
LAWO
CLASSICS
Blonde Netter
Music by Alf Hurum
Marianne Thorsen—Violin
Mari Eriksmoen—Soprano
Håvard Gimse—Piano

Alf Hurum may be considered a footnote in Norwegian music history. But his journey as a sonic and visual artist, together with his porous response to international creative trends, suggest he was an uncommonly receptive craftsman with a bold and borderless view of the world. Unusually for a composer, Hurum's formative journey from romanticism to impressionistic modernism found its ultimate expression not in music but in art — in a series of vibrant paintings capturing the colours of life on the Pacific island of Hawaii, where he settled and lived for over four decades.

Hurum was born to a wealthy, culturally-literate family in Oslo (then Kristiania) whose income from the tobacco trade gave their son the freedom to pursue his own path without compromise. That led the young Hurum to early studies in architecture in Oslo before a switch to music, in which he was taught at the city's conservatoire by Iver Holter and Martin Knutzen. In 1905, Hurum's travels began in earnest with a move to Germany, where he studied at the Königliche Hochschule für Musik in Berlin under Max Bruch (counterpoint), Robert Kahn (composition) and José Vianna da Motta (piano), remaining a student at the institution for five years.

Hurum's life would pivot decisively in Berlin upon meeting Elizabeth Leslie Wight, a Hawaiian from a family of missionaries and shipping magnates who shared Hurum's financial security, sense of independence and taste for the arts. They married on 13 June 1908. In 1910, after a short stay in Oslo, the couple moved to Paris; the following year they moved back to Berlin before relocating to Oslo in 1915. In the winter of 1916—17, they stayed in St Petersburg while Hurum took lessons in orchestration from Maximilian Steinberg. The pair then returned to Oslo, remaining until 1924, the year they made an extended visit to the city of Wight's birth, the Hawaiian capital, Honolulu. There were subsequent stays in Beijing (then Peking) and Tokyo. The specifics of Hurum's various itineraries and residences have been outlined by Rune J. Andersen in biographical and musical analyses of the composer's life.

Each of those cities exerted its own influence on Hurum's creative outlook. Oslo and the country of his birth connected him to ideas of folklore, medievalism and landscape. In Berlin, he was schooled in classic Romanticism from a musical perspective. In Paris, he had the transformative experience of discovering the music of Claude Debussy (this at a time when it was largely disparaged in northern Europe) and later still, of studying cubist painting with André Lhote and the art of ancient art of oriental colour making and silk painting with Rihakou Harada. Settling permanently in Honolulu in 1934, Hurum wedded his Nordic idea of landscape and realist painting with the rhythms, colours and labour traditions of the Pacific island – a potent combination. He also led, reformed and expanded the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra as its conductor, laying foundations for the present-day Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra.

When Hurum began to experience life in Hawaii fully, his focus switched from music to painting – to the extent, ultimately, that he stopped composing altogether.

His musical output is effectively limited to the two decades from 1910 and incorporates piano, chamber, orchestral and choral works. His Symphony in D minor was first performed in 1927 in Oslo, while other major orchestral works include the tone poem *Bendik og Årolilja* (1923) and the suite *Eventyrland* (1920, orchestrated from earlier piano music). The latter two scores were both derived from Nordic myth and folklore, as was the large-scale work for a cappella male choir, *Lilja* (1919), which sets a Norwegian translation of the medieval Icelandic poem of the same name by Eysteinn Ásgrímsson.

The sound of Debussy's music, which Hurum first encountered in Paris in 1911 in the form of *Estampes* and Préludes Book 1, altered the Norwegian composer's musical thinking and had a lasting effect on his aesthetic, both musical and visual. He is believed to be the first composer from the Nordic countries to have become an obvious acolyte of Debussy and to have absorbed his techniques. Initially, Hurum's admiration for the Frenchman produced works in which passages resemble pastiche. Later, he arrived at a style that more subtly assimilated essential techniques of musical impressionism including non-functional harmonies, parallel chords, whole-tone scales, modality, melodic fragments and irregular metric shifts.

Hurum's two violin sonatas came either side of his meeting with Debussy's music. The first, completed in 1910, is a work of its time and its place — a sonata in the Norwegian style, fresher and lighter than one of its typical German counterparts and incorporating folk elements including a 'halling' (a quick, acrobatic Norwegian folk dance) in its finale. The opening movement launches with an outgoing theme offset by an expansive lyrical idea; the second has been compared to one of Johan Svendsen's Romances and the third is an invigorating folk-style dance with chromatic touches and spiccato violin effects. The sonata was dedicated to Leif Halvorsen, who gave the first performance on 8 May 1911.

The second sonata, completed in 1915 in Berlin, helps chart the transitioning of Hurum's style under the influence of Debussy and others. Some sense of the folk influence is retained (even from the opening double-stop), as is sonata form, albeit deployed now across four movements. There is the sure feel, in this piece, that the rubric of Bruch's Romanticism is yielding to the more intuitive, beauty-oriented world of Debussy. The predominant theme of the opening Allegro risoluto alternates with a folksy F minor melody, and at one point produces a shimmering whole-tone passage. A wistful melody winds its way through the Andantino doloroso before another halling forms the basis of Hurum's Allegro vivace scherzo, filled with modal harmonies and more double-stops. Hurum sounds at his most free in the Andantino patetico, indulging in parallel harmonies and the mood-shifting characteristics of impressionist music while managing to retain some sense of a Norwegian context. The sonata was first performed on 25 March 1915 in Berlin.

The great Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad became the

most high-profile exponent of Hurum's songs and once visited him in Honolulu. The bulk of the composer's output for voice and piano is grouped into the successive opus numbers 12–14 dating from 1917–18, of which the first song from the middle set is the most well-known. 'Blonde nætter' ('White Nights') was also a favourite of Flagstad. It sets the poem 'I de forunderlig, blonde nætter' from Wilhelm Krag's collection *Nye Digter* ('New Poems'). Krag's quasi-symbolist verse, suggesting love and loss in a mysterious landscape, draws notably impressionistic techniques from Hurum's pianist, accompanying the soprano's relatively traditional melody with sparse, bell-like and distinctly-coloured sounds.

The first song in Hurum's Op 14 set uses the poem 'Fandango' from Krag's 1891 collection *Digte* ('Poems'). The text refers explicitly to music, dismissing 'janissary rhythms' in favour of the 'sensual, sweet' music of the fandango (a lively Spanish dance) as the protagonist serenades the doomed, mysterious Zerlina. If we can detect an Iberian sensibility in the second movement of Hurum's Violin Sonata No 1, it erupts into full fruition here. Again, the song demonstrates the deftness of the composer's mature writing for collaborative piano.

'Regn' ('Rain'), also from Hurum's Op 14, is a straightforward reaction to Sigbjørn Obstfelder's poetic greeting to precipitation while 'Stævnemöde' ('Meeting') from the Op 13 set returns to a more symbolist mode and to Krag; the song uses an excerpt from his 'Sange om natten' from *Nye Digte* that talks of shadows and graves, a theme picked up in 'Til min Gyldenlak' ('To my Wallflower'), a famous poem written by Henrik Wergeland on his deathbed that reflects on the fleeting nature of mortality. Hurum's setting, from his Op 14 set is more conventional though there are glimpses of the impressionistic style in the piano writing.

That style comes to the fore in Hurum's Op 5 *Akvareller* ('Watercolours') for piano, the title suggesting the extent to which the composer thought in visual terms even when writing music. The set of three piano works dates from 1912, the year after Hurum had been so struck by Debussy's language. This was a time in which painting started to become more than a side activity in Hurum's creative life and in which visual stimuli began to inform his music more and more.

The influence of Debussy is clear from the fragmentary motifs, parallel harmonies and rippling textures of 'Vandlilje' ('Water Lillies' – the title referencing another master of impressionism, Claude Monet). 'Miniature' seems more attached to Nordic traditions, with a clear lyrical melody and a central section taking the form of a Norwegian 'springar' (an uneven 4-step dance from Norway). 'Akvarel' ('Watercolour') returns to a more impressionistic, fragmentary texture and harmonic language, bound by a canopy of rippling piano figurations.

Andrew Mellor © 2026

Andrew Mellor is a freelance journalist and critic based in Copenhagen and author of *The Northern Silence: Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture* (Yale University Press, 2022).



Blonde nætter
Vilhelm Krag (1871–1933)

I de forunderlig blonde nætter
jeg gaar alene, men med dig jeg taler.
Rundt om mig vaaren blomstersnehvid blunder,
et springvand plasker lydt. En hane galer.

Jeg gaar alene, men med dig jeg taler,
som jeg har talt med dig saa mange gange.
Har du det ondt, min ven?
Var du bedrøvet i disse svundne aar, de lange lange!

Jeg stanser brat. Jeg fryser nedad ryggen
og stirrer ræd omkring de stille sletter.
Aa Gud! Det er, som jeg hører dig græde
i de forunderlig blonde nætter.

Blonde nights

In the strange blonde nights
I walk alone, but I talk with you.
Around me snow-white spring flower slumber,
a fountain splashes loudly. A cock crows.

I walk alone, but I talk with you.
As I have talked to you so many times.
Are you in pain, my friend?
Were you sad in these long, bygone years!

I stop abruptly. Chills run down my spine
As I stare fearfully around the silent plains.
Oh God! It is as if I hear you crying
in the strange blonde nights.

Fandango
Vilhelm Krag

Ikke janitscharmusik!
Stille, I marschtunge rythmer!
Stille, for fan, musikanter!

Tscherkesserinderne, tscherkesserinderne,
lad dem blot komme!
Ind skal de danse på spæde små fødder
til dæmpet musik
fra fjerne guitarer.
Surrende, kurrende, kjælende toner,
smilende, hvilende, hviskende toner,
sanselig søde:
Fandango!

Dysterrødt skjær om den lyslette dans,
skinnende langslør som sølvskyer stryge,
bølgende arme sig slynge så myge
i dans!
Et rødt lidet øre, en hvid liden finger
og fødder, som lydløse, lynrappe tripper
i sobelskinsdækkenets silkehår sorte. -
Og rislende ringlen fra smykker og stene.
Og kinder. Og øine.
Fandango!

Fandango

No Janissary music!
Silence! You marching rhythms
Silence, damn it, musicians!

The Circassians, the Circassians,
let them appear!
They will dance in on their delicate feet
to softened music
from distant guitars
murmuring, cooing, caressing tones
smiling, relaxing, whispering tones
Sensually sweet:
Fandango!

Crimson red glow around the light hearted dance,
radiant draperies stroked by silver clouds,
flowing arms, softly twining
in dance!
A little red ear, a little pale finger
and feet, which trip silently, swiftly
in the black silky sable fur.
And the rustling of jewels and stones
and cheeks, and eyes!
Fandango!

Zerlina, min terne, din hals er så sød,
dit øie så sort,
men dit øie er vådt, Zerlina.

Zerlina, min terne, din læbe er rød,
din kind er så rund,
men din kind er så bleg, Zerlina.

Zerlina, min terne, din hud er så blød,
din mund er så frisk.
Men — hvi bæver din mund, Zerlina?

«Ak, herre, det lider mod høstens tid
og Persiens roser, de falder.
Og duggen græder på nellikens mund,
og løvet visner, o herre.»

Zerlina, min terne, hav tak for din dans
og dit ord. Lad mig ene.

Det visner. Det visner,
det visner, det visner,
verden, den visner, og roser og kvinder,
mit legem og alle de skjælvende nerver
visner

Zerlina, my seabird, your throat is so sweet,
your eye is so black.
But your eye is wet, Zerlina.

Zerlina, my seabird, your lips are so red,
your cheek is so round,
but your cheek is so pale, Zerlina.

Zerlina, my seabird, your skin is so soft,
your mouth is so fresh.
but why is your mouth quivering, Zerlina?

«Oh, master, autumn is coming,
and the roses of Persia are falling.
And the dew is crying on the clove's mouth,
and the leaves are shrivelling, master»

Zerlina, my seabird, thank you for your dance
and your word. Now let me be.

It shrivels, it shrivels,
it shrivels, it shrivels
the world, it is shrivelling, and roses and women
my body and every trembling nerve
shrivel!

Og tiden, den sniger sig langsomt forbi mig,
og timerne vandrer at grave min grav.
Jeg tør ikke tænke – jeg tør ikke leve.
Tør ikke dø!

Og i denne dødens den natdybe stilhed
risler som endeløs heilo-sang:

Det visner, det visner,
det visn....
Musik, musik, janitscharmusik,
den store kinesiske tromme!

And time, it is slowly creeping past me
the hours are wandering to dig my grave
I dare not think – I dare not live.
Dare not die!

But in this deathly deep night, silence
rustles like an endless song of the plover

It shrivels, it shrivels
it shriv...
Music! Music! Janissary music,
The big Chinese drum!

Regn
Sigbjørn Obstfelder (1866–1900)

En er en, og to er to –
vi hopper i vann,
vi triller i sand.
Sikk, sakk, vi drypper på tak,
tikk, takk, det regner i dag.
Regn, regn, regn, regn
øsende regn, pøsende regn,
regn, regn, regn, regn
deilig og vått, deilig og rått!
En er en og to er to –
vi hopper i vann,
vi triller i sand.
Sikk, sakk, vi drypper på tak,
tikk, takk, det regner i dag.

Rain

One is one, and two is two –
we jump in water,
we roll in sand.
Zig, zag, we drip on the roof,
tic, tac, it's raining today.
Rain, rain, rain, rain
pouring rain, pouring rain,
rain, rain, rain, rain
lovely and wet!
One is one, and two is two –
we jump in water,
we roll in sand.
Zig, zag, we drip on the roof,
tic, tac, it's raining today.



Stævnemøde
Vilhelm Krag

Gravene ligger i maaneskin,
korsene suser i nattevind,
klokken i taarnet slaar tolv.

— Da svæver henover gravens straa
to lysende skygger, saa tyste og smaa,
to hvide, flygtende sjæle.

De svæver stille mod kirken bort,
og der, dens skygge er dyb og sort,
glider til ét de sammen.

Gravene ligger i maaneskin,
korsene suser i nattevind,
taarnurets viser kun lever.

Romantic meeting

The graves lie in the moonlight,
the crosses rustle in the night wind,
the bell in the tower strikes twelve.

— Then over the graves' straw
float two luminous shadows, so silent and small,
two white, fleeing souls.

They float quietly towards the church,
and where its shadow is deep and black,
they merge together as one.

The graves lie in the moonlight,
the crosses rustle in the night wind,
only the hands of the tower clock are alive.

Til min Gyldenlak
Henrik Wergeland (1808–1945)

Gyldenlak, før Du din Glands har tabt,
da er jeg Det hvoraf Alt er skabt;
ja før Du mister din Krones Guld,
da er jeg Muld.

Idet jeg raaber: med Vindvet op!
mit sidste Blik faar din Gyldentop.
Min Sjel dig kysser, idet forbi
den flyver fri.

Togange jeg kysser din søde Mund.
Dit er det første med Rettens Grund.
Det andet give du, Kjære husk,
min Rosenbusk!

Udsprungen faaer jeg den ei at see;
thi bring min Hilsen, naar det vil skee;
og siig, jeg ønsker, at paa min Grav
den blomstrer af.

Ja siig, jeg ønsker, at paa mit Bryst
den Rose laa, du fra mig har kyst;
og, Gyldenlak, vær i Dødens Huus
dens Brudeblus!

To My Wallflower

Wallflower, before your shine is lost,
I shall be that from which all is made.
Yes, before your lose your crown of gold,
I shall be mould.

As I call: open the window!
My final glance falls upon your golden head.
My soul kisses you as
it flies free.

I kiss your sweet mouth twice;
the first belongs to you by right,
the second you must give, remember,
to my rose bush!

I will not get to see it bloom;
so give my regards when it thrives,
and say I wish for it to shed its blossoms
upon my grave.

Yes, say that I wish the rose you kissed
might rest upon my chest.
And wallflower in the house of death
be its guarding flame!





Marianne Thorsen

Violinist Marianne Thorsen enjoys a varied musical life as a performer. As a soloist, she has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, all the Norwegian orchestras and many of the major orchestras in Scandinavia.

With a particular passion for chamber music, Marianne Thorsen was first violin of the Nash Ensemble from 2000—2015 and a founder member of the Leopold String Trio from 1991—2006, touring extensively and appearing at the BBC Proms as well as numerous festivals.

Other notable projects include regular collaborations with Norway's renowned string orchestra TrondheimSolistene, with whom she recorded Mozart's violin concertos nos. 3—5 to great critical acclaim, winning the Norwegian Spellemann prize in 2006. 2011–2014 also saw the release of five CDs of music by Halvorsen and Svendsen on the Chandos label, with Thorsen as soloist alongside the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Neeme Järvi.

Thorsen was Artistic Director of the Vinterfestspill festival in Røros, Norway from 2009 to 2013. Since 2006 she has been professor of violin at the Department of Music of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Marianne plays on a violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini from 1745, kindly on loan from the Dextra Musica Foundation.



Mari Eriksmoen

Mari Eriksmoen is a Norwegian lyric soprano with an extensive international career, appearing regularly at leading opera houses and festivals across Europe. She has performed at venues including the opera houses of Vienna, Frankfurt and Munich, and has been a frequent guest at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

Eriksmoen received her training at the Norwegian Academy of Music, the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse in Paris, and the Royal Danish Opera Academy in Copenhagen.

Her international breakthrough came in 2010 as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Theater an der Wien, marking the beginning of a broad European career. She has since appeared at major festivals such as Glyndebourne, Savonlinna and the BBC Proms, and made her debut at Teatro alla Scala in 2013. In 2022, she debuted at the Salzburg Festival. In recent seasons, she has taken on a range of new roles at institutions including the Norwegian National Opera, The Royal Danish Theatre and the Tiroler Festspiele Erl.

In addition to her stage work, Eriksmoen is an established concert singer, collaborating with leading orchestras and conductors in a wide-ranging repertoire. She has performed on many recordings of opera, orchestral and song repertoire from the Baroque to the present day.



Håvard Gimse

Pianist Håvard Gimse is one of Norway's leading musicians and counts among the Nordic region's most significant concert and recording artists, with an expansive repertoire including an impressive list of concertos. Known for his highly personal sound, sympathetic approach and investigative programming, Gimse is in frequent demand as both soloist and chamber musician.

He has toured throughout Scandinavia and appeared with leading orchestras in Europe, Japan and the USA. Gimse has had a longstanding collaboration with Norwegian cellist Truls Mørk, and they have toured together in Japan, Italy and the USA, as well as releasing critically acclaimed recordings.

Håvard Gimse's strong affinity for Scandinavian and especially Norwegian music has made him one of the foremost recording artists in this area. His extensive discography includes acclaimed recordings of Nordic repertoire, and he has also been involved in reconstruction work on Geirr Tveitt's music from lost sources.

Gimse is the recipient of the Grieg Prize (1996) and the Sibelius Prize (2004). He has performed on many of the world's most prestigious concert stages, including Carnegie Hall in New York City, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Suntory Hall in Tokyo and Wigmore Hall in London. Wherever he performs, he is committed to presenting both well-known and lesser-known Nordic repertoire.



Credits

RECORDED IN SOFIENBERG CHURCH,
OSLO, 28–30 AUGUST 2023 & 5 MARCH 2024
PRODUCER: VEGARD LANDAAS
BALANCE ENGINEER: THOMAS WOLDEN
EDITING: VEGARD LANDAAS
MASTERING: THOMAS WOLDEN
BOOKLET NOTES: ANDREW MELLOR
BOOKLET EDITOR: ALISON BULLOCK AARSTEN
COVER DESIGN: ANETTE L'ORANGE / BLUNDERBUSS
ARTIST PHOTO (MARIANNE THORSEN): OLE WUTTUDAL
ARTIST PHOTO (MARI ERIKSMOEN): MARI ERIKSMOEN
ARTIST PHOTO (HÅVARD GIMSE): ILJA HENDEL

LWC1384
℗ 2026 LAWO | © 2026 LAWO Classics
www.lawo.no

Alf Hurum 1882—1972

Sonata for violin and piano in D minor, op. 2

1. Allegro animato 08:42
2. Andante espressivo 05:35
3. Allegro non troppo 03:07

Selected songs:

4. Blonde nætter (op. 13 no. 1) 03:07
5. Fandango (op. 14 no. 1) 07:33
6. Regn (op. 14 no. 4) 01:14
7. Stævnemøde (op. 13 no. 2) 03:10
8. Til min Gyldenlak (op. 14 no. 2) 03:28

Akvareller for Piano, op. 5

9. Vandliljen 02:23
10. Miniature 02:03
11. Akvarel 01:16

Sonata for violin and piano in A minor, op. 8

12. Allegro risoluto 08:53
13. Andantino doloroso 05:07
14. Scherzo, allegro vivace 03:18
15. Andantino patetico—Allegro appassionato 07:22