
Barokksolistene

Early Music Ensemble

Selected Reviews

The Playhouse Sessions

This wonderful album takes us back to a time before that stiff, formal artefact we call "classical music" had come into being, when composers rubbed shoulders with actors and folk singers in disreputable playhouses and taverns, and a folk song could migrate from the street to the theatre and even a nobleman's grand house [...] What Eike understands is that to bring this distant world to life for contemporary audiences, it's not enough to recreate it literally. *You have to mobilise people's imaginations and feelings, which the group does with great flair and sensitivity.* A wonderful example is Purcell's song "Oft she Visits This Lone Mountain" from his opera *The Fairy Queen*, which assembles itself from scraps of sound on guitar, harpsichord and bass, before Berit Norbakken's beautifully soft rendition of the song itself. It exemplifies the way this group catches the magic and mystery of the music, as well as its bawdy humour and rumbustious energy. – **Ivan Hewett, The Daily Telegraph *******

Rip-roaring music making effortlessly melds ancient and modern [...] At the core of the album's appeal is not only the shrewdly researched repertoire and uninhibited fantasy of the arrangements but some hand-in-glove ensemble playing conditioned by a thorough grasp of English Baroque aesthetic and gesture. The suave arches of Bjarte Eike's violin on an Adagio from Purcell's *Come ye sons of art* would grace any recording of the anthem proper. – **Peter Quantrill, The Strad**

Bjarte Eike and his Barokksolistene approach this music and its cultural context with open hearts and minds. [...] there's no effortful or pointed rewriting, just a gentle blurring of genre and boundaries (plus *some seriously stylish playing and singing from all concerned*). [...] It's hard to put your finger on the ensembles distinctive appeal but it seems to be a sort of strange reverse alchemy. These are expert musicians who take off their professional hats and muck in as needed, playing multiple instruments and all singing both as chorus and soloists, creating a performance that may not be authentic in a strict historical sense feels absolutely authentic to the spirit of the period and of players – as then, and as now. – **Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone (Editor's Choice)**

[This record] makes a good shot at pinning down the essence of a live experience. The Playhouse Sessions, on Rubicon, again sees the violinist Bjarte Eike and his Barokksolistene ensemble recreating the anarchic atmosphere of after-hours musical sessions in Restoration pub backrooms. This time the mix of *exhilarating folk music and stylishly appropriated Purcell* is loosely themed around *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The team has expanded to include two women, one of whom, Berit Norbakken, sings an understated version of *Music for a While* with bassist Johannes Lundberg that wouldn't be out of place in a jazz club. – **Erica Jeal, The Guardian**

Emulating the creativity unleashed in the Restoration playhouses, this loosely *Midsummer Night's Dream* - themed programme ricochets from Purcell to folk music, from vocals to instrumentals, in *intoxicating style*. – **BBC Music Magazine *******

While nothing can quite match being in the room, the Playhouse Sessions in recorded form still *offers more musical revelation and sheer fun than anything else I have heard recently*. [...] The sheer difficulty in pinning down what *The Playhouse Sessions* is, is one of its delights, and it successfully remakes the magic of the Alehouse Sessions in a way that is both more of the same, and something wonderfully different. – **Bernard Hughes, The Arts Desk**

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Early Music Ensemble

A bit of Purcell, folk shanties and ballads by an ensemble that builds on baroque, jazz and folk styles. This is Barokksolistene led by violinist Bjarte Eike who play and improvise without inhibition. You'll find a delightful collection of music and lyrics that will effortlessly take you back three centuries to Henry Purcell's favourite pub. – **NPO Radio 4, Netherlands ("Recording of the Week")**

The Alehouse Sessions

(...) carefree casualness that can only come from discipline and skill (...) They can U-turn from wild cavorting to a whispered melodic strain with mesmerising mutability. (...)

Judging the pacing and passions of the sets perfectly, he (Bjarte Eike) let the musical temperature rise and fall with hypnotic fluency, playing by turns with vigorous intensity and slender delicacy. His alchemical musical sparks drew everyone in Middle Temple Hall into the musical experience. – **Claire Seymour, Opera Today**

The authenticity being aimed for is less that of performance style – though the calibre of playing is unimpeachable – and more that of experience...As Barokksolistene's slogan reminds us, "It's just old pop music". Performers like this are unlocking the joy in this music, and that might be the most valuable authenticity of all. – **Erica Jeal, The Guardian**

From punchy, percussion-rich Purcell and terpsichorean tid-bits from Playford's English Dancing Master, to lusty anonymous a cappella drinking songs and atmospheric ballads, The Alehouse Sessions is a riotous recreation of Cromwellian pub entertainment – **Will Yeoman, Limelight**

Innately theatrical, genre bending and suffused with great musicianship and string playing, this is a substantial and fine piece of work. – **Tim Woodall, The Strad**

The group's tagline is "It's just old pop music." But their music is much more than that. It invigorates not only the hearing, but also the vision, inspiring a different perspective towards music among audience members. Their uniquely contemporary performance style injects new life into their baroque music and truly exemplifies the beauty of combining the new and the old. – **Linh Nguyen, The Daily Princetonian**

Barokksolistene have been working on this project for almost 10 years, and the performances had a wonderful sense of being thoroughly lived in. The variety of tone and texture was astonishing, ranging from very naughty folk-songs...to delicate dance tunes with a modal tang, from as far afield as Shetland and Norway. The whole joyous evening was a liberation, carrying us back to a time when the terms "classical" and "folk" hadn't yet been invented, and music was simply music. – **Ivan Hewett, The Telegraph**

overflowing musical energy and joy – **Alexandra Goghlan, The Arts Desk**