

SCULPTED SOUND

THE MUSICIANS

THE INSTRUMENTS



VON DER LIPPE
RECORDS



Photo: Paal Audestad

TIMBRE – THE SOUL OF MUSIC

For the listener, timbre is the soul of music.

Timbre has individuality, is always unique, and is created in it's meeting with the listener.

Timbre reaches me in a room, touches me, overwhelms me, and surrounds me.

Timbre is created when a person plays on an instrument. Different musicians can tease different timbres out of the same instrument.

An arsenal of timbres lay hidden away in the instrument, waiting to be liberated by the hands and breath that push the tones out.

KLANGEN – MUSIKKENS SJEL

For den som lyttar er klangen musikkens sjel.

Klangen har individualitet, er alltid unik og blir til i eit møte med den som lyttar.

Klangen når meg i eit rom, rører meg, overveldar meg og omsluttar meg.

Klangen blir til når eit menneske spelar på instrumentet. Ulike musikarar kan lokke fram ulike klanger på same instrument.

Eit arsenal av klanger ligg løynt i instrumentet og ventar på å bli forløynt av hendene og pusten som driv tonane fram.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edvard Hoem". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter 'E' being particularly large and stylized.

Edvard Hoem

ARVE TELLEFSEN

Ole Bull: En moders bøn

Ole Bull said that he envisioned a mother who prayed for her children when he created this piece after a stay in a cloister outside of Florence. I attempt to interpret this piece with a tonal quality that is warm, yet not bothersome. It is hard to put into words what happens on the way from the written music to the moment when the music resonates in the room. I moved beyond the notes long ago, and I interpret the piece differently each time. This is the way it is with everything that I perform. I play the way I feel in the moment.

I have had a close working relation with Jacob von der Lippe over the course of many years. It is a pleasure to be a part of this project, and it will hopefully demonstrate that wonderful instruments are created in our own time, and that Jacob von der Lippe is an outstanding creator of fine instruments.



Arve Tellefsen on Galdhøpiggen



VIOLIN • 2019 copy of

Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù' • 1742 "Tellefsen"

I sent Arve Tellefsen a letter more than twenty years ago after seeing him play an outdoor concert at the Holmenkollen Ski Jump in Oslo. The rain was pouring down, and as a young violin maker I was more worried about his valuable violin than anything else. I proposed making a twin of his 'del Gesù' violin which he could use for outdoor concerts. Two years later, after many hundred hours of painstaking work, I was able to deliver the violin. In the process, I got to know this beautiful violin from one of the best Cremonese makers of all time. In 2018 Arve sent me a photo where he was playing the violin I made for him on the summit of Galdhøpiggen (elevation 2469 m), the highest mountain in Norway. He had carried the violin on his back all the way, just like Ole Bull did when he played on the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza in 1876 (height 138 m).

Making an exact copy means that every single part of the original has to be reproduced with a tolerance of 0,1 mm. Even the neck must be cut off and grafted to the pegbox, just like the original. One of the most challenging tasks is to copy the varnish. Obviously, the original has a lot of wear and patina over more than 250 years of playing. To replicate the ground and varnish is no small feat. As the years passed by, Arve asked me to make a second copy of his Guarneri, which I was happy to deliver in 2019. It has been a privilege to serve a living legend like Arve Tellefsen.

MATIAS JENTOFT

Improvisation, Duo Pleni sunt coeli, Partita nr 3 - Preludio

My contribution on this recording was not so much playing with the nuances of my specific instrument, but rather expanding the concept of the instrument's resonance to encompass the reverberating space of a tomb of a bygone artist. In the Partita by Bach, the crisp sixteen notes of von der Lippe's violin are transformed from the clear triad feel of the original piece into an impressionistic painting of sound, while the non-chromatic parts stand out as pure towers of majesty. This is perhaps not what the composer had in mind originally.

The improvisational track is a bath in the sonic pool which is the room. Everything is present on the recording: the instruments, the walls, and even the audience. The wide spectrum of timbre and volume is allowed to flourish through the microphones and out through your speakers. This makes this track the most special to me.



VIOLIN · 2016

Personal 'von der Lippe' model

Violin making today is a craft closely related to the period spanning from 1550 to 1750. Often, when looking at violins made in our time; whether it is violin making competitions, international workshops, friendly encounters between colleagues or just surfing violin making sites on Internet, it is striking how many violins today look much like one another. Compare that to what our Italian predecessors did 300 years ago. Back then, there was a tremendous amount of diversity. You could find different styles and artistic outputs from one Italian city to the next. Many of these makers were trained with the same starting point from a certain school or maker. But often went on to create something personal and easily recognizable during their professional careers.

In the same way as the old Italian makers, we should search for our own unique style. How are our violins perceived today? Well, by our colleagues, mostly by eye. And our clients? Mostly by what they hear. Making a personal model demands courage.

Having worked with classical patterns like Stradivari and Guarneri for more than ten years, I felt eager to try something new. I had met François Denis, a French violin maker and author of the book «Traité de Lutherie». His book inspired me to start drawing my own personal model. I tried to figure out a model that gave a balanced, full bodied and projecting sound. For me, this is a work of intuition. After having made a certain number of instruments, you develop a gut feeling for what works. This is, of course, also based on the feedback from many musicians along the way. I am privileged to see nearly all my instruments on a regular basis, and this gives me valuable information on how they evolve. This is a crucial point for all violin makers. I always ask the musicians for their positive and negative feedback. The constructive input on what to improve, is my guiding light.

KAJA ROGERS

Improvisation, Duo Pleni sunt coeli, Partita nr 2 - Allemande

In this recording, the acoustics and very long reverb of the Mausoleum made it a special experience. We had to spend a lot of time in the room before the concert, to understand which repertoire would suit the occasion. The fact that the room was almost pitch dark, and the public placed in the middle, we could experiment with our own placement in relation to each other.

We had to make more drastic choices how to perform these pieces, compared with a more traditional interpretation. So many musical elements have to work together when the room acts as the third instrument. We also used improvisation to get to know the room. Listening to the improvisation on this recording was an interesting experience. Because as a musician you're absorbed in the moment and your own playing, and it's hard to listen at a distance.

The way I played the violin and interpreted the music had to adapt to the room, more so than I usual. Especially with the timing, sometimes the sound had to ring across the room before starting the next phrase. On the other hand some musical passages worked better with the successive chords, even if not intended that way by the composer.



VIOLIN • 2004 inspired by

Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù' • 1741 "Kochanski"

In 2000, my final year in Cremona, I set out to choose a 'del Gesù' model which I could use in the following years. Guarneri's instruments went from a fairly classic Cremonese approach in the beginning of his career to a rougher and more spontaneous style which characterizes his later years. For me, the "Kochanski" from 1741 combined these two aspects in a delicate and stylish way. This model created the basis for many of the violins I made until 2010. Using the same violin as a starting point for many years makes it easier to improve and take small steps forward with every instrument. At least that is the goal.

This model favors a well-balanced sound with clarity and a wonderful G string. The back is made in one piece of flamed maple combined with a top in Italian spruce from Val d'Ega cut in 1997. The ribs and scroll are made of Canadian maple, an unusual choice for me as a maker. Most of the maple I use is of European origin. Kaja's contribution to this recording is highly praised, as those who were privileged to be present in the Emanuel Vigeland Mausoleum that evening can attest. Luckily, we have this recording.



ANNE STINE DAHL

Ernest Bloch: From Jewish Life, Prayer

Ernest Bloch's Prayer tells me a story and transports me to a special state of mind. The piece is insistent on communicating with me. First and foremost, Prayer encompasses a wide range of emotions and expressions of widely differing character, spanning a range from powerful and decisive to the delicate and introspective.

Here it is possible to find peace and warmth as well as extroverted and forceful music that takes the cello from its deepest register and up to the most expressive and soloistic range of the instrument. The instrument that I play has power, strength and volume, but also a warmth of tone that I deeply appreciate. The instrument sets no boundaries on my performance, and opens up a wide range of possibilities for interpreting Bloch's music.



Photo: Elin Eike Worren



CELLO · 2017

Personal 'von der Lippe' model

In 2013 I decided to make my own cello model, having made mostly Montagnana and Ruggeri models in the past. Being a cellist myself also helped in this process. Soundwise, the goal was to combine the upper register of the Stradivari with the lower strings of the Montagnana. First, I analyzed all the cellos I had made up to that date and figured out what kind of sound I wanted to achieve. From that point, I established the length, width and vibrating string length.

Making my own model took courage. I was basically putting my head on the block by trying to stand out of the crowd. Now, after many years, it feels quite liberating. When it comes to varnish, my goal is to make an instrument with a full, non-antiqued varnish with an organic and lively look to it. That is maybe the biggest challenge of all. Great wood is the best starting point. After that comes the way in which I work the wood. An easy pitfall is to leave too much structure and too many toolmarks on the surface. This is a delicate balancing act. Leaving too many marks will make your instrument look like a caricature. On the other hand, if the surface is too smooth or clean, you will lose the liveliness. Most importantly, all the stylistic and aesthetic choices have to fit together as a whole. I finish every surface with scrapers. Sandpaper is only allowed on the neck and the edges to some degree.

Anne Stine's cello is the third cello of my personal models. It was an immense pleasure to hear her play it on this recording, accompanied by her husband Anders on the old Steinway piano at Frogner Hovedgård.

HILDE KOLSTAD HUSE

Sergei Prokofiev: Sonata for two violins, Op. 56

This work uses a wide range of the instrument's tonal possibilities, and the room acts as an extra resonating body outside of the instrument. The room and the audience become a part of the total sonic experience. For me, a concert is a snapshot because of the unique whole that is created there and then. It will never be quite the same when performed again. This particular concert was performed during the pandemic and was important to me because of the spontaneous musical meeting that only occurs during a live concert. This recording then becomes an entry into the music, the room and a listening experience where two violins, both made by Jacob von der Lippe, play together.



VIOLIN · 2009 inspired by

Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù' · 1741 "Kochanski"

This violin was violin number seven that I made on the "Kochanski" Guarneri model. Hilde got in touch with me after having tried out a similar model played by a friend of hers. This violin has a two-piece bookmatched maple back which I bought in Cremona in 1997, and a top in Italian spruce from the same year.

I still find varnishing to be a big challenge every time and use my own self-cooked oil varnish. If the surface is finished correctly, a good varnish should highlight all the interesting aspects of the instrument. The goal is to sand or rub the coats as little as possible. The structure of the wood should show through, even on the finished surface. Good judgement is needed. A totally dust free environment is hard to find in any workshop, but I find that varnishing in the morning is a good start. Sometimes I use a small scraper to remove particles dried in the fresh varnish. To finish off the last coat of varnish, I try to polish as little as possible so that I can maintain the structure of the surface.

Hearing Hilde playing such a challenging piece together with Maren was a real highlight. A violin duo without a viola or cello creates a special effect for the listener.

MAREN ELLE

Sergei Prokofiev: Sonata for two violins, Op. 56

This composition demands wide variation of dynamics and sound, spanning from the wild and violent hammered chords over four strings to the vulnerable and barely detectable tones when the two violins weave into each other. It was interesting to perform this duet on twin violins. Now, in retrospect, I can be unsure of which one of us is playing, since the two instruments sound so much alike. The music can flow freely from the hands of the musician when the room and the instruments are so responsive. Of course, a musician must also be able to perform under less-than-optimal conditions, but when everything contributes actively to the whole, it's like putting in an extra gear.

I liked the idea of a festival with sound as a common thread running through all the performances, and the feeling of community that comes with everyone playing on instruments made by the same instrument maker. It is an original approach to a concert and recording project. My violin is an extremely specialized and highly valued tool for creating and communicating music, not a collectible or museum piece. For that reason, it is good to be able to showcase one of our contemporary violin makers who follows in a long and proud tradition of accomplished artisans dating all the way back to the seventeenth century.



Photo: Fredrik Blikeng

VIOLIN • 2007 inspired by

Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesù' • 1742 "Alard"

Maren visited my workshop in 2006 when she was a freelancer in Oslo, and decided to put her name on my waiting list after trying some of my violins. The "Alard" is quite wide, giving a nice big "platform" around the bridge area which I think is important for the sound. For this particular violin I chose a narrow-grained piece of Italian Spruce, cut in 1997.

During my studies in Cremona, I joined some violin making friends to find the best quality spruce in the Italian Alps. The journey led us to Val d'Ega and the sawmill in Latemar. We went there in February, when the logs were freshly cut and still laying in the snow. Only the lower part of the tree is used, around four meters long. The logs were separated in two big stacks. Around five hundred logs in one stack intended for house construction. In the other stack, ten logs carefully selected by the highly experienced people working at the sawmill.

These ten logs were chosen because of where in the terrain they had grown, how straight they were, and because they had few knots. Out of those ten logs I chose two; one with wide grain, and the other with a narrower grain used in the construction of Maren's violin. Maren got the violin in 2007 and won an audition in the Norwegian Radio Orchestra in 2010. Maren has been a strong supporter of my work since we first met, in addition to being a wonderful musician and person.



SIGURD IMSEN

Giuseppe Tartini: Sonata in d-minor, B.d4 ("Opus 2", Walsh 1746)

In this performance, I played the baroque violin I commissioned from Jacob in 2010. It has been my instrument of choice ever since. The instrument is closely modelled after the «Lipinski» Stradivarius which was played by Tartini throughout his lengthy career. Most likely from when it was new in 1715 until his death in 1769. Leaning upon contemporary accounts of Tartini's preferred string gauges as well as common knowledge about Stradivari's construction methods and measurements, Jacob has created a violin that both acoustically and idiomatically resembles the instrument Tartini used when performing his own music. This is a matter of great importance, since the idiomatic preconditions of the instrument affect the music – and the performer's delivery – even more than we might realize. Hence, the instrument and its idiom are a conveyor of information about historical practice that cannot be ignored.

The result of Jacob's painstaking work was an instrument with a considerably higher string pressure than we see on modern instruments today. Thicker and tighter strings improve diction and facilitate faster and clearer trills, as well as providing several other technical advantages. A highly strung fiddle offers more resistance, and more strength will be required to play it. The instrument will have better projection, but the sound will also have more of a nasal quality. This may be unfamiliar to our modern taste, but this is the actual type of sound expected and appreciated by the ears of the 18th century. We chose to perform this program in A415 instead of A440, the practice Tartini would have followed in his time. The sound of the present recording is still milder than it would have been. Tartini had an enormous room to fill with his Stradivarius for the 50 years he was employed as principal violinist in St. Anthony's Basilica. We proved that Fagerborg church was no match for Jacob's baroque violin, even with a more relaxed concert pitch!

BAROQUE VIOLIN • 2011 copy of the

Antonio Stradivari • 1715 "Lipinski" ex Tartini

Making a baroque violin is quite different from making a modern violin used today. Crucial parts like the bassbar, soundpost, fingerboard, neck, bridge, tailpiece and strings are all shaped in a different manner to support the final goal, which is the sound. Sigurd had very specific wishes for this violin, and that made it easier for me as a maker to approach this special project. Luckily, we had access to high-quality photos and measurements of the original violin that we used as a point of departure. There are many misconceptions about what a baroque violin should sound like. What we learned through the making of this violin, is that baroque instruments had a greater degree of variation when it came to proportions, personal style and how the instrument was tuned. Sigurd wanted a violin that could be tuned from A415 to A450, which challenged me as a maker. After many years, it is a pleasure to see how this violin keeps evolving and maturing in the hands of a skilled violinist.



A dream comes true

For a short period during the outbreak of Covid, there was a window of opportunity for small and unique music festivals. During that time, I arranged the KLANG:FOKUS festival in Oslo, Norway. The idea was to involve the listener and ask them: "What is sound?" Eight live concerts with musicians playing their own von der Lippe instruments is the backbone of our first live recording, "Sculpted Sound".

A special thanks to everyone involved in this recording. You made the dream come to life.



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Instrument descriptions by Jacob von der Lippe. Translations by Scott Rogers.

Cover photo by Marius Viken • www.vonderlipperecords.com

JACOB VON DER LIPPE

VIOLIN MAKER

I made my first cello at the age of seventeen. Ever since then it's been my main interest and passion.

I trained as a violin maker at the world-famous "Istituto Professionale Internazionale per l'Artigianato Liutario e del Legno 'A. Stradivari' " in Cremona, Italy. My instruments exhibit a sound of warmth, projection and richness of overtones. The sound of a new instrument will develop over time, and I follow this process closely in collaboration with the musicians who perform on my instruments.

My workshop is situated in the center of Oslo. It is there that I make violins, violas and cellos that combine new knowledge with old tradition. The oil varnish, which I make myself, is based on analyses of old Italian varnishes, and I use the best alpine spruce from the Italian Alps for my instruments. In recent years I have been concentrating on developing my own personal instrument models. Leading soloists, orchestral musicians and music students from many countries are currently performing on my instruments.





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