

Ketil Bjørnstad

Terje Rypdal

Life in Leipzig

ECM 2052
175 5891

ECM

Ketil Bjørnstad, piano

Terje Rypdal, guitar

The Sea V	8:01
Ketil Bjørnstad	
The Pleasure Is Mine, I'm Sure	5:28
Terje Rypdal	
The Sea II	7:29
Ketil Bjørnstad	
Flotation And Surroundings	6:42
Ketil Bjørnstad	
Easy Now	4:35
Terje Rypdal	
Notturmo (fragment)	1:01
Edvard Grieg	
Alai's Room	1:38
Ketil Bjørnstad	
By The Fjord	3:06
Ketil Bjørnstad	
The Sea IX	5:23
Ketil Bjørnstad	
Le Manfred/Foran Peisen	5:10
Terje Rypdal	
The Return Of Per Ulv	5:20
Terje Rypdal	



Photo: Matthias Creutziger

Touring with Terje

With the formation of The Sea quartet in 1994, Manfred Eicher proposed a new creative arena for Terje Rypdal, David Darling, Jon Christensen and myself. We had six years of improvisational exchanges together, and I recognised that my group music would never be the same again. But the quartet was difficult to administer, with David living in the U.S. and the other three of us working continually with different ensembles. So Terje suggested we form a duo, building on what we had experienced with the quartet, but also bringing in some new elements from his and my latest productions. When we launched the duo, in the small but lively Belleville jazz-club in Oslo in 1999, we didn't know that this constellation would become our main touring focus in the years ahead, taking us from Taiwan to Canada, from Italy to the Shetlands, from Lanzarote to the North of Norway.

For me it was a deep pleasure to work this way with Terje. Since my days as mainly a classical pianist, I'd always found the duo format the most agreeable – as I also do in 'real' life. Meeting persons face to face is always challenging. The communication is so direct, and the musical ideas are so easily adapted by the receiver. There is nothing to disturb the dialogue. Even socializing as three, makes talking – or making music – more difficult.

Pleasure in the work was also intensified by my pure and lifelong fascination with the electric guitar. Even if I barely knew who the Beatles were, after two years among long-haired fellow

pupils howling odd songs in the schoolyard, I understood that the five year elder Terje Rypdal, at the same school where I would later experience some of the nightmares of growing-up, was a rock'n'roll hero, playing the hell out of his instrument. And when I, some years later, listened to his first album "Bleak House", I had serious thoughts about my own classical music career, at that time preparing for Bartók's 3rd with the Oslo Philharmonic. Perhaps I was already then, unconsciously, hearing the soundscape that the electric guitar and the acoustic piano might create together. My very first recordings for Philips were anyway always heavily orchestrated for the guitar.

But Terje was soon absorbed in his celebrated association with Manfred Eicher, and even if I often used the same recording studio as they did, and often said hello to them at Oslo's Club 7, where musicians from all over the world would congregate, it was not until 1989 that I dared approach Terje for a collaboration ... He was friendly and encouraging, even if he said he had no time then. When I tried my luck again in 1992, he said yes, and performed my kind-of-a-guitar-concerto "Vandring mot havet" in Rosendal, on the west coast of Norway. It was a thrilling experience. Terje decided that this music should be presented for Manfred, and I still recall the atmosphere of that late October evening, when we sat in the bar at the West Hotel in Oslo, making our first preparations for "Water Stories". I felt the special

rapport between these old friends, who had experienced “Afric Pepperbird”, “Waves” and “After The Rain” together, and felt privileged to be a part of their musical plans.

Fifteen years and five ECM albums later, Terje is now the musician with whom I’ve worked most extensively, even if we both have been occupied with many different projects along the way. The touring with Terje has given our partnership musical continuity, and after so many concerts, it is a pleasure to write these liner-notes, knowing that the recording from Leipzig is also a document of our special connection to ECM, of a shared fascination for melodies and soundscapes, and of a close friendship which has found its expression in airports, on long-haul flights, in dressing-rooms, on the stage, and in late night hotel bars. Touring with Terje is always talking with Terje.

The 14th October 2005 started very early for both of us. For Terje to reach the first flight from Molde to Oslo, he has to get up at five o’clock. Then it is a taxi to the ferry-dock over slippery and narrow roads, then the ferry across the fjord, a second taxi to the small airport, all the check-in-troubles that the fear of terrorism has inflicted upon us, and then the flight to Oslo Airport Gardemoen, where I always meet him at our special meeting point close to Gate 44. I was also in early from Bunnefjorden, close to Oslo, that morning, since our flight to Frankfurt was an early one, with much transit-time before the commuter flight to Leipzig.

These morning conversations with Terje are always very intense, and also filled with many of his incredible jokes. As we sit on our respective aisle seats in the plane’s cabin, it can be difficult for the stewardesses to pass between us, when Terje leans his head towards me and begins talking about Norwegian politics – all the betrayals and the fabrications of diverse politicians and ministers. He always updates me on the progress of his ever-lasting crime-novel plot “Weekend Killer”, in which, every weekend, a famous Norwegian politician is bumped off, mostly on account of his lies.

Terje lives on the very edge of Norway, with big mountains, fjords, deer and much wild-life and nature all around him. He has strong feelings for this special country. When he speaks of it I often feel that he is a much more literary person than me, even if I actually write the novels. He has also an obsession with detail. Look at the titles of his compositions over the years: there are some short-stories hidden behind many of them.

Reaching Leipzig after six to seven hours in airplanes and airports, we have to go directly to the soundcheck. Terje is, at this time of the day, always very concerned with the practical details. Will his favourites, the Vox AC30-amplifiers, be on stage tonight? We enter the Opera House two hours before the concert. I think we both feel drained of energy at this point. We are not the big tuxedo-stars, driven in from a luxury-hotel nearby.

We are the hard working “Melodic warriors”, as Terje says; fighting, year after year, for our improvised, but melodic based music, on different stages. Tonight it is Leipzig. Bach was in Leipzig. The young Edvard Grieg was in Leipzig. We recognise the festival atmosphere in the building.

So many people everywhere. Terje says hello to his friends in the band Oregon, who will perform the same evening. Then we enter the stage. Terje puts up his pedals and checks out the guitar and the connections, while I wait for the tuner to be ready with the Bösendorfer. When he is finished, I ask him if he thinks the instrument will hold the tuning during the concert. I am not always the softest pianist, and especially not when I am working with Terje. The tuner says he thinks it will be fine. Yes, fine. On Terje’s part of the stage, it is also fine. We go to the dressing room with a good feeling. The energy is back. We like the building. We like the sound. We like the people. Terje has something more to tell me about his crime-plot. There is always much talk about music. Terje suggests that I should start the concert with the incredible lower strings of the Bösendorfer.

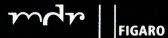
And couldn’t I play some Grieg in between? I agree. The promotor knocks on the door. Then it is time. Then everything can happen. Then it is “Life in Leipzig”.

Ketil Bjørnstad



Recorded live by MDR, October 14, 2005
during the Leipziger Jazztage
Recording producer: Christian Cerny
Engineer: Matthias Sachers
Mastering: Rainbow Studio, Oslo
Photos: Arne Reimer
Design: Sascha Kleis
Executive producer: Manfred Eicher

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