
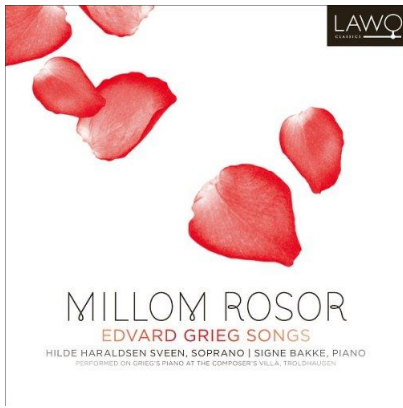
 GRIEG Songs • Hilde Haraldsen Sveen (sop); Signe Bakke (pn) • LAWO LWC 1006 (58:27 )

5 Songs, op. 26. Romances, op. 39. 2 Songs from Peer Gynt, op. 23. 6 Songs, op. 48



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This is a lovely recording in part because of the attractive lyric soprano of Hilde Haraldsen Sveen, and in part because of the wisely chosen repertoire that includes some of Grieg's lesser-known songs along with some favorites. The recording was made in Grieg's old villa, and Signe Bakke plays Grieg's own Steinway. Occasional faint outside noises can be heard, but they are not really intrusive or disturbing. The performers clearly love this music, and know the idiom, and there is no question that one will take a great deal of pleasure in spending the hour with this disc.

There is, however, some powerful competition in Grieg song recordings—the complete Monica Groop series on BIS, and Anne Sophie von Otter's remarkably beautiful DG recording (818102), perhaps the finest Grieg recital I've encountered and which includes some duplication with this disc.

The von Otter disc would be my first recommendation for someone wanting a single disc of songs by this Norwegian master. For the avid collector, the complete Groop series is certainly worth exploring. But, and this is an important but, this disc is also worthy of attention, for those who enjoy alternate versions of repertoire, or for anyone interested in a very attractive, sensitively performed selection of really beautiful songs. What keeps it from the very top drawer is a rather limited range of vocal colors available to Sveen—a certain sameness pervades the whole collection. It is a bright, clear voice, evenly produced throughout the range, and she inflects and phrases with appropriate emphasis and dramatic point. But the sound itself doesn't change very much—as opposed to von Otter, who astonishes with the coloristic variety she can find in a three-minute song.

The notes are engaging and informative, the recorded sound warm and naturally balanced, and overall I am likely to return to this disc again for the satisfaction that it gives. Henry Fogel

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