

LAWO
CLASSICS

Out of Step

LARS LIEN – SAXOPHONE

SERGEJ OSADCHUK

– PIANO



Out of Step

This recording is the culmination of a process spanning several years, in which the performers delved into the works of composers found right in their own backyard. The facts are that all but one of the composers on this recording were born in the 1940s (the exception here is Mark Adderley, who was born in 1960). All of the composers are Norwegian, except for Anders Eliasson from Sweden and Adderley, who is half English, half Swedish, and has lived in Norway since 1981. Three of the composers have worked as professors at the Norwegian Academy of Music, an institution that has been at the forefront of the education of Norwegian composers since its establishment in 1973. These facts have not in themselves been instrumental in the choice of repertoire; rather it was more important that the works were composed for saxophone and piano, and that we as performers believed that they were works that deserved to be realized into sound, and given attention beyond their catalog listings in various music libraries. The works become audible and alive through such a recording, rather than existing only as visual notations in the composers' manuscripts. There is so much fantastic music created in Norway and the Nordic countries that we wanted to bring some of it to light in order to make musicians and audiences, potentially all

over the globe, more aware of the high quality of works from these countries. The recording also documents some of the different artistic directions and variations to be found among Norwegian and Nordic composers around the turn of the millennium.

Mark Adderley's *Out of Step* is a complex, exuberant, and rich musical playground, both for the performers and listeners alike. Here the performers' virtuosity and coordination skills are put to the test. The asymmetrical rhythms give the impression of imbalance while conjuring the chirping of small birds. For most of us, life isn't just smooth sailing, and we are generally able to recognize these small bumps in the road, the roughness and unevenness that challenge our sense of equilibrium. However, apart from the turbulence and stress, there are also moments of melancholy, peacefulness, and calm. Adderley has steadfastly resisted any temptation to follow trends over the last thirty years of his career, choosing instead to take his own path, finding his own musical voice within the parameters of the classical music tradition. Adderley and Lien have an ongoing collaboration and have worked on several other projects in the past. This partnership has resulted in a recording of *Hallucinations*

for alto saxophone, mezzo-soprano, and percussion on the CD *Phonetix*, (LWC1095) from 2015. *Out of Step* was composed specifically for the performers on this recording.

The musicians are also pushed to their limits by the technical challenges found in **Olav Anton Thommessen's** *Somber Song*. The saxophone part extends in long lines over more than 4 octaves, while placed in an extremely soft dynamic. The piano part fills in with a mosaic made up of virtuosic blankets of sound, creating a stripped and almost raw expression, at the threshold of what the instruments and performers can handle. It's almost a trademark of Thommessen to compose on the periphery, where musicians have to balance on a knife-edge in order to avoid compromising their own expectations of perfection. His pursuit of maximalism also contains a basic idea about where authenticity and fragility arise, free of easy solutions and a shiny, glossy exterior. The work was composed for American saxophonist John-Edward Kelly, who was the saxophone professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music from 2000 to 2005.

Bjørn Howard Kruse's work *The Secret of Gyda* was composed for the opening of the Norwegian

Academy of Music's new building on Gyda's Road in 1989. The Norwegian Academy of Music was finally gathered under one roof after many years of struggle to find funding and a location. Kruse euphorically wrote the piece and performed the work himself on the occasion of moving into the building on Gyda's Road. And in the title, Kruse also refers to the cornucopia of secrets hiding within a music academy. The work is idiomatic and atmospheric in its expression, and expels powerful cascades of sound where the phrases disappear in echo-like repetitions. His improvisatorial touch shows Kruse's fascination with the intuitive side of the compositional process. The middle section feels almost like an improvised cadenza, perhaps not so surprising given Bjørn Kruse's background as a performing jazz clarinetist and saxophonist.

Ragnar Söderlind considers himself a tonal composer and mainly composes within the Western art music tradition. One can, however, still find inspiration from modernism in several of his orchestral works, such as his *Trauermusik*, written in indignation over the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Söderlind often uses nature and paintings as sources of inspiration for his works. In *Friesische Landschaft*, he takes

inspiration from the Danish-German artist Emil Nolde of Nordfriesland. Nolde was known for his colorful paintings in the expressionist style, not so unlike Söderlind's compositional output. The work is a musical depiction of the painter walking through a Frisian landscape, but it can also be interpreted in a figurative sense as a depiction of Nolde's artistry, and the artistic relationship between Nolde and Söderlind. The piece was composed for the Norwegian saxophonist Rolf-Erik Nystrøm.

Anders Eliasson's piece, *Poem* for alto saxophone and piano, is a reworked version of his own work *Längs radien* (Along the radius) for soprano and piano. The piece is based on Tomas Tranströmer's poem of the same title. With its long singable lines and poetic expression, it is easy to hear that the work was originally composed for voice. The fact that the work suits the saxophone so well might be due to the instrument's proximity to the human voice and its ability to vary its sound in the different registers. In the saxophone version, the composer uses almost the entire range of the instrument, and the large intervals create an enormous tension without losing the demonstrative and highly personal compositional expression that Eliasson

represents. His music is rooted in a striking, almost Romantic expression that at the same time points towards the future. In the work's dramatic climax, Eliasson implements the *Dies irae* (Day of Wrath) - a Latin hymn from the Middle Ages that adds a philosophical and tragic dimension to *Poem*. There is something everlasting about Eliasson's music that could simply be that it is art music of the highest quality. The piece is dedicated to the saxophonist John-Edward Kelly and was a preliminary sketch toward Eliasson's third symphony, which itself has a consistently virtuosic, solo saxophone part.

The composer **Olav Berg** has written several works for woodwinds, and many using saxophone. His *Saxophone Quartet* from 1988 is regularly performed both in and outside of Norway. *Saxifraga* from 2000 is his second work for saxophone and was commissioned by the producer of this recording, Vegard Landaas. Later, Berg worked with the performers on this recording on his quintet for saxophone quartet and piano, dedicated to the NoXaS saxophone quartet and Sergej Osadchuk. He also recently composed a soulful saxophone concerto especially dedicated to the author here. The title *Saxifraga* has a meaning beyond the obvious fact that it is written for saxophone. *Saxifraga* is a genus of plants,

and the scientific name literally means "stone-breaker," referring to the fact that this plant in the *Saxifragaceae* family grows in rock crevices and was once thought to be able to break up kidney stones. Musically, Olav Berg shows the same explosive power by utilizing dissonant quarter tones, glissandi, and slap tongue. Powerful gestures are thrown about in both the piano and saxophone parts. The contrasts between the percussive gesticulation and the more sonorous atmospheric parts come together to create a feeling of something natural and subtle. Several of Berg's most important works have been created in collaboration with performers. This work has gone through a revision process where the performers on the recording and the composer have been fruitfully inspired by one another.

- Lars Lien

(Translated by Leann Currie)



Lars Lien

– Saxophone

Lars Lien is a graduate of the Norwegian Academy of Music where he studied with Harald Bergersen. He has been active with several ensembles such as Saxofon Concentus, Affinis Ensemble, and the Oslo Sinfonietta and has performed as soloist with the Oslo Philharmonic, Oslo Sinfonietta, BIT20 Ensemble, and the Arctic Philharmonic, among others. Lien is the founder of the saxophone quartet NoXaS, which recently released a new CD recording. He has twice been named "Performer of the Year" by the Norwegian Society of Composers, once with Saxofon Concentus, and again with Affinis Ensemble. He has participated in a number of CD recordings with various chamber ensembles

such as Saxofon Concentus, NoXaS saxophone quartet, Affinis Ensemble, Asamisimasa, BIT20 Ensemble, and Oslo Sinfonietta. His recording *Phonetix* was released on the LAWO Classics label in 2016. Lien has performed concerts and held masterclasses in the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Russia, USA, and in all of the Nordic countries. Dedicated to the development of new works for saxophone in various constellations, he has collaborated with a great number of Norwegian composers throughout his musical career. Lien is Associate Professor of Classical Saxophone at the Academy of Music, University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway.

Sergej Osadchuk

– Piano

Sergej Osadchuk studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Professor Pavel Messner (student and assistant to Emil Gilels) and has thus continued the long-established Russian piano tradition. He has had an extensive career as a soloist, chamber musician, and accompanist, and has been a soloist with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Radio Orchestra, Jönköping Symphony Orchestra, Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, Arctic Philharmonic, and Oslo Camerata, among others. He combines his concert career with teaching and has given masterclass-

es in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia. Osadchuk has released a number of CD recordings in collaboration with various artists including Morten Carlsen (viola) and Marianne Beate Kielland (mezzo-soprano). Osadchuk is Professor of Piano at the Academy of Music, University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway.



LARS LIEN – SAXOPHONE
SERGEJ OSADCHUK – PIANO

- Mark Adderley** (*1960)
1. Out of Step __ 11:24
- Olav Anton Thommessen** (*1946)
2. Somber Song __ 14:32
- Bjørn Kruse** (*1946)
3. The Secret of Gyda __ 06:24
- Ragnar Söderlind** (*1945)
4. Friesische Landschaft __ 07:25
- Anders Eliasson** (1947–2013)
5. Poem __ 10:47
- Olav Berg** (*1949)
6. Saxifraga __ 12:30

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