



Asmundsen & Co Gnus

Losen Records LOS 253-2

- 1 **Gnus** 8:52
- 2 **Her** (Aner ikke) 8:40
- 3 **Busken Smoul** 7:43
- 4 **Song for an Absent Piano Player** 5:20
- 5 **Liten Frostmåler** 7:18
- 6 **Oskars Drøm** 6:05
- 7 **In a Dream** 5:18
- 8 **My Boy** 8:04

Total Time 57:20

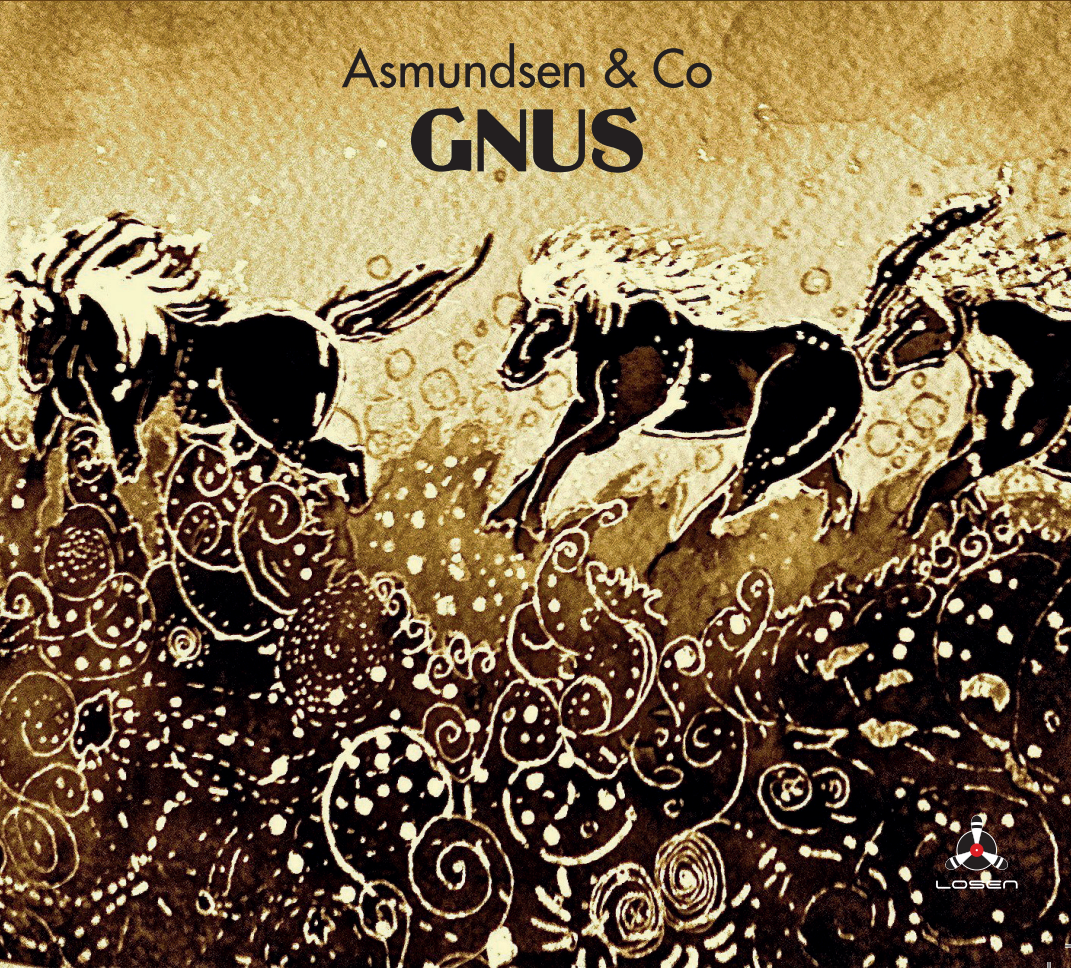
All compositions and arrangements by Vidar Johansen

Vidar Johansen tenor & soprano saxophone
Magnus Aannestad Oseth trumpet, flugelhorn
Rune Klakegg piano
Tine Asmundsen upright bass
Terje Engen drums

Recorded January 8, 2020 by George Helmke at Oslo Konserthus (Lille sal), Norway
Mixed September 11, 2020 by Vidar Lunden at Musikkloftet, Asker, Norway
Mastered October 2020 by Vidar Lunden at Musikkloftet
Produced by Tine Asmundsen and Vidar Johansen
Executive producer Odd Gjelsnes
Front cover is a section of a painting by Mari Rognerud
Inside cover photos by Francesco Saggio
Cover design by design holtmann

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The art of the composer is often overlooked in the history of jazz music. Improvisations, technical facility, the virtuosos aspect of the music is more revered and noticed by critics and audience. But without the structure of a composition, very little is left of the music. Even the free jazz depended on a strong musical line as a starting point for delving into and exploring the outer reach of the instrument, the melodic line, the rhythm.

Vidar Johansen and I have known each other since we both played in the Kongsberg Jazz Festival Big Band Workshop in 1973, him on lead tenor sax, me on second. He was 20, I was 18. Well, I soon found my place on the piano bench, and have stayed there. Since then we have played together in many different musical formations, several of them lasting for a long time.

Vidar's breakthrough band was a pianoless quartet, Balke-Johansen Quartet, with alto saxophonist Erik Balke, bassist Bjørn Kjellemyr and drummer Eyvind Olsen. The composition *My Boy* was premiered by this outfit. When Erik Balke left for studies at Berklee School of Music in Boston, I snuck into the band, which reformed as «Busken Smoul» (named after an obscure Danish nursery rhyme). Two of the songs on this album stem from the repertoire of «Busken Smoul»: *Her (Aner ikke)* [*Here (Clueless)*] and *Busken Smoul*. In my humble opinion *Her (Aner ikke)* is among the greatest Norwegian jazz ballads of all time. For a couple of years I was the happiest of musicians, playing in a band that gave me so much of what I had longed for. But as bassist Bjørn Kjellemyr left for Bergen symphony orchestra, the quartet disbanded.

Vidar Johansen has been one of the finest composers and arrangers in Norwegian jazz since he broke into the jazz scene while still in his teens as a tenor sax player (with an occasional stint at the soprano and the bass claimed). He has never promoted himself much, but often been part of larger musical units with other people at the head. And at these settings he has always seized the opportunity to contribute creatively. His creativity also extends to the titles of his songs, which are often quite mysterious and evocative. With this recording, some of the hidden gems of



When Tine Asmundsen decided to do an album of Vidar's compositions, I had one demand: that we played a song that I remembered hearing at Malla Jazzhouse around 1980. Vidar played with drummer

Espen Rød's «Kribøl» alongside Calle Neumann on alto sax, Jon Balke on piano and Geir Holmsen on bass. I did not know the name of the song, but it had made such an impression on me that I could hum it credibly 40 years later (except that the melodic line in the second part is so convoluted and unbelievable that any effort to sing it correctly premiered by this outfit. When Erik Balke left for studies at Berklee School of Music in Boston, I snuck into the band, which reformed as «Busken Smoul» (named after an obscure Danish nursery rhyme). Two of the songs on this album stem from the repertoire of «Busken Smoul»: *Her (Aner ikke)* [*Here (Clueless)*] and *Busken Smoul*. In my humble opinion *Her (Aner ikke)* is among the greatest Norwegian jazz ballads of all time. For a couple of years I was the happiest of musicians, playing in a band that gave me so much of what I had longed for. But as bassist Bjørn Kjellemyr left for Bergen symphony orchestra, the quartet disbanded.

From 1985 on Vidar and I played together in the quintet «Out to Lunch» (with brother Bjørn Klakegg on guitar, Kneften Kamfjord on bass and Svein «Chrício» Christensen on drums.) From this repertoire Get hold of it if you can!) *4-MENN* LP are Vidar's compositions. (It's great. Saxophone Quartet, 7 out of 11 tracks on their strength shone in his arrangements for the (on baritone sax). Again Vidar's compositional Tore Brunborg, Arne Frang and Vidar Johansen World Saxophone Quartet) consisted of Erik Balke, Lille Frøen Saksofonkvartett (A friendly nod to the

«Chrício» Christensen on drums.) From this repertoire

«Out to Lunch» recorded two albums, one simply named *Out to Lunch*, the other *Kullboksrytter*. The latter album featured the Norwegian String Quartet and also the voice of Sidsel Endresen. Once again Vidar contributed some wonderful compositions for the project, in which we tried to make the string quartet an essential part of the compositions, not just icing on the cake.

stem *Song for an Absent Piano Player* and *Oskars drøm*. The former was later arranged for big band at the request of Mercer Ellington, for use in his band. He had heard the song in Copenhagen, and immediately fell for it. The process of handing over the arrangement consisted of a bottle of Scotch and ample stories about the musicians in his father's orchestra.



Anne Marie Gløtzjuntz quintet was another band where Vidar put his creativity to use, and the composition *In a Dream* originated from that repertoire. In the 1990's Vidar was a part of the composers collective «Søyr», led by Torggrim Solli, a large and

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the Herr Nilsen jazz pub in Oslo.

Asmundsen & Co. Commission. And the collaboration continues with a work commissioned by the Norwegian Cultural label. Among them is *Demons Diversions*, resulting in quite a few albums on Tine's Hazeljazz in Tine Asmundsen's band «Lonely Woman», from the early 2000's. Vidar has been playing

many headed monster of a band, full of ideas and was a part of Bugge Wesselløft's «New Conception of Jazz».

From the early 2000's, Vidar has been playing in Tine Asmundsen's band «Lonely Woman», resulting in quite a few albums on Tine's Hazeljazz label. Among them is *Demons Diversions*, a work commissioned by the Norwegian Cultural Commission. And the collaboration continues with Asmundsen & Co.

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Skien, September 2020
Rune Klakegg

So where does all this leave us? It certainly leaves us with a legacy of great music, and a continuing story of great sound pouring out on his manuscript paper. And it leaves us, his fellow players, with thankfulness for being allowed to contribute to that same magnificent sound!

several pieces for classical musicians. and a lot of others. Vidar is also a fan of 20th century classical music, and has composed Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, the jazz history: Theolonious Monk, Charles Mingus, show a deep connection with the great names of humor and humanity. And likewise his compositions with the audience, the earnestness, craziness, tone, the phrasing, the necessity of communicating of his playing. It is instantly recognisable: the big