

Knut Erik Jensen

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Biography

The Norwegian pianist Knut Erik Jensen was born in the small town of Hell the 6th of March 1981. His musical interest was obvious from the very beginning. Already from he could sit upright, he loved to sit at his mother's electric organ and make sounds. He started studying music in more organized ways in 1988 at the age of 7. His first instrument was the accordion and he was taught in different styles of music. He made rapid progress with Arne Larsen and later Kåre Jørve in Selbu as teachers. During these first years he self taught in keyboard playing and singing, and was member of several local pop and rock bands. He became famous in his home town very early on for his unique talent and good ears. Together with a local young soprano, he put together and performed a short musical show at the age of only 11. This effort got attention also outside of Selbu and they were broadcasted on a big radio show. He also participated in a number of competitions on solo accordion, as well as with bands and other ensembles with great results. He was also active in the school marching band from the age of 9 and played alto, tenor and baritone saxophones for 7 years.

At the age of 16 he moved to Trondheim to continue his accordion studies with Per Olaf Green at the Heimdal Music Gymnasium. There he also got education in music theory, composition, conducting and music history. His big interest for classical music was born when he heard Griegs concerto in A minor for the first time. Driven by a rush of inspiration, he changed his main instrument to piano after one year and had Tone Mjelva as a teacher. He ended his solo accordion career by winning the Norwegian Championship in 1999. He won another first prize together with the dance orchestra Jhohans and they toured in Norway playing concert almost every weekend. He played the 1st movement of Griegs piano concerto with Trondheim Symphony Orchestra (www.tso.no) later that year at 2 school concerts in the big concert hall in Olavshallen,

<http://knuterikjensen.com>



Trondheim. The following year (2000) he was accepted at the Music Conservatory in Trondheim on classical piano after playing this instrument for only 2 years.

Here he studied for 4 years with Mona Spigseth Sagstad as his main teacher. He also had lessons with Jørgen Larsen working specifically with the demanding music of the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt. During these years he did a Russian chamber music tour with the legendary Norwegian violin professor Bjarne Fiskum. Fiskum is the founder of the Trondheim Soloists, an internationally respected string orchestra. They have toured all over the world working with musicians like Anne Sofie Mutter and Joshua Bell to mention a few. Knut Erik was also soloist with the conservatory string orchestra in Klaus Egges 2. piano concerto in 2003 and he became a popular pianist in the professional opera and vocal society in Trondheim. He also played several solo recitals and worked as a freelance musician, both as a classical pianist and with other projects. He released several CDs with a rock band called Perished and toured around in Norway with a klezmer-jazz ensemble Kilombo. He was also used as a studio musician for projects including a triple-CD for children and for a local singing celebrity called Ørnulf Holte. For a period of 4 years, he conducted, composed and arranged music for two accordion ensembles. This led to several prizes in the Norwegian accordion championships and a CD release. During UKA in Trondheim which is the biggest student festival in Norway, he did a unique project with painters and visual artists. While Knut Erik performed Mussorgsky's famous "Pictures at an Exhibition" in the grand hall of Samfundet, the painters improvised new artwork to the pieces he performed live from the stage. After attending a summer masterclass in Piteå, Sweden, he was invited in 2005 to perform a concert containing music of Mahler, Strauss and Wagner with the dramatic soprano Miryam Danielsson in Munich, Germany. He also did opera projects with the well-known Norwegian tenor Harald Bjørkøy.

The studies at the conservatory ended in 2005 with a bachelor degree in the performing art of classical piano. At his final exam he played amongst others Chopin 4th ballad and Ravels "Gaspard de la Nuit," one of the most demanding pieces for solo piano ever written.

Jensen is the most frequently used pianist for the opera company in Trondheim and he has done projects like "The Magic Flute" by Mozart, "Cavalleria Rusticana" by Mascagni, "Eysteinn av Nidaros", by Sommerro, "Petite Messe Solennelle by Rossini and "La Traviata," by Verdi as well as



several opera gallas and masterclasses. During the tour version of *La Traviata*, Knut Erik became the orchestra itself by playing the entire orchestra part on piano. For the fall of 2009, he will do the same thing with *La Boheme* by Puccini. In several of these projects, he has also participated as a choir singer. He has also played an active role in the new concept of “opera pub” or “opera caffè’s.” This means performing opera in a bar or restaurant in a loose atmosphere for “everyday people”. This has increased people’s awareness about opera and classical music by bringing so-called “high culture” into a different arena. In 2006 he was chosen after audition by the National Academy of Music in Oslo to attend a lied-duo competition in Marl, Germany with the mezzo soprano Nina Sæterhaug, now a student at the Opera Academy in Stockholm, Sweden.

Knut Erik’s biggest solo project so far has been to bring Norwegian culture and music to foreign countries. The project started with a concert in Yaiza on the Spanish island of Lanzarote and a performance of Edvard Grieg for American guests in Norway. He’s invited back to Lanzarote in January 2009. He also performed the Grieg A-minor Concerto on the Norwegian national day with the Kristiansund Symphony Orchestra in 2006. He continued by playing the music of Edvard Grieg and telling about his life and the Norwegian culture in the USA and Canada during the fall of 2007, for instance at the big Norwegian Høstfest in Minot, North Dakota. Here he also performed the Grieg A-minor Concerto with the Minot Symphony Orchestra. The next USA tour with Norwegian piano music, will take him from Montana, down the west coast and all the way across the continent to Florida in 2009. He’s also invited to Kishinev in Moldova to perform the Grieg concerto with the Moldova National Philharmonic orchestra in May 2009. They are making a Norwegian Day in cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy in Romania. In 2006 he recorded the CD “Edvard Grieg - Anniversary Collection.”

In 2006, Knut Erik was accepted as a master student of performing piano at the Music Institute in Trondheim. The musical emphasis has been Russian music centered around the composer Alexander Scriabin. He has done several recitals in the Trondheim area and will do his master exam in May 2009 performing the Scriabin piano concerto with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra. During this time, he also got the best possible grade in accompanying together with the upcoming Norwegian soprano star Janne Berglund. She recently did the big role of Mimi in *La Boheme* at the Norwegian State Opera in Oslo. In addition to the upcoming tour and the master studies, he works as a freelance musician with emphasis on opera and different theatre projects.