



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

aud 95.742

EAN: 4022143957429



Gramophone (Harriet Smith - 01.10.2017)

### GRAMOPHONE

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.

### Saint-Saëns • Grieg • Liszt

Grieg Lyric Pieces: Op 12 - No 5; No 6; Op 43 - No 2; No 4; Op 54 No 1 Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies, S244\* - No 5; No 10 Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No 2, Op 22\*

Nelson Freire, 21<sup>st</sup> Berlin Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Ádám Fischer

Audite 'mono' © AUDITE95 742 (55 • \*ADD/\*DDD)  
Recorded \*1966; \*live at the Haus des Rundfunks, Berlin, March 16, 1986



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Saint-Saëns – selected comparisons:

Hough, CBSO, Orans (11/01) (HYPP) CD:A67331/2

Grosvenor (11/12) (DECC) 478 3521DDH

Grieg Lyric Pieces – selected comparisons:

Andsnes (6/98, 4/02) (VIRG/ERAT) 232286-2 &

(EMM/WRN) 557286-2 (see)

Grieg Op 43 Nos 2 & 4 – selected comparisons:

Hough (6/15) (HYPP) CD:A68070

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No 5 – selected comparison:

Cherkassky (VAD) VALA1066

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No 10 – selected comparison:

Arona (12/96) (SONY) MHK82338

## Saint-Saëns · Grieg · Liszt

Grieg *Lyric Pieces*: Op 12 - No 5; No 6; Op 43 - No 2; No 4; Op 54 No 1 Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, S244<sup>a</sup> - No 5; No 10 **Saint-Saëns** Piano Concerto No 2, Op 22<sup>b</sup>

Nelson Freire *pf*<sup>b</sup> Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra / Ádám Fischer

Audite <sup>a</sup>mono © AUDITE95 742 (55' • <sup>a</sup>ADD/<sup>b</sup>DDD)  
Recorded <sup>a</sup>1966; <sup>b</sup>live at the Haus des Rundfunks, Berlin, March 16, 1986



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.

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*Saint-Saëns – selected comparisons:*

Hough, CBSO, Oramo (11/01) (HYPE) CDA67331/2

Grosvenor (11/12) (DECC) 478 3527DH

*Grieg Lyric Pieces – selected comparisons:*

Andsnes (6/93<sup>a</sup>, 4/02) (VIRG/ERAT) 232286-2 &

(EMI/WARN) 557296-2 (ans)

Grieg Op 43 Nos 2 & 4 – selected comparison:

Hough (6/15) (HYPE) CDA68070

Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody No 5* – selected comparison:

Cherkassky (VAI) VAI1066

Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody No 10* – selected comparison:

Arrau (12/96) (SONY) MHK62338