

GADE Symphonies: No. 1 in c, op. 5, "On Sjølund's Fair Plains"; No. 5 in d, op. 25¹ • Christopher Hogwood, cond; Danish Natl SO; Ronald Bräutigam, pn ¹. • CHANDOS 10026 CHAN 58:09

This is the fourth and concluding volume in Christopher Hogwood's edition of the eight symphonies by the Danish composer, Niels Wilhelm Gade (1817-1890). In strongly recommending Volume 3 (*Fanfare* 26:4), I observed that it offered performances of the Third and Sixth Symphonies comparable in quality to the competition, plus significant bonuses in the *Echoes of Ossian* Overture and a discarded but worthy opening movement for the Third Symphony. The present disc offers no bonuses, but lively and idiomatic performances. The First Symphony has always been Gade's most appealing, with its lovely melodies and dramatic scoring. It could pass for Grieg, though composed in 1842, the year before Grieg was born. The Fifth (1852), if not the finest of the remainder, is an unusual work, containing an important solo piano part. Stylistically, Gade here reminds one of Mendelssohn, a friend and early champion. Hogwood has pianist Ronald Bräutigam play an 1835 Erard, and then reduces the size of his orchestra for balance. Chandos, famous for its rich, resonant sound, perhaps overdoes it a bit for the Gade symphonies, but most listeners will probably find performance and sound better than acceptable. Chandos offers interesting and instructive notes. In the case of the First and Fifth Symphonies, however, one must report that the older recordings by Neeme Järvi and the Stockholm Sinfonietta for BIS and by Michael Schønwandt and the Collegium Musicum, Copenhagen, for dacapo are perceptibly better. They are not alike: Järvi is fast and dynamic; Schønwandt by comparison is more relaxed and genial. BIS has bright, clean, close-up sound; dacapo provides warm, middle-distant sound. Both employ modern pianos, which I prefer, though the Erard seems to be perfectly restored and sounds charming in its way. Eight years ago I thought the piano a bit recessive in Järvi's Fifth; with my present speakers it sounds fine. Couplings are different in all three complete sets of Gade's symphonies: BIS couples the First Symphony with the Eighth, and the Fifth with the Sixth; dacapo couples the First with the Second and the Fifth with the Third.

In conclusion: Any serious collector of European Romantic music from the first half of the 19th century ought to have a recording of Gade's marvelous First Symphony. His Fifth is perhaps optional, but still desirable. There are no bad recordings of either. Hogwood, Järvi, and Schønwandt offer a pleasing range of choices.

Robert McColley

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GADE Symphonies, Vol. 2: No. 4 in B \flat , op. 20; No. 7 in F, op. 45. Concert Overture No. 3, op. 14 • Christopher Hogwood, cond; Danish NRSO • CHANDOS CHAN 9957 (64:32)

Niels Gade (1817–90) was one of the first to strike a Nordic tone in music. His music may sound very like that of his good friend Felix Mendelssohn, but there's a hint of broadness here that was taken up by his younger contemporaries. By the time he received as his student a young man by the name of Carl Nielsen, the Nordic sound was something readily identifiable. But Gade's own music nonetheless had its feet firmly planted in Leipzig, even as late as the Seventh Symphony (1864), where Mendelssohn's *Scottish* meets Schumann's *Rhenish*—and in his sharp-eared notes Anthony Burton notes "a distinctively Brahmsian stamp," accurately turning his identification the right way round to argue for a Gade-ian stamp in Brahms's music. The Fourth (1850) isn't quite as noble in manner: It feels its way forward to begin with, in an *Andantino* introduction, soon picking up the confidence to bustle purposefully forward. The earliest work here, the 10-minute Concert Overture No. 3 of 1846, getting its first recording on this disc, calls on the ghost of Weber in its introductory *Allegro moderato e maestoso*; the Mendelssohnian spirit evoked in the subsequent *Allegro con fuoco* so strongly suggests some classical drama that Burton suggests it could have been called "Heroic Overture"—and, indeed, Gade apparently penciled "Achilles Overture" on the two-piano printed score.

But how many cycles of the Gade symphonies can the market tolerate?

Christopher Hogwood's ongoing account of these scores competes with Neeme Järvi's, with the Stockholm Sinfonietta on BIS, recorded in the mid-1980s, and Michael Schønwandts, with Collegium Musicum, Copenhagen, on Marco Polo/da capo, from the early 1990s. Gade's music is generally delightful, but these aren't works that offer every inquisitive conductor the chance of saying something new about them. Well, to my surprise, Hogwood does bring out something missing in the other recordings—a sense of size, which he owes to his use of a symphony orchestra. Järvi and Schønwandt both use chamber-orchestral forces, giving their recordings crispness, clarity, and immediacy (though Järvi has a slightly distant perspective). Yet Hogwood's collaborators forfeit his advantage: The playing of the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra is scrappy and loose, and the Danish Radio recording team has given him imprecise, tubby sound, with plenty of body, but no real detail. If you are a hard-core Gade nut, you'll want to investigate the Concert Overture No. 3; if you already have Järvi or Schønwandt on your

shelves, there's no real reason to shell out on this disc.

Martin Anderson

This article originally appeared in Issue 25:4 (Mar/Apr 2002) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

GADE Symphonies: No. 2; No. 8. Allegretto, un poco lento. *In the Highlands* • Christopher Hogwood, cond; Danish Natl RSO • CHANDOS CHAN 9862 (69:46)

This is the first volume in a series devoted to the eight symphonies of Niels Gade. These are charming works, elegantly scored and filled with attractive ideas, at their best when the composer is least influenced by Mendelssohn or Schumann. Although nearly 30 years separate the Second and Eighth Symphonies, they share a similar design and, to some extent, content. The opening movements of both symphonies begin with well-defined, distinctive themes. The horn call that opens the Second is both familiar and immediately intriguing; the minor-key first theme of the Eighth is quite striking. The Second Symphony has an eloquent slow movement based on a Schubertian march figure with a quirky rhythm and a slightly downcast tone, and the scherzos of both symphonies are irresistibly catchy. The finales feature good tunes and a generally triumphant tone, but here the influence of others, especially Mendelssohn, tends to be strongest. If there are weaknesses in these last movements, however, they are insignificant, and one is always left wondering why these thoroughly satisfying symphonies are not better known. The disc includes an Allegretto, un poco lento originally written as the slow movement of the Eighth Symphony. It's a pretty piece of music but not as effective as the one that Gade ultimately included in the work. The final selection on the disc is the overture *In the Highlands*, an enjoyable piece, similar in some ways to Gade's earlier Scottish work, *Echoes from Ossian*.

Neemi Jarvi's complete cycle, recorded in the 1980s on BIS with the Stockholm Sinfonietta, is still in the catalog and is first-rate in both sound and performance. This new recording by Hogwood is also extremely attractive. The Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra plays impeccably, and Chandos's warm, rich recorded sound is very flattering and appropriate to this music. Hogwood's readings are, in general, more reserved than Jarvi's, with a bit less contrast and more emphasis on the lyrical aspects of the scores. Gade fans will want both cycles, but for those who already have the Jarvi, a brief sampling of the Hogwood's recordings will probably do. This disc, devoted to both an early and a late work, would be an excellent candidate. **Richard Burke**

This article originally appeared in Issue 24:5 (May/June 2001) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

Niels GADE - MusicWeb Review - Hogwood, V. 1

SYMPHONIES Volume 1

Symphony no.2 in E, op.10;

Symphony no.8 in b, op.47;

Allegretto, un poco lento (discarded slow movement from Symphony no.8);

In the Highlands, op.7.

Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra/Christopher Hogwood

Chandos CHAN9862 [69' 46"]

Times are changing in the record world while in the concert hall they have hardly changed at all. When Neeme Jarvi embarked upon the first complete cycle of Gade's Symphonies in the mid eighties, no less an expert on Scandinavian music than Robert Layton had doubts as to whether it was worth while (in the end he decided it was). And now we have rival cycles. And yet, your chances of hearing any of these works in the concert hall are about as dim today as they were before, at least outside Denmark.

The new cycle begins boldly with one of the weakest, the second, which even Gade himself made little attempt to revive in later years. In fact it is a likeable piece, recognisably Danish in its sturdy tones, more effective in its poetic moments (of which there are many) than its assertive ones, which are rather four-square and short-breathed. Maybe a conductor who allowed it to unfold a little more patiently would have got more out of it, but Hogwood is certainly brilliant, and affectionate too when called for. The Jarvi performance sometimes takes a mite more time, but overall they reach such similar conclusions over tempo and articulation that you would be hard put to tell them apart.

The contrast between this amiable but limited piece and the eighth, Gade's last symphony, is most striking. Here there is a far wider expressive range and an unmistakable Nordic/bardic tone, integrated in true symphonic fashion. I began by thinking this piece has claims to be in the general repertoire, but in the finale Gade becomes short-breathed again and fails to crown his work satisfactorily. So perhaps there is justice both in the gramophone's attention to his cause and the concert hall's neglect of it. Hogwood responds well to the piece, but Gade's years in the wilderness mean that there is probably no conductor today who, as a result of having lived with this music and loved it all his life, could conduct it as, say, Kubelik conducted Dvorak.

The remaining pieces are first recordings but add little. The discarded slow movement from the 8th Symphony shows that Gade was not without self-criticism, for the value of the work would have been seriously impaired had this static, repetitive movement remained in place. *In the Highlands* has little more than instant bustle to recommend it.

Gade's work was written in a period of symphonic hiatus when the masters,

Mendelssohn and Schumann, who had attempted, and not quite managed, to inherit Beethoven's mantle were dead, Brahms was still waiting to write his first symphony and Bruckner was as yet unrecognised. In a world dominated by Raff and Rubinstein (all of whom had similar problems with their finales) Gade's star shone bright. (But dare I suggest that few symphonies written in this symphonic no-man's land have as much life as Sullivan's single work?). For those who enjoy the hills as well as the mountains of romantic symphonism he still has much to say. The new series should be worth following, and the warm recording and helpful notes in three languages can only add to the pleasure.

Christopher Howell



Hogwood Aces Gade Symphonies Nos. 4 & 7 - ClassicsToday

Review by: David Hurwitz *Artistic Quality: 9 Sound Quality: 10*

Christopher Hogwood's recording of Niels Gade's Fourth Symphony originally appeared in tandem with music by another composer, but so successfully does he realize Gade's particular mixture of neo-classical and conservative Romantic elements that it's no surprise that Chandos opted to go for a complete cycle. While the Concert Overture No. 3 sounds a trifle anonymous, the two symphonies contain plenty of interesting music, from an impressive "funeral march" Andante (sound clip) and wonderful Scherzo in Symphony No. 7, to the pithy No. 4's irresistibly breezy finale.

Say what you will about Gade: he knew how to make his music "go", and so does Hogwood, whose firm rhythmic control and ideally transparent textures, never stinting on timpani, brass, and winds, reveal masterful orchestration and a far gutsier idiom than received opinion generally allows. Gorgeous sonics complete an exceptionally attractive picture of a composer too often dismissed as an unimaginative hack who spent much of his career copying Mendelssohn. Terrific.

Gade - Hogwood - ClassicalNet Review

Symphonies

- Symphony #1 in C minor "Paa Sjørunds fagre sletter", Op. 5
- Symphony #5 in D minor, Op. 25 *

*** Ronald Brautigam, piano**

Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra/Christopher Hogwood

Chandos CHAN10026 58m DDD

Christopher Hogwood's triumphant Gade cycle comes to an end with another superlative coupling of the First and Fifth symphonies. In principle, this set surpasses all before it, including the excellent Schönwandt on Da Capo and Järvi on BIS.

Gade's First Symphony is probably his best work and it was not surpassed for its youthful vigour and exuberance by the later works. Hogwood whips up a frenetic basic tempo and the Danes play with brilliant commitment especially in the inspired first movement and the rousing Finale.

I am not so comfortable with Gade's inclusion of a piano part in the Fifth but the music is still of the highest order. Brautigam dazzles with his virtuosity whilst the orchestra again plays with gusto, fervour and commitment for its conductor. Again, the Finale is the cornerstone of the work and the whole interpretation is most wonderfully memorable.

One point of beauty in this series is their artistic covers devoted to window shades and this final one is similarly eye-catching. The whole project cannot be recommended too highly and if you have been collecting the previous instalments in the cycle, then this will definitely make it to your shopping list!

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Niels Gade - Symphonies - Hogwood V. 3 - ClassicalNet Review ***Symphonies, Volume 3***

- Overture "Echoes of Ossian" Op. 1
- Symphony #3 Op. 15
- Symphony #6, Op. 32
- Discarded Movement from Symphony #3

Danish National Symphony Orchestra/Christopher Hogwood
Chandos CHAN9795 77m DDD

This is the third disc in Hogwood's admirable symphonic cycle dedicated to the works of Niels Wilhelm Gade, most certainly a composer who has a gift for honest, well crafted melodies and a penchant for good tunes. I have already commented favourably on previous issues in this series and can safely say that the warm welcome accorded to those discs is extended here. Hogwood chooses to begin with the lovely 'Echoes of Ossian' overture that flows about in a most intriguing manner. The Third Symphony is one of Gade's most excitable works and it also gets off to an intriguing and energetic start in its First Movement. The A minor key is well adhered to and the *Un poco lento tempo* is very intriguingly drawn out by Hogwood and his Danish orchestra who play this music to the manner born. The lovely *Andante sostenuto* is also very well managed with a particular singing melody attributed to the strings, who play with dreamy charm in Hogwood's coaxing. In the *Allegro assai moderato* we have an impression of impish playfulness that is very much akin to Gade's own inventiveness. The Finale is

typically sprightly and is indeed very energetic with the tempo changes also well negotiated by the conductor. The triumphant peroration at the end is almost hair-raising in its eminent sense of nationalism.

The intriguing supplement is provided in the shape of the première recording of the discarded first movement from the Third Symphony. This is a whole two minutes longer than its successor and is indeed very interesting hearing although I must confess that I found it slightly repetitive at times. The Sixth Symphony is in G minor and is also a deeply felt work that reveals a certain debt to Goldmark and Reinecke but is inimitably Gadesian in all respects. A trenchant First Movement is marked *Andantino-Allegro molto vivace* and Hogwood is superb in handling the transition between both parts of the score. The same goes for a deep and soul felt *Andante sostenuto*. The short scherzo marked *Allegro moderato e energico* is similarly 'Play of the Elves' touched whilst the splendidly rambunctious Finale is another debt to Berwald. I do believe that Hogwood and his Danish band are enjoying the music greatly.

As comparisons go, the previous Marco Polo cycle with Schönwandt and the same DRSO was quite fine but Chandos has the edge in sonics. Järvi and his Tapiola Sinfonietta on BIS are also a good bet but with the original presentation, copious notes and the informal vitality of performances, Christopher Hogwood is now definitely top of the pile as these works go. I look forward to the final disc in this outstanding series.

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Gade: Symphonies Nos 3 and 6; Echoes of Ossian Overture: Danish NSO/Hogwood

Edward Greenfield - Guardian Review - 5* Rating

Thu 12 Sep 2002 21.03 EDT

he symphonies of the 19th-century Danish composer Niels Wilhelm Gade may bring many echoes of his mentor, Mendelssohn, but No 3, written in 1846 when he was working in Leipzig, has an invigorating bite to it. It starts with a vigorous Presto movement in a dark A minor - although it seems this was an afterthought. This new coupling of Nos 3 and 6, the third in Christopher Hogwood's Gade series with the Danish National Orchestra, has a big advantage over earlier rivals in that it offers the original first movement, more expansive with a slow introduction. Only recently published, it is here given its first recording. The warmth and weight of Hogwood's readings also give him an advantage over rivals on disc, and the Echoes of Ossian overture, Gade's most popular orchestral work, is a valuable makeweight.

Gade: Symphonies, Vol. 2: Symphony No. 4; Symphony No. 7; Concert Overture No. 3 in C

Our rating: 5.0 out of 5 star rating

By **BBC Music Magazine**

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COMPOSERS: Gade LABELS: Chandos

WORKS: Symphonies, Vol. 2: Symphony No. 4; Symphony No. 7; Concert Overture No. 3 in C PERFORMER: Danish National RSO/Christopher Hogwood

CATALOGUE NO: CHAN 9957

This is the second volume in Christopher Hogwood's fine and musicianly survey of the Gade symphonies with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. His recording of the Fourth is actually a reissue and was originally coupled with a symphony by Johannes Frederik Frøhlich, an interesting rarity. The Seventh Symphony was written in 1864, 14 years after the Fourth, though Gade's musical idiom never really changed or developed, and he never succeeded in making any significant escape from the orbit of Mendelssohn. But it has great geniality and charm, and is winningly played on this disc. My only reservation concerns the sound, which though naturally balanced with plenty of presence, places the listener far too close to the orchestra. Tutti passages are thick and oppressive, and one longs for more air round the aural image. Neeme Järvi's recordings of both symphonies with the Stockholm Sinfonietta (BIS) have the greater tonal finesse and transparency of texture, and sound much fresher. The Concert Overture No. 3, composed in 1846 between the Second and Third symphonies, is an appealing piece, a first recording and well worthwhile having. Others may not be worried by the sound, and the disc can certainly be recommended for the spirited playing of the Danish orchestra and the elegance of Hogwood's direction. Robert Layton

JÄRVI REVIEWS BELOW:

Gade: Symphonies/Järvi - ClassicsToday Review

Review by: David Hurwitz *Artistic Quality: 10 Sound Quality: 10*

At five discs for the price of two, this set is a steal. Neeme Järvi's versions of the eight symphonies are as fine as any available, certainly as good as Hogwood's

excellent Chandos set which now costs several times as much. Niels Gade was a musical conservative, very much of the Mendelssohn school, but he had a distinctive personality and, more to the point, he knew how to make his music move. These symphonies have good tunes, almost no dead spots, and the Fifth, which has an important concertante part for solo piano, really is an entertaining and original piece by any standard. Järvi secures crisp, lively playing from the Stockholm Sinfonietta; there isn't a weak performance in the lot.

The Violin Concerto is also a fine, unaccountably neglected piece, very well played by Anton Kontra (of the eponymous quartet fame). Its central Andantino espressive really is a gem, but then the entire piece has a formal compactness and confidence typical of Gade. The Crusaders (featuring the Aarhus Symphony under Frans Rasmussen) is an hour-long cantata for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, and it makes a considerable bonus. Of course in today's world it's kind of hard to sympathize with the crusades, or with any piece in which Peter the Hermit is the good guy, but give Gade credit: he gets through the entire Armida/Rinaldo love story in 23 minutes, and it's the best part of the work. Enough talk: just get this box, and your Gade collection will be pretty much complete.