

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 528

Kirsten Flagstad

sings Grieg

Pristine
XR

1957 was the fiftieth anniversary of Grieg's death and to mark the occasion a special prom concert was organised to consist entirely of his music. It was decided that the occasion honouring Norway's most famous composer would be made extra special with an appearance by Norway's foremost singer, Kirsten Flagstad. Flagstad had retired from public performances following her Carnegie Hall farewells in 1955, but had continued to perform on the radio (including a complete *Götterdämmerung* broadcast over three days), and make commercial recordings. Happily Flagstad indicated her willingness to participate in the concert, paying tribute to a composer 'whose music meant so much to me.'

The concert consisted of a number of shorter Grieg pieces, *In Autumn*, *Lyric Suite*, *Peer Gynt Suite*, *Piano Concerto*, *Homage March* and ten songs. The entire prom was broadcast by the BBC on the Light Programme (a rather curious location, since most serious classical music was heard on the Third Programme or the Home Service), but the BBC Transcription Service were also there to record parts of the concert for the overseas audience.

While the purely orchestral pieces are of historic interest, and given a dash of energy by Sir Malcolm Sargent's conducting, the main attraction of the prom for attendees and radio listeners alike, was Flagstad's return to London, and to public performance. If anyone had concerns that her vocal instrument, so treasured from her pre- and post-war appearances at Covent Garden, had been diminished through lack of use, those doubts would have disappeared very rapidly. As the critic of the Times reported, the voice remained 'colossal', easily able to soar to the furthest reaches of the Albert Hall and every single one of the more than five thousand seats. Part of Flagstad's longevity was that she was always careful about what she sang, refusing to take on too many engagements, but her superb vocal technique obviously helped. Her voice is often described as 'seamless' without jarring register changes, and this concert demonstrates it clearly. The lower, middle and upper parts of the voice blend together perfectly and when she opens up the sound to something like full throttle (though one suspect she always kept a little in reserve) the impression is almost overwhelming.

The reviews were overwhelmingly positive. The Times thought that her voice 'has retained its glory in retirement; repose and relaxation have probably enhanced its potentiality.' Indeed the songs allowed her 'glorious musicianship' to shine through. Neville Cardus, writing in the *Manchester Guardian*, thought 'the tone and phrasing were, as ever, controlled without the slightest effort' and that the 'mellow warmth of her singing' was the only sign of her advancing years. Flagstad appeared in Norwegian national costume, much to the delight of her audience, and no doubt many hoped, as did the *Listener Magazine*, that she would be persuaded to return in future years. Alas it was not to be. Within days of this concert she wrote 'I will never sing in public again' and she stuck to that decision. While there were to be a few more recordings, including a set of Sibelius songs, and the role of Fricka in *Das Rheingold*, Flagstad never sang before an audience again. This recording shows that she left the concert stage while still at the height of her powers.

flagstad

sings grieg

Pristine
XR
PASC 528

her final concert performance, 1957
ten songs, plus orchestral music by grieg

bbc symphony orchestra, sir malcolm sargent



PRISTINE
AUDIO

PASC 528

FLAGSTAD SINGS GRIEG - HER FINAL CONCERT
FLAGSTAD, BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, SARGENT

flagstad

sings grieg

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 528

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Kirsten Flagstad and Sir Malcolm Sargent in the present concert, September 1957

A live BBC broadcast recording
Proms Concert, 7 September 1957
The Royal Albert Hall, London

1 In Autumn, Op. 11 (11:46)

Lyric Suite

- 2 1. Shepherd Boy (5:39)
- 3 2. Norwegian March (2:52)
- 4 3. Notturmo (3:58)
- 5 4. March of the Trolls (3:30)

12 Songs, Op. 33

- 6 No. 2 - Våren (*Last Spring*) (6:57)
- 7 No. 1 - Guten (*The Youth*) (2:55)
- 8 No. 9 - Ved Rondane (*At Rondane*) (3:55)
- 9 No. 12 - Fyremål (*The Goal*) (3:12)

10 Sigurd Jorsalfar (suite), Op.56, No 3 - Homage March (8:51)

- 11 6 Romances, Op.39, No. 1 - Fra Monte Pincio (*From Monte Pincio*) (5:55)
- 12 4 Songs, Op.21, No. 1 - Det første Møde (*The First Meeting*) (4:53)
- 13 5 Songs, Op. 26, No. 1 - Et håb (*Hope*) (2:34)
- 14 6 Songs, Op.25, No. 2 - En Svane (*A Swan*) (3:13)
- 15 5 Songs, Op.70, No. 1 - Eros (3:59)
- 16 Melodies of the Heart, Op.5, No. 3 - Jeg elsker Dig! (*I Love You!*) (3:20)

Total duration: 77:29

For a full catalogue visit
www.pristineclassical.com
or call : (00) 33 967 391 857

© 2018 Pristine Audio

Kirsten Flagstad *soprano*

BBC Symphony Orchestra *Sir Malcolm Sargent*

PRISTINE
AUDIO

FLAGSTAD SINGS GRIEG - HER FINAL CONCERT
FLAGSTAD, BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, SARGENT

PASC 528

PRISTINE
AUDIO