

**Helge Lien Trio | Tore Brunborg  
Funeral Dance****Music is about singing, dancing, life, and death.**

These are the kinds of things I learned from my teacher and mentor, the incredible Ukrainian pianist Mikhail (Misha) Alperin. Misha turned my world upside down from the moment we met. I was 19 then, and he continued to have a huge influence on me ever since. We didn't see each other very often in later years, but every time we did, I was filled with energy and inspiration. And in every meeting, he said at least one little thing that I would think about for months afterwards, whether it was during a brief conversation in the academy hallway, or a two-hour monologue in his office. He was intense. He celebrated life and love. He was singing, dancing and certainly living through his music. His death has left a void in our world that can never be filled, and he is sorely missed.

Shortly after his passing in May 2018, I was asked by Hasse Anderson at Maijazz Int. Jazz Festival in Stavanger if I would like to team up with Tore Brunborg for a special concert at the 2019 festival.

Tore and I decided to compose new music together and started writing and exchanging ideas. Eventually, we rehearsed and completed the concept with the members of my trio at that time, Per Oddvar Johansen (drums) and Mats Eilertsen (bass).

The concert took place on May 11 2019, exactly one year after Misha's death. We continued to play here and there throughout the year, and we started planning a recording. In October 2019 we performed at the Beijing Jazz Festival in China, with Knut Aalefjær and Johannes Eick as subs, and Asle Karstad taking care of the live sound. This was the moment when I realized I had to make changes in my trio; Knut and Johannes joined the band permanently some months later. In the beginning of 2022, still shaky after that dreadful pandemic, we could finally record the music.

Funeral Dance is dedicated to Misha, I even had him in mind when I composed it. It's not much of a dance tune perhaps, but I always liked such contradictions. I'm sure that Misha would want us to celebrate his life with singing and dancing instead of mourning his death. On this album we do a little bit of both, I guess. I'm forever grateful to have been his student, colleague, and friend.

Helge Lien, December 2022