

## **JOHANSEN:** Piano Pieces

Rune Alver—LAWO 1101 — 60 minutes

One of the perks of reviewing for the American Record Guide is discovering composers that I've never heard of before. Some of these composers are forgettable, but others turn out to be worthwhile and have supplied me with repertoire that I can then program in concerts. Born in the late 19th Century, Norwegian composer David Monrad Johansen is one of the great discoveries.

Most of the works are suites for piano. 'Kvaern-Slatt' is a very engaging miniature with a strong rhythmic pulse. The first movement of the suite Nordlandsbilleder is somewhat amorphous, and played sensitively. It is full of different textures, packed with atmospheric sounds and rapid tempos. Alver seems completely at home with the piece. With the suite To Portretter fra Middelalderen, folk song motifs come through in this abstract, hauntingly beautiful work. It swivels in and out between contrasting themes, with sensitive pianism from Alver. Fra Gudbrandsdalen is very different in style, more akin to Grieg's Lyric Pieces. The work sounds more challenging compared to the other works, yet Alver is fully in control.

I do wish that Alver had included translations for the work titles, as I wasn't sure what aspect or landscape of Norway they were supposed to summon. This is a fine recording.

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