

LIVE: The Alehouse Sessions, Belgrave Music Hall, Leeds, 08/06/2025

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This is **noisenight** number two hundred and twelve in what has become such an enduring and popular series of crowdfunded gigs where, with the stated aim of breaking down many of the accessibility barriers often associated with experiencing classical music concerts, the **Through the Noise** organisation takes world-leading musicians to iconic independent venues.

Curated and devised by the Norwegian baroque violinist, **Bjarte Eike**, tonight's gig goes by the name of *The Alehouse Sessions* which offers an insight into the music and atmosphere of an English 17th century tavern. It is performed here by the group **Barokksolistene** who are six in number tonight. Stood alongside Eike there is **Per Buhre** (viola), **Hans Knut Sveen** (harmonium), **Fredrick Bock** (guitar), **Steven Player** (dance, guitar), and **Johannes Lundberg** (upright bass), a multinational ensemble of crack musicians.



The Belgrave Music Hall is packed to its Victorian rafters. It is hot and sticky, all 350 tickets having sold out, creating the perfect environment in which to enjoy this theatrical performance that takes its inspiration from the tumultuous period in English history when the country was under the rule of Oliver Cromwell. At that time, the lord protector pushed

forward a puritanical “*reformation of manners*” whereby excessive drinking and associated activities such as theatre, music, and dancing were all suppressed and driven to the margins.

For 80 inspired minutes *The Alehouse Sessions* recreate the spirit of those times through song, dance, and theatricality. It is not long before Steven Player approaches the lip of the stage to cut an energetic rug that would have shamed many a man half his 66 years. The traditional English tune ‘*The Virgin Queen*’ is introduced by Bjarte Eike as “*a big hit from 1651.*” There is certainly much merit in Barokksolistene’s assertion that what they create here “*is just old pop music.*” And humour is never far away from the surface of a Barokksolistene show, one where fun and enjoyment are key to the entire experience.

The old sea shanty ‘*Haul Away Joe*’ has Eike engaging the crowd in an animated call-and-response routine. A series of traditional folk tunes from Shetland and Scandinavia follow before the band encore with ‘*The Spanish Set*’ which includes a frantic and most dramatic instrumental face-off between violin and viola and culminates in a dramatic barroom brawl enacted by the six musicians. It is wonderful entertainment and goes a long way towards making such music far more accessible to a much greater number of people.



More photos of [The Alehouse Sessions at Belgrave Music Hall in Leeds](#)