VILDE FRANG (VIOLIN), JOSÉ GALLARDO (piano)

‘HOMAGE’. Catalogue number WARNER CLASSICS 9029580532

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The BBC Magazine once said of the Norwegian violinist, Vilde Frang,\* ‘Frang has the knack of breathing life into every note, whether by variations in phrasing, attack, tone or dynamic’. This comment is particularly pertinent to Frang’s ‘Homage’ which she intended as a tribute to the players of the Golden Age of the Violin. Although she trained in Germany and hence did not grow up immersed in the Central and Eastern-European tradition of Heifetz, Kreisler, Auer and Szigeti, Frang sets her own distinctive seal on these ‘encore’ pieces, never imitating the masters’ rendering of them, but always playing with originality and personality. The same freshness of approach underlies the playing of the pianist, José Gallardo.

Some of the old favourites are there: Gluck’s ‘Mélodie’ which Frang endows with a tragic and tender yearning in contrast to Grumiaux’s very clean and restrained approach; Mendelssohn’s ‘Song without words’, arranged by Kreisler as ‘May Breezes’; and Kreisler’s ubiquitous ‘Rondino on a theme by Beethoven’. But there are less well-known pieces such as the ‘Gypsy Caprice’ with which Frang astutely pairs the Kreisler ‘Rondino’, and a Szigeti transcription of Scriabin. Although as a boy-prodigy Menuhin recorded ‘La capricciosa’ by Franz Ries (nephew to Beethoven’s student, Ferdinand Ries) the work has been largely neglected and Frang puts it firmly back on the map underscoring all of its charm and grace with a beautiful lightness of touch. It is not the usual Bazzini either: the ‘La Ronde des Lutins’ having thankfully been replaced by the equally dazzling and virtuosic ‘Six morceaux caractéristiques: Calabrese’. Another unknown is the ‘Tango’ of Poldowski. Poldowski was a pseudonym for Wieniawski’s youngest Polish-British daughter, Irène (1879-1932), and this sinewy Tango has Frang attacking and digging into the strings as befits the surprisingly brazen and masculine quality of the piece. Wieniawski himself is represented by his ‘Obertas’ Mazurka no. 1, coupled with the Caprice in E-flat ‘Alla Saltarella’, transcribed by Kreisler. The latter, as implied by its title which implies the 15th century Italian dance form, has a repeated and rapid leaping feature which Frang executes with the light and charming touch she is so capable of. The smooth string crossing required in the arpeggiated triads is executed impeccably, in line with the remarkable level of musicianship Frang displays throughout the whole of the recording. At 33 years of age, it is safe to say that Frang is one of the leading and most original artists on today’s world stage. Her appeal is further heightened by her refusal to pay court to the media. We hear a lot from performers about the need for self-effacement so as to make the music shine. Frang, in my view, is one of the very few who actually lives by this precept.

**Vilde Frang**

In 2012 Frang was unanimously awarded the Credit Suisse Young Artists Award which led to her debut with the Wiener Philharmoniker under Bernard Haitink at the Lucerne Festival.

In 2016 she made her highly acclaimed debut with the Berliner Philharmoniker under Sir Simon Rattle. She will return during the 17-18 season for her debut at the Philharmonie, as well as for concerts at the Baden Baden Easter Festival with Ivan Fischer.

The 2018-19 season will include two extensive European tours with the Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin with Robin Ticciati and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg with Gustavo Gimeno, plus engagements with San Francisco Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Bamberger Symphoniker, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra and Seoul Philharmonic.

Vilde Frang is an exclusive Warner Classics artist and her recordings have received numerous awards.  She is the recipient of the Edison Klassiek Award, Classic BRIT Award, “Diapason d’Or” by Diapason Magazine, Deutsche Schallplattenpreis and Echo Klassik Award.  She also received a Gramophone Award in the Concerto category for her recording of Korngold’s Violin Concerto and Britten’s Violin Concerto.