

Wind Music in Norway

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The Norwegian Band Scene

The Norwegian school and community band movement peaked in the early 1980s with about 92,000 players in 2,230 bands. Today the Norwegian Band Federation numbers less than 75,000 players in about 2,000 bands, a significant number for a country with a population of four million. Although the publishing business in Norway is dominated by a few international giants, there are a number of national publishers, and The Norwegian Music Information Centre's Contemporary Norwegian Band Music catalogue is a useful tool for those seeking new compositions.

The Wind Music of Yesterday

Until the 1940s, original compositions for wind band consisted mainly of shorter pieces from minor composers, often military musicians who were historically important in their own right such as Ole Olsen, Oscar Borg, Alfred Evensen, Adolf Hansen and Johannes Hansen. Some of their best works have been made available on CD recordings, using the original instrumentation. For those interested in marches, Oscar Borg composed a number of excellent marches, which may be performed very successfully even for small amateur bands.

The only composition by a major Norwegian composer prior to the middle of the 20th Century is Edvard Grieg's Funeral March for Richard Nordraak. None of the major composers of the time received commissions from military bands, although Edvard Grieg, Johan Halvorsen and Johann Svendsen were of the greatest importance to the nation's cultural and civic pride. A number of their best works do exist in wind band arrangements. In the 1920s and 1930s, British publishers produced some excellent arrangements of Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite and Svendsen's Carnival in Paris, Norwegian Rhapsody No 1 and Norwegian Carnival which are still available through Studio Music. Halvorsen's Bourré from Suite Ancienne is a charming piece, and the Molenaar edition of Svendsen's Festpolonaise also works quite well.

Norwegian Wind Music of the Mid-20th Century

Edvard Flifaet Braein had a strong, individual style. It is a great loss that he never composed any works for band, but two of his shorter tone poems, June Night and Ut Mot Havet are available in band versions. His wonderful Serenade, op. 5 has also been transcribed for band.

Eivind Groven wrote Hjalar-Ljod Overture in 1953 to celebrate Oslo's 900th anniversary — a wonderful piece and a smashing concert opener.

Fanfare and Chorale by Egil Hovland is a gorgeous work for wind orchestra. It is one of the few original band works that I know that has been transcribed for symphony orchestra. His Festival Overture from 1962 merits close attention as well.

The music of the internationally renowned Arne Nordheim is always exciting and challenging. *Recalls and Signals*, commissioned by the American Wind Symphony Orchestra, is a powerful piece that boasts an unusual instrumentation, including cannons. It is not for everyday use, I suppose!

Knut Nystedt's *Pia Memoria* from 1971 is one of my personal favorites — a stunning piece, but a very demanding work for the first horn and first trumpet. Nystedt's works for symphonic band often incorporate elements of Norwegian folk music, and compositions such as *Entrata Festivo*, *Mountain Scenes*, *Celebration* and *The Greater Glory* are well suited for amateur bands.

The *Military Overture* by Øistein Sommerfeldt is an attractive piece, typical of his transparent orchestration and concern for melodic lines. Several of his orchestral pieces, including *Eika (The Oak)*, have been transcribed for band. *Eika* is a good example of Sommerfeldt's lyric disposition, inspired by nature and folk music and is well worth investigating by those who believe that good tunes still matter. Sommerfeldt's concert march *Torsteinen* is also very good.

Geirr Tveitt burst onto the international music scene in 1930 when his first piano concerto was premiered by the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester. He quickly established himself as a highly original and individual craftsman. He collected more than 1,000 folk tunes on the western coast of Norway, and these formed the basis for his five exciting and colorful orchestral suites which make up the cycle *One Hundred Tunes from Hardanger*. The first suite is now superbly reorchestrated for wind band by Per O. Paulsen. *Det Gamle Kvernhuset* is a short and very beautiful tone poem, whereas *Sinfonia di Sofficatori Nr. 3* and the *Sinfonietta di Soffiatori*, op. 203 are major statements within the romantic-lyric genre. The luscious *Sinfonietta*, written in 1970, is in five movements.

Norwegian Wind Music of the Late 20th Century

John Brakstad is a band conductor and composer. One of his better known works is the *Variations for Band* from 1993, a chorale with five variations.

One of Norway's few female composers is Åse Hedstrøm. Her contribution to the wind band repertoire is *Sug* for percussion quartet and wind band, an unusual work premiered by the Stockholm Symphonic Wind Orchestra in 1990.

In 1983, Ketil Hvoslef wrote *Vind (Wind)*, a concerto for flute, winds and percussion. This work, which was commissioned for the Swedish flautist Manuela Wiesler, is beautiful but difficult.

Those interested in unusual combinations should have a look at Kjell Mørk Karlsen's *Concerto for Organ and Symphonic Band* and his *Psalm Symphony No 2* for Symphonic Band, Mixed Choir and Organ. Well written and efficiently scored, they both merit attention from adventurous conductors. The *Psalm Symphony No. 2* needs a good choir; otherwise both works are within reach of competent amateur bands.

Guttorm Kittelsen often combines elements from contemporary music, jazz and rock. His *Concert Piece for Symphonic Band and Percussion*, written in 1990, won first

prize at the XI Concorso Internazionale di Composizione Originale per Banda in Corciano, Italy.

Trygve Madsen is a prolific composer with a particular affinity for wind instruments. His works for symphonic band are Suite, op 46, Introduction and Allegro for Tuba and Symphonic Band, op 50 and Festival Overture, op 53a.

Harstad was written by Kjell Samkopf and premiered in 1991. It has since been played in Stockholm, Oslo and Manchester. Samkopf is assistant professor of percussion at the Norwegian State Academy of Music and one of Norway's most innovative composers. Harstad is a fascinating score in which the percussion soloist uses a set of eight octobans, a KAT MIDI Controller and an AKAI S-10000 sampler.

Olav Anton Thommessen is professor of composition at the State Academy in Oslo and a colorful personality. His works for band are Stabarabesk and Music for a Futurist Feature. Stabarabesk I personally find quite exciting, mixing as it does elements from Egyptian and funk music.

The Norwegian Band Federation numbers 1700 bands with 68 000 members (44 000 under the age of 26). This is in fact a big market for new pieces and arrangements, which means good opportunities for composers and arrangers to hear their music performed. Last summer I did a tour of Australia and Singapore conducting Norwegian music with various local bands - amateurs, students and professionals, and it was a great pleasure to notice how well our band music was received - fresh and colourful were frequently used adjectives, so I'm quite confident that WASBE members will find much of interest once they start exploring this rich ore.

Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen (b.1964), has been staff arranger and composer for the Norwegian Armed Forces Music, and is now living in Bergen. His latest piece is Pentagram (a large-scale piece commissioned by the Royal Northern College of Music Wind Orchestra in Manchester, who premiered it this April), very challenging and difficult for all players. Needs 4 percussion players and lots of equipment! All clarinet parts should have 3 or 4 players, otherwise no doublings. 5 movements (Call and Awakening, Ritual I, De Profundis, Ritual II, Call and Destruction. Grade 6, about 31', and like most of his works published by Nordic Sounds.

Triade - "The Angels of Destruction" was commissioned by New Music Composers' Group and first performed by the top community band Dragefjellet at the Music Factory in Bergen May 1995. Triade is a very demanding, uncompromising piece with some very lyrical moments (e.g. a short section for 4 triangles and piano!). 14' grade 6, Norwegian Music Information Center (NMI). Needs a big instrumentarium including plenty of percussion, a five strings double bass, double bassoon, double bass clarinet and cor anglais. Three players per part for the clarinets, 2 euphoniums and 5 tubas, otherwise no doublings.

Arctic Landscape (16'30, grade 6, 1992, NMI) depicts Torstein's childhood landscapes of Northern Norway: cold, lyrical, and beautiful. Well suited for 25 players with no doublings required.

One of Aagaard-Nielsen's many strengths as a composer is his ability to create original and well-sounding "utilitarian" music which is both interesting for players and conductor alike, and equally enjoyable for the audience:

Norwegian Dance (1997) quotes Grieg's Symphonic Dance no.4 elegantly using catchy rhythms. Good fun at grade 4-5, 6'30. Draug (1997) and its companion piece, Grim (1998 - pronounced Green!) depicts two folklore sea monsters (both approx. 7' and grade 4-5). Two different personalities, the Grim is a more jazzy and benevolent creature, but they work well both together and as separate pieces.

From Borge (1997) is based on two folk tunes from a small coastal community in Northern Norway. Lyrical, beautiful and well suited for smaller forces. 4'30, grade 3-4. The Viking Church was written in 1999 to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of Kabelvaag church, and first performed by the local community band. It depicts rough and powerful forces set against a sacred and delicate church. 6', grade 4.

Helge Hurum (b. 1936) combines traditional tonalities and solid craftsmanship with elements of jazz. He often draws his inspiration from Norwegian nature and folk tunes. Accessible, lyrical and often elegiac, his music is popular with school and community bands. Among his works meriting closer attention are Eventus (10'30), Adagio for Winds (4'45), Concita for Band (5'15) and Capriccio & Canzone (11'30, grade 4-5, Warner). Band works with soloists are Contrasts for trumpet (6'), Sketches for Oboe and Band, and Ballade for Alto Sax and Band, for which he received 1st price in the European Broadcasting Union's Band Music Competition in 1987. Hurum has also written several works for band and choir: Folklore (7'30) and Vind Fer Vide (15'20). Pulsare (10', grade 5, Warner) is a 2-movement work and was commissioned by the Norwegian Band Federation as a test piece for the 2000 Norwegian Championships 1st division. His latest work is Contrasts for French Horn and Band.

Lars Erik Gudim, trombonist, band leader, composer and arranger naturally gets much of his inspiration from the rich world of jazz. His publisher is Nordic Sounds, unless otherwise stated.

Fresh Fruit from Friday is a latin piece written in 1998 for the Army Reserves Band in Oslo. It alternates between a light samba and Afro-Cuban salsa groove with solo opportunities for sax or trumpet. 3' grade 4. Eg ser deg utfor gluggen (1996) is a jazzy version of a Norwegian folk tune depicting a young maid waiting for her lover. Alto sax or cor anglais solo in the slow, beautiful introduction before the fun begins. 5', grade 4, Warner. Three Pictures for Band was commissioned by the Strinda Youth Band in 1994. The first part is a rock groove, the second part a pop ballad and the third part combines previous material and ends in a half-time 6/8 groove. Optional electric guitar and bass. Grade 5. Jubilee was written in 1993 for the Sarpsborg Girls' Band and is a traditional concert band piece with a main theme built on fourths. Grade 4-5. Jeg vil meg Herren love is an old religious folk tune, treated to four variations for tuba and wind band. The third variation is a jazz waltz. The demanding solo part was written for virtuoso tuba player Roger Fjeldet. Grade 5-6. Gudim's other work for tuba and symphonic band is his Concert Suite, written in 1991 for Fjeldet's debut recital. 5 short movements played attacca: Variations - Expansions - Latin Waltz - Ballad - Shuffle. Solo part grade 6, band grade 4-5. Bloody Euphonium (concertino for euphonium and band) takes its title from the film "Brassed Off".

Written for Sverre Olsrud, who premiered it with the Army Staff Band in 2000. Grade 5.

John Brakstad (b. 1940) I mentioned in my previous article (Newsletter XVI no.4). His most recent work is *The Old Railway Station* (1999), a three-movement 13-minute nostalgic piece (Pastorale - Intermezzo - Epilogue) depicting an old narrow-gauged steam railway near Bergen and incorporating local folk tunes. Well suited for smaller forces (no CA, Eb cl. or alto cl., and only two cornet and three horn parts), and all three movements can be played separately. Grade 4, Warner.

Jan Magne Førde (b. 1960), well known jazz trumpeter, arranger and composer of more than 250 works for all types of ensembles, has written several pieces for wind band, the most popular and frequently performed being *Wedding March*, *The Dome* (a beautiful trumpet solo with interesting echo effects in the band), and *Mountain Air*. School bands love these pieces! All approx. 4', grade 3-3,5 and published by Warner. His trumpet concerto "*Hornhavet*" (14') is a meeting of Norwegian traditional music and international rhythms and sounds - beautifully recorded by Førde and the Kolbotn Symphonic Winds SONCD 9002.

Tom Skjellum (b. 1953) has with *Fanitullen* (4'45, grade 4, Warner) updated the old legend of the mythical fiddle player who fatally mesmerized anyone who came within the spell of his playing. Terrific fun for audience and players alike! Needs a boot-on-a-stick, a good drum kit and nimble clarinets.

Henrik Lyssand's beautiful *Ved Nesland Kirke* (1998) depicts an old church and offers soloistic possibilities voice, for oboe, alto sax, trumpet or euphonium, and is well suited for school bands. 3'30, grade 3, Warner.

Bjørn-Morten Kjærnes (b. 1951) has with *Form and Colours* written an exciting, well-crafted piece based on the mathematical formula for the Golden Section (5.8). Good contest piece with many interesting challenges. 8'30 grade 4, Warner.

Geirr Tveitt (1908-1981), a major music personality in the middle of the previous century, I also mentioned in my previous article. His wonderful and highly personal *Sinfonia Sofficatori no.3* (grade 5-6, 14'30) is at long last commercially available from Warner. First performed in 1974 by the St.Olaf College Band (USA) at the Bergen International Arts Festival, it needs a harp in addition to regular symphonic band forces. Fabulous music by any standard!

For those interested in more modernistic music will find great pleasure in trying out *Changes* (12') by Rolf Wallinn, and three very good pieces by Bjorn K. Hoemsnes: *Opus Partus* (13') and two very good pieces by Bjorn K. Hoemsnes: *Metamorphoses* (5') and "*Voices from the Script*", the last using sampled sounds and other esoteric effects in an evocative ending. Or you could look at "*Etwas neues unter der Sonnen oder Das unterirdische Klippenkonzert*" by Kjell Habbestad. A highly original work (23') which features the ingenious Hardanger fiddle! *One For Tinka* (9'30) by Roy Hellvin (NMI) and Kjell Mørk Karlsen's revised *Viking_Hymn* (13'30) also fits the bill of being exciting without posing equestrian problems, organ, sampled sounds and other esoteric effects.

The database of the Norwegian Music Information Center (www.mic.no) contains a great many titles for wind band, and since 1990 an additional 100 works – concertos, cantatas, symphonic poems etc. has been added! In this article I'll update you on some of the latest commercial publications and a couple of interesting CDs that have come my way.

Incidentally, not all Norwegian band music is published domestically! In Hafabra's catalogue (hafabramusic.com) we find Magnar Åm with his grade 3 march March 2001b The Oblique One(3'30), and from Mythen (www.mythen-hollanda.nl) you can get Frode Thingnæs' Three Pieces for Horn (7', grade 3), Ballad and Samba from 2nd Jazz Suite (9', grade 4 clarinet soloist, grade 3 band), Once Upon a Theme There Was A... (5'30, grade 3), Concertino for Tuba and Wind Band (10', grade 5), and his euphonium solo Peace, Please! (5', grade 4). Thingnæs writes in the lyrical jazz tradition, and his music and arrangements are very popular in Norway. Like a Gentle Breeze (5', grade 2) is a good introduction to the jazz ballad idiom for your grade 2 school band – everyone gets a chance to play the tune.

Mythen has also published two compositions by Per Husby: Inverness Wedding (5', grade 3) and the tone poem Mythos (11' grade 3). Inverness Wedding was written for a Scottish-Norwegian wedding and comes (of course!) with strong references to Scottish reels and Norwegian folk music. Husby describes Mythos as a film score for a non-existing film, inspired by impressionism and jazz.

Beriato published in 2001 a short, lively concert march by Morten Wallin, The Eagle March. This simple, three minute march written in alla breve is well suited for grade 2 bands looking for a concert opener.

I have recently come across a fabulous piece by Jon Øivind Ness (b. 1968) – “Tics and Tiffs” from 1991. Jon Øivind Ness is a major force to be reckoned with, his knowledge and mastery of compositorial techniques is impressive. In Norway he is well known and respected for his completion of Geirr Tveitt's Prillar, a large symphonic poem in three movements (brilliantly recorded on BIS 1027 by the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra). Tics and Tiffs was commissioned by the elite band Opus 82, who gave it a terrific first performance. Ness combines nervous energies with stark confrontations between woodwinds and brass, with the percussion section playing the part of the go-between. Written for standard instrumentation (3 horns only, but 4 trumpet parts), I regard Tics and Tiffs as a grade 6 piece with great demands on rhythmic accuracy and transparency, with plenty of excitement for all involved. Durata 11'30, and published by Norsk Musikkforlag.

If your young players are interested in improvising, Magne Rulte has written two short, charming pieces, Soave (4') and After (5'), both featuring solo parts with an introductory theme followed by a chord pattern. No written-out solos are provided. Band parts are grade 2-3. After is a quiet ballad written for tenor sax solo (but playable on any Bb-flat instrument). The solo part for Soave (“soft”) is also intended for any Bb-flat instrument, and should be played in a calm, relaxed atmosphere with a steady pulse. Both pieces are provided with chord patterns for the rhythm section. Standard instrumentation, but in Soave the clarinet section is divided into 5 separate parts, in addition to bass clarinet. Magne Rulte is a prolific arranger and writes exclusively for Nordic Sounds (www.nordicsounds.com). His arrangement of Gabriel

Fauré's Requiem works very well indeed if you want to combine your forces with a good choir.

I wrote extensively about the music of Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen in my previous article, so let me just mention that he has combined three of his separate works (Tunes from Ryfylke, Tunes from Lofoten and Norwegian Dance) into an exiting 3 movement suite, Viking Spirit. Publisher is Nordic Sounds. A good programming choice if you want to introduce this composer to your audience.

The Blue Arctic Sun was written last year for a local community band by Helge Sveen during the winter months when the sun is slowly returning to Northern Norway, gradually spreading its magical blue light after the near-total darkness of December. Part one, Dawn, describes the first glimpse of the sun, while Latin Lunch describes the mood of the arctic inhabitants when they again feel the sunshine, and Jam Session is the fun of making music together late into the night. Excellent solo part for flugel horn, with additional solo features for trombone, clarinet and percussion. Standard band instrumentation plus electric bass and guitar, and published by Nordic Sounds. Durata 12-14' (depending on how long you allow your drummer to improvise), grade 4.

Norsk Noteservice (www.noteservice.no) has published two of Jan Magne Førde's African- inspired pieces, both well suited for smaller school bands: Ejala (5', grade 3), a lyric piece with an open improvisation section, and Kongolela (4', grade 4). The kids will enjoy playing this music.

The Staff Band of the Norwegian Armed Forces has just released "Shaker Song", an exciting CD with Lars Erik Gudim conducting some of his own compositions and arrangements. Terrific playing, with a tightly controlled and balanced ensemble supporting superb instrumentals solos combined with great sound makes this CD a must. You can get the music as well as the CD from Norsk Noteservice (www.noteservice.no).

Kolbotn Syphonic Winds and their conductor Erlend Tunestveit have a strong tradition in championing contemporary music, and their latest CD, Etwas Neues Unter der Sonnen (SONCD 9002), shows them once again on top form. The title refers to Kjell Habbestad's highly original work featuring the Hardanger fiddle as solo instrument. Folk music, jazz, aleatoric passages blended with a tasteful modernistic language (no frightening of horses!) certainly fascinated me. Voices from the Script (commissioned by the band) is a deeply felt personal work based on biblical texts. The band blends beautifully with organ and electronics in this very evocative piece. In Hornhavet (also a commission from the band), Jan Magne Førde's lyric trumpet playing is well supported by the band. The band parts are fairly simple, with traditional instrumentation and chords, well suited for large school bands. Apart from a few minor mishaps, I find this adventurous CD highly enjoyable.

Internet is a wonderful tool if you want to look at the band scene in Norway. Try the Norwegian Band Federation's address for starter: www.musikkorps.no. Even with little or no knowledge of Norwegian, I'm sure you'll find much of interest.

Nanset Ungdomskorps under the direction of Odd Terje Lysebo has for many years been among our finest community bands, and their latest CDDéjà vu is a wonderful

confirmation of their rightful place in the top. This CD is dedicated to the wind music of Yngve Sletholm (b. 1955) and is in all respects a great credit to the band and its conductor. The recording is excellent by any standard, with dedicated playing on the highest level both individually and collectively, tastefully presented with an informative booklet in English. Get hold of Hemera HCD 2937 straight away – it's a must!

Sletholm is placed firmly in the modernist tradition. He studied composition with Finn Mortensen in Norway and Morton Feldman in the U.S., and is also influenced by the music of Varèse and Messiaen. *Five Studies for Band* (1985) is a terrific way for conductors and bands eager to move a bit outside the typical limitations of the contemporary neo-classical soundworld of wind bands. Here you can approach atonal textures, aleatoric counterpoint and gradual transformation of material in an eminently practical way without being overtly pedagogical. In *Beyond for Two Wind Ensembles, Piano and Percussion* (1990) the band is divided into two independent sections with the piano placed centre stage and the whole ensemble surrounded by four percussionists. Ideas develop and cross-fertilize between the sections and you're dawn into a magical and delicate soundscape.

Since 1994, all Norwegian championship finals for band have been recorded on CD by Doyen. These recordings give you a broad impression of band playing in Norway, and they all feature some Norwegian music.

Last but not least, I must mention that Geirr Tveitt's fabulous *Sinfonia di Soffiatori* (see Newsletter XVII no.2) has been splendidly recorded (together with Førde's *Mountain Air* and *The Dome*) on "The First Shoot" by the Washington Winds and Edward S. Petersen. Another great recording with plenty of stylistic variety, and available from Norsk Noteservice.