



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works, Vol. IV

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Gramophone (Rob Cowan - 2014.12.01)

GRAMOPHONE

'Must never be performed' is an obvious red rag to any musical bull and although Grieg's youthful C minor Symphony reveals numerous influences, some more obvious than others, it's confidently built, thematically appealing and mildly memorable in a way that recalls similarly derivative early symphonic works by Dvorak and Glazunov. Its first recording, by the Bergen Symphony Orchestra under Karsten Andersen, is now out on Decca Eloquence (appropriately coupled with Goldmark's equally engaging Rustic Wedding Symphony), and shares the market with worthy versions under Ari Rasilainen, Okko Kamu, Terje Mikkelsen and Neeme Järvi. Up until now I would probably have rated the latter as top contender but this newcomer from Eivind Aadland and the Cologne WDR Symphony Orchestra, which is captured in admirably natural sound and appears in the context of Grieg's 'Complete Symphonic Works, Vol 4', is a fresh, lightly sprung performance that avoids any inappropriate feelings of portentousness and highlights the mazurka-style third movement as the most characteristic in terms of its thematic material.

A good idea to couple Grieg's least familiar orchestral work with its totally familiar near contemporary, the A minor Piano Concerto, in a not insubstantial reading by the excellent Herbert Schuch, who sounds-as if he's worked over every semiquaver with infinite care. Not that the performance lacks spontaneity, more that inner voices, crisp rhythms and a sculpted brand of poetry suggest a truly 'settled' interpretation, one that happily compares with (but hardly replaces) the best available. Again Aadland and his Cologne players provide an excellent account of the orchestral score, supportive of Schuch and distinctive on its own terms, and the recorded balance is excellent.