



LAWO
CLASSICS

My
FAVORITE
THINGS

JAN MARTIN
SMØRDAL

MEMBER, REMEMBER

For a long time I have been inspired by mechanisms of herd behaviour, spontaneous reflexes and movements, emerging patterns and spontaneous social dynamics. Ideas surrounding such phenomena, and concretising and interpreting these phenomena as sound and sequence, have largely shaped my compositional work the past 10 years — often based on clusters and independent pulses or impulses. Through this approach memories have also become a recurring theme. Although memories are something we only have in ourselves, mutual memories and experiences connect us as humans, creating a strengthened sense of belonging to groups, or flocks. Mutual memories call attention to something beyond the group's sensation of the 'now', they form a consensus regarding something enduring, yet exist as unverifiable samenesses and still something that binds the group and creates a collective of movements and actions. In that way I have made myself a time tool that ranges from lightning-fast impulses to seemingly eternal memories, and each end of the gamut forms groups, springing from each individual.

When we recall memories, they are reconstructed for our conscious mind. Perhaps we could say they are translated from emotional "playbacks" into language. Memories are plastic, private work in progress.

From 2015 to 2017 I composed the trilogy *My Favorite Thing* (MFT), consisting of music for

the percussion trio Pinguins, the collective Ensemble neoN, and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. In the project I worked primarily with descriptions of memories, interpretations of memories, transformations of memories and memories of others in encounters with mine.

I fashioned an enquête in which all involved performers were asked about their musical awakenings and what it was (or is) in music that captivated them. The artistic style of the three pieces arose through working with their responses: *MFT 1* was based exclusively on the strong memory one of the performers had of a drum fill from the song *Girl in Oslo*, by the rock band Big Bang. In *MFT 2* I gave each performer a segment, shaping the piece as a free collage through my interpretations of the nine musicians' childhood memories. For instance, the piece begins with my interpretation of one performer's memory of hearing Rachmaninoff's 2nd piano concerto for the first time. The piece ends with my interpretation of another performer's memory of being sung to as a child. *MFT 3* became a cascade of juxtaposed, concurrent and overlapping memories. With such a large group of people there were, not surprisingly, many virtually identical experiences and memories. Opera especially had provided the musicians with early sparks. The conclusion of *MFT 3* was based on a stretched-out and nearly erased version of the first eight measures of the overture to *La Gazza Ladra* (*The Thieving Magpie*) by Rossini.

In working with the *My Favorite Thing* trilogy I have narrowed down the performers' strong memories into short fragments. I have torn

the memories loose from the emotional experience that spawned them, and I have reinterpreted and reconstructed them in such a way that they now appear as musical expression without any clear affiliation.

In retrospect, I view this entire process in a different way. It has to do with my own dependency on the necessity of relating socially and creating a relationship to all people with whom I work. At the same time I have tried to give the participating musicians ownership of the music so that it is our making common cause that is at stake. I was perhaps seeking to achieve something so elementary as a sense of belonging. I suppose my background as band musician and the quantum leap I made to work almost exclusively with classically trained musicians has made me feel insecure as to what constitutes my herd and what it is that connects my expression to the expression of others.

Or is it perhaps that I now reconstruct my memory of this process, and in doing so fit the idea with my present me? If so, I have probably involuntarily added a new level to this work. The process behind the trilogy now seems more like an act of self-revelation or a study in social exposure therapy.

In 2015, in parallel with my *MFT* project and immediately following a proto-piece based on *emergent behaviour ((herd)STUDY* for sinfonietta), I worked on a piece for flutist Yumi Murakami that wound up turning into a compositional technique that I have used a lot since then. By imitating herself as best she could through immediate reactions to innumerable

recordings of herself, she produced an extensive round of "Chinese Whispers". The piece is usually presented as a fixed-media piece for 5 loudspeakers, during which the audience is encapsulated in something reminiscent of a flock of birds. This release presents the piece as a stereo mix.

less-sense is an early piece. The commission for this piece came from Silje Aker Johnsen and marks the point in time when I chose to resign from my last permanent position and had the courage to call myself a composer. The piece is based on reflections around the theme of self-limitation, self-correction, and comes close to an obliteration of the nature and prime movers of the self. The text consists of a few sentences from Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, in which he confesses his drives, his choices, and, especially, his inner conflicts: "How good you were to me, for you put so much bitterness in that cup of pleasure." As the piece progresses, the performers scratch out portions of the scores, thus reducing — in a twofold sense — their own parts/voice.

In retrospect, it is difficult not to notice how the behaviour-correcting aspect of the piece reflects my own incessant revising of my earlier works. The version of the piece on this release has even got its entire intro discarded. Thus the piece serves in a way as a palimpsest of itself and an imprint of my own processes.

– Jan Martin Smørdal
(translated by Jim Skurdall)

— a few responses from the enquêtes:

"The Thieving Magpie of Rossini, on LP — the first time I received my own record (was 4 years old), and slept with it in my bed...! (Luckily it survived.) An LP with Rossini overtures that my father had bought while attending a convention in Italy."

“Father returned with a record player
from a trip to Stockholm. Heard music!”
“Music from ‘E.T.!’”

"I understood very little of what the conductor did/conducted, so I played by ear imitating everything around me. I had also learned about/seen impressionist paintings/art, and I saw the connection between the pictures and the music."

"An uncle taught me to listen to music. He said: lie on the floor, close your eyes and listen."

"Sitting alone in the hall while my father's orchestra rehearsed *Carmina Burana*."

"The Ellington tune was simply the most magnificent and the saddest thing I had heard, I rewound and rewound in order to hear it again and again. Weightless, almost out-of-body-like."

"The incredible dynamics from exceptionally soft to extremely loud."

“Community”

Flock of me
Sketch score

Jan Martin Smørðal
2015

$\lambda = 86$
 $(\lambda^* = 115)$
 $R.1 \quad \begin{array}{c} 0 \\ \text{+R.2} \\ \text{+R.1} \\ \text{+R.2} \\ \text{+R.3} \\ 0 \end{array}$

Group of Rules 1
 $p \rightarrow f$

$(\lambda^* = 102.3)$
 $\begin{array}{c} \text{pic.1} \\ \text{+pic.2} \\ \text{+pic.3} \\ \text{+pic.4} \\ \text{+pic.5} \\ 0 \end{array}$

Group of Rules 2
 $p \rightarrow f$

$(\lambda^* = 51.1)$
 $R.3 \quad \begin{array}{c} 0.3 \\ \text{+0.4} \\ \text{+0.5} \\ \text{+0.6} \\ \text{+0.7} \\ \text{+pic.6} \\ \text{+pic.7} \\ \text{+pic.8} \end{array}$

Group of Rules 3
 $p \rightarrow f$

Group of Rules 4

Group of Rules 5

2
 sim.

3
 R.1
 R.2
 R.3
 $(\lambda^* = 100.3)$
 $\begin{array}{c} 0.0.1 \\ \text{+0.0.2} \\ \text{+0.0.3} \\ \text{+0.0.4} \\ \text{+0.0.5} \\ \text{+0.0.6} \\ \text{+0.0.7} \\ \text{+0.0.8} \\ \text{+0.0.9} \end{array}$

R.4
 $mp \rightarrow f$

$(\lambda^* = 68.8)$
 $\begin{array}{c} 0.0.5 \\ \text{+0.0.6} \\ \text{+0.0.7} \\ \text{+0.0.8} \\ \text{+0.0.9} \\ \text{+0.0.10} \end{array}$

R.5
 Chord on a chosen pulse
 Ca. 18"
 fpm

Jan Martin Smørdal (b.1978), composer and musician, musician with a master degree from the Academy of Music in Oslo. Co-founder and member of Ensemble neoN.

Smørdal's musical training consists mainly in playing in bands, with a focus on experimentation, improvisation and studio production. His works range from solo, orchestra, and choir to installations and improvisation. Recurring themes in his works include imitation reactions, phenomena of swarm and flock formations found in nature, and ways of using memory as material. In 2022 Smørdal was the recipient of the biennial Arne Nordheim Composers Prize.

www.smordal.no



Silje Aker Johnsen (b. 1982), soprano, dancer and dramatic artist, earned a Ph.D. from the Academy of Opera at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts with her project “*A Search for an Expanded Physical Interpretation of Vocal Contemporary Music and of Opera.*” Moreover she studied at the Grieg Academy in Bergen and at Universität der Künste, Berlin, and she has a Master’s degree from the Norwegian Academy of Music.

As opera singer and dancer she has performed at opera houses, concert halls and theatres throughout Europe. In addition, she appears in concerts of her own improvisational works and works for solo voice.

Silje Aker Johnsen has premiered a number of works and has had guest performances as soloist at many festivals, including Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Die Donaueschinger Musiktage, the Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival and the Bergen International Festival. In 2013 she was honoured as “Performer of the Year” by the Norwegian Society of Composers. Silje is a member of Ensemble NeoN, which won ‘Spellemannspris’ (the Norwegian Grammy) in 2016 in the category ‘contemporary’. In 2017 she was once again selected as “Performer of the Year” by the Norwegian Society of Composers.

www.siljeakerjohnsen.no

Kristine Tjøgersen (b. 1982) holds a Master of Music in Composition from Anton Bruckner Universität in Linz, Austria, where she studied with Carola Bauckholt, and a Master of Music in Clarinet from the Norwegian Academy of Music, following studies with Hans Chris-

tian Bræin. Her works have been performed throughout Europe by leading orchestras and ensembles, and as a clarinet player she has performed at many of the major European new music festivals with the award winning ensembles Ensemble neoN, Tøyen Fil og Klaffer, and asamisimasa.

www.kristinetjogersen.no

Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen (b. 1983) is a trained percussionist, and is a versatile creative performer with a focus on experimental music. She is a member of Pinquins, neoN, and The Touchables, and she tours the world with the French-Norwegian puppet theatre company Plexus Polaire.

www.anemarthe.no

Jennifer Torrence (f. 1986) is an experimental musician based in Oslo, Norway. Her focus is on percussion/performance, artistic research, collaborative projects, curation, composition, writing and teaching. She is Adjunct Associate Professor of percussion at the Norwegian Academy of Music and a member of Pinquins. Former principal percussionist of Arctic Philharmonic; former artistic research fellow (Ph.D.) at the Norwegian Academy of Music, with her project *Percussion Theatre: A Body In Between (2015-2018)*; former Fulbright scholar (UK); further studies at Oberlin Conservatory, University of California in San Diego, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

www.jennifertorrence.com

Sigrun Rogstad Gornæs (b. 1978) is a percussionist educated at the Norwegian Academy of Music with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a major in chamber music/solo instrument. Her studies were completed in part in Copenhagen and Brussels. Sigrun is co-founder and a permanent member of the percussion trio Pinquins. She works as performing musician and teacher in Oslo. She substitutes regularly in orchestras and contemporary music ensembles. Sigrun teaches percussion at Foss VGS and the Talent Development Programme (TUP) at the Norwegian Academy of Music. She is also the leader of the Torshov Band, a band for children and adults with different special educational needs.

Pinquins, a percussion trio consisting of Jennifer Torrence, Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen og Sigrun Rogstad Gornæs, is a genre-crossing and experimental trio based in Oslo. The trio’s main focus is contemporary music, and its aim is to challenge audiences and expand the format within which it works. The trio works in close collaboration with composers and performers in a number of different genres. It debuted recently as a composing ensemble together with Kjersti Alm Eriksen with the work INTERVALL. With its remarkably visual repertoire and its unique stage presence, the trio has attracted attention as one of the most innovative and creative of the leading ensembles in the Norwegian contemporary music scene.

Yumi Murakami (b. 1982) has a Bachelor and Master of Music Performance in flute

from The Norwegian Academy of Music. She studied flute with Per Øien, Andrew Cunningham and Andrea Lieberknecht. She was an exchange student at Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris during her Bachelor studies (2006). She is a member of the renowned and award-winning Ensemble neoN and has performed at the Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival, at Klub Katarakt, and at Darmstadt Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Germany, at MATA festival in the USA, and at Venezia Biennale in Italy, among others. Composers with whom she has collaborated include Alvin Lucier, Phill Niblock, Catherine Lamb, Erik Dæhlin, Jan St. Werner, Marina Rosenfeld, Ignas Krunglevicius, to name but a few.

Ensemble neoN was founded the winter of 2008, when the members were students at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. The ensemble consists of nine musicians, four of whom compose music. Through its productions neoN strives to define present and current musical trends. The ensemble wishes to be forward-leaning in an ever-changing music scene in which genres constantly merge. In its artistic agenda it initiates collaboration with musicians and artists who challenge and expand the ensemble’s musical expression and repertoire.

In recent years Ensemble neoN has distinguished itself nationally and internationally with its festival performances, including MATA (USA), Ultima (Oslo), Molde Jazz Festival, Klub Katarakt (Hamburg), Darmstadt Ferienkurse, Weimarer Frühlingstage, Only Connect (Oslo) and the Oslo Chamber Music

Festival. The ensemble has received glowing press reviews and has been hailed as — “(...) an impressive ensemble” (New York Times) and “(...) the impressive Ensemble neoN” (ballade.no).

The ensemble commissions works on a regular basis and has performed works of and collaborated with, among others, Alvin Lucier (USA), Johannes Kreidler (Germany), Phill Niblock (USA, Germany), Oren Ambarchi (Australia), Marina Rosenfeld (USA), Catherine Lamb (USA), Jan St. Werner (Germany), Lars Skoglund (Norway), Ignas Krunglevicius (Lithuania, Norway), Jon Øivind Ness (Norway), Erik Dæhlin (Norway), and the ensemble's own composers Jan Martin Smørdal, Julian Skar and Kristine Tjøgersen.

The **Norwegian Radio Orchestra (KORK)** is known as “the whole land's orchestra” and is today regarded with a unique combination of respect and affection by its music-loving public. With its remarkably diverse repertoire, this is no doubt the orchestra most heard throughout the land – on radio, television, and online, and at various diverse venues around the country.

It is a flexible orchestra, performing all from symphonic and contemporary classical music to pop, rock, folk, and jazz. Each year the orchestra performs together with internationally acclaimed artists at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert, which is aired to millions of viewers worldwide. Those with whom the orchestra has collaborated in recent years include Kaizers Orchestra, Mari Boine, Jarle Bernhoft, Dia-

manda Galàs, Renée Fleming, Andrew Manze, Anna Netrebko, and Gregory Porter.

The Norwegian Radio Orchestra was founded by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation in 1946. Its first conductor, Øivind Bergh, led the ensemble in a series of concerts from the broadcasting company's main studio, establishing the basis of its popularity and securing its status as a national treasure. The orchestra continues to perform in the context of important media events. It is comprised of highly talented classical instrumentalists and yet its musical philosophy has remained the same: versatility, a light-hearted approach, curiosity for all kinds of music, and an unwillingness to pigeonhole musical styles.

Kai Grinde Myrann has in a very short time established himself as one of his generation's most talented conductors. Already he has conducted all the major Norwegian symphony orchestras and military bands and has been reengaged by them all. He has also conducted Danish orchestras and a number of smaller ensembles and choirs.

Following his graduation from the Norwegian Academy of Music with a Master's Degree in conducting in 2013, Myrann immediately assumed the position of assistant conductor with Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, extended by both to the maximum duration of two years. He then held a postgraduate fellowship in conducting at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø. Since 2021 he has been part of the Savings Bank Foundation and Talent Norge's

program Opptakt, which promotes young conductors at the highest level.

Myrann is artistic director for Aksiom, a contemporary music ensemble of nine musicians he co-founded in 2010. Under his leadership it has become a much sought-after ensemble of the Scandinavian contemporary music scene. He also conducts Ensemble Temporum, an ensemble established in 2016 specializing in classical masterpieces of the contemporary music tradition. With Bachelor's Degrees in composition from the Norwegian Academy of Music and Hochschule für Musik “Hanns Eisler” in Berlin, and with his experience as a conductor, Myrann has become an acclaimed interpreter of contemporary music. His discography consists of a number of releases of contemporary music by the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, Trondheim Sinfonietta, Aksiom and Ensemble neoN, among others.

Magnus Loddgard is a Norwegian conductor, pianist, and composer, known primarily for his work in opera and in contemporary music. He studied piano and conducting at the Norwegian State Academy of Music and Universität der Künste in Berlin. Following his studies, he was hired as member of the music staff of the Norwegian State Opera, and few years later he got his debut as an opera conductor with Puccini's *La Bohème* at Opera Sør. With the Norwegian State Opera, he has conducted both Ballet and Opera performances, including Verdi's *Macbeth*, Britten's *Rape of Lucretia*, and Mozart's *Magic Flute*. He was also on the music staff of Komische Oper Berlin,

where he has conducted Bernstein's *West Side Story* and *Candide*. Other opera engagements include a premiere of *Menotti's Amahl and the night visitors* at Theater an der Wien with the Wiener Symphoniker. Loddgard is also an expert on contemporary music, having premiered many works both as pianist and conductor. He was a founding member of ensemble neoN, and regularly works with Ensemble Mosaik in Berlin.

JAN MARTIN SMØRDAL
(*1978)

1 less-sense (no intro)
(2007, ed. 2014, -16, -19, -21) 07:56

2 My Favorite Thing 1 (2017) 10:51

3 My Favorite Thing 2 (2015) 12:52

My Favorite Thing 3 (2017)

4 I. — 04:57

5 II. another memory 03:16

6 III. memory of major — minor, pulses 02:23

7 IV. arpeggios, beats 01:43

8 V. memory of major — minor 02:26

9 VI. 03:01

10 VII. ...something about a bird 03:24

11 Flock of Me (2015) 06:47

Credits

less-sense (no intro)

(2007, ed. 2014, -16, -19, -21)

Silje Aker Johnsen (soprano, pencil)
Kristine Tjøgersen (clarinet in A, pencil)
Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen (percussion, pencil),
Jan Martin Smørdal (guitar)

Recorded at Rainbow Studio 30 June 2016,
with sound engineer Peer Espen Ursfjord.
Edited by Jan Martin Smørdal and
Vegard Landaas
Mixed by Vegard Landaas and
Thomas Wolden
Commissioned by Silje Aker Johnsen

My Favorite Thing 1 (2017)

Pinquins Percussion Trio:
Sigrun Rogstad Gomnæs
Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen
Jennifer Torrence.

Recorded at Newtowne 8 January 2021,
with sound engineer Aksel Jensen
Edited and produced by Jan Martin Smørdal
Mixed by Ingar Hunskaar
Commissioned by the ensemble.

My Favorite Thing 2 (2015)

Ensemble neoN and
conductor Magnus Loddgard.

Ensemble neoN:
Yumi Murakami (flutes)
Kristine Tjøgersen (clarinets)
Ida Kristine Zimmermann Olsen (alto saxophone)
Solmund Nystabakk (guitar)
Heloisa Amaral (piano)
Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen (percussion)
Karin Hellqvist (violin)
Inga Grytås Byrkjeland (cello)
Silje Aker Johnsen (soprano).

Recorded at Rainbow Studio
16 December 2015,
with sound engineer Peer Espen Ursfjord
and Jan Erik Kongshaug.
Edited and produced by Jan Martin Smørdal
Mixed by Ingar Hunskaar
(Previously released on Aurora with a
different mix, also by Hunskaar).
Commissioned by the ensemble.

My Favorite Thing 3 (2017)

Norwegian Radio Orchestra (KORK) and
conductor Kai Grinde Myrann.

Recorded 3 November 2017 in Norwegian Radio's (NRK's)
Store Studio, with sound engineer Geoff Miles.
Edited by Jan Martin Smørdal and Vegard Landaas
Mixed by Vegard Landaas and
Thomas Wolden
Commissioned by the orchestra.

Flock of Me (2015)

Yumi Murakami (flute, piccolo,
alto flute, bass flute)
Piece for recorded flute player.
Composed for 5 loudspeakers,
here in stereo version.

Recorded 23 & 24 June 2015 in Subsonic Society.
Edited and produced by Jan Martin Smørdal.
Recording and mix by Ingar Hunskaar.

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