

Music Web International

Ketil HVOSLEF (b. 1939)

Chamber Works No. IV

Sekstet (1972) [12:33]

Beethoventrio (1997) [16:02]

Nordisk Kontrapunkt for Feler og Flasker (1973) [3:48}

Klaverkvintett (2003) [26:39]

Hvoslef Chamber Music Project

rec. Gunnar Sævig's Sal, The Grieg Academy, Bergen, 2015

LAWO CLASSICS LWC1130 [59:02]

This is the fourth in a series of discs (see [review of Volume 3](#)) aiming to present the complete chamber music of the Norwegian composer Ketil Hvoslef, and in many ways it is the most entertaining, it is certainly the most approachable. I have enjoyed the three previous releases in this series, but if I was to suggest a single disc to someone interested in getting to know his chamber music it would be this one, the composer's sense of humour shines through here making this disc more memorable than the others.

The disc opens with Hvoslef's Sextet which is scored for the unusual combination of oboe, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, violin and cello, and is the earliest chamber work to feature in the series. The composer talks of the work being influenced by his background as a jazz/pop pianist, but most importantly by the music of Stravinsky. The piece is cast in a single movement with each of the instruments has a starring role at one point or another; it has a rhythmic intensity that drives the music along through its various changes in tempo and thematic material, making this a very accessible work, a work that I feel would accompany a silent film of a cityscape well, with its hustle and bustle and monumental structures.

The Beethoventrio is not set for the usual instrumentation of a piano trio with the violin being replaced by a clarinet, but is not unique; indeed Beethoven set his Trio No. 4 in B flat Op. 11 for the same combination, and it is the light hearted motif from the final movement of this trio that Hvoslef quotes in his own work. This theme is treated in various ways throughout the trio, some blatant others as a variation on the theme, the result is exciting and humorous, although there is a sense of tension throughout.

Hvoslef composed his Nordisk Kontrapunkt for Feler og Flasker, or Nordic Counterpoint for Fiddles and Bottles, as an intermission in a television program. Scored for two violins and Hansa beer bottles, this short piece is bound to bring a smile to your face.

The final work on the disc is also the longest and most recent, dating from some thirty one years after the Sextet. This is the most modern sounding work on this disc, with Hvoslef stating that "...I have, in this quintet, dared to approach the very limit the very limit for how minimalist it is possible to be. The piano part contains almost nothing!" This is not however, minimalism as you might have become aware, rather this is music cut to its bare bones. Opening with pizzicato strings there are also periods of silence which heighten the listening experience, with the piano joining the strings rather than having a leading role. The Quintet, as with all the pieces here, is in a single movement, although the second half of the piece restates and builds upon material used in the first half, this is music driven once again by changing rhythms, and in some ways is reminiscent of Messiaen. This is an impressive and strong work, and although it might not be as accessible as the other three works on this disc, it is the most impressive.

The Hvoslef Chamber Music Project is a group of musicians based around Bergen, the composers home that have been brought together by Ricardo Odriozola and Einar Røttingen specifically for this project. Their performance is excellent throughout, with this series growing in stature and my esteem as it progresses, performances like this only makes me long for the next instalment. The recorded sound and booklet note are also first rate.

Stuart Sillitoe

http://musicweb-international.com/classrev/2017/Dec/Hvoslef_chamber_v4_LWC1130.htm