

The artsdesk.com

reviews, news & interviews

Classical CDs Weekly: Alnæs, Granados, Kelly, Mompou

Rediscoveries from Norway and Australia, plus a pair of poetic Spaniards

by [Graham Rickson](#) Saturday, 25 March 2017

Eyvind Alnæs: Piano Concerto & Symphony *Håvard Gimse (piano), Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra/Eivind Aadland* (Lawo Classics)

Eyvind Alnæs's C Minor Symphony, written in 1897 after his return to [Norway](#) after studying in Leipzig, hints at great things, a contemporary Norwegian critic writing that "one must hope that the composer may live under such conditions that he may reap the rewards of his talent, rather than having to bury it into everyday toil and trouble." You suspect that this handsomely crafted large scale work appeared just a decade or so late, unable to compete with the sonic thrills provided by the likes of Sibelius, Strauss and Mahler. Alnæs later achieved fame as an organist and choir director, little of his subsequent music being written for orchestra. The first movement's moody main theme and lolling 6/8 rhythms recall mature [Tchaikovsky](#), with a smidgeon of Dvořák thrown in. It is a real grower; Alnæs's tunes are engaging and the orchestral writing accomplished. The sombre chorale which opens the Adagio is haunting, and there's a hugely entertaining scherzo before a last movement wraps up proceedings in a mood of unbuttoned exuberance. I'd happily pay to hear this live, though presumably that would involve a return flight to Norway. Eivind Aadland's Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra play with plenty of warmth and rhythmic bite, and they're beautifully recorded.

The coupling is Alnæs's Piano Concerto, premiered in 1914. Big-hearted but anachronistic, most of the incidental thrills come from the orchestral writing, with which the pianist often struggles to complete. There are some lovely moments: again, it's the slow movement's introduction which makes a big impression, the tuba superbly caught. Håvard Gimse gives a heroic account of the solo part, especially impressive in the goofy waltz finale. Poor Alnæs's concerto limped into obscurity, defeated by a combination of global war and changing musical tastes, and was rarely performed afterwards. It doesn't deserve to be forgotten, but the Symphony makes a far more compelling case for Alnæs's talents. Recommended.

<http://www.theartsdesk.com/classical-music/classical-cds-weekly-aln%C3%A6s-granados-kelly-mompou>