

The
TENORSAX
of
ARVID GRAM PAULSEN
“SYRE PÅL”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: Jan. 10, 2021

Born: Oslo, Jan. 4, 1922
 Died: Oslo, April 11, 1963

Introduction:

I heard Arvid Gram Paulsen playing tenorsax while finishing school, it must have been spring 1956 or 1957. He played at a school event (Holtet Høgre Skole, Oslo) with his trio, Øistein Ringstad on piano and Karl Otto Hoff on drums, and he made a great impression on us young teenagers with his charismatic appearance and dynamic tenorsax playing. Only some years later I understand I had witnessed a legendary event!!

History:

Professional musician from his first summer job at Åsgårdstrand 1939. A particularly gifted multi-instrumentalist who quickly became active in Oslo Swingklubb's orchestra. His first recording session features him on tenorsax. With Svein Øvergaard's band 1939-40, altosax in trumpeter Rowland Greenberg's different groups 1940-42, at the same time with Svein Øvergaard at Sinsen restaurant autumn 1940, concerts with own groups 1941. With Willie Vieth's orchestra at Kongen summer 1941. Book'n's autumn tour 1941, recording session on (as) with Rowland Greenberg Jan. 15, 1942. Trumpet and altosax in Book'n's Revyorchestra spring 1942, in Alf Søgaaard's orchestra at Edderkoppen 1942-45. Recording sessions with Syv Muntre (tp, as) Oct. 27, 1942 and Nov. 24, 1943, with Frank Ottersen (tp, as) Oct. 27, 1943, with Søgaaard's Danseorkester (tp, as) Nov. 22/23, 1943, with Rolf Syversen (tp) Oct. 13, 1944. Member of Pete Iwers' bigband and Book'n's revueorchestra 1945, had sporadic own bands but made his living from theatre- and dancejobs. Trumpet soloist with Alf Søgaaard's orchestra 1947, with Finn Westbye 1948-50, with Lulle Kristoffersen in Sweden 1950, Book'n's touring 1950-51, then several years at Rosekjelleren, circus bands and various dancing activities. With "Norsk Jazzelite" 1950, Pete Brown's groups 1955-57, own bands in the late 50s. Received the Buddy-prize 1957, played mostly tenorsax although he often won polls as best altosax (ref. Bjørn Stendahl/ Johs Bergh).

Message:

Dear Norwegian jazzfan: There must be more material by AGP from the period 1957 – 1962 on well hidden tape reels, maybe in your own basement? Take a look and let us know!!

Note: Part of this solography was printed in Johs Bergh & Jan Evensmo: "Jazz TenorSaxophone in Norway 1917 – 1959" (NJA 1996, No. 5)

Availability:

Most of AGP's tenorsax material belongs to Norwegian Jazz Archives' collection (NJA), noted below for easy reference for those planning to go there to listen!

Feb. 14, 1940:	Hot Club Records HCRCD40
1950s:	NJA-D685
Nov. 28, 1957:	NJA-CD
Unknown date	NJA-CD
ca. 1957?:	Where is this program??
prob. 1959:	NJA-D146, K704
May 7, 1960:	Gemini Records GMOJCD 9501
ca. 1960:	NJA-K47
Nov. 5, 1960:	NJA-D187
Dec. 27, 1960:	NJA-K3&4
Aug. 5, 1962:	Gemini Records GMOJCD 9501

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN TENORSAX SOLOGRAPHY

AGP's very first recording session features him on tenorsax:

OSLO SWINGKLUBB'S BAND MED JACK BUTLER

Oslo, Feb. 14, 1940

Jack Butler, Rowland Greenberg (tp), Ivan Jacobsen (tb), Per Nilsen, Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Fren Dahl (p), Robert Normann (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Stein Lorentzen (dm).

One title was recorded for Norwegian HMV:

ona 520 I'm Coming Virginia Solo 24 bars. (M)

An interesting recording debut, proving that AGP knew his horn. He seems to be influenced by the American black tenorsax schools of Hawk and Chu, rather than white schools. Any influence however must be minor, he was 18 years old and probably exposed to records only, before the war terminated all foreign "cultural imports". The solo is best in the beginning, he has problems with the changes in the last eight. It is just too bad that this is his only tenorsax recording from the forties.

No tenorsax recordings (but trumpet and altosax) for almost a lifetime but then ...

ODD WENTZEL LARSEN

Oslo, 1950s

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Odd Wentzel Larsen (vln), Willy Andresen (p), possibly Håkon Nilsen (b), possibly Per Nyhaug (dm).

Test recording, not issued, date highly uncertain, two titles:

How High The Moon (NC) Solo 32 bars. Solo 8 bars (NC). (M)

Honeysuckle Rose (NC) Solo 28 bars (NC). (FM)

An interesting discovery with bebop violin. However, the tenorsax playing is quite disappointing, having little resemblance to the fine works later. Possibly AGP was experimenting with bebop without really mastering it. This session is just a footnote or pebble in AGP's recording treasure chest.

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN

Oslo, Nov. 28, 1957

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), probably acc. by Tor Hultin (p), Leif Ebersson (g), Kjell Gustavsen (b), Pete Brown (dm).

Private recording in Randi Hultin's house, Gartnerveien 6:

5:25 Body And Soul Solo 32 bars (S) to solo 64 bars. (M). Solo 8 bars. (S)

AGP was quite active the last five years of his much too short life. In this period he played tenorsax exclusively, and some private recordings (there are no studio sessions) are truly magnificent. One example is the "Body And Soul" issued on Oslo Jazz Circle's 3-LP-box-set (now also on CD), a performance second only to that of Coleman Hawkins (see below, May 7, 1960)! The version above, believed to be the first AGP tenorsax recording since 1940 is however not of the same quality. The setup is extremely disorganized, everything starts in chaos to develop slowly into music, but the main result is too incoherent to get a high rating. Nevertheless, due to the rarity of AGP's works, anything is of interest, and there are details showing that he was one of our greatest tenorsax players ever when in good shape, alas so rarely.

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN

Oslo, unknown date

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Robert Normann, Franco Serri (g), Frank Ottersen (b).

Private recording in Randi Hultin's house, Gartnerveien 6:

Body And Soul As above. (S)

Postscript of Sept. 25, 2017: Going through Randi Hultin's numerous tapes, a quite messy job with little documentation, Per Husby has recently found a hitherto unknown version of "... Soul". After two and a half minutes of nonsense, AGP starts out in his usual manner but even slower than any other version, continuing for five minutes only interrupted by a guitar solo which origin we are not quite sure. There are many differences to be noted, and we are happy to realize that it is still possible to find such local treasures.

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN

Oslo, ca. 1957?

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), unknown (p), (g), (b), Edin Bakken (dm).

Nine titles were recorded live at Frognerseieren restaurant:

4:32	Dinah	Straight 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. Solo/straight 32 bars to coda. (M)
4:27	Out Of Nowhere	Straight 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (M)
3:07	Night And Day	Straight 28 bars (NC). Solo 48 bars to coda. (M)
4:09	Getting Sentimental Over You	Solo/straight 36 bars. Solo 12 bars to coda. (SM)
3:50	Stardust	Solo/straight 32 bars. Solo/straight 32 bars to coda. (SM)
5:31	Undecided	Straight 32 bars. Soli 32, 32 and 8 bars. (M)
5:26	Ain't Misbehavin'	Straight 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. Solo 32 bars to coda. (M)
4:00	Body And Soul	Soli 32 and 30 (NC) bars. (SM)
3:30	Lester Leaps In	Soli 8 and 32 bars. Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. (F)

However, this program has disappeared, not to be found in NJA, nor other likely sources, can anybody help?? Postscript of Jan 10, 2021: Found it!! Jazz expert Arne Bryn of Trondheim, Norway had it! The sound and general recording quality is better than expected, although often the tape operator is too slow to capture the very first bars. The music was obviously meant for dancing, and the tempi are mostly around a safe medium. Many strange things happen here, but we don't have to go into that here, but concentrating on AGP as the relevant subject. If you are familiar with his music, having much of what else is in the solography, you will enjoy this program very much. You will be strengthened in your suspicion that he was quite lazy, usually not playing more than one chorus, leaving ample space to his friends. All items have interesting tenorsax playing; to be mentioned in particular are two choruses of his favourite "... Nowhere", and, to my enormous surprise, AGP playing fast, strong, energetic and long in "... Leaps In", turning all my ideas about his laziness and capabilities around!

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN **Oslo, prob. 1959**
Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Syver Reff (p), Øistein Ringstad (p-"Tea ..."), Leif Eberson (g), Omar Heide Midtsæter (dm).
Five titles were recorded live at Kunstnerkroa:

5:45	Between The Devil And TDBS	Solo 24 bars (NC). Soli 64 and 64 bars. Solo 16 bars to coda. (FM)
7:45	Lady Be Good	Soli 32, 64 and 32 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (FM)
5:15	I'm In The Mood For Love	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
4:55	Crazy Rhythm	Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 32 bars to coda. (F)
5:11	Tea For Two	Soli 64 and 64 bars. (FM)

This session cannot quite compare with AGP's best ones, but there are qualities. The sound could have been better, and the piano is badly out-of-tune, particularly unnerving on the slow "... For Love". The drummer swings the uptempo items with high energy, obviously inspiring AGP to play very swinging soli, longer than usual, up to a record four choruses of "... Rhythm". However, on the other hand, he seems to play rougher and less concerned with the more sophisticated aspects of the tunes ... The general impression is therefore somewhat mixed.

HANS CHRISTIAN JARNFELDT /
ARVID GRAM PAULSEN SEXTET **Oslo, May 7, 1960**
Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Einar Iversen (p), Leif Eberson (g), Håkon Nilsen (b), Hans Christian Jarnfeldt (dm), John Svendsen (vib).
Eight titles were broadcasted from Metropol Restaurant:

3:11	Somebody Loves Me	Soli 30 and 34 bars. (M)
6:22	Body And Soul	Intro 4 bars to solo 16 bars. Soli 32, 16 and 8 bars to coda. (S)

5:02	Lover Come Back To Me	Soli 32, 16 and 64 bars. (F)
4:16	Rose Room	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)
2:56	You're Driving Me Crazy	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)
3:03	I'm Gonna Sit Right Down AWMAL	Soli 32 and 34 bars. (M)
3:33	Foolin' Myself	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
3:53	Out Of Nowhere	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)

This is the program that introduces AGP's tenorsax playing to Norwegian jazz enthusiasts and the rest of the world. Presented first in the OJC-LP-set, now on CD, it gives a most flattering picture of this great tenorsax player. First and foremost there is a magnificent version of "Body ...", lasting almost twelve minutes. It shows his charismatic appearance, a highly laidback style, a strong sense of what is most important in the melody. He always takes his time, preferring many shorter solo pieces instead of prolonged multi-chorus soloing, giving ample space to his fellow musicians, which here also belong to the best of what this country could offer. Note here also the strong and utterly beautiful conclusion, oh yes, AGP could eat cherries with anybody! He is best on the slower titles, as on "Foolin' ..." where is the last chorus in his personal style, and particularly on "... Nowhere", a favourite, listen to the lovely melody presentation, and then concentrate on his concluding solo chorus, how he digs in with so much emotion, giving everything he has got! But there is more! AGP was a master of swinging the melody presentation, as evident also on "Rose ..." and "... Sit Right ...", almost as improvisation is not needed! Finally it has to be admitted that sometimes in the upper tempi, a lack of concentration can be heard, as if sharps and flats don't matter so much, as can be heard in "... Loves Me" and "... Crazy". But as a general impression, AGP's tenorsax playing is on an international level, highly personal, easily identifiable anywhere, lovely swinging and melody wizard of rare qualities. If you are interested in vintage jazz, where you live in the world, contact Oslo Jazz Circle and obtain this session for your jazz tenorsax collection!!

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN

Oslo, ca. 1960

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), possibly Terje Kjær (p), Frank Aasen (g), Hans Christian Jarnfeldt (dm).

Thirteen titles were recorded live at Frognerseieren restaurant:

3:15	Night And Day	Solo 28 bars (NC). Solo 48 bars. (M)
4:30	Crazy Rhythm	Straight 32 bars. Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (M)
4:15	I'm Getting Sentimental OY	Soli 36 and 12 bars to coda. (SM)
4:40	Out Of Nowhere	Soli 32 and 64 bars. (M)
5:35	Blues	Soli 12, 24 and 12 bars. (S)
3:50	All Of Me	Soli 32, 32 and 32 bars to coda. (FM)
4:00	Stardust	Solo 30 bars (NC). Solo 32 bars to coda. (SM)
4:00	Tea For Two	Straight 32 bars. Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (M)
4:10	Ain't Misbehavin'	Soli 32 and 8 bars to coda. (S)
4:55	Blues	Soli 24, 36, 48 and 36 bars. (FM)
4:40	Blue Moon	Solo 30 bars (NC). Soli 14 and 8 bars to coda. (S)
4:15	Lady Be Good	Soli 32, 32 and 32 bars to coda. (FM)
4:45	Dinah	Solo 30 bars (NC). Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (M)

This session from the 'up-on-the-hill' ski-restaurant came as a gigantic surprise to this solographer, with excellent sound, located in NJA and to my knowledge escaped attention until now!! The rhythm section is quite different from above; a rather heavy but solid piano, and the guitarist Frank Aasen, both as a fine soloist and as rhythm motor. There are some gorgeous tenorsax treasures in slow tempo here, "... Sentimental ..." and "Stardust" are just so beautiful, sometimes with a heavy vibrato reminding of 'Chu', simple improvisations but with an elegance, conviction and personality rarely heard. Then something you never heard before,

“... Misbehavin” played in slow tempo, strange but fascinating! But there is more! Another version of “... Nowhere”, two solo choruses this time, og how he swings them! And equally swinging versions of medium tempo evergreens, particularly “All ...”, “Tea ...” (dig the last chorus!) and the delicate “... Moon”. But there is even more! This is the only occasion where we can hear AGP play the blues, first a slow and groovy version, then in uptempo, no problems. To sum up: A most valuable and inspired session, highly suitable for a CD issue!

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN **Oslo, Nov. 5, 1960**

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Per Nyhaug (vib), Alfred Janson (p), Bjørn Pedersen (b), Svein-Erik ‘Atom-Jørgen’ Gaardvik (dm). Erik Andresen (as) added on ”Auf Wiedersehn”, AGP also (as) on “Body And Soul”, borrowed from Andresen.

Ten titles were recorded at Metropol Restaurant, initiated by Ronnie Johanson:

9:20	I Found A New Baby	Straight 32 bars. Soli 64 and 64 bars to coda. (FM)
8:55	Honeysuckle Rose	Straight 32 bars. Soli 3 and 2 choruses of 32 bars to coda. (FM)
9:00	Yesterdays	Solo 32 bars. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. Solo 32 bars to coda. (SM)
2:10	How High The Moon (NC)	Straight 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
7:10	September Song	Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (S)
9:15	I Only Have Eyes For You	Straight 36 bars. Soli 36 and 36 bars. Straight 36 bars. (FM)
6:20	Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 64 bars. (F)
0:50	Between The Devil And TDBS (NC)	Straight 32 bars. (FM)
3:55	Body And Soul (NC)	Tenorsax solo 32 bars. Altosax solo 24 bars to long coda. (S)
1:45	Auf Wiedersehn	Duet with (as-EA) 64 bars. (M)

This is a ‘different’ AGP-session (with very good sound quality). The rhythm section is more modern than on other preserved sessions, and the atmosphere is not that of the pure swing we are used to. The otherwise highly competent drummer is doing much harm by dropping bombs all the time. Much blowing space is given to piano and vibraphone, certainly nothing wrong with them, while AGP plays and plays his things, somewhat detached from his surroundings. His soloing is not at all bad, but he is not on his usual homeground here. Note that he quite often in upper tempi goes into a kind of unpleasant roughness quite similar to that of Ben Webster. The best uptempo item seems to be “... Brown”, nothing wrong with his technique! However, most successful tenorsax items are, not unexpected, in the slow tempi; “Yesterdays” and “September...” both have beautiful soli, listen to the latter’s last chorus!! Also a fine chorus on “Body ...”, and note here the swapping of horns, making him finish the item off with altosax, many years since we last heard AGP on that instrument! Totally a session with qualities but not among his very best.

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN **Oslo, Dec. 27, 1960**

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Ivar Andresen (vib), Øistein Ringstad (p-”I Can’t Believe ...”), Frank Aasen (g), Bjørn Jacobsen (b), Øistein Lund (dm). This personnel is announced by Lund.

Twelve titles were broadcasted from Metropol Restaurant:

4:50	I Can’t Believe That You’re ILWM	Soli 32, 32 and 32 bars. (FM)
7:30	Stardust	Soli 32 and 32 bars to long coda. (S)
5:40	Avalon	Soli 32, 64 and 64 bars to coda. (FM)
8:15	Rose Room	Soli 32, 64 and 32 bars to coda. (M)
5:55	Moonglow	Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (S)
9:00	Exactly Like You	Soli 64, 64 and 32 bars to coda. (FM)
8:35	Out Of Nowhere	Soli 32, 64 and 32 bars to coda. (SM)
5:10	I Got Rhythm	Soli 68 and 34 bars to coda. (F)

7:20	Don't Blame Me	Soli 32 and 32 bars to coda. (S)
5:00	All The Things You Are	Soli 64 and 32 bars to coda. (M)
8:50	Body And Soul	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
6:20	Blue Lou	Soli 64 and 64 bars. (FM)

Another excellent session, this time from 'down-town' Metropol Restaurant, recorded by the drummer, with amazingly good sound. The guys are all inspired, particularly the vibraphone man who wants to be everywhere! They start with a swinging "... Believe ...", here featuring our great Swing pianist Øistein Ringstad on his way to another job. A third version of "... Nowhere", obviously one of AGP's favourite tunes, is played in a slower tempo than previously, making it even more exciting, this is just gorgeous tenorsax playing, oldfashioned and youthful at the same time! New versions also of "Stardust" (this time with remarkable vibraphone and guitar soli), almost as good but not so 'Chu-ish' as the previous one, and a slower "... Soul" with delightful differences (yeah!!). There are two other titles in a lovely slow tempo, "Moonglow" and "... Blame Me", highly noteworthy, but there is much annoying talk in the background. Then listen to how he majestically introduces the swinging "Avalon"! "Rose ..." is so typical of the dynamic Norwegian swing tradition! And in fact, all items here have fine tenorsax playing! NJA is open to receive you!!

ARVID GRAMPALUSEN

Molde, Aug. 5, 1962

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Øistein Ringstad (p), Frank Aasen (g), Bjørn Jacobsen (b), Karl Otto Hoff (dm).

Three titles were recorded live at Molde Kino, Molde International Jazz Festival:

3:13	Limehouse Blues	Straight 32 bars to solo 64 bars. Solo 32 bars to coda. (F)
6:01	Out Of Nowhere	Straight/solo 32 bars. Solo 64 bars to coda. (M)
5:57	All The Things You Are	Straight 36 bars to solo 36 bars. Solo 52+12 bars, (g) on 2 nd bridge. (FM)

This is AGP's last recording session, and I was there! To this very day I remember the impression he made on us young jazz enthusiasts, a charismatic appearance, a sound large as a house, a swinging legend! More than half-a-century later one must admit that the musical contents has its shortcomings, topped with an incredible catastrophic start of "... Nowhere", where the guys obviously had not planned what key would be appropriate, thus using half a chorus to get into orbit. However, things improve, dig first the fine guitar playing of Frank Aasen, another legendary personality in Norwegian vintage jazz, then our much missed inspired pianist Øistein Ringstad, both with so few recordings, then back to AGP, two choruses swinging, jumping, whatever you call it, a dynamic solo, who cares about a few misplaced tones here and there, this is at least local jazz history. The two faster titles also have much good to offer, with some tolerance. Within one year, Arvid Gram Paulsen had passed away, a great musician and artist, a man not being kind to his health, living a rather unstructured life, but the music he left us will last as long as there is jazz in this country!!

No further sessions.

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