



BERWALD

Complete Duos

DDD

8.554286

Tobias Ringborg, Violin • David Bergström, Violin
Mats Rondin, Cello • Bengt-Åke Lundin, Piano



Franz Berwald (1796-1868): Complete Duos

Almost everybody would agree that Franz Berwald was the musical world's leading light in nineteenth-century Sweden. Many regard him as Sweden's foremost composer ever. But during his lifetime few of his countrymen appreciated his art.

This was partly because symphonies, the genre at which he excelled, were little appreciated. Besides operas and *Singspiele*, more intimate forms of music practised in the home with friends were preferred, such as piano pieces, chamber music, works for male choir and solo songs. Most of what was written was unpretentious in the salon music vein.

Orchestral concerts were given sporadically by the *Hovkapellet*, the orchestra of the Royal Opera, but the few symphonies that were presented in these concerts were foreign and usually quite old. For decades in Sweden no new symphonies appeared; Adolf Lindblad's *Symphony No. 1* being the only example. Its first performance in 1832 is significant from a musical historical point of view, but it hardly made an impact. Around ten years later the Leipzig Gewandhaus-orchester played it, but in Sweden Lindblad remained known exclusively for his songs and chamber music.

It is therefore easy to understand why Berwald the sophisticate found the antiquated Swedish music scene suffocating. In 1829, at the age of thirty-three, he left Sweden and moved to Berlin, where he remained for twelve years, working not as a musician but in one of the other professions he was obliged to practise during his lifetime in order to support himself. As a skilled orthopedic surgeon he managed to make a successful living, from 1835 running his own orthopedic institute. In his free time he wrote a not insubstantial amount of music, first and foremost operatic fragments, although nothing complete has emerged from this time. One can wonder why, when he had now found a more inspiring *milieu*.

In the spring of 1841 he closed the institute and moved to Vienna, it seems to continue his work in the orthopedic field. He discovered, however, that the Viennese showed an interest in his music, which seems to have cleared his writers' block. Although he only remained in Vienna for a year he managed to write several works, including two symphonies, four orchestral fantasies and the opera *Estrella de Soria*. Some of the works were played immediately, including most of the opera. He himself conducted three of the shorter pieces. The reception he received in this cosmopolitan city was more positive than any he had experienced before. One can understand why he might feel that the world was ready for his music, even Sweden. After thirteen years abroad he decided to return home. In April 1842 he arrived in Stockholm with his bags full of new music.

His hopes had been in vain however. The Swedish music scene had not changed noticeably at all. Stockholm, was, apart from the Opera, as provincial as it had always been, at least it seemed that way to Berwald who was now used to the rich concert life on the continent. The few compositions he did manage to have performed met with little success. Some works were deemed to be uninteresting, others the work of an eccentric outsider. Yet he did have some new ideas – from a Swedish perspective. Inspiration came from innovators such as Beethoven and Cherubini and, to a certain extent, Weber. When it came to inventiveness, sudden leaps and unexpected key changes he often went further than they did. The musical development of a piece by Berwald was far less predictable than most of the music that was known in Sweden at the time, and for us it is precisely the unexpected which makes it so exciting.

During his years abroad Berwald must have heard the music of Europe's true innovators; Berlioz, Liszt

and Wagner, however their influence is noticeably absent from his music. He continued to draw inspiration from the classicists and early romantics, Gluck and Mozart being among those he admired. What was foreign to Swedish audiences of the day was his pronounced personal style, rather than anything truly revolutionary.

Of Berwald's four symphonies, only the *Sinfonie sérieuse* (Naxos 8.553051) was played during his lifetime; once, badly rehearsed and with a greatly reduced orchestra. The performance took place at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm in 1843 under the direction of a conductor who, it seems, showed no great interest in the work. This was Berwald's cousin Johan Fredrik Berwald, renowned as an imaginative director of music, but not on very good terms with cousin Franz, ten years his junior.

Whether through personal animosity, a lack of understanding of the music or quite simply insufficient rehearsal time, Swedish audiences' only opportunity to hear the symphonic genius of Berwald was thus lost. The work was not performed again until 1876, eight years after Berwald's death. Several of the other symphonies had to wait until the beginning of the twentieth century for first performances.

In 1846 Berwald departed once more for foreign shores, stopping in Paris, Vienna, Salzburg and southern Germany. In Vienna he was once again warmly received, on one occasion in a performance with Jenny Lind. In Salzburg he became one of the few Swedes to have the rare honour of being elected an honorary member of the Mozarteum. He was also accorded warm receptions elsewhere.

Economic difficulties forced Berwald to return to Sweden for good in 1849 and for seven years he managed a glassworks in Ångermanland in Northern Sweden. He was still able to spend his winters in Stockholm where, amongst other things, he was able to

take part in performances of chamber music in the homes of various musically-minded families. His failure to gain an audience for his larger works caused him now to concentrate almost completely on chamber music. In the ten years after his return to Sweden he completed two piano quintets, two string quartets, three piano trios as well as duos for violin and piano and cello and piano. Six of these works he had published by the Hamburg publishing house Schubertsh.

It is to this period that four of the works on the present recording belong. The remaining piece appears to have been written in 1816 or 1817 by a twenty-year old Berwald who had already been employed by the *Hovkapellet* for four years. His younger brother August was also employed there and from time to time the two violinists gave concerts in Stockholm and elsewhere. The *Duo Concertant for two violins* may have been composed for just such an occasion. That the piece survives at all today is pure chance; in 1931 a man by the name of Martin Andréason was walking past a demolition site when he noticed a few sheets of manuscript sticking out of an abandoned suitcase amongst the rubble. Fortunately the man was not just anyone, but one of the répétiteurs at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. When he opened the case he discovered a bundle of old manuscripts including the *Duo Concertant*. A further coincidence was that Andréason's wife was the violinist Lottie Andréason, who for many years had been a member of the Berwald Trio together with the composer's grand-daughter, the pianist Astrid Berwald. It was natural that Lottie therefore be entrusted with the manuscripts. It transpired that they had been given to Henrik Hästesko, a violin pupil of Berwald's cousin Johan Fredrik Berwald, and that they had remained in the Hästesko family until they were discovered in the abandoned suitcase.

The *Duo for cello (or violin) and piano* seems to have been written in the early autumn of 1857, when

Berwald had just returned from a visit to Weimar, during which he received praise from Liszt for some of his works. Berwald dedicated the *Duo* to a cellist from Weimar, Bernhard Cossman, who gave the first performance of the work in January 1859.

In June of that year the work received a successful performance in Leipzig from Friedrich Grützmacher (best known today for his dubious edition of one of Boccherini's cello concertos) and the twenty-one-year old pianist Hilda Thegerström, a protégée of Berwald's whom he introduced to Liszt. Following an acclaimed début that year Thegerström soon came to be regarded as Sweden's finest pianist.

At some point between 1858 and 1860 Berwald wrote the *Duo for violin and piano*. No performances during Berwald's lifetime are documented, but it may well have received a private performance at the home of Berwald's friend Lars Fries, where many of Berwald's works had received their first airings. In any case the manuscript was in the possession of Fries at the time of the composer's death.

The violin part of the *Concertino for violin and piano* was written for a musician who was to become world-famous; the soprano Christina Nilsson (1843-1921), who, as a child was well-known enough in the

dance halls of her home province of Småland to be given the nickname *Stina from Snugge*. In 1859 she began lessons with Berwald, who offered her lodgings in his home. At various song recitals in Stockholm the following year she delighted audiences with her violin playing as well as her singing, presumably including her teacher's *Concertino*. Only the first part survives today, and it is not known how much longer the piece originally was. In contrast to the brilliant piano parts of the completed duos the piano part here appears purely in a supporting rôle.

Apart from his *Piano Concerto* for Hilda Thegerström (Naxos 8.553052), Berwald did not attempt any larger scale works for the piano, although several smaller pieces of various types exist. The *Fantasy on two Swedish folk-melodies* has been preserved only in an anonymous manuscript in a hand other than Berwald's, and although it does not name him it has been attributed to Berwald. Probably written in the late 1850s it contains the *Värmlandsvisan* (Värmland Song), well-known in Sweden to this day, and a melody that is believed to be derived from a polka by the Dalecarlian fiddler Pekkös Per.

Sven Kruckenberg
English version: Andrew Smith

Tobias Ringborg

Tobias Ringborg was born in Stockholm in 1973. He began playing the violin at the age of three and was admitted to the violin class of the Royal University College of Music in Stockholm at the age of fifteen. In the spring of 1994 he received his Soloist Diploma with a Medal of Honour. He also studied abroad with teachers such as Herman Krebbers and Igor Oistrakh and he spent two years studying with Lewis Kaplan at the Juilliard School in New York. Tobias Ringborg has won many prestigious awards, including the Premier Prix of the Concours International de Musique de Chimay in Belgium. He has appeared with conductors such as Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Okko Kamu, Sakari Oramo, Daniel Harding, Paavo Järvi and Ronald Zollman and in March 1996 he performed the Mendelssohn Concerto on tour with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Muhai Tang. He has also given numerous recitals throughout Sweden and Europe, as well as in the USA. As a

chamber musician, Ringborg has collaborated with musicians such as Håkan Hagegård, Michel Lethiec and Daniel Blumenthal. He plays a 1709 Stradivarius, lent to him by the Järnäker Foundation of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

Mats Rondin

Born in 1960, the Swedish cellist Mats Rondin studied at the Swedish Radio Music School in Edsberg, continuing his studies in London with William Pleeth, and also with Ralph Kirshbaum and Mstislav Rostropovich. From 1982 to 1985 he served as principal cellist with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and since then has occupied a similar position with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He teaches at the Music Academies in Malmö and Stockholm and is well-known as a soloist, as well as for his numerous recordings. According to Esa-Pekka Salonen, 'His technique is impeccable, his musicality intense and his taste unflinchingly refined'.

Bengt-Åke Lundin

Bengt-Åke Lundin was born in 1963. He studied at the Royal Conservatory in Stockholm with Irène Mannheimer, and has taken part in master-classes for Tatiana Nikolayeva, Dmitry Bashkirov and Noel Florez. He made an acclaimed debut playing Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto in B flat minor*, since when he has appeared frequently as a soloist with leading orchestras, in recital and in several recordings for Swedish Radio, above all of Swedish music. His frequent collaborations with contemporary composers have resulted in a number of works dedicated to him, such as Johann Hammerth's *Piano Concerto*, which he premiered in 1994. Bengt-Åke Lundin has appeared throughout Europe, as well as in Egypt and China. In the spring of 1996 he was chosen with five other young soloists to give a series of recitals at prestigious concert halls in Europe, including the Vienna Musikverein, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Philharmonie in Cologne and the Alte Oper, Frankfurt.

David Bergström

David Bergström was born in Täby, to the north of Stockholm, in 1976. Both his parents are musicians and he began to play the violin at the age of five. Following studies with Milan Vitek in Copenhagen he attended the Conservatory in Gothenburg, where he is currently studying for his diploma. He has already made many notable appearances as a soloist, performing Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto* under Sïsten Ehrling, and his official debut with Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E minor* under the same conductor, as well as with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Neeme Järvi. Alongside his studies David Bergström is leader of the Huaröd Chamber Orchestra and, since January 2000, the Royal Danish Orchestra in Copenhagen

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Piano Quintets
(Complete)

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Playing
Time
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Franz
BERWALD

(1796-1868)

Complete Duos

Tobias Ringborg, Violin • David Bergström, Violin*
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|----|---|-------|
| | Duo in D minor for violin and piano (1858) | 18:22 |
| 1 | Allegro | 8:36 |
| 2 | Andante | 4:04 |
| 3 | Allegro giocoso | 5:42 |
| 4 | Fantasy on two Swedish folk-melodies (1850)
for piano solo | 7:29 |
| 5 | Concertino in A minor
for violin and piano (1859) Fragment | 2:40 |
| | Duo Concertant in A minor
for two violins (1816)* | 24:28 |
| 6 | Adagio con espressione | 2:53 |
| 7 | Andantino con variazioni | 15:57 |
| 8 | Rondo | 5:39 |
| | Duo in B flat major
for cello and piano (1857) | 17:07 |
| 9 | Allegro ma non troppo | 6:11 |
| 10 | Poco adagio quasi andante | 5:12 |
| 11 | Allegro agitato | 5:44 |

For much of the nineteenth century in Sweden, music-making was confined to small-scale chamber music at home and ambitious composers had to move abroad to seek acceptance of their work. Whilst Berwald enjoyed some success in continental Europe, only a handful of his orchestral works were performed in Sweden during his lifetime. This caused him in later years to concentrate on chamber music, completing two piano quintets, two string quartets, three piano trios as well as duos for violin and piano and cello and piano. Berwald received much encouragement from his friend Liszt who praised Berwald's invention, skill and elegant style whilst adding, somewhat prophetically: 'you truly possess originality but you will not enjoy success during your lifetime. Nevertheless you must persevere.'

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Engineer: Torbjörn Samuelsson
Music Notes: Sven Kruckenberg

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by Johan Way (Nationalmuseet, Stockholm/Bridgman Art Library)

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