

HERILIAN VUET: VUEN GULGULU

Geir Inge Lotsberg, violin
The Norwegian Radio Orchestra
Bjarte Engeset, conductor

HERMAN VOGT wrote his *Violin Concerto* from 2011 to 2015 on commission from soloist Geir Inge Lotsberg and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. It is over 200 years since Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 61, was performed for the first time by the young Franz Clement in Vienna. The performance was not a success, and the piece was forgotten for many years. But 35 years later it was revived, and was presented in Paris in 1842 by the great violinist of the day, Joseph Joachim. It immediately became part of the standard repertoire for violinists. Now, when Herman Vogt has written a violin concerto for the eminent violinist Geir Inge Lotsberg, he freely acknowledges that Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* has been an important source of inspiration. But what is it about Beethoven's concerto that can inspire a contemporary composer?

Vogt says: *Beethoven lets the orchestra maintain the supportive structures to a significant degree, while the soloist plays around them. Thus the violin acquires a sort of obbligato role in the sense that its voice lies on top of "simpler" fundamental structures. In my violin concerto this serves as a kind of basic premise that creates unity and coherence in polyphonic orchestral structures, while at the same time it gives the soloist scope to explore variation and development.*

Beethoven's violin concerto, then, is all about the architecture of the composition and how the solo voice is given the freedom and scope for playful ornamentation within a larger form that safeguards the overall dramaturgy of the work. Herman Vogt's *Violin Concerto* also reflects Beethoven's dramatic dynamics, in which the solo violin dances above swelling outbursts like waves in a stormy sea.

Vogt: *The violin concerto is conceived of as a dialectical interplay between the orchestra and the soloist. The degree of transparency in the orchestra's sound plays a decisive role in the soloist's ability to be heard and to rise above the orchestra. This implies an idea of a solo concerto as an interesting form, in which the orchestra is regarded in relation to a soloist and must therefore constantly assume varying roles.*

At the intersection between the traditional and the modern, Vogt creates a fascinating dialogue that transcends historical and current reference points and emerges as a sophisticated

and extremely personal contemporary musical language. The solo violin is reminiscent of firm lines on a wet watercolour, where rich colours flow into each other and reflect themselves in Geir Inge Lotsberg's plastic, poetic playing.

The work convincingly displays Vogt's artistic integrity and credibility, and not least his masterly use of the sound possibilities inherent in the orchestra, both instrumentally and harmonically. This is a composer who combines the traditional and the modern in a symbiotic, well-articulated and dynamic idiom.

Vogt: *In relation to the violin, the fifth can be regarded as a kind of primal interval as the instrument is tuned in fifths, and the interval acquires a quasi-tonal function in this movement. From time to time the music becomes more tranquil by being assembled in columns of fifths. For some listeners this may evoke associations with the iconic opening of Alban Berg's Violin Concerto, where in the soloist's first entry the four open strings are played as slowly arpeggiated chords.*

The three movements of the work follow a classical dramaturgic form, with two active outer movements framing a contemplative, but gently movable, middle movement. The first movement, *Sonata Movement*, opens with the slowly rising entrance of the solo violin with a strikingly lovely and delicate orchestral sound surface in the background, which gradually takes a more active part in the violin's approach to the lines.

Vogt: *The playful approach to tradition can be seen in the way the form of the piece is shaped, among other things. The musical materials glide into each other, and eventually there is no clear definition of the specific roles of the materials. Is the movement actually what it seems to be?*

No, it is perceived as something other than Beethoven's classical sonata movement form, which had an exposition, development and recapitulation, with a cadence in a final coda. Vogt's music evolves speedily, displaying itself in its own luxuriant guise, and abandoning the impression of form. Thus Vogt develops the sonata movement form as a subtle shadow structure, without the defined rhetorical function that Beethoven used. Vogt creates a dynamic, sculptural focal point, where the physical and acoustical body of the music

attracts attention and is experienced differently from the music of Beethoven. The solo cadence arises organically from the embrace of the orchestra like a fully grown flower, entirely on its own merit, and stimulates the orchestra to conduct a dialogue towards the end of the movement.

Vogt: *The solo cadence functions as a symbol of the virtuoso recital. Here it promotes the idea of the soloist as possessing a transcendental role: technical performance challenges are overcome in order to attain some underlying element, and the details are formed mainly in the light of larger lines and overall coherence.*

The second movement, *Lied*, is in three parts, with brief transitions. A short section with harp and pizzicato strings forms a transition between the first and second parts, while a brief cadence for the solo violin introduces the third. *Lied* opens up like a vast book, revealing an undulating forest landscape in deep, transformative colours, with the soloist like flickering sunbeams thrusting through the leaves. It builds up to a storm before rounding off with descending lines, while the violin remains high in the crowns of the trees, rising further towards a golden sky. The orchestra huddles in the dark, smouldering, before rising again and introducing the third movement as it once again encounters the violin in a dialogue.

Vogt describes it as follows: *The second movement is clear in its tripartite form, where the long lines from the A section are contrasted with a faster B section. The A section is in constant movement. It begins with a D major chord, but glides immediately on to a restless continuum. Occasionally it finds a certain amount of repose, and dwells briefly on individual focal points. The tonality is conceived as an ambiguous and uncertain variable, almost vague and intangible. The suspensions (notes from a previous chord that are maintained after the chord changes) in this part of the section evoke an unsettled continuity. The B section is characterised more by repetitions and disjointed statements in contrast with the unified nature of the A section. The arched form is expressed when the movement closes by uniting at the point of departure, a D major chord.*

The third movement, *Rondo*, is a yearning, reflective journey towards deliverance, reconciliation and peace – and it arrives in the form of a nearly magical depiction of an idyllic state with

crystal-clear orchestration. Here Vogt's lyrical core emerges into view, after having remained during the entire work in the violin's voice as an intrinsic shaft of light shining through the orchestra's lush undergrowth. An attentive listener will hear, in the final minutes, echoes of Beethoven's famous kettledrum beats that introduce his Violin Concerto.

Vogt: The Rondo, as one of the most frequently used forms of classical as well as later music, provides the basis for the idea of the final movement. What could possibly be regarded as a ritornello (the recognisable and repeated motif/theme in classical music) is first suggested here in the calm introduction, and is later used more to punctuate the progression of the form than as a discrete element of the form. The movement ends with a version of the very first motif from the first movement, and the circle is closed. But is it a definitive conclusion? Perhaps one can imagine that the music continues in a broader musical and historical context.

Despite its association with the aesthetic ideals of romanticism, Herman Vogt's music is characterised by an unequivocally contemporary musical colour, in which it communicates an obvious awareness of a sound aesthetic that today's composers are concerned with refining and nuancing as a self-evident instrument of the sonic palette. Today the colour combinations and light spectrum of sound are incorporated as natural components into the creation of sound art. At the same time, Vogt is well acquainted with the long-established harmonic, rhythmic and dynamic potential of music to create an organic force that drives the musical narrative onward like the course of a river with countless pools in which the current drifts in circles of dreamy contemplation. This is what creates an experience, with all of its facets of action and reflection, at the interface between reverence for the insights of the past and exploration of a new future.

Bjørn Kruse

HERMAN VOGT (b. 1976) was born in Drammen, Norway. Vogt studied composition from 1999 to 2004 at the Norwegian Academy of Music with Bjørn Kruse, Lasse Thoresen, Henrik Hellstenius and Olav Anton Thommessen. In 2003 he studied composition at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague in the Netherlands with Martijn Padding and Louis Andriessen. Vogt studied violin at the Norwegian Academy of Music from 1995 to 97.

He has also studied composition, and has taken part in numerous master classes given by Salvatore Sciarrino, Walter Zimmermann, Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough, Klas Thorstensson and Diana Burrell, among others.

Vogt has written a number of pieces for different instrumentations ranging from solo pieces to chamber music and orchestral music. His compositions have been presented at concerts and festivals in Norway as well as abroad, including the World Music Days (ISCM Festival) in Sydney in 2010 and Belgium in 2012 (ISCM and Transit Festival, Leuven), the Nordic Music Days 2010 in Copenhagen and 2012 in Stockholm, the Ultima Festival in Oslo, the Oslo Chamber Music Festival, the Borealis Festival in Bergen, and the UNM Festival in Helsinki, Oslo and Copenhagen.

Vogt has received commissions from, and his compositions have been performed by, a wide selection of Norwegian ensembles and musicians, including the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Cikada, the BIT20 ensemble, POING, the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra, the chamber ensemble from the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, violinist Geir Inge Lotsberg, pianist Kristian Lindberg, clarinetist Rolf Borch, and conductors Pierre-André Valade, Christian Eggen, Per Kristian Skaland, Peter Szilvay and Baldur Brönniman. His music has been performed abroad by the Finnish Ensemble UNKO, the Danish ensemble Athelas Sinfonietta, pianist Ian Pace, cellist Timo-Veikko Valve and pianist Bernadette Balkus, among others.

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GEIR INGE LOTSBERG, born 1969, grew up in Elverum. He was a student of Leif Jørgensen (1927-1988) with whom he studied for eight years from the age of ten. He also studied with Sandor Vègh in Salzburg, Camilla Wicks in Houston and Ana Chumachenco in Munich.

Lotsberg is a widely experienced musician. Early in his career he was a member of ensembles such as the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Camerata Academica Salzburg, and this was followed by engagements as concertmaster of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra. From 1997 until 2004 he served as concertmaster of the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra with a part-time contract.

In 1991 he became one of the founding members of the Oslo String Quartet.

In addition to collaborations with other musicians including Håvard Gimse, Vebjørn Anvik, Einar Steen-Nøkleberg and Kåre Nordstoga, Lotsberg has performed as a soloist with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra, the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and Camerata Academica Salzburg.

He has released a number of CD recordings featuring works by J. S. Bach, Carl Nielsen and Edvard Grieg, two recordings of contemporary music for solo violin and an album with romantic works for violin and organ.

Lotsberg is much in demand as a teacher and orchestra leader, has worked regularly for over ten years with the Trondheim Soloists, and has been a teacher at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo since 1994.

Geir Inge Lotsberg is playing a violin by Joseph Guarnerius filius Andrae from 1703, provided by Dextra Musica AS.

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BJARTE ENGESET is from Ørsta, and studied conducting with Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy, where he graduated in 1989 having attained the jury's highest achievable number of points. In 1991 he was invited to attend the renowned conducting seminar at Tanglewood, in the USA, where he studied with teachers such as Seiji Ozawa, Gustav Meier, Simon Rattle and Marek Janowski.

Engeset has been the chief conductor and artistic director of the Tromsø Symphony Orchestra and the Norwegian Wind Ensemble. He was the artistic director of the Northern Lights Festival and Opera Nord, and the permanent guest conductor of the Flemish Radio Orchestra. From 2007 to 2012 Engeset was the chief conductor and artistic director of Sweden's DalaSinfonietta, and made a significant contribution to the orchestra's high quality. He is currently the musical director of the Royal Norwegian Navy Band.

Engeset has conducted concerts, touring productions and CD recordings with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Flemish Radio Orchestra, the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, the Malmø Symphony Orchestra, the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, the NDR Symphony Orchestra, the National Gallery Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, the Sønder Jyllands Symphony Orchestra, the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, among others.

Among the soloists he has collaborated with are Leif Ove Andsnes, Håvard Gimse, Henning Kraggerud,, Solveig Kringlebotn, Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, Benjamin Schmid, Martin Frøst, Ivo Pogorelic and Louis Lortie.

Engeset has carried out extensive research on the orchestral music of Edvard Grieg, Geir Tveitt, Johan Svendsen, Ludvig Irgens-Jensen and others.

Engeset has made over 30 critically acclaimed CD recordings, including Johan Svendsen's symphonies with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Grieg's collected orchestral music in the comprehensive "Grieg Orchestra Edition" on the Naxos label.

Founded in 1946, **THE NORWEGIAN RADIO ORCHESTRA** is today regarded with a unique combination of respect and affection by its public. The orchestra's repertoire is exceptionally wide, ranging from baroque, classical and contemporary to jazz, pop and rock. The Norwegian Radio Orchestra meets its audience at many different venues, and central in the orchestra's philosophy are concepts such as playfulness, curiosity and flexibility.

The orchestra has enjoyed enormous success and garnered critical acclaim in recent years, and has a pivotal role in Norwegian musical life as it represents a versatility that is matchless in Norway.

The orchestra collaborates with first-class musicians and conductors from all over the world, as well as having the privilege of performing every year at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert. Since autumn 2013 Miguel Harth-Bedoya has been the orchestra's chief conductor. He has initiated many exciting projects and has a strong international footprint.

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Herman Vogt (1976):

Violin Concerto

1. Sonata Movement 17:40
2. Lied (ABA') 8:34
3. Rondo 8:46

Geir Inge Lotsberg, violin
The Norwegian Radio Orchestra
Bjarne Engeset, conductor

Members of The Norwegian Radio Orchestra on
31 March and 1 April 2016:

Flutes: Anne Karine Hauge, Andrew Cunningham.

Oboes: Trygve Aarvik, Ingrid Uddu.

Clarinets: Björn Nyman, Ingvill Hafskjold.

Bassoons: Alessandro Caprotti, Embrik Nikolai Snerte.

Horns: Joar Jensen, Hildegun Flatabø, Dette Alpheis,
Marinette Tønning-Olsen.

Trumpets: Kåre Magnar Hagen, Erlend Aagaard-Nilsen.

Trombones: Petter Winroth, Sverre Riise, Clare Farr.

Tuba: Peder Strandjord.

Timpani: Tom Vissgren.

Percussion: Joakim Nordin, Bjørn Rabben.

Harp: Sidsel Walstad.

Piano/celesta: Thomas Knudsen.

First violins: Harald Aadland (concertmaster),

Kolbjørn Holthe, Agnes Hoffart, Annar Follesø,
Janina Kronberger, Ingvild Habbestad, Sara Øvinge,
Emilie Heldal Lidsheim, Stine Rem Aarones.

Second violins: Henrik Hannisdal, Simona Bonfiglioli,

Hans Petter Møhle, Willy Aase, Guro Hilmen,
Kristin Karlsson, Andrea Manger, Sidsel Scheen.

Violas: Nora Taksdal, Einar Kyvik Bauge, Mari Giske,
Anne Beate Bakker Wålengen, Gunhild Hindar.

Cellos: Emery Cardas, Torun Stavseng, Merete Carr,
Marit Klovning, Inga Grytås Byrkjeland.

Basses: Marius Knutsen Flatby, Magnus Bernt Söderberg,
Hans Petter Bang.

This release is an edited version of recordings from
the dress rehearsal, the concert on 31 March 2016, and a
recording session on 1 April 2016.

The recordings were made in Store studio at the Norwegian
Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), Oslo.

Producer: Geoff Miles

Technicians: Terje Hellem and Dystein Nordengen

Editing: Geir Inge Lotsberg

Mixing: Geoff Miles

Article by: Bjørn Kruse

Translation: Shari Nilsen

Design and photography: Erik Johan Worsøe Eriksen

The Violin Concerto is composed with the support from The
Composers' Remuneration Fund and Arts Council Norway.

This release has received financial support from the
Norwegian Society of Composers.

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