



SÆVERUD PIANO EDITION • 4

DDD

8.557050

A profile portrait of Harald Sæverud, an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark suit and a patterned bow tie. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text.

**Harald
SÆVERUD**

Complete Piano Music

“Yearning Waltz”

Peer Gynt Suite No. 2

5 Capricci

Squirrel Dance

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

Harald Sæverud (1897-1992) Complete Piano Edition, Volume 4

Throughout his life, Harald Sæverud was one of the most distinctive figures on the Norwegian music scene. His desire to express himself and his will to seek unique solutions to the artistic challenges presented by each new work gave rise to a personal musical idiom, easily recognisable as ‘Sæverudian’. The English conductor Sir John Barbiroli, closely acquainted with Sæverud’s orchestral music, expressed his uniqueness thus: “Whether you like the music of Sæverud or not there is no mistaking who wrote it, and this can be said of few composers of the present day.”

The neglect, or even contempt, with which Sæverud often appeared to treat conventions and inherited ‘truths’ should not be seen as a disparagement of the historical music tradition. It was within this tradition that he found support for his own preferences, often indicating Mozart and Haydn as his most important influences. His formal music education was somewhat fragmentary; in 1915 he entered the Music Academy in Bergen where he studied the piano, supplemented by lessons in music theory taught by Borghild Holmsen, an accomplished pianist and composer with a degree from the music conservatory in Leipzig. After having completed the course at the Bergen Music Academy, Sæverud undertook further periods of study in Berlin (1920–21) and Paris (1925).

The support he received from his older, distinguished colleagues at the outset of his career was particularly important to Sæverud. Certain members of this group of colleagues, such as Christian Sinding, had difficulty in grasping Sæverud’s musical intentions, but were nonetheless positive to his achievements. Sæverud’s spirited style and power of expression bore witness to his unique talent. The support and encouragement offered by Gerhard Schjelderup in Norway and Carl Nielsen in Denmark was no less influential, just as was Sæverud’s friendship with the composer and conductor, the

younger Johan Ludwig Mowinckel. It was thanks to Mowinckel that excerpts from Sæverud’s first symphony were performed in Berlin in 1921.

Slowly but surely, Sæverud gained a prominent position in the music life of Norway, subsequently attracting international interest, particularly during the 1950s and 60s. In addition to being one of Norway’s most distinctive and unique composers, he was also able to find time for administrative work and held honorary positions in organizations such as Ny Musikk (the Norwegian section of the ISCM) and Musikselskabet Harmonien (the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra). In the course of his career he received a number of awards both in Norway and abroad, and from 1953 was a recipient of the annual state grant to artists.

Harald Sæverud’s output falls into two main categories, works for orchestra and works for piano. The works for orchestra include nine symphonies and solo concertos for oboe, violin, piano and bassoon, in addition to a number of single movement works. It is therefore no coincidence that his Opus 1 is *5 capricci* for piano (1919), while Opus 2 is the *Symphony No. 1 in G minor* (1920). At a relatively late stage in his career he also made a considerable contribution to the chamber music repertoire. It is also interesting to note that his meagre production of theatre music had a substantial impact in Norway’s cultural spheres; this is particularly true of his music to Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* (1947) which became an ‘anti-romantic’ opposite to Edvard Grieg’s music to the same play.

Many of the characteristic traits which make Sæverud’s music so easily recognisable are ubiquitous in his music, and not least in the works for solo piano. However it is not so easy to categorize Sæverud’s music in any one particular style. His music has been labelled in a variety of ways: atonal (though much of his music is clearly tonal); barbaric (though many

works are inclined towards lyrical-romantic moods); dissonant (though just as frequently we encounter consonant triads); thematically ‘short of breath’ (though many themes are given generous space in which to unfold). Common to most of the piano pieces is an apparently simple form and texture, often two-part, with detailed dynamics and pedalling. Frequently we find a highly individual development of each part, giving the music a distinctive dissonant quality, and when the rhythmic element in each part is treated similarly freely, the end result is that tonal quality referred to above as ‘Sæverudian’.

The music for Ibsen’s play *Peer Gynt* has a special place among Sæverud’s compositions. The theatre director Hans Jacob Nilsen asked Sæverud to compose new music for a new “anti-romantic” production of *Peer Gynt* for which Grieg’s well-known music was less appropriate. The first performance took place at Det norske Teater in Oslo on 2nd March 1948. The stage version of the music contains 26 numbers of which eleven in 1950 were published in an arrangement for piano. Later on, in 1973, two more numbers (*Peerludium* and *Her var mitt keiserdom*) were transferred to the piano and a revision of *Tvinman* was worked out as well, all three of them by Einar Steen-Nøkleberg in

cooperation with the composer. The division of the thirteen pieces into two suites was, from then on according to the composer’s wish.

The *Five Capricci, Op.1*, written in 1918 and 1919, were Sæverud’s first published works (1922) dedicated to his teacher at the Bergen Music Academy, Borghild Holmsen. It is the young romantic with much on his mind who speaks to us through this eruptive, dramatic music.

There are four suites entitled *Slåtter og stev fra “Siljustøl” Op.21, 22, 24 and 25*. The first three date from the years 1942–44 whereas the last suite was written between 1950 and 1955 (it was not published until 1966). Sæverud says of the individual titles of his piano pieces that their function is to give an indication of how the single piece is to be played; the music is therefore not intended to be descriptive or programmatic. The title of No.5, *Randomoltogåjo* is invented by Sæverud to make the performer grasp the idea behind the composition: it should be played as if it has a built-in motor. According to the composer No. 2, *Draumeslåten*, is one of his best piano pieces.

Øyvind Norheim

First Performances of Harald Sæverud

It was a most exciting time being an archaeologist among Sæverud's forgotten and hidden (posthumous) manuscripts. They were literally in total disorder and had to be excavated with the greatest care. The manuscripts were kept in Siljustøl, the composer's house, and in Bergen off. bibliotek, Musikkavdelingen (the Bergen Public Library, Music Department). Every composition and every note in this recording, however is original, nothing added, nothing changed.

Længselsvals is most charming and ought to prove popular among Sæverud's works, on the level of *Rondo amoroso* and *Kjempeviseslåtten* in its appeal to the listener and player. With *Kongeslageren* Sæverud gives a flashy, almost ragtime-like tribute to his King and his country.

The rest of the pieces must speak for themselves and for the most exciting and sparkling musical personality of Harald Sæverud.

Sæverud's Musical World

"All my music has grown out of a vague and supernatural sound. As a fourteen-year-old boy I heard the invisible fluttering of owls' wings in the summer night. This made the starting-point for all my music."

So much for Sæverud's own words. Motifs came to his mind almost like wild flowers and weeds, he said. He let them grow freely while he, the composer, could only be their guiding gardener. Evidently he could not decide for their growth and development, just lead them along. As much as Sæverud loved plants he even cared for stones. "There is also much stone in my music!" he said.

Sæverud does not often describe the grand Norwegian scenery of mountains and fjords. He rather gives focus to fragments of nature and human moods; he describes ancient legends and myths or tales from valleys and islands. Throughout his life Sæverud consciously suffered from being born on the site of a former churchyard, a place of execution from Viking times. He kept talking about the sadness, sorrow and the dissonances this fact gave to his art. "There are reflections of murder and death in me as well as in my music." Those were his words. This provides, therefore, an underlying sombre quality to his otherwise cheerful music.

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

The Sæverud Edition has been supported by Grieg-Forsk
and the Edvard Grieg Museum, Bergen, Norway

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg



© Hæge Håtveit Moe

The Norwegian pianist Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was an early winner of the German High School Piano Competition. Other prizes include the Norwegian Piano Competition in 1972, and in 1975 the Norwegian Critics Prize for Best Performance, awarded after a performance of Grieg's *Piano Concerto* at the Bergen Festival. In 1976 he was honoured for the Norwegian recording of the Year, with a recital of music by Norwegian Baroque composers. Other awards include the Grieg Prize in 1985 and in 1992. From 1975 to 1981 Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was professor of piano at the Hanover Musikhochschule and in recent years has enjoyed an international career, with recitals throughout Europe, in the United States of America and in the former Soviet Union. He was appointed a Knight of St Olav by the King of Norway for his contribution to Norwegian music.

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Peer Gynt Suite II, Op. 28, No. 2 [Tracks 1,5-6: NMI 2-4, 7-8: M-H] | 21:41 |
| | Peer-ludium — Peer-ludium | 3:08 |
| 2 | Brureslåtten — Bridal Dance | 3:40 |
| 3 | Hotaren — The Threatener | 1:32 |
| 4 | Gravsalmen — Grave Hymn | 3:27 |
| 5 | Twinnan — Twinnan | 2:03 |
| 6 | Her var mitt keiserdom — Here was my Empire | 3:13 |
| 7 | Pinsesalmen — Whitsun Hymn | 1:05 |
| 8 | Sov du dyreste gutten min — Sleep my Precious, my Darling Boy | 3:32 |
| | Five Capricci, Op. 1 [NMO] | 15:25 |
| 9 | No.1 - Prestissimo | 2:15 |
| 10 | No.2 - Allegro non troppo | 3:09 |
| 11 | No.3 - Allegretto | 2:20 |
| 12 | No.4 - Allegro molto e grazioso | 3:51 |
| 13 | No.5 - Allegro ritmico | 3:51 |

	From Posthumous Manuscripts [BOB]	27:25
14	Længselsvals — Yearning Waltz	1:41
15	Malle — Silurus glanis	1:41
16	Sorg (skisse) — Sorrow (sketch)	1:39
17	Haren og reven — The Hare and the Fox	1:22
18	Julesang (“Jeg er så glad hver julekveld”) — Christmas Song	1:15
19	Vals (fritonal) — Waltz (free-tonal)	1:21
20	Båd’ n-sull — Lullaby	1:54
21	Scherzo	1:41
22	Scherzino, e-moll — Scherzino, E minor	1:04
23	Scherzo (med tema fra klaversonaten), g-moll Scherzo (with theme from Piano Sonata), G minor	1:29
24	Aften (tema fra Sonate i g-moll, op. 3), e-moll Evening (theme from the Sonata in G minor, op. 3), E minor	2:18
25	Sonate, g-moll (skisse) — Sonata, G minor (sketch)	0:44
26	Sonatine, C-dur — Sonatina, C major	1:35
27	Novelette — Youthful Places	2:26
28	Novelette, g-moll — Novelette, G minor	1:30
29	Melodi, g-moll — Melody of the Mermaid, G minor	1:50
30	Kongeslageren (Krigs H7) — Royal Hit	1:55

Slåtter og stev fra “Siljustøl”, Vol. 4, Op. 25 [M-H] **13:24**
(Tunes and Dances from “Siljustøl”)

31	Høgsetestev — High Seat Lay	2:30
32	Draumeslåttén — Dark Dream	1:08
33	Fossekallen — The Dipper	2:52
34	Tones vuggevisé — Tone’s Cradle Song	3:37
35	Randomoltogâjo	3:18

NMO = Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo; M-H = Musikk-Huset, Oslo; NMI = Norsk musikkinformasjon, Oslo;
 NMS = Norsk musiksamling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, avd. Oslo; BOB = Bergen off. bibliotek.

With thanks to Roger Martin

“All my music has grown out of a vague supernatural sound. As a fourteen-year-old boy I heard the invisible fluttering of owls’ wings in the summer night. This was the starting-point for all my music.” Throughout his life, Harald Sæverud was one of the most distinctive figures on the Norwegian music scene. His desire to express himself and to seek unique solutions to the artistic challenges presented by each new work, gave rise to a personal musical idiom. Sæverud’s music tends not to describe the grand Norwegian scenery of mountains and fjords, but focuses on nature and the human moods reflected in it, incorporating Norwegian folk-lore and legends.

**Harald
SÆVERUD**
(1897-1992)

WORLD PREMIERE
RECORDINGS

Complete Piano Works, Vol. 4

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1-8 Peer Gynt Suite II, Op. 28, No. 2 | 21:41 |
| 9-13 Five Capricci, Op. 1 | 15:25 |
| 14-30 From Posthumous manuscripts (including Yearning Waltz) | 27:25 |
| 31-35 Slåtter og stev fra “Siljustøl” Vol. 4, Op. 25 | 13:24 |
- (Tunes and Dances from “Siljustøl”)

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

The Sæverud Edition was recorded on 9th-10th June 1997, 30th June - 3rd July 1997, 14th April 1998, 15th-17th May 1998, 16th - 18th July 1998, 22nd July 1998, 24th - 26th November 1998 and 1st May 2002 in St Martin’s Church, East Woodhay, Hampshire, UK.

Producer and Engineer: Andrew Walton & Eleanor Thomason (K&A Productions Ltd.)

Tracks 14-30 are World Premiere Recordings • A complete track list can be found on pages 5-6 of the booklet

The Sæverud Edition has been supported by Grieg-Forsk and the Edvard Grieg Museum, Bergen. Norway

Booklet Notes: Øyvind Norheim • Cover Photo: Harald Sæverud © H. J. Brun, Bergen (Siljustøl Museum, Bergen, Norway)



DDD

8.557050

Playing Time
77:56



© & © 2002 HNH International Ltd.
Booklet notes in English
Made in E. C.

www.naxos.com