



Jubilee Release # 16

Bugge Wesseltoft & Henning Kraggerud

Last Spring
ACT 9526-2

German Release Date: August 31, 2012



Every ACT Album has its own story. Schloss Elmau plays a role in many. This magnificent hotel at the foot of the Bavarian Alps, far removed from everyday life and constantly flooded with culture, has inspired a number of outstanding artists from Gidon Kremer and Brad Mehldau to Esbjörn Svensson. Moreover in recent times several award-winning albums by ACT artists such as Joachim Kühn and Michael Wollny, Gwilym Simcock and Dieter Ilg have been recorded at this unique place. This time it was the launch pad for a new and surprising collaboration, simultaneously building a bridge between Classical and Jazz, and helping many people revisit and resume a long-awaited success story.

In early 2011, label owner Siggie Loch attended a concert by the Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud at Schloss Elmau. Afterwards, the two of them got talking, and Kraggerud mentioned the legendary Christmas album "It's snowing on my piano" by his countryman Bugge Wesseltoft: "That's our absolute favourite CD! It plays non-stop at our place every year from early December to the end of January." Upon hearing that, Siggie Loch happily introduced himself as the producer of the album. "Why don't you make another album for the rest of the year?" Kraggerud then asked. "Would you play on it?" Loch countered. "Of course," came the immediate response. The only thing that remained was to convince Bugge Wesseltoft to join them on the project. He didn't hesitate to consent, and so it was that they came together in November 2011 to record "Last Spring" in Oslo's famous Rainbow Studio, the place where "It's snowing on my piano" was recorded.

It is no coincidence that the Classical musician Kraggerud is a fan of that CD, which is the most successful ACT album to date, and which has been lauded repeatedly since its release in 1997 for its "almost celestial beauty" and as the "greatest Christmas CD of them all" (Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung).

There are tangible musical predilections of Kraggerud that make understandable his love of the minimalistic and "classically" austere "It's snowing on my piano", which at the same time celebrates variation and the spirit of freedom. This 38 year-old is one of the most successful solo violinists of his time, having played with the best orchestras – most recently with the Danish National Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra – and conductors in the most prestigious concert halls around the world.

This multi-talented pupil of Camilla Wicks, Emanuel Hurwitz and Stephan Barratt-Due also lives out his passion as a chamber musician – for example in an all-star quintet with Martha Argerich, Joshua Bell, Yuri Bashmet and Mischa Maisky – as festival director, university professor and composer, and not least of all as improviser. This makes Kraggerud one of a growing number of classical musicians for whom the two great music forms Classical and Jazz are not mutually exclusive but instead complement each other – which goes without saying for this largely classically educated modern Jazz exponent.

This is important for Bugge Wesseltoft, the grand master of the synthesis of live electronics and jazz improvisation, to now show his more tranquil, classical side again. Together, Wesseltoft and Kraggerud let time progress one season from the winter theme of "It's snowing on my piano" and put together a sparkling program of 16 pieces with connections to spring for "Last Spring", which is founded mostly on Norwegian folk music. The title track is based on a theme from the great Nordic Romantic Edvard Grieg which is also apparent in many of the other tracks. Alongside folk songs like "Om Kvelden" and "Hei hu", also called upon are indigenous composers from various ages, largely unknown to us: from Anne Haavie, deceased in 1888, and Lars Søråas the Elder, to the Danish organist Otto Mortensen, who died in 1986 and the young singer and lyricist Øyonn Groven Myhren. Then there is also an improvisation on the baroque La Folia, the oldest melodic-harmonic compositional structure, and finally a rendition of Johannes Brahms' Lullaby.

As the title intimates, "Last Spring" is a revisiting of spring. It is not an exulting, whirling awakening, but a sustained, minimalistic meditation, oriented strongly towards the details, the variance of the melodies, the breadth and beauty of the sound. It is based on the most perfect interaction possible: Wesseltoft's soft piano daubs melt like wax into the pizzicato melodies that Kraggerud entices out of his 1744 Guarneri violin, his Harald Lund viola and his unique six-stringed viola Concorda.

This magical duo succeeds in gleaming new sound ideas and facets from spring, just as the original concept intended. There won't be much doubt as to which CD will be playing from February to May in Norway. And not just then and there...



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Photo by CF Wesenberg

- 01 Blåmann (melody by Anne Haavie) 4:55
- 02 Om Kvelden 6:12
- 03 Margit Hjukse 3:24
- 04 Stevtona 5:44
- 05 Hei hu 3:57
- 06 Jeg lagde meg så silde 5:58
- 07 Lilja (Øyonn Groven Myhren) 5:08
- 08 Last Spring (based on Edvard Grieg) 5:52
- 09 Byssan Lull 2:58
- 10 Den fyrste song (melody by Lars Søråas senior) 3:38
- 11 Gjendines Bådnåt 5:46
- 12 Maria durch ein Dornwald ging 4:42
- 13 Sæterjentens Søndag (based on Ole Bull / Johann Svendsen) 4:58
- 14 La Folia (improvisation) 2:44
- 15 Til Ungdommen (melody by Otto Mortensen) 3:39
- 16 Wiegenlied (Johannes Brahms) 3:10

Arrangements, compositions and improvisations over traditional themes except where melody is mentioned by composer

Recorded by Jan Erik Kongshaug,
November 22 & 23, 2011 at Rainbow Studio, Oslo
Mixed and mastered by Jan Erik Kongshaug

Produced by Siggie Loch

Bugge Wesseltoft bei ACT:

It's snowing on my piano, ACT 9260-2
Also available as Platinum Edition (CD + DVD), ACT 6003-2

ACT – The Art in Music:

“Constable II”, 1999 - 2000 by Rainer Jochims

Bugge Wesseltoft / piano

Henning Kraggerud / violin, viola & viola concorda

Henning Kraggerud plays a 1744 Guarneri Del Gesu violin owned by Dextra Musica (company owned by Sparebankstiftelsen DNB NOR) on track 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13 & 14; a viola by Harald Lund on track 3, 6, 9, 11, 12 & 16; and a viola Concorda (with 6 strings) custom built as only instrument in the world by Ariane Becker on track 1, 4 & 15.

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