



Kurt Atterberg

SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN D MAJOR, OP. 10

The Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra

Sixten Ehrling

CONCERTO FOR HORN AND ORCHESTRA

IN A MINOR, OP. 28

Albert Linder

The Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Gérard Oskamp



CAP 21364

DDD/AAD

Kurt Atterberg

1887-1974

SYMPHONY NO. 3

in D Major, Op. 10 "West Coast Pictures" (1916)

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | 1. Soldis (Sun Haze) | 7'22 |
| 2 | 2. Storm | 11'00 |
| 3 | 3. Sommarnatt (Summer Night) | 16'00 |

The Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra

Sixten Ehrling, Conductor

Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden; previously issued on Caprice CAP 1250/Musica Sveciae MS 604

CONCERTO FOR HORN AND ORCHESTRA

in A minor, Op. 28 (1926)

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 4 | 1. Allegro pathetico | 6'50 |
| 5 | 2. Adagio | 7'10 |
| 6 | 3. Allegro molto | 4'55 |

Albert Linder, Horn

The Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Gérard Oskamp, Conductor

Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden; previously issued on CAPRICE CAP 1144

DURING THE FINAL STAGE of the Romantic period young Swedish composers often wrote richly coloured symphonic programme music. One of the sources of inspiration could be nature itself, the natural scenery of a country landscape, or seascape, as in Kurt Atterberg's *Västkostbilder* ("West Coast Pictures" 1914-16).

Atterberg was one of those composers who have met with the most response beyond the borders of Sweden. His music has been performed by conductors like Nikisch, Richard Strauss, Furtwängler, Toscanini and Beecham.

After having been practically forgotten for decades, the slumbering tones of these two works are here finally allowed to resound again.

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CAPRICE
r e c o r d s

KURT ATTERBERG was born in Gothenburg, on Sweden's west coast, on 12 December 1887. In 1907 he started studying at the Technical College in Stockholm, enrolling at the same time in the Conservatory of Music. During the academic year 1910–11 Atterberg studied composition with Andreas Hallén (1846–1925), instruction which was—according to what he himself has declared—of little value. It was at this time that he completed his first symphony, which qualified him for a state scholarship for composers. This made it possible for him to reside in Germany for certain periods.

The largest and most important part of Atterberg's creative activity during the years 1909–1920 are the first four symphonies. It is primarily through these that we can get a picture of the artistic development of his youth. According to many people these works also make up the richest harvest in his extensive production.

In Symphony No. 1 in B flat minor (1909–1911) Atterberg was working under the influence of two great sources of inspiration: Brahms and Alfvén. The tonality is broadly flowing, with cantando melodic lines and an intonation in which there are as yet only hints that Nordic folk music also provided certain impulses. The lively Scherzo was met with enthusiasm at the first performance.

In Symphony No. 2 in F major (1911–1913), with which he was to make a name for himself in Germany, there is a clearer exemplification of his means of expression. This can best be heard in the middle movement, where Atterberg lets "air" and "dance", slow tempo and scherzo, succeed one another. These forms are not, as in so many other works by Atterberg, direct borrowings from folk music, but rather imitations or variations personally expressed. Typical for Atterberg is also the development of the movement as a whole. Differing from Alfvén and Stenhammar, for example, and of course also Brahms, he does not devote himself to thorough thematic development and polyphonic designs. He is not an engraver, he paints with broad brush strokes and brilliant colours. His crescendo progressions—Atterberg loved crescendos—seldom become mere processes, but grow chiefly through dynamic and colouristic treatment.

Atterberg was a great admirer of Viennese Classicism. Despite this there is often something anti-classical in his way of handling form. This is particularly noticeable in his String Quartet, Op. 11, written in 1916, from the same period as the third symphony. The

first movement of the quartet is completely homophonic throughout, and formed as a dialogue in abrupt breaks between two different moods: one heated, aggressive, and one mild, elegiac, something of a nocturne. It can hardly be farther removed from the tradition of the Beethoven quartet.

In Symphony No. 3, *Västkostbilder*, ("West Coast Pictures") there occurs a further exemplification of impressionistic and atmospheric effects and a deepening of the relationship to folk music.

In Symphony No. 4 in G minor, *Sinfonia Piccola* (1918), Atterberg takes still another step which would be significant for several coming works: he no longer tries to imitate or vary motifs and rhythms from Swedish folk music; he quotes, he uses the "real" material (in this case from the province of Västergötland, in western Sweden). Because of these contextual elements and reduced size, the work is less of a symphony than a rhapsody in four movements (Atterberg was to use the same technique in his famous ballet *De fåvitska jungfrurna* ("The Foolish Maidens") from 1920, in *Värmlands-rapsodi* from 1933, and other works).

SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN D MAJOR, OP. 10, "VÄSTKUST-BILDER"

Västkostbilder ("West Coast Pictures")—composed for the most part at Stockevik on Skaf-tölandet, near Gothenburg—was written between 1914–1916. The work was premiered in

its entirety by Hovkapellet (The Royal Opera House Orchestra) at the Royal Opera on 28 November 1916. Of the three movements, the first two had already been played by the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra earlier the same year, on 9 February. The Gothenburg public was to hear the final movement separately a week after the Stockholm performance, which indicated that Atterberg did not consider the work to be an integrated symphonic whole. In his memoirs he also relates that it was not until after the February concert in Gothenburg that he decided to “expand the work into a symphony with three movements”. Even without this information it is easy to regard the work as a symphonic *suite*, as something of a Swedish *La mer* and a continuation of the path that Hugo Alfvén had trodden with his tone poem *En Skärgårdssägen* (“A Tale from the Archipelago”), 1903–1904.

The movements of *Västkostbilder* have, appropriately, been given headings: *Soldis* (“Sun Haze”), *Storm*, and *Sommarnatt* (“Summer Night”). There are, in addition, for the guidance of interpreters and listeners, short poetical landscape descriptions in the score. When the work was performed by the Stockholm Concert Society Orchestra (the predecessor of the Stockholm Philharmonic) in October 1918, Atterberg added an introduction, in which he explained his compositional approach. He writes:

“Just as with Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony*, *Moonlight Sonata*, and last piano sonatas which assume larger or smaller discrepancies from the traditional sonata form, the struc-

ture of this symphony differs from the usual pattern though retaining that which is essential for the modern symphonic form—namely, that the different movements, through their contrasts, should create mutually complementary elements of mood. Using the designation of symphony means, in this case, that the programmatic names of the movements need not constitute necessary conditions for the musical comprehension of the work, but that it can even be interpreted as ‘absolute music’.”

SOLDIS/SUN HAZE

Atterberg’s programme notes: “The first movement (in lied form) strives to recreate the mood at the seaside on a calm sunshine-saturated day when the heat haze over the surface of the water makes it impossible to judge distance, and when the sea swells are rolling, in spite of complete calm.”

STORM/STORM

In the commentary Atterberg writes: “The second movement, ‘Storm’, is arranged in ‘symmetrical’ sonata form (i.e. the first theme, second theme, developmental phase, second theme, first theme, and coda passage). The first motif, development, and coda strive to represent impressions of the violent power of a storm among the islands of the outer archipelago. The second theme endeavours to capture the feeling of seeing the calm placid water in a fjord, while the rumble from the open water of a distant black and threatening sea is hardly heard.”



Kurt Atterberg

SOMMARNATT/SUMMER NIGHT

In his commentary Atterberg gives only one piece of information regarding the structure here. The finale is, just as the last movement in Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, "written in free form". Atterberg's text is otherwise a lyrical nature sketch:

"In the tranquillity of evening, when only the swells move the surface of the sea, the eye is enraptured by the fabulous display of colours in the endless view over sea and land; the colours fade towards midnight, the calmness becomes even more complete until at last the night winds slowly begin to blow. The colours in the north-east become stronger, the wind becomes brisker, the sun rises majestically over the mountains, first in cold nuances, then warmer and warmer".

Västkostbilder also belongs to a special category of works which we can call *the Nordic sea symphony*—such as Alfvén's *Från havsbandet* ("From the Seaward Skerries"), Sibelius' *The Oceanides* (one movement version) and *Prelude to Shakespeare's The Tempest*, and, much later, *Sinfonia del Mare* by Gösta Nystroem (1890–1966).

The power of nature over the mind of man—and the power of nature over the mind's creative fantasy.

After *Västkostbilder* and *Sinfonia piccola* (1918) Atterberg was to write an additional five symphonies, of which the fifth, *Sinfonia funebre*—given little notice—is the most interesting. But the sixth was played more often than either the second or third. With this work, Symphony No. 6 in C major, Atterberg won a competition—in commemoration of

Schubert and in the spirit of Schubert—arranged by Columbia Record Company in 1928. The prize gave status—both Arturo Toscanini and Sir Thomas Beecham conducted the symphony—and large economic remuneration, which explains the appellation used in Sweden: *The Dollar Symphony*.

During the 1920s and the beginning of the thirties Atterberg devoted himself primarily to dramatic or music theatre works: for example. *De fåvitska jungfrurna* ("The Foolish Maidens"), a ballet composed for the Swedish Ballet in Paris, and the operas, *Bäckhästen* ("The Water Sprite") and *Fanal*. Through these works he held his positions as being the Swedish composer most often performed, at least abroad if not always in Sweden.

But as we have seen in the case of *Västkostbilder* ideals and interests were to develop in another direction. Not only the representatives for new music trends—in different generations—but also the public and performers alike were to assume a critical attitude towards the lavish, sumptuous harmonic texture which is such a characteristic feature in Kurt Atterberg's music. When he died in 1974 his name was still well known, but his compositions were very seldom played. As a composer of symphonies he was almost forgotten; of his sixty works only a few smaller compositions were still included in the concert repertoire: the *Suite* for Violin, Viola and String Orchestra, and the folk music rhapsody/the ballet music, *De fåvitska jungfrurna*.

BWr/WEO*

HORN CONCERTO IN A MINOR

The Horn Concerto was composed in 1926 and was at first called "Suite Concertante"—at the stage of the sketch. The form scheme is traditional. The first movement is energetic and virile with the horn being used as a kind of ancient bellowing signal instrument. We should probably call the second movement "National-Classical", just as Atterberg would have it. In a three-part song form he abandons himself to tranquil birch-grove moods. The concluding finale is a dancing rondo with an interwoven reel melody.

The concerto was composed for Axel Malm, a prominent first hornist of the Stockholm Concert Society for 40 years, also a teacher at the State College of Music for nearly 50 year.

RECORDING INFORMATION

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KURT ATTERBERG
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HORN CONCERTO IN A MINOR

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