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ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphonies 1 & 2

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra

Jan Willem de Vriend conductor

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ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 38

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| [1] | I. Andante poco maestoso - Allegro molto vivace | 11:24 |
| [2] | II. Larghetto | 6:00 |
| [3] | III. Scherzo - Molto vivace | 5:43 |
| [4] | IV. Allegro animato e grazioso | 8:15 |

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61

- | | | |
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| [5] | I. Sostenuto assai - Allegro ma non troppo | 11:57 |
| [6] | II. Scherzo - Allegro vivace | 7:10 |
| [7] | III. Adagio espressivo | 7:44 |
| [8] | IV. Allegro molto vivace | 8:25 |

Total time 66:43

Robert Schumann (1810-56) composed four symphonies. The first one is titled "Spring Symphony," written during a period Schumann himself characterized as happy (in 1841). A spring-like atmosphere rushes towards us at the beginning of this Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major. The symphony was written in an incredible four weeks. It originally had the headings "The Beginning of Spring – Evening – Joyful Play of Love – Full Spring." However, Schumann left this aside to create absolute music without commentary. There is no internal development in this work; instead, there are changing moods in each movement. Especially in the third movement, the scherzo, we encounter a "poetic character piece" with contrasting themes: passionate, lyrical, and dancing. The finale can be heard as a hymn to spring.

It was Leonard Bernstein who showed that Robert Schumann's Second Symphony in C major was not an independent work. Interpreted with urgency, contrasts, and with Bruckner-like mysticism, the work reveals something entirely different. Just listen to how the powerfully shining trumpet theme emerges from the mysteriously murmuring twilight! And it returns again at the end of the movement and at the end of the work. After the brilliant scherzo, there is a slow movement that stands as an emotional centerpiece in the work; it's a sort of nocturne or a romance that unexpectedly references Bach. The finale also has something unexpected about it, as it twice quotes a theme from Beethoven's song cycle "To the Distant Beloved": "So accept them, these songs."

Arnfinn Bø-Rygg



Harmony and legacy

Jan Willem de Vriend unravels Schumann's musical tapestry with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

Jan Willem, you are not the first Dutch conductor who regularly works with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

Working with this orchestra is very special, and I think it has to do with a very old tradition. A long time ago, they invited my colleague, Frans Brüggen, just as he was starting to conduct. I believe the orchestra helped him start as a conductor. He learned the orchestra about the old music style, the way of playing in the time of Mozart, Beethoven, Bach—how they played and how you must approach the music. On his part, Brüggen put something in the orchestra that I would say is now part of their DNA: the flexibility, the curiosity, and the way to approach the music. It's so special, here in Stavanger.

Recording sessions are a challenge in their precision; they are also a testament to the orchestra's commitment. Tell us something about the delicate balance required.

The main challenge with recordings is to find the balance between two things: technical perfection and the pleasure to take risks as if that music was played for the first time.

Delving into Schumann's musical world, what's your personal and intimate relationship with his music?

Schumann's music is to me something very special, because what he's writing is so personal; on one hand it is sometimes very emotional, but on the other hand, it's technically perfect. In music, I don't often find those two elements together.

What makes Schumann's musical personality unique, if compared to his contemporaries?

If I compare him with, for example, Beethoven, it's not about his headache, it's not about that he doesn't feel well, but it is about the time, it's about the politics of his time, about the relationship between him and other people. Or Mozart. He makes a structure, and combines it with for instance Freemason or politics, like in Figaro. With Schumann, it's about... for example, in his Second symphony, you hear he really honors Bach, Haydn, and Beethoven. You can hear small moments of a Haydn symphony, and then he used small moments of a piece of Bach, and he combines them to honor them, and that is the personal aspect in it. It's not about him, it's not about whether he is sad or whatever. It's his feelings for these colleagues, and to honor them. That makes it so tender and so sympathetic.

What about the composer's relationship with Clara, his wife?

You can hear this motive '*Clara, Clara.*' Their marriage was quite tough, I think. On the other hand, in the music, there are moments in the Second symphony that are really a love story told to her.

Probably Schumann would have liked to handle his marriage in a different way.

However, he just didn't know how to behave. He didn't know how to be kind to her, how to be open, to have a real relationship with her. So that's one thing of the personal aspects that makes these symphonies, for me, always very interesting to play.



Stavanger Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra was founded in 1938 and consists of 85 musicians from 23 different nations. SSO rehearses, records and has its concerts in Fartein Valen in Stavanger concert hall, considered one of the best concert halls in Europe.

The orchestra has been touring in various European countries, Japan and the USA. SSO was nominated for Spellemann in 2018 for Gisle Kverndock's Symphonic Dances, and received two Hedda Awards in 2019, including Best Performance, for *The Mute*.

Andris Poga is SSO's Chief Conductor. Tianyi Lu is the orchestra's current Conductor-in-Residence. Recent guest conductors have included Karina Canellakis, Pablo Heras-Casado, James Gaffigan, Stanislav Kochanovsky, Dalia Stasevska and Vassily Sinaisky. Frans Brüggen was the SSO's Artistic Director for early music from 1990-1997; Philippe Herreweghe had the same position from 2000 to 2004 and Fabio Biondi from 2006 to 2016. Ever since then, the SSO has continued to work regularly with exponents of historical performance practice including Kristian Bezuidenhout, Andrea Marcon, Jan Willem de Vriend, Matthew Halls, Ottavio Dantone, Riccardo Minasi, among others.

Jan Willem de Vriend is Principal Conductor of the Wiener KammerOrchester, Principal Guest conductor of the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor designate of the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, and artistic partner of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. He makes regular guest appearances with such ensembles as the Belgian National, Bergen Philharmonic,

Hong Kong Philharmonic, HR-Sinfonieorchester, Melbourne Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Warsaw Philharmonic and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony.

From 2015 to 2019 Jan Willem de Vriend was Principal Conductor of the Residentie Orkest Den Haag and from 2006 to 2017 he was Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (now Philon, Orkest van Gelderland & Overijssel). He was also Principal Guest Conductor of the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya from 2015 to 2021 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Brabant Orchestra (now South Netherlands Philharmonic) from 2008 to 2015. De Vriend and the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra went on to record a substantial Beethoven catalogue for Challenge Classics, embracing the complete symphonies and concertos (with Hannes Minnaar and Liza Ferschtman among the soloists). Classic FM praised the interpretation of Symphony No 7 for "a bounding flair that does real justice to the composer's capacity for joy". Further landmarks in the Challenge Classics catalogue are the complete Mendelssohn symphonies, again with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, and the complete symphonies of Schubert, recorded with the Residentie Orkest, also de Vriend's orchestra for a Decca recording of Mendelssohn's complete works for piano and orchestra.

De Vriend first established an international reputation as Artistic Director of the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, which he established in 1982 and led from the violin until 2015. Specialising in music of the 17th and 18th century,

and applying historically informed practice on modern instruments, the consort gave new life to many rarely heard works and Gramophone magazine praised its players as “accomplished ... with technical finesse and a lively feeling for characterisation”. Its collaborative spirit lives on in de Vriend’s approach as he explores and energises the symphonic repertoire, in particular the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Johann Strauss.

In the field of opera, in both Europe and the USA, de Vriend and Combattimento Consort Amsterdam gave performances of works by Monteverdi, Haydn, Handel, Telemann, and J.S. Bach (the Hunting and Coffee cantatas at the Leipzig Bach Festival), all in stagings by the director Eva Buchmann. Operas by such composers as Mozart, Verdi and Cherubini featured in his seasons with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, which included a visit to Switzerland with productions of Don Giovanni and Rossini’s La Gazzetta, again directed by Eva Buchmann. De Vriend has also conducted operas in Amsterdam (Nederlandse Reisopera), Barcelona, Strasbourg, Luzern, Schwetzingen and Bergen.

In the Netherlands he has presented several television series and is well known for his appearances on a variety of other programmes about music. In 2012 he received a prize from the national station NPO Radio 4 for his creative contribution to classical music.

This Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited using the ‘High Quality Musical Mastering’ principle with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



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