



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works, Vol. IV

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Over his entire career Grieg wrote only two orchestral works in the traditional multimovement format: this symphony and concerto. Both are early works. The symphony was completed in 1864, when the composer was 20; the concerto followed in 1868. The symphony had a curious fate because after some partial performances Grieg withdrew it, declaring it should not be performed. And so it wasn't until 1980, and since then a few recordings have appeared. The work shows debt to Mendelssohn and Schumann but probably doesn't have enough interest to enter the general repertory. It does have, though, catchy themes and lovely moments that show the remarkable skill and finesse of a young composer. The sweet romanticism we associate with Grieg is not yet part of his style—it really sounds more like Mendelssohn!—and it is clear that after these two early orchestral works he directed his career in other directions.

The symphony performance under Eivind Aadland has everything you would hope for: lots of energy and excitement, with a very fine, well-prepared orchestra. The music emerges with a sense of youth and enthusiasm, and rhythms are crisp. With the concerto, of course, we are on familiar ground. The catalog lists dozens of fine recordings, and a relative newcomer like Schuch (now in his mid-30s) won't gain notice easily. But this is a fine performance. He throws himself into the piece with lots of excitement in the outer movements and plenty of virtuosic display, mainly in the big cadenza. He also gives us ample poetry in the slow movement and the finale (before the strange stop in the middle!) Schuch is ably backed by Aadland, who brings the same level of excitement here as in the symphony.

This is Volume IV of Audite's complete edition of Grieg's orchestral work in five volumes (see our index). It comes with fine, detailed notes, and the sound is first rate. A fine job all around!