

... in circles — The compositions on this CD circle each other like planets in a binary star system and form an aesthetic as well as an epic union: one gives where the other takes, one is tacit where the other speaks.

In fact, all the inner and outer processes are distinguished by contrasts. The tension between the old and the new is additionally re-inforced through the use of extremely archaic as well as modernistic instrumental means.

Composer **Wolfgang Plagge** here takes on the challenge of treading two apparently very dissimilar circles – only to discover that they are tightly connected, like links in a chain.

Annar Follesø
violin

Helge Kjekshus
piano

- 1-2 **Sonata III** op.93
Acute 5:07 – Tranquillo 7:28
- 3-6 **Asteroid Suite** op.33
Melpomene 4:10 – Ceres 2:35 – Vesta 4:55 – Hector 1:36
- 7 **Rhapsody** op.89
for solo violin 9:43
- 8-10 **Sonata IV** op.116 "… in circles"
Lento 5:21 – Rigido 5:39 – Adagio/Allegro 5:37

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Follesø / Kjekshus

... in [Wolfgang Plagge] circles



Annar Follesø

Helge Kjekshus



Helge
Kjekshus



Annar
Follesø

... **in circles** — The two sonatas for violin and piano – op. 93 and op. 116 – are in many ways mirror images of one another. Seen from the outside, both consist of one horizontal and one vertical time axis, one of them assertive and quick, the other introverted and gentle. **Sonata no. III** op. 93 [1997] begins impetuously and restlessly, but eventually flows into a quiet and stately final movement. **Sonata no. IV** op. 116 [2001] has an altogether contrary pattern: a static, probing introduction ultimately leads into an explosive and extroverted conclusion. Also on a deeper level the two works circle one another like planets in a binary star system and form an aesthetic as well as an epic union: one gives where the other takes, one is tacit where the other speaks. In fact, all the inner and outer processes are distinguished by binary contrasts – strong-weak, fast-slow, light-dark, aggression-melancholy, sorrow-joy. The two sonatas can well be understood as two-faced extremes, or poles with opposing charges, but I rather conceive of them as two half circles that meet one another at their upper and lower points.

Precisely this aspect of bipolarity on all levels has captivated me in these two works, and my fascination for the musical history of the Middle Ages has furthermore left profound marks on Sonata no. IV in the form of a Gregorian sequence – an old Norwegian version of Thomas Aquinas' hymn "Lauda Sion" comprises one of the work's two primary elements. The tension between the old and the new is additionally reinforced through the use of extremely archaic (open fifths, violin playing without vibrato) as well as modernistic (quarter tones, aleatoric elements) instrumental means. As a composer I therefore took on the challenge of treading two apparently very dissimilar circles – only to discover that they are tightly connected, like links in a chain.

Asteroid Suite op. 33 [1987] is a humorous treatment of mythical figures. Discovering ever new heavenly bodies within and outside of our solar system, astronomers have from the earliest days often given these "new" planets, planetoids and constellations beautiful and imaginative names from the world of mythology. As a result, major parts of the Greek and Roman pantheon are scattered across the heavens in the form of stars such as Mars, Venus and Orion. The four movements of Asteroid Suite are thus named after decidedly real planetoids, as well as four Greco-Roman mythological figures: Melpomene is the muse of tragic poetry, Ceres the Roman goddess of harvest, Vesta the goddess of the hearth and guardian of society, as well as a symbol of purity, and Hector a fearless and bold Grecian warrior, the son of Priam, renowned as the man who lost the duel against the half-god Achilles.

My point of departure for the depictions of the four asteroids lies therefore within their Greco-Roman personifications, and is meant more as caricature rather than characterization. The suite is a good-natured and slightly ironic comment upon Gustav Holst's very illustrative orchestral suite "The Planets." The 3. movement, "Vesta", furthermore includes a musical salute to the great Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski by way of a short quote from his brilliant "Dance Preludes".

Rhapsody op. 89 [1996] is a work for solo violin in divertimento style, full of technical challenges for the violinist. Similar to the two sonatas, the Rhapsody displays a pronounced dualism, and the music changes rapidly between expressive and technical extremes. This is one of the few works of mine that incorporate distinctly "Norwegian" musical elements.

Wolfgang Plagge 2003

Violinist Annar Føllesø, pianist Helge Kjekshus and composer Wolfgang Plagge have worked in partnership for many years. A close collaboration of this kind, based on friendship, mutual artistic respect and a demand for quality, is essential in order to realize a project such as the current one: an entire CD consisting exclusively of new chamber music for violin and piano.

The three musicians can look back upon a long list of considerable musical achievement. All of them are passionate chamber musicians, even though they are also extremely active as soloists. **Annar Føllesø** began his professional musical studies at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo, completing his studies with an Artist Diploma from Indiana University at Bloomington, USA, where he studied with Mauricio Fuks. He won the violin prize at the international summer academy in Salzburg in 1998, and is now one of the most active and sought-after musicians among his generation of Norwegian violinists. He is at home within most musical styles, playing music by baroque composers such as Pisendel and Bach as well as contemporary composers such as Lutoslawski and Carter. In 2003, together with pianist and duo-member Helge Kjekshus, he will also present first performances of newly written works by Sven Lyder Kahrs and Karen Tanaka, among others.



Helge Kjekshus has already distinguished himself as one of Norway's foremost pianists. He received his Masters degree from Yale University in the USA, where he studied with Boris Berman, and has won a number of prizes and competitions, among others the Grieg Prize in 1998. Kjekshus is an extremely active performer, giving concerts all over the world and playing with many prominent international musicians. In 2000 he made his formal debut in Russia with the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, and presented his first solo recital in Seoul, South Korea, during the same year. Since 1995 he has had an exclusive sponsor agreement with STATOIL.

Composer and pianist **Wolfgang Plagge** got his MA from the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, and has emerged as one of the most unique and productive Norwegian composers of his generation. He, too, has an extensive international career as a performer, but dedicates increasingly more of his time to composition. He has been awarded many prizes as both pianist and composer, most recently an ASCAP Award in 2001, and Vocal Nord in 2003. Plagge has always had a special fondness for chamber music constellations, and a number of his chamber works have begun to earn a position as standard works of the literature.

One of the most vital musical as well as human meeting points for the three musicians is their clear and explicit relationship towards mutual musical communication. Contemporary musical taste changes ever faster, heading towards a value system which seems to place emphasis upon quality rather than stylistic fraternity. A perspective such as this demands the ability and the will to communicate, in order to be able to reach one another within the context of artistic expression. As musicians with a background in the classical tradition they are also extremely aware of the importance of past and present in regard to the musical profession itself. Plagge's music, which frequently is inspired both deliberately and directly by sources leading back to the cultural roots of Western music, emerges thus as a natural representative for all three.

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Welcome into the circles!

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balance engineer **Hans Peter L'Orange**
piano technician **Jan Haghus** Steinway
editing **Hans Peter L'Orange**

photo **Dag Thorenfeldt**
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