

The NAXOS logo consists of a blue square containing a white graphic of a classical building facade with columns and arches, with the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters centered below the graphic.

Louis
SPOHR

Concertos for
Two Violins,
Nos. 1 and 2

Henning Kraggerud and
Øyvind Bjorå, Violins

Oslo Camerata and
Barratt Due Chamber
Orchestra

Stephan Barratt-Due



Louis Spohr (1784–1859)

Concertante in A major, Op. 48 • Concertante in B minor, Op. 88 • Duet, Op. 3, No. 3

Concertos for multiple soloists were rare in the romantic era. The cult of the solo-virtuoso dominated the genre with its strong focus on the unique individuality of a specific performer's contribution to what is essentially an argumentative form. While excelling in this type of concerto as well, with four *Clarinet Concertos* and the eighteen solo *Violin Concertos*, Louis Spohr sought to place musical integrity ahead of superficial showmanship in the relationship between soloist and ensemble.

When Spohr was eighteen years old, a concert-tour took him to St Petersburg in Russia where he witnessed an Orthodox church ritual. He was fascinated by the antiphonal singing of the church choirs, and a life-long interest in the responsorial possibilities inherent in dialogue became a driving inspirational force in many of his compositions. This interest manifested itself in works such as the beautiful *Mass, Op. 54*, for two choirs of 1821, and the gorgeous collection of four double string-quartets. It culminated in his *Seventh Symphony* written for double orchestra. The two *Concertanti* recorded here belong in this category, where two equally important forces share the stage and enter into a civilized conversation with one another.

One can notice a nostalgic tendency in Spohr's aesthetic which coincided with the rise of "bourgeois historicism" in the other arts. It has often been called the Biedermeier style, and is characterized by elegance, sturdy workmanship, and emotional reticence; this style was to be maligned in the rise of the sensational in art. Louis Spohr opposed the superficiality of the national romantic school of composition, which he considered vulgar, repetitive, blatant and bombastic. In his *Sixth Symphony*, the 'Historical', of 1839, he lambasts this tendency in the symphony's last movement, with its subtitle 'From our own time'. This stand against growing commercialism in music led to many difficulties in his career. He resigned the directorship of the Frankfurt Opera when they refused to stage Beethoven's *Fidelio*. It was his championing of the

works of Beethoven, Weber, and the young Wagner (he conducted early performances of *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*) that best illustrates his opposition to contemporary tendencies, which lay in his desire to promote what he considered to be the true art of composition. He demanded structural discipline and the subservience of the virtuosic to the musical utterance. This does not mean that his works do not display instrumental brilliance. The music is extremely demanding technically and the glittering solo passages overwhelm the listener with feelings of satisfaction and contentment. Spohr's style has been accused of being "feminine", but there is no tasteless excess and, at the same time, the music is harmonically advanced with a strong emphasis on chromatic invention. The forms he chooses for his concertos are classical but never routine. At the other extreme, he developed the art of through-composition and pioneered the use of the *Leit-motiv* in his operas (*Faust* 1813 and *Jessonda* 1822) before Wagner. The over-riding tendency, however, was his emphasis on good taste, solid craftsmanship and emotional restraint. This aesthetic has been problematic for his subsequent reputation, in that concert-goers have demanded a more extrovert sensationalised form of expression. The subtleties inherent in Spohr's style have often been regarded as his weakness. This is certainly not the case, but the listener must attune him/herself to a sonic world inhabited by a delicate sensibility, to small shifts in thematic emphasis. Spohr is a master of the developmental possibilities inherent in a clear melodic contour, which is usually presented unadorned at the beginning of each composition.

All of this is in ample evidence in his two *Concertanti* recorded here, which he enjoyed playing together with his best pupils. The generosity of the shaping of the individual parts does not place one soloist above the other. Rather they complement one another and contribute to one another's display. This collegiality manifested itself in his tireless promotion of his contemporaries – both performers and composers – as

well as his championing of the works of J. S. Bach. Indeed, the two works have more in common with Bach's concerto for similar forces in its use of Baroque ideals inherited from the *Concerto Grosso*.

Spohr uses the term *concertante* to describe these two works for two violins and orchestra. Each *Concertante* is in the traditional three movements. The first, the *Concertante in A major, Op. 48*, was composed in 1808. The introduction is in a mellow A minor, containing wisps of the main contour appearing before the *Allegro* begins in earnest presented by the two violinists playing in octaves. The second, the *Concertante in B minor, Op. 88*, written in 1833, is a mature work that predates many of the stylistic traits copied later by Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Mahler. The orchestral introduction sets the stage for the two soloists

who present the two themes of this sonata movement. The second movement begins with the soloists playing double-stops, the result sounding like a string quartet. The last movement is again in *Rondo* form with a theme of darker hue, perhaps reflecting the fatal illness of his wife Dorette.

Louis Spohr's *Violinschule*, published in 1833, was one of the founding pillars of the German violin tradition. The work consists of violin duets for teacher and pupil. The *Violin Duet in G major, Op. 3, No. 3* included here is, in contrast, written for two equal partners, enjoying a lively dialogue.

Olav Anton Thommessen

Henning Kraggerud



Born in Oslo in 1973, the Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud was a student at the Barratt Due Institute under Stephan Barratt-Due, and also studied with Camilla Wicks and Emanuel Hurwitz. He is a recipient of Norway's prestigious Grieg Prize, the Ole Bull Prize and the Sibelius Prize. He is a professor at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo, and appears as a soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia, collaborating with many leading conductors. A committed chamber musician, Henning Kraggerud also performs both on violin and on viola at major international festivals, appearing with musicians such as Stephen Kovacevich, Kathryn Stott, Leif Ove Andsnes, Jeffrey Kahane, Truls Mørk and Martha Argerich. His recordings include an acclaimed release of the complete *Unaccompanied Violin Sonatas* of Ysaÿe for Simax, which brought him the Spellemann CD Award. His recordings for Naxos include Grieg's *Violin Sonatas, Norwegian Favourites* for violin and orchestra, works by Sinding for violin and piano and the violin concertos of Sinding and of Sibelius. He plays a 1744 Guarneri del Gesù instrument, provided by Dextra Musica AS, a company founded by Sparebankstiftelsen DnB NOR.

Øyvind Bjørå



Øyvind Bjørå formerly studied at the Barratt Due Institute under Stephan Barratt-Due. He is a versatile solo violinist who has also distinguished himself as a leader of orchestral ensembles. Formerly concertmaster of the Trondheim Symphony and Bergen Philharmonic, he currently leads the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra. As guest leader he has appeared with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, the Danish National Symphony, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, the Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, the Trondheim Soloists and Oslo Camerata, and he has also given solo performances with major symphony orchestras in Norway. As a chamber musician, he has had the honour of performing at Troldhaugen and Lysøen, the homes of Edvard Grieg and Ole Bull, and he has collaborated with, amongst others, Sveinung Bjelland, Leif Ove Andsnes, Saleem Abboud Ashkar and Gordon Back, at the Festspillene in Bergen and at other major chamber music festivals in Norway.

Photograph: Eric Berg

Oslo Camerata

The Oslo Camerata was established in 1998, and has since then been much in demand in Norway and abroad. Regular tours have brought them to prestigious festivals and concert-series in several European countries, India and South America. They have produced several commercial recordings as well as television recordings for NRK. The repertoire of the ensemble spans from baroque to contemporary music, with commissioned works from both young and established composers. From the very beginning there has been collaboration with artists such as Mischa Maisky, Julian Rachlin, Truls Mørk, Christian Lindberg, Henning Kraggerud, Lidia Baich and Jeremy Menuhin. The Oslo Camerata is ensemble-in-residence at the renowned Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo. From 2008 the ensemble has, through funding by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, been involved in, and supported *Projeto Aprendiz* in Niteroi, Brazil, a music project for children and young people in the *favelas*. The internationally renowned cellist Truls Mørk has from 2009 been associated with the orchestra as principal guest leader. Other recordings include Grieg's Music for String Orchestra (Naxos 8.557890) and the soon to be released orchestral arrangements of String Quartets by Grieg and Arne Nordheim. This recording brings the Oslo Camerata together with players from the Chamber Orchestra of the Barratt Due Institute of Music.

www.oslocamerata.no



Photograph: Erik Berg

Stephan Barratt-Due



Photograph: Dag Thorenfeldt

Stephan Barratt-Due is the third generation of violinists from a family with a long musical tradition. Since his *début* in 1981 he has been active as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestra leader, participating in numerous national and international festivals both in and outside Norway, and has toured extensively in Norway, the United States, Asia, South-America and Europe. His duo collaboration with violist Soon-Mi Chung has become well known over the years in Norway, through tours, television appearances and recordings, and many important Norwegian composers such as Arne Nordheim and Kjetil Hvoslef have written for this duo. During the course of his career Barratt-Due has made several recordings. In 1985 he succeeded his father as artistic director of the Barratt Due Institute of Music, a 500-student conservatory in Oslo founded in 1927 by his grandparents. Since he took over the Institute has evolved into one of the leading educational institutions in Norway, producing numerous highly distinguished musicians. Stephan Barratt-Due is today considered one of the leading violin professors in Scandinavia. Under his leadership the chamber orchestra Oslo Camerata has become increasingly in demand both nationally and internationally. Stephan Barratt-Due plays a violin by J. B. Guadagnini from 1751, provided by Dextra Musica.

19TH CENTURY VIOLINIST COMPOSERS





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Louis Spohr's life-long artistic commitment to elegance, sturdy workmanship and emotional reticence has burdened him with a reputation as a nostalgic conservative. Yet his melodic mastery, delicately poised Classical sensibility and advanced treatment of harmony, are evident in the highly enjoyable music on this disc. Glittering solo passages and congenial interplay between the soloists characterise both the *Concertanti*, which pay tribute to the Baroque *concerto grosso* and look forward to the music of Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Mahler, and the *Duo*, with its lively dialogues between equal partners.

Louis
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(1784–1859)

Concertante No. 1 in A major, Op. 48	24:30
1 Allegro	11:03
2 Larghetto	4:59
3 Rondo – Allegretto	8:18
Concertante No. 2 in B minor, Op. 88	22:46
4 Allegro	9:46
5 Andantino	6:25
6 Allegretto	6:35
Violin Duet in G major, Op. 3, No. 3	9:55
7 Andante – Allegro vivace	5:43
8 Andante – Allegretto – Andante – Allegretto – Andante	4:12

Henning Kraggerud and Øyvind Bjørå, Violins
Oslo Camerata and Barratt Due Chamber Orchestra
Stephan Barratt-Due

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