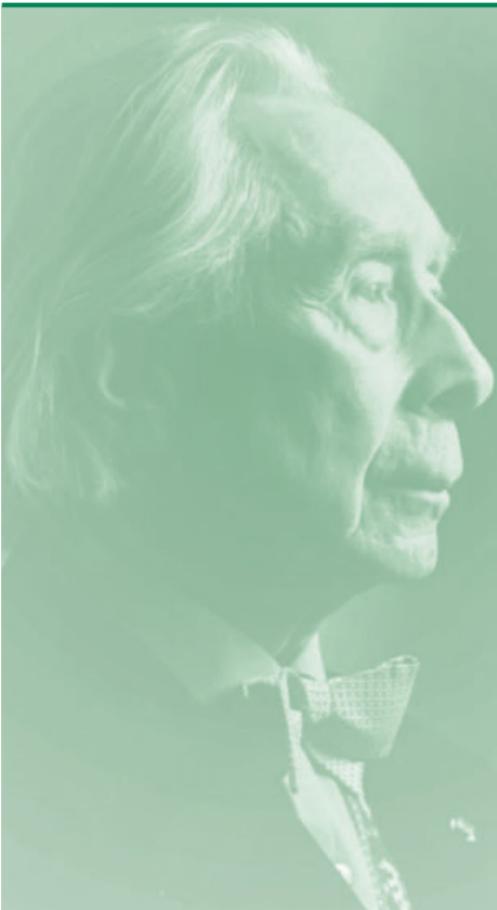




SÆVERUD PIANO EDITION • 1

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A black and white profile portrait of Harald Sæverud, an elderly man with long, wavy hair, wearing a suit and a patterned bow tie. The portrait is positioned on the left side of the cover, with the text overlaid on the right.

**Harald
SÆVERUD**

Complete Piano Music

“Ballad of Revolt”

Tunes & Dances from Siljustøl,
Volume 2

Festa campestre

Birdcall Variations

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

Harald Sæverud (1897-1992) Complete Piano Edition, Volume 1

Throughout his life, Harald Sæverud was one of the most distinctive figures on the Norwegian music scene. His desire to express himself and his will to seek unique solutions to the artistic challenges presented by each new work gave rise to a personal musical idiom, easily recognisable as 'Sæverudian'. The English conductor Sir John Barbirolli, closely acquainted with Sæverud's orchestral music, expressed his uniqueness thus: "Whether you like the music of Sæverud or not there is no mistaking who wrote it, and this can be said of few composers of the present day."

The neglect, or even contempt, with which Sæverud often appeared to treat conventions and inherited 'truths' should not be seen as a disparagement of the historical music tradition. It was within this tradition that he found support for his own preferences, often indicating Mozart and Haydn as his most important influences. His formal music education was somewhat fragmentary; in 1915 he entered the Music Academy in Bergen where he studied the piano, supplemented by lessons in music theory taught by Borghild Holmsen, an accomplished pianist and composer with a degree from the music conservatory in Leipzig. After having completed the course at the Bergen Music Academy, Sæverud undertook further periods of study in Berlin (1920–21) and Paris (1925).

The support he received from his older, distinguished colleagues at the outset of his career was particularly important to Sæverud. Certain members of this group of colleagues, such as Christian Sinding, had difficulty in grasping Sæverud's musical intentions, but were nonetheless positive to his achievements. Sæverud's spirited style and power of expression bore witness to his unique talent. The support and encouragement offered by Gerhard Schjelderup in Norway and Carl Nielsen in Denmark was no less influential, just as was Sæverud's friendship with the composer and conductor, the

younger Johan Ludwig Mowinckel. It was thanks to Mowinckel that excerpts from Sæverud's first symphony were performed in Berlin in 1921.

Slowly but surely, Sæverud gained a prominent position in the music life of Norway, subsequently attracting international interest, particularly during the 1950s and 60s. In addition to being one of Norway's most distinctive and unique composers, he was also able to find time for administrative work and held honorary positions in organizations such as Ny Musikk (the Norwegian section of the ISCM) and Musikskelskabet Harmonien (the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra). In the course of his career he received a number of awards both in Norway and abroad, and from 1953 was a recipient of the annual state grant to artists.

Harald Sæverud's output falls into two main categories, works for orchestra and works for piano. The works for orchestra include nine symphonies and solo concertos for oboe, violin, piano and bassoon, in addition to a number of single movement works. It is therefore no coincidence that his Opus 1 is *5 capricci* for piano (1919), while Opus 2 is the *Symphony No. 1 in G minor* (1920). At a relatively late stage in his career he also made a considerable contribution to the chamber music repertoire. It is also interesting to note that his meagre production of theatre music had a substantial impact in Norway's cultural spheres; this is particularly true of his music to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1947) which became an 'anti-romantic' opposite to Edvard Grieg's music to the same play.

Many of the characteristic traits which make Sæverud's music so easily recognisable are ubiquitous in his music, and not least in the works for solo piano. However it is not so easy to categorize Sæverud's music in any one particular style. His music has been labelled in a variety of ways: atonal (though much of his music is clearly tonal); barbaric (though many

works are inclined towards lyrical-romantic moods); dissonant (though just as frequently we encounter consonant triads); thematically 'short of breath' (though many themes are given generous space in which to unfold). Common to most of the piano pieces is an apparently simple form and texture, often two-part, with detailed dynamics and pedalling. Frequently we find a highly individual development of each part, giving the music a distinctive dissonant quality, and when the rhythmic element in each part is treated similarly freely, the end result is that tonal quality referred to above as 'Sæverudian'.

Siljuståtten, Op. 17, bearing the subtitle "Symphonic Dance", was written in 1947. The title refers to the magnificent property "Siljustøl" where Sæverud lived from 1939 with his family in a house with 63 rooms. *Siljuståtten* is a piano piece in large format full of strong contrasts. The vigorous ending appears to be a preparatory study for his Opus 22, No.5, *Kjempeviseslåttten*. Sæverud later orchestrated both of these pieces. The *Fuglefløyt-variasjoner*, Op.36, were composed in 1968 when the composer was 71. While *Siljuståtten* is eruptive and violent in character, the *Fuglefløyt-variasjoner* have a transparent, subtle quality. The composition consists of a lyrical, almost dream-like theme followed by ten variations of which the last is a shortened and condensed version of the theme itself. The *Melodi fra Gjetlewise-variasjoner* is an unpublished arrangement for piano of the first 25 bars (i.e. theme) of the work for orchestra *Gjetlewise-variasjoner*, Op.15 (1941). This piece is found in the same manuscript as *Ukedagene* (see Einar Steen-Nøkleberg's comments below). Sæverud's only ballet, *Ridder Blåskjeggs mæritt*, Op.42, was given its first performance by the Norwegian State Opera in the autumn of 1960. The last part of the ballet is the *Grazietta*, which was published the same year in this arrangement for piano. This piece was however composed as early as 1941 and in its first version it bears the title *Vals til Solveig*.

Sæverud published two collections of piano pieces entitled *Lette stykker*. The second collection, Opus 18, as it appears on this recording, was not completed until 1987. It is therefore more difficult to find a uniform quality in this collection than in the first, Opus 14. The oldest of the pieces in Opus 18 is *Brygge-vals* which can be dated back to 1915. The *Småfugl-vals* was written in 1941; the *Vals til en liten pike* was begun in 1916 and revised in 1959, and finally rewritten for violin and piano as the third movement of *My ancestors* (1990). The last piece of the collection, *Venevil* (*Kristins vals*), was added as late as 1987, while the first, *Stevnemøte — men hun kom ikke!*, was composed in 1916.

There are four suites entitled *Slåtter og stev fra "Siljustøl"*, Op.21, 22, 24 and 25. The first three date from the years 1942–44. Sæverud says of the individual titles of his piano pieces that their function is to give an indication of how the single piece is to be played; the music is therefore not intended to be descriptive or programmatic. Even so, Sæverud often made up stories or dramatisations of individual pieces. This is particularly true of the last piece of Opus 22, *Kjempeviseslåttten*, of which Sæverud tells the following: "I was on the landing stage at Lærdalsøren [in the western part of Norway] following a rare visit to Oslo when I was struck by wrathful indignation at the sight of the enemy's barracks spoiling the mountainside. The music burst forth from me in a spontaneous, bitter oath." The piece became a national symbol of revolt against the German occupying forces. Both as a piano piece and in its orchestrated form the work never fails to make a deep impression upon its listener with its insistent melodic ostinato ending in a violent eruption at the climax of a crescendo which lasts the entire length of the work.

Øyvind Norheim

First Performances of Harald Sæverud

Ukedagene (seven pieces) from 1953 were brought to light in Norsk Musikkksamling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, avd. Oslo (National Music Collection, Norwegian National Library, Oslo Department) in 1998. The recordings on Naxos have provided the opportunity to bring them out. They are unique miniatures in Norwegian music, like aphorisms they lean towards Kodály, yet with an independent touch and in the best Sæverud language. The eccentric ideas of the composer are found even in the succession of days, with Thursday coming before Wednesday. Thus there are links to an ancient Viking belief that the god Thor was more important than Odin (Thor - Thursday, Odin - Wednesday).

It was a most exciting time being an archaeologist among Sæverud's forgotten and hidden (posthumous) manuscripts. They were literally in total disorder and had to be excavated with the greatest care. The manuscripts were kept in Siljustøl, the composer's house, and in Bergen off. bibliotek, Musikkavdelingen (the Bergen Public Library, Music Department). Every composition and every note in this recording, however, is original, nothing added, nothing changed.

Capriccio in C major and *Etude capriccioso* are most original pieces in a folk-style and dissonant musical language.

Kornstøet legges and *Potetopptak* are the most original short pieces in an advanced and dissonant musical language. *Norrønnet* recalls Norwegian folk-music with cow calls and special string instruments. *Mazurka* shows the very young Sæverud bubbling with youthful vitality. It is not revolutionary, but extremely talented. *Ruths Vals* has a neo-classic texture and polyphony, with a rapid and eccentric melodic line.

Sæverud's Musical World

"All my music has grown out of a vague and supernatural sound. As a fourteen-year-old boy I heard the invisible fluttering of owls' wings in the summer night. This made the starting-point for all my music."

So much for Sæverud's own words. Motifs came to his mind almost like wild flowers and weeds, he said. He let them grow freely while he, the composer, could only be their guiding gardener. Evidently he could not decide for their growth and development, just lead them along. As much as Sæverud loved plants he even cared for stones. "There is also much stone in my music!" he said.

Sæverud does not often describe the grand Norwegian scenery of mountains and fjords. He rather gives focus to fragments of nature and human moods; he describes ancient legends and myths or tales from valleys and islands. Throughout his life Sæverud consciously suffered from being born on the site of a former churchyard, a place of execution from Viking times. He kept talking about the sadness, sorrow and the dissonances this fact gave to his art. "There are reflections of murder and death in me as well as in my music." Those were his words. This provides, therefore, an underlying sombre quality to his otherwise cheerful music.

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

The Sæverud Edition has been supported by Grieg-Forsk
and the Edvard Grieg Museum, Bergen, Norway

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg



© Hæge Håtveit Moe

The Norwegian pianist Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was an early winner of the German High School Piano Competition. Other prizes include the Norwegian Piano Competition in 1972, and in 1975 the Norwegian Critics Prize for Best Performance, awarded after a performance of Grieg's *Piano Concerto* at the Bergen Festival. In 1976 he was honoured for the Norwegian recording of the Year, with a recital of music by Norwegian Baroque composers. Other awards include the Grieg Prize in 1985 and in 1992. From 1975 to 1981 Einar Steen-Nøkleberg was professor of piano at the Hanover Musikhochschule and in recent years has enjoyed an international career, with recitals throughout Europe, in the United States of America and in the former Soviet Union. He was appointed a Knight of St Olav by the King of Norway for his contribution to Norwegian music.

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|-----------|---|-------------|
| 1 | Siljusrått. Symfonisk dans, Op. 17 [NMO]
(Festa campestre. Danza sinfonica) | 8:39 |
| 2 | Fuglefløyt-variasjoner (Whistle Variations), Op. 36 [M-H] | 6:30 |
| | Ukedagene (Days of the Week) [NMS] | 5:45 |
| 3 | Søndag — Sunday | 0:47 |
| 4 | Mandag — Monday | 0:21 |
| 5 | Tirsdag — Tuesday | 1:04 |
| 6 | Torsdag — Thursday | 0:53 |
| 7 | Onsdag — Wednesday | 0:42 |
| 8 | Fredag — Friday | 1:00 |
| 9 | Lørdag — Saturday | 0:57 |
| 10 | Melodi fra Gjøtlevise-variasjoner, Op. 15 [NMS]
(Theme from Pastorella variata), | 0:54 |
| 11 | Grazietta fra Ridder Blåskjeggs mareritt, Op. 42 [M-H]
(Grazietta from Knight Bluebeard's Nightmare) | 2:33 |
| 12 | Vals til Solveig (Waltz for Solveig) (1st version of Op. 42) [BOB] | 2:30 |

	Lette stykker (Pezzi facili), Op. 18 [M-H]	13:19
13	Stevnemøte – men hun kom ikke — Rendezvous – but she didn't come	2:02
14	Småfugl-vals — Little Bird Waltz	2:39
15	Brygge-valsens — The Landing Waltz	2:50
16	Vals til en liten pike — Waltz for a Little Girl	3:31
17	Venevil (Kristins vals) — Venevil (Kristin's Waltz)	2:16
	From Posthumous Manuscripts [BOB]	25:59
18	Kornstøet legges — Staking the Corn	0:34
19	Potetopptak — Potato Digging	0:17
20	Norrønnetta - Norselette	1:33
21	Mazurka	1:17
22	Ruths vals — Ruth's Waltz	2:05
23	Rittet til Valhall — The Ride to Valhalla	1:15
24	Trollnatt (Nocturne) — Faery Night (Nocturne)	2:13
25	Capriccio, C-dur — Capriccio, C major	0:51
26	Capriccio, a-moll — Capriccio, A minor	1:33
27	Capriccio, G-dur — Capriccio, G major	2:41
28	Capriccio (stor), g-moll — Capriccio (large), G minor	4:39
29	Capriccio (tidlig versjon av 1. sats av suite op. 6), g-moll	2:21
	Capriccio (early version of 1st movement of Suite op. 6), G minor	
30	Etude capriccioso	1:12
31	Capriccio	3:27
32	Buskebjønn-slått — Squirrel Dance [Tanum, Oslo]	0:50
	Slåtter og stev fra “Siljustøl” Vol. 2, Op. 22 [M-H]	10:29
	(Tunes and Dances from “Siljustøl”)	
33	Revebjølle — Digitalis purpurea (Foxglove)	2:05
34	Kvernslått — Mill-Wheel Tune	1:38
35	Den siste bå'nlått — Her Last Cradle Song	2:29
36	På kingelvevstrenger — On the Strings of a Spiderweb	1:05
37	Kjempevisen-slåtten — Ballad of Revolt	3:12

NMO = Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo; M-H = Musikk-Huset, Oslo; NMI = Norsk musikkinformasjon, Oslo;
 NMS = Norsk musikkksamling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, avd. Oslo; BOB = Bergen off. bibliotek.

With thanks to Roger Martin

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg



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Harald
SÆVERUD
(1897-1992)

WORLD PREMIERE
RECORDINGS

Complete Piano Works, Vol. 1

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Einar Steen-Nøkleberg

The Sæverud Edition was recorded on 9th-10th June 1997, 30th June - 3rd July 1997, 14th April 1998, 15th-17th May 1998, 16th - 18th July 1998, 22nd July 1998, 24th - 26th November 1998 and 1st May 2002 in St Martin's Church, East Woodhay, Hampshire, UK.

Producer and Engineer: Andrew Walton & Eleanor Thomason (K&A Productions Ltd.)

Tracks 3-10 and 18-31 are World Premiere Recordings • A complete track list can be found on pages 5-6 of the booklet

The Sæverud Edition has been supported by Grieg-Forsk and the Edvard Grieg Museum, Bergen, Norway

Booklet Notes: Øyvind Norheim • Cover Photo: Harald Sæverud © H. J. Brun, Bergen

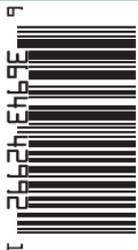
(Siljustøl Museum, Bergen, Norway)

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