



THE STEINMEYER ORGAN AT NIDAROS CATHEDRAL

Magne H. Draagen

Lawo Classics LWC 1075

[78:57]



The enormous (125 stop) 1930 Steinmeyer organ in Norway's National Cathedral has suffered from seemingly endless vicissitudes of luck in its comparatively short history. Although intended for the west end when built, this portion of the church had yet to be completed on delivery from Germany. As a consequence it was squeezed into the north transept until 1960, when it was finally moved to its intended location. At the same time it suffered some particularly brutal neo-classical torture of the sort meted out to so many organs of the era. Much was lost, much put into storage (including, remarkably, the solo division, ordered wholesale by Steinmeyer from Henry Willis III and then destroyed in 1983 during a fire at the Archbishop's Palace, where it was stored). The recent reconstruction of the original instrument by Kuhn could reasonably be said to be the completion of Steinmeyer's intended concept for the first time. Cathedral organist Magne Draagen demonstrates its many colours in a gift-shop style CD, albeit a creative one. Norway is strongly represented in music by Grieg, Hovland, former Nidaros organist Ludvig Nielsen, a luscious Adagio by Arild Sandvold and a brief improvisation on an attractive folk song by the organist. Eben's tempestuous *Moto ostinato*s somewhat tastelessly juxtaposed with the Hornpipe from Handel's *Water Music* while the heart of the disc is populated by Karg-Elert's eccentric *Homage to Handel*. Draagen plays with skill and commitment and the whole is highly enjoyable. And what of the organ? Obviously less sophisticated than its contemporary in Cincinnati (see review, p.93) and of a self-evidently industrial nature, it nevertheless speaks with a unity of purpose; a fine, very late-romantic German organ with some interesting evidence of the early influence of the *Orgelbewegung*. Oh, and a hint of Westminster Cathedral too, thanks to the reconstructed tubas...

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