Edvard Grieg - Complete Music with Orchestra CD3 (2001)



Peer Gynt Op. 23 Incidental Music To The Play By Henrik Ibsen 85:06 *3-1 No. 1 I Bryllupsgården (Viola – Paul Cortese) 5:02 3-2 No. 2 Halling (Hardingfele – Knut Buen) 1:25 3-3 No. 3 Springar (Hardingfele – Knut Buen) 2:07 3-4 No. 4 Bruderovet. Ingrids Klage 3:48 3-5 No. 5 Peer Gynt Og Sæterjentene 4:04 3-6 No. 6 Peer Gynt Og Den Grønnkledde 1:56 3-7 No. 7 Peer Gynt: »På Ridestellet Skal Storfolk Kjendes« 0:21 3-8 No. 8 I Dovregubbens Hall 2:51 3-9 No. 9 Dans Av Dovregubbens Datter 1:47 3-10 No. 10 Peer Gynt Jages Av Troll 3:14 3-11 No. 11 Peer Gynt Og Bøygen 4:45 3-12 No. 12 Åses Død (Prelude To Act III) 3:52 3-13 No. 12 Åses Død (Act III Scene 4) 3:27 3-14 No. 13 Morgenstemning 4:14 3-15 No. 14 Tyven Og Heleren 1:20 3-16 No. 15 Arabisk Dans 4:53 3-17 No. 16 Anitras Dans 3:41 3-18 No. 17 Peer Gynts Serenade 3:09 3-19 No. 18 Peer Gynt Og Anitra 4:27 3-20 No. 19 Solveigs Sang 4:58 3-21 No. 20 Peer Gynt Ved Memnonstøtten 2:11 3-22 No. 21 Peer Gynts Hjemfart. Stormfull Aften På Havet 2:19 3-23 No. 22 Skipsforliset 1:38 3-24 No. 23 Solveig Synger I Hytten 1:45*
Barbara Bonney – soprano Maria Andersson - soprano Monica Einarson – soprano Marianne Eklöf – mezzo-soprano Carl Gustaf Holmgren - baritone Urban Malmberg – baritone Pro Musica Chamber Choir Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra Neeme Järvi – conductor

This is a gathering together of recordings made over a period of about seven years and covers everything Grieg wrote involving an orchestra in some way. I toyed with the idea of rearranging it to listen chronologically, and so get an idea of Grieg's development, but few listeners are likely to want to do this and I feel the compilers of sets like this should also be judged on their success or not in making each disc a listener-friendly experience, so I opted for a disc-by-disc account.

A few conductors made LP selections from Peer Gynt which went beyond the traditional two suites, most famously Beecham and Barbirolli, and not forgetting Sir Alexander Gibson's World Record Club selection. But it was a Unicorn set made in 1978 under Per Dreier (transferred to CD in 1987) which brought the revelation that Grieg's music, long derided for having prettified

Ibsen’s stark and unsentimental drama, had measured up to the project far better than was generally believed. Not that the music outside the extended selections usually amounts to more than fragments and melodramas, but so chillingly atmospheric and dramatically potent are they that even the familiar pieces appear under an entirely new light. In any case, a "Morning Mood" as scrupulously phrased and paced as Järvi’s is far from being the anaemic piece if tone-painting we know from popular orchestral concerts of yore. Beecham also had a choir in "In the Hall of the Mountain King" but it was not very evident. Here, with the sinister aspects of the orchestration relished and the choir brought right forward the effect is spine-chilling. For what it tells about Grieg’s potentialities as a composer this complete Peer can only be compared to the revelation – also dating from the 1970s – of the ur-Mussorgsky in all his barbaric power.

A very detailed note from Finn Benestad and Rune J. Andersen, editors of the music as published in Vol. 18 of the Complete Grieg Edition, state that this performance, based on that edition, is the first recording of the definitive score. I don’t have the Dreier set to hand but I have tracked down a review of both this and the original issue of the Järvi and it would seem that the principal differences are that Dreier adds – on the grounds that they were included at a revival in Copenhagen in 1886 - the "Norwegian Bridal Procession" (an arrangement by Halvorsen of a piano piece) and the first three of the Norwegian Dances, op. 35 (which you get on their own account at the end of CD 4, but see my comment below), but did not include any of the melodramas. As stated above, these add strongly to the total effect, to the extent of making preference for Järvi automatic. In any case Dreier’s conducting was generally felt to be sound but underwhelming, something that could most emphatically not be said of Järvi who, as suggested above, packs a real punch when necessary but is also highly sensitive in the gentler pieces. The vocal contributions add a definite dimension to the whole (but the original issue printed texts and translations), with a welcome presence from Barbara Bonney as Solveig. If you want just the two suites, the booklet lists the tracks you need to programme in order to do that. ---Christopher Howell, musicweb-international.com

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