

Orchestral

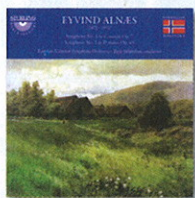
Richard Ayres's NONcertos • A Superman symphony • Boulez boxed

Alnæs

Symphonies – No 1, Op 7; No 2, Op 45
Latvian National Symphony Orchestra /
Terje Mikkelsen

Sterling © CDS1084-2 (78' • DDD)

**Appealing Nordic rarities dusted
 off with polish and conviction**



Anyone who invested in Piers Lane's splendidly charismatic Hyperion recording (6/07) of the Piano Concerto by Eyvind Alnæs (1872-

1932) will also find much to savour in this enterprising coupling of his two symphonies. Like Grieg, Svendsen and Sinding before him, Alnæs studied under Carl Reinecke in Leipzig, where his First Symphony enjoyed a successful premiere in 1899. A very likeable find it proves, too, a work of no little fluency and craft which reveals an undeniable lyrical gift in the generously songful *Adagio* slow movement in particular. There are echoes of Grieg, Dvořák and (closer to home) Stanford in this endearing music, which radiates a skip and warm-hearted honesty that make it easy to forgive the occasional lapse into sequential squareness and timid convention. Its successor (completed nearly a quarter of a century later) employs a larger orchestra – the celesta makes an ear-tickling appearance halfway through the first movement – but emerges more as a sizeable suite, albeit full of attractive invention and with rather more in the way of local colour to boot (the finale's main idea dances to the step of the Norwegian *balling*).

To be honest, neither symphony operates at anywhere near the same level of exalted inspiration as Svendsen's but they do make highly diverting listening and many will be well pleased to make their acquaintance, especially when Terje Mikkelsen secures such tidy, bright-eyed results from the Latvian National SO. Copious presentation and vivid sound, too, though the slightly hollow acoustic precludes the last ounce of transparency and bloom. No matter, inquisitive collectors with a sweet tooth can safely investigate.

Andrew Achenbach

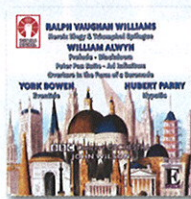
Alwyn • Bowen • Parry • Vaughan Williams

Alwyn Overture in the Form of a Serenade^a.
 Prelude. Blackdown. Peter Pan Suite.

Ad infinitum Bowen Eventide, Op 69^b Parry
 Hypatia – incidental music Vaughan Williams
 Heroic Elegy and Triumphal Epilogue^b
^aMicaela Haslam sop ^bRoderick Elms org
^aLondon Chorus; BBC Concert Orchestra /
 John Wilson

Dutton © CDLX7237 (73' • DDD)

**VW's substantial early elegy is among an
 outstanding treasure chest of lost gems**



Here's a fascinating haul of long-buried British rarities, all performed with exemplary dedication by the BBC Concert Orchestra under John Wilson's clear-headed lead and afforded gloriously ripe, airy sound from the production team.

It's hard to believe that a diptych as substantial and nobly eloquent as Vaughan Williams's *Heroic Elegy and Triumphal Epilogue* (originally conceived as the second and third movements of a symphonic rhapsody in three parts) should have lain unheard for over a century (the 32-year-old composer directed the last known performance, in Leeds, on January 21, 1905). This is a confidently paced, compassionate and ultimately stirring 20-minute essay, studded with enthralling glimpses of great achievements to come; the orchestral writing, too, is already remarkably assured, with some marvellously unclotted brass sonorities in particular. At the March 1901 RCM premiere of the *Heroic Elegy* under Stanford, the latter reputedly commented to his pupil John Ireland: "That's better than anything you could write, me bhoys."

A similarly deft touch is evident in every bar of York Bowen's 1922 orchestral poem *Eventide*, an ecstatically lovely and voluptuously scored creation that no admirer of this prolific figure should miss hearing. Bowen's own November 1926 performance with the Guildford SO shared the bill with the world premiere of William Alwyn's tone-poem *Blackdown*, one of four early offerings here, all of which demonstrate a budding orchestral mastery; the 18-year-old's miniature *Peter Pan Suite* proves an especially exquisite find. Designed as a tribute to Holst and VW, Alwyn's *Overture in the Form of a Serenade* from 1946 makes a delightful curtain-raiser, and the programme concludes with three excerpts from Parry's strongly communicative and characteristically humane

incidental music for Stuart Ogilvie's adaptation of Charles Kingsley's novel *Hyppatia* (first staged in London, on January 2, 1893, at the Theatre Royal on Haymarket).

Extensive and knowledgeable notes by Andrew Knowles (of the William Alwyn Foundation) and Lewis Foreman (Dutton's indefatigable A&R consultant) lend further lustre to an outstanding release that deserves every success. Andrew Achenbach

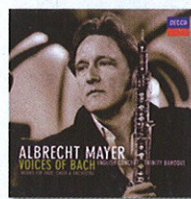
JS Bach

Concerto for Oboe d'amore, Strings and Continuo (from BWV209). Concerto for Cor anglais, Strings and Continuo (from BWV54). Concerto for Oboe, Strings and Continuo (from BWV105, 170 and 49). Chorales – Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan (from BWV75); Jesu bleibet meine Freude (from BWV147); Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren (from BWV167); Dein Blut, der edle Saft (from BWV136); Ich bitte dich, Herr Jesu Christ (from BWV166); Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme (from BWV140); So fahr' ich hin zu Jesu Christ (from BWV31); Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan (from BWV12)

Trinity Baroque; The English Concert /
 Albrecht Mayer ob

Decca © 478 1517DH (65' • DDD)

**Selections from Bach's cantatas
 arranged into oboe concertos**



For his second Bach album Albrecht Mayer, principal oboist in the Berlin Philharmonic, has collaborated once again with arranger Andreas Tarkmann. They have fashioned a variety of movements from Bach cantatas into three new concertos, one each for oboe, cor anglais and oboe d'amore. The latter is based on the cantata "Non sa che sia dolore" – one of only two Italian text settings by Bach.

In a nod to authenticity Mayer directs the strings of the English Concert. The recording was made in 2009 in the Roman Baroque splendour of St Paul's Church, Deptford. The balance favours the soloist and vocal layers. The orchestra sounds a little recessed at times. The use of a lute as the continuo instrument emphasises a sense of fragility.

The chorales, sung with precision and sweetness by Julian Podger's vocal ensemble Trinity Voices are enhanced by Mayer's stylistically sympathetic obbligato