

CLASSICAL LOST AND FOUND (CLOFO)

FORGOTTEN MUSIC BY GREAT COMPOSERS AND GREAT MUSIC BY
FORGOTTEN COMPOSERS



**Kleiberg: Vn Conc, DblB Conc; Thorsen/Sjölin/Reuss/Trond SO [2L]
AUDIOPHILE (1 SACD)**

For those of us living in the U.S. nation's Capital, 2004 saw one of the most memorable concert events in recent years, a performance of Norwegian-born Ståle Kleiberg's (b. 1958) powerful *Requiem for the Victims of Nazi Persecution* (2002) at Washington National Cathedral.

Commemorating the "9/11" terrorist attacks, it was broadcast nationally, and shortly thereafter released on CD to great critical acclaim. Now here's a new hybrid, CD(2)/SACD(2/5.1) disc from the 2L label with two concertos by this little known but highly gifted

composer. Both are contemporary works with an extended sense of tonality grounded in the late romantic rather than the avant-garde. Some may find they bring to mind the symphonic music

of Finnish composer [Magnus Lindberg](#), who oddly enough was born the same year as Kleiberg.

The CD begins with a violin concerto dating from 2005, which the composer considers one of his major works. Thematic metamorphosis is the common denominator in all three of its movements, and like Lindberg's highly praised [clarinet concerto](#), the variety of moods conjured up is nothing short of amazing. It opens pensively, gathering momentum as the soloist and orchestra carry on a fascinating chromatically colorful dialogue. In the process a number of fragmentary motifs are tossed about, finally coalescing into a robust melodic idea that ends the movement assertively.

The following *adagio* begins mysteriously as the violin in the company of other solo wind instruments drifts heavenwards. This leads to an orchestral catharsis and agitated passages haunted by repeated phrases on the vibraphone. Another *tutti* introduces a brief cadenza for the soloist, and then the movement ends in a state of celestial bliss.

The final *allegro* commences with a rhythmically jagged motif à la [Stravinsky](#) (1882-1971) played by the violin. The orchestra joins in, and a rhapsodic episode for the soloist with a walking bass and [quixotic](#) airborne flights of fancy in the woodwinds follows. The opening theme then reasserts itself, becoming the basis for the concerto's conclusion, which includes a much more extensive and demanding cadenza than what we heard before.

The next work is a real curiosity because it features the [double bass](#), which like the [tuba](#) is rarely chosen as the solo instrument for a concerto. This is understandable considering its limited natural note range as well as the extended length of its neck do not lend themselves to displays of virtuosity. Also, in spite of its size, a single bass fiddle has minimal decibel output compared to other modern day bowed instruments. On the other hand, with its longer strings it can produce more natural sounding harmonics than any other stringed instrument in the orchestra. Kleiberg takes full advantage of the latter, producing one of the most engaging bass concertos written to date.

Dating from 1999 and in three movements, the opening *andante* begins with alternating brass and string flourishes that seem Nordic in spirit and may recall [Sibelius'](#) (1865-1957) [Finlandia](#) (1900). The double bass enters sounding rather cello-like, and introduces an animated theme (AT) in its upper registers in tandem with the bassoon. A brief orchestral interlude follows, and the soloist then intones a fascinating folklike melody (FM) each note of which is one of those natural harmonics mentioned above. The two ideas are elaborated on by soloist and *tutti* in a manner sometimes reminiscent of the "Dawn" or "Sunday Morning" [interludes](#) from Britten's (1913-1976) [Peter Grimes](#) (1945). The movement then ends mysteriously with a restatement of FM.

In the hypnotic *adagio* that follows the soloist remains exclusively in the upper registers with natural stopping as well as those harmonics. The resulting sound world is quite unlike anything you've ever heard in a concerto for a bowed instrument. But the bass fiddle's true character shows through in the final *allegro*, where the stringed behemoth immediately chortles an ursine version of AT. This jolly movement once again finds our soloist frequently in the company of his woodwind counterpart, the bassoonist. It also includes a meditative cadenza of considerable difficulty. After it FM and AT return briefly in cyclic fashion, and the concerto ends on an orchestral high.

Violinist [Marianne Thorsen](#) and bassist Göran Sjölin are simply superb, playing with a verve and sensitivity that make a strong case for Kleiberg's music. The same can be said of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, which commissioned both pieces, and under conductor Daniel Reuss provides ideal support for both soloists.

The recordings are excellent with the CD and SACD stereo tracks producing a soundstage that's quite convincing even if it seems a bit stretched compared to the multichannel one. The instrumental timbre is totally natural sounding in all three playing modes across the extended frequency and dynamic spectrums effectuated by Kleiberg's brilliant scoring. The soloists are perfectly miked and highlighted against the orchestra. The **2L** folks pride themselves on their recordings, and audiophiles will not be disappointed with this one.

-- **Bob McQuiston**, Classical Lost and Found (CLOFO.com, Y091030)

- AVAILABILITY -

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