

The Steinmeyer Organ of Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Norway

Edvard GRIEG (1843-1907)

Morning, from *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*, Op. 46 (1875/1892, transcribed for organ by Harvey B. Gaul) [4:06]

Marcel DUPRÉ (1886-1971)

Placare Christe servulis, from *Tombeau de Titelouze*, Op. 38 (1942) [2:49]

Herbert HOWELLS (1892-1983)

Master Tallis's Testament, from *Six Pieces for Organ* (1940) [6:12]

Charles-Marie WIDOR (1844-1937)

Marche nuptiale, from incidental music to *Conte d'Avril*, Op. 64 (1885) [6:40]

Max REGER (1873-1916)

Benedictus, from *Zwölf Stücke*, Op. 59 (1901) [4:43]

Egil HOVLAND (1924-2013)

Toccata over 'Kjærlighet er lysets kilde', from *Orgelkoraler heft 4* (1989) [3:49]

Théodore DUBOIS (1837-1924)

In Paradisum, from *Douze Pièces Nouvelles* (1893) [4:26]

Ludvig NIELSEN (1906-2001)

Nidarosdomens Klokker (The Bells of Nidaros Cathedral), from *Orgelfantasi* (1976) [6:20]

Sigfrid KARG-ELERT (1877-1933)

Hommage à Handel, Op. 75b (1914) [15:27]

Arild SANDVOLD (1895-1984)

Adagio, from *Organ Sonata in F minor*, Op. 9 [4:28]

Petr EBEN (1929-2007)

Moto ostinato, from *Nedelní Hudba* (Sunday Music) (1957-1959) [6:05]

Georg Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Hornpipe, from *Water Music*, HWV348 (c.1715/17, transcribed for organ by O. H. Peasgood) [3:47]

Magne H. DRAAGEN (b. 1974)

Improvisasjon over en folketone fra Hornindal (Improvisation on a folk tune from Hornindal) [3:46]

Eugène GIGOUT (1844-1925)

Grand chœur dialogué, from *Six Pièces d'orgue* (1881) [6:10]

Magne H. Draagen (organ)

rec. 9-11 June 2014, Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Norway

Reviewed as a stereo DSD128 download from [NativeDSD](#)

Pdf booklet included

LAWO CLASSICS LWC1075 [79:48]

One of the manifold pleasures of reviewing organ recordings is getting to know a new instrument. In this case, it's the splendid Steinmeyer in Trondheim's Nidaros Cathedral. Installed in 1930, the organ was moved from the north transept to the west nave and substantially altered in 1962; then, after half a century of decline, it was fully restored by Kuhn of Switzerland between 2012 and 2014. Boasting 146 stops and 36 couplers, it's one of the largest of its kind in Europe.

At the console is the cathedral's Director of Music, Magne H. Draagen, who offers an attractive programme that highlights the organ's warm, eminently civilised demeanour. Among the usual suspects – Dupré, Gigout, Karg-Elert and Widor – is a smattering of home-grown talent. As for the Oslo-based Lawo Classics, they've not been around that long; alas, I was underwhelmed by the first instalment in their [Scriabin](#) series with Vasily Petrenko, but, to be fair, that has more to do with the conductor than anything else. However, a quick dip into this Nidaros album promised a much happier experience all round.

The jewelled Grieg transcription, with its distinctive melody, is a quiet delight, and Draagen plays it with all the sensitivity and colour it needs. More extrovert is the Dupré,

part of a 16-movement piece he penned after visiting the tomb of French composer-organist Jean Titelouze (1562/63-1633). What magnificent pedals, and how well caught, the sound firm and fearless right across the range. But it's the ineluctable presence of this recording, its startling inner voices, that's so striking. Add to that astonishing delicacy in the antic Howells and you really do have a recital that engages and illuminates at every turn.

Initially, I felt Draagen too self-effacing, but then he just lets the Steinmeyer 'speak' for itself. For instance, the Widor wedding march might tempt other organists to flamboyance, but not this one; indeed, he gives the music a simplicity, a lightness of tread, that seems just right. Widor's little flourishes and fanfares are more effective for being woven so carefully into the surrounding fabric, but at the rolling climax one is reminded this is the man who wrote those monumental organ symphonies. It certainly makes a change from the ubiquitous processions by Mendelssohn and Wagner, whose very custom has made them stale.

Then again, freshness is the guiding principle here, Reger's *Benedictus* succour to the famished soul. And there's variety too, with the Norwegian composer Egil Hovland's imposing toccata based on a chorale by his compatriot, the composer-organist Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-1887). Once again, the sheer range and agility of this great instrument is revealed. All credit to producer Vegar Landaas and his team for producing such a natural, beautifully balanced recording. Nowhere is this more welcome than in the gossamer lightness of Dubois's *In Paradisum*, which has rarely sounded so 'hear through', its soft, plosive pedals so lovely.

And what better way to celebrate this organ than with the peals – large and small – of local boy Ludvig Nielsen's *Bells of Nidaros Cathedral*? It builds to a glorious panoply of sound, the organist firm and focused to the very end. Handel is also celebrated in Karg-Elert's *hommage* and O. H. Peasgood's transcription of the *Hornpipe* from the *Water Music*. I find the former a tad lugubrious, but the latter is deftly done. Sandwiched between these two is the dark-toned – but light pricked – *Adagio* by the one-time organist of Oslo Cathedral, Arild Sandvold, and the Czech Petr Eben's intriguing *Moto ostinato*; both are impeccably rendered.

After Draagen's own improvisation on a folk tune from Hornindal, Nordfjord – a charming little number, chimes and celesta to the fore – comes the celebratory splendour of Gigout's *Grand chœur dialogué*. And what a rousing send-off it is too, the Steinmeyer in full voice, formidable weight and fine articulation laced with sparkling detail. Goodness, I've not enjoyed the piece this much since Jan Kraybill's account in [Organ Polychrome](#), one of my Recordings of the Year for 2015. And if you'd like to hear it with brass added, try Christopher Jacobson and Amalgam in [The Aeolian Organ at Duke University Chapel](#), also available as a DSD64 download from [NativeDSD](#); that was one of my top picks for 2016.

This well-filled album is mighty impressive, and that goes for the sound as well; in short, a triumph.

Dan Morgan

http://musicweb-international.com/classrev/2017/Jul/Nidaros_organ_LWC1075.htm