

# ACT

## Jan Lundgren Hans Backenroth

The Gallery Concerts II  
Jazz Poetry  
ACT 9960-2 / CD / Digital

Release date: 28. October 2022

"In every beginning magic dwells. [...] Only those who are ready for a departure and a journey can escape the stultification of habit," wrote Hermann Hesse in one of his most famous poems. "Jazz Poetry" is alive with the particular excitement that a first-time experience brings, and also with the courage to surrender to the moment. The programme for this concert by Jan Lundgren and Hans Backenroth, their first ever as a duo, was conceived as a one-off and includes brand-new compositions. The setting is inspiring, to say the least: at these "Gallery Concerts", exclusive music evenings in Siggı Loch's ACT Art Gallery, the performers and the invited audience are surrounded by fine contemporary art, works by Philip Taaffe, Gerhard Richter, Martin Noël and Martin Assig...Front and centre is the Alfred Brendel Steinway, the grand piano on which the classical piano legend would perform as soloist at Berlin's Philharmonie.

**Jan Lundgren has often proved during his career that he is a true jazz poet**, especially with the Mare Nostrum Trio, but also more recently with Emile Parisien and Lars Danielsson on "Into the Night". "Jazz Poetry" as the strapline for this concert could not be more fitting: "Like a poem, music stimulates your imagination. A sound can be as abstract as a metaphor," says the pianist. "Like writers, we musicians tell stories and create images in our minds. What we have in common is that we want to touch people's hearts." "Jazz Poetry" meets these idealistic aims: there is wonderful lyricism in Lundgren's and Backenroth's lively dialogue between jazz and classical music, folk melody and song.

**Two Swedes, a duo of piano and bass.** They inevitably bring to mind the 1964 album "Jazz på svenska" by Jan Johansson and Georg Riedel of jazz arrangements of Swedish folk songs, an album which is still a reference for the Scandinavian jazz today. The "Gallery Concert" makes allusions to this historic recording, especially with the two adaptations of Scandinavian folk melodies, "Polska No.1" and "Gårdsjanta", but the range of inspiration is much broader here, because what is special about Lundgren's art is his ability to forge the most diverse musical styles into a fascinating whole. It is true that the sonic language of his homeland permeates his playing, but he also has roots in the American jazz piano tradition, as well as an obvious grounding in Western classical music.

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**Thus, Leonard Cohen leads to Mozart;** a Beatles classic sits alongside the jazz standard "Stella by Starlight". Swing, what Nordic people call 'vemod' (melancholy), Mozartian playfulness and impressionistic 'esprit' all co-exist with Lundgren in a way that is as natural as it is inevitable. In his own compositions he shows himself to have a beguiling gift for melody. There is a particularly impressive lightness about the way this duo performs at its premiere. The pair develop a sense of flow which makes the unexpected sound completely natural.

**The astonishing thing here is the fact that Lundgren and Backenroth have never worked as a duo prior to this.** They have known each other from early years of their careers. Since then, their paths have crossed again and again, also on recordings where both were engaged as sidemen. "We were always in contact, but until then it never happened that we would start our own project. So when Siggı Loch invited me to do a gallery concert and to try a new programme, Hans was my first choice. He is a great bass player with amazing technique and a warm, full tone, and a sensitive accompanist with a great ear for melody." These qualities are well appreciated by others too, most notably by the top flight of Swedish jazz musicians. Saxophone legend Arne Domnerus once called Backenroth the best bass player his country had produced. Putte Wickman, Monica Zetterlund, Svante Thureson and Ulf Wakenius also secured Backenroth's services...and, what many don't know is that he was the original bassist of the Esbjörn Svensson Trio. Internationally he has played with Scott Hamilton, James Moody, Kenny Barron and many more. Backenroth, born in Karlstad in 1966, can be heard on over 150 albums to date.

**This duo is not going to remain as a 'one-evening wonder',** far from it. The "Gallery Concert" marks a beginning and will pave the way for an ongoing collaboration: further concerts are in the diary for winter 2022. The duo give a captivating performance; their poetry in sound is chamber jazz at its finest.

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- 01 **It Was Good While it Lasted** (Jan Lundgren) 4:02
- 02 **The Unexpected Return** (Jan Lundgren) 4:59
- 03 **Polska No.1** (Mats Edén) 3:52
- 04 **Gårdsjanta** (Norwegian folk song) 4:35
- 05 **A Thousand Kisses Deep** (L. Cohen & S. Robinson) 5:54
- 06 **Lacrimosa** (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) 4:15
- 07 **Svante** (Jan Lundgren) 5:29
- 08 **She's Leaving Home** (J. Lennon & P. McCartney) 5:03
- 09 **Tricotism** (Oscar Pettiford) 4:44
- 10 **Stella by Starlight** (Victor Young) 5:15

04 & 06 arranged by Jan Lundgren

**Jan Lundgren** piano  
**Hans Backenroth** bass

Live in concert at ACT Art Collection Gallery,  
Berlin, 04.05.2022

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Klaus Scheuermann

**Curated by Siggie Loch**

Cover art by Manfred Bockelmann

Photo by Thomas Schloemann

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