

The 13th
**British
Silent Film
Festival**

PHOENIX SQUARE
FILM & DIGITAL MEDIA

The Bridal Party in Hardanger/Brudeferden i Hardanger

Thursday 15 April, 6pm

Norway 1926

Director: RAsmus Briestein

Presented with a new music score by Halldor Krogh
74 min

Introduced by Jan-Anders Diesen & Halldor Krogh



Notes from the DVD released by the Norwegian Film Institute in association with the Bergen Philharmonic and the University of Lillehammer.

Bridal Voyage on the Hardanger Fjord (1848, Adolph Tidemand and Hans Gude) is one of the most well-known paintings in Norwegian art history – a main work of the National Romantic Art period. This was the motif Rasmus Breistein built upon in his fourth film. *The Bridal Party in Hardanger* was the culmination among his national romantic films – one of the highlights from the breakthrough of Norwegian film in the 1920's. The peasant culture enabled Breistein to depict scenic Norwegian nature: "Those wonderful Norwegian landscapes which nowadays people from all parts of the world flock here to see." The filming of *The Bridal Party* was exceptionally important to Breistein. Having grown up in Western Norway, with this film he

managed to convey his own Western Norwegian nature and traditions. "No other film I have made has given me as much pleasure as this one," he stated.

In its original form, the film has been destroyed. This is a reconstruction of Rasmus Breistein's film from 1926. The composer Halldor Krogh reconstructed the silent film music, and arranged it for a major orchestra. It is here performed by the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.
Jan Anders Diesen

The Music

The music for the *The Bridal Party in Hardanger* is based on the music cue sheet that conductor Micha Benedikoff made for the movie's opening night on December 26th 1926 in Oslo. The music list specified which pieces of music were to be performed for different scenes. Another music list made for the first screening also exists made by orchestra conductor Anton Holme at the Cirkus Verdensteater Cinema. His selection of music is somewhat different from Benedikoff's, through both had chosen to use the Norwegian composer Halfdan Kjerulff's piece *Bridal Party in Hardanger* as the opening score and for the bridal party's boat race across the Hardanger, and both had selected Ole Olsen's *Sunset Songs* as the closing music.

The national expression of music: Halldor Krogh

I first became aware of Benedikoff's music list as I was working at the task of arranging and composing music for the TV series, *Norwegian Film History*. When I was later to do a similar job for a documentary on the film director Rasmus Breistein, I was given access to a video copy of this silent movie, I have arranged the music for orchestra with *Hardanger*/violin based on Benedikoff's music list. I found piano versions of almost all the recommended music in Norwegian Broadcast's

music score archives, and used this as background material for arranging the music.

The National Romantic music expression is significant in the music selections made. Norwegian composers such as Edvard Grieg, Halfdan Kjerulf, Ole Olsen and Agathe Backers Grøndahl are central, but there are also works by other Nordic composers such as Finnish composer Jean Sibelius and Swedish composer Wilhelm Peterson Berger. Since the DVD version of *The Bridal Party in Hardanger* is a reconstruction, I have taken the liberty of changing some of the pieces of music and I have moved some of the suggested music pieces to their places in the movie where I believe they have greater effect. In addition I have made use of techniques in music arrangement and composition unknown in 1926.

Concerning the traditional tunes, “slatter” in the film, no special mention is made beyond just “hardanger fiddle solo”. With excellent assistance from Hardanger fiddler Einar Mjølhus, I selected tunes “slatter” by Ola Hastabo (1826-1899) who worked in the tradition of his Uncle’s (Ola Hastabo) music. It is very probable that we see him in the film playing tunes by Ola Hastabo. I have arranged six of his tunes “slatter” for Hardanger fiddle and orchestra, and adapted these.

When the *Bridal party in Hardanger* was screened in the 1920’s, the musical accompaniment varied from performance to performance. It was possible to have relatively big orchestras in the big cinemas, but it was more common with simple music accompaniment. In newspaper reviews for those days one can read that Breistein also used a singer to present the “title melody”, thereby adding a verbal dimension that joined in telling the story. Breistein, a competent fiddler himself, frequently accompanied the performers on Hardanger violin as he went on tour with the film.



Lead Themes and Leitmotiv

Warning: contains plot spoilers!

My first version of the music is for symphony orchestra and Hardanger fiddle soloist. The textual has no function beyond the associations one can have in listening to a familiar song being performed instrumentally. The basis for association has however changed over time so that songs that were popularly known in the 1920’s do not necessarily have a similar reception today. Moreover I have taken into consideration how the different keys in the music pieces relate to each other and create a sense of suspense or state of relaxation. This part of forming tonal landscapes, thus becoming an element in supporting the dramatic course of events. Several pieces of music therefore transposed and set in other key than the original.

Leitmotiv or lead theme is hardly used in my music arrangements. I have rather used instruments to lead the attention to happenings or characters. Each instrument has a “sound” that indicated a mood or atmosphere (this is in line with traditions and conventions passed on down through the history of music, and they have been frequently used and abused by film music composers since the early days of film up until today). Marit, as a young woman, has clear woodwind instruments such as flute and oboe as her guiding instrumental, bringing associations of innocence and purity. The older, mature and wise Marit has the cello as her guiding instrument.

On numerous occasions in the film the French horn is used as a solo instrument. French horns can give associations of something being “decided by destiny”, the inevitable etc. In the film the character of Anders has a trumpet as lead/guiding instrument. When he is presented in Act 2, he assumes a hero-like figure to Marit. Later, in the course of the movie we can hear the trumpet fading in and out directing

the attention towards Anders. The solo violin is used to indicate romance and love and occurs in scenes where the brooch Marit had received as a token gift from Anders is in focus.

Serenade opus 15 no 1 by Agathe Backer Grondahl is used four times in the country judge's home, functioning as the lead theme of his house and representing the upper echelon in the community. The music has a light sophisticated expression and is arranged in four different ways in four different keys in order to create variation. The theme contrasts with the Hardanger fiddle that often appears in advance or in the aftermath and become the "people's instrument".

There are two weddings in the film: One occurs when the deceitful Anders betrays Marit and marries the rich woman Kari, and other wedding occurs when Eli (Marits daughter) gets married to Bard (Anders' son). One wedding is "on screen" whereas the other is only talked about. I have used the same melodic material to connect the two events.

Another lead motif is found towards the end of the first act when the boat to America sails out the Hardanger fjord and towards the end of the film when Vigleik (Marit's son) leaves for America. I have here used the Hushabye themes from the 2. Movement in Antonin Dvorak's Symphony to the New World. Both times the music symbolizes the dream of the new world.

Performances and production

In the summer of 2005 the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra (BFO) directed by Ole Kristian Ruud performed the music at a silent movie concert at the Handingtonar festival in Norheimsund on the Hardangerfjord. Following the success of this venture, the Norwegian Film Institute, the BFO and the University of Lillehammer published this DVD with music recorded in the summer 2006 the at the Grieg Concert Hall in Bergen.