

COMPOSER'S NOTE:**ABOUT THE SCORE:**

Accidentals apply through the whole bar within the same octave

Trills are chromatic unless marked. Tremolos are unmeasured unless marked

The score gives the performers freedom to improvise, and decide the length of each Senza Misura bar (When seconds are indicated, they are suggestions rather than instructions)

The piece is to be performed from the score, since there are no parts

Page turns have been taken into consideration for all musicians -
last page to be folded out for violin and cello

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

Svev was premiered at the Borealis festival in Bergen 2018 by Valen Trio. The piece was included in our research project at the Grieg Academy; (un)settling Sites and Styles. It has been partly developed with John Ehde (my partner in this project), and further developed in workshops with Valen Trio. The piece includes quotations from some of my own pieces. Special effects were developed and combined in new ways as a part of the research project

Many thanks to John Ehde, Ricardo Odriozola and Einar Røttingen,
and to Peter Meanwell and Tine Rude from Borealis Festival

Recorded by Vegard Landaas and Thomas Wolden for the CD "Svev", Lawo Classics 2020 - LWC1199

DURATION: c. 27 min.

Royalties protected by TONO, P.b. 9171, Grønland, N-0134 OSLO, tono@tono.no

More info: www.knutvaage.com

Knut Vaage
(b. Bergen, 14. October 1961)
Svev (piano trio) 2017-18 (revised 2020)
First performance: 11. March 2018. Tårnsalen, Bergen
by Valen Trio:
Einar Røttingen, Ricardo Odriozola and John Ehde

Knut Vaage, born 1961, is a Bergen-based Norwegian composer. He graduated as a pianist and composer from the Grieg Academy in Bergen. Vaage has worked in different styles of music, with special focus on improvised and contemporary music. Many of his projects have investigated the boundaries between improvisation and composed music. Vaage's production ranges from symphonic works and opera to solo pieces. His music is frequently performed at concerts and festivals in Norway and abroad. Much of Vaage's instrumental music has been released on CD.

Investigation of the acoustic/electronic hybrid sound is another important area in Vaage's music. He has also written a number of vocal works and works for the stage. As an improviser Vaage early on explored the boundaries between improvisation and composition as a member of the trio JKL. The tension created between acoustic instruments and electronics was an important ingredient of their style. Vaage's work with improvisation continues with the band Fat Battery, and in staged works like "Achilles or Stupor", premiered at Grec Festival in Barcelona in 2015.

The dissemination of contemporary music for a wider audience forms an important part of Vaage's compositional activity. He has participated in different concert projects aimed towards children, teenagers and local choirs and orchestras. Vaage has also been deeply involved in administrative work, having served as leader and board member of several contemporary music organizations in Norway.

<http://www.knutvaage.com/>

Svev (2017-18 – rev. 2020)

This piano trio has an interesting history and had an unusual gestation.

In June 2013 Valen Trio was engaged to play four concerts at Knut Vaage's home during the Bergen International Festival. The composer wrote the following in the Festival program (direct quotation from the English translation appearing on the program):

The home is a place of quiet and rest, but also of movement. Space is transformed when it is used in different ways. It takes the shape of the people who fill it. The people change along with it. The music creates its own space that fills up the physical space. A room becomes more than a room when filled with sound. Different rooms affect each other. The moment influences time. Time moves through space at different speeds. The senses create a window in time. The musician moves as he plays. The guest moves upon entering the room, listening. The child moves in the room, unstoppable. The family fills the home, but it is emptied every morning when everyone leaves for their daily duties and silence takes over. What moves in the silent room?

(Bergen International Festival, 2013. Official program)

The performances (two each day) took place on June 1st and 2nd. Vaage put together the program, which included works by Ravel, Valen, Beethoven and Cage. He also composed a new work, specially tailored for the occasion: *I Rørsle* (in motion). The piece began with the musicians playing in different rooms of the house, eventually converging into the living room, where the audience was placed. A toy piano (used at the end of the piece) was part of the instrumentation. Vaage was well aware of the fact that the piece, as it was, could only be used in that particular setting. It contained, however, too many good ideas that would have been a pity to let languish into oblivion. The idea of writing a brand new trio for the concert stage that would incorporate the best suited

material from *I Rørsle* became a frequent conversation topic between Vaage and Valen Trio. The catalyst for the realization of the new work was the artistic research group “(Un-)settling Sites and Styles”. The group embarked on a three-year project hosted by the Grieg Academy between 2017 and 2020. It had ten members, including singers, pianists, string players, a musicologist and a composer. The focus of the research was Norwegian composers (both alive and deceased) and their means of expression, and how the performers deal with these. Knut Vaage and John Ehde (the cellist of Valen Trio) cooperated in a project exploring the functions of composer and performer and the alleged boundaries between them. In the true spirit of research, the duo set out to find out what was available, not expecting any definite outcome. The three-year period turned out to be exceptionally fertile for Knut Vaage, spawning many diverse compositions, all of them branches sprouting out of the project’s core. The culmination was the (literally) spectacular *Hybrid Spectacle*, an hour-long piece for cello, electronics, video and sinfonietta ensemble written for Ehde and BIT-20 Ensemble. It was performed in March 2020 to a large audience, five days before Norway went into lockdown. Along the way Valen Trio was able to commission Vaage to write the long discussed piano trio based on the ideas from the 2013 piece. It became a truly collaborative venture, with frequent meetings and workshops between the ensemble and the composer in order to find out what worked and how to best notate it. By the time the premiere performance took place during Borealis Festival in 2018, there was a proper feeling of ownership in the ensemble, confident that what we were about to play was the result of a thorough and fully satisfying creative process. A video of the premiere can be watched on YouTube.

Knut Vaage writes the following about *Svev*:

Selected synonyms for Svev (Levitate):

Float, rise into the air, rise, hover, be suspended, glide, waft, drift, hang, defy gravity, fly...

The title Svev might be seen as an elegant way of flying/hanging without gravity. We all know that this is hard on earth, because eventually we will touch the ground. The musical material contains more or less gravity. One recurring sequence is quite “down to earth”, while other parts are more floating. In the piece a playful tension between those extremes occurs.

(CD text: SVEV – CHAMBER WORKS BY KNUT VAAGE, LWC 1199)

Svev is many things: a hidden jigsaw puzzle, a playful exploration of the possibilities of the piano trio, a juxtaposition of planes and points, a treatise on sound archaeology, a vast soundscape where sounds and musical ideas are given plenty of time to unfold...

The recurring sequences that Vaage mentions are the so-called “Row and shadows” segments. Four such sections appear intermittently in the first two thirds of the piece. These impersonal sequences of point-music represent absolute control, whereas the extended parts devoted to sound exploration (conducted, by and large, by the group working as a team in search of similar sound properties) come with an inherent element of chance (including the possibility of malfunction). After the fourth “Row and shadows” (page 21) the music finally gathers momentum, as if making up for the rather sedate pace that has characterized much of the work up to that point. After the most raucous part of the piece cuts off abruptly (p. 25) we are left with a sense of ghostly disassociation until, as if out of nowhere... the four previous “Row and shadows” segments are played in succession, without a break (pp. 28-30); a formal procedure vaguely reminiscent of Italo Calvino’s 1979 novel “If on a winter night a traveller”. The title of the piece is beautifully honoured in the weightless, saturnine coda. Here the melody consists of the tones of the “row” played very slowly by the strings, while the piano repeats a languid scraping figure inside the instrument. In the end we are left with the sound of ethereal harmonics and, ultimately, air.

Ricardo Odriozola 9. February 2021