



Edvard Grieg: Complete Symphonic Works, Vol. V

aud 92.671

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As usual (as if you remember these things from one year to the next), I'll lead up to my final choices with a few deserving near-misses. I'll begin with a handful of mainstream releases, even though I spend most of my time looking into music's more obscure corners. The final installment of Eivind Aadland's five-volume survey of Grieg's complete orchestral music (Audite 92.671)—Peer Gynt and orchestral songs, so it's pretty familiar material—maintained the sterling virtues of the first four: This was the best Grieg recording to come my way in a long time. Manfred Honeck's reading of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Reference Recordings FR-720SACD) sent shivers down my spine—and it's accompanied by Honeck's own 20-minute fantasy on material from Dvořák's opera Rusalka, which is wholly delightful. And Yevgeny Sudbin's second Scarlatti recording for BIS (BIS-2138) presented astonishing pianism and lively musical imagination in equal measure.

But now it's time to wander off the beaten track a little. A third volume of the Röntgen String Trios (Nos. 9–12) from the Lendvai String Trio (Champs Hill Records CHRCD101) kept that particular flag flying, but I have more Röntgen to come back to in my final five. Two recordings from The Sixteen brought music of extraordinary beauty: Vol. 1 of Monteverdi's *Missa a Quattro voci e salmi*, conducted by Harry Christophers (Coro COR16142), and the fourth album in a series conducted by Eamonn Dougan that uncovers the music of the Polish Renaissance and here featured three Italian composers who worked in Poland: Asprilio Pacelli, Vincenzo Bertolusi, and Luca Marenzio (COR16141). Another BIS release brought the orchestral works of George Butterworth that we all know and love (*The Banks of Green Willow*, *Six Songs from "A Shropshire Lad,"* the *Shropshire Lad* rhapsody, *Two English Idylls*, and *Love Blows as the Wind Blows*), with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Kriss Russman, but added two new scores: Russman's realization for string orchestra of the *Suite for String Quartette* and his completion of an *Orchestral Fantasia*, of which Butterworth left only 92 bars of score when he went off to war and an early death (BIS-2195). A Lawo Classics CD (LWC1101) from Rune Alver of the Norwegian David Monrad Johansen's piano music made a better case for him than many of his more imposing scores and demonstrated how much the music of Debussy echoed round the fjords. A Neeme Järvi CD from Chandos, with the two suites from Martinů's ballet *Špaliček* and the *Rhapsody-Concerto for viola and orchestra*, the latter with the violist Mikhail Nemtsov and the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra (CHAN 10885), was nothing less than life-enhancing. A CPO CD of chamber music—*Clarinet Quartet*, op. 1; *Fantasiestücke*, op. 2; *Violin Sonata*, op. 6—by the Viennese composer Walter Rabl (1873–1940) was a revelation: music as good as Brahms's, but Rabl stopped composing at the age of 30. This album makes it plain what a terrible loss to music that was, since he still had half his life ahead of him. Another CPO CD (777 687-2)

brought Paul Graener's Piano Concerto, op. 72, Symphonietta, op. 27, Drei Schwedische Tänze, op. 98, and Divertimento, op. 67, from pianist Oliver Triendl and the Munich Radio Orchestra conducted by Alun Francis—such big-hearted music that one feels that, despite his association with the Nazi Party (he was vice-president of the Reichsmusikkammer from 1935 to 1941), he must have been a decent soul underneath it all. Last of my nearly-made-it recordings is Leo Ornstein's Piano Quintet and Second String Quartet, from Marc-André Hamelin and Pacifica String Quartet (Hyperion CDA68084)—just about the feistiest piano quintet you will ever hear.

Now to my final five. Neeme Järvi's recording of Kurt Atterberg's First and Fifth Symphonies made it into my Want List last year, and his account of No. 3, "West Coast Pictures," does so this year as well. The entire album is nothing less than glorious, the chief glory being the 36-minute Third Symphony, composed in 1914–16 as (as the title, *Västkustbilder*, suggests) a series of tableaux depicting the Swedish west-coast archipelago where it was written. A double album of Korngold's Complete Songs (not quite, in fact, since they left one or two things out) from baritone Konrad Jarnot and soprano Adrienne Pieczonka, with Reinild Mees at the piano, offered one masterpiece after another: There is not a weak bar in sight, and all of it glows with Korngold's unique ardent lyricism. A three-CD set from the violinist Oliver Kipp and cellist Katharina Troe (Thorofon (CHT 2628/3) assembled all Röntgen's works for solo violin, solo cello, and violin-cello duo and so offered a musical feast of astonishing richness, almost all of it completely known before now. The two string quintets by Sergei Taneyev—op. 14 in G Major and op. 16 in C Major—are both masterpieces that open windows on to the human soul; they get wonderful performances from the Utrecht String Quartet, joined by the cellist Pieter Wispelwey in op. 14 and violist Alexander Nemtsov in op. 6 (MDG603 1923-2). Finally, a boxed set of Telemann's complete wind concertos (with La Stagione Frankfurt and Camerata Köln conducted by Michael Schneider; CPO 777 939-2) collects eight separate CDs released between 2007 and 2012, and brought eight-and-a-half hours of unalloyed pleasure. The very list of the 46 concertos assembled here beggars belief: All with strings and basso continuo, there are six concertos for flute and for two flutes and bassoon; five for oboe; four for two horns; two each for two oboes and bassoon, oboe d'amore, two chalumeaux (an early form of clarinet), recorder and two violins, two recorders; and one each for horn, two horns and two oboes, two oboes d'amore, two chalumeaux and two bassoons, recorder and flute, oboe and two violins, recorder, alto recorder, recorder and bassoon, recorder and horn, piccolo, trumpet, and trumpet and two oboes. And there's not a dull piece among them—imagine a musical landscape somewhere between the Bach violin concertos and Handel's concerti grossi and you'll have some idea of the sheer delight awaiting the listener.