

Ceros

Frøydis Ree Wekre, Lisa Ford,

Jan-Olave Martinsen - Horns

Atle Sponberg - Violin

Tor Espen Aspås - Piano

Wolfgang Plagge - Piano

Andrea Clearfield - Piano

Wolfgang Plagge: *Raga. Monoceros.*

Sonata nr. 4.

Sigurd Berge: *Horntrio.*

Trygve Madsen: *Trio for Violin,
Horn and Piano. Op.110.*

Johan Kvandal: *Salmestone.*

Andrea Clearfield: *Into the Falcon's
Eye.*

Frøydis Ree Wekre says,

"For many years I have felt it an obligation – as well as a blessing – to help the growth of the literature for my fantastic instrument".

All the works on this CD are from the last 25 years. My heart goes out to her when I read this testament and from the first notes of Plagge's *Raga* with its extended piano ostinati which lets the horn float, soar, or plunge around the textures, this CD stamps its commitment and vitality on the senses. There are 3 very different offerings from Plagge and they are a good group.

The 2nd track, *Monoceros*, is unaccompanied and thirdly the Sonata begins with a nice dry contrapuntal offering which is followed by a somewhat meandering slow movement which is only just saved by Plagge's piano accompaniment and some nicely centred horn notes.

Sigurd Berge's Trio for 3 horns is initially disturbingly eclectic, ranging from band studies, through a modified folk idiom to a Neo Baroque. It wasn't until I got to the 3rd movement that I began to understand these "Tongue in cheek" pastiches so well played by the hornists. Berge's clever writing cannot fail to bring a smile to the listener's face.

Madsen's Trio op. 110 for violin, horn and piano, "can serve as obligatory warming up for the Brahms." So the sleeve notes proclaim. Wow! There's a bold statement! This trio sets out as a Romantic piece. There are plenty of dominant ninths and sequences. There are also some passages with violin doubling the horn at the octave, which

despite good tuning seem to exacerbate the "stringiness" of the violin, and lend a lugubrious pondering to the horn. The second movement contains some nice duetted passages between violin and horn, but it barely escapes a sensation of wearily plodding through the music. The 3rd Movement begins with a Mendelssohnian statement from violin and piano which when the horn takes it up, it is so transformed that the re-entry of the violin is like a rescue mission. The movement travels on and a strangely syncopated passage arrives like the sudden onset of an allergic rash to herald yet more sequences and ninths leading to the close. Had John Ireland left this piece in manuscript I would not have been too amazed. There seem to be many differing influences; Fauré-like piano writing and Kurt Weill piquancy drift through like spectres amidst other Romantic spirits.

If I had thought the Berge eclectic, I hadn't bargained for the Madsen. It resembles an addled "curate's egg", but despite its Romantic weaknesses I really loved the good parts!

Johan Kvandal's *Salmestone* in its clean simplicity seems like a transition into Andrea Clearfield's *Into the Falcon's Eye* for 2 horns and piano which is a work commissioned by Wekre, and for me, brands this CD as, "Save the Best to Last".

Two horns and piano could ring the alarm bells of double trouble for the ensemble, but this is a jewel. Clearfield's exploitation of the timbres and techniques, - bends, glissandi, stopping, and flutter lays the souls of the instruments bare, but far from revealing flaws it serves to re-enforce Wekre's description of the horn as, "My fantastic instrument."

Adrienne Fox

April 2005

The Horn Player

The Horn Player is published by the British Horn Society.