

THE
 ROMANTIC
 VIOLIN
 AND
 ORGAN

Geir Inge Lotsberg, violin

Kåre Nordstoga, organ

.....
 Oslo Cathedral



The Romantic Violin and Organ

An unusually lovely bouquet of works has been gathered on this CD. Several of these consist of adaptations that have been tailored to this release, but there is every reason to believe that the composers would have been pleased with the results. Presented here is a collection of songs about love, grief and prayer, and powerful melodies that only a violin is able to do justice to.

“ROMANCE”

Otto Olsson was one of Sweden’s foremost composers of church music, and he himself was the organist at Gustav Vasa Church in Stockholm. His “Advent” for choir and organ is a popular work at Norwegian Christmas concerts, too, and was composed at the same time as his “Romance” in a Nordic late-Romantic style that is reminiscent of the works of Edvard Grieg.

“ALLT UNDER HIMMELENS FÄSTE” (“ALL ON A SUMMER’S EVENING”)

Folksongs were an important source of material for national-romantic composers such as Edvard Grieg and Johan Svendsen. They provided the raw material for rhapsodies and symphonic dances, and appeared in shorter forms as independent arrangements. It was rather unusual for Norwegian composers to use Swedish melodies, but as a young man Svendsen had received a grant from the Swedish King Karl XV. When the king died in 1872, Svendsen composed a funeral march in his honour. Svendsen made use of “Du gamla, du friska” (“Thou Ancient, Thou Hale”), which would later become the Swedish national anthem, and

the melancholy folksong “Allt under himmelens fäste där sitta stjärnor små. Den vännen som jag älskar den kan jag aldrig få” (“All on a summer’s evening the little stars do shine. The lad I loved so dearly, he is no longer mine”). He combined them in the work “To svenske folkemelodier for strykeorkester” (“Two Swedish Folk Melodies for String Orchestra”).

LARGO FROM “SUITE IN THE OLD STYLE”

Max Reger composed his “Suite im alten Stil” for violin and piano, and later created an orchestral version of the piece. Of the three movements, Prelude, Largo and Fugue, he selected the middle one, the Largo, as the basis for a version for violin and organ. Of Reger’s prolific output, his “Maria Wiegenlied”, composed at the same time as the Largo, is particularly well-known, and is marked to a similar degree by Reger’s advanced harmonic imagination.

“ADAGIO DI MOLTO. SECOND MOVEMENT OF THE VIOLIN CONCERTO”

Jean Sibelius composed the Violin Concerto between his second and third symphonies. His international fame was on an upward curve, but it was nevertheless a difficult period for him. He was consuming a good deal of alcohol and earning little money. However, this situation did not have an ill effect on this lovely and singing movement. In the following year, 1903, he bought a plot of land outside Helsinki. The home he had built there was named after his wife, Aino, and for the rest of his life Aino was the base for his life and work.

“PRIÈRE” (“PRAYER”)

Camille Saint-Saëns was the organist at the Church of the Madeleine in Paris for many years (1857-76), and his prolific output includes important contributions to the organ repertoire. At the age of 83 he published his “Prière” both for cello and organ and for violin and organ.

“TROIS MOUVEMENTS” (“THREE MOVEMENTS”)

Jehan Alain’s “Trois Mouvements” was originally composed for flute and piano. Alain died in World War II at the early age of 29, but had been extremely productive until then. He made an impact on the repertoire with his exuberant organ pieces, chamber music and vocal music. His younger sister, Marie-Claire, performed his organ works often. The movements are Andante, Allegro con grazia and Allegro vivace.

“LARGO FUNÈBRE” (“FUNERAL LARGO”)

On a June day in 1993, Klaus Egge planned to visit a close friend at Porsgrunn Hospital. He called before leaving, and was told that his friend had died that morning. “Under the influence of this tragic and unexpected event I composed ‘Largo funèbre’ in the course of two hours. It was played at the funeral,” he says. The theme is reminiscent of older folk music with a modal flavour (Dorian C minor with F major, not F minor), and contrasts with the funeral march rhythm. Klaus Egge used “Largo funèbre” as the first movement in his string quartet.

“ADAGIO”

Arild Sandvold was hired as an organist for the first time at the age of 19, and when he was 23 years old he composed his organ sonata, a significant work of the Norwegian organ repertoire. Sandvold was the organist at Oslo Cathedral from 1933 to 1966 and was an influential teacher at the Music Conservatory. “Adagio in D flat Major” was originally the second movement of the sonata as it was first performed in 1918, but before the work was published he removed this movement and instead included it in his “Two Organ Pieces”, Op. 1. He later wrote versions for both violin and piano, and violin and organ. The latter was written in 1975 for the violinist Ivan Hauge and the organist Daniel Strøm.

“ROMANZE” (“ROMANCE”)

In 1881, Johan Svendsen rented a room at Carl Warmuth’s music shop to give lessons to his students. The shop-owner himself was an accomplished violinist, and asked his tenant to compose something for violin and orchestra. One day the busy conductor, composer and teacher had an unexpected pause in his daily activities when a student did not turn up. Svendsen was struck by sudden inspiration, and in the course of a few hours during the pause and later that evening he sketched the violin romance. Warmuth was very enthusiastic about it, and purchased the composition for 200 kroner. By the time Svendsen died in 1911 the piece had been reprinted 68 times. Its intense melodiousness and rich sound structure had made it popular the world over.

“BOLS VISE” (“BOL’S SONG”)

In 1938, Hans E. Kinck’s play “Driftekaren” (“The Herdsman”) was presented at the National Theatre with music by Ludvig Irgens Jensen. The theatre music was later published as an orchestral work, “Partita sinfonica”, in which “Bols vise” was the second movement. Bol is the female protagonist, and according to the composer, “‘Bols vise’ is a song about repressed yearning. This is a recurring theme throughout the poetry and music.” The melody is hummed several times on stage, and is played when the curtain falls at the end. The text is: “Sveinen han lye på kvednå, han” (“The lad listened to the mill, did he”), and the swaying movement of the accompaniment echoes the grinding of the mill. As in Klaus Egge’s “Largo funèbre”, “Bols vise” bears an imprint of a folk song with a modal feeling (D minor and G major). Along with “Altar”, this is the composer’s most popular work.

“AIR”

J. S. Bach composed his orchestral suites for the student orchestra Collegium Musicum and its weekly concerts in Leipzig. An account from 1736 reports that they took place “auf dem Zimmermannischen Caffé-Haus in der Cather-Strasse Freytags Abends von 8 bis 10 Uhr” (“in Zimmermann’s Coffee House in Cather Street on Friday evenings from 8 to 10 o’clock”). In the summer the concerts took place at 4pm outside in the garden. The programme usually consisted of an orchestral suite (called “Ouvertyre” after the opening movement in the French style) followed

by an instrumental concerto (often featuring violin or piano) in the Italian style. “Suite No. 3” consists of the dance movements gavotte, bourrée and gigue. But after the overture the happy exception “Air” (melody, song) is played first, with strings only. It is one of the Leipzig master’s best-known gems.

— *Torkil Baden*



Photo: Ole Marius Jørgensen

The Romantic Violin and Organ

1. Otto Olsson (1879-1964) Romance for violin and organ, Op. 24 (1910)	9:56
2. Johan S. Svendsen (1840-1911) Allt under himmelens fäste, from Two Swedish Folk Melodies, Op. 27, 1 (1876)	2:48
3. Max Reger (1873-1916): Largo from Suite in the Old Style for violin and organ, Op. 93a (1906)	6:20
4. Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) Adagio di molto. Second movement of the Violin Concerto, Op. 47 (1904)	9:04
5. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) Prière for violin and organ, Op. 158bis (1919)	5:43
Jehan Alain (1911-1940) Trois Mouvements (1934/35)	
6. Andante	1:50
7. Allegro con grazia	1:48
8. Allegro vivace	2:30
9. Klaus Egge (1906-1979) Largo Funèbre for violin and organ (1933)	4:20
10. Arild Sandvold (1895-1984) Adagio for violin and organ (1917/1975)	4:44
11. Johan S. Svendsen (1840-1911) Romanze, Op. 26 (1881)	8:02
12. Ludvig Irgens Jensen (1894-1969) Bols vise (1937/38)	2:55
13. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Air from Orchestral Suite No. 3, BWV 1068 (1723)	5:07

Geir Inge Lotsberg, violin
Kåre Nordstoga, organ

Oslo Cathedral main organ, 53 stops,
Ryde & Berg, 1998

Arrangement for organ of Sibelius,
Irgens Jensen and
Svendsen Op. 26: Kåre Nordstoga
Arrangement for organ of
Svendsen Op. 27, 1: Leif B. Andresen

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