

# dreamers' CIRCUS





**Dreamers' Circus**  
**Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, violin; Nikolaj Busk, piano & accordion; Ale Carr, cittern**  
**2023-2024 Biography**

A new driving force in Nordic world music is the young Danish trio, Dreamers' Circus. Contemporary and endlessly innovative in their approach, they draw inspiration from the deep traditions of folk music in the region and reshape them into something bright, shiny and new. Dreamers' Circus are: Nikolaj Busk (DK) on piano and accordion, Ale Carr (SWE) on Nordic cittern and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen (DK), also of the Danish String Quartet, on violin.

Dreamers' Circus display inventiveness and talent in their approach to performances that include music from Denmark and Sweden as well as Finland, Norway and the far reaches of the windswept Faroe Islands. The ensemble has won five prestigious Danish Music Awards and were named 2023 Artist of the Year by the Danish national classical radio channel P2, becoming the first non-classical group to earn that honor. The trio has and toured throughout Europe and beyond, with performances in Japan and the Sydney Opera House in Australia. Their first US tour in 2019 opened ears, eyes, minds and hearts. The trio collaborates regularly with the Danish String Quartet and the Copenhagen Philharmonic and performs with other orchestras.

In the 2023-2024 season, Dreamers' Circus is presented in the United States by Middlebury College Performing Arts Series, Princeton University Concerts, Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Cal Poly Arts, Philharmonic Society of Orange County, UCLA Center for the Art of Performance, Noe Music, and the Mondavi Center at UC Davis. Recent US highlights include performances presented by Celebrity Series of Boston, San Francisco Performances, Detroit Chamber Music, La Jolla Music Society, and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC.

In 2020, Dreamers' Circus released their 5th album, *Blue White Gold* on Vertical Records and was awarded Album of the Year by the Danish Music Awards 2020 and the 2021 Carl Prize for Composer of the Year (Roots music category). *Lost Swans* was released in 2022 and is available on vinyl as a double-album alongside *Blue White Gold*. In May 2022, Dacapo Records released *Langt ud' i skoven*, a collaboration with Denmark's DR National Children's Choir, featuring old Danish children's songs in new arrangements by Dreamers' Circus. In Fall 2022, the trio released *Handed On*, a published book of 58 of their own pieces of Nordic folk music, arranged for varying degrees of difficulty, along with professionally recorded videos to accompany each tune.

Dreamers' Circus views their traditional roots as a point of departure and know tradition should not be a straitjacket. This adventurous attitude, coupled with their outstanding musicianship, has brought the band to the forefront of the Nordic folk and global music scene.

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## Dreamers' Circus

### Critical Acclaim



“Everything, anything is fodder for a song. They gather up impressions from wherever their travels take them and share. They thrust us into discoveries or sweep us into a meditative moment when being at one with the world is o.k. It’s immersive with mind, heart, body, and soul in music’s sway and lift.”

*Nuvo*

“This is music that paints images in your mind, that fires the imagination... Dreamers’ Circus celebrate more than the colour and vibrancy of Scandinavian music, they celebrate the ability it has to drive inspiration and innovation, and place themselves firmly in the vanguard of that movement.”

*Folk Radio*

“Folk-rooted but genre-defying in music that shifted through the playful and the sublime.

*The Scotsman*

“Not to be left out is the engaging and laid back camaraderie between the musicians as they take the audience on an intriguing and inviting musical journey that could suit any musical taste.”

*The Sleepless Critic*

“It was a luminous concert that spoke to all senses.”

*GAFFA*

“It bristles with confidence, with nods to music as diverse as Danish folk and Erik Satie.”

*fRoots*

“The watchword here is ‘expansive,’ for the trio crafts remarkably open vistas from humble means.”

*RootsWorld*

“The trio responded with a performance that will be one of the highlights of this year’s festival.”

*Fruk*

# The Boston Globe

February 23, 2013

## Meet Dreamers' Circus, Hayao Miyazaki's favorite Nordic folk trio

The Denmark-based band performs at Jordan Hall Friday, kicking off a six-city US tour  
By A.Z. Madonna



The year was 2016, and the Nordic folk trio Dreamers' Circus was half a world away from home on its first tour of Japan. Violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, pianist/accordionist Nikolaj Busk, and cittern player Ale Carr were backstage at the night's venue when the band's Japanese representatives came in with breaking news: "Miyazaki-san is here!"

That was "Miyazaki-san" as in Hayao Miyazaki, the widely celebrated animator behind "My Neighbor Totoro," "Spirited Away," "Howl's Moving Castle," and other beloved films released by the Tokyo-based animation house he cofounded, Studio

Ghibli. Busk and Carr had seen some of these, but Sørensen was wholly unfamiliar. "I didn't know who he was back then," the violinist said in a recent Zoom interview with Busk from Denmark. "At least now I do!"

Miyazaki quickly and quietly left after the concert ended, but he later sent the band his compliments and an invitation to visit him at home. When Dreamers' Circus next toured Japan, the trio played a private house concert for the filmmaker, his family, and several Studio Ghibli staff members. "That became a friendship with him and his family," Busk said. "He's a lovely man."



This week, there's no need to be a Ghibli employee to see Dreamers' Circus close up. The trio plays at Jordan Hall Friday in a concert presented by Celebrity Series of Boston; it's the first stop on a six-city American tour that continues to destinations including Orono, Maine, (Feb. 26) and New York City (Feb. 27).

It's not hard to see why Miyazaki was so drawn to the trio. His films cherish all things handmade and enduring without being blindly nostalgic for the so-called good old days. In a similar vein, the band's music is deeply rooted in and inspired by traditional Nordic dance music, but not bound to its conventions either.

The trio was born out of a midnight chance encounter at a 2009 folk festival in Copenhagen. Busk had played a gig outside the city that same night, and he decided to check out the festival's after-hours acts. In the corner of a bar, he found Sørensen (whom he'd met previously a few times) and Carr, playing traditional and original folk tunes together. There was a piano nearby, and Busk asked if he could join in. The jam session continued until daybreak.

To Busk's delight, Carr and Sørensen reached out to play together again. "I didn't dare ask them because they were already a duo, but I wished so much that they would ask me, and now here we are 14 years later, still playing together," said Busk. "I'm so happy that I did not drive home that night."

The band's lifespan has so far included five full-length albums, contributions to video game and television soundtracks, and collaborations with artists including accordionist Sharon Shannon, the Danish String Quartet (with which Sørensen also plays), and a Denmark children's choir.

The "tiny little festival" where the band met no longer exists, said Sørensen, but its atmosphere continues to inspire them. "I remember, a lot of people there, in a tight and packed little venue," he said. "And you

can hear people playing in every single room. It's just amazing."

Aptly enough for a trio of two Danes and one Swede, one word that describes Sørensen's impression of that festival is "hygge," a Danish and Norwegian term that translates roughly to "a feeling of contentment and comfort in community," and has lately been appropriated in the Anglosphere to sell such items as oatmeal-colored throw blankets and scented candles. But besides their own music, the only thing that the Dreamers seem to be selling is an invitation to join the circus, so to speak. During the pandemic, the trio assembled "Handed On," a book of original music written in a traditional style, designed to be accessible to amateur players who are just starting out on their instruments or unfamiliar with Nordic folk tunes.

"We wanted to make a sheet music book for many years but never had time," said Busk. "Then COVID came and suddenly we had time. So we decided, 'Let's get it done.'" To accompany the project, the trio recorded videos for all 58 tunes contained in the book and [posted them on YouTube](#).

Sørensen explained that the trio found ample inspiration for "Handed On" in the Suzuki method, the popular classical training curriculum through which the band members learned their own instruments as children. Because Suzuki emphasizes learning music by ear as one would learn a language, said Sørensen, it has some things in common with the aural traditions of folk tunes.

And there was one more thing. "Me and Ale, we remembered when you learned a piece of music, you got this little sticker [from the Suzuki teacher] that you could put in your sheet music book, and that was the proof that now you know this tune," said Sørensen with a chuckle. "And that was always the most amazing moment. So we copied that idea and printed a lot of stickers for our book."

October 3, 2022



## Violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen — Exploring Different Genres is Key

The Violin Channel recently caught up with violinist **Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen**, while on the last of a U.S. tour with his folk ensemble, **Dreamers' Circus**.

Made up of violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, pianist Nikolaj Busk, and accordion player Ale Carr, Dreamers' Circus draws inspiration from the deep traditions of Nordic folk music and reshapes it for the modern audience.

Concurrently, Sørensen also plays in the GRAMMY®-nominated **Danish String Quartet**, whose interpretations of classical canon repertoire has garnered them awards such as the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and Carl Nielsen Prize.

We were curious to gain some insight into the positive effects of playing multiple genres and the projects Sørensen is working on...

### **How have you combined both folk and classical music in your career?**

It has always been natural to have folk and classical music in my musical backpack. I started listening to traditional music when growing up in Roskilde, which is quite close

to Copenhagen in Denmark. Soon after, I got my first violin and a Suzuki teacher. My parents would help me practice 10 minutes a day and bring me to traditional music and dance evenings in the local community house most weekends.

I never really intended to create a career as such. Meeting my friends in the Danish String Quartet at the beginning of the millennium and Dreamers' Circus some years later, in many ways defined my life path, and I haven't looked back since.

### **Are there differences, especially technical, in your approach to classical repertoire vs. folk music?**

I wouldn't say there are any differences in my approach. Some classical pieces can be quite technically demanding and maybe need some more personal practice, but since the music of Dreamers' Circus is concert music (as opposed to the traditional "use" of folk music), I try to treat it the same way as when I play classical pieces.

**In terms of storytelling, colors, emotions, etc., it's all just music.**



**How important do you think it is for young musicians to explore different genres? What can they gain from stepping outside their comfort zones?**

I think it's the most important thing you can do as a young musician. Of course, it's important to practice your scales and etudes, but I think that learning from other genres and other art forms is crucial in order to find your own identity as an artist. Stepping out of your comfort zone can be frightening at times, but also represents a space where you can develop the most.

**Where did the name of the ensemble Dreamer's circus come from? How was the group founded?**

The three of us met in a jam session in 2008. There was an instant spark of musical and personal chemistry and from that moment we knew that we would play together for many years.

The name Dreamers' Circus is based on associations. Think of the vivid colors we associate with childhood memories of the Circus. Remember the magic of entering the tent as a child — the way our senses were engaged. The excitement and slight trepidation came from daylight into darkness.

In our music, we always strive to invoke a place of freedom, somewhere for our imagination to play in and a space for dreaming.

**What is your connection to Danish folk music? Why is it so important for you to keep it alive and share it with the world?**

Basically, because we love it. But also because music is a universal language and can provide an insight into other cultures. With the ever-growing polarization — east/west, red/blue, etc., it's more important than ever to communicate and understand each other. Here, music can play a pivotal role.

**Your award-winning folk trio has recently released a music book titled "Handed On," including 58 original melodies inspired by traditional songs and accompanying videos. What was the process like in creating something like this?**

The project began during lockdown in 2020 and has grown in size and ambition until the release event on Sep 10th. We started with a writing day in Nikolajs apartment and since then, we have managed to compose around 70 tunes. After that, we had a long selection process with testing and feedback from peers. Many tunes were sacked, new tunes were written and in this process, a more educational profile of the project emerged.

Taking inspiration from the Suzuki method, the tunes from Handed On are divided into four levels of difficulty so that everyone, from beginners to more experienced players, can participate.

Then came the notation process, writing little background texts for every tune, creating the artwork, setting up layout, proofreading, recording and filming music videos for all tunes in four different locations, and planning the release event with 40 guest musicians. All in all, a very time-consuming but rewarding process.

Check out this video previewing the book:

**What are your next projects with Dreamers' Circus?**

Next big projects for us include four Christmas shows with Danish National Girls Choir, concerts with Zürich Chamber Orchestra, various commitments as town musicians of Roskilde among other things and we'll continue to play our own trio gigs also in Denmark, Europe, and Asia. We love it.

The last stop on the Dreamers' Circus U.S. tour is on Wednesday, October 5, at 7:30 pm in Provo, Utah's Harris Fine Arts Center. For tickets, click [here](#). They return to U.S. audiences in late February, stay tuned!



February 26, 2020

## Danish trio Dreamers' Circus brings Scandinavian folk to Asheville



Late one night in 2009, Nikolaj Busk strolled into a bar in Copenhagen and chanced upon two strangers performing a sweet harmony of traditional Nordic tunes. Spotting a piano in the corner of the room, Busk joined in with fiddle player Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen and cittern player Ale Carr — and, instantly, it became clear that there was musical chemistry, as magic, melodic electricity filled the air.

That spontaneous, late-night jam session — when three musicians met by chance — launched an incredible journey.

“We had a really good jam session the whole night, until 3 or 4 in the morning,” Carr said in a 2017 interview at Sweden’s Change Music Festival. Following their performance, the musicians exchanged numbers, and, a few hours later, Carr received a text message about forming a trio.

Now, more than a decade later, Dreamers’ Circus has earned international renown, traveling from their native Scandinavia to perform throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and North America. Called “authentic folk music from another planet” by fellow musician Peter Bastian of the

Danish band Bazaar, Dreamers’ Circus takes audiences to a magical and wondrous place, transcending genres and evoking vivid, colorful imagery by blending traditional Nordic folk with sounds from around the world.

“We really see traditional music as a great opportunity to go new places,” said Busk, who plays both piano and accordion. “We add lots of new, fun instruments that we find (around the world) and try to paint pictures and to tell stories through the instrumental pieces.”

### **A love of folk music**

Coming from various musical backgrounds, the trio is united by an interest in and love for folk and traditional music. Tonsgaard Sørensen grew up in a household where traditional Faroese dance and music was enjoyed, but he also studied classical music — and, when not on tour with Dreamers’ Circus, he plays as a member of world-class chamber music ensemble The Danish String Quartet. Busk, on the other hand, has a background in jazz that is evident in his fluid and melodic playing, while Carr is from a family of well-known traditional musicians and teachers in his native southern Sweden — and his rhythmic drive forms the backbone of the band.

None of the musicians, however, claims the role of the band’s frontman. “We’re all very flexible when it comes to making the music, and we all participate in arranging and composing,” Carr explained. “We play different instruments and switch roles, but if you forced us to define (ourselves), then I guess Rune is more or less the melody-player, I am the one who drives the rhythm forward and Nikolaj is the painter.”



When composing folk music, Tonsgaard Sørensen, in particular, turns to his background in classical music for inspiration. “There’s a lot of detail written into every score in classical music,” he said, “and we try to use that same level of detail in shaping the music (of Dreamers’ Circus).” “If you ask, outside Denmark: Do you know what Scandinavian folk music is? And especially with Danish folk music — not many people know what it is,” Tonsgaard Sørensen continued. “So it’s nice to be ambassadors for something that we believe

in and that we actually think is really cool. Not that we are a museum traveling around showing old stuff, but we just take these old melodies and try to bring them into (the present) in our own way. And that’s an important thing to us: To move the music forward.”

At 8 p.m. Feb. 28, Asheville audiences will get a taste of Scandinavian folk music, mixed with modern influences, during Dreamers’ Circus’ performance at the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts.

**dreamers'  
circus**

  
**THE SCOTSMAN**

February 6, 2023

**Dreamers' Circus**

By Jim Gilchrist

...If these first two outfits played pretty well the kind of repertoire we've come to expect from them, you can never be quite sure of what Denmark's folk-based but genre-defying **Dreamers' Circus** might come out with. On this occasion, fiddler (and Danish String Quartet violinist) Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, cittern player Ale Carr and pianist and accordionist Nikolaj Busk proved characteristically capricious. One moment they were whistling and vocalising over a perky accordion melody, next they were into Vivaldi's Four Seasons, Sørensen's fiddle trilling birdsong.

They ranged gleefully through brisk Scandinavian dances, enlisted electronic keyboard for what sounded like a perky advertising jingle, before celebrating their mutual culinary enthusiasms with Kitchen Stories, fiddle, accordion and cittern ebbing and flowing with unadulterated zest.

dreamers'  
circus



## Dreamers' Circus takes us along the sunny side of midnight

Rita Kohn Feb 3, 2022

As a trio fully in sync with each other, the collective Dreamers' Circus is taking us along with them into the kind of world they want to live in and pass along to our emergent generations. We're all together, safely masked & seated in the pitch-perfect setting of the Indiana Landmarks Centre, separated from the rhetoric of divisiveness, for an hour.

Ale Carr, Nikolaj Busk, and Rune Tonsgaard Sorensen glide effortlessly from a piece one of them composed to one they reimagine upward from tradition; from something they've already recorded to one they've recently conjured up. Everything, anything is fodder for a song. They gather up impressions from wherever their travels take them and share. They thrust us into discoveries or sweep us into a meditative moment when being at one with the world is o.k. It's immersive with mind, heart, body, and soul in music's sway and lift. Imagine unity. Wow.

They move. We move. WE are breathing for good purpose—our collective joy. Setting worry aside for the moment refreshes. We're watching, and listening to the segue across a dozen instruments conjuring up the sounds and beats particular to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and yet generously indigenous to us all—and transformable within our birth clime.

Landscapes teach us how to safely navigate underfoot, how to scan the sky to foretell incoming weather, how to feel the weight of air. This is the feel of the trio's playing—safely guiding us through a passage where our senses are nourished and our intelligence is expanded. I will wager it's hard for the discontented to remain sullen, ill-tempered, begging for a fight, in the presence of something this gloriously expansive.

I carried home the group's four CDs, with the intention of sharing them with friends and family. I checked what was on the



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program that comes from the albums. None are from their first offering, “A Little Symphony,” recorded with The Danish String Quartet and the European Traveling Brass Carnival. Here’s what came from the other three:

From their 2015 album, “Second Movement,” the opening “Sofastykket,” wafts in like dawn across a fjord. Busk teases the accordion to awakening, Carr stirs movement with the cittern, Tonsgaard Sorensen gets imperative with the violin. And then we’re up and away adventuring with the trio as they glide each preceding piece into the next.

“Dreampolska,” based on a traditional jig, moves Busk to the piano; it’s a constant sleight of hand with trade-off instruments for Carr and Tonsgaard Sorensen; and so it goes forward to the end of the program, with ever-changing beats and allusions.

“Since we started playing together we’ve traveled widely with our music and it is sometimes when you travel farthest that you come to realize how much you value wherever it is that you call home,” they offer in introducing their 2020 album, BlueWhiteGold, released at their tenth anniversary.

“While travel opens up new vistas and ideas it also encourages reflection on where you come from,” they tell us. “So, here, while we continue opening new ground in our music, we also give a nod to the familiar by including some traditional Nordic tunes, the music we are rooted in and the music that brought us together...”

“Pentamime” jogged my memory back to Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. And Sweden and Norway, too, were recalled with Hjerter To, Ottemandsdans, Aerindetur, Nodebog 16, Skon Pols, Tretur, Grindevisen (traditional to Faroese Island), and with Promenaden.

“The World Was Waiting,” a whistle song, inserts itself as one of those moments when you just sort of whistle without intending to and then anyone else you’re walking with, or is passing by, gets caught up in the moment, and yes, I noticed that some of us in the

seats were leaning forward and whistling...why not?

The accordion, violin, cittern feature in this namesake BlueWhiteGold theme.

“A Room in Paris” comes from the 2015 album, Second Movement. Again, I’m carried into memory with this sumptuous ballad rising up with the piano taking the lead.

“Kitchen Stories” is from the 2017 album, “Rooftop Sessions,” and then we’re sent home with the melange of sounds of “Farther Into It” from the album Second Movement.

We’re chatting with each other as we exit. “Otherworldly” is the favorite descriptor for Dreamers’ Circus among the quoted critics; yet I find something deep-rooted inside this trio, that’s reaching too into the best parts of ourselves. We have come together as a community, in unity. We wore our masks; we left the performance space if we had need to cough. Upon leaving, I walked lightly on our Mother Earth and though my gaze up to Father Sky skirted toward worrisome, I felt lighter-hearted than when I came.

Safe at home, I leafed through “Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience,” to the chapter “Scandinavians.” Here I am reminded of the immigrants from Sweden, Denmark, and Norway who have helped build Indiana and particularly Indianapolis. The standouts of course are Col. Eli Lilly, whose family tree “traces back to the 1200s to the province of Sodermanland, west of Stockholm...” and our beloved Johnny Appleseed, (John Chapman), whose grave we visit in Fort Wayne. There’s also Knute Rockne, who was born in Voss, Norway, and also gained legend status with Notre Dame. Purdue, too, has its Nordic claim with Frederick L. Hovde with Swedish heritage, and Arthur G. Hansen with roots in Norway.

Architect Jens Jensen, of Danish ancestry, was “the most eloquent of those who first spoke out on behalf of the Dunes.” The list goes on to include my here and now neighbors, and to the subject of a soon to surface column...stay tuned.



**dreamers'  
circus**

  
**THE SCOTSMAN**

January 25, 2021

**CELTIC CONNECTIONS REVIEWS:  
DREAMERS' CIRCUS**

By Jim Gilchrist



...Saturday night further exemplified the kind of compendious online delights the festival has been curating. Live from Copenhagen came the Danish-Swedish trio **Dreamers' Circus** (\*\*\*\*\*), folk-rooted but genre-defying in music that shifted through the playful and the sublime as Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, Ale Carr and Nikolaj Busk switched seamlessly between instruments, as in their magical opening air as fiddle and cittern gave way to the chimes of the kannel zither. Elsewhere, fiddle strings skirled over ringing piano in traditional Danish dances while in *The World Was Waiting* – a tune “about hope” – they whistled as well as played its irresistibly jaunty melody.

**dreamers'  
circus**

# The Sleepless Critic

April 14, 2021

**Celebrity Series of Boston @home presents  
mesmerizing musical trio Dreamers Circus**



One of the main attractions of virtual concerts is being able to discover new music anywhere in the world.

Inside Copenhagen's iconic Round Tower that houses a church, library, and an astronomical observatory, three musicians deliver a mesmerizing musical experience as Dreamers Circus. Warmly introduced by violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sorensen, this performance was filmed in Round Tower's immaculate library as Swarm, a floating exhibit created by female Denmark

artists Baskets4Life, contributes to the concert's surreal setting.

Celebrity Series of Boston welcomes award-winning musical trio Dreamers Circus streaming through Thursday, April 15. The concert premiered as a live streamed concert on Friday, April 9 and includes a Q & A with the group. [Click here for more information and for tickets.](#)

Comprised of violinist Rune Tonsgaard Sorensen, pianist and accordionist Nikolaj Busk, and Ale Carr on Nordic Cittern,

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Dreamers Circus draws from classical, Swedish, and Nordic rhythms to weave a collection of playful, breezy, and mesmerizing selections well suited to the band's name while providing a haven in this dark time.

Among the many highlights of this performance is the quirky originality and chipper rhythms in their telling song, *The World is Waiting* from their latest album, *White Gold*. The sunny piano and whistling medley exudes a lighthearted anticipation of what's to come. *Pentamime* delves into hypnotic rhythms, suspense, and building intensity while *City Gardens*, from their album *Rooftop Sessions*, offers a fascinating and intricate mix of soothing rhythms, bright notes, as well as haunting, eclectic, and electronic sounds that brings out the song's unique vibrancy.

Busk introduces *Kitchen Stories*, a rich number that fluctuates between lively and tranquil while showcasing Sorensen's

nimble artistry with the violin and Busk's switch to an accordion before joining together for a memorable folk reel.

*Hjerter To/Fangden Og Hans Pumpestok* has a bright, catchy, and fanciful medley as Busk pulls double duty performing on the piano and the accordion.

Introducing what Carr calls "a poor man's viola," Carr duets with Sorensen for traditional Swedish song, *Folkrothvalsen*.

The concert builds to a thrilling finale with *A Room in Paris* and *Prelude to a Song*. While *A Room in Paris* delivers an upbeat and joyful urgency, *Prelude to the Sun* provides a perfect blend of sonic and dreamlike harmony.

Not to be left out is the engaging and laid back camaraderie between the musicians as they take the audience on an intriguing and inviting musical journey that could suit any musical taste. Celebrity Series of Boston @home presents Dreamers Circus on demand through Thursday, April 15.



dreamers'  
circus

# folk radio

your folk & roots bread and butter

August 6, 2018

## Dreamers' Circus: Rooftop Sessions

By Neil McFadyen



Recently Folk Radio premiered the video for *Then We Waltzed*, from Danish/Swedish trio Dreamers' Circus. As that article explained, we first encountered this remarkably talented trio entirely by accident at *Celtic Connections*. Aside from the quite dazzlingly impressive musicianship they displayed, it was the way that they managed to stay firmly rooted in Scandinavian folk and classical music while, at the same, refusing to be restricted by it, that made their performance so memorable.

Dreamers' Circus, Nikolaj Busk (piano, accordion) Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen (violin) and Ale Carr (cittern), have previously released two albums in Europe. Their third album, *Rooftop Sessions*, sees the band enjoy a worldwide release at last. The album itself matches

this extending of their horizons, with a collection of self-written instrumental pieces that move a few degrees more towards the conceptual; in a series of intricate musical narratives on the spaces that provide respite from an ever more demanding and fast-paced world.

The unmistakably Scandinavian *City Gardens* opens the album at an exquisite pace; lively, but unhurried, and with an intensity that ebbs and flows towards a soft, extended departure. *Kitchen Stories* is brisker and offers more adventure, putting the listener in mind of *Lau* with a Nordic twist. This comes through, not only in the accordion and violin combination but in the rhythm, the tempo changes, the peaks and troughs. Beyond that, there's a Bach-inspired violin that climbs exultantly and sings as clear as a bird.



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The pace is often more moderate, and the mood more earnest. The mysterious and ethereal opening of *Foreseen* leads to a piercing cry on the wind and a heart-rending lament with a Romany soul. The equally sombre opening of *Meanwhile* is soon sweetened by a poetic violin. Although *Opus 2, 5* seems to draw on the trio's classical background more than any other track, there are touches of mystery in there too; among the graceful piano, the soft strings and the more intense conclusion that leads to the short, dream-like *Draft. Mormor* (Grandmother) is a soft, stately dance with a mysterious twinkle in its eye. There's a definite sense of adventure in this music that's reflected in the wide range of instruments used by the trio. Bass drum, vibes, and even a toy piano (among many others) all find their place in this extensive soundscape.

*Rooftop Sessions Part 1* and *Part 2* seem to epitomize the album and, indeed, the band themselves. *Part 1* opens with piano,

violin, cittern in a typical Dreamers' Circus ensemble setting. There's a latent energy that stirs softly until piano starts to follow a slow, diving spiral into dark storm clouds with ever increasing tension. *Part 2* brings soft rainfall, a far, but persistent, rumble of thunder, and distant birds seen against dark clouds. To close the album, *Afterwards* is like a clearing of the air as the sun rises.

This is music that paints images in your mind, that fires the imagination. There's no doubt that *Rooftop Sessions* is far more thought-provoking than the trio's previous, thoroughly impressive, releases. As well as finding those quiet moments our souls seek out in a hectic world; with *Rooftop Sessions* Dreamers' Circus celebrate more than the colour and vibrancy of Scandinavian music, they celebrate the ability it has to drive inspiration and innovation, and place themselves firmly in the vanguard of that movement.





## **Dreamers' Circus Discography**

Vertical Records

*Langt ud' i skoven* (2022)

Vertical Records

*The Lost Swans* (2022)

*Blue White Gold* (2020)

*Rooftop Sessions* (2018)

GO' Danish Folk

*Second Movement* (2015)

\*Danish Music Awards Folk 2015 Album of the Year

*A Little Symphony* (2013)

\*Danish Music Awards Folk 2013 Album of the Year

*Dreamers' Circus EP* (2010)











