



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works, Vol. IV

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Dip your ears

[...] It's almost eerily similar to another recent (also live) recording that combines the concerto with Lyric Pieces (although four of Ott's twelve choices overlap), namely that of Javier Perianes on Harmonia Mundi with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo. If I had to choose between the two, Ott would win out; when she differs, however marginally, in tempos, she's a touch fleeter, which I like... and the recorded sound (and orchestra's wind section: no hiss with the Bavarians) is slightly better on DG, which becomes notable in the slow movement. Compared to Herbert Schuch's recording on Audite (a very delicate, favorite performance, with the WDR SO Cologne and Eivind Aadland) the sound is more direct and almost (and only in comparison) brash.

In the Lyric Pieces Ott (and the acoustic) is a little drier, a little leaner, while Perianes indulges in a freer rubato. Incidentally that's closer to Grieg, whose rubato was very free-wheeling, indeed. Another fine, slightly specialist release, of Grieg's Piano Concerto and select Lyric Pieces (played on Grieg's piano and trying to emulate Grieg's own performances) shows this to be the case, namely that of Sigurd Slåttembrekk with the Oslo Philharmonic under Michail Jurowski on Simax (ionarts review here: Musical Journey Through Norway). Alice Sara Ott navigates her way through these pieces in similar manner as with the concerto. She won't indulge, and while her butterfly is fast and sufficiently nervous, she doesn't deliberately undercut the romantic cliché, either. Like that butterfly, the pieces flit by with great pleasantness and slight blandness.

If that sounds like a gentle bashing, it's not intended that way. These qualities are no detriment to the music or recording. Actually, this disc could be considered an ideal Griegroduction™: it does not overly color the canvas of the music and leaves the ears ready, thereafter, to open-mindedly receiving and considering any number of differing interpretations. The only snag: There is one similar recording already, which does all that, a little more of it, arguably a little more interestingly while doing it, and certainly no worse at it. That's Leif Ove Andsnes' first, super-stormy, recording of the concerto with the Bergen Philharmonic under Dmitri Kitayenko which, in a coupling on a Virgin twofer (now Erato, if only Warner only re-issued it at last, hopefully with the same Delacroix' "Orphan girl seated in cemetery" on the cover), added many more lyric pieces and the Piano Sonata on two discs priced lower than the DG

release. [...]

