
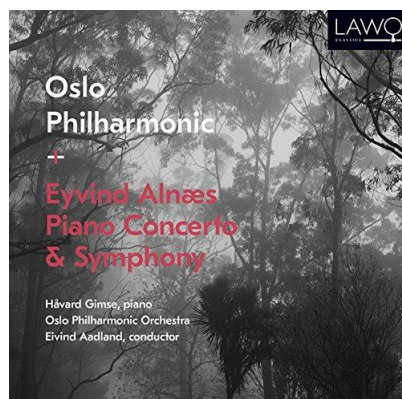


## CD Review by [Jim Svejda](#)

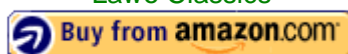
 **ALNÆS** Piano Concerto in d. <sup>1</sup> Symphony No. 1 in c • Eivind Aadland, cond; <sup>1</sup> Håvard Gimse (pn); Oslo PO • LAWQ 1112 (70:08)



Eyvind Alnaes: Piano Concerto & Symphony

AUDIO CD; IMPORT

Lawo Classics



After studying with Iver Holter in his native Norway and with Carl Reinecke in Leipzig, Eyvind Alnæs (1872–1932) returned home to lead an outwardly unremarkable life. He played the organ in various Kristiana churches, directed choirs—for which he wrote considerable music—and devoted most of his compositional energies to producing hundreds of songs, some of which were taken up by singers as important as Kirsten Flagstad and Feodor Chaliapin. He was also one of the founders of the Norwegian Composers’ Society. The Piano Concerto from 1914—which has already been handsomely served by Piers Lane, Andrew Litton, and the Bergen Philharmonic in an installment of the Hyperion *Romantic Piano Concerto* series (67555)—is an attractive, irresistibly tuneful late-Romantic piano concerto in the grand tradition, with more than its fair share of charm and wit. There’s also considerable pathos—to say nothing of genuine *gravitas*—in the moving slow movement, which after the barnstorming fireworks of the opening *Allegro moderato* comes as a complete (but welcome) surprise. The real shock, though, is in the finale, which after a portentous timpani roll—a wry send-up, perhaps, of the opening of the Grieg Concerto—scampers off in a delightfully scatter-brained waltz based on what sounds like an Italian carnival tune. All concerned—including the LAWQ engineers—not only give it a rousing send-off but also seem to be having a roaring good time. Finished in 1897 when he Alnæs was only 25, the Symphony No. 1 in C Minor is a work of an entirely different order. A contemporary critic said something as revealing as it was disturbingly prescient: “From such a young man, which [sic] has written something as lovely as the Andante in this Symphony, one may expect big things. 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 struggle.” Apart from finishing a second symphony in 1923, that was a sadly accurate summation of the remainder of Alnæs’s compositional life.

While this early work understandably contains echoes of the composers the young Alnæs obviously admired—Brahms, Wagner, Schumann, Mendelssohn, with occasional hints of Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin—the symphony is far from derivative or immature; in fact, there’s a serious case to be made that it’s the most satisfying Norwegian symphony of the 19th century, a score with far more character and dramatic interest than either of the symphonies of Johann Svendsen, more backbone than any of the four by Christian Sinding, and far more self-assurance than the early symphony that Edvard Grieg understandably tried to suppress. A powerfully dramatic, tightly-argued *Allegro pathetico* is followed by a richly Brahmsian slow movement which is every bit as gorgeous as that early review suggests. The pleasantly syncopated, Russian-sounding scherzo is a toe-tapper from beginning to end. Best of all is the bustling finale, which begins with a slightly sinister march-like figure out of Wagner’s Nibelung music. If the orchestration is slightly string-centric, then it’s also airy and transparent as so much of the best Scandinavian orchestral music tends to be. Those familiar with conductor Eivind Aadland’s superlative Grieg series for Audite won’t be surprised by his incisive and engrossing work here. Not only does the Oslo Philharmonic completely outclass the Latvian National Symphony on the rival Sterling CD, but its members also give the distinct impression they’re dealing with a national treasure. This is an exhilarating and important album and—for devotees of the Romantic symphony—an irresistible release. **Jim Svejda**

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