

YGGDRASIL

Featured performance at
JAN 25, 2013; BERLIN (D), NORDIC EMBASSIES

Kari Sverrison, vocals
Anders Hagberg, flute, saxophone
Heðin Ziska Davidsen, guitar
Kristian Blak, piano
Mikael Blak, bass
Brandur Jakobsen, drums

Yggdrasil is a Nordic ensemble based in the Faroe Islands. Formed in 1981 by composer & pianist Kristian Blak, who has written most of the material for the group, it has included from the very beginning musicians from other countries.

Yggdrasil has, from its inception, had a distinct concept. Most compositions have been created in collaboration with other forms of art or, in some cases, with nature. Musicians that have been part of the ensemble, whether on long-term basis or as participants in a particular project, have varied musical backgrounds, mainly in jazz, but also in ethnic, folk, rock and classical music. While the works draw ideas or themes from ethnic material, improvisation ranges from free to classical style. Over the years many musicians and artists have contributed to Yggdrasil's projects, which include visual art, poetry, ballet, opera, concertos in grottos; and essential to the Yggdrasil concept is that the personality of each individual member of the ensemble be heard or seen. This makes Yggdrasil's sound truly unique.

In Norse mythology, Yggdrasil is the World Tree. The branches of the mighty ash reach up above the heavens, and its three roots pass into the realms of the Æsir and of the frost giants and descend deep into the underworld. In the very top of Yggdrasil sits the wise eagle, keeping watch. The three Norns water and nurture the tree each day, while the great serpent Niðhøgg, together with a host of lesser snakes, gnaws at its root. Thus the tree is in a state of cosmic equilibrium, constantly threatened and devoured as it grows and flourishes.

Yggdrasil, the World Tree, is all-encompassing; Yggdrasil, the ensemble, has a repertoire that encompasses a wide range of genres – from free jazz to classical – and expressions – from humor and beauty to disaster and destruction. The line-up of the band has changed organically over the years. Like new branches of the tree, some of the musicians are a generation or more younger than those who founded the group. As an ensemble, Yggdrasil continues its growth in exploring new paths of musical expression.

Anders Hagberg is a featured soloist with Yggdrasil since many years and has also contributed with several compositions. During these concerts music by Hagberg included compositions based on a Sami-joik, WOMAN ON VIDDA and the lead theme from the documentary film STENRISTARNA. These works were specially arranged for the Yggdrasil musicians and singer Eivor Palsdottir.

MARCH 1, 2013; WASHINGTON DC (US)
Festival NORDIC COOL KENNEDY CENTER

YGGDRASIL - TRAVELLING

Eivor Palsdottir, vocals
Anders Hagberg, flute, saxophone
Heðin Ziska Davidsen, guitar
Kristian Blak, piano
Mikael Blak, bass

(Info about Yggdrasil, see above):

Travelling is a suite of nine episodes of a journey from the sea and land, through the air and back to the ocean. All episodes relate to travelling in mythical or shamanistic ways with conceptual and musical ideas from cultures far apart, but all related.

1. Umiaq (boat) - music inspired by drum dance phrases from Qaanaaq, Thule District, in Northern Greenland. In Inuit myths these boats, as well as kayaks, are also capable of flying into the air.

2. Horse – "The tree in which Odin "hanged" himself can only be the Cosmic Tree, Yggdrasil; its name means the "steed of Ygg (Odin). Odin's steed, Sleipnir, has eight hooves. Now, the eight-hoofed horse is the shamanic horse par excellence; it is found among the Siberians, as well as elsewhere, always in connection with the shaman's ecstatic experience." (*Mircea Eliade: Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, 1951*)

3. Swan – includes recordings of Black Swans made by Lise and Carl Weismann in Australia 1957

4. Wind – a South American Mapuche melody joins the wind.

5. Goyaalé – based on a medicine song as sung by Apache Chief Geronimo, collected in 1906 by Natalie Curtis.

Said Geronimo: "The song that I will sing is an old song, so old that none knows who made it. It has been handed down through generations and was taught to me when I was but a little lad. It is now my own song. It belongs to me. This is a holy song (medicine-song), and great is its power. The song tells how, as I sing, I go through the air to a holy place where Yusun (The Supreme Being) will give me power to do wonderful things. I am surrounded by little clouds, and as I go through the air I change, becoming spirit only." Goyaalé is Geronimo's Apache name.

6. Raven - "Shaman Travelling by Night xxxrrrww" as seen by Nunavut artist Jolly Atagooyuk's etching.

7. Feather

8. Trout – Describing Odin's ability to change shape at will, Snorri Sturluson, writes "His body lay as though he were asleep or dead, and he then became a bird or a beast, a fish or a dragon, and went in an instant to far-off lands." (*Mircea Eliade*)

9. Qajaq – integrates a traditional Inuit kayak song, sung by Ajukutooq, recorded 1906 in East Greenland by William Thalbitzer. This recording is used with kind permission by Dansk Folkemindesamling.

Additional compositions by Anders Hagberg: Stenristarna, Woman on Vidda, Hommage mfl