

Beyond borders

On her latest disc, Norwegian violinist Vilde Frang is showcasing the multinational appeal of Nielsen, 'a Scandinavian Mahler'

Vilde Frang's latest recording for EMI looks like a clever marketing wheeze: the Tchaikovsky concerto to show the violinist's prodigious technique and the Nielsen to emphasise Scandinavian empathy.

But her words – and her strikingly individual performances of both works – testify otherwise.

'Tchaikovsky played a really important role in my childhood. I grew up with the *Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, the symphonies, the operas,' she says, recalling how as a child she used to dance around her bedroom to the ballets. 'He is the storyteller above all, with his chromatic, spicy language.' While the technical demands of the work are formidable, Frang's playing emphasises the lyricism and she insists: 'Tchaikovsky was not aiming to write a virtuoso work.'



And though the Tchaikovsky may be popular with audiences today, she admits the Nielsen is a hard sell: 'I don't believe a Scandinavian

school of composition existed. Scandinavia did not have any roots like the Russian school or the French school, which is perhaps why Scandinavian music is considered more exotic and less audience-friendly, which actually is not true.

'Nielsen is like a Scandinavian Mahler, he goes beyond borders. Tchaikovsky is incredibly structured; he tells you exactly what he wants. Nielsen is completely the contrary, he has his special structure but it is a completely untraditional one and it is easy to get lost in the work. Nielsen may not be easy to listen to but it gives incredible opportunities to the player.'

Although this is the 26-year-old's third recording for EMI, she has no illusions. 'Having the possibility to record for a label nowadays is like being inside a big, beautiful soap bubble. You never know when it will pop.' Plans for her next recording are under wraps. She says it will not be of concertos but will reveal 'hidden treasures'.

Despite being a veteran of 14 years of concerto playing, she denies any risk of burnout. 'It feels completely natural doing what I am doing. It feels normal to travel, to perform and to meet many truly wonderful musicians.



The most important thing is to keep challenging myself musically.'

She is fulfilling a long-held ambition to learn the Britten concerto and would love to commission a work from fellow Norwegian Rolf Wallin ('But I have to get in line because he is so popular!'). She also admires Sofia Gubaidulina's music but, again, feels she must defer to senior colleagues such as Kremer and Mutter. But her admiration of the piece Paul Mealor wrote for the royal wedding might mean less of a wait. As with her next foray into recording, time will tell.

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