



CHRISTIAN BERGQVIST • MATS BERGSTRÖM • PER FLEMSTRÖM

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MATS BERGSTRÖM *guitar*

CHRISTIAN BERGQVIST *violin*

PER FLEMSTRÖM *flute*



Romantic salon music long suffered a bad reputation. Many thought of it as sentimental, even trivial – and it probably often was. In our days, the best of it has come to know a renaissance.

What then was the salon? It was the large, sometimes very large room where the well-to-do bourgeois families met with their friends for singing, playing and recitation. The salon could have the function of a small stage. Just as important is also that there was a shifting border to the home and home music. It was in keeping with good breeding that at least mother and daughter should play the piano. The repertoire could also be heard in public places. All self-respecting hotels and restaurants had an orchestra or at least a pianist.

Much of the return of salon music is due to a nostalgic longing and the need of many for an idyll in times of unrest. However there are also other causes. There are so many small, charming masterpieces to discover,

not least because even the great masters cultivated this music, often through love and inspiration, sometimes – it cannot be denied – for financial reasons, something which did not necessarily entail artistic compromise. Probably there is one more reason:

When the music was written, the composer was not thinking of mass-media (which was non-existent) or the approval of exclusive circles. He turned directly to practitioners or listeners who usually were amateurs. For many composers, this musical practice was one they had experienced in their homes. Much was so natural, so self-evident, and is so direct in the music.

Six biographical sketches

Between 1896 and 1914 **WILHELM PETERSON-BERGER** (1867-1942) issued three keyboard collections titled *Frösöblomster* (*Frösö blossoms*, named after his home, Sommarhagen, on the island of Frösö near

Östersund). They quickly became popular and are still so today, in their elegance, folksiness, and dense lyrical atmosphere. The scores are the idyllic side of an artistry of great inner tension. As a music critic Peterson-Berger created something quite new in Swedish musical life through his heated dedication and fiery, personal language, but he could also be incomparably cruel and frequently lacked sufficient knowledge and objectivity. A third important aspect of Peterson-Berger's work was reflected in *Arnljot* (1909), a viking drama inspired by both Wagner and Nietzsche, in which the second act is an apotheosis of the forests, lakes and mountain scapes of Jämtland. The inspiration from nature is also much apparent in *Frösöblomster*, but even more so is that of the music making in the homes and salons he frequented. *Serenade* (from *Four Dance Poems*, 1907) is one of these domestic pieces. As the composer expresses it in a poem written as a

programme:

"In Evening's firmament rosy clouds do burn

And the shade creeps forth to your balcony..."

The contrast is great to **CARL NIELSEN** (1865-1931), who like Sibelius is one of the great symphonists after Mahler. His orchestral set is always expansive, sometimes even hard and modernistic. There is usually a tremendous will in Nielsen's music – will and great lines. This is also true for his piano music, with two early exceptions: *Five Piano Pieces* (1890), some of which are in Grieg's spirit, and the more personal *Humorous Bagatelles* (1894). These six pieces are some of the most original in Nordic piano music, where playful or cutting humour is otherwise rare. Nielsen was a violinist and orchestral musician. Perhaps one can hear this in the *Bagatelles*, where melody and rhythm easily lend themselves to many instrumental guises. Nielsen also had a popular musical vein. No

other Danish composer could write such simple, personal and inspiring tunes as he. This tone is also recurrent in the much-played Taagen letter (The Fog is Lifting, originally written for flute and harp), which is an interlude in the music to Helge Rode's play The Mother (1920). There was also a lyrical side to Carl Nielsen.

WILHELM STENHAMMAR (1871-1927), the most versatile talent in Swedish musical history, important as composer, pianist and conductor, was a close friend to Nielsen and Sibelius since the beginning of the century. Like them, he wrote in large forms: for orchestra, choir and orchestra, and chamber music, mainly string quartets.

Romanza is an early work. Stenhammar is nineteen and much dedicated to his piano-playing. Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin are among those who most occupy him, as well as Wagner (in keyboard reduction). Romanza – Adagio quasi andante – is part of a piano sonata in

G minor that Stenhammar only performed once (at a students' concert) and was never printed. In the sonata it is preceded by a passionate allegro.

Also JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957) wrote smaller works. He left about a hundred piano pieces. Many of his admirers around the world, to whom the symphonies are among the highest points of twentieth century music, encounter these trifles with surprise. However, as his biographer Erik Tawaststjerna writes about Pensées lyriques (originally ten pieces from 1912-16, collected as opus 40), no-one can deny him having "one day felt like dedicating a valsette to the pianist among his daughters in the style of Tchaikovsky's melancholy waltz, or cradling her younger sister to sleep to the tones of a berceuse, or striking up a rondoletto-polka and polonaise". It is music for home and salon (received with delight by the publisher), where one of the most interesting features is that Sibelius

could be so personal even in this miniature form. Berceuse is in its simplicity a gem of Nordic lyricism.

One Nordic Romantic who more than others came to write pieces that have become "evergreens", in the best and most admiring sense, was EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907). The music from Peer Gynt and the piano concerto are played everywhere, and Våren (Spring) has become something of a ringing emblem for Nordic nature poetry: melancholy, folksy, intimately expressive in its harmony. It exists in two versions by the composer. The original is a solo song (op. 33 no. 2, written in 1890), the other is set for string orchestra as one of Zwei elegische Melodien (op. 34). The song has lyrics by the Norwegian poet A.O. Vinje, a pugnacious, uncompromising character who could nevertheless express a singularly dreamy sensitivity in his poems. As in Våren.

All the composers on this record are celebrities of Nordic music, except

one, the Dane JOACHIM ANDERSEN (1847-1909). Nevertheless, this was not the case in his day. A skillful flautist, he played in orchestras not only in Copenhagen but also in Petersburg and Berlin (under Hans von Bülow amongst others), was interested in pedagogy, and eventually, after a paralysis of the tongue, he came to devote himself entirely to conducting. All the musiclovers of Copenhagen knew him in this capacity. He led the Tivoli orchestra and created the so-called Palae concerts. These were symphony matinées comprising not only popular works but also great, well-known symphonies. As a composer he wrote mostly for flute in a melodious virtuoso style. The four pieces on this record are all from Andersen's op. 55, Acht Vortragsstücke for flute and piano.

Bo Wallner

Translation: Isabel Thomson

MATS BERGSTRÖM, born in 1961, is a graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm as well as the Juilliard School in New York. A top prize winner in competitions in London (John Mills Int. 1983) and Paris (Radio France Int. 1992), he performs regularly as a soloist, in recitals as well as with orchestras. He is also a highly demanded accompanist and chamber musician. Mats Bergström has arranged many instrumental works and over a hundred songs for guitar. His transcription of Schubert's "Die schöne Müllerin", in collaboration with Swiss baritone Martin Bruns, has attracted particular attention. Mats Bergström's previous recordings include "English Music for Guitar" (Polar), "Villa-Lobos", "Castelnuovo-Tedesco" (Proprius), and numerous recordings with some of Sweden's foremost singers and instrumentalists.

CHRISTIAN BERGQVIST, born in 1961, studied at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, obtaining a soloist diploma. He continued his studies with Dorothy DeLay and Sandor Vegh. He has performed as a soloist with Sweden's major orchestras, as well as the Berlin and Oslo Radio Orchestras, the Slovakian and New

Moscow State Philharmonics, a. o. He has worked with conductors such as Salonen, Segerstam, Saraste, and Welsler-Möst. In 1987, Christian Bergqvist won first prize at the European Broadcasting Union's TIJJI tribune in Bratislava, which led to invitations from various European festivals and concert engagements in Paris, Berlin, Stavanger, Oslo, and the former Czechoslovakia. He performs regularly as a chamber musician with pianists Roland Pöntinen and Staffan Scheja and is among the most frequent guests at the Gotland Chamber Music Festival. He holds chairs in the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Stockholm Chamber Orchestra. Christian Bergqvist has recorded "The Russian Violin", Schnittke's Concerto Grosso and first Violin Sonata for violin and orchestra (BIS), and Aulin's Violin Concerto (Musica Sveciae).

PER FLEMSTRÖM was born in 1958. Like Mats Bergström and Christian Bergqvist he was a student at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where he graduated with a soloist diploma. He has also studied with Karl-Heinz Zöller in Salzburg. Per Flemström has been a soloist with i.a. the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic orchestras of Gothen-

burg, Stockholm, and Oslo. As a sought-after chamber musician, he appears frequently at chamber music festivals such as those of Oslo and Stavanger. Between 1989 and 1991 he held the solo chair in the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Today he is a member of the Stockholm Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra in Oslo, where he now resides. As a recording artist, Per Flemström has performed the Nielsen Concerto with RSO/Salonen (Sony Classical) and Mozart's flute quartet in D with members of the Lysell Quartet (Artemis).

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