

Kismet

Tobias Lindstad Collective





LETTING OURSELVES BE INSPIRED BY EACH OTHER — ON TOBIAS LINDSTAD'S MUSIC

Håvard Enge

There seem to be few subjects that do not interest my friend Tobias Lindstad. He is well-versed in literature, art, and philosophy, he throws himself into debates with an open mind and has kept his fascination for the mysteries of the universe. Above all, he displays a nearly all-encompassing appetite for good music in the most diverse genres. He never stops finding inspiration in classical and modern chamber

music, in cool jazz and free-form improvisation, in avantgarde rock, in folk music, and in subtle pop melodies; really, he finds inspiration in all kinds of beautiful, strange, challenging and/or alluring music. However, his curious and open attitude as a listener does not lead to musical restlessness or lack of focus in his own compositional process, but rather to exploration and immersion. He holds on to his chosen musical ideas as if they were ships on a long sea voyage, always wondering where they will lead him next, and which new musical worlds he will discover along the way. And since patience is



is the culmination – so far – of this process of exploration.

Having started to play trombone and guitar as a teenager in Oslo, Tobias was lucky enough to become part of a small society of avid jazz lovers at high school when moving to Hallingdal, far away into the Norwegian mountains. His enthusiasm for Kenny Wheeler's music arose already in this group, as did the meandering bass line of the title song and longest musical voyage of discovery on this record, *Kismet*. And after high school, in 1993, Tobias' hunger to learn more about jazz led him to Sund People's College, 100 km north of Trondheim, which had a dedicated jazz program. The third of the

just as important a part of his personality as curiosity, Tobias Lindstad's musical voyages of discovery usually continue for a very long time, nearly 30 years in some instances. This record

Three Jazz-Fanfares for Kenny Wheeler recorded on this album (*Trusting Rainbows*) was composed at that time, in an attempt – typical of Tobias' musical voyages of discovery – to combine Wheeler's melancholic tone with the undulating, intertwining lines of the medieval composer Perotin. About the same time, he added the chords and melody to the bass line of *Kismet* when he got the message of the death of his first dear cat bearing the same name. He has later remarked that already at this point, twenty years before the lyrics of the song took shape, the composition was a result of contemplating the fragility of life and the inevitable impact of relating to each other's lives.

After Sund, Tobias studied music at the University of Oslo for a year and a half, delving into his



concurrent enthusiasm for classical and pre-classical music, but also



continuing his forays into jazz composition. And again the relational aspects of being human inspired him in the process of composing.

as the tune *Family Waltz in Eb* came into existence when Tobias found himself whistling the melody to bring himself solace in the middle of family conflict. Sharing this memory with me, he adds that for him, the tune honors the efforts of us all to deal with the conflicting interests that may be part of family life. If you listen closely to the chords of this quirky earworm, it may come as no surprise that Bill Evans' sense of harmony is a longtime source of inspiration for Tobias.

The second year of his musical studies, Tobias decided for a new career path in psychology. When Tobias announced that



he was quitting his music studies, one of his teachers, the composer Trygve Madsen, asked him jokingly: "Are you really going to stop having fun, now?"

But the fun of playing with soundscapes was surely not over, even if the pace of the musical discoveries had to slow down for a while. The melody of *Singalong Song*, which turned out to be a particularly insistent idea, entered his mind while relaxing in his student dormitory, and the chords for it were discovered the year after while working in a kindergarten in which the children had fallen asleep. Many arrangements of the tune followed, among them a string quartet inspired by Hindemith, as well as the Thelonious

Monk fantasy of *Singalong Monk* recorded here. Sometime around 2005, Tobias was invited into Chateau Neuf FriEnsemble, a jazz collective springing from the music study at the University of Oslo. The ensemble was centered around



projects, and shortly after Tobias joined, the project leader was the sax and clarinet player **Mathilde Grooss Viddal**, and Tobias was excited to participate in concerts in which her early works were performed. He also got the opportunity to try out some of his own compositions in the ensemble, as larger arrangements of the third of the Three Fanfares for Kenny Wheeler, *Singalong Song* and *Kismet* were rehearsed. Significant parts of the arrangement of the latter are now used on this recording, such as the flute and trombone duet. Unfortunately, Tobias had to prioritize his day job as a clinical psychologist when Mathilde went professional with the band under the name FriEnsemblet.



When I had the pleasure of meeting Tobias for the first time some years later, at a Christmas market at our children's school, it felt as if he were glowing with music.

I heard him playing simple Christmas songs on the trombone, and still

I had a strong feeling that this guy had some special music in him and wanted to share it. When I met him in the grocery store afterwards, I asked him if he would like to try playing with our local folk-rock band. Yes! It soon became apparent to me that he was also an original composer. Tobias showed great enthusiasm for the songs the other members of the band were making, taking them up several notches by adding unexpected riffs and solos. He soon contributed new pop songs of his own, complex, but with infectious melodies, and he also presented the jazz ideas he had been exploring for a couple of decades. We tried our best keeping up with the staggering level of detail in these songs, and we learned a lot from it, as Tobias always introduced his compositions with the utmost patience and a remarkable





openness for the ideas of his fellow musicians.

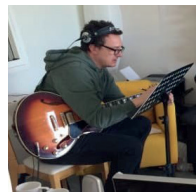
Introducing *Kismet* and *Singalong Song* for our local band, Tobias wrote lyrics

for them for the first time. The lyrics of *Singalong Song* consist of a meta level discussion of the song itself and its process of inception, describing how its angular melody almost forced its way into his mind and how he wondered whether anybody would dare listening to, and maybe even dare singing, such a strange song. The lyrics of *Kismet* developed on the sentiment he felt many years earlier, when he wrote the melody, but it now has a wider meaning concerning relations between people who love each other and try to avoid standing in the way of each other's freedom. A related song on this record, *Dream*, was written quite recently. Its chords were based on the same harmonic idea as *Singalong Song*, but a new melody was set to a poem by the Welsh poet R. S. Thomas, whose work Tobias got affected by already in

high school. Reading this poem again in his back garden a day in spring 2016, Tobias felt strongly that it effectively complemented his own lyrics for *Kismet*.

The first and second of the *Three Jazz-Fanfares for Kenny Wheeler* (*Aequale* and *Something Else Matters*) are also of more recent origin. Tobias started working on them after hearing of Kenny Wheeler's death in 2014, and they are partly the result of developing the chords that are the coincidental result of the polyphonic lines of the older third fanfare. Moreover, these pieces are constructed using a strict compositional principle inspired by Coltrane's *Giant Steps*.

When studying at Sund in 1993, Tobias made travels to Trondheim to get trombone lessons



with Øyvind Brække, who at that time was studying at the renowned jazz program at the music conservatory and who had just



co-founded the quartet which grew to become one of Norway's best loved jazz bands, The Source. Last year, 27 years later, Tobias happened to walk into the release concert for Øyvind Brække Sextet's *Wilderness*, a sextet in which guitarist Jacob Young also takes part. After the concert, Øyvind agreed to Tobias' request for new trombone lessons and sessions to discuss some of his jazz compositions. Later, he also agreed to consider playing and recording the compositions with other professional musicians, just so to hear how the auditive result would be. For this, Tobias asked Mathilde Grooss Viddal to join in and Øyvind brought with him Jakob Young for accompaniment. The result of this session was very exciting for Tobias, as Jakob believed that the compositions were so complex that they needed to be recorded in a proper studio, suggesting Øystein Sevåg's Blueberry Fields Studio. Also, Mathilde argued

that gathering professional musicians for recording, it would be a real shame not to do it properly. And thus, the album project was born. Tobias acted as singer and conducting composer, leaving the instruments to Øyvind, Jakob and Mathilde, and bringing in Andreas Wildhagen and Adrian Myhr to complete the rhythm section, as well as Gunnar Halle for the trumpet part of the three fanfares and Børge-Are Halvorsen for the flute part of *Kismet*.

Talking to me, Tobias explained the concept behind the album:

"The lyrics of Kismet form a kind of prayer that the ones you love, will be allowed to live their lives well and on their own terms, as well as a hope of not standing in their way. And I have thought that all the compositions on the album are really about this, and it



that sense, it is a concept album, an idea that all the songs play with. They are all in different ways about wishing the best for people, including yourself. In one way, Kismet is about a relation between me and my cat that died, but it is also about relations between me and my relatives, and it can also be about a relation between me and myself. All the songs are concerned with building upon inspiration, getting inspiration from others and letting people's potential come forth by letting yourself be inspired by them. Kenny Wheeler's potential is not realized if people are not inspired by it, and I do not realize John Coltrane's potential if I am not letting myself be inspired. This music is about letting ourselves be inspired by each other and letting each other be free.

In the process of making this album, all the musicians have been unbelievably forthcoming. In the recording sessions, I got the feeling that it was not my project alone, but a collective one. The musicians really did their utmost to fulfill the potential of the music and seemed eager to use themselves and their musicality in relation to my ideas, and I tried to let them. This process of creative interaction continued in the mixing process with Øystein Sevag afterwards. I feel that the themes that this album is concerned with, what this music is about – being inspired by each other, daring to use each other, and not standing in each other's way – these ideas are brought alive in the recording project itself. And for this I am very grateful.”

