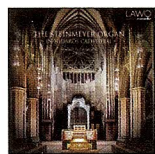


## THE STEINMEYER ORGAN IN NIDAROS CATHEDRAL (GRIEG, DUPRÉ, HOWELLS, WIDOR, REGER, HOVLAND, DUBOIS, L. NIELSEN, KARG-ELERT, SANDVOLD, EBEN, HANDEL, DRAAGEN, GIGOUT)

Magne H. Draagen

LAWO LWC1075 [79:00]

★★★★★



The 1930 Steinmeyer organ of Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway, has been magnificently restored by Orgelbau Kuhn into an all-electric IV/139 instrument of some 9,600 pipes, with a tower Echo section, and a triforium Solo division

with pipework originally built, and latterly replicated, by Willis. Cathedral Kantor Magne H. Draagen could hardly have devised a more satisfying 80-minute programme to show off the organ to an international listenership. The full range of strings, woodwinds and reeds is displayed in the opening arrangement of 'Morning Mood' from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite no.1. More Norwegian connections are made via Egil Hovland's effervescent Toccata on 'Kjaerlighet er lysets kilde', a chorale written by Ludwig and Peter Lindeman, who helped found the Norwegian Academy of Music; Ludwig Nielsen (1906-2001) was the Cathedral's organist for 41 years – his delightful *Nidarosdomens Klokke* combines the theme of the Cathedral's north tower bell chimes with the Norwegian folk tune 'Høyr kor kyrkjelokke lokkar' (Hear the church bells beckon) in a delightful Fantasy – fit to stand alongside Vierne's *Carillon de Westminster* – which uses the Echo organ to great effect; the Adagio by Oslo Cathedral organist Arild Sandvold (1895-1984) nods to the installation of the great Walcker organ in Oslo, which became the second largest instrument in Norway after Trondheim's Steinmeyer; and Draagen himself contributes a charming improvisation on a folk tune from Hornidal to demonstrate the organ's Euphone 4ft, French Horn 8ft, chimes and celesta. Impressively rich string and foundation stops are heard in Howells's *Master Tallis's Testament* and Reger's *Benedictus*; the celesta imitates the harp figures in Widor's Wagnerian *Marche nuptiale* (arranged from incidental music to the play *Conte d'Avril*); Petr Eben's *Moto Ostinato* performs its familiar trick of ping-pong-ing round the divisions; the 54 micro-variations in Karg-Elert's *Homage to Handel* prove a clever choice for a showcase, and Draagen – never headstrong, always playing with clarity and expressive nuance – rounds off by letting the Solo reeds rip in Gigout's *Grand chœur dialogué*. This is a Rolls-Royce organ, in a recording well worth seeking out.

GRAEME KAY

## HECTOR BERLIOZ: SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE – ORGAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

Hansjörg Albrecht, Goll organ, Culture and Congress Hall, Lucerne

Oehms Classics OC 692 [59:51]

★★★★★



Opening with two marches from *The Damnation of Faust*, Hansjörg Albrecht's articulation and interpretation are from the outset a tremendous advocate for the art of the organ transcription – of which series this disc is number 10 from the

Oehms Classics label. The tonal and dynamic range of the IV/66 Goll instrument of 2000 adds clear-cut precision and ardent solo voices, yet Albrecht conjures ample romanticism throughout, not least through his intricate orchestral registration schemes and perfect playing. The live acoustics of the empty hall and the large dynamic range are well handled by the sound engineering here.

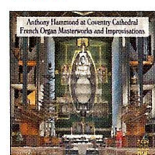
MATTHEW POWER

## FRENCH ORGAN MASTERWORKS AND IMPROVISATIONS

Anthony Hammond, Harrison & Harrison organ (1962), Coventry Cathedral

RAVEN OAR-961 (2CDs) [76:17; 73:34]

★★★



Anthony Hammond, organist of Cirencester Parish Church and author of the excellent recent biography of Pierre Cochereau, sets himself an onerous task by juxtaposing his own improvisations with two staples of the French romantic repertoire:

Franck's *Trois Chorals* and Widor's Fifth Symphony. Interestingly, although the larger of his improvisations explicitly pay tribute, in terms of genre, to Franck and Widor, the musical language never ventures far from Anglicana and the tension isn't sustained for long enough to prevent them from becoming a little predictable after an hour's listening. The dramatic and mystical Francis Bacon-inspired studies fare much better in this regard. All that said, the second disc serves as an excellent demonstration of the Coventry organ, recorded here magnificently, as is often the case on Raven's CDs. I'm not enamoured with the instrument as a vehicle for Franck and Widor, missing the treble ascendancy and integration of reed and fluework which characterises the Cavaillé-Coll style. Beyond Hammond's mannered addition of beats between phrases in the exposition of the First Choral, the Franck interpretations are strongly conceived but the Widor Toccata, like so many other interpretations, abandons the meticulous left hand accents early on. Though everything here is well done, for me it would not be a 'go-to' release in the face of so much competition.

CHRIS BRAGG

## J.S. BACH: LA MESSE LUTHÉRIENNE VOL.2

Pierre Bardon, historic organ, Basilique du Couvent Royal de Saint-Maximin

Syrus SYR 141463 [75:47]

★



'The Lutheran Mass' here means the smaller-scale chorale preludes from *Clavierübung* part 3, supplemented by *Jesu, meine Freude*, *In dulci jubilo* and the partita *O Gott, du frommer Gott*. The historic organ of Saint-Maximin does not sound at its best, with many of the *manualiter* chorale preludes registered too heavily (with 16ft) and played very deliberately. Bardon aims for a legato approach, and his touch is often imprecise. The opening *Te Deum* (BWV 725) is really a written-out accompaniment to a repetitious chant, and the famous gigue fugue (BWV 577) is played slowly on full reeds – bizarre.

DAVID PONSFORD