

Alehouse Sessions to broadcast on BBC Four on 23 April at 9pm

**Soundtrack of rebels in Cromwell's prohibition England
Ballads, sea shanties, folk tunes alongside Purcell & Playford**

"It's just old pop music"

Bjarte Eike



Sunday 23 April 2023, 21:00

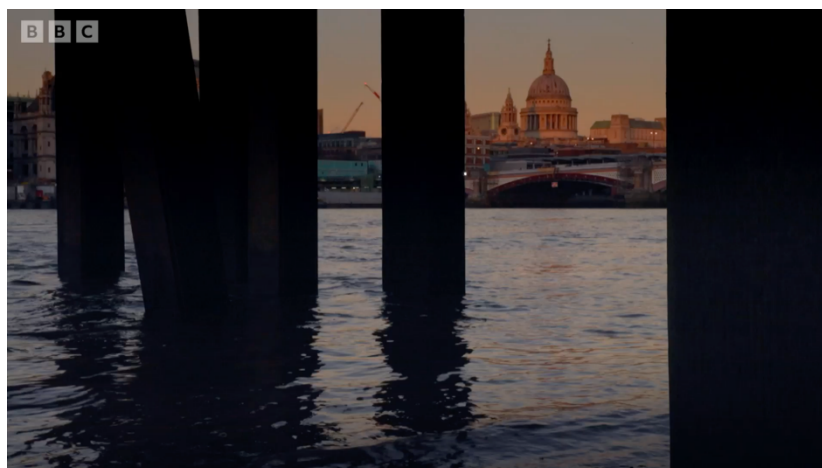
BBC Four

THE ALEHOUSE SESSIONS WITH BAROKKSOLISTENE:

Bjarte Eike (Norway)	violin, vocals, artistic director
Fredrik Bock (Sweden)	guitar, charango, vocals
Per Buhre (Sweden)	viola, vocals
Tom Guthrie (UK)	lead vocals, violin
Johannes Lundberg (Sweden)	double bass, vocals
Helge Andreas Norbakken (Norway)	percussion, vocals
Steven Player (UK)	dance, guitar, vocals
Hans Knut Sveen (Norway)	harmonium, harpsichord, vocals
Milos Valent (Slovakia)	violin, viola, vocals

Cameo guest appearance by soprano Mary Bevan (UK)

[Watch the promo video below](#)



"Rip-roaring music making effortlessly melds ancient and modern"
The Strad (on The Playhouse Sessions CD)

BBC Four brings *The Alehouse Sessions* to screens this April with the bad boys of baroque – Bjarte Eike's Barokksolistene – to capture the sound world of rebellious London under Oliver Cromwell's draconian laws prohibiting any excess and abolishing the capital's lively arts scene.

When 17th Century England went into lockdown and the Puritans closed playhouses and theatres, musicians and performers sought refuge in backrooms of taverns and alehouses to vent their anarchy. The Barokksolistene bring their trademark fleet-footed fiddling, devilish improvisation and intoxicating revelry to perform folk melodies, sea-shanties, bawdy ballads and cheeky ditties alongside ayres and dances by Purcell and Playford.

Following their best-selling recordings *The Alehouse Sessions* and *The Playhouse Sessions*, **Bjarte Eike's virtuosic Barokksolistene** and **soprano Mary Bevan** took to the stage of the Battersea Arts Centre and the 17th century George Inn in Southwark.

Produced in collaboration with the award-winning director Dominic Best, celebrated for his innovative ways of filming performance for the screen, this film captures the energy, sheer joy and raw beauty of folk ballads, traditional ayres and dances annotated by Playford alongside the refined simplicity of Purcell's vocal music. The music lives and breathes down the ages, free of later conventions of published music.



Norwegian Baroque violinist Bjarte Eike is the artistic director of Barokksolistene. One of their innovative concepts have included *The Alehouse Sessions* which has

a broad, unifying approach to music, as well as a desire to curate exhilarating new experiences for audiences.

Bjarte Eike & Barokksolistene's performances have been hailed as '*irresistible*' (*The Times*) and '*fabulously unrestrained*' (*The Guardian*). Their latest album on Rubicon *The Playhouse Sessions* features Eike's arrangements of music from Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, his own original compositions on words from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; popular songs and ballads such, as '*The Irish Washerwoman*', '*I often for my Jenny strove*' and '*The Three Ravens*'.

Reviews of their recent disc *The Playhouse Sessions* have included:

"Ricochets from Purcell to folk music, from vocals to instrumentals, in intoxicating style"
BBC Music Magazine

"Bjarte Eike and his Barokksolistene approach this music and its cultural context with open hearts and minds"
Gramophone

"the anarchic atmosphere of after-hours sessions in Restoration pub backrooms"
The Guardian

★★★★★ The Telegraph (The Alehouse Sessions) ★★★★★☆ De Volkskrant

★★★★☆ The Scotsman ★★★★★☆ BBC Music Magazine

★★★★☆ Pizzicato (The Image of Melancholy)



Gramophone Editor's Choice



Bjarte Eike

Baroque violinist Bjarte Eike pushes boundaries in classical music, constantly looking for new projects in the borderland of genres and is reaching out to new audiences with his infectious playing and style.

As a freelance violinist he explores alternative ways of approaching classical music. Although rooted in historically-informed performance practice, he strives to include other artistic aspects in his performances, using visual arts, dance, storytelling and improvisation. Major collaborations include Handel's *Alcina* at the Norwegian National Opera, *Vespertine* with choreographer Liam Scarlett, a staged *Messiah* with Netia Jones at the Bergen International Festival and recordings and concerts with jazz pianist Jon Balke, including as part of the Siwan project which explores the links between North African Arabic, Andalusian and baroque music.



Barokksolistene

Founded by Bjarte Eike in 2005, Barokksolistene is now recognised as one of the world's most dynamic and exciting groups working in the field of historically-informed performance, fusing virtuoso musicianship with flawless ensemble playing.

Constantly striving to reach out to new audiences, their passion to engage with folk and experimental music, improvisation, visual arts, dance and story-telling has led them to create unique concert experiences which play to sold-out audiences worldwide.

Nowhere is this more evident than in their signature project *The Alehouse Sessions*. Curated and devised by Bjarte Eike, this project is an ever-changing and evolving look into the music of the English 17th century tavern, with the group diverting away from the traditional concert model to create an evening that is "*innately theatrical, genre bending and suffused with great musicianship*" (The Strad).



An album of the project was released on Rubicon Classics in 2017 and immediately made the UK top 10 classical charts. Since then, Barokksolistene has toured the project throughout the UK, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Slovakia, Scandinavia, the US and Ireland, and it continues to return season-after-season, each time with new ideas. In 2018 the album received the Opusklassik Award in Germany.

On stage their collaborations have found them working with artists as diverse as choreographer Liam Scarlett on his ballet *Vespertine* and Norwegian jazz musician Jon Balke, whose Siwan project explores the links between North African Arabic, Andalusian and baroque music. Further concerts have included performances of the Malcom Bruno reconstruction of Bach's *St Markus Passion* and a series of major opera productions, including a staged *Messiah* with Netia Jones at the Bergen International Festival and Handel's *Alcina* for Den Norske Opera in Oslo. In 2019 they returned there for a new production of *Dido and Aeneas*. Directed from the violin by Bjarte Eike the group appeared on stage as both actors and musicians.

Bjarte Eike and Barokksolistene are based in Norway and were established in 2005. They are very grateful to receive support from the government via Kulturrådet and the community of Norway as proud ambassadors of Norwegian culture.



Dominic Best - Producer & Director

Dominic Best is an award-winning film director, with an international reputation for making films that open eyes and ears to new ways of experiencing music, arts, opera and dance. Best's films have broken new ground by bringing innovative filming techniques to performance, recently a portrait of the Kanneh-Mason family *This House is Full of Music* (BBC One), a feature film of Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw* (Marquee TV/BBC Four) and Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (Hallé/BBC Four).

After training at Guildhall School of Music in London, Best sang as a professional classical tenor until 1998 when he joined BBC Music Television. A storyteller with an instinct for getting to the heart of his subject, Best's collaborations embrace artists such as Antonio Pappano, Mstislav Rostropovich, Joyce DiDonato, choreographers such as Wayne McGregor, Christopher Wheeldon, Siobhan Davies, Cathy Marston and Akram Khan.

In 2019 Best established **AD LIB PRODUCTIONS**, an independent production company specialising in Music, Arts, Opera and Dance

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