

**HVOSLEF Piano Trio. VALEN Piano Trio. EGGE Piano Trio • Valen Tr • LAWO 1037 (67:55)**



Piano Trios  
AUDIO CD; HYBRID SACD - DSD  
LAWO Classics

The Valen Trio's CD covers the music of three generations of Norwegian composers, two of whom wrote in the 20th century: Fartein Valen (1887–1952) and Klaus Egge (1906–1979). The third, Ketil Hvoslef (b. 1939), not only composed in the past century, but also continues his work today. Although their works are not in date order on the disc, at some point, you might want to listen to them that way in order to get a better understanding of the progression.

Born in Stavanger, Fartein Valen studied organ before moving to Berlin in the hope of studying with Max Bruch. There, he worked on tonal and atonal counterpoint that involved dissonance. His music eventually bore similarities to the works of Bach and Schoenberg. Glenn Gould, who admired Valen's compositions, found them distinctive and said, "For the first time in many years I have found a looming personality in the 20th century's music." For those of us listening in 2014, Valen is an interesting way station on the musical timeline. The Valen Trio—composed of Ricardo Odriozola, violin; John Ehde, cello; and Einar Røttingen, piano—play his rhythmic, energetic music with love and great attention to detail. Their excellent rendition of the composer's work transports us back to the first part of the previous century when his kind of writing was revolutionary. Egge, who wrote in the middle of the century, was first inspired by folk music and wrote in a tonal language for some years before he began to explore atonalism. Having become a student of Valen, he was present at the premiere of the latter's Trio. His works show the progress of Norwegian music at this time and they are of both musical and historical importance. The Valen Trio plays his op. 14 Trio with the stylistic knowledge that comes from a serious study of the composer and knowledge of the culture in which he worked.

The most modern composer whose music is recorded on this disc is Ketil Hvoslef. His Trio was first heard in 2011. Like Valen, Hvoslef first studied organ in Norway. Later, he moved to Stockholm and then to London to study composition. His compositional style has often varied with the makeup of the group for which he was writing. Beginning as a neo-Classicist, he has developed a personal musical language that shows his rhythmic ingenuity. The Trio begins with sustained string tones and rhythmic incursions by the piano. It continues with a dialogue between the strings and the piano followed by a languid slow section. For the Finale, Hvoslef returns to rhythm and music that makes the listener want to dance. The sound on this recording is well balanced among the three instruments. The ambience will make the listener feel that he or she is sitting in an appropriately sized hall for chamber music while hearing the Valen Trio play this music. Since this CD takes the listener on a historic tour of Norwegian chamber music, it will probably be of greatest interest to lovers of trios and the music of Scandinavia. **Maria Nockin**

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