



Martin ROMBERG (b.1978)

Valaquenta (2009) [48:31]

Tableaux Fantastiques (2008)
[31:13]

◆Aimo Pagin (piano)

rec. Kulturhus, Bølgen, Norway,
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◆LAWO LWC 1022 [79:44]

This is the debut CD of young Norwegian composer Martin Romberg, and is likely to have very wide appeal: Romberg writes in a style the notes describe as "post-Romantic tonal". This means that, while a few crackerjacks will find his writing decidedly old-fashioned - much of it could have been written a century ago - anyone with a fondness for evocative, characterful, melodic music cannot go wrong.

French pianist Aimo Pagin's programme consists of two long suites of piano pieces. Paris-based Romberg's music is mainly based on themes from fantasy literature, the visual arts, Celtic mythology, and comic strips: Valaquenta takes its name and inspiration from the second part of JRR Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, published posthumously in 1977. Valaquenta is a kind of who's who of the main divine characters constituting Tolkien's Middle Earth universe. The *Tableaux Fantastiques*, meanwhile, are based on artwork by Polish fantasy painter [Jacek Yerka](#).

Romberg's music is deliciously atmospheric and suggestive, a little in the spirit of Albéniz' *Iberia*, but most of all reminiscent, especially in the *Tableaux*, of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*: warm and lyrical, playful, reflective, impressionistic, gently exotic. Valaquenta is the longer and livelier work, and more romantic; its masculinity - relative rather than absolute - is accounted for by the fact that the seven characters Romberg describes so musically and memorably are all male. By way of considerable bonus, Tolkien's Valaquenta is a lot less prolix in Romberg's hands!

Aimo Pagin has played this programme in public twice already. His performance here is as expressively fluent, attuned and aromatic as could be wished for in his own recording debut. Sound quality is pretty good, though not perfect - there are a few inconspicuous editing joins, as well as very low level hiss audible in the quietest sections. This latter is curious, because although the booklet admits to mixing, there is no sense of over-processing, and certainly no fake-sounding reverberation. The dreamy artwork and photos of the booklet add to the open-space feeling of Romberg's music. The English-Norwegian notes are concise but fairly informative, well written and neatly laid out. Handily, the booklet can be downloaded for free [here](#).

Byzantion

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