

Edvard Flitfglet BRÆIN (1924-1976)

Concertino for flute and orchestra, Op. 10 (1958) [17:15]

Johan KVANDAL (1919-1999)

Concerto for flute and strings, Op. 22 (1963) [14:20]

Egil HOVLAND (1924-2013)

Suite for flute and strings, Op. 31 (1959) [20:07]

Finn MORTENSEN (1922-1983)

Sonata for flute solo, Op. 6 (1953) [19:35]

Tom Ottar Andreassen (flute)

Norwegian Radio Orchestra/Ingar Bergby

rec. 2014, NRK Radio Concert Hall, Oslo

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Torkil Baden's booklet notes for this release are instructive about the transitional period from 1953-63 represented by the works recorded here. In broad terms, the post-war national style was taken over by Neoclassicism influenced by Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók and other Europeans of that generation. Serialism and twelve-tone technique associated with Schoenberg took longer to emerge in Norway, but composers such as Egil Hovland championing the style during the 1960s.

On the cusp of this change we are presented with rather a jolly collection of pieces that have resisted the pull of the avant-garde. Edvard Flitflet Bræin is counted firmly amongst the Norwegian traditionalists, and his *Concertino* is a lively and inventively enjoyable work which is entertaining and lyrical in an optimistic, major-key way. Charm is more in evidence than emotional depth, with even the more dramatic opening of the final movement diffusing into bouncy cheer before the first minute has elapsed.

Johan Kvandal's *Concerto for Flute and Strings* takes us into the 1960s, but again avoids the complexities of modernism. Bartók is the main influence here, with rhythmic urgency, a certain melodic turn of phrase and close string harmonies echoing some of the Hungarian's fingerprints in the first movement. The central *Aria* has elements of a nocturnal feel, but the meat of its melodic material is eloquently romantic. A prelude to the final movement is taken up with a substantial cadenza that has its own track number, dedicatee Per Øien describing it as "an organic transition, both melodic and virtuosic, to the unbridled rondo finale."

Egil Hovland's cautious early forays into twelve-tone technique can be heard in his *Suite for Flute and Strings*, a work started long before he went to Florence to study for a short period with Luigi Dallapiccola. Hovland's Italian teacher was unimpressed by his attempt to blend neoclassical style with serialism, and the composer himself admitted that this was "to a great extent new wine in old wineskins." An inability to find oneself belonging to one camp or another is something I can sympathise with, and such legitimate criticism and the lack of distinct clarity when it comes to defining this music's stylistic direction should not take anything away from the merit of the work as a whole. This is music that explores its expressive boundaries to the full, and as Pauline Hall, director of Ny Musikk remarked, "the manner in which the flute is incorporated into the whole is accomplished with great effect, and the elaboration of both the solo and orchestral parts is technically resolute and imaginative..."

It might seem a little perverse to end such a programme with a solo work, but Finn Mortensen's *Sonata for Solo Flute* is a tour de force that has been considered unplayable by some. Mortensen wrote the piece for Alf Andersen, stating that "I hope no one will think that my flute sonata is too outrageously difficult. I had no urge to create a sensation, I was only thinking of Alf Andersen, who is phenomenal. It was not my intention to be a sadist." This is indeed a major technical feat for any player, but the musical content of the *Sonata* is what impresses and sticks in the memory, rather than Tom Ottar Andreassen's excellent mastery of its challenges. Analysis of the music itself reveals its conventional basis in tonality, and in forms that would have been familiar to Mozart. It is certainly more scary to play than to hear, and its final *Allegro giocoso* is a fitting conclusion to this superbly performed and recorded celebration of Norway's early adventures beyond nationalist striving and the comforts of tonality.

Dominy Clements

http://musicweb-international.com/classrev/2018/Jan/Norwegian_flute_LWC1127.htm