



Edvard GRIEG (1843–1907)

Songs

see end of review for track listing

Marianne Beate Kielland (mezzo)

Nils Anders Mortensen (piano)

rec. Vågan Kirke, Kabelvåg, Norway, 4-5 January 2013

Sung texts with English translations enclosed

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There is no lack of recordings of Grieg's songs, including two complete sets. One of those is on Brilliant (93803) with native Norwegian singers, the other is on BIS with the Finnish mezzo-soprano Monica Groop; we have reviewed [Volume 4](#), [Volume 5](#) and [Volume 7](#).

On the present disc Marianne Beate Kielland has collected three groups of songs to texts by three of the most important Norwegian poets from the late nineteenth century.

Arne Garborg's *Haugtussa* is a cycle of 71 poems of which Grieg selected eight that tell a love story – a cycle within the cycle so to speak. Grieg regarded his *Haugtussa* (composed in 1895) as one of his most important. That it hasn't had wider international circulation has to do with the language. Not only are they in Norwegian but in *Nynorsk* (New Norwegian) which is rather different from the ordinary Norwegian, *Bokmål*, which is more closely related to Danish. As Kielland says in her notes, only someone with Norwegian as her mother tongue can do full justice to these songs. Danish and Swedish speakers can also sing them successfully: [Anne Sofie von Otter](#) and Siv Wennberg (EMI, 1970s), Monica Groop (a substantial part of the Finnish population are Swedish speakers) to mention three available on recordings. There are also several excellent Norwegians, including [Kirsten Flagstad](#). The latter came to mind from the very beginning when I listened to the present disc. *Det syng* is generally sung with restraint but occasionally she opens up and pours out trombone-like tones *à la* her great predecessor. I have reviewed several discs with Kielland, among them some [Bach](#) and my impression is that she can adjust her timbre depending on what kind of music she sings. Some of her Bach singing is almost vibrato-less while her Schumann is full-bloodedly romantic and rich in tone. *Haugtussa* is a demanding work with its many different moods, light and darkness, joy and sorrow. Kielland encompasses all these moods securely and effortlessly. Her diction is exemplary and she sings the sprightly *Killingdans* with real verve. This *Haugtussa* now shares the top position in my collection with von Otter and Groop.

The Vinje songs (Aasmund Olavsson Vinje (1818 – 1870) are not a cycle and they are rarely performed as a unit, either in concert or on disc. A few of them are frequently heard, and *Våren* is probably the most popular. It doesn't however reflect the uncomplicated joy of yet another spring but the gloomy sensation that the poet against all odds is able to experience again but now the definitively last one. It is very movingly sung. *Langs ei å* and *Ved Rondane* also belong to the standard repertoire and rightly so. There are several of the other songs that are worth acquaintance. *Gamle mor* has a sense of folksong and it is also close to a hymn – a noble and loving song. *Trudom* is another hymn-like song and *Fyremål* draws some truly heroic singing from Ms Kielland in the [Flagstad](#) mould.

Nobel Prize winner Henrik Ibsen is best known as a playwright but he also penned some deeply loved poetry. *Spillemaend* is another noble and solemn song, *En svane* one of the best known, as is also *Med en vandlilje*. Both are sung with deep feeling. *En fuglevise* makes a magnificent finale to this highly enjoyable Grieg disc. Nils Anders Mortensen knows his Grieg inside out and there is excellent rapport between the two artists.

A disc that is worth buying not least for the opportunity to hear the lesser known songs – and the impressive singing of Marianne Beate Kielland.

Göran Forsling

Track listing

Haugtussa (Arne Garborg)

1. *Det syng* [3:09]
2. *Veslemøy* [2:30]
3. *Blåbær-li* [3:11]
4. *Møte* [4:07]
5. *Elsk* [2:43]
6. *Killingdans* [1:41]
7. *Vond dag* [2:45]
8. *Ved gjætle-bekken* [5:19]

Vinjesangene (Aasmund Olavsson Vinje)

9. *Guten* [3:11]
10. *Våren* [7:14]
11. *Den særde* [3:09]
12. *Tytebæret* [2:07]
13. *Langs ei å* [2:29]
14. *Eit syn* [1:48]
15. *Gamle mor* [2:21]
16. *Det fyrste* [2:47]
17. *Ved Rondane* [3:05]
18. *Trudom* [2:34]
19. *Fyremål* [3:33]

Ibsensangene (Henrik Ibsen)

21. *Spillemænd* [2:39]
22. *En svane* [2:19]
23. *Stambogsrím* [2:18]
24. *Med en vandlilje* [1:49]
25. *Borte!* [1:41]
26. *En fuglevise* [2:19]