

Nordic Voices

Tone Elisabeth Braaten, soprano * Ingrid Hanken, soprano * Ebba Ryd, mezzo-soprano
Per Kristian Amundrød, tenor * Frank Havrøy, baritone * Rolf Magne Asser, bass

Nordic Voices is the acclaimed six-voice *a cappella* ensemble based in Oslo, Norway. Hailed internationally for its performances on stage and on award-winning CDs, Nordic Voices' vast repertoire ranges from the medieval era to the present, featuring works of composers from Orlando di Lasso and Monteverdi to Ligeti, Messiaen, Thoresen and Kverndokk. Their performance style is smart and stylish, employing a playful yet sophisticated approach that enhances their already remarkable singing. Nordic Voices has appeared in major series and concert halls from Kyoto to New York, from Munich to Toronto to South Africa and Taiwan. On regular U.S. tours, the group has enjoyed multiple return invitations to sing on distinguished series including the Lane Series in Burlington, VT and Dumbarton Concerts in Washington, DC, enjoying strong critical acclaim:

"Such mesmerizing talent is rare.... Whatever language, it was the group's astonishing range of sonic vocabulary... that thrilled the senses and sent an emotional message no listener could miss"
(*Washington Post*)

Formed in 1996, Nordic Voices comprises six graduates from the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Norwegian Academy of Opera, who, in addition to their singing backgrounds, have a broad range of experience from choral conducting to teacher training and composition. It is perhaps this range of interests that leads them to explore a wider than usual spectrum of musical expression, from plainchant to new works commissioned from leading Norwegian composers; from the most sacred of religious texts to the strongly secular.

Nordic Voices enjoy mixing their programs to the point of what many would consider extremes. Lassus rubs shoulders with Ligeti and Norwegian contemporary composer Henrik Hellstenius, and Dufay with Huber and Nystedt. Their program concepts revolve around themes, for example historical figures or textual links, bringing the music to life in sometimes unexpected ways. Nordic Voices have explored the world of electronics, with works exploiting not only electronic amplification, but sampling, mixing and video-art.

In short, Nordic Voices concerts are an unusual blend of sophisticated music-making and stylish performance, often with more than a dash of humor, and thanks to the group's ability to engage and fascinate, it is increasingly in demand on the international scene. In addition to regular concerts in Oslo and around Norway, recent concert tours have included visits to South-America, Spain, Germany and regular tours of the United States and Canada. One of Nordic Voices' main goals is to be in front of researching in vocal art. This means to explore, as they did in the Concrecence project which led to the Djánki Don recording, new vocal techniques and new way of using the classical trained voice. In the end this means that Nordic Voices can produce a wide range of techniques, from ordinary classical sounds to Mongolian overtone singing.

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The group's premiere CD 'Sense and nonSense' (Jonathan Digital) celebrates a focus on different approaches toward text in vocal music, from the use of abstract phonemes to pictorial storytelling. Its first CD on the Chandos label 'Reges Terrae', music from the time of Carlos V in the 16th century was released to enthusiastic acclaim: 'their clear, radiant performances, full of character, are vividly captured by the DSD recording'... 'the music is sumptuously textured and elegantly phrased in these gorgeous realisations' (BBC Music Magazine). Reges Terrae was nominated for the Norwegian Grammy Award (Spellemannprisen 2007). The next CD, 'Djånki Don', with contemporary music by various Norwegian composers, was also nominated for the Norwegian Grammy Award (Spellemannprisen 2008). 'Lamentations' (Chandos) was released in 2009, and the release tour included concert venues in Oslo, Bergen and Haugesund in Norway, as well as Stockholm, Helsinki and London. 'Himmelkvad' was released in 2012, including Lasse Thoresen's opus 42, written especially for Nordic Voices, for which the composer won the very highly regarded Nordic Council Music Price in 2010. The 'Fuge der Zeit' CD is comprised of new works written for Nordic Voices by Gisle Kverndokk, was released in 2015 on the Grappa label. The release concert was held at The Fartein Valen Festival in Haugesund and it was nominated for the Norwegian Grammy Award (Spellemannprisen 2015).

In addition to the nominations for the Norwegian Grammy 'Spellemannprisen', Nordic Voices has won several awards, including the Fartein Valen-award, the Rolf Gammeleng-award, and in 2014, the prestigious 'Performer of the Year' from the Norwegian Society of Composers.

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