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OUR DREAM OF AN ALLIANCE

Abstract: The article is a survey in Nordic music and music institutions. From a historical approach the author tries to isolate and qualify distinct areas in Nordic music culture. He suggests that the musical institutions in the Nordic countries are too deeply rooted in the conventional, central-European criteria, and should act and compete more on the background of cultural roots on the different Nordic traditions. He thinks, on the one hand, that one cannot conceive of the North without its own historic setting. On the other hand, in the overall description we shall maintain that the story of the North is not one of isolation but rather a story of the influence of and rejection by the wider world. In order to find the necessary perspective, the patterns from the wider world must be brought into the picture albeit in the background, in as much as as we are permitting ourselves to place the Nordic motif in the foreground. Understanding this context is necessary and vital to any discussion about the North as against the world at large, when views tend to be polarised. The article describes furthermore important features and challenges en each of the five Nordic countries; seen from outside all five Nordic countries might look alike, but a closer look reveals a variety of differences alongside with shared values and viewpoints.

What do people in the Balkan countries think of when the talk turns to "Nordic music"? A few well-known composers and world-famous performers perhaps, or the symbol of the bronze "lur"; or possibly folk music played on peculiar instruments. Even we in the Nordic countries have a somewhat vague not to say staggeringly unclear notion of Nordic music. Nevertheless, we try to isolate and qualify distinct areas in Nordic music culture. As is so often the case, it may help to take a historical approach.

The awareness abroad of Nordic music has for many years been based on the stereotypical nature of the market's random selection of knowledge picked up sporadically from information campaigns. You have probably only heard of a few names such as Grieg (Norway), Nielsen (Denmark) and Sibelius (Finland). It is possible that the musical institutions in the Nordic countries are too deeply rooted in the conventional, central-European criteria. That it is say that we try to compete on others' terms, in the struggle for famous works, famous composers, orchestras, prices and *names*.

The French champion of the North, Jean-François Battail stresses time and time again that the North will never triumph in the wider world simply by flourishing our "big names" of which, reassuringly enough, we are perceived abroad to have a good many. No, what fascinates the wider world is our everyday culture, that which is quite without equal elsewhere. Battail cites all those factors which go to make up "folkelighed" a concept which defies precise translation but means something like popular character, culture....; he mentions folkeuddannelse ("community education"), popular movements, workers' literature, peasant culture, grass roots humanism. And the remarkably diffuse nature of the concept of culture in the Nordic countries. If we apply this to the world of music, the most interesting thing to market abroad would in the first instance be activities in societies and clubs, the amateur music

movement, traditional touring musicians, choral music and local authority music teaching: all this, rather than the classical, international "podium culture".

The Folk High School movement abroad programme of further education and all the other classic popular movements, namely the labour movement, the temperance movement, the Free Church movement: all these have combined to generate awareness of fundamental democratic values. The Nordic concept of justice is directly associated with such ancient Norse concepts as honour and personal integrity as a basis for freedom and inviolability. This view of humanity has meant that the Nordic countries have emerged as the "good guys" whose values in many areas may lead the way for the rest of Europe.

The North enjoys a good reputation in respect of humanistic values and solutions for various social problems. It may be said that the democratic movements of the North "dream" the positive aspects of the future on the strength of a firm belief in reason and progress, side by side with the romantic dream of a united North based on age-old common values. This dream may be perceived both as forward-looking rationality and as reactionary nostalgia, something which is also reflected in the post-War cooperative methods which have emerged in the field of music.

The North and Europe

In this overall description we shall maintain that the story of the North is not one of isolation but rather, however banal it may sound, a story of the influence of and rejection by the wider world. In order to find the necessary perspective, the patterns from the wider world must be brought into the picture albeit in the background, in as much as we are permitting ourselves to place the Nordic motif in the foreground. Understanding this context is necessary and vital to any discussion about the North as against the world at large, when views tend to be polarised. In fact, one cannot conceive of the North without its own historic setting.

Taking the birds' eye view of history, so to speak, we must at this point state that the euphoric Scandinavianism of the mid-nineteenth century has been eroded away. Back then, one could truly speak of a common goal which averted the rise of nationalist movements witnessed on the Continent. But strong interests in terms of *realpolitik* behind Scandinavianism as an alliance no longer exist. The contrary is rather the case, succumbing to temptations in the form of offers of new partnerships in the major central European movements.

The new political situation in Europe is indeed a new cultural/political situation which makes it relevant to attempt to define afresh the relationship between Nordic music and the wider world. Several approaches are brought to bear: the "national approach" or "provincialism" or "national characteristics". From a narrow perspective of the history of music one could discuss music drama in the North indeed,

opera as a genre serves to reflect and comment on contemporary phenomena in musical form. One could discuss "the symphonic approach" – a relatively large number of symphonies are still being composed in the North! Is it the inheritance of Sibelius, Svendsen and Nielsen running true to form. There are certainly any number of reasons for attempting to articulate the differences and points of contact between the music of the Nordic countries and these countries' relationship with the world at large.

The fellowship which existed within the cultural élite in the North before and around the turn of the century is a thing of the past. These days, those in artistic circles and *milieux* do of course know each other, but the association goes no further. It is no longer necessary to be familiar with everyone else's output. In computerised music the international avant-garde is globally based: a Nordic viewpoint would be much too narrow a horizon.

We are often forced to admit to an inadequate knowledge of the newer repertoire within neighbouring countries. Judging by the number of Nordic works which figure on general orchestral programmes, the Nordic union is practically non-existent: our neighbours' share of the concert programmes is diminishing by comparison with the historic, central European standard repertoire.

The much-vaunted "Nordic tone" is being given an increasingly rough ride. Well-disposed musicologists endeavour to update the Nordic tone at congresses and festivals. They try to modernise and re-define the now trite comment made in 1956 by the Danish composer Per Nørgard on the state of "the universe of the Nordic mind", often stumbling in argumentation, with questionable conclusions. Critics ask whether there is anything left of the alliance apart from *the dream*?

The question evokes more response if one chooses to identify some empirical facts surrounding performances of Nordic music in the North, as the Norwegian Elef Nesheim has done. His findings, based on notes from the period 1979-82 are not encouraging if one elects to judge the Nordic alliance by how much Nordic music is actually played in Nordic countries. As Nesheim concludes: "We have achieved the greatest paradox of all. The very music which is chronologically and geographically closest becomes the most exotic. Music from our own time and our own neighbouring countries can become a rarity." It is still music, several centuries old and originating from Germany, Austria and to a certain extent, France, which dominates concert programmes in the Nordic countries.

But why go to any effort to seek Nordic ties at all? Because historically there are precedents to support them. If there is any point at which the Nordic countries converge in mutual inter-dependence it is in cultural points of contact, in language to a certain extent, in religion and to a certain extent in spiritual links. Normally, we do take "Nordicness" for granted. In spite of the differences between the Nordic countries we perceive the Nordic countries as a single entity which is distinct from the rest of the world.

This local perception is reflected and confirmed in the image which others have of the Nordic countries

which are often seen from outside as exotic, with untameable landscapes which colour the life of the Nordic peoples dependence on nature which is not part of European civilisation's self-image. But in Nordic terms, inner and external nature do not involve a certain "naturalness" which is more or less natural than anywhere else. It may be said that "Nordicness" is an expression of a particular culture and a particular outlook on the world. Perhaps it could be said that there is an indefinable but none the less real type of Nordic society and way of life. Perhaps it is the same old *notion of "Nordicness"* based on the historical, political and cultural substructures on which the North is founded. This way of life is not the worst starting point for an imminent and inevitable integration process within Europe.

Nordic networks

One does not need to have travelled far in the Nordic countries to discover that in the interests of goodwill we are desperate to have something to say to each other in the North. We build institutional networks which offer trips on group tickets. Whenever we are as successful as we have been in getting music to work within the inter-Nordic framework we get financial resources from official funds, so-called "Nordic means". That which cannot be achieved at national level may come about in an alliance with other Nordic countries.

One cannot misinterpret the signal given in the music world when the Nordic countries launch joint campaigns such as *Nordiske Musikdage* (Nordic Music Days) and *Ung Nordisk Musik* (Young Nordic Music), the high-profile promotional drives for Nordic art and culture such as *Scandinavia Today* in the USA and *Bajo la Estrada Polar* (beneath the Polar Star) in Spain (this autumn the Nordic Council of Ministers have as a cultural focus area the Western Balkans); or award prizes such as the Nordic Council's Prizes for music and literature. We look good enough when we run in a pack. High visibility makes us stick together. This applies equally to the relationship of the North as against Europe. And out in the wider world beyond the North, the art and culture of our little enclave of Northern countries are often lumped together and treated as a whole. Viewed from a different continent, the artistic offerings in the North often look much of a muchness. This is the result of no more than a superficial appreciation, but could there be a grain of truth in it? In the sphere of music, foreigners in particular give prominence to the part played by the aforementioned "Nordic tone" in Nordic musical vocabulary, the "Northern lights" in Nordic paintings, or the nature-laden lyricism in Nordic poetry.

But underlying such superficial approaches there are areas where we can observe conceptual and attitudinal patterns which do constitute Nordic culture as such. These are the ways in which we run our communal life, ways which defy definition. We use culture as something with which we deal intuitively, rather than something about which we have clear understanding. This means that we deal with culture

from the *inside out* and not from the *outside in*.

So we must look for common cultural ties between the lines so to speak, behind the words, alongside the actions. We will find the Nordic identity by tracing the tracks which run through times past and times present.

Finland as pioneer country

Each country has to face its own challenges and problems. Model solutions and perspectives on the future which apply to one country rarely apply to another. Developments occur in fits and starts: all of a sudden the culture and cultural institutions of a given country mushroom almost out of the blue. Finland and Finnish cultural life are a perfect example. Early on in the century, the advantages of nurturing and promoting the artistic élite were clearly perceived in Finland. By the end of the 1950's, Finland had paid off its war indemnities to the Soviet Union. Its parliament decided to use the money which was now liberated for cultural purposes. This led to wide-ranging public subsidies for the musical community, and a new generation of musicians and composers grew up in an environment which was much influenced by a lively cultural life. These people have carried on the determined policy and the tradition of giving substantial resources to culture for the following generations.

The policy soon bore fruit. During the 1970's and on into the 80's the world beheld a rich musical community which, as far as resources and artistic potential were concerned, fairly overshadowed the other Nordic countries. Finland was also the only Nordic country which could produce musicians and composers who met with serious acclaim outside the North. This was the outcome of a goal-oriented drive to develop the reserves of talent. It also meant that the Finnish Radio Symphonic Orchestra committed itself to including a great deal of new Finnish music in its repertoire; that the radio generally broadcasts a great deal of new Finnish music; that the opera houses in Helsinki and Savonlinna regularly perform new Finnish musical drama. For example, nearly 300 performances of Joonas Kokkonen's *Viimeiset Kiusaukset* (the Final Temptations) were given at the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki.

At the end of the 1980's and in the 1990's stringencies in the government's budget in Finland have led to cut-backs in all sectors, including arts and culture which now has to look to alternative sources. Despite the economic downturn in Finland, they did still succeed in opening the large new opera house in Helsinki in 1994.

The result of all these endeavours is that new Finnish music and musical drama has been a popular success, a national issue. And Finnish conductors, musicians and music scholars have been able to assess themselves against the international avant-garde. By virtue of its geographical location on the periphery of Europe, Finland has been obliged to work "internationally" to attract attention.

Swedish structures

The music world in post-War Sweden has developed into a highly professional apparatus. As in the other Nordic countries the music world in Sweden in general is funded partly by grants from public sources such as state and municipal bodies which have to meet cultural political obligations, and partly from subsidies from the commercial, privately financed musical community. As in most places, the latter wields the real power because of the scale of resources and media interest involved.

Sveriges Radio (Radio Sweden) and Svenske Rikskonserter (Swedish Concert Institute) today occupy a significant position in Sweden's music world. Until 1933 Radio Sweden had monopolised the ether, but must now compete not only with international radio and TV channels but also with national stations. This pattern is repeated throughout the Nordic countries. Technical resources have loosened state monopolies on an interminable media output which has a tendency to be uniform and fixated by trends, in spite of all the talk about variety and freedom.

Influential interest groups affect the structure of musical life in Sweden. Amongst the most important are FST (The Union of Swedish Composers) and SKAP (Swedish Composers of Popular Music) who have combined to set up the copyright association STIM (Swedish Musicians' International Bureau). In 1965, STIM set up the Swedish MIC (Music Information Centre) *Svensk Musik*, which disposes of approx. 10% of all the royalties from the performance of music in Sweden (1994: 13 million SEK). These monies are used to serve the interests of Swedish composers and music publishers. The centre also receives a state subsidy of two million SEK and a corresponding sum from the sale of records, scores and hiring material.

Sweden boasts no fewer than 11 state-subsidised symphony orchestras and approximately 80 amateur symphony orchestras all over the country. The whole amateur music sector in Sweden stands out as something quite unique, with different genres in which there are many active participants. To counterbalance the official and commercial musical life in Sweden, then, there are popular movements whose roots go back to the end of the last century with considerable impact on the Swedish community. We must mention in this context the whole choral music set-up in Sweden, where some 200,000 choir members are combined in 8 different choral associations. The choir movement in Sweden has strong traditions and works closely with the other Nordic countries. It transpires that nearly half a million Swedes (6% of the population) regularly take part in choral singing.

Norwegian music world

Just as in other Nordic countries, Norway's music world is financed by public and private funding bodies. The public grant system falls, broadly speaking, into three areas of responsibility: the state, regions and municipalities. The task in Norway is wide-ranging as there are so many small communities spread over such a large area, making for a demanding development task. Nonetheless Norway's cultural policies set great store by ensuring that all sections of the population have the opportunity to develop their talents whatever the geographical, social or financial considerations.

It is the state's function to be responsible for financing the resource-hungry institutions such as The Norwegian Opera, and the Oslo and Bergen Symphony Orchestras; the National Concerts, NRK, collections, museums, further education, scholarship and bursaries. The State also subsidises festivals, ensembles and various organisations.

At the regional level the *fylkene* or regions are responsible for cultural promotions, whether symphony orchestras, musicians, or festivals. As the smallest unit, the municipalities are responsible for the so-called music schools, a form of extra-curricular local authority *conservatoire* of which there are some 300 (amongst a good 400 municipalities in Norway).

In the sphere of musical education, Norway was previously restricted by a shortage of professional competence and Norway did not make any serious progress at institutional level until the last two decades. When Norway's Musikhøjskole (College of Music) in Oslo was built in 1973, coinciding with the expansion of the six *conservatoires* and university music teaching, artistic training and scholarship acquired the framework which today underpins the important institutions within Norwegian musical life.

Last of all, traditional scholarship within European art music has been supplemented with a whole new range of options in research within electro-acoustic music. In the NoTAM studios (Norwegian Network for Technology, Acoustics and Music) at the University of Oslo, music can be worked on using the latest hardware and software wizardry. NoTAM is obligated to stimulate and coordinate activities within four main areas: composition, research and development, teaching, and promotion.

As in other Nordic countries, the amateur music world in Norway comprises large and small organisations whose musical development goes back to the 19th century. The amateur organisations today are under the umbrella of the Norsk Musikkråd (the Norwegian Music Council). This council has 26 member organisations with over 370,000 active individual members.

On the music information side, Norsk Musikkinformasjon (Music Information Centre Norway) acts as a central intermediary body with a great variety of functions in the music world. The institution was set up in 1978 at the instigation of the Norsk Komponistforening (the Norwegian Association of

Composers) in order to attend to information requirements within contemporary Norwegian music both in Norway and abroad. Around 200 Norwegian composers have deposited their manuscripts with Norsk MIC, one of the many assets which make the centre the significant archive which it is.

Under the roof of the North

The cultural environment in Iceland as the century has progressed has been characterised by attraction and repulsion. Attraction because communication with the world outside has been necessary to maintain contact with other worlds bringing fresh inspiration. We also see that Icelandic composers have travelled abroad widely in order to study. The determination to adopt an international orientation is typically Icelandic. On the other hand, there is a distinct nationalist streak amongst Icelanders, particularly in the context of debates as to foreign influences.

The historical consciousness in Iceland and the determination to make the most of the cultural heritage handed down through the sagas, for example, are well known, and were evident in Copenhagen in 1996 where the composer Haukur Tómasson's opera *Gudrun's 4 sang* (the Fourth Song of Gudrun) based on the old Icelandic Edda poems was highly successful. The work received the Nordic Council Music Prize 2004.

Jón Leifs was the first Icelandic composer to contribute to the æsthetics debate both in writing and in the form of musical pieces with national undertones. In his book *Islands Künstlerische Anregung* of 1951 he writes about the European culture compared with the Nordic. He hopes for a rediscovery of the Nordic culture which has survived in Iceland since the 14th century. And it is certainly fascinating that the Icelandic language of today is spoken in much the same way as by the Norwegian immigrants 1100 years ago.

In the course of the 1930's, musicians and teachers came to Iceland from abroad. They settled and were able to introduce fresh inspiration, particularly from the continent of Europe. The new Iceland of the 1930's therefore came under the influence of the late romantic æsthetics, and the early modernist movements of central Europe.

Reykjavík Byorkester (City Orchestra) was established in 1925. Five years later, Icelandic Radio was set up. In 1932 *Tónlistarfélagid* (The Philharmonic Society) was set up and soon became an umbrella organisation for many musical institutions, including the *Conservatoire* in Reykjavik. It ran a small orchestra until it eventually became possible, in 1950, to set up the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra.

Obviously, establishing the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra represented a considerable step forward in the promotion of music in Iceland. The repertoire of orchestral music could be broadened in line with the

raising of the orchestras' standards. Today, the orchestra boasts exceptional soloists with international careers, and has a number of records under its belt, with a good catalogue of recordings of Nordic music.

In 1968, Iceland's Composers' Association instigated the process of setting up a music information centre, MIC, in Iceland. With a population of 265,000, the centre naturally does not enjoy the same resources as its Nordic counterparts. The centre has information not only on classical Icelandic music but also jazz, rock and folk music. The centre also has archives with 3,000 titles of Icelandic music. Its own record label ITM (the acronym of the Icelandic MIC) issues recordings. The 1994 budget for Iceland's MIC was 13 million Icelandic kroner.

Denmark's music world

The pride of Danish cultural policy is an Act of Parliament covering music; thought to be the first of its kind in the world. The Music Act was passed in 1976, fifteen years after the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was set up. In October 2001, the Danish Musical life celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Music Law, which had had a great impact on the development of Danish music. The purpose of the legislation was to provide the machinery for an overview of developments within the world of music. Discussions on culture back in the 1960's generally dwelt on the élite versus the popular, the avant-garde versus the amateur.

Gradually, the concept of culture broadened to encompass everything from high art to relaxing leisure activities. In the interest of cultural democracy, no-one was to be excluded. Culture for the people. In 1995, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs published its latest exposition on culture in Denmark: *The Danish cultural model review of a political ideology*. In 18 volumes, an account is given of Danish culture's past experience and possible innovations. One of the points made in the account is that creative art should be given a more favourable reception. Artists whose creative output leads the way forward should receive greater recognition in the form of improved backing.

On the promotional front there have been changes in Denmark in recent years. The Danish Music Information Centre is supposed to undertake promotion of the world of music at home and abroad, but as a consequence of a new cultural structure the music information does not have the same role anymore and the staff has been heavily reduced. The new cultural structure is based on the Arts Council model: all art forms have been gathered under the same umbrella: The Danish Arts Agency (Kunststyrelsen). The Danish Arts Agency is an administrative unit under the Danish Ministry of Culture. The agency manages the financial support provided for artists and artistic activities by the Danish state, a support granted by (primarily) The Danish Arts Council and The Danish Arts Foundation.

The Danish Arts Agency operates the international cultural exchange programs of The Ministry of Culture and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it manages a continuous cultural exchange between

Denmark and foreign countries in the field of literature, music, theatre, and visual art. The Agency acts furthermore as a service unit and attends to the bookkeeping and accounting of a number of organizations under the Danish Ministry of Culture.

Back to the North

Embracing the viewpoint of Jean-François Battail's previously mentioned, let us recapitulate with some observations which apply by and large throughout the North:

- * the amateur music movement is thriving and well organised.
- * the voluntary musical education given to children in Denmark's municipal "music schools" is (or has been) widespread and has provided the basis for new generations of musicians at élite, amateur and appreciation level.
- * the state has assumed responsibility for both amateur and élite levels and music is perceived as an element of our citizens' educational and social upbringing.
- * countries develop and refine different local traditions, where the many summer festival plays and music festivals attract international attention.

A phenomenon which is unique to the North is the notable unanimity within the general cultural approach and the state's responsibility for culture. This applies both to the content of cultural policy documents and the fact that the reforms were introduced almost simultaneously in all the Nordic countries.

Indeed, it should be noted that in the world of music there is a fine network in the Nordic countries, formed by extensive liaison between their institutions, irrespective of the changing political firmament. It is not unreasonable to describe this as something unique, in that we do not observe such a high level of interaction between these countries' institutions in respect of other art forms.

In order to gain an overview of the opportunities for pan-Nordic initiatives it is useful to refer to the book *Nordiska samarbetsorgan* which is published by the Nordic Council of Ministers. This shows that there is evidence of a quite impressive range of relationships between the Nordic countries. In the field of music, one can see at a glance the Nordic countries' internal and inter-Nordic institutions from the NOMUS catalogue (www.nomuskatalogen.org) which is published by the NOMUS committee under the aegis of the Nordic Council of Ministers. An impressive network of authorities, organisations, periodicals, bilateral funding bodies and amalgamations based on the Nordic alliance.

The previously mentioned Scandinavianism of the 19th century was followed by a growth of mistrust between the Nordic countries culminating in a tense Sweden-Norway alliance around the turn of

the century. But in the course of the 20th century the sense of mutual affinity was gradually fortified and gave rise to pressure for practical inter-Nordic projects. This development really gained momentum after World War II. Until the post-war official Nordic joint relations were established, *Foreningerne Norden* (Nordic Associations) played an important rôle as intermediary between the countries.

As an element in this partnership, the Nordic Council was set up in 1952, a liaison body to act as intermediary between Nordic parliaments and governments. At government level, the Nordic Ministerial Council was set up in 1973. These bodies deal with pan-Nordic areas of interest.

The Nordic Council was set up in 1952 to liaise between the parliaments and governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Finland was brought in in 1955. The Faroese, Greenland and Aland Island delegations are included in the Danish and Finnish delegations respectively. The Council, which comprises 87 elected members, has initiative-taking and advisory functions and plays a controlling and instigatory part in the Nordic alliance.

The Nordic Council of Ministers was set up in 1971 as a joint body to liaise between the governments of the Nordic countries. The Council of Ministers presents proposals at Nordic Council sessions, executes the Council's recommendations, reports to the Nordic Council on the outcome of collaborative ventures and in the final analysis directs the work in the different sectors. The Ministers of State have overall responsibility for the joint ventures which are also coordinated by the Ministers responsible for the Nordic Alliance and the Nordic Alliance Committee. The Council of Ministers meets in different groupings such as all five Ministers of Cultural Affairs, all five Ministers for the Environment, etc, depending on the matters in hand.

As far as music is concerned, certain pan-Nordic projects have traditionally received backing. These include *de Nordiske Musikdage* (Nordic Music Days) which have been arranged by member countries of the Nordic Composers' Council in turn since 1888. On the basis of a growing partnership between the composers' associations in the Nordic countries in the first half of the century, it was decided that a Nordic Composers' Council should be set up as a permanent forum for the Nordic alliance. Over the years, the Nordic Music Days Festival has been criticised for being a social scheme for infrequently performed composers rather than a music festival with high artistic aspirations. In recent years, the need has been perceived in these Nordic circles for a strong artistic profile in order to be able to compete with internationally biased new music festivals. In autumn 2002, the Nordic Music Days *Magma* thus took place in Berlin in order to make a Nordic foothold in Europe and in order to make contemporary music more visible outside Scandinavia, and we are seeing not just standing committees such as the *Nordisk Kulturfond* (the Nordic Cultural Foundation) and the NOMUS committee; but also "heavyweight" resource-hungry institutions such as the Nordic House in Reykjavik, Tórshavn and the Nordic institutions in Mariehamn and Nuuk testify to a determination to invest a great deal in the Nordic alliance.

The NOMUS committee (www.nomus.org) to which we have already referred is a committee for the Arts, made up of representatives of the Nordic countries under the Nordic Council of Ministers. NOMUS, in association with the Nordisk Kulturfond and the sector for cultural projects abroad in the Nordic Council of Ministers in particular, can give financial backing to musical activities in the North. Unlike the Kulturfond but like other arts-based committees made up of experts, the NOMUS committee is a group of professionals with a thorough knowledge of the various *genres*. From a narrow musical point of view, this group of professional experts can have a significant impact within the Nordic alliance.

On the information front, the music world in the North is pretty much on a par with institutional counterparts in Europe. All five Nordic countries have Music Information Centres which work together on joint projects when appropriate, for example in connection with music promotion in non-Nordic countries. It has long been accepted that as a lone voice, any Nordic country is virtually lost in the big wide world of the media. Scandinavia, on the other hand, rings out as both exotic and familiar.

People far from the Nordic latitudes have difficulty in distinguishing between the individual Nordic countries, some mistaking even countries and capitals. This fact presents an undeniable challenge to those whose task it is to promote Nordic art and culture in the world at large. Marketing the music of the Nordic countries is undertaken not only at the national level but also, indeed to a considerable extent, at the Nordic alliance level. It can be said that the

Music Information Centres are the incarnation of the Nordic union with initiatives which help to produce a strong and cohesive world of music in the North.