

THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL JAZZ ORCHESTRA

NORSE MYTHS



featuring

ARILD ANDERSEN, TOMMY SMITH, PAOLO VINACCIA

MARCH 2019

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Nordic jazz has its own heroes, and foremost among them are bassist Arild Andersen and drummer/percussionist Paolo Vinaccia. Both are admired as pre-eminent jazz masters, and both are strongly associated with impressive jazz music. They collaborate here with Tommy Smith and the SNJO to tell new and original jazz stories spun around Norse legends, as together they exploit the unlimited potential of musical symbolism. Imaginations will run riot as Thor swings that famous hammer and Odin's thunder rolls high above the roof of Valhalla as this startling new creative music is heard and shared.

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ARILD ANDERSEN TRIO

One of the most interesting and unusual jazz trios to have emerged in the last ten years is the international collaboration between Norwegian master bassist Arild Andersen, Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith and Italian percussionist Paolo Vinaccia. Andersen formed the trio in 2007 with the clear aim of breaking new ground in contemporary jazz and their impact was immediate.

Arild is a multi award-winning virtuoso jazz bassist and composer from Norway, and a legend in international jazz. He has played with noted artists including Don Cherry, Sam Rivers, George Russell, Stan Getz and Sonny Rollins.

Tommy Smith is founder/director of the respected Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO). An international recording artist, and a leading jazz educator, he toured the world in the late 80s with Gary Burton.

Paolo Vinaccia is an Italian drummer, percussionist and composer who has lived in Norway since 1979 and worked with Arild Andersen for many years on a wide range of projects and has

been extremely active within the domestic jazz community.

Their group's initial live performances were noted for their astonishing power, precision and dynamism. Much of that energy was captured on their first album *Live at Belleville* in 2008 on ECM, and received widespread critical acclaim. In that same year, Andersen was awarded the prestigious Grand Prix du Musicien Européen de l'Académie du Jazz in France for this recording.

Since then, Andersen, Smith and Vinaccia have toured regularly worldwide, consolidated their reputation as a compelling live act and won the appreciation of discerning jazz audiences as far afield the USA, Japan, Scandinavia, Europe, UK, Nicaragua, Argentina, India, Guatemala, South Korea and Egypt.

In 2014, the trio released *Mira*, a delightful second recording for ECM. The album attracted universally enthusiastic reviews and became instantly popular with jazz radio broadcasters. Andersen conceived *Mira* as a Sunday morning album and its appeal lies as much in its startling contrast to *Live at Belleville* as its devotion to shimmering melody.

"The sheer depth and lustre of this trio's sound can invite you to start purring in grateful imitation."

The Guardian

"Few trios even after a decade together, can build musical landscapes this dramatic and richly detailed" *Andy Herman, Down Beat*

"A new trio album by the Norwegian bass virtuoso Arild Andersen is out on the ECM label, promising to stun whoever takes a mindful listen to the marvelous music that inhabits here..." *Jazz Trail*



PROGRAMME NOTES

Faiths of all kinds have fascinated me throughout my life; from the Shinto Gods of Japan, the hand of God in the Torah, the world of Karmic reverberations, to Shamanistic realities. These are the reasons why so much of my music has followed inspired irregular pathways from Spirit of Light, World of the Gods, Torah, Karma, Planet Wave, Forbidden Fruit, to Evolution.

Humankind has proven that most cannot live without worshipping deities like Allah, Jehovah, Jesus, Shiva, Buddha, Brahma, Ganesha, Vishnu, etc., or submerging themselves within intoxicating belief systems, to Alien space homage, the Earth's Environmental movement, Humanism, and Atheism.

Similar to Norse Gods, Greek Gods and Goddesses like Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, and Athena, all encountered fates that idle in ancient Mythology. Loki, Frigg, Odin, and Thor were all once revered too, but now they are categorized as Norse Myths; although, Odin is worshiped again in Norway.

When I was younger, I worshiped the music of ECM, that featured European indigenous music, and my love for melody and the traditional song was born, and that spark still flickers today.

Selecting the music for Norse Myths was a mammoth task. First, I played through 400 Norwegian folk melodies and over time, slowly whittled the list down to my favourite 90 themes, which was a great challenge because Norwegian folk songs are so beautiful and memorable. After reaching 90, I recorded most of them on solo saxophone and quickly organised them into groups of tonalities and vibes. After an urgent meeting with Arild Andersen, we reduced the number even more. Finally, after reaching the magic selection of 12, I separated the remaining songs into four groups of 3 contrasting melodies, assigned the thematic material of Odin, Frigg, Loki, and Thor and contacted the arrangers (Dobbins, Ross, Keezer, and Brække) with the special instructions and instrumentation, and here we are today, after the composers and the musicians have worked so expediently and passionately. — Tommy Smith

FRIGG wears many hats in Norse mythology. Often described as “foremost among the goddesses,” she was the wife of Odin and Queen of the Aesir. Goddess of the sky, fertility, household, motherhood, love, marriage, and domestic arts, in Norse mythology, Frigg’s primary roles were familial, mostly surrounding her husband and children.

The melody of **“Ramund den Unge”**, creates a sense of mystery swirling around love, desire, and the enigma of fertility. It’s a very old, Danish folk song, dating from the 1600s with many variants: Ramund is the eponymous hero who battles trolls and seizes the emperor’s daughter for his wife. It’s certainly appropriate as a heroic tribute to Frigg, the seductive Goddess of all the goddesses.

Second song, **“Laugmann Rider Sig Under Oy”**, evokes a distinctly melancholic mood, for it recalls the cruel fate of Frigg’s son, Balder. His death was long foretold in dreams and prophecies, so Frigg commanded every object on earth not to kill him. Unfortunately, she neglected to include mistletoe, and Loki’s first instinct was to construct a magic spear from the plant. He then tricked Balder’s sibling, blind Höðr, into killing Balder, his own brother, with the spear.

The final song, **“Langebergs Laatt’n”**, has a playful character, but in this orchestration, it clearly has a triumphant side as well. In the tale of the tribal war between the Vandals and the Winnilers, Frigg is in disagreement with Odin about who should be granted victory. As a weaver of events still to come, Frigg orchestrates victory for the Winnilers, much to Odin’s displeasure.

LOKI – **“Åsmund Frægdegjevar”** is the Nordic tale of a hero, sent by his father to free a princess imprisoned in a distant castle. At first, he’s shocked to discover that the princess is possessed by an ogre. In the end, the ogre is ruthlessly slain, the castle is plundered, and the princess is freed from the spell. The sudden key-change into the folk tune, and the turn of

mood in the solo section, represent the surprise that Åsmund felt when he found the possessed princess.

Loki is often portrayed as a scheming coward and in many ways, he is the antithesis of core values in Norse mythology. **“Et lidet barn så lysteligt”** is an early Christian carol telling the tale of the “little cheerful child” born “the son of God”. Jesus, in this context, may be seen as the Christian antithesis of Loki, a figure bringing hope and joy, rather than chaos to the world.

“Stolt Øli” is based on an old Norwegian folk tune **“Jutulen og Stolt Øli”**. It’s a humorous ballad all about a young giant who politely courts a haughty maiden. When she refuses him, he complains bitterly to his (human) mother, but the advice he’s given is blunt. “That was not what your father did!” she tells him. She recalls the time his own father (also a giant) simply carried her away to the mountain. My arrangement concentrates on the giant’s anger over his unsuccessful courtship and circles back to “Åsmund”, who had a similar experience with his princess.

ÓÐINN – This piece of music- a suite of 3 songs - depicts Odin’s travels through the sky with his trusty steed Sleipnir; his seeking of knowledge; and his role as a father figure and founder.

The piece starts out with the **“Dance of Jolster”**, which is well known from Edward Grieg’s subtle, solo piano version (Opus 17, No.5). Øyvín’s version reaches out into the void, into desolate battlefields littered with fallen warriors, half of whom were chosen by the valkyries to enter Valhalla, while the others are transported to the goddess Freya’s “Fólkvangr”. Here her “Einherjar” was an elite group of dead soldiers given by Freya to Odin, who would later lead them through the great and final battle at Ragnarök.

The Dance of Jolster gently comes to a conclusion offering a glimpse of hope, before settling into the folksong **“Ragnhild”** and followed by **“Møllervisen”**, a joyful song from Bø in Telemark, Norway.

This lighter music may reaffirm Odin’s role as a father figure, by connecting to Yuletide lore, and the creation myth of ‘Ask’ and ‘Embla’, the first two humans given the gift of life from the gods.

But storm clouds are never very far away, and the C Major motifs of ‘The Jolster Dance’ suddenly conjure up Odin’s ghostly **“Wild Hunt”** as he hurtles across the winter sky with elves, fairies, and the wailing dead in his wake. A long journey over a mysterious foggy moor finally brings a conclusion as the ‘Jolster’ theme once more manifests itself, summoning all combatants to a peaceful afterlife in the underworld.

ÞÓRR (THOR) is the fierce hammer-wielding god who is often associated with thunder, lightning and storms. He also personifies strength and justice, although Loki, his eternal antagonist, often outwits him. This suite seeks to capture his personality, reflected through the lens of three Norwegian folk songs.

The first, **“Jeg Lagde Meg Så Silde”**, is a popular song that tells the sad tale of a person who goes to visit their lover and upon arrival, finds them dead. Perhaps something tragic like this happened to Thor. Who is to say that underneath that tough exterior, Thor was not a sensitive guy with feelings?

The second song, **“Huldre-Kve”**, depicts the legendary battle waged at Ragnarök between Thor and a giant ‘Midgard-serpent’. The “snaky” chromatic lines played by the horns represent the serpent, while the low brass and percussion become Thor’s hammer smashing down. Naturally, Thor wins, but he takes only nine steps before succumbing to the beast’s venom. His last stumbling moments are portrayed by the piano in a gradual rallentando to a final quiet chord.

But then Thor’s back for the finale! In **“Bufarsvein”**, this boisterous god with a taste for simple pleasures is honoured in a lively celebration, Inevitably, given Thor’s short temper and penchant for heavy drinking, things go badly and erupt into a mythic bar brawl. There is a lot of hammer smashing and the suite culminates in a storm of thunder, lightning, and relentless D minor chords.

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*Exact playing order will be announced from the stage.
There will be a 20 minute interval.*

FRIGG

orchestrated by Bill Dobbins

Frigg, as the wife of Odin, is often described as "foremost among the goddesses". She was also known as the goddess of fertility, household, motherhood, love, marriage, and domestic arts.

- Ramund den unge Bb minor
- Laugmann Rider Sig Under Oy E minor
- Langebergs G Major

LOKI

orchestrated by Florian Ross

Loki, one of the best-known Norse deities is son of a goddess and a giant. He is widely depicted as handsome and 'well-made', but his sexuality is distinctly ambiguous. He is also a famous mischief-maker who is fickle, mercenary, volatile and exceptionally cunning.

- Asmund Fredegjaever A minor
- Et Lidet Barn Saa Lystelight D Major
- Stolt Oli G minor

ÓÐINN (Odin)

orchestrated by Øyvind Brække

God of wisdom, magic, battle and kingship, who is worshipped by the elite. As a 'chooser of the slain', he has power over life and death on the battlefield.

- Mollervisen D minor
- Ragnhild G minor
- En Jolstring C minor & C Major

ÞÓRR (THOR)

orchestrated by Geoffrey Keezer

Thor is perhaps the most familiar of all the Norse Gods. Red-Bearded, Short-tempered and not very clever, he governs the weather and seafaring, and is worshipped by farmers as the guardian of fields and crops.

- Jeg Lagde Mig Saa Silde A & B minor
- Huldre-Kve Bb Major
- Bufarsvein D minor



ØYVIND BRÆKKE

Øyvind Brække lives in Oslo and is a respected freelance jazz trombonist, composer, and arranger of jazz, rock and large ensemble productions all over Norway.

He started his music education at Oslo University, earning a music degree in 1990, and followed this with a 2-year spell at the Trondheim Music Conservatory focusing on jazz performance and composition.

Brække has just completed a 3-year composer's grant (2015-2018) from the Norwegian Arts Council, focusing on writing chamber music for string quartet, piano trio and piano solo, and creating new musical content for these classical formats.

In 1993 Brække co-founded the still active jazz quartet, the Source with fellow students in Trondheim: Trygve Seim, drummer Per Oddvar Johansen and Ingebrigt Flaten (later Mats Eilertsen took the bass role). The Source has so far released 7 albums, 2 on ECM, and performed all over Europe.

Since 2000, he has worked on numerous projects with the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, often with well-known jazz legends including such as Chick Corea and Joshua Redman.

In 2011 he released his own music with this ensemble on a CD – Migrations and his current project with the Trondheim Orchestra, led by bass player Ole Morten Vågan, is for a premiere at the Harstad Festival this summer.

As an arranger, he is working with singer Tora Augestad on re-working Kurt Weill music for the Symphonic Orchestral format, and this year is also working in symphonic format for singer/sax player Håkon Kornstad on classical re-works.



BILL DOBBINS

Bill Dobbins is professor of jazz studies at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

He teaches the jazz composing and arranging courses and directs the Eastman Jazz Ensemble and Studio Orchestra. His many students have been heard in the big bands of Count Basie, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Chuck Mangione, Maria Schneider, and Bob Brookmeyer.

As a pianist, Bill has performed with orchestra and chamber ensembles under the direction of Louis Lane, Pierre Boulez, Lukas Foss and Frederick Fennell, and has performed and recorded with Clark Terry, Al Cohn, Phil Woods, James Moody, Dave Liebman, John Goldsby and Peter Erskine. From 1994–2002, he was principal director of the WDR Big Band in Cologne, Germany, and headed the jazz studies department at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne (1998–2002). Concert, radio, television and tour projects under his direction with the WDR Big Band featured Clark Terry, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, Kevin Mahogany, Art Farmer, Steve Lacy, Paquito D'Rivera, Claire Fischer, Peter Erskine and the Kings Singers.

He continues to collaborate with the WDR Big Band, the Netherlands Metropole Orchestra and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. Schott Music (Germany) publishes his compositions and arrangements for big band, chamber music combinations and solo piano, Jazz piano transcriptions and textbooks. These include Creative Approach to Jazz Piano Harmony, and Arranging for the Contemporary Big Band, Preludes (Volumes 1-4), and a DVD, The Evolution of Solo Jazz Piano.

THE ORCHESTRATORS



GEOFFREY KEEZER

Multiple GRAMMY®-nominated pianist **Geoffrey Keezer** is a native of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and started playing in jazz clubs as a teenager. He held the piano chair for Art Blakey at age 18, and toured in the company of Ray Brown, Joshua Redman, Diana Krall, Art Farmer, Benny Golson and Barbara Hendricks in his 20s. More recently, he has toured with Wayne Shorter, Dianne Reeves, David Sanborn, Chris Botti, Sting, Joe Locke and Christian McBride; has produced / arranged 3 GRAMMY®-nominated recordings with vocalist Denise Donatelli, and released a series of albums drawing influences from Hawaiian, Okinawan and Afro-Peruvian folk traditions. His 2009 album *Áurea* was nominated for a Best Latin Jazz Album GRAMMY® award.

He has had compositions commissioned by the Mainly Mozart Festival, Art of Elán Ensemble, Zeltsman Marimba Festival, Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra. His music can be heard in the films *What Happens in Vegas* and *Inhale*, and in numerous TV shows including *The Young and the Restless* (CBS), *Parks and Recreation* (NBC), and *House of Lies* (Showtime).

Pop icon Sting said "In the universe of piano players that I have been exposed to over the years, Geoffrey has proved himself to be not only a superb technician and improviser, but also above and beyond this, a composer and conceptualist who can maintain the overall line and the DNA of the song in everything he plays. A musician's musician." geoffreykeezer.com



FLORIAN ROSS

Florian Ross is a musical explorer. His journey into the lands of jazz began with studies in Cologne and later London and New York, where he honed his skills both as a pianist and a composer. Florian's special area of expertise was post-bop, which flowered into his remarkable ability to handle all forms of contemporary and improvised music.

His first album as a leader appeared in 1998 and he now has 18 to his name.

Florian's music comes from a deep synthesis of heart and mind, of feeling and intellect, enabling him to effortlessly span the realms of improvised and composed jazz. His gifts as a piano player prevent him from being seduced into abstract theory of purely intellectual composition, while his instincts as a composer enables him to steer clear of self-indulgence on the keyboards. His music is of breathtaking variety, excelling in every combination from solo, duo, trio and quintet to big bands and symphony orchestras.

He has taught at many German universities and currently teaches Piano and Composition at the Hochschule für Musik, Köln and is Professor of Composition at the Jazz Institute, Berlin. Additionally he teaches workshops all over the world and plays, composes and arranges for many orchestras across Europe including the Metropole Orchestra, WDR and NDR Big Bands. Florian's international awards are too numerous to list, but among them are the coveted first prize in the Danish Radio Big Band International Thad Jones Competition and the prestigious WDR Jazz prize for composition. florianross.de

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