



SÆVERUD PIANO EDITION • 5

DDD

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A blue-tinted profile photograph of Harald Sæverud, an elderly man with long, wavy hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light-colored shirt, and a patterned bow tie. He is looking towards the right of the frame.

**Harald
SÆVERUD**

**Complete Piano Music
“Sonata in G minor”**

**Suite Op. 6
At Caesar’s Last
Foxglove Fantasia**

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

Harald Sæverud (1897-1992) Complete Piano Edition, Volume 5

Throughout his life, Harald Sæverud was one of the most distinctive figures on the Norwegian music scene. His desire to express himself and his will to seek unique solutions to the artistic challenges presented by each new work gave rise to a personal musical idiom, easily recognisable as 'Sæverudian'. The English conductor Sir John Barbirolli, closely acquainted with Sæverud's orchestral music, expressed his uniqueness thus: "Whether you like the music of Sæverud or not there is no mistaking who wrote it, and this can be said of few composers of the present day."

The neglect, or even contempt, with which Sæverud often appeared to treat conventions and inherited 'truths' should not be seen as a disparagement of the historical music tradition. It was within this tradition that he found support for his own preferences, often indicating Mozart and Haydn as his most important influences. His formal music education was somewhat fragmentary; in 1915 he entered the Music Academy in Bergen where he studied the piano, supplemented by lessons in music theory taught by Borghild Holmsen, an accomplished pianist and composer with a degree from the music conservatory in Leipzig. After having completed the course at the Bergen Music Academy, Sæverud undertook further periods of study in Berlin (1920–21) and Paris (1925).

The support he received from his older, distinguished colleagues at the outset of his career was particularly important to Sæverud. Certain members of this group of colleagues, such as Christian Sinding, had difficulty in grasping Sæverud's musical intentions, but were nonetheless positive to his achievements. Sæverud's spirited style and power of expression bore witness to his unique talent. The support and encouragement offered by Gerhard Schjelderup in Norway and Carl Nielsen in Denmark was no less influential, just as was Sæverud's friendship with the composer and conductor, the

younger Johan Ludwig Mowinckel. It was thanks to Mowinckel that excerpts from Sæverud's first symphony were performed in Berlin in 1921.

Slowly but surely, Sæverud gained a prominent position in the music life of Norway, subsequently attracting international interest, particularly during the 1950s and 60s. In addition to being one of Norway's most distinctive and unique composers, he was also able to find time for administrative work and held honorary positions in organizations such as Ny Musikk (the Norwegian section of the ISCM) and Musikskabet Harmonien (the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra). In the course of his career he received a number of awards both in Norway and abroad, and from 1953 was a recipient of the annual state grant to artists.

Harald Sæverud's output falls into two main categories, works for orchestra and works for piano. The works for orchestra include nine symphonies and solo concertos for oboe, violin, piano and bassoon, in addition to a number of single movement works. It is therefore no coincidence that his Opus 1 is *5 capricci* for piano (1919), while Opus 2 is the *Symphony No. 1 in G minor* (1920). At a relatively late stage in his career he also made a considerable contribution to the chamber music repertoire. It is also interesting to note that his meagre production of theatre music had a substantial impact in Norway's cultural spheres; this is particularly true of his music to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1947) which became an 'anti-romantic' opposite to Edvard Grieg's music to the same play.

Many of the characteristic traits which make Sæverud's music so easily recognisable are ubiquitous in his music, and not least in the works for solo piano. However it is not so easy to categorize Sæverud's music in any one particular style. His music has been labelled in a variety of ways: atonal (though much of his music is clearly tonal); barbaric (though many

works are inclined towards lyrical-romantic moods); dissonant (though just as frequently we encounter consonant triads); thematically 'short of breath' (though many themes are given generous space in which to unfold). Common to most of the piano pieces is an apparently simple form and texture, often two-part, with detailed dynamics and pedalling. Frequently we find a highly individual development of each part, giving the music a distinctive dissonant quality, and when the rhythmic element in each part is treated similarly freely, the end result is that tonal quality referred to above as 'Sæverudian'.

The *Sonata in G minor, Op.3* (1921), was not published by Sæverud, nor was his *Suite, Op.6* (1927–30). Among Sæverud's posthumous manuscripts there are several that contain material used in this

sonata, for example the oldest of Sæverud's surviving compositions, *Hønenes død* (Naxos 8.554230), provides the main motif of the first movement. The *Sonata, Op.3*, is in a late Romantic style with a serious attempt at creating thematic unity between the first and the last movements. The second movement was originally an independent piece with the title *Pastorale*.

In the *Suite, Op.6*, Sæverud has moved far away from the style of the sonata. The tonality is now diffuse or even sometimes non-existent and the texture has been simplified and more transparent. He is now close to the later style of the mature Sæverud as we know him from his *Slåtter og stev from 'Siljustøl'*.

Øyvind Norheim

First Performances of Harald Sæverud

It was a most exciting time being an archaeologist among Sæverud's forgotten and hidden (posthumous) manuscripts. They were literally in total disorder and had to be excavated with the greatest care. The manuscripts were kept in Siljustøl, the composer's house, and in Bergen off. bibliotek, Musikkavdelingen (the Bergen Public Library, Music Department). Every composition and every note in this recording, however, is original, nothing added, nothing changed.

Lauparstrengen and *Cæsars frafall* are most attractive pieces in a neo-classical language but with a clear Sæverud colouring. *Fader vår* is a beautifully set three-part modal-like chorale, and *Bækken I & II* are traditional in language but brilliant and virtuoso in pianism. The *Barcarolle* is an extended phantasy in a moderately dissonant style.

Let the rest of the pieces speak for themselves and for the most exciting and sparkling musical personality of Harald Sæverud.

Sæverud's Musical World

"All my music has grown out of a vague and supernatural sound. As a fourteen-year-old boy I heard the invisible fluttering of owls' wings in the summer night. This made the starting-point for all my music."

So much for Sæverud's own words. Motifs came to his mind almost like wild flowers and weeds, he said. He let them grow freely while he, the composer, could only be their guiding gardener. Evidently he could not decide for their growth and development, just lead them along. As much as Sæverud loved plants he even cared for stones. "There is also much stone in my music!" he said.

Sæverud does not often describe the grand Norwegian scenery of mountains and fjords. He rather gives focus to fragments of nature and human moods; he describes ancient legends and myths or tales from valleys and islands. Throughout his life Sæverud consciously suffered from being born on the site of a former churchyard, a place of execution from Viking times. He kept talking about the sadness, sorrow and the dissonances this fact gave to his art. "There are reflections of murder and death in me as well as in my music." Those were his words. This provides, therefore, an underlying sombre quality to his otherwise cheerful music.

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

**The Sæverud Edition has been supported by Grieg-Forsk
and the Edvard Grieg Museum, Bergen, Norway**

	Sonate, g-moll (Sonata, G minor), Op. 3 [NMI]	20:34
1	Allegro maestoso — Presto con fuoco	8:14
2	Pastorale: Allegretto grazioso quasi andantino	5:15
3	Allegro molto e agitato — Presto con fuoco — Prestissimo — Allegro agitato	7:04

	From Posthumous Manuscripts [BOB]	42:33
4	Lauparstrengen — Rustic Aerial Cable	1:35
5	Cæsars frafall — At Caesar's Last	1:15
6	Fader vår — Our Father	2:15
7	Bækken I, Ass-dur — The Brook I, A-flat major	1:14
8	Barcarole, C-dur — Barcarolle, C major	3:34
9	Poco Andante, g-moll — Poco Andante, G minor	2:13
10	Gunvors vals — Gunvor's Waltz	1:46
11	Vals til en liten pike (tidlig versjon av op. 18, nr 4) Waltz for a Little Girl (early version of op. 18, No. 4)	0:44
12	Ballade, g-moll — Ballad, G minor	2:03
13	Berceuse, g-moll — Berceuse, G minor	0:48
14	Marcia (tema) — Marcia (theme)	0:38
15	Praeludium, d-moll — Prelude, D minor	2:02
16	Presto, G-dur — Presto, G major	0:32
17	Sang uten ord, g-moll — Song Without Words, G minor	1:54
18	Nocturne, f-moll — Nocturne, F minor	2:42
19	Sørgemarsj (Largo), d-moll — Funeral March (Largo), D minor	1:36
20	Klokker — Chimes	2:04
21	Vindharpe II og vals — Aeolian Harp II and Waltz	4:56
22	Fantasi, g-moll — Fantasia, G minor	1:52
23	Allegro, g-moll — Allegro, G minor	1:15
24	Revebjølle (1. versjon av op. 22, nr 1) — Foxglove (1st version of op. 22, no. 1)	1:44
25	Revebjølle-fantasi — Foxglove Fantasia	1:16
26	Bækken II, G-dur — The Brook II, G major	2:35

	Suite, Op. 6 [NMI]	15:47
27	Praeludium	4:21
28	Grazioso	1:14
29	Andante	2:33
30	Scherzando	2:05
31	Rondo	5:34

NMO = Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo; M-H = Musikk-Huset, Oslo; NMI = Norsk musikkinformasjon, Oslo;

NMS = Norsk musikksamling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, avd. Oslo; BOB = Bergen off. bibliotek.

With thanks to Roger Martin

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg



The Norwegian pianist Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was an early winner of the German High School Piano Competition. Other prizes include the Norwegian Piano Competition in 1972, and in 1975 the Norwegian Critics Prize for Best Performance, awarded after a performance of Grieg's *Piano Concerto* at the Bergen Festival. In 1976 he was honoured for the Norwegian recording of the Year, with a recital of music by Norwegian Baroque composers. Other awards include the Grieg Prize in 1985 and in 1992. From 1975 to 1981 Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was professor of piano at the Hanover Musikhochschule and in recent years has enjoyed an international career, with recitals throughout Europe, in the United States of America and in the former Soviet Union. He was appointed a Knight of St Olav by the King of Norway for his contribution to Norwegian music.

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Playing Time
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“All my music has grown out of a vague supernatural sound. As a fourteen-year-old boy I heard the invisible fluttering of owls’ wings in the summer night. This was the starting-point for all my music.” Throughout his life, Harald Sæverud was one of the most distinctive figures on the Norwegian music scene. His desire to express himself and to seek unique solutions to the artistic challenges presented by each new work, gave rise to a personal musical idiom. Sæverud’s music tends not to describe the grand Norwegian scenery of mountains and fjords, but focuses on nature and the human moods reflected in it, incorporating Norwegian folk-lore and legends.

Harald
SÆVERUD
(1897-1992)**WORLD PREMIERE**
RECORDINGS**Complete Piano Works, Vol. 5**

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|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1-3 | Sonate, g-moll (Sonata, G minor), Op. 3 | 20:34 |
| 4-26 | From Posthumous manuscripts | 42:33 |
| | (including At Caesar’s Last & Foxglove Fantasia) | |
| 27-31 | Suite, Op. 6 | 15:47 |

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

The Sæverud Edition was recorded on 9th-10th June 1997, 30th June - 3rd July 1997, 14th April 1998, 15th-17th May 1998, 16th - 18th July 1998, 22nd July 1998, 24th - 26th November 1998 and 1st May 2002 in St Martin’s Church, East Woodhay, Hampshire, UK.

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Booklet Notes: Øyvind Norheim • Cover Photo: Harald Sæverud © H. J. Brun, Bergen
(Siljustøl Museum, Bergen, Norway)