

# SEONVEH KETIL HVOSLEF MUSIC FOR GUITAR

### STEIN-ERIK OLSEN GUITAR



GUITAR QUINTET · DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR FLUTE, GUITAR AND STRING ORCHESTRA · SIX PIECES FOR SIX STRINGS · SEONVEH

## KETIL HVOSLEF

#### Guitar Quintet (2004) 27:23

- 1 Movement I 06:35
- 2 Movement II 04:30
- 3 Movement III 03:35
- 4 Movement IV 05:33
- 5 Movement V 08:10

#### 6 SEONVEH for three guitars (2011) 17:52

#### 7 Double Concerto for Flute, Guitar and String Orchestra (1977) 19:57

#### Six Pieces For Six Strings (1966) 11:11

8 | Vivace 01:14 9 | Adagio 01:57 10 | Andantino 02:18

11 IV Moderato 02:09

12 V Lento 01:32

13 VI Animato 02:01

## STEIN-ERIK OLSEN, GUITAR

Gro Sandvik, flute (track 7)

Egil Haugland, guitar · Njål Vindenes, guitar (track 6)

Elise Båtnes, violin · Daniel Dalnoki, violin · Ida Bryhn, viola · Torunn Stavseng, cello (track 1-5)

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra · Christian Eggen, conductor (track 7)

# SEONVEH

## KETIL HVOSLEF MUSIC FOR GUITAR

Ketil Hvoslef's music for guitar has been written over a number of years. Like many twentieth century composers Hvoslef became fascinated by the instrument's versatility and timbres. As a result his work with the guitar has been to explore its ensemble possibilities. whether with string quartet, string orchestra, or in the unusual context of composing for three guitars. The result is an extraordinary synthesis of colours. textures, musical ideas, and totally original melodic and harmonic concepts. In the process Hyoslef has imparted to the guitar a distinctive Nordic voice unique in itself.

The Guitar Quintet (2004) in five movements begins with a plaintive song from the guitar set against the gentle accompaniment of strings. One of Hvoslef's characteristic that emerges here is the repeated note often cleverly deployed over ingenious harmonic progressions. Plucked and bowed strings are perfectly integrated, each at ease with its partners. At times the strings seem to caress the guitar as if protecting its poignant expressiveness. But with Bartok pizzicato and strumming effects from the guitar, the instrument proves it can have its own kind of assertiveness.

The slow movement that follows is a deeply felt poem in sound with the guitar, using mandolin-like tremolo effects over the mournful strings as if nostalgic for a more southern clime. The third movement is enigmatic, beginning with fragmented passages against a quiet accompaniment.

But this dissolves into complex rhythmic patterns and more repeated notes from the strings leading to frenetic chords and agitated strumming from the guitar. Towards the end the guitar plays in the higher register moving through various modulations till arriving at a more serene ending.

The fourth movement begins with a staccato guitar punctuating the sustained accompaniment of the strings in plaintive progression. The texture changes when the viola is given a repeated note accompaniment of bell-like intensity. For the first time we hear the singing tone of the first violin. The guitar ends the section with bird-like chirpings high up on the instrument.

The fifth movement has a march-like quality, while against the ticking clock regularity of the pulse the guitar weaves little cross-rhythms in thirds and sixths. Then the quartet perform in strident unison before a quieter episode intercedes. But the guitar breaks from this into agitated semiquavers and before long the march insistently resumes, with rhythmic embellishments across the steady beat. But it is not long before agitation returns and at this point all the partners in the ensemble are at full stretch as they explode into a breathless, headlong finale.

SEONVEH utilizes the initials of the three guitarists for whom it was composed (Stein-Erik Olsen, Njål Vindenes and Egil Haugland). The work, written in one movement, begins mysteriously, the three instruments moving together in dark harmonies. But gradually the momentum builds up. In a piu mosso section the quitars create further suspense with pizzicato effects but this gives way to a mood where each guitar has its own separate part. This develops into a chordal part full of its own strange tension as if calm before the storm. Sure enough the serenity is broken in an exciting three part outbreak which culminates in an extended tremolo episode marked *quasi niente*. This is contrasted against an interlude where the lower notes of the guitar are exploited, followed by the first use of harmonics in the work, an ethereal sound which gives way to chattering by the three guitars in excited chorus, almost as if arguing among themselves. Order is eventually restored in a passage marked dolce. where guitars two and three are played in slow triplets against the quiet urgings of the treble. But such sweetness cannot last for long and more pizzicato and harmonics effects gently recaptures the momentum. The harmonics become more urgent, once again signalling impending turmoil.

The finale begins at a fairly low dynamic level but the intensity quickly grows and a quote from the beginning of the development in the fourth movement of Mozart's Symphony, No. 40, sets the trio off into fascinating fugal flights before the outburst of strumming which ends the piece with an almost orchestral intensity.

The Double Concerto for Flute. Guitar and Strings, completed in 1977, was imagined by the composer as a love affair between flute and quitar. This scenario provides an extra dimension to the music. The work begins with tentative gestures between flute and guitar followed by an excited orchestral interlude. The interchange between the two principal instruments grows closer in imitative fondness. Eventually the guitar sets off on its own, supported by light strings and we wait for the flute to join in. A duet between the two follows. The duo conversation grows more elaborate while the orchestra remains quietly supportive. The tempo increases until a passage of rapid triplet semiguavers which inspires the orchestra into a spasm of activity. An extended duet follows with the orchestra increasingly participating. A quieter episode intervenes with pizzicato guitar and a meditative flute part.

We hear several snatches here of the composer's repeated note patterns as the music enters a labyrinth of intricacy with all partners in the music fully engaged. The momentum of the music intensifies. A quieter passage follows with a guitar cadenza lightly backed by the orchestra as if contemplating all that has happened. The guitar then takes off on an episode of rapid triplets marked accel. al a tempo (poco rubato) leading to a straightforward duet between flute and guitar, where the orchestra remains innocently subdued.

The duet begins almost shyly but soon picks up in an irresistible tenderness of being together. A bitter-sweet solo from the flute expresses both the ecstasy and sadness of love with gentle accompanying touches from the guitar though this gives way after a few bars. The orchestra intervene with slightly agitated activity until the guitar joins in again and we wait for the flute's arrival shortly after, announced by a guitar harmonic. The orchestra repeats a two note chord till developing into a full dramatic chorus increasing in momentum. When flute and guitar intervene they play in perfect unison though the underlying chorus is uneasy. The finale becomes meditative, ending in quiet ambiguity, the resolution of passion and fulfilment.

Six Pieces For Six Strings, composed in 1966, is a series of tone studies. Each movement has its own mood and texture and each explores the guitar's expressive possibilities. Thus the first piece, marked *Vivace*, uses both the bass and high notes of the guitar, the *Adagio* is an introspective poem, and the *Andantino* is a kind of tribute to the early nineteenth century guitarists who wrote many arpeggio studies with highlighted melodic notes in the treble.

Moderato, fourth in the sequence, delights in the guitar's capability to produce exquisite harmonics. The composer also contrasts these sonorities with non-harmonic sounds. Lento is a two-part invention exploring intricate modulations. The final Animato uses characteristic guitar idioms to create a tapestry of arpeggiated patterns.

Graham Wade

# KETIL HVOSLEF

## INTERVIEWED BY GRAHAM WADE

### GW: First of all, how did you become a composer?

KH: I never intended to be a musician when I was young even though I had violin and piano lessons. Visual art interested me more, and I wanted to see what I might be able to do as a painter. Gradually I realized I was able to do less and less, and finally my canvas was empty. But I didn't leave "visuality" completely. When I compose now I use not only sound but visual experiences as well. I see the musicians with their instruments and wonder how that sound matches with how they look.

#### GW: So where did you study?

KH: I studied first at the Bergen Art Academy. Here I met Inger Bergitte, my future wife. We married in 1961, and in 1962 our first child, Trond arrived. Having a family to support I had to earn some money, so I studied for an organist's diploma at the Bergen Music Conservatoire. Then I was invited to teach at the same college, and that kept us going for sixteen years! In 1964 I started my composer career, and at that time playing keyboard in jazz and rock bands came to an end.

#### GW: You also studied abroad.

KH: Yes, first I went to Stockholm. Then I studied twice in London. Thomas Rayna, a Hungarian, was my first teacher, a very kind and tolerant person. Six or seven years later I studied with Henri Lazarof, a Bulgarian. He looked through my scores and into my eyes, and said, "Promise that you will never write music like this again!" A tough, but also useful, start, as he made me think seriously about what I was

actually doing. Studying with him was a kind of awakening for me even though I didn't change my musical language very much later on.

#### **GW: How old were you then?**

I was twenty-nine at the time. I remember it was extremely cold in London. I couldn't even sit in my room and work. But the composition I wrote was extremely hot! The teacher said he couldn't understand how a Norwegian could write a piece like that!

### GW: So your journey as a composer had begun?

KH: Oh yes, but you must not discover too clearly who you are. You have to go on exploring and try to be conscious about what you do and why you are doing it.

### GW: And did you get commissions to compose during these years?

KH: Well, I wrote my Opus I, which was a concertino for piano and orchestra in 1964, and then I was asked to write a quintet for the Bergen Woodwind Quintet. They first asked my father, who was a great composer, but he had no time to work at this piece so he asked me to do it instead. After that a lot of commissions came in. One of the most interesting was *Mi-Fi-Li* for symphony orchestra which I wrote in 1971. This was a commission from my wife who wanted a piece for orchestra!

### GW: I believe that around this time you changed your name to Hvoslef?

KH: Yes. By 1979 I had built up some kind of reputation for my work but it was becoming confusing as my father was a composer and we couldn't have two composers of the same name in a small country like Norway. So I changed my name from Sæverud to Hvoslef, gave up my teaching post and worked full-time in composing.

## GW: I'd like to ask some questions about your guitar music. Let's start with the *Double Concerto.*

KH: Well, as you know this is for flute, guitar and string orchestra. I wrote it in 1977. I thought flute and guitar would be a very romantic combination so I wrote as if it was a kind of love affair between the two instruments. But there were consequences - the flautist and guitarist really did fall in love and things ended unhappily. It was all rather a disaster. We say in Norway 'Never challenge destiny'. I learned that you have to be careful. And I had not been careful! But it's a true story!

# GW: It's an amazing story! Certainly adds to the drama of the music! How about the work for three guitars with its somewhat mysterious title of SEONVEH?

KH: The title of the piece refers to the initials of the three performers for whom I

wrote the composition, Stein-Erik Olsen, Njål Vindenes and Egil Haugland.

## GW: Was it strange writing for three guitars when you as a composer do not play the guitar?

KH: It was a completely new experience to write for three guitars, as well as producing a very special sound. I was so fortunate to have three very good guitarists who all play very differently as individuals. For me this was wonderful because I had a far broader landscape to work in. I was working not only with different personalities but with different guitars. These three guitarists were also my pupils once so I had known them before this came along. That's why I jumped into the job immediately because I knew they were such excellent musicians.

This was one of my most inspiring commisions and the work went along very well. In fact it went so well that after some time I had made sketches for more than half an hour of music. As the

commission was for a work of only fifteen minutes, I had to choose. The musicians assisted me decisively by practicing all my sketches! – a dream for a composer! I could then hear what really would work, and what would not. SEONVEH was finished in the summer of 2011.

### GW: Are you writing any new pieces at the moment?

KH: Yes, some weeks ago I stayed in Texas and heard a mockingbird for the first time. The nightingale is nothing compared with this bird. One single mockingbird can imitate more than thirty other birds! An extraordinary bird which inspires me to try to make extraordinary music in my coming opus, *The Mocking Bird*.

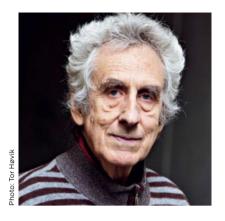
### GW: So your long journey as a composer continues, perhaps stronger than ever?

KH: Well, I keep on exploring and that's why I'm still working and why composers often say they are working on the same piece all their life!

Stein-Erik would like to thank Ricardo Odriozola for his work with the interpretation of the guitar trio, SEONVEH. His presence and assistance in the final rehearsals both before the recording session and during the

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recording was most inspiring and of immense value.



**Ketil Hvoslef** (b. 1939) studied at the Music Conservatory in Bergen, from which he graduated as an organist in 1962. He continued his composition studies in Stockholm with Blomdahl and Lidholm, and in London with Raina and Lazarof. From 1963-79 he taught theory at the Music Conservatory in Bergen and throughout the years has inspired and composed for a number of contemporary ensembles in Bergen. His compositions include dramatic scores for theatre and television, a wide range of orchestral music, many concertos, a quantity of chamber- and vocal music, and many instrumental pieces. He has received considerable acclaim and was awarded the

Norwegian work of the year prize on four occasions. He was composer in residence at the Bergen International Festival in 1990.



Stein-Erik Olsen (b.1953) studied at the Bergen Conservatory of Music and the Norwegian State Academy of Music. His teachers have included Alexandre Lagova, at the Paris Conservatoire and the Czech pianist, Jiri Hlinka. Stein-Erik Olsen's international career began in 1974, when he represented Norway in the Expo Norr Festival, Sweden. Since then he's performed at many overseas festivals and toured extensively, appearing on radio and television throughout Europe, Great Britain, India and Korea.

In 1986 his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, won great praise from the critics and his subsequent recordings have been similarly well received. Stein-Erik Olsen has had compositions dedicated to him by many eminent composers including works by Ketil Hvoslef, Olav Berg, Noel Zahler, John Duarte, Nikita Koshkin and Stepan Rak, featured in his recordings for Simax. Stein-Erik Olsen is currently professor of guitar at The Grieg Academy - University of Bergen (Norway).



**Egil Haugland** (b. 1959) is a guitarist, luthier and associate professor at Bergen University College. In addition to solo recordings he has participated in numerous recording projects with major artists in Norway. A luthier since 2000, Haugland has produced a television documentary on making and playing classical guitars. He has made several instruments with the great guitar maker José Luis Romanillos. In this recording of Seonveh, Haugland guitars are used by Njål Vindenes and Egil Haugland.



Niål Vindenes (b. 1957). Associate Professor with the Gried Academy and Bergen University College, Norway, has performed a large repertoire of solo and chamber works for guitar. He premiered many new works, and is an avid performer of contemporary music. He also plays the basso continuo on theorbo and baroque guitar and is fond of traditional and romantic guitar music. Niål Vindenes has released several recordings.



Gro Schibsted Sandvik (b. 1942) is professor of Music Performance at the Grieg Academy, University of Bergen. Her distinct philosophy of music and flute playing was derived from Professor Beyer, and private studies with Marcel Moyse. She served as principal flute of the Bergen Philharmonic from 1967 until 2005, and previously held the same post with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. From 1967 she has been a member of the Bergen Woodwind Quintet. In 1995 she was Visiting Guest Artist in residence at the University of Minnesota. She has conducted master classes throughout

Europe and the USA, and is often engaged as an adjudicator. Gro has held positions on several committees dedicated to Norwegian musical education and performance. Between 2006 and 2007 she was Visiting Professor of Flute at both the University of Iowa and in 2012 at Western Michigan University. Her articles on flute playing in wind bands are widely recognized and she is a sought-after guest lecturer and flute educator. Gro Sandvik is an Honorary Member of the Norwegian Flute Society and the Bergen Chamber Music Society. In 2012 she was awarded the King´s Medal of Merit. Gro Sandvik has recorded extensively with the Bergen Woodwind Quintet, as well as with guitarist Stein-Erik Olsen and pianist Einar Røttingen.

#### **Norwegian Chamber Orchestra**

Since its formation in 1977 the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra has established itself as one of the foremost chamber orchestras in the international classical music scene. The orchestra's international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have received outstanding reviews at many of the world's prestigious concert halls and festivals. With nearly 40 recordings to date, the NCO has recorded comprehensive chamber orchestra repertoire with distinguished soloists, including Leif Ove Andsnes, Terje Tønnesen, Iona Brown, Lars Anders Tomter and Tine Thing Helseth.

The orchestra draws on an enviable roster of distinguished Norwegian and international soloists and is dedicated to presenting contemporary music as part of its concert repertoire. In this endeavour, the NCO continually commissions and premieres new works from composers around the world. The NCO currently presents its own concert series at the University Aula, Oslo, and performs in major concert venues in the capital in addition to organizing regular tours to many regions of Norway. The artistic directors and guest leaders throughout its history have been Iona Brown, Leif Ove Andsnes and Isabelle van Keulen together with current artistic director Terje Tønnesen, who has held this role since the orchestra's formation in 1977. The NCO is a project orchestra comprised of Norway's finest instrumentalists. Through integrating experienced musicians with talented young instrumentalists, the orchestra continuously develops its unique style and innovative culture, thereby greatly contributing to the international prestige of Norwegian musicians and ensembles. Since 2011, the NCO has worked in close collaboration with Risør Chamber Music Festival and is now orchestra-in-residence at the festival.



Christian Eggen (b. 1957)

When Christian Eggen in 1981 began his conducting career as leader of the Ny Musikk Ensemble, he had already established a highly successful career as a pianist in Norway and abroad. In 1984 he represented Norway at the Biennale for Nordic Soloists, and his recording of Carl Nielsen's piano works was received to great critical acclaim. Christian Eggen made his international breakthrough as a conductor during the World Music Days in 1990 and he rapidly became one of the Nordic countries most prominent conductors. Since 1988 he has been conductor of the Cikada ensemble,

and in 1993 he was appointed artistic director of the Oslo Sinfonietta.

Today he is regarded as one of Europe's finest interpreters of contemporary music and has worked closely with composers such as Morton Feldman, Witold Lutoslawski, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, György Kurtag, Helmut Lachenmann, Kaija Saariaho and Magnus Lindberg. He regularly appears with groups such as the Ensemble Musikfabrik and Ensemble InterContemporain, as well as leading symphony orchestras like the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Stockholm Philharmonic, the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Milan, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London. His own output includes music for film and theatre, chamber music, orchestral works, and electroacoustic compositions and installations.

Principal featured performer at the Bergen International Festival in 1999, he was awarded the Norwegian Music Critics Prize. In 2005 he and the Cikada group received the Nordic Council Music Prize. In 2007 His Majesty King Harald V appointed him Commander of The Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav.

#### THE STRING QUARTET



Elise Båtnes began playing the violin at the age of four and made her first appearance as soloist with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra four years later. She gave her first performance with the Oslo Philharmonic in 1981 at the age of ten when she appeared as soloist in a children's concert conducted by Mariss Jansons. In 1982 she performed again with the Oslo Philharmonic and since then has played as soloist with all the major Norwegian symphony orchestras in numerous countries. As first concert master of the Oslo Philharmonic she continues to appear with leading orchestras and conductors around the world. Over a period of nine years she served as

concert master of the Danish Radio Orchestra and the West German Radio Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. Elise Båtnes has extensive experience in chamber music and has performed at many chamber music festivals together with noted Norwegian pianists such as Leif Ove Andsnes, Håvard Gimse, Sveinung Bjelland and Einar Henning Smebye. She was formerly a member of the award-winning Vertavo String Quartet. In 2008, together with pianist Håvard Gimse, she released the recording Bartók featuring the violin music of Béla Bartók (Simax Classics). In 2010 she participated in recording the clarinet quintets by Mozart and Brahms with the Oslo Philharmonic Chamber Group (LAWO Classics). Elise Båtnes plays an Arditi violin made by A. Stradivari in 1689, on loan from Dextra Musica



**Daniel Dalnoki** studied violin at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo and at the Hochschule für Musik, Dresden, Germany, where he took his Master's Degree. After many years as a freelance artist he became Associate Concertmaster in the Norwegian Opera Orchestra, a position he held for ten years. In 2012 he accepted a post in the first violin section at the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. Daniel Dalnoki is also an active chamber musician playing in various ensembles, such as the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra.



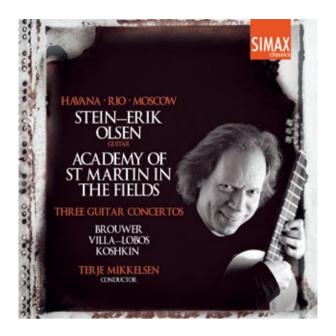
Ida Bryhn, born in Oslo, studied with Soon Mi Chung, Björn Sjögren, Pascal Siffert, Kim Kashkashian and Lars Anders Tomter. She plays principal viola in the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and is regularly invited as a guest principal in major Scandinavian orchestras. Ida has auditioned for principal viola in Philharmonia Orchestra in London and is recognized as a profiled young artist in Norwegian musical life. She is professor at the Royal College of Music, London, and also teaches at Barratt Dues Music Institute and the Norwegian State Academy, Oslo. Ida Bryhn is a keen chamber musician, appearing as soloist and chamber musician throughout Europe

and the USA. She has recorded the chamber music of Mozart and Brahms, and appears on the Norwegian Grammy Award winning label 2L with percussionist Eirik Raude.



**Torun Stavseng** is a cellist interested in a wide span of music, active as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral leader. After studies at Barratt Dues Music Institute, the Hochschule für Musik, Stuttgart, and the Royal College of Music, Stockholm, Torun was awarded the Swedish Royal Academy of Music's honorary prize in 2010 for her performance of Britten's Cello Symphony with the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In the same year she was awarded the Young Swedish Soloist Prize and offered the post of principal cellist of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra where she worked until 2012. She has also performed with the Oslo

Philharmonic Orchestra, the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra and the Oslo Camerata. In 2008 Torun established her duo partnership with Swedish pianist Anna Christensson, with whom she performs extensively across Scandinavia and Europe. In 2012, with the London-based cellists and composers Gregor Riddell and Colin Alexander, Torun formed Tre Voci, which explores music ranging from transcriptions of renaissance choral works to new commissions. Together with violinist Liv Hilde Klokk and violist Ida Bryhn, they formed Trio Virgo, and gave performances of Mozart s Divertimento for string trio, a work they have recorded on the 2L label.



"Opulent sound beautifies Olsen's guitar in Brouwer's dramatic Concerto Elegiaco and the florid Villa-Lobos."

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE, MARCH 2015

"Stein-Erik Olsen...is perfectly cast: his playing throughout the disc is clean, controlled and thoughtful... unfailingly pleasant."

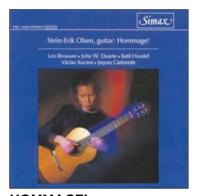
INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW, MARCH 2015

"Olsen's customary thoughtful, lapidary playing is perfectly complemented by a very much on-form Academy of St Martin in the Fields under the Norwegian conductor Terje Mikkelsen, the whole vividly captured by Simon Kiln and Arne Akselberg in the Abbey Road Studio."

WILLIAM YEOMAN: GRAMOPHONE FEBRUARY 2015

"His playing is exceptionally polished, as is the luscious accompaniment provided by the ASMF. Balance and sound quality are quite simply ravishing. This imaginatively programmed, winningly played disc comes highly recommended."

PHILLIP SCOTT: FANFARE USA MAY/JUNE 2015



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L'ESPACE ENTRE NOUS SIMAX | PSC 1268 2010



SONGS & DANCES SIMAX | PSC 1084 1991



**3-WAY PROJECT** SIMAX | PSC 1253 2005



SEONVEH and Six pieces for six strings. Recorded 9 – 11 June 2014 in Vaksdal kirke. Producers; Arne Akselberg and Stein-Erik Olsen. Balance engineer and editor Arne Akselberg.

Guitar Quintet and Double Concerto for flute, guitar and string orchestra.

Recorded 1 - 4 October 2014 in Lommedalen kirke.

Producer and editor Simon Kiln.

Balance engineer Arne Akselberg.

Mixed and edited at Abbey Road Studios.

Ketil Hvoslef was present in the studio during the entire recording session. His comments, wonderful humor and musical input was crucial for the recording.

Liner notes: Graham Wade

Photo: Hans Knut Sveen Cover design: Martin Kvamme

Released with support from: Norsk Kulturråd, Fond For Lyd og Bilde, Fond For Utøvende Kunstnere, Bergen Kommune – seksjon for kunst og kultur, Norsk Komponistforening, Griegakademiet – Institutt for musikk, UiB















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## KETIL HVOSLEF

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## STEIN-ERIK OLSEN, GUITAR

Gro Sandvik, flute
Egil Haugland, guitar · Njål Vindenes, guitar
Elise Båtnes, violin · Daniel Dalnoki, violin · Ida Bryhn, viola · Torunn Stavseng, cello
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra · Christian Eggen, conductor

Stein-Erik Olsen preforms on a Daniel Friederich guitar, especially made for him (No. 821 Année 2008)

**Mixed at Abbey Road Studios** 





