



**Nelson Freire plays Saint-Saëns, Grieg and Liszt**

aud 95.742



[American Record Guide](#) January / February 2018 (Donald R Vroon - 2018.01.01)

source: <http://argsubsonline.com/subscribers/ARG...>



I am especially fond of the second Saint-Saëns concerto, and I have heard it a number of times in concert. I have five or six recordings of it, and I have to say that this one is as good as any. The pianist is one of the best, and the conductor and orchestra are with him all the way.

But the concerto is 23 minutes. The rest of the time here is a recital by the pianist. Yes, he plays it all quite beautifully, as one expects of him. But you need at least a full CD of Grieg Lyric Pieces, not just these five (10 minutes). And you need a set of Hungarian Rhapsodies, not just these two—not two of my favorites, either!

So if you already have the concerto, you would buy this only for the pianist. The sound is excellent. The recordings are from 1986 (concerto) and 1966.

**Audiophile Audition August 28, 2017**  
(Gary Lemco - 2017.08.28)

source:

<http://www.audaud.com/saint-saens-piano-...>



The colossal panache and sweep of this performance will doubtless motivate Freire acolytes to demand more heated excursions into this pianistic, luxurious world.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

BBC Music Magazine November 2017 (Claire Jackson - 2017.11.01)



Nostalgia is a heady temptation, but newly released historic recordings such as Nelson Freire's brilliant concert performance of Saint-Saens's Second Concerto invoke a certain longing.

Crescendo Magazine Le 19 septembre 2017 (Ayrton Desimpelaere - 2017.09.19)

source: <http://www.crescendo-magazine.be/nelson-...>



Nelson Freire : la noblesse du piano

De la belle musique par un grand monsieur du piano, à écouter et réécouter !

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[deroperfreund.de](http://www.deroperfreund.de) 4.9.2017 (Egon Bezold - 2017.09.04)

source: <http://www.deroperfreund.de/neue-silber...>



Publikumswirksames Virtuosenfutter

In eleganter Ausdruckshaltung, im Wechsel von leidenschaftlichen Attacken und rasant abzischenden Figurenwerk beweist Nelson Freire respektgebietende pianistische Souveränität.

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[Fanfare](http://www.fanfarearchive.com) December 2017 (Huntley Dent - 2017.12.01)

source: <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/a...>



This worthy addition to the discography of Nelson Freire captures one of a handful of live concerto recordings to be found outside his major-label catalog, in this case the Saint-Saëns Concerto No. 2—the boldest of his five piano concertos—coupled with incidental solo works by Grieg and Liszt. The solo pieces are studio recordings from 1966; the concerto is a live recording from 20 years later. Without a discography of the pianist to consult, I'll venture to say that everything here is a new addition, and the recorded sound is quite good throughout. In the Saint-Saëns the forwardly placed piano is as full and realistic-sounding as one could hope for, but orchestral detail hasn't been sacrificed.

What immediately attracts major pianists to the Saint-Saëns Second is the gesture of placing a cadenza-like prelude before the orchestra enters, a twist on a Bach organ prelude, and as in Bach (or Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, which uses the same gesture) the music is free-form, improvisatory, and expressive. Freire takes a large-scaled Romantic view of the introduction, setting the mood for a reading of the first movement strong in passion and virtuosity. Ádám Fischer's conducting follows suit, although he's

fairly ordinary in comparison to such a charismatic soloist. Taking Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Charles Dutoit (Decca) as a good modern standard, Freire is just as sparkling in the Scherzo but more virtuosic in the finale, where Fischer also catches fire. It would get no argument from me if someone called his reading a first choice. (Equally exciting concerto performances can be found in Decca's two-CD collection of the pianist's radio broadcasts, which I welcomed enthusiastically in *Fanfare* 38:4.)

Since there was no online booklet, I can't say why the Liszt and Grieg pieces, being studio recordings, didn't make it to disc previously; I presume this was a radio broadcast. In any event, the recorded sound, if a bit dry and confined, is perfectly respectable. In his selection of five of Grieg's 66 Lyric Pieces, Freire is so convincing that one longs for more. Charisma isn't what these homey pieces call for, being chiefly aimed at the Victorian market for amateur-level character pieces. Freire brings the sensitivity of a great Chopinist to meditative miniatures such as "Lonely Wanderer" and imparts a touch of brilliance where he can, as in "Little Birds." The only other pianist I know who found such modest magic was Walter Gieseking in his monaural collection for EMI.

Liszt is more familiar territory for Freire, whose Decca album for the composer's bicentennial was one of the high spots among a slew of solo recitals that year; he has also recorded the B-Minor Sonata, Totentanz, and both concertos. The three works on the present release are fairly offbeat. The two Hungarian Rhapsodies, No. 5 and No. 10, are generally found only in complete cycles—neither was recorded by Horowitz or Richter, and Grigory Ginzburg has only a single recording of No. 10, just to name my favorite Lisztians. Freire gives No. 5 a dignified, stately reading suitable to its solemnity. No. 10 is far more a showpiece, like the famous No. 2, and here Freire shines with effortless passagework and trills while avoiding any hint of vulgarity. He succeeds in finding the music behind the cascade of notes, in the vein of Alfred Brendel's Liszt but with more warmth. Polonaise No. 2 is as heroic and showy as Chopin's most forceful examples, so I'm surprised that I didn't know the piece already. It's like Chopin with bells and whistles added, an exciting final flourish to the program. Richter has been captured in this work no less than 15 times (!), the vast majority on tour in 1988; I should have been paying much better attention. Freire plays at the same level of bravura.

Everything about this release is superb. In the current issue I review Freire's new release of Brahms solo piano works, also new to his discography, so it's a month to celebrate for those who esteem his art.

**Gramophone October 2017 (Harriet Smith - 2017.10.01)**

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Nelson Freire hasn't made a commercial recording of Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto, which makes this radio recording from 1986 all the more fascinating. In the piano's rhapsodic solo opening he combines freedom with a sense of purpose, though ensemble isn't always entirely precise between him and Ádám Fischer's orchestra, and the piano sound can be a touch muddy in the bass register. Despite this, Freire can make something as simple as an arpeggio sound ravishing and the sense of fantasy is everywhere apparent. He takes a freer approach than Grosvenor and Hough in the scherzando second movement. But it is in the finale that Freire is most impressive, dispatching its considerable virtuosity with flair, from pounding octaves to highly delicate textures, the closing moments suitably tumultuous.

The solo pieces on this disc were recorded when Freire was only 21 and have not been previously released. How good it is to have a selection of Grieg's Lyric Pieces, which are vividly rendered. If the 'Solitary traveller' (Op 43 No 2) is still more forlorn in Stephen Hough's hands, Freire's 'Little bird' (Op 43 No 4) is set free by the lightest of pedalling and a scampering virtuosity (Andsnes is more sustained – both are compelling). The colourful 'Norwegian Melody' (Op 12 No 6) moves from stamping rhythms to a darting, shifting idea, though Andsnes is arguably even more effective here, making more of its folkish qualities at a faster tempo. Freire's 'Shepherd Boy' (Op 54 No 1) is a highlight, conjuring a palpable sense of loneliness, of vast unpeopled vistas.

Freire's Liszt has always had a nobility to it and the pieces here are no exception. If he can't quite match

the darkness of Cherkassky (c1946) in the Fifth Hungarian Rhapsody – a searing reading whose sense of purpose glows through the crackle of the recording – it is still remarkable for its gravity, while the 10th is entirely without garish showmanship, Freire's panache with its glissandos a joy to behold. In the Second Polonaise, too, we find muscularity and finesse in perfect balance. A fine addition to the Freire discography.

**Piano News Mai/Juni 3/2018 (Carsten Dürer - 2018.05.01)**



## Alte Aufnahmen

*Von der britischen Insel über Salzburg und die USA nach Berlin*

[Freire] nimmt keine Phrase von Grieg als gegeben einfach und simpel hin, sondern füllt sie mit klanglicher Ausarbeitung so mit Leben, dass jedes dieser Stücke eine eigene Welt bedeutet, wenn man sie in seiner Darstellung anhört.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

**Record Geijutsu SEP.2017 ( - 2017.09.01)**



Japanische Rezension siehe PDF!

**Stereoplay 9|2017 (Attila Csampai - 2017.09.01)**



## Brasilianer in Berlin

Jetzt hat das Detmolder Label audite, das für seine historische Serie Rundfunkarchive auswertet, im RIAS-Katalog einen bislang unveröffentlichten Berliner Livemitschnitt Freires aus dem Jahr 1986 entdeckt, in dem er das bis heute unterschätzte zweite Klavierkonzert von Camille Saint-Saens mit vulkanischer Energie auflädt und es als höchst originelles Meisterwerk der Gattung rehabilitiert, zu einer Zeit, als man es außerhalb Frankreichs kaum spielte. Dirigent Adam Fischer und das RSO Berlin ließen sich damals förmlich mitreißen von der explosiven Vitalität und den rasenden Tempi des 41-jährigen Energiebündels Freire.

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.myclassicalnotes.com](http://www.myclassicalnotes.com) August 18, 2017 ( - 2017.08.18)  
source: <http://www.myclassicalnotes.com/2017/08/...>



### Nelson Freire performs Grieg

Freire not only demonstrated his pianistic skills, but also what was already at that stage his extraordinary touch and stylistic confidence.

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[www.pizzicato.lu](http://www.pizzicato.lu) 11/08/2017 (Remy Franck - 2017.08.11)  
source: <https://www.pizzicato.lu/34313-2/>



### Nelson Freire: Neues von 1966 und 1986

Diese CD mit Archivaufnahmen von 1966 und 1986 enthält ausschließlich Erstveröffentlichungen. Die Wiedergabe des Zweiten Klavierkonzerts von Camille Saint-Saëns durch Nelson Freire ist ganz außergewöhnlich. Es gelingen ihm subtilste Nuancen und feinste Differenzierung, anfangs sogar tiefe Besinnlichkeit und Melancholie. Aber es gibt auch genügend Brillanz und Fingerfertigkeit zu bewundern, sowie ein großes Raffinement des Anschlags. Im Allegro scherzando und im Presto faszinieren die ungewöhnliche Leichtigkeit des Spiels. Freires Finger huschen flink über die Tasten und lassen die Musik zum funkelnden Feuerwerk werden.

20 Jahre zuvor hatte der brasilianische Pianist als 22-Jähriger für den RIAS Berlin fünf von Griegs Lyrischen Stücken, Liszts Ungarische Rhapsodien Nr. 5 und 10 sowie seine zweite Polonaise eingespielt. Die Grieg-Stücke sind reichlich nüchtern geraten, aber die drei Liszt Werke zeigen Freire als inspirierten Interpreten, der das Rhapsodische der Werke mit viel tiefer Versenkung wiedergibt.

With a reflective and finely nuanced first movement, a sparkling Allegro scherzando and a volatile Presto, Nelson Freire's account of the Second Saint-Saëns Concerto is mesmerizing. In the solo recordings from 1966 the Grieg is less compelling, but the Liszt compositions show him as a very inspired performer.

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