



EDVARD GRIEG
Complete Symphonic
Works • Vol. IV

audite

WDR • THE COLOGNE
BROADCASTS

HERBERT SCHUCH
WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln
EIVIND AADLAND

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Edvard Munch „Verwünschter Wald“, 1903. Oel auf Leinwand
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EDVARD GRIEG Complete Symphonic Works • Vol. VI

Symphony in C minor, EG 119* [32:35]

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| I. <i>Allegro molto</i> | 12:31 |
| II. <i>Adagio espressivo</i> | 7:21 |
| III. <i>Allegro energico – Più mosso –
Tempo primo – Coda. Più allegro</i> | 4:51 |
| IV. <i>Allegro molto vivace</i> | 7:52 |

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 [30:01]

- | | |
|--|-------|
| I. <i>Allegro molto moderato – Cadenza –
Poco più allegro</i> | 12:57 |
| II. <i>Adagio</i> | 6:46 |
| III. <i>Allegro moderato molto e marcato –
Quasi presto – Andante maestoso</i> | 10:18 |

HERBERT SCHUCH, piano
WDR SINFONIEORCHESTER KÖLN
EIVIND AADLAND, conductor

The forgotten great work

Edvard Grieg's only two orchestral works in the multiple movement formats of concerto and symphony – with which a nineteenth century composer could cause a *furor* – were written during his first mature period. Whilst he certainly composed multi-movement chamber music later on (including sonatas for violin and cello as well as the string quartet of 1878), in orchestral music he was to restrict himself to single movements or suites which mostly had a folklore background. Grieg clearly had to struggle with strong emotions, self-doubts and crises from an early age. Was this the reason for the fact that his Symphony in C minor was to remain his only one? Or did he feel that the symphony genre had become outdated, thus preferring poetic miniatures and programmatic music à la Franz Liszt?

His only symphony was written in Copenhagen – an important time for Grieg, as he studied Norwegian folk

music intensively for the first time – thanks to the request, as Grieg himself remembered, of Niels Wilhelm Gade, the greatest Danish symphonic composer at the time. Apparently, Gade had asked his colleague to go home and write something “truly valuable”. Not wasting any time, Grieg finished the first movement within two weeks and completed the remaining three movements by May 1864. It was an ambitious project with which Grieg exposed himself to comparisons with his most potent predecessors and contemporaries. Both the charismatic key of C minor and the emotionally charged dynamism (“through night to light”), heading towards the finale, were linked to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, whilst Schumann is present mostly in the harmonic language and in the lyrical passages. The symphonies by Gade and the revered Johann Peter Emilius Hartmann also left their mark on Grieg's work, which may be less obvious to Central European ears but which related to the discussion about current “Nordic” music.

The quality of the young Grieg's journeyman's piece has been discussed more than the works of the “minor” masters. However, the original opening of the symphony should already surprise all those who are expecting mere imitation. With a powerful flourish of several accelerated chordal strikes, Grieg creates a dramatic atmosphere spilling over into the springy main theme, presented by a fanfare from the clarinets and violas as well as a vocal upsurge (both elements will be processed at length later on). The two main elements of “rhythm” and “melody” thus enter into an exciting dialogue as early as the first theme, whilst the second theme fully relies on the *cantabile* sonority of the first violins' G strings. Above all, the 20-year-old composer seeks to create as much variety in mood and character as possible; the movement ends with increasing acceleration and condensation of the main motifs.

Amongst the master's fans this symphony has of course prompted a discussion as to whether an individual, “Griegian” style can be detected. Despite several references to the *Larghetto* from Robert Schumann's First Symphony, the second movement in particular anticipates the well-known Grieg style: a vocal, slightly melancholy theme is continued and varied with distinctive harmonic devices and a peppering of chromaticisms; multiple layers of accompanying rhythms create a floating, iridescent atmosphere which is reinforced by the frothy instrumentation.

These fragile sounds are contrasted with the mazarca-like, stamping rhythms of the scherzo's dancing swagger. This is reversed by the trio's intimate mood, featuring flowing figures in the wind instruments. The movement with the greatest formal ambitions, however, is the finale, which appears, like a movement by Franz Schubert, out of thin air but then develops into a jubilant movement which surprisingly comes to a standstill in the middle of the development section. A new, chorale-like theme makes an entrance, beginning as if it were an

apotheosis of the symphony but remaining without any impact on the course of the piece – a formal inconsequence in a significant closing movement for which Grieg might justifiably be reproached.

The destiny of this work is curious, as the composer withdrew it after several partial performances in Bergen and Copenhagen: his note “må aldrig opføres” (may never be performed) prevented generations of loyal archivists from releasing the work for performance. When the Russian conductor Vitali Katayev asked Bergen city library for a photocopy of the score for “research purposes” and, against the agreement with the Soviet Union, performed it in December 1980, Norway felt obliged to rehabilitate the long-unrecognised piece of national heritage by arranging a performance of it as well. Even if details of the youthful work are still being criticised nowadays, as his most substantial orchestral work, Grieg’s C minor Symphony represents a significant tessera in his career.

Summer in Søllerød

An old black and white photo from the collection of the Royal Library Copenhagen depicts a rural whitewashed inn with flat thatch, mirrored in the village pond. The tables and chairs in front of the house are still empty whilst a carriage is coming around the corner at some speed, apparently transporting the first guests to the still virginal idyll. During the summer of 1868, this inn in Søllerød, a popular seaside resort at Øresund, north of Copenhagen, was home to a lively trio of artists who, afterwards, would bring a certain amount of fame to the village. The Danish composer Emil Horneman and the Norwegian pianist Edmund Neupert regularly stopped by at the inn, and sometimes were joined by the 25-year-old Edvard Grieg, who spent a lot of his time in a remote garden house where he worked at his most ambitious project up to that point. A piano concerto was evolving during this unbearably hot summer at Søllerød – a large-scale work

in three movements with which the young Norwegian dared another foray into “great form” four years after completing his symphony. And he probably would not have dreamt that only a few decades later this piece would be taken across Europe and even into the New World by the finest soloists.

As a pianist and conductor, the Norwegian from the provincial town of Bergen who had Scottish ancestors (his great-grandfather still spelled his name “Greig”) already enjoyed a certain prominence. Grieg’s father ran a business exporting lobster and dried fish whilst holding the respected position of British vice consul. His mother was a trained pianist and ensured that their home was filled with music. Bergen and its environs remained an important reference point for Grieg: he was raised on the country estate of Landås and later on would retreat to the sublime natural beauty of the Hardangerfjord. According to a contemporary bon mot, however, Norway in the mid-nineteenth century had only one conserva-

toire: the Leipzig one. Grieg therefore moved to Saxony in 1858 where he was to study, for three and a half years, piano and composition. His teachers included Moritz Hauptmann and Carl Reinecke.

After his return, Grieg oscillated between Bergen, Copenhagen and Kristiania (today’s Oslo), founded the first Norwegian music academy and, as conductor of the Philharmonic Society, reformed the city’s music life by offering innovative concert programmes featuring works from the Baroque period to his present era. On his way to becoming a “national composer” who wanted to disengage from the romantic mainstream, Grieg received defining impulses from his short-lived fellow student Richard Nordraak, as well as the violin virtuoso and ardent patriot Ole Bull, who introduced Grieg to Norwegian peasant folk music. This opened up a fresh new corpus of melodies and tonal systems which were to come to wonderful fruition in his piano concerto of 1868. During a time of Norwegian dependence on Sweden (the union

of 1815 had aligned the two states under Swedish supremacy), this was of course a political signal. The piano concerto of 1868 thus became a declaration of an independent Scandinavian musical tradition which in Central Europe was unjustly denigrated as “Norwegianisation”.

As Grieg lacked experience with the large-scale orchestral apparatus, he looked for models. References to Chopin can be found in the orchestral writing, but even more so to Robert Schumann’s Piano Concerto in the same key of A minor, which also inspired the opening flourish: following a timpani roll and a tutti downbeat, the piano descends in a cascade of full-fingered chords, leading into a march-like springy main melody which is not unlike the theme of the Schumann concerto. Grieg’s effective piano writing appears astonishingly mature, successfully combining orchestral sound extension, brilliant passagework and romantic sentiment. At the same time, Grieg ensures that the soloist does not need to wait during extended orches-

tral tutti but that he is almost constantly present. Instead of great symphonic blocks, Grieg creates a lively dialogue which at times seems to be inspired by folk tradition. The lyrical second theme of the cellos plays a subordinate role in the first movement: in the development section, the dominant features are still the piano cascade from the beginning and the main theme which leads to an apotheosis in a grandiose cadenza à la Franz Liszt.

The slow movement shows how anxious Grieg was to construct a cyclical structure in his concerto – an idea which had been introduced to him by the “Leipzig School” of Schumann and Mendelssohn. A solemn, *religioso* tone in the muted strings creates a nocturnal atmosphere which the soloist continues in a Chopinesque manner. His seemingly improvisatory garlands veil the powerful piano gesture from the beginning of the concerto, which is gradually transformed into a lyrical entity by way of “motif metamorphosis”. The emotional peak of the movement features the adagio theme

in a brilliant *fortissimo* from the piano; it then slowly drifts away in arpeggios and ecstatic trills.

After this gentle nocturnal piece, morning dawns with a vigorous dance drawing on the Norwegian Halling, a rhythmic acrobatic dance traditionally accompanied by fiddles. The theme and its derivations roll through the solo and orchestral parts; peace only comes with a simple flute melody whose repeat on the piano evokes once again the nocturnal mood of the second movement. But the spirits are soon chased away by the opening dance and a brief solo cadenza heralds the coda: an even more furious variant of the dance in triple time whose wildness in the end is arched over by the hymnic version of the lyrical second theme – an effect which sent Franz Liszt into rapture when he played through the concerto in his Roman palazzo. But the audience at the premiere in Copenhagen on 3 April 1869 was also taken with the new piece which was performed by its dedicatee, Edmund Neupert. “I cel-

ebrated a true and great triumph”, Neupert reported back the following day to the composer who had been otherwise engaged. “I was called back twice to the stage, and at the end, the orchestra played a big flourish for me.”

Michael Struck-Schloen
Translation: Viola Scheffel

HERBERT SCHUCH

Herbert Schuch is recognized as one of the most interesting musicians of his generation by virtue of his sophisticated programs and recordings. He attracted international attention when he won three important piano competitions – the Casagrande competition, the London International Piano Competition, and the International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna – within a single year. In 2013 he received the ECHO Klassik for his recording of concertos (Viktor Ullmann, Ludwig van Beethoven) together with the WDR Sinfonieorchester. In 2012 Herbert Schuch was already awarded with an ECHO Klassik in the category “Chamber Music Recording of the Year”.

Herbert Schuch was born in Temesvar (Romania) in 1979. After early piano lessons in his home town, he emigrated with his family in 1988 to Germany, where he since lives. He continued his musical studies with Kurt Hantsch and then

with Prof. Karl-Heinz Kämmerling at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. In the recent past Herbert Schuch has been particularly influenced by his encounters and work with Alfred Brendel.

Herbert Schuch has worked with orchestras such as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg, Residentie Orkest Den Haag, Bamberger Symphoniker, Dresden Philharmonie, and the radio symphony orchestras of hr, MDR, WDR, NDR Hannover, and DR (Danmarks Radio). He is a regular guest at festivals such as Kissinger Sommer, Rheingau Musik Festival, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and Salzburger Festspiele. He collaborates with conductors Pierre Boulez, Douglas Boyd, Eivind Gullberg Jensen, Jakub Hrůša, Jun Märkl, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Jonathan Nott and Michael Sanderling.

Alongside his concert work, Herbert Schuch has been active for some time in the “Rhapsody in School” organization founded by Lars Vogt, which is committed to bringing classical music into schools.





The **WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne** was formed in 1947 as part of the then North West German Radio (NWDR) and nowadays belongs to the West German Radio (WDR). Principal conductors were Christoph von Dohnányi, Zdenek Macal, Hiroshi Wakasugi, Gary Bertini, Hans Vonk and Semyon Bychkov. Celebrated guest conductors such as Fritz Busch, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan, Günter Wand, Sir Georg Solti, Sir André Previn, Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado and Zubin Mehta have performed with the orchestra. The WDR Symphony Orchestra tours regularly in all European countries, in North and South America and in Asia. Since the season 2010/2011 Jukka-Pekka Saraste from Finland is the Chief Conductor of the orchestra.

EIVIND AADLAND

Eivind Aadland has been Chief Conductor and Artistic Leader of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra from 2003 to 2010. In addition, he has worked with many other Scandinavian orchestras, including the Oslo and Bergen Philharmonics, the Stavanger Symphony, the Finnish and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestras and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. He is also a frequent visitor to other European orchestras such as the WDR Cologne, SWR Stuttgart and the RSO Berlin; he has appeared with the Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, the Lausanne and Scottish Chamber Orchestras and the Symphony Orchestras of Melbourne, Tasmania and Iceland. Concert tours led Eivind Aadland to China, Korea and Australia.

His recording output includes a diverse range of repertoire putting a special focus on Norwegian composers.

Previously a violinist having studied with Yehudi Menuhin, Eivind Aadland was concertmaster of the Bergen Philharmonic from 1981 to 1989 and Music Director of the European Union Chamber Orchestra from 1987 to 1997. Then he devoted himself to conducting completely and studied with Jorma Panula.

