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gods of music

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REVIEWS

Review by: **Glenn Franco**

ARTIST: FRED JONNY BERG

SONG: FLUTE SONATA NO.1 OP.40 (THREE SEPARATE MOVEMENTS)

GENRE: CLASSICAL / CLASSICAL/CONTEMPORARY & VICE VERSA :0)

SIMILAR: ERIC SATIE, ANDERSEN

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This man is the epitome of contemporary/classical music. Fred Jonny Berg is a young, well-known and highly productive composer in his homeland of Norway but is quickly becoming world renown. He composes all sorts of music, mostly in a contemporary style, whatever that means these days.

First I must say this is one fabulous piece of music (actually one piece divided into three sections) and although listened to as 3 parts I am reviewing the score as a whole. I also must give kind words and credit to the fine musicians playing the piece. I must admit I know very little about Tom Ottar Andreassen who so very skillfully plays the flute in this piece but I wish to extend a BRAVO!!!! Very Very nice job!

Wolfgang Plagge on the piano has been considered from a very early age to be a musical genius playing since the age of 5 years old and composing since he was 12 and I absolutely agree, his playing perfectly complemented the flute on this piece and I dont believe there is another who could have played it better.

From the artists page: "The first movement is melodious - full of life..." I have never heard a statement quite so true. The flute floated me away on a gentle breeze over green grassy lowlands and thru soft puffy clouds high above with the piano adding its own flavor guiding me on my flight. Oh yes folks this is such a masterful piece I beg of you to listen and download this greatness!

From the artists page: "A tranquil and poetic movement..." Oh again how wonderful! This section really blew me away on my wonderful journey. Such twists and turns for such a modest section. This composer took the old adage "Less is more" and really ran with it. The soft flute and wonderfully diverse piano plucked at my heart strings flowing beautifully!

From the artists page: "The last movement of this sonata is presto, and demands virtuosity from the musicians." This one really put both Mr. Tom Ottar Andreassen and Mr. Wolfgang Plagge through the proverbial wringer testing their metal. Of course they....MADE IT THROUGH WITH FLYING COLORS!!! These guys are great and the composition they were playing took me to so many places it is almost impossible to describe or put into words!!

Fred Jonny Berg has given the world yet another timeless classic piece with "Flute Sonata no.1 op.40" and should be heralded for his tremendous effort and choice of musicians for this grand masterpiece! I beg all of you to please visit his page and download some or all of his music. I have been on this page now for hours enjoying all of his music over and over again. I can find no fault of any kind with this wonderful piece, it is truly perfect and there is only one score for perfection!

NOTE: Glenn Franco is neither a professional radio critic, a degree holding music professional, or amateur pornography star. He is purely a listener of a wide spectrum of genre that gives as qualified an opinion as can be expected from such. Please feel free to give viewer or artist feedback so that I can even better serve you here at Gods Of Music.

Thank You,

Glenn



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REVIEWS

Review by: Alexander Johannesen

ARTIST: FRED JONNY BERG

SONG: VIOLIN SONATA NO.1 OP.50

GENRE: CLASSICAL / CONTEMPORARY

SIMILAR: ERIC SATIE, ANDERSEN

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It has been hard to review this piece of music. Not so much because of its complexity or unfamiliar style, but because I have to balance my bias against my emotions. You see, the composer and the performers are all Norwegian like I am, a rare sight in my world of reviewing free Internet music, and they're doing music outside of the general scope which, to me, is a valued genre.

Don't get me wrong; my bias doesn't alter what I write here but keep in mind that we're dealing with really, talented professionals here, not your average wannabe composer playing with his or her accidental friends;

Fred Jonny Berg is a young, well-known and highly productive composer here in Norway. He composes all sorts of music, mostly in contemporary style, whatever that means these days.

Then we have the violinist Håvard Rognli that I know too little about, but enough to have recognized his name from a few assorted good concerts. I can only judge him by his playing, and, without revealing too much, there is no reason why his name shouldn't be next to the pianist's.

So naturally we come to the pianist, Wolfgang Plagge. A lot can be said about this guy but "genius" is a word he has lived with since he started performing as a 5-year old, composing from the age of 12. This is one of those rare birds out there who was born to play this type of music, one who understands that music is more than just playing notes on a piece of paper. And, admittedly, I've been a fan of his since I saw him live a few years back. On a side-note: He's also known for swaying back and forth as he plays, some don't like that. I, on the other hand, love it! He's alive and emotional, which is exactly what I think a good musician should be. But I digress...

Now, take these three people's expressions, throw them into the bag of contemporary music, and see what you get. Hard to tell, at best, and bloody impossible to easily explain without going through some slight paces, so here we go;

I have spent a long time listening to this piece of music. A very long time. I've had a fair bit of shouting, threatening and abuse from the automatic reviewing system. "Review that thing now!! You're late!" I've heard every week for the last two months. How can I explain to such an impersonal and unemotional system that these things take time? And when the music is so ... so ... grasping? Let's review "grasping"; I can't really find another word that is more suitable. Let me try to explain.

That which truly grasps me are most often things that are dead simple in texture and truly amazing in its complexity. In other words, I crave nice curves

on the outside, and a rough powerful monster under the hood. I like shiny crystals with electric current going through it; the perfect mix of the beauty and the workings behind it. I have no better way of explaining it, than to refer to Bach's cello suites, where a note is playing and switching to the next, creating a rumbling in the case of the instrument, which just happens to be the ground note of the next section's first note; simple in texture, simple when you listen to it but dearily and amazingly complex when you try to understand its nature and inner workings.

But a reference to Bach when reviewing this music is somewhat misleading. This is nowhere near the baroque style, tonality nor feel. In fact, the first association I got when listening to this is Eric Satie, that crazy French modernist of early to mid 20th century. So, through that reference, let us explore what the music is.

This music was first played in December of 1999, at the famous Edvard Munch museum in Oslo. I can imagine being there, the swaying pianist, the dramatic violinist, and a somewhat serious composer sitting close, amongst the pictures of the impressionist Munch. There are links here, intentional or not; Munch, violin, Satie, piano, impressionism, modernism. Just like the setting in which it was played, so it is equally compelling, or, rather, grasping. Yes, there goes that word again;

The music grasps me because it is a structured piece that has an improvised feel. The music starts off in one direction that soon changes from rhythm-bound to free-track in one moment, before it restructures itself in a adagio part that sounds like random themes put together, only fooling me until I have a second listen; there is structure, one level up.

The music grasps me because it portrays syncopation in seemingly unrelated places. Where one would think that the piano and the violin would go their separate ways, they don't. It feels almost like the syncopation is a hidden way of telling their context, having the two instruments say the same thing but mean two different things. And it is not out of place, but rather done very nicely indeed.

The music grasps me because the theme is vivace, yet subtle in the total piece, repeated enough for a statement, but less as a repetition. One problem with a lot of music is how you get the shampoo-rinse-shampoo-rinse cycle going too many times, making the music seem repetitive and lifeless. Not so here, where the seemingly repetitions are merely transcriptions of the previous cycle. And note the piano intro and outro to this piece; truly amazing, and something I'd love to hear more of.

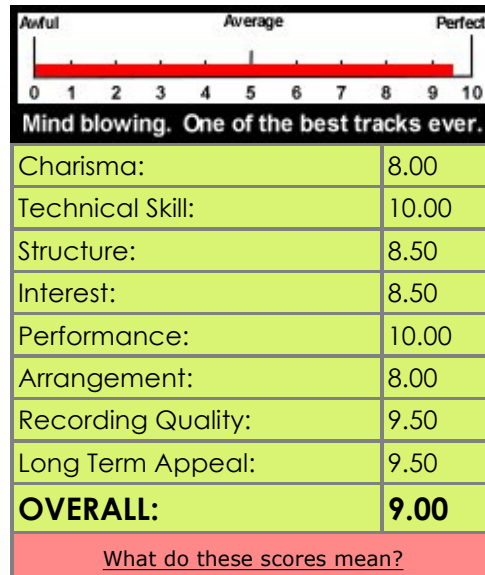
The music grasps me because it is darn well played! There is no denying the brilliance of the players here; lively, gentle, subtle, dramatic, all in their respective places, never out of tune, never out of touch with the music. If you don't like this type of music you should at least listen to it because of the performers; control, feel and understanding of the music in perfect symbiosis.

Having said all this, bare in mind that there is no revolution going on here. We've heard this music before, and it doesn't break any new ground. And hopefully it wasn't meant to do any such thing. As a stand-alone piece it is very nice in form and performance, but calling it new contemporary music is maybe stretching the genre to its limits, so let's settle for what it is; a nice contemporary piece I'll be playing through my system a lot in the future.

And Jonny; thanks for sharing your wonderful music with us. Rest assured your music will not go unnoticed, and that your homepage is duly noted in my favourite bookmarks.

Alexander Johannesen, *limited to my own shelter.*

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