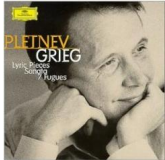


Grieg - Piano Sonata, 7 Fugues, Lyric Pieces (Pletnev)

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1. *Piano Sonata In E Minor, Op.7: 1. Allegro Moderato* 2. *Piano Sonata In E Minor, Op.7: 2. Andante Molto* 3. *Piano Sonata In E Minor, Op.7: 3. Alla Menuetto, Ma Poco Piu Lento* 4. *Piano Sonata In E Minor, Op.7: 4. Finale. Molto Allegro* 5. *Fuga A 2 In C Minor (allegro)* 6. *[fuga A 2] In C Major* 7. *Fuga A 3 In D Major (andante Non Troppo)* 8. *Fuga A 3 In A Minor (allegro)* 9. *Fuga A 4 In G Minor (allegro Non Troppo)* 10. *Fuga A 3 Voci In C Major (allegro Energico)* 11. *Fuga Duplex In G Minor (andante Non Troppo)* 12. *Bellringing, Op.54 No.6* 13. *Berceuse, Op.38 No.1* 14. *Butterfly, Op.43 No.1* 15. *Melody, Op.47 No.3* 16. *To Spring, Op.43 No.6* 17. *Wedding Day At Troldhaugen, Op.65 No.6* 18. *In Ballad Vein, Op.65 No.5* 19. *Brooklet, Op.62 No.4* 20. *Scherzo, Op.54 No.5* 21. *Vanished Days, Op.57 No.1* 22. *Grandmother's Minuet, Op.68 No.2* 23. *March Of The Trolls, Op.54 No.3* 24. *Carnival Scene Op.19 No.3* Mikhail Pletnev – piano

Pletnev provides scrupulous and sensitive advocacy for Grieg, including his previously unrecorded Fugues, in exceptional DG sound. It is heartening when artists of international stature take Grieg under their wing, their musical faith undiminished by the hostile and patronising attitudes of those who equate Grieg with little more than easily palatable or domestic virtues. Thankfully Debussy's dismissal of Grieg as 'a pink fondant stuffed with snow' has changed over the years from bane to joke. Mikhail Pletnev's recital ranges from the early, unwieldy but engaging E minor Sonata to the Fugues and a shrewd selection from Grieg's confessional diary, his Lyric Pieces. Composed in Leipzig in 1861-62, recently discovered and here receiving a world-premiere recording, the Fugues find Grieg most oddly attired, and doffing his mortarboard, so to speak, to the groves of Academe. But whether brisk, contemplative or quirky (No 6), all seven are played with impeccable clarity and musicianship. Hardly a pianist to wear his heart on his sleeve, Pletnev none the less combines his legendary cool head and crystalline technique with frequent flashes of poetry and affection.

He is generous and comprehensive in Vanished Days, music at once radiant, dark, introspective and joyful, finds an undertow of melancholy in the Brooklet's chatter (dismissed in

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the inadequate insert-note as 'a peacefully idyllic, leggero study'), is audaciously improvisatory in Melody and almost palpably warms to the central oasis of calm in March of the Trolls. His Grandmother's Minuet, too, wittily suggests a slightly tipsy as well as spry old lady. You may occasionally miss that 'world of intimate feeling' so unforgettably conjured by Pletnev's compatriot, Emil Gilels (DG, 2/97), but all these performances are of special calibre, at once scrupulous and sensitive. DG's sound is no less exceptional.-- Bryce Morrison, Gramophone [5/2000]

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