

MAGNUS BOYE HANSEN — VIOLIN
MATHIAS HALVORSEN — PIANO

Christian Sinding
Violin Sonatas 1 – 3

LAWO
CLASSICS



For much of his life **Christian Sinding** (1856-1941) was a prominent figure in Norwegian and European cultural landscape. He worked as a composer for more than 50 years during a time when society was undergoing significant cultural and political upheavals. His own musical style didn't take any substantial twists and turns throughout his career; he stuck to his own musical language, seemingly uninterested in the plethora of avant-garde movements materialising in the music world around him. The courage and creativity he showed in order to realise his most crafty ideas within his life-affirming style is what is most admirable.

Sinding was born in Kongsberg in 1856 and grew up in a family brimming with artistic talent. The Sinding siblings' sense of enthusiasm and drive for the arts must have been well nurtured by their surroundings. Their parents, the famous geologist Wilhelm Mathias Sinding and his wife Cecilie Mejdell, made sure that art, literature, and natural science played an integral part in the Sinding household. In fact each of the four siblings were to become prominent figures in Norwegian cultural life, although Christian was the only one of the group to dedicate his artistic talent to music. He clearly wanted to become a composer.

As with many Norwegian composers before him, Christian Sinding travelled to Leipzig to study composition. There he had his first encounter with Richard Wagner's music and developed a lifelong fascination with it, something that is easily identifiable in his compositions. He felt at home in Germany and within the German cultural sphere, and he would later spend a large part of his life there.

In *Sonata No. 1*, the genesis of these new impulses can clearly be heard, including an extensive use of leading motives and "Wagnerian" harmonies. Additionally, the sonata possesses an operatic grandeur that almost stretches the boundaries of what a violin sonata can actually be. Sinding clearly demonstrates through this his uncompromising courage when realising his ideas, exemplified in the long chromatic passage in the final movement's coda. It would have been easier to fully realise this musically with a large orchestra, but Sinding chose the chamber music format for just two musicians, with the result being subtle, energetic, and effective.

There is a clear development in Christian Sinding the composer from the first to the last sonata, the first being full of youthful whims and virtuosic energy, with a pronounced orchestral *schwung*, or momentum. The second sonata is more nimble in style, with clear references to both Vivaldi and Schubert. While these two initial works are energetic and youthful, the third sonata in F major appears more focused and "mature", highlighting the fact that Christian had become an experienced composer, seemingly less interested in experimenting and provoking as he was in the first two sonatas. He was now focusing his creativity on harmony, melody and form, eschewing the more untamed dallying with musical syntax of the first two sonatas, and adopting a cleaner expression.

Sinding's music is largely governed by melody and harmonic progression. At times highly creative, it twists and modulates forward. His penchant for modals and the rhythmically catchy, combined with advanced harmonic journeys, enables him to create a

rich and virtuosic sound scape. The third sonata is by no means bereft of these qualities, but they are less conspicuous here than in the previous two. Sinding shows here that he is now a more nuanced and experienced composer capable of evoking an even more focused musical expression.

We are of the belief that Sinding's music tends to use a set of "standard solutions" in instrumentation. It may seem as if he cares little, either consciously or unconsciously, about the instruments' limitations when faced with the musical ideas he conjures up. Several passages appear almost unplayable in their original form, and the execution usually sounds best when played at breakneck speed. Could this be due to a more orchestral composition style?

Christian Sinding was by no means a gifted pianist or violinist, and this is discernible in the scores he wrote. The lack of idiomatic expression in some passages has forced us to rewrite the score, particularly with regard to articulation. Sinding is also somewhat sparing with his use of musical terminology and dynamics, which perhaps hints at his character – Sinding was no control freak, leaving much up to the performers.

We concluded early in this process that we had to find solutions closer to what the music required, and we believe that in this way we can better realise Sinding's musical project.

From a contemporary perspective, Sinding's music is interesting because of his many strong melodic and harmonic references to both the past and his own time. His fascination with baroque and archaic music is well documented, and he also casts a number of

deferential side glances (or should that be kicks?) in Edvard Grieg's direction, as well as generally to what is distinctly *Norwegian*. Sinding's *Norwegianness* is unmistakable in several of the twists and turns during all of the sonatas.

Personal reflections

By working with these three sonatas, we couldn't help feel that Sinding is a composer who loved unpredictable moments and who took neither himself nor his work too seriously. We could imagine him looking around the concert hall observing the audience's reactions to his music.

What thoughts Sinding himself had in this regard are not known, but the music certainly seems far from modest. On the contrary, his music is permeated by a life-affirming courage and stubbornness that are a natural part of his aesthetic. This good-natured "threat" that is always present is easy to like.

The sonatas show a Sinding who is not afraid to show his weaknesses. At times, he may seem uneven or inconsistent, which is very much at odds with the classical view of the "untouchable genius artist." His artistic life project is neither about appearing as a genius nor about cultivating the goal of writing timeless "masterpieces." Christian Sinding's art is about character, courage, humour, and joy of life. This is arguably where his greatest strength lies.

Magnus Boye Hansen (b. 1988) is a Norwegian violinist and violist. He studied with Prof. Morten Carlsen and Geir Inge Lotsberg at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo, with Aksel Gerhardt at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, and also with Lars Anders Tomter at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo.

Magnus Boye Hansen is a versatile musician; since 2016, he has been a violinist in the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and since 2018 a member of the Oslo String Quartet, where he plays a Matteo Gofriller viola from 1710 lent to him by Dextra Musica. Boye Hansen is a member of the LightsOut Ensemble, a group that exclusively performs concerts where musicians and audiences are in complete darkness, and also Boyes Caféorkester, an ensemble that performs symphonic music in chamber music format. Magnus has arranged several symphonic works for Boyes Caféorkester (Maurice Ravel's *La Valse*, Richard Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel*, among others). He also regularly performs with various ensembles in Oslo (the Oslo Philharmonic, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Oslo Sinfonietta/Cikada, Ensemble Ernst, to name a few).

Magnus Boye Hansen is a sought-after chamber musician and regularly performs at festivals (Bergen International Festival, Podium Festival in Haugesund, Nordlysfestivalen, Gloger Festival, as well as Oslo and Risør Chamber Music Festivals, to name a few). He has also performed at international festivals such as the Grachten Festival, Scaldis Festival, Portland Chamber Music Festival, Düsseldorf Festival, Regensburg Festival, and Podium Festival Esslingen.

His solo performances include two renditions of Alfred Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso No. 1* (with Oslo Camerata and Stephan Barratt Due in 2007, and with Podium Festival Strings and Miguel Perez Inesta in 2016) as well as *Maltes Earth*, trio concerto by Håkon Thelin (Ensemble Allegria/Nikolai Matthews/Mathias Susaas Halvorsen, 2021).





Mathias Halvorsen (b.1988) is an internationally active soloist and chamber musician. As part of the Beethoven Jubilee in 2020, he was one of only twelve members of Bundes Kulturstiftungs fellowship program *BeBeethoven*, in Germany (2018-2020). Mathias is one of the artistic directors for PODIUM - Fartein Valen's International Music Festival in Haugesund, Norway. of only twelve members of Bundes Kulturstiftungs fellowship program *BeBeethoven*.

Halvorsen studied with Prof. Jiri Hlinka (2006-2010) at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo and with Prof. Gerald Fauth (2011-2013) at the Hochschule für Musik Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in Leipzig. In 2008, he founded the Podium Festival, which will be held for the 15th time in 2022. In 2009, he discovered the manuscript for Halvdan Cleve's *Piano Concerto No. 5* at the National Library in Oslo and performed the concerto with the Lithuania State Symphony under the direction of conductor Gintaras Rinkevicius. In 2020, he made his debut with Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G major* at Berlin Philharmonie's main hall, with JEB Orchestra conducted by Miguel Perez Inesta. Mathias has also performed Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No. 1* several times with Tine Ting Helseth and collaborated with, among others, Ingar Bergby, Cathrine Winnes, and Peter Szilway.

As a soloist and chamber musician in recent years Halvorsen has performed at the Brighton Festival, Scaldis Festival (Netherlands), Mofo (Tasmania), Everybody's Spectacular (Reykjavik), Oranjewoud Festival, Grachten Festival (Netherlands), Fringe Festival (Stockholm and Dublin), Bergen International Festival, and Portland Chamber Music Festival. With his own projects, he has also performed at the Philharmonie de Paris, Nikolaisaal (Potsdam), Radialsystem (Berlin), Münchner Kammerspiele, La Commune (Paris), ZKM (Karlsruhe), HAU 1 (Berlin), Onassis Cultural Centre (Athens), Queen Elizabeth Hall (South-

bank Centre), Taplin Hall (Princeton), and Kampnagel (Hamburg).

Since 2010, Halvorsen has toured with his critically acclaimed ensemble LightsOut, playing contemporary music in complete darkness. He also has a piano duo with Joachim Carr, having performed at festivals in Europe and Asia including at the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet in Oslo September 2020. Mathias appears regularly alongside electro-rock queen Peaches in the duo show *Peaches Christ Superstar*, where Peaches sings all the roles and Halvorsen performs the orchestral parts. This production has featured at festivals across Europe, including Theater der Welt in Mannheim and Yoko Ono's Meltdown in London. The production was also part of the regular repertoire at the Münchner Kammerspiele in the 2016/2017 season. Halvorsen has also collaborated with director and choreographer Laurent Chetouane on several productions, including *Den Stundesløse* at the National Theatre in Oslo, where Halvorsen also made his acting debut. Since April 2019, he has toured the Netherlands and Germany with violinist Mathieu van Bellen in a unique adaptation of Puccini's opera *La Boheme*, combining the parts of the soloists, the choir(s), and the orchestra in a giant, uncut version of the opera for only two players – violin and piano – as well as the subtitles.

Halvorsen's first solo album was a recording of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* on prepared piano. The first volume was released on Backlash Music in November 2018 under the title *The Well-Prepared Piano, vol. 1*. His first album with percussionist Jan Martin Gismervik was released on the same record label in 2020, entitled *On Goldberg*. Other albums include *Works for Two Pianos* (Rachmaninov, Babajanijan, Ravel) with Joachim Carr, as well as *Works for Piano and Clarinet* (Berg, Bernstein, Geppert) with Miguel Perez Inesta.

CHRISTIAN SINDING

(1856-1941)

VIOLIN SONATA NO.1, OP.12

- I. ALLEGRO MODERATO ____ 07:31
- II. ANDANTE ____ 04:12
- III. FINALE. TEMPO GIUSTO ____ 08:34

VIOLIN SONATA NO.2, OP.27

- I. ALLEGRO ____ 06:48
- II. ROMANCE. ANDANTE ____ 05:13
- III. FINALE. ALLEGRO VIVACE ____ 05:28

VIOLIN SONATA NO.3, OP.73

- I. ALLEGRO CON BRIO ____ 08:29
- II. ANDANTE CANTABILE ____ 05:47
- III. DECISO MA NON TROPPO ALLEGRO ____ 05:47

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