



Til Eva – selected Norwegian songs, a tribute to Eva Sars Nansen

LIEDER BY HALFDAN KJERULF · RIKARD NORDRAAK · AGATHE BACKER GRØNDAHL

**Isa Katharina Gericke, soprano · Christian Ihle Hadland, piano ·
RECORDED AT THE POLHØGDA VILLA
THE HOME OF FRIDTJOF NANSEN AND HIS WIFE EVA**

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Selected Norwegian songs, a tribute to Eva Sars Nansen

Polhøgda. It was the home and the castle of the arctic explorer, scientist and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen. But it housed more than planning of polar expeditions. Soprano Isa Katharina Gericke and pianist Christian Ihle Hadland have on this recording re-created some of the repertoire championed by the leading Norwegian Lieder interpreter around 1900, wife of the celebrated Fridtjof – Eva Sars Nansen.

Practically unknown today, Eva Sars Nansen is the most important pioneer of the Norwegian lieder tradition.

Norwegian songs in a state striving for independence

During her song studies in Berlin she was believed to have a great opera career in front of her. But Eva was much too attached to the Norwegian nature and cultural life, friends and family – and the special qualities of the Lieder format. She took a particular interest in the Norwegian Lieder tradition. Some of the songs on this release have lyrics by her uncle J.S. Welhaven and the family friend Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. In the period leading up to the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905, the Nansen group 'Lysakerkretsen', including among others Hulda and Arne Garborg, were important in outlining a unique 'Norwegian-ness', also reflecting the cultural heritage.

Eva and Fridtjof

On the return from his expedition from Greenland, the relationship between Fridtjof and Eva was allowed to develop and in 1889 the two married. Even with five little children and a husband who was away for years at a time, Eva continued her career as a singer. The growing fame of Fridtjof Nansen helped to attract audiences to her concerts both at home and abroad – every seat was taken when Eva performed. In 1901 the Polhøgda at Lysaker was finished, and it was in large central hall Eva would hold her legendary musical soirees.

Historical work

Based in Berlin, Isa Gericke has received brilliant critics for her performances on opera stages and in recitals, most recently in Wigmore Hall. Christian Ihle Hadland is a sought after soloist and chamber musician on an international level. Together they have picked out the repertoire for this recording based on the concert programmes of perhaps the most important pioneer in Norwegian art song.

Release: | Catalogue number: PSC1238 | EAN: 7033662012381 | Price category: 1CDK | Genre(s): World premiere recording, Young Norwegian, Lieder, Norwegian

"- Gerickes levende fortellertalent og Ihle Hadlands elegante pianisme er som skapt for dette repertoaret. Dette er stor og betydelig formidlingskunst. [Kjell Hillveg / Dagsavisen]"

"- She is frankly the best Norwegian singer that I have encountered since I first heard Solveig Kringelborn. There is even more of light and shade in her interpretations. In this programme she steps out as the foremost Norwegian song interpreter of the present generation. If Eva Sars had the voice and all the expressive means that Gericke displays on this disc she should have been an exceptional artist indeed. The songs in themselves are wholly attractive. Especially in the Bjørnson settings they far transcend the merely socially presentable. As a whole this is as attractive a collection of Norwegian songs as I have come across for many a year. This recital only confirms that she is a singer who has fully mastered the lyric repertoire. I don't expect ever to hear this repertoire better performed. [Göran Forsling / MusicWeb]"