

"If Valen (1887–1952) had not been such a shy, self-effacing person, he would have won fame throughout Europe." So said Issay Dobrowen, a prominent conductor in the inter-war period, and chief conductor from 1927 to 1931 of Oslo's Filharmonisk Selskaps Orkester (predecessor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra). The path to fame was indeed uphill for Norway's leading modernist. However, Valen's diffidence was not the only reason for this – another was his chosen musical language, which grew out of the twelve-tone method of composition associated with Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. By writing this sort of music, albeit with his own highly personal stamp, he was asking for trouble in the conservative world of Norwegian music.

The beauty and profundity of Valen's subdued but expressive music is being discovered by more and more listeners. Valen's reputation as one of Norway's foremost composers and as a pioneer of new music in the 20th century is now secure. The legendary pianist Glenn Gould recognized the importance of Valen's music, saying "For the first time in many years I have found a looming personality in the 20th century's music".

Fartein Valen string quartets

- 1 - 4 String Quartet no. 1 op. 10 (1928-29)
- 5 - 7 String Quartet no. 2 op. 13 (1930-31)
- 8 - 9 String Quartet op. 0 (1909)
- 10-12 Three poems by Goethe op. 6 (1925-27)

HANSAKVARTETTEN / Hilde Haraldsen Sveen



Recorded in DXD 24bit/352.8kHz

■ 5.1 DTS HD MA 24/192kHz

■ 2.0 LPCM 24/192kHz + mShuttle MP3 and FLAC
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Fartein Valen string quartets



Hansakvartetten

Fartein Valen string quartets

String Quartet no. 1 op. 10 (1928–29)

- 1 Moderato 8:43
- 2 Adagio 4:36
- 3 Scherzo 3:13
- 4 Rondo 5:10

String Quartet no. 2 op. 13 (1930–31)

- 5 Fuga (Andante con moto) 5:12
- 6 Tempo di Menuetto, grazioso 4:14
- 7 Finale (Allegro assai) 6:42

String Quartet op. 0 (1909)

- 8 Andante più tosto allegretto 6:05
- 9 Scherzo (Allegro molto vivace) 6:38

Three poems by Goethe op. 6 (1925–27)

Version for soprano and string quartet by Leif Halvorsen

- 10 Sakontola 1:32
- 11 Weiss wie Lilien 1:41
- 12 Suleika 1:48

HANSAKVARTETTEN / Hilde Haraldsen Sveen

“If Valen had not been such a shy, self-effacing person, he would have won fame throughout Europe.” So said Issay Dobrowen, a prominent conductor in the inter-war period, and chief conductor from 1927 to 1931 of Oslo’s Filharmonisk Selskaps Orkester (predecessor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra). The path to fame was indeed uphill for Norway’s leading modernist. However, Valen’s diffidence was not the only reason for this – another was his chosen musical language, which grew out of the twelve-tone method of composition associated with Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. By writing this sort of music, albeit with his own highly personal stamp, he was asking for trouble in the conservative world of Norwegian music.

Fartein Valen (1881–1952) had a remarkable talent. His early childhood was spent on Madagascar, where his father was a missionary. His exceptional musical abilities were obvious from the start – and he began piano lessons very early. When he was six, the family moved back to Stavanger in Norway. While at school he shone in most subjects, became a first-class pianist, and began to compose music. After excelling in his final school exams, he wanted to study music, but, under pressure from his family, he agreed to study philology, in particular German and French. However, he continued to take musical studies at the same time – one of his mentors being the composer Catarinus Elling – and in 1909 he graduated from the Music Conservatory in Kristiania (modern Oslo) with a degree in organ playing. In the same year his Opus 1, Legend for piano, was published.

Valen was increasingly sure that he wanted to devote all his energy to becoming a musician, and, on the advice of Catarinus Elling, he travelled to Berlin, hoping to gain entrance to the Berlin music conservatory, Die Königliche Hochschule für Musik. However, when he arrived in Berlin in 1909, he discovered that admissions to the conservatory had been completed. He reacted boldly, and immediately sought out Max Bruch, head of composition studies, saying he had the score of a string quartet he wanted to show him. Bruch agreed to see it, and a week later informed Valen that a place for him in the conservatory had been granted, and that he should come and talk with him. Bruch welcomed him warmly, and, we are told, said to the nervous Norwegian, “You have talent, my dear Sir, and your ideas are good, but you have much to learn and much work to do to develop your talent.”

The string quartet Valen had with him on that occasion was a completely new work, completed in the half year before he went to Berlin – the first movement bears the

date 18th March 1909. It seems he had written the first three movements by the time he arrived in Berlin, and that he continued to work on the quartet during his first months in Berlin, but work must have gone slowly. In February 1910 he writes to his sister Magnhild: "Three movements are complete, but they need a very thorough revision. Both Bruch and Elling have praised the motifs, and a few days ago I showed the theme of the last (fourth) movement to [Leopold] Wolf. The professor found it 'very fine and inventive', and [Enoch] Davis was beside himself with enthusiasm. But I am still a long way from completion. When I study Beethoven's quartets and see what masterpieces they are I simply despair."

From the sketches in the National Library of Norway in Oslo it is difficult to see how far he had come in the planned revision. Two of the movements exist in complete form and it is these – *Andante più tosto allegretto* and *Scherzo (Allegro molto vivace)* – that are performed on this recording. The movements are clearly the work of someone who knows his craft, and Valen already shows a propensity for polyphony. This is especially evident in the short *Andante*. Each of the four voices has a relatively independent role, and harmonically Valen is in the world of the late Romantics, using frequent modulation and strong chromatic elements. The second movement has a more open and dance-like character – its beginning has a delicacy that is reminiscent of Mendelssohn. This is followed by a darker and more reflective passage, before Valen returns to the rhythmic lightness of the movement's opening.

Valen studied at the music conservatory in Berlin for two years, Max Bruch and Karl Leopold Wolf being his teachers, but it was an experience that failed to live up to his expectations. In a letter to his friend Otto Lous Mohr in 1911 he writes: "I thought I was coming to a temple to art, but found it was a mere training school for musicians."

However, he was not finished with Berlin after these two years. He spent a further five years there, studying on his own and making a living from giving music lessons. This gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with what was going on in contemporary music – for example he heard Arnold Schönberg's D minor quartet in 1913. He also got to know Gustav Mahler's music, but it failed to make a convincing impression on him; Anton Bruckner, on the other hand, was someone he came to admire enormously. Valen was, meanwhile, searching for his own style. In his compositions from these years – a piano sonata and a sonata for violin and piano – one sees his interest in the linear aspects of music and in contrapuntal devices. And he looked to the

father of such music: Johan Sebastian Bach's music was to become his most treasured ideal. Using Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier as a starting-point, Valen composed his own fugues on Bach's 48 fugal themes – six variations on each theme.

Progress on his own compositions was slow. His Opus 4, *Ave Maria* for soprano and orchestra, which is six minutes in length, took four years to write. It was his last work in the major/minor system of tonality, and even in this work he stretched tonality to its limits. Its first performance, in Oslo in 1923, caused one of the biggest scandals in Norwegian musical history. His fellow composer Hjalmar Borgstrøm wrote the following in the leading newspaper *Aftenposten*: "How on earth can an intelligent musician mar this pious Catholic adulation of the Madonna with exuberant shrieks from the singer and provocative cacophony from the orchestra?" Many others reacted in a similar vein.

Seven years were to pass before another work by Valen was performed in the Norwegian capital, and it was in this period, after *Ave Maria*, that he broke away from tonality. The new style he now espoused has been termed "dissonant polyphony". Contrapuntal devices play a central role and tonality is free. In the 1920s he also worked with Schönberg's twelve-tone system, but he stood closer to Alban Berg's more moderate detachment from tonality than to the more radical atonality one finds in Schönberg's music.

Valen's first work in the style of dissonant polyphony is his *Piano Trio*, Op. 5, which took him seven years to compose. It was finished in 1924, but received its first performance in 1931, by which time his music was more readily appreciated. Response to the work was cautiously enthusiastic.

In the intervening years Valen had been nurturing his new technique in four vocal works, the first of which – *Drei Gedichte von Goethe* – was composed in 1928–29. In its original version it was composed for voice and piano, and was published by Norsk Musikkforlag in 1929, but the work was premiered in a new version with a string quartet replacing the piano at a concert in Oslo on 16th September 1932. At this concert Valen's first string quartet, Op. 10, was also played. The works were performed by the Norwegian String Quartet with the soprano Haldis Halvorsen as soloist. Leif Halvorsen, first violin in this ensemble, had made the string quartet accompaniment to the Goethe songs. (This is the version that is played on this disc.) Haldis Halvorsen also sang a selection of Grieg's songs.

That evening, Valen's works were very well received by the audience, but the critical notices had, as usual, a negative tone. There was, however, one exception – the review by Arne van Erpekum Sem in *Tidens Tegn*. He wrote: "Halldis Halvorsen has every reason to be highly satisfied with her concert in the University Hall yesterday. There was a large audience, and all her songs were warmly applauded." He wrote the following about Valen's Goethe songs: "It was interesting for those who know the songs with a piano accompaniment to hear them accompanied by a string quartet, where the complex tracery of the music's voices are heard to better effect." Of Valen's string quartet, Sem wrote: "Strangely enough, this completely atonal work seemed to be thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. It received very warm applause and the composer was asked to come forward several times." This was a minor triumph for Valen, in marked contrast to the reception to his *Ave Maria* nine years earlier. The winds of musical taste were beginning to blow in his direction.

Valen had put the finishing touches to his String Quartet no. 1 in 1929. As we have seen, it was first performed in 1932. This work manifests once again the combination of classical forms and his new "dissonant polyphony" (cp. his *Trio*, Op. 5). The first movement is in many ways in traditional sonata form, but instead of generating tension through shifts between different keys, Valen here uses various contrapuntal transformations of the thematic material to achieve the same sort of effect. The second movement is almost in the form of a Lied, while the following scherzo is fairly free in its form and is characterized by its rhythmic elements. The final movement is composed as a rondo with a main theme that appears again and again, interspersed by passages of different character. (On the cover of the score Valen wrote: "Dedicated to my teacher Jeanette Mohr.")

The same compositional method is evident in Valen's String Quartet no. 2, Op. 13, written two years after the first quartet. It is a three-movement work adhering to the classic baroque structure: fugue – minuet – sonata form. In his biography of Valen, Olav Gurvin dwells at some length on Valen's inspiration for the introductory fugue: "He was standing alone late one evening on the Honnorbrygga quay in Oslo, when he noticed how the stars were reflected in the clear water, and how they sparkled and moved with the water's gentle undulations. The extraordinary mood of the scene suddenly filled him with music, and the idea of the fugue came to him ... It was not nature as such that was his inspiration on this occasion, so much as the special atmosphere created by the starry night, something which he felt was more cosmic than earthly."

Valen's work on the second quartet progressed more easily than was the case with many of his earlier works. In a letter to his sister Ingrid in November 1930 he writes: "... what used to take me a year now takes me only some weeks, and I think I can boast that I am full of inspiration even though I am writing atonal music and 'only using my brain.'" Valen dedicated this quartet to his sister.

Norsk Musikkforlag published Valen's Quartet no. 2 in May 1932. However, it was not given its first performance until June 1946, when it was played at a concert of Norwegian music given in Copenhagen by the Danish Koppel Quartet. It was an audacious move to include the work, and the response from the Danish musical establishment was not particularly positive.

Composer Sven Erik Schulz preferred the works by Sparre Olsen and Pauline Hall to Valen's quartet, while Erik Abrahamsen in *Berlingske Tidende* thought the quartet outdated: "Most concertgoers from yesterday will perhaps consider Valen's Quartet extremely 'radical' music. In fact, this style is already passé, at least to Danish ears. The work was played with enthusiasm by the Koppel Quartet, who showed great technical skill as they threw themselves into this difficult music."

That was in 1946. It was, however, not long before Valen's music was appreciated in a far more favourable light outside his native Norway. In 1947 Copenhagen was the venue for the music festival arranged by the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), and Valen's orchestral work *Sonetto di Michelangelo* was one of two pieces chosen to represent Norway. The Swedish composer Hilding Rosenberg, on hearing Valen's work, said, somewhat ambivalently: "I felt drawn to Valen's composition and liked it, but I did not understand a thing." His Danish colleague Nils Viggo Bentzon, on the other hand, was clearer about where he stood: "Valen's *Sonetto di Michelangelo* is a very beautiful piece – real twelve-tone poetry."

The following year Valen's violin concerto aroused considerable interest at the ISCM festival in Amsterdam, and he wrote eagerly to his colleague Pauline Hall: "The concert went very well indeed and I was asked to come forward and was presented with flowers, but the best thing of all was the encouragement I received from musicians of every nationality. That really was something to take back home."

In 1949 the British pianist Alexander Helmann founded The Valen Society in Eng-

land, and shortly afterwards the Norwegian Valenselskapet was founded. The composer had achieved his international breakthrough.

Lorentz Reitan, 2012

Sources: *Articles and books by Olav Gurvin, Bjarne Kortsen, Arvid Vollnes, Berit Kvinge Tjøme et al.*



The Hansa Quartet was formed in 1987 by musicians from the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. The current members of the quartet are Åsta Jørgensen and Hilary Foster (violins), Helga Steen (viola), and Walter Heim (cello).

The Hansa Quartet plays most of the classical string quartet repertoire as well as all genres of contemporary music. Norwegian music has a central place in the quartet's work. It has given a large number of concerts of Edvard Grieg's music at Troldhaugen and of Harald Sæverud's music at Siljustol – often as part of the Bergen International Festival. In 1997 the Hansa Quartet released the first complete recording of Sæverud's three string quartets (PSC1141).

The quartet has worked in close collaboration with several composers, and this has resulted in a CD with works by Kenneth Sivertsen, Sverre Bergh and Ketil Hvoslef (VNP2002-0057). The quartet has also performed Hvoslef's music for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation's TV production of "Peer Gynt" (1994) and premiered his guitar quintet (2004).

During the first decade of the present century the Hansa Quartet has been closely involved with Fartein Valen's works. Bjarne Kortsen, musicologist and biographer of Valen, has been a source of knowledge and inspiration to the members of the quartet in this project – a project which, while very demanding, has given them an ever-deepening understanding of, and love for, Valen's music. This is something they wish to share with their listeners.

Hilde Haraldsen Sveen graduated from the Berlin University of the Arts (Hochschule der Künste) in 1994. Since then, she has held principal roles in a number of European opera houses. She debuted in 2001 as Gilda at The Norwegian Opera and has since then had several leading roles there. Her versatility has made her a popular singer for oratorios, concerts and romances. She has recorded several CD-albums with Norwegian music and currently teaches voice at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen.



«Hvis Valen ikke hadde vært så tilbakeholden og beskjeden, ville han nu hatt europeisk berømmelse.» Ordene var Issay Dobrowens, en av mellomkrigsårenes store dirigenter og leder av Filharmonisk Selskaps Orkester i årene 1927–31. Men veien til berømmelse skulle bli tung for Norges fremste modernist i denne perioden. Det skyldtes nok ikke bare hans tilbaketrukne vesen, men med et tonespråk i forlengelsen av Schönberg-Berg-Weberns tolvtoneamusikk, dog med en meget personlig utforming, gjorde han det ikke lett for seg i et konservativt norsk musikkmiljø.

Fartein Valen (1881–1952) var en helt spesiell begavelse. Hans far var misjonær på Madagaskar, og sine tidlige barneår tilbrakte Fartein Valen på kjempeøya utenfor Øst-Afrika. Musikaliteten var åpenbar, han hadde et ekstremt utviklet gehør, og ganske ung fikk han sin første klaverundervisning. Da han var seks år gammel flyttet familien til Stavanger. På skolen var han suveren i de fleste fag og samtidig utviklet han seg til å bli en meget dyktig pianist som også komponerte. Etter en brillant artium ville han studere musikk, men etter press fra familien ble det filologistudier i tysk og fransk i stedet, men med parallelle musikkstudier, bl.a. med komponisten Catarinus Elling. I 1909 avla han organisteksamen ved Musik-Konservatoriet i Oslo (daværende Kristiania) og samme år fikk han utgitt sitt opus 1: Legende for klaver.

Det ble imidlertid mer og mer klart at det var musiker han ville bli, og etter råd fra Catarinus Elling gikk veien til Berlin og Die Königliche Hochschule für Musik. Men da Valen ankom storbyen i 1909 hadde oppaket til høyskolen allerede funnet sted. Han tok imidlertid mot til seg og henvendte seg direkte til Max Bruch som ledet komposisjonsavdelingen, og Valen kunne da fremvise en strykekvartett han hadde med seg. Bruch gikk med på å se på verket, og etter en uke fikk Valen et kort fra Max Bruch om at han var tatt opp til studiet, og måtte innfinne seg hos ham. Her ble han hjertelig tatt i mot, og Bruch skal også ha sagt til den nervøse nordmannen: «Sie haben Talent mein lieber, Ihre Gedanken sind sehr gut, aber Sie müssen noch lernen, sie besser zu entwickeln.»

Den medbrakte strykekvartetten var et helt ferskt verk. Den var blitt til i halvåret før han dro til Berlin, og førstesatsen er datert 18. mars 1909. Mye tyder på at han hadde tre av satsene ferdig da han ankom metropolen, og at han arbeidet videre på kvartetten i de første månedene på høyskolen, men arbeidet må ha gått sakte. I februar 1910 skriver han nemlig til sin søster Magnhild: «Tre satser er ferdige, men de tiltrænger en grundig revisjon. Baade Bruch og Elling har rost motiverne og forleden tog jeg med

themaet av sidste (fjerde) sats til [Leopold] Wolf. Professoren fandt det 'sehr hübsch und gut in der Erfindung', og [Enoch] Davis var ude af sig selv af henrykkelse. Men dermed er ikke alt gjort. Naar jeg læser Beethovens kvartetter og ser den mesterlige udførelse, saa blir jeg ganske fortvilet.»

Av skissene som befinner seg på Nasjonalbiblioteket i Oslo er det vanskelig å si hvor langt han kom med den planlagte revisjonen. To av satsene foreligger i komplett form og det er disse som er innspilt på denne platen: Andante più tosto allegretto og Scherzo (Allegro molto vivace). Kvartetsatsene viser et godt håndverk og allerede her avslører Valen en forkjærlighet for polyfoni. Det er særlig merkbart i den korte Andantesatsen. De fire stemmene har her en relativt selvstendig rolle, og i harmonisk forstand befinner han seg på senromantisk grunn med hyppige modulasjoner og kromatikk. Andresatsen har fått et åpnere og mer dansant preg, og innledningspartiet kan minne litt om Mendelssohn. Så følger et mørkere og mer reflektert mellomspill før han vender tilbake til innledningens rytmiske letthet.

Fartein Valen tilbrakte to år ved musikhøyskolen i Berlin og han hadde Max Bruch og Karl Leopold Wolf som lærere. Men oppholdet ble ikke helt det han hadde forventet. I et brev til sin venn Otto Lous Mohr skriver han i 1911: «Jeg trodde jeg var kommet til et kunstens tempel, men så var det et seminarium for musikanter.»

Men han var ikke ferdig med Berlin. Han skulle tilbringe ytterligere fem år i den tyske hovedstaden hvor han bedrev studier på egen hånd, og levnært seg med å gi undervisning. Samtidig fikk han førsteklasses innblikk i det som rørte seg innenfor samtidsmusikken, bl.a. hørte han Arnold Schönbergs d-moll kvartett i 1913. Gustav Mahlers musikk fikk han godt innblikk i, uten at han ble helt overbevist, men ikke minst Anton Bruckner skulle imponere ham. Valen var hele tiden på leting etter sin egen stil. I sine komposisjoner fra denne perioden – en klaversonate og en sonate for fiolin og klaver – ser man igjen hans interesse for det lineære og kontrapunktske. Og han gikk til kilden: Johan Sebastian Bach skulle bli hans fremste ideal. Han brukte Bachs Wohltemperiertes Klavier som utgangspunkt og skrev egne fuger på Bachs 48 fuggetemaer, seks varianter for hvert tema.

Men arbeidet med egne komposisjoner gikk sakte. Hans opus 4, Ave Maria for sopran og orkester som er seks minutter langt, hadde en komposisjonsperiode på over fire år. Det skulle bli hans siste verk i dur/moll tonalitet, og her tøyer han tonaliteten til det

ytterste. Da verket ble uroppført i Oslo i 1923 foranlediget det en av de største skandalene i norsk musikkliv. Hans konservative komponistkollega Hjalmar Borgstrøm skrev følgende i Aftenposten: «Hvordan kan dog en intelligent komponist finne på å utstyre den fromme katolske tilbedelse av Madonna med eksalterede skrig i sangstemmen og udspesulerede kakofonier i orkesteret?» Andre uttrykte lignende tanker.

Det skulle gå syv år før et nytt Valen-verk ble oppført i hovedstaden, og etter Ave Maria var bruddet med tonaliteten et faktum. Den nye stilten er blitt betegnet som «dissonerende polyfoni». Det kontrapunktiske står i sentrum, og tonaliteten er fri. På 1920-tallet arbeidet han også med Schönbergs tolvtoneteknikk, men han står nok nærmere Alban Bergs nedtonede tonespråk enn det uttrykket man finner hos Schönberg.

Valens første verk i den dissonerende polyfone stilten er Klavertrio, op. 5 som han strevde med i syv år. Den var ferdigkomponert i 1924, men ble først uroppført i 1931 og da hadde tiden arbeidet for Valen. Mottagelsen var avventende sympatisk.

I de mellomliggende årene hadde Valen finslipt sin nye teknikk i fire vokalopus, hvorav det første – Drei Gedichte von Goethe – ble komponert i 1928-29. Originalversjonen er for sang og klaver og ble utgitt på Norsk Musikkforlag i 1929, men verket ble uroppført i ny versjon med strykekvartett under en konsert i Oslo 16. september 1932 hvor også Valens første strykekvartett, op. 10 ble fremført. Den Norske Strykekvartett spilte med sopranen Haldis Halvorsen som solist, og kvartettversjonen av Goethesangene var utarbeidet av kvartettens primarius Leif Halvorsen. (Det er denne versjonen som er innspilt her.) Haldis Halvorsen hadde også en egen avdeling med Griegsanger under konserten.

Valens verker denne aften ble meget godt mottatt av publikum, men de fleste kritikerne hadde som sedvanlig sine negative merknader. I Tidens Tegn skriver imidlertid Arne van Erpekum Sem: ”Haldis Halvorsen har all grunn til å være fornøyd med sin konsert i Aulaen i år. Det var godt hus, og publikum mottok alle sangerindens numre med hjertelig bifall.” Om Valens Goethe-sanger skriver han spesielt: ”For dem som kjenner sangene fra klaverutøget, var det interessant å høre dem nu med ledsgjelse av strykekvartett hvorved de forskjellige stemmers innviklede flettverk kom bedre til sin rett.” Og om Valens strykekvartett: ”Merkelig nok syntes også dette helt atonale verk å treffe publikums smak midt i blinken. Det ble ihvert fall mottatt med varmt bifall, og komponisten ble fremkalt gjentagne ganger.” En fin seier for Valen, og etter

totalslaktet med Ave Maria ni år tidligere var vinden nå begynt å blåse i en positiv retning for ham.

Sluttstrek for Strykekvartett nr. 1 hadde Valen satt i 1929 og her ser vi igjen kombinasjonen av klassiske former og Valens nye ”dissonerende polyfoni”. (Jfr. trioen op. 5). Førstesatsen er således i sonatesatsform, og der forskjell mellom tonearter skaper spenningen i den klassiske sonatesatsformen, benytter Valen seg av ulike kontrapunktiske transformasjoner av det tematiske materialet for å oppnå en lignende kontrastvirkning. Andresatsen er i en tilnærmet Lied-form, mens den påfølgende scherzo har en relativt fri utforming hvor det rytmiske spiller en dominerende rolle. Finalen er bygget som en rondo med et hovedtema som kommer igjen mellom ulike mellomspill. (På tittelbladet har Valen skrevet: ”Til min lærerinne Jeannette Mohr.”)

Denne komposisjonsmetoden er også gjennomgående i Valens Strykekvartett nr. 2, op. 13, komponert to år etter den første. Her er mønsteret tresatsig og satsstrukturen klassisk-barokk: fuge – menuett – sonatesats. Olav Gurvin har i sin Valenbiografi gjengitt inspirasjonskilden til den innledende fugen: ”En sein kveld da han stod alene på Honnørbygga (Oslo), la han merke til noen stjerner som speilet seg i den blanke sjøen og blinket og beveget seg litt i den aldri så svake bølging i vannet. Og straks ble den underlige stemningen han kom i, til musikk, til en fuge ... Det var ikke egentlig naturen som var inspirasjonskilden denne gang, men stjernehimmelen hadde satt ham i en stemming som etter hans mening var mer kosmisk enn jordisk.”

Arbeidet med den andre kvartetten hadde gått lettere enn i flere av de foregående verkene. Det ser man av et brev Valen skriver til sin søster Sigrid i november 1930: ”— det som før tok mig år, tar mig nu uker, og også kan jeg rose mig av at være helt borte i inspirasjonen enda jeg er atonal og ”kun skriver med fornuften”.» Fartein Valen tillegnet strykekvartetten til sin søster.

Norsk Musikkforlag ga ut kvartett nr. 2 i mai 1932. Men en oppførelse lot vente på seg. Heft til juni 1946 da den var å finne på programmet under en norsk musikkfest i København. Den danske Koppelkvartetten våget å programfeste verket, men reaksjonen i danske medier var ikke særlig positiv. Komponisten Sven Erik Schulz foretrak komposisjoner av Sparre Olsen og Pauline Hall fremfor Valens kvartett, mens Erik Abrahamsen i Berlingske Tidende mente kvartetten var utdatert: ”De fleste av Gaarsdagens Koncertgjengere vil maaske se paa Valens Kvartet som en saare ”radikal”

Musik. I virkeligheten er denne Stil i Øieblikket forældet, i al fall for danske Ören. Kompositionen blev spillet med Ildhu af Koppelkvarteten, der med største Dristighed kastede sig ud i den vanskelige Musik.»

Dette var i 1946. Det skulle imidlertid ikke gå lang tid før Valens musikk ble oppfattet adskillig mer positivt utenfor landets grenser. I 1947 ble verdensmusikkfesten for samtidsmusikk (ISCM) også arrangert i København, og Valens orkesterstykke Sonetto di Michelangelo var det ene av to stykker som skulle representere Norge. Den svenske komponisten Hilding Rosenberg reagerte med følgende paradoks: «Jeg følte meg meget tiltalt av Valens komposition, men jeg forstod ikke et suk af den.» Hans danske kollega Niels Viggo Bentzon var derimot sikker i sin sak: «Valens Sonetto di Michelangelo er et meget smukt stykke, virkelig '12tonepoesi'.»

Året etter vakte Valens fiolinkonsert oppsikt under verdensmusikkfesten i Amsterdam, og han kunne skrive begeistret til sin kollega Pauline Hall: «Det gikk utmerket på konerten, jeg blev fremkaldt og fikk blomster, men det hyggeligste av alt var den oppmuntring jeg fikk fra mange musikere av alle nasjoner, og det var jo godt å ha med sig hjem.»

I 1949 startet den britiske pianisten Alexander Helmann Valen Society i England, og ikke lang tid etter kom det norske Valenselskapet. Komponisten hadde fått et internasjonalt gjennombrudd.

Lorentz Reitan, 2012

Kilder: Artikler og bøker bl.a. av Olav Gurvin, Bjarne Kortsen, Arvid Vollnes og Berit Kvinge Tjørne.

Hansakvartetten ble dannet i 1987 av musikere fra Bergen Filharmoniske Orkester. Ensemblet består i dag av Åsta Jørgensen og Hilary Foster (fioliner), Helga Steen (bratsj) og Walter Heim (cello).

Hansakvartettens repertoar omfatter det meste av den klassiske kvartettliteraturen såvel som samtidsmusikk i alle sjangre. Norsk musikk har stått sentralt i kvartettens virke. Den har gitt tallrike konserter med Edvard Griegs musikk på Troldhaugen og Harald Sæveruds musikk på Siljustøl, bl.a. under Festspillene i Bergen. I 1997 utga Hansakvartetten den første fullstendige innspillingen av Sæveruds tre strykekvartetter (PSC1141).

Tett samarbeid med flere komponister har bl.a. resultert i en CD med verker av Kenneth Sivertsen, Sverre Bergh og Ketil Hvoslef (VNP2002-0057). Kvartetten har også spilt inn Hvoslefs musikk til NRK TVs produksjon av 'Peer Gynt' (1994) og utfremført hans gitarkvintett (2004).

Siden midten av 2000-tallet har Hansakvartetten beskjeftiget seg med Fartein Valens verker. Musikkviteren og Valen-biografen Bjarne Kortsen var en viktig inspirator til dette arbeidet. Prosessen som resulterte i den foreliggende CD-utgivelsen har vært lang og krevende. Samtidig har den ført til en stadig økende forståelse og kjærlighet til Fartein Valens musikk, som Hansakvartetten ønsker å dele med sine lyttere.

Hilde Haraldsen Sveen avla sin konserteksamen ved Hochschule der Künste, Berlin 1994. Hun har siden den gang hatt sentrale roller ved en rekke europeiske operahus. Hun debuterte i 2001 i rollen som Gilda ved Den Norske Opera og har siden den gang hatt flere hovedroller der. Hennes allsidighet har gjort henne til en ettertraktet sanger i så vel oratorie-, konsert- og romancesammenheng, og hun har flere CD-utgivelser bak seg med norsk musikk, og arbeider som førsteamannensis i sang ved Griegakademiet – Institutt for musikk.

Blu-ray is the first domestic format in history that unites theatre movies and music sound in equally high quality. The musical advantage is the high resolution for audio, and the convenience for the audience as one single player will handle music, films, DVD-collection and your old library of traditional CD.

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authoring **Martin Seer** • project management **Stefan Bock**
Blu-ray producers **Morten Lindberg** and **Stefan Bock**

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This recording was made by Lindberg Lyd AS with DPA microphones, Millennia Media amplifiers and SPHYNX2 converters to a PYRAMIX workstation. Digital Extreme Definition is a professional audio format that brings "analogue" qualities in 24 bit at 352.8 kHz sampling rate. DXD preserves 8.4672 Mbit/s per channel linear PCM.

Note on Low Frequency Effect channel: For SACD and FLAC audio files, all six channels (including the Lfe channel) are calibrated for equal playback levels. However, in the audio streams for the Blu-ray the Lfe channel is lowered by -10dB in the mastering process, anticipating a +10dB elevation in cinema-style home theatre playback.