

The Bach Players are a polished ensemble and have produced a thoughtfully crafted recital. Nicolette Moonen plays the violin sonatas with empathy and spirit, and the viol player Reiko Ichise acquits herself beautifully throughout. The recording itself lets the musicians down by allowing what can only be described as 'continuo fog' to creep in. Employing fewer continuo instruments, unspecified except in the Charpentier, might have alleviated this effect. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Leipzig!'

Grieg Lyric Suite, Op 54 **E Hartmann** Serenade, Op 43 **Reinecke** Octet, Op 216 **Svendsen** Norwegian Rhapsody No 1, Op 17
Oslo Chamber Academy /
David Friedemann Strunck ob
LAWO Classics © LWC1058 (69') • DDD



When is an octet not an octet? When, as here, the flute, oboe and pairs of clarinets, horns and bassoons are joined by a double bass, doubling the bassoon line in good 19th-century practice. The Hartmann and Reinecke octets were not written with the string part specified, while the Grieg and Svendsen works are given here in new arrangements for the nine players by Trond Olaf Larsen.

The four pieces of Grieg's *Lyric Suite* started out life among the six piano movements of the fifth volume of *Lyric Pieces*, completed in 1891, but three years later Anton Seidl orchestrated four of them as a *Norwegian Suite*. Grieg produced his own, more refined orchestration in 1904, replacing the opening 'Bell-Ringing' with 'Shepherd Boy'. Larsen's arrangement is a delightful composite of Grieg's and Seidl's.

Indeed, delight is the watchword throughout this engaging programme, superbly played by the Oslo ensemble. The group's playing shows a beguiling lightness of touch with no loss of gravity where it's needed. Larsen's arrangements suit the music neatly, Svendsen's *Norwegian Rhapsody* (1876) sounding as naturally in this format as Emil Hartmann's gentle Serenade (1887) and Reinecke's fine Octet (1891-92). This last is the only work in a truly classical-abstract vein, conforming to the conventional sonata genre as typified by a string quartet or wind quintet, and is none the worse for that. Reinecke deserves more attention that he receives nowadays, being more than the pedant who taught in Leipzig (where the others studied) for half a century. Superb sound. **Guy Rickards**

PHOTOGRAPHY: NANCY HOROWITZ

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'Love Songs'

'Dedicated to Ensemble Recherche'
Abrahamsen Liebeslied M André iv 9
Bauckholt Liebeslied Claren MBRMMPP
Czernowin Lovesong C Fox Lines of desire
GF Haas Drei Liebeslieder Huber An die Musik
Kröll mit innigster Empfindung Lazkano Lied ohne Worte E Mendoza Liebeslied für recherche
Mozart Adagio, K356 (arr Sciarino) **Nieder** Der SCHUH auf dem WEG zum SATURNIO: Ein Liebesgesang in drei Bildern Parra Love to recherche Poppe Schweiss A Richard Y al volver la vista atrás se ve... Riehm Ein Liebeslied
Ronchetti Rosso pompeiano Sarhan scènes d'amour Schöllhorn Chanson: Ein Liebeslied mit Ernst Jandl Schwehr Notturmo amoroso Smolka AMarCORdOSO Staud Chant d'amour Steinke für dich CJ Walter Angelorum Psalat
J Widmann Liebeslied Winkler Liebes-Lied (Lied ohne Worte I) Zagaykevych Blicke der Verliebten Zender Alfabet (Kamasutra)
W Zimmermann AFUGAPE
Ensemble Recherche
Wergo © 2 WER6792-2 (146') • DDD



Nothing here need give Elton John or James Blunt any sleepless nights. For starters, none of these 30 love songs have any words. When the Freiburg-based Ensemble Recherche asked a selection of their favourite composers to write them a short love song to mark their 25th anniversary in 2010, the brief was to compose an instrumental work that teased with the idea that, since the emergence of the post-war avant-garde, the love song had become an aesthetic no-no; 'instead the subject was left to pop, rock and other types of commercial music,' the booklet-notes tells us.

The snuffy implication that rock and pop musicians have somehow done the love song a disservice is a pity – from the Proustian power of Ray Davies's 'Days' to Janis Joplin's raw 'Piece of my heart', pop music has nothing to be ashamed of. But, of course, the task of composing a love song without words, and possibly with failsafe conventional tonality jettisoned, is not an easy one: when we're in love, cliché is never far away – how to write love music without pressing obvious expressive buttons sets an intriguing challenge.

Some composers miss the point altogether. Had Ensemble Recherche commissioned a set of songs about the Common Agricultural Policy, Mark André's aridly pointillistic *iv 9* for bass flute, cor anglais and bass clarinet would have been a triumph; similarly you might

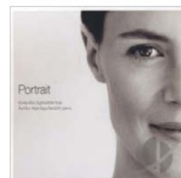
not want to date Chaya Czernowin, whose textbook new-music scrapings and subtone rustling-based *Lovesong* sounds like she's set her income tax code.

But other composers deal with the issues at hand more resourcefully. Nicolaus A Huber's *An die Musik* presents the musicians with written-in mistakes that they must erase to find the music's pure heart; Christopher Fox's *Lines of desire* showcases a keening viola line that artfully dodges the usual loved-out melodic intervals; Georg Friedrich Haas's *Drei Liebeslieder* likewise compresses emotion as lines journey upwards and beyond – like champagne corks popping out of bottles.

Philip Clark

'Portrait'

Fauré Morceau de concours. Sicilienne, Op 78
Jolivet Chant de Linos **Sancan** Sonatine
Schubert Introduction and Variations on 'Trockne Blumen', D802 **Sveinsson** Intermezzo from Dimmalimm **Younis** Rising from the Ashes
Emilia Rós Sigfúsdóttir fl
Ástríður Alda Sigurðardóttir pf
Emilia Rós Sigfúsdóttir © ERS01 (61') • DDD



The flute stands out here as being the most flexible instrument in the woodwind family, capable of prodigious feats of virtuosity, and so it proves in the performance of Jolivet's *Chant de Linos*, with its astonishing cascading roulades, for which the piano provides a firm backing. But the programme opens with Schubert's innocent variations on a simple vocal melody, which shows how attractive the combination of flute and piano can be without histrionics. The seven variations are simply devised and have the character of classical variations of their time. Yet the work closes with the composer's most fetching idea, as if Schubert were keeping it up his musical sleeve for a memorable finale.

Pierre Sancan's *Sonatine* again demands great virtuosity from flute and piano alike but has real charm; it also has a haunting slow movement that shows flautist and pianist at their most touchingly sensitive. The two lovely Fauré pieces, *Morceau de concours* and the familiar *Sicilienne*, are no less captivating and just as delightfully played, while Sveinsson's *Intermezzo from Dimmalimm* continues the seductive mood. Throughout the programme, both artists join to create a perfect partnership. The flute timbre is beautifully caught by the recording and the balance is nigh-on perfect. A stimulating disc. **Ivan March**

GRAMOPHONE SEPTEMBER 2014 71