

*Chasing Strings*

Telemark Chamber Orchestra  
Lars-Erik ter Jung, conductor

## ***Chasing Strings***

1. Nils Henrik Asheim (1960)  
***Chase*** ..... 14:17
2. Jan Erik Mikalsen (1979)  
***Lied for String Ensemble*** ..... 10:43
3. Magnar Åm (1952)  
***Studier over ein salmetone frå Luster*** ..... 08:23
4. Jan Erik Mikalsen (1979)  
***Munchsonaten*** ..... 09:30

Telemark Chamber Orchestra  
Lars-Erik ter Jung, conductor

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Telemark Chamber Orchestra

1. *Violin:*  
Bogumila Dowlasz  
Patrycja Blaszak  
Amanda Håøy Horn  
Linnéa Fredricson  
Mons Michael Thommessen (2,3)

2. *Violin:*  
Alyson Read  
Emilie Gudim  
Rønnaug Flatin  
Elia Kaden

*Viola:*  
Anders Rensvik  
Karoline Vik Hegge  
Caroline Berge Mæhlum  
Nanna Ikutomi Sørli (1)

*Cello:*  
Ingvild Nesdal Sandnes  
Cecilia Göttestam  
Tove Margrethe Erikstad (2)

*Double Bass:*  
Kjetil Sandum  
Inga Margrete Aas (1)

## TELEMARK CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

### *Chasing strings*

After 25 years of activity, 23 of these in affiliation with Telemark County, Telemark Chamber Orchestra holds a strong position in Norwegian musical life. The orchestra, which works on a project-by-project basis, has emerged as a prominent collaborator within the area of contemporary music, and has garnered broad acclaim for its promotion of new art music. In addition to the classical chamber orchestra repertoire, Telemark Chamber Orchestra has for several years regularly presented new works for chamber orchestra, most of which were commissioned by the orchestra itself from Norwegian composers. Several of these works have been released on five of the orchestra's six CDs. The Telemark Chamber Orchestra will pursue its ambition to present new string-based music when commissioning works, performing at various concert venues, and making recordings.

Arts Council Norway has supported the orchestra's activities for several years through its funding scheme for music ensembles. The orchestra also received financial support from the Telemark county authority until 2015. In 2014 and 2015 Telemark Chamber Orchestra was engaged in an extensive collaboration with the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź, Poland, after having received a substantial EEA Grant.

This production follows up the idea of a series of recordings with Telemark Chamber Orchestra as a dedicated promoter of Norwegian contemporary music. This effort, which began with the 2005 CD release *Nostos* (FBRCD-04), encompasses a broad repertoire while, at the same time, maintaining a unified profile. The common denominator is that all of the works include strings, and the discography comprises music connected with the Norwegian folk

music tradition, pieces using wind instruments, and works featuring a variety of soloists. Some of the music is by established Norwegian composers, while some is the work of young, unestablished composers, such as the recording *Tapestry* (FBRCD-14), released in 2016, which presented the work of seven composers connected with nyMusikk's Composer Group. Here, too, the range of different sources of musical inspiration is striking, while at the same time this is also the first release where the string orchestra plays on its own. This is what Telemark Chamber Orchestra now wants to follow up on this new album: pure string music, which in itself holds great potential for displaying nuance and variation.

The CD was recorded in 2017, the year when Telemark Chamber Orchestra marked its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary – which also coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Norwegian Society of Composers. This new release links three generations of contemporary composers, all of whom are well established. All the works on *Chasing Strings* are also connected to Lars-Erik ter Jung, the orchestra's artistic director, who commissioned *Chase* and *Munchsonaten*, and who has collaborated with and commissioned works from the three composers for many years.

#### **NILS HENRIK ASHEIM**

Nils Henrik Asheim (b. 1960) combines his work as a composer with his career as a performer, and collaborates regularly with other artists on projects that integrate spatial, theatrical and improvisational elements. Asheim began his studies with composer Olav Anton Thommessen, and made his debut as a composer at the early age of 15. In 1978 he received the European Broadcasting Union's Rostrum Award for the work *Ensemblemusikk for 5*, after which he studied organ and composing at the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam.

Nils Henrik Asheim has composed around 100 works in genres including chamber music, orchestral music, church music, and various types of musical theatre and opera. Since 1991 he has been living in Stavanger, Norway, where among his activities he played a major role in the establishment of Tou Scene, an alternative arts centre. Since September 2012 he has been engaged as an organist at Stavanger Concert Hall, where his creative programming of the organ has garnered considerable acclaim.

In the work *Chase* the ensemble is divided into two equal groups that play against each other. As the title suggests, it could seem as though the two groups are "chasing" one another. Sometimes they are as close as shadows, while at other times they part company entirely and revolve in their separate musical worlds. The word "chase" can also bring to mind the physical energy inherent in the string instruments. In certain sections of the piece we are thrust into the midst of an intense cascade of bowings, both synchronous and asynchronous. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are sections where time seems to stand still, a sort of "no-man's-land" in which the soundscape consists of miniscule (bowed) twitches on a surface.

The work was commissioned by the ter Jung Sextet in 2001. The chamber orchestra version was commissioned by the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra in 2006. Asheim was awarded the Edvard Prize for *Chase* by TONO, the Norwegian copyright organisation for musicians and composers, in 2002.

#### **MAGNAR ÅM**

Magnar Åm (b. 1952) studied composition and organ at the Bergen Music Conservatory (now the Grieg Academy) from 1969 to 1971, and continued his studies in composition with Ingvar Lidholm at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm from 1971 to 1972. Magnar Åm has composed commissioned works for the major orchestras in Norway, for choirs such as

the Bergen Domkantori and the Norwegian Soloists' Choir, and for chamber music ensembles such as the Oslo String Quartet, the ter Jung Sextet and the Grieg Trio.

In addition to his activities as a composer, Åm has given seminars in composition and improvisation throughout Norway since 1975, and has been teaching the subjects *Intuitive composition/improvisation and music philosophy*, *Creating meaning*, and *Playful truth* approach as a part-time professor at Volda University College since 2005. In 2006 he was awarded Berlin's Europäischer Komponistenpreis at Europäischer Musik Sommer Berlin for *det er'kje snøen som fell, det er me som stig*, commissioned by the Norwegian National Youth Orchestra. In 2009 he received the prestigious Arne Nordheim Composer's Prize and in 2014 he was awarded TONO's Edvard Prize, the latter for the viola concerto *inngang, nærvær, utgang*. Åm was the recipient of a Guaranteed Income for Artists starting in 1979, and now receives the Grant for Senior Artists.

Åm based *Studie over ein salmetone frå Luster (Study on a Norwegian Hymn)*, composed in 1977, on the folk song "*Dagen viker og går bort*", collected from Luster in the district of Sogn by music researcher O. M. Sandvik. The lyrics of the song date from 1678, and the melody has an ambiguous and equivocal tonality, which sparked Åm's interest. Since then this type of tonality has become a major element of his compositional toolbox, and characterises many of his subsequent compositions. The piece can also be found in a version for organ, also under the title "*Dagen viker og går bort*".

#### **JAN ERIK MIKALSEN**

Jan Erik Mikalsen (b. 1979) studied at the Grieg Academy in Bergen and the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. He has received various commissions, for symphonic ensembles among

others, and has participated in a number of major festivals all over the world. Mikalsen has collaborated with video and visual artist Tori Wrånes on works including the performance piece *Yes Nix* at the Performa 13 visual art biennial in New York City. In 2012 Mikalsen's *Parts II for Orchestra* was selected as one of the four finalists for the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award, and was given its world premiere by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. This work also won TONO's Edvard Prize for the best contemporary work of 2012. The Norwegian Radio Orchestra premiered his *Songr for Orchestra* in 2014. The following year this work won Rostrum 2015, and was broadcast in 30 countries throughout the world. In 2017, several of Mikalsen's large-scale works had their world premieres: *Saan* (Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and the POING ensemble), *Violin Concerto* (Ingerine Dahl and the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra) and the piano concerto *Just for You* (Ellen Ugelvik and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Lars-Erik ter Jung).

*Lied for String Ensemble* (2012) was commissioned by the Oslo Camerata. The title refers to Franz Schubert's songs, especially "*Der Doppelgänger*" from the song cycle *Schwanengesang*. The song's ostinato-like chords and the descent of the protagonist into madness provide the starting point for Mikalsen's composition. Schubert's chord progression of B minor-F#-D-F#7, which is modulated through glissandi and ghostly chords, is interposed within the sections of the work that feature fleeting musical fragments and long expanses of sound extending throughout the ensemble.

*Munchsonaten* was commissioned by the Faust Quartet, who gave it its world premiere at the Munch Museum in 2013 during the Oslo Chamber Music Festival. The Faust Quartet commissioned four string quartets from Norwegian composers, and a picture by Munch was assigned to each composer to serve

as an inspiration. Mikalsen was given the iconic work *The Scream* as his point of departure. The sonata was composed as an attempt to reflect nature and its sounds, an internal scream, and anxiety when confronting the overwhelming aspects of the essence of nature. It was arranged for chamber orchestra in 2016 on commission from Lars-Erik ter Jung and the Telemark Chamber Orchestra, and this version had its world premiere the following year.

#### **LARS-ERIK TER JUNG, CONDUCTOR**

After an active career as one of Norway's most highly profiled violinists, Lars-Erik ter Jung has gained widespread recognition as a conductor in the past decade. He has worked with many ensembles including the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. He has commissioned and given the world premieres of new works by a number of Norwegian composers, not least through his engagement as Artistic Director of the Telemark Chamber Orchestra, for which he has served as director since its inception in 1992. In recent years ter Jung has also been active as a conductor of operas and ballets, for instance at the Kristiansund Opera and the Norwegian Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra. A comprehensive discography is available at [www.larserikterjung.no](http://www.larserikterjung.no)