



Edwin LEMARE (1866-1934)

Organ Works - Volume 1

Concertstück No.1 - Written in the form of a Polonaise op.80 (1911) [6:25]

Andantino in D? (1882) [3:19]

Caprice Orientale op.46 (1902) [3:21]

Organ Symphony No.1 in G minor op.35 (1899) [32:50]

Lars Rosenlund Nørremark (Frobenius Organ of Aarhus Cathedral)

rec. Aarhus Cathedral November 2009; February 2010. DDD.

CDKLASSISK-DK CDK209 [46:26]

I imagine that to many the name of Edwin Lemare is rather like that of Busoni in relation to Bach - Busoni being the smaller man in the Bach-Busoni relationship. Lemare made many transcriptions for organ of orchestral works. And superb arrangements they are too! Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre*, Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas Overture* and Elgar's *1st Pomp and Circumstance March* all got the Lemare treatment, and they are most effective. They were made at the time when home music-making was still the norm and the chances of actually hearing a full orchestra were slim, so here was a chance to hear some orchestral music. There was also something of the showman about them, for these transcriptions allowed Lemare, who was a virtuoso organist, to show off his abilities in symphonic repertoire. Lemare was a fairly prolific composer but until this disk came my way I'd only ever heard one work of his; the *Fantasia on Hanover*, a short but strong piece.

The biggest piece here is the *Symphony*. In four large movements, this work is a match for any of the French Symphonies by Widor and his compatriots. It's bold and romantic, full of rich harmonies, long-breathed tunes and a real epic feel. Although this is obviously an English work, there are reminiscences of both French and German music in it. But it's none the worse for that, it's just a composer writing in the language of his own time. The finale, in particular, is a true *pièce héroïque*, complete with fugue and *stretto* conclusion. It's a marvellous work and will surprise anyone who only knows the transcriptions.

Two years after completing the *Symphony* Lemare made his first trip to America and the following year he became the Organist to the City of Pittsburgh, where he wrote the *Caprice Orientale* - a charming genre piece. The *Andantino* became known when American songwriters Ben Black and Neil Moret (Pseudonym for Charles N Daniels) created the lyric *Moonlight and Roses*. *Andantino* thus became a million seller. Unfortunately for the songsmiths they hadn't bothered to get copyright permission to use the tune and Lemare sued successfully, and earned

from the royalties of the song - which is just as well for he sold the original work for three guineas and never made a penny from the organ work.

Concertstuck No.1 - Written in the form of a Polonaise could almost be a study for the bolder passages in the *Symphony*, and were it not for the Polonaise element could almost pass for a movement of that work.

This is a fascinating disk and one which has been needed for some time - although I didn't know that until I heard it! Lemare might be a man of his time but he's certainly worth a listen. Lars Rosenlund Nørremark plays with full belief in the music, a deep understanding of it, and a fine technique which allows him to play the most difficult music as if it were the simplest thing imaginable. He also supplies a very detailed and fascinating essay in the book, which is published in both Danish and English. I can hardly wait for volume 2.

Bob Briggs

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