



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works Vol. III

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GRAMOPHONE

Top 10 Grieg recordings

Aadland's Cologne Radio Grieg survey continues

The first two discs in this 'Complete Symphonic Works' series (10/11, 11/11) were outstanding. This third is wholly exceptional. The presence of the overture *In Autumn* and the *Old Norwegian Romance with Variations* gives the programme a Beechamesque feel. But Aadland and his astonishingly well-integrated German ensemble – by this I mean that they are guided into a natural-sounding Nordic style – need fear nothing by way of competition, not even from the RPO's dream woodwind section.

Aadland's *Romance* – unlike Beecham's it is complete and not marginally reorchestrated – becomes a kind of *Norwegian Enigma Variations* *avant la lettre*, mixing a large degree of symphonic seriousness with wit and Griegian nostalgia. The demonstration-class recording showcases a weight and colour of orchestration that puts this Grieg score in the correct but rarely considered position of contemporary to Strauss's early orchestral masterworks. A piece that (sssh, even on the two Beecham recordings) can sound bloated and occasional claims a place here alongside, indeed anticipates, the disguised turn-of-the-century unnamed symphonies of Rachmaninov, Elgar and the like.

A similar seriousness but never overblown grandeur informs *In Autumn*. Aadland has already shown us in this cycle that he is good at correctly scaling miniatures both in joy and in grief. He seconds those achievements here in the characterisation of the *Lyric Suite* and the *Sigurd Jorsalfar* music, while the five minutes of *Klokkeklang* ('Bell-ringing') become a spooky shadow of the *Bøyg's* music in *Peer Gynt* (eagerly awaited in this series). A compulsively playable record, hugely recommended.