



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works Vol. II

aud 92.579

EAN: 4022143925794



Gramophone (Mike Ashman - 2011.11.01)

GRAMOPHONE

Volume 2 of Cologne's Grieg cycle arrives

A happy star reigned over Cologne two autumns ago when violinist-turned-maestro Eivind Aadland recorded his cycle of Grieg symphonic works with the city's WDR orchestra. Aadland – his name, we are told, means 'land at the river' – explains in his notes to the project his own familial and geographical affinity with Grieg's affection for folk and dance music. In this collection of (mostly) string-orchestral arrangements of songs and piano originals actions certainly speak as loud as his words: the bite and bounce of the German orchestra's playing is remarkable for its apparent ethnicity.

This lack of the borrowed German romanticism that still cloaks much non-Scandinavian Grieg-playing – the composer portrayed as a kind of simplified Brahms with the Hungarian bits writ Nordic – does not indicate any lack of passion. The uberrestraint which characterised Ole Kristian Ruud's Bergen survey of this music is replaced here by a real evocation of the sadness – perhaps darkness would be a better word – behind Grieg's melodies and themes. A weighty and tense interpretation of From Holberg's Time gives the lie to the composer's none-too-serious apology for the work as 'periwig music' – a kind of 18th-century mask to his own emotions – and attains a dramatic level more suggestive of the plays and writing of Ludvik Holberg than most rivals. The song transcriptions, none more so than the Melody, Op 53 No 1 (retitled 'Norwegian'), are lent here an importance far beyond that of the salon encore material as which they are often scheduled.

In this series (three releases to come) or as a separate venture, Aadland and his adoptive orchestra must be let loose on as complete as possible a Peer Gynt. Almost singlehandedly these days he continues to make the case for Grieg as serious orchestral writer.