



Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Duo for violin and viola in G major KV 423 (1783) [18:10]

Duo for violin and viola in B flat major KV 424 (1783) [21:20]

Bjarne BRUSTAD (1895-1978)

Capriccii for violin and viola (1931) [10:46]

Johan HALVORSEN (1864-1935)

Passacaglia on a theme of Handel (1893) [6:27]

Elise Båtnes (violin); Henninge Båtnes Landaas (viola)

rec. August 2011, Grorud Church, Oslo

LAWO CLASSICS LWC 1028 [57:08]

One stealthy justification advanced for this programme in the booklet is that all three composers were violin players; another is that both violin and viola are given equal expressive prominence. Both are legitimate lines of attack, though the programme does also offer a reasonable spread of repertoire, adding piquancy to the Mozart, where other duos might have, again, plumped for a classical example - Haydn being the most obvious port of call.

The church recording location tends slightly to inflate the sound; there's a bit of a boom, but it's not woolly, so doesn't impede clarity. The Båtnes sisters are distinguished players. Elise is the first concertmaster of the Oslo Philharmonic and Henninge Båtnes Landaas is now co-principal violist of the same orchestra, so one can take for granted a communal approach both to the works and to the various ensemble considerations necessary to project them satisfactorily.

Their Mozart is a very effective example of straight-forward musicianship. They play on modern set up instruments so their tone colours and sound production are broadly centrist, and their tempi are middle-of-the-road. The slow movement of K423 is elegantly shaped and tonally congruent. Whilst the violin speaks quickly, the somewhat slower responding viola makes a less dynamic showing in the finale. They play the aria-like slow movement of K424 with considerable warmth and the sprightly finale, with its brisk march rhythms, with requisite brio and not too staccato.

Bjarne Brustad was, like the sisters, a member of the Oslo Philharmonic. He's best known for his symphonies and for the violin concertos and other works for his instrument. He also played the viola, which accounts for the parity between the two in his *Capriccios*, four brief and engaging pieces written in 1931. They muse between folklore and modernism - between Hardanger and Hindemith, you might say - in a rather pleasing kind of way. Brustad was clearly drawn to the folk fiddle style if the *Allegretto* is any indication, and from the droll way he lays out the *Vivace* finale he must have been amusing company.

The Båtnes duo takes Halvorsen's *Passacaglia* and runs with it, with no messing about. It has speed, bite, character, warmth and technical command. It's not despatched merely as a virtuoso warhorse. It ends a well balanced programme.

Jonathan Woolf

Speed, bite, character, warmth and technical command. A well balanced programme.