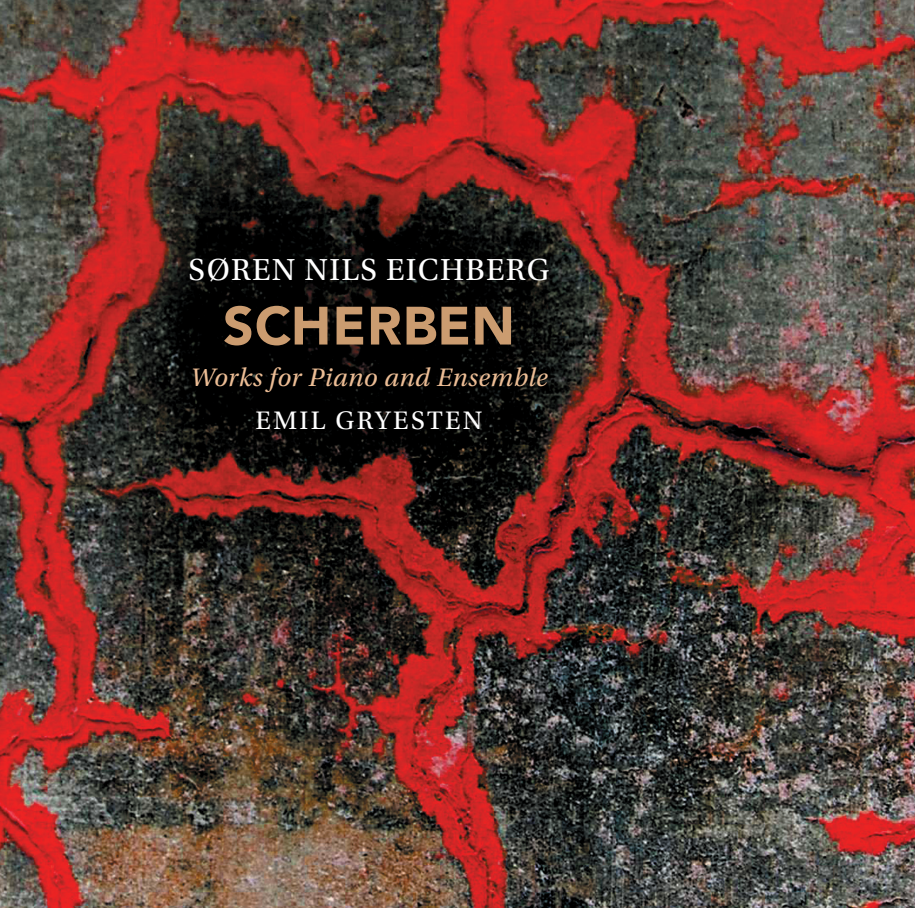




SØREN NILS EICHBERG

SCHERBEN

Works for Piano and Ensemble

EMIL GRYESTEN

SØREN NILS EICHBERG (b. 1973)

SCHERBEN

Works for Piano and Ensemble

EMIL GRYESTEN, *piano** · VALDEMAR ULRIKKEHOLM, *flute* · RADI RADEV, *oboe*
ELAINE RUBY, *clarinet* · NIKOLAJ HENRIQUES, *bassoon* · PÁLL SÓLSTEIN, *French horn*
KIRSTINE SCHNEIDER, *violin** · KEHAN ZHANG, *violin* · JÁKUP LÜTZEN, *viola**
TOBIAS VAN DER PALS, *cello* · JOHAN KRARUP, *cello** · MATTIAS PALM, *double bass*
SØREN NILS EICHBERG, *conductor* +

1 **Hærværk** (2002, rev. 2003) + 12:30
Concertino for piano and 10 instruments

Scherben (2002) 18:52
19 Etudes-Postludes for piano

- 2** No. 1 1:32
- 3** No. 2 0:43
- 4** No. 3 0:44
- 5** No. 4 0:49
- 6** No. 5 1:25
- 7** No. 6 0:55
- 8** No. 7 0:28
- 9** No. 8 0:38

- 10** No. 9 0:53
- 11** No. 10 1:28
- 12** No. 11 2:02
- 13** No. 12 0:29
- 14** No. 13 0:44
- 15** No. 14 1:33
- 16** No. 15 0:38
- 17** No. 16 1:24
- 18** No. 17 0:51
- 19** No. 18 0:41
- 20** No. 19 0:55

21 **Nofretete** (2011) 9:48
For piano

22 **Natsukusa-Ya** (2005)* 17:15
For piano quartet

Total: 58:27

World premiere recordings

Dacapo is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation **DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION**

‘The piano is my instrument,’ says Søren Nils Eichberg; ‘I am led by my fingers.’ His works with piano might chart the loosening of those fingers from formal obedience towards what the composer himself has described as ‘psychological form’: a modernist take on the keyboard fantasies of yesteryear in which emotional intuition underpins progress (a similar shift traverses his first three symphonies, composed 2005–15). Rather than sprawling formlessly, the latest fruits of that journey are guided to their final shape by Eichberg’s growing weight of experience – logical, emotional, dramatic.

This recording, piloted by the two hands of pianist Emil Gryesten, covers piano-focused works spanning the decade from 2002. These were pivotal years for Eichberg, coming directly after his victory in the composing discipline of the 2001 Queen Elisabeth Competition. We hear Eichberg returning to basics: exploring a piano’s sonority (and a pianist’s technique) with a series of miniature character pieces that form more than the sum of their parts (infinitely so, potentially). We hear him riffing on a touchstone of Danish literature via a classic functionalist technique, and applying the same practice to a tradition from Japan. And we hear his ‘psychological form’ in the grip of total inspiration.

Hærværk (2002, rev. 2003)

The year after Eichberg’s Violin Concerto won the Queen Elisabeth Competition, the composer’s former piano tutor Arbo Valdma commissioned a new work from his erstwhile pupil to be performed during his sixtieth birthday concert at the Philharmonic Hall in Tallinn, Estonia. In *Hærværk*, Eichberg advanced the idea of metamorphosis established in the concerto, but via a ‘concertino for piano and ten instruments’ that mines almost all its activity from a single three-note chord.

That might be described as a distinctly Nordic (and post-Sibelian) technique, and Eichberg took a staple of Danish literature as his inspiration. *Hærværk* – the word sitting somewhere between ‘havoc’ and ‘vandalism’ in English – is a monumental and semi-autobiographical 1930 novel by the poet and journalist Tom Kristensen. Part Danish *Ulysses*, part Danish *Inferno*, it plots

the decadent descent of a respected journalist into alcoholism, against a backdrop of Copenhagen in thrall to jazz and in the grip of political change.

Though he concedes that ‘things fall apart’ in *Hærværk* the concertino, Eichberg’s work is less a narrative mirror of the novel and more a response to his memory of reading it at high school (and seeing the central character, as played by the actor Ole Ernst, ‘stumbling drunk around Copenhagen listening to jazz’ in Ole Roos’s 1977 film adaptation). ‘It is always night here, and there is always the sound of music,’ utters the journalist Jastrau in a moment of familiar oblivion.

There are moments when the jazz in and around Jastrau’s head drifts into focus in Eichberg’s work. Just as prevalent is the feeling of an individual struggling with his surroundings and eventually surrendering to the strange joy of inevitable annihilation and the peace that comes with it (the cadenza flails and smashes violently before burning out into silence, a direct parallel with one of Jastrau’s Vesterbro odysseys). As for the three-note chord, an octave spiked in the middle by a diminished fifth, it is heard at various pitches from the start and infests the music from there on. As in his early symphonies, Eichberg takes care to establish this sort of thematic familiarity to the benefit of the listener.

Scherben (2002)

The same year, Eichberg was asked to write the compulsory work for the finals of the International Piano Competition Ferruccio Busoni in Bolzano, Italy. Concluding that ‘it’s always bad for a piece to be played 12 times in a competition by people who don’t really want to play it for people who don’t really want to listen to it,’ Eichberg took a novel approach. *Scherben* (‘Shards’) is a collection of 19 miniatures described as ‘Etudes-Postludes’, of which contestants could make their own selection and devise their own sequence, thus satisfying the rubric that performances last no more than eight minutes while creating a potentially unique musical journey each time.

On one level, the solution presented the composer with a fertile opportunity to explore colours, techniques and textures – and, in that very exploration, draw on famous precedents from the past. Among his shards we hear hints at passacaglia (No. 1), boogie-woogie (No. 3), tarantella (No. 12) and romantic rhapsody (No. 17) but we also encounter challenges to the pianists in the form of displacement (No. 8), pitch games (No. 11) and non-standard scoring (No. 16).

Choosing and presenting a selection was one way of demanding 'a different kind of imagination from the contestants than just that of the fingers'. But so, reflexively, was Eichberg's entire conceit, which was designed to last well beyond the lifespan of the competition. As in Chopin's *Preludes* or Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*, each shard has a single design concept but each exists fleetingly enough to end as quickly as it has revealed itself.

Nofretete (2011)

Rubric exists to be contravened, and Eichberg's development as a composer has been stoked by his own introduction of disruptive elements, not least that of total freedom from form (or something near it). In 2012, the composer responded to a commission from the Foundation of Prussian Culture and Heritage for an instrumental work taking its lead from an artefact in one of Berlin's museums (the German capital is Eichberg's home).

He settled on the bust of the ancient Egyptian queen Nefertiti, from the Ägyptisches Museum Berlin. The composer describes 'the magical radiation' of the painted limestone bust, but felt the resonance of the person even more than the object: 'Nefertiti was the most powerful woman that had ever lived and was described as having a beauty that must have been absolutely radiant. There is much mystery surrounding her; we don't know when or where she died or where she was buried. It is even believed that she continued to reign alone after her husband's death.' This resonant but ultimately unspecified legacy, with the evolution of his ideas about psychological form, prompted Eichberg to follow his nose in the creation of an unregimented piano work. 'I wanted it to flow freely,' he says, developing 'from what I felt were the music's own impulses.'

We hear the magnetic allure of Nefertiti in the music's surface glisten; the piece exists as if under the spell of another being, working itself up into reality and present-tense before retreating again. Nefertiti's legend lingers, even after Eichberg's musical monument has stopped sounding.

Natsukusa-Ya (2005)

The strange human urge to self-destruct as recounted in *Hærværk* remained a theme for Eichberg and was a central tenet of his Symphony No 1, *Stürzten wir uns ins Feuer*. In between those two scores, the composer created a piece which again reflected the 'havoc and violent

death' craved by Ole Jastrau but in this instance, thrust unwilling upon one nation by another, and on a scale unimagined: the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The Piano Quartet *Natsukusa-Ya* was composed for a concert dedicated to the victims of the bombing and premiered in 2005, the sixtieth year after the event, by an ensemble led by the Japanese concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic, Daishin Kashimoto.

Eichberg's starting point is a haiku by Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694): *Summer grass alone / Remains as faded trace of / Ancient warrior's dreams*. 'After the fighting and battles, after all the vanity of humans, nothing remains except for grass,' reflects the composer. As in *Hærværk*, he established a delimited space for the piece: the form of the haiku (seventeen syllables, divided 5-7-5 across three lines) and its poetic concept of juxtaposing two contrary but interdependent images.

That tight economy of material – the idea of 5-7-5 controls intervals, harmonies and rhythmic patterns – doesn't preclude *Natsukusa-Ya* from conjuring a wide, open space from the beginning, perhaps because of those 'open' fifth intervals that form the work's initial portal. The piece has the feeling of a lament, one interrupted by the memory of violence but infused with a very Japanese sense of ritual and order, which apparently emerges from within.

Andrew Mellor is a journalist and critic with a particular interest in the culture and music of Denmark and the Nordic countries.

EMIL GRYESTEN

Pianist Emil Gryesten (b. 1985) was educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, with further studies at the Como International Piano Academy in Italy. Among his teachers are prominent pianists such as Erik Tawaststjerna, Eero Heinonen, Dmitri Bashkurov, Tamás Vásáry and Fou Ts'ong as well as Niklas Sivelöv.

Emil Gryesten has received awards at a number of Danish and international competitions for young pianists. As a 15-year-old, he won first prize at the Steinway Competition in Hamburg and a gold medal at Berlingske Tidende's Classical Music Competition in Copenhagen. In 2010, he won both the first prize and the Audience Prize at the Nordic Pianist Competition at Nyborg Castle. During his time as a student at the Sibelius Academy, he also won first prize at Finland's National Piano Competition in Jyväskylä in 2010, and he also received the first prize at the Blüthner Pianist Competition in Malmö in 2006.

Emil played his first solo recital as a 15-year-old and has since then had an active concert career both as a soloist and as a chamber musician. He made his debut as a soloist with orchestra as a 16-year-old, with Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. He has performed at classical music festivals such as the Copenhagen Summer Festival, Aarhus Piano Festival, Hindsgavl Festival, and Espo Piano Festival and Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland, Blüthner Classics in Leipzig, International Piano Association Switzerland's concert series in Lugano, and in the summer of 2018 in Carnegie Hall in New York.

On this recording, Emil Gryesten has gathered a team of friends to play Søren Nils Eichberg's works for piano and ensemble in close collaboration with the composer himself, who conducts one of the works.



Emil Gryesten

“Klaveret er mit instrument,” siger Søren Nils Eichberg, “jeg lader mig lede af fingrene.” Hans værker med klaver kan ses som fingrenes gradvise frigørelse fra formel lydighed i retning af det, komponisten selv har kaldt “psykologisk form”: en modernistisk tilgang til fortidens klaverfantasier, hvor udviklingen er baseret på følelsesmæssig intuition (en lignende udvikling kan spores i hans tre første symfonier fra årene 2005-15). Frem for at brede sig formløst får rejsens seneste resultater snarere deres endegyldige karakter som følge af Eichbergs tiltagende erfaring – både logisk, følelsesmæssigt og dramatisk.

Denne indspilning med pianisten Emil Gryestens to hænder som rejseledere dækker klaverorienterede værker fra 2002 og et årti frem. Det var afgørende år for Eichberg, der netop i 2001 havde vundet komponistkategorien ved Dronning Elisabeth-konkurrencen i Bruxelles. Vi kan høre Eichberg vende tilbage til grundelementerne: udforske klaverklangen (og pianistens teknik) med en række små karakterstykker, hvor helheden er mere end summen af de enkelte dele (måske endda uendelig meget mere). Vi hører ham tage udgangspunkt i et af dansk litteraturens nøgleværker gennem en klassisk funktionalistisk teknik og anvende samme fremgangsmåde over for en japansk tradition. Og vi hører hans “psykologiske form” anvendt gennemført inspireret.

Hærværk (2002, rev. 2003)

Året efter at Eichbergs violinkonzert havde vundet Dronning Elisabeth-konkurrencen, bestilte komponistens gamle klaverlærer Arbo Valdma et nyt værk hos sin tidligere elev, der skulle opføres til Valdmars 60-års fødselsdagskoncert i Tallinn Filharmonien. I *Hærværk* videreudviklede Eichberg sin metamorfosetænkning fra violinkonzerten, men dette via en “concertino for klaver og ti instrumenter”, hvor næsten alle begivenheder udspringer af en enkelt treklang.

Det kan hævdes at være en typisk nordisk (og Sibelius-inspireret) teknik, og Eichberg tog samtidig afsæt i et hovedværk i dansk litteratur, nemlig digteren og journalisten Tom Kristensens monumentale og delvis selvbiografiske roman *Hærværk* fra 1930. Som en slags dansk kombination af James Joyces *Ulysses* og Dantes *Helvede* beskriver den en respekteret journalists dekadente opløsning i alkoholisme i et København præget af jazz og politisk opbrud.

Selv om Eichberg medgiver, at “tingene går i opløsning” i concertinoen *Hærværk*, er den ikke så meget en genfortælling af romanen som en reaktion på hans egen erindring om at læse den i gymnasiet (og se hovedpersonen i skuespilleren Ole Ernsts skikkelse “vælte døddrukken rundt i København og høre jazz” i Ole Roos’ filmatisering fra 1977). “Det er altid nat, og der er altid musik,” erklærer journalisten Jastrau i et typisk opgivende øjeblik.

Indimellem kommer jazzen i og omkring Jastraus bevidsthed også i centrum i Eichbergs værk. Lige så markant er følelsen af et individ, der kæmper med sine omgivelser og til sidst bukker under for den mærkelige glæde ved undergangens uundgåelighed og freden derefter (kadencen raser og larmer brutalt, før den brænder ud i stilhed nøjagtig ligesom en af Jastraus odysseer gennem Vesterbro). Hvad angår treklangen, en oktav med en formindsket kvint i midten, høres den lige fra begyndelsen i forskellige tonehøjder og gennemsyrrer al den følgende musik. Ligesom i sine tidlige symfonier er Eichberg bevidst om at hjælpe lytteren på vej med et sådant genkendeligt tema.

Scherben (2002)

Samme år blev Eichberg bedt om at skrive det obligatoriske værk til finalen i den internationale Busoni-klaverkonkurrence i Bolzano. Efter at være nået frem til den konklusion, at “det altid er dårligt for et stykke at blive spillet 12 gange i en konkurrence af folk, der i virkeligheden ikke har lyst til at spille det, for folk, der i virkeligheden ikke har lyst til at høre det,” valgte Eichberg en alternativ tilgang. *Scherben* (“Skår”) består af 19 miniaturer med genrebetegnelsen “Etuder-Postludier,” som deltagerne i konkurrencen kunne foretage deres eget udvalg og fastlægge deres egen rækkefølge af og dermed både opfylde kravet om, at opførelsen ikke måtte vare over otte minutter, og hver gang i princippet skabe en ny musikalsk rejse.

Dermed gav løsningen komponisten en frugtbar mulighed for at udforske klangfarver, tekniker og teksturer – og netop i kraft af denne udforskning også trække på berømte fortilfælde. Blandt skårene hører vi både hentydninger til passacaglia (nr. 1), boogie-woogie (nr. 3), tarantel (nr. 12) og romantisk rapsodi (nr. 17), men vi møder også udfordringer til pianisterne i form af rytmiske forskydninger (nr. 8), leg med tonerækker (nr. 11) og utraditionel notation (nr. 16).

At skulle udvælge og fremføre et udvalg var samtidig også et krav om “en anden slags fantasi hos deltagerne end blot den i fingrene.” Men ved nærmere eftertanke gjaldt det også hele Eichbergs koncept, sådan som det er bevidst er tiltænkt at leve videre efter klaverkonkurrencen.

Ligesom Chopins *Prælodier* eller Prokofjevs *Visions fugitives* har hver enkelt skår sin helt særlige karakter, men er også flygtig nok til at forsvinde umiddelbart efter at have givet sig til kende.

Nofretete (2011)

Rammer er til for at bliver overskredet, og Eichbergs udvikling som komponist har da også været præget af hans egen indførelse af forstyrrende elementer, ikke mindst den gennemførte frigørelse fra form (eller i hvert fald tæt på). I 2012 tog komponisten imod en bestilling fra Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (de statslige museer, biblioteker og arkiver i Berlin) på et instrumentalværk med udgangspunkt i en genstand på et af museerne i Berlin, hvor Eichberg bor.

Han besluttede sig for busten af den ægyptiske oldtidsdronning Nefertiti i Ägyptisches Museum Berlin. Komponisten beskriver selv "den magiske udstråling" fra den malede kalkstensbuste, men følte også endnu større fascination af personen end af den fysiske genstand: "Nefertiti var historiens mest magtfulde kvinde og blev beskrevet som smuk på en måde, der må have været fuldstændig overvældende. Hun er i høj grad omgivet af mystik, og vi ved hverken noget om tidspunktet for hendes død, eller hvor hun er begravet. Nogle mener ligefrem, at hun efter sin mands død fortsatte med at regere på egen hånd." Den fascinerende, men i sidste ende ukonkrete fortælling fik sammen med udviklingen af Eichbergs egne tanker om psykologisk form ham til at følge sine egne instinkter og skabe et klaverværk uden ydre begrænsninger. "Jeg ville havde det til at strømme frit," siger han, og udvikle sig "fra det, jeg følte, var musikkens egne impulser."

Vi kan høre Nefertitis hypnotiserende tiltrækning i musikkens glitrende overflade; værket synes at være tryllebundet af et andet væsen, først gradvis arbejder det sig op i virkeligheden og nutiden for derefter at trække sig tilbage igen. Legenden om Nefertiti lever videre, også efter at Eichbergs musikalske hyldelse er holdt op.

Natsukusa-Ya (2005)

Den forunderlige menneskelige trang til selvdestruktion som beskrives i *Hærværk*, vedblev at optage Eichberg og var også et centralt element i hans 1. symfoni, *Stürzten wir uns ins Feuer*. Indimellem disse to partiturer skabte komponisten et værk, der igen afspejlede Ole Jastraus længsel mod "hærværk og pludselig død," som i dette tilfælde blev påført en nation af en anden nation og i et hidtil utænkeligt omfang: nedkastningen af atombomben over Hiroshima. Klaver-

kvartetten *Natsukusa-Ya* blev skrevet til en koncert til minde om bombens ofre og uropført i 2005, tres år efter begivenheden, af et ensemble under ledelse af Berlinerfilharmonikernes japanske koncertmester Daishin Kashimoto.

Eichberg tager udgangspunkt i et haiku af Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694): *Fugtigt sommergræs / Forbliver eneste spor / Af krigeres drøm*. "Efter kampene og slagene, efter al menneskets dårskab, er der kun græs tilbage," forklarer komponisten. Ligesom i *Hærværk* fastlagde han et bevidst afgrænset rum for værket: haikuformen (sytten stavelser opdelt i 5, 7 og 5 fordelt på tre linjer) og dens poetiske princip med at sammenstille to modsatrettede, men forbundne billeder.

Den stramme økonomi i materialet – princippet 5-7-5 er styrende for både intervaller, harmonier og rytmiske mønstre – forhindrer ikke *Natsukusa-Ya* i fra første færd at fremmane et stort, åbent rum, måske som følge af de "tomme" kvintintervaller, der udgør værkets åbningsportal. Værket har karakter af en klagesang, der bliver afbrudt af erindringer om vold, men er også gennemsyret af en meget japansk stemning af rituel og orden, der synes at komme indefra.

Andrew Mellor er journalist og kritiker med særlig interesse for kultur og musik fra Danmark og de nordiske lande.

EMIL GRYESTEN

Pianisten Emil Gryesten (f. 1985) er uddannet ved Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium og ved Sibelius-akademiet i Helsinki, med videre studier ved Como International Piano Academy i Italien. Blandt hans lærere er fremtrædende kapaciteter inden for pianistfaget såsom Erik Tawaststjerna, Eero Heinonen, Dmitri Bashkirov, Tamás Vásáry og Fou Ts'ong samt Niklas Sivelöv ved DKDM.

Emil Gryesten har modtaget priser ved en række danske og internationale konkurrencer for unge pianister. Som 15-årig vandt han førstepris ved Steinway-konkurrencen i Hamburg samt guldmedalje ved Berlinske Tidendes klassiske musikkonkurrence i København. I 2010 vandt han både førstepris og publikumsprisen ved den nordiske pianistkonkurrence på Nyborg Slot. Under sin tid som studerende ved Sibelius-akademiet vandt han desuden førstepris ved Finlands nationale klaverkonkurrence i Jyväskylä i 2010, og han modtog ligeledes førsteprisen ved Blüthner Pianistkonkurrencen i Malmø i 2006.



Emil spillede sin første solo-recital som 15-årig og har siden da haft en aktiv koncertkarriere både som solist og som kammermusiker. Han debuterede som solist med orkester som 16-årig, med Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han har optrådt ved klassiske musikfestivaler såsom Copenhagen Summer Festival, Aarhus Piano Festival, Hindsgavl Festival, samt Espo Piano Festival og Kuhmo Kammermusikfestival i Finland, Blüthner Classics i Leipzig, International Piano Association Switzerlands koncertserie i Lugano, og i sommeren 2018 i Carnegie Hall, New York. På denne udgivelse har han samlet et hold af venner til at indspille Søren Nils Eichbergs klaver- og ensembleværker – i tæt samarbejde med komponisten, som selv dirigerer et af værkerne.

DDD

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