



Nordic News

240 Sparks Street, PO Box 55023, Ottawa, ON K1P 1A1

Tancred Ibsen and the Scandinavia Cinema

Carleton University is lucky to have on loan an expert on Norwegian cinema, Professor Gunnar Iversen from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. His extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for Scandinavian cinema was obvious when he gave a detailed and fascinating talk to the CNS on April 19, 2017. He spoke for 45 minutes without notes and gave us an overview not only of the life of “the Ibsen of the movies” but also of Norwegian cinema, with quite a bit of information about cinema in the other Scandinavian countries thrown in for good measure. What an interesting and educational experience! Here is just some of what we learned...

Great things were expected of Tancred Ibsen from the moment he was born, a heavy burden to bear for anyone and a particular disadvantage in Norwegian culture. (Traditionally, the iconic hero of Norwegian culture starts his life practically unnoticed and with very little expected of him. It is only later in life that he surprises everyone by using his wits to achieve great things in the world. Such is the story of “askeladden”, the unpromising youngest son in traditional Norwegian folklore who sits daydreaming by the fireplace while his older brothers set out into the world achieve great things. “Askeladden” is said to symbolize Norway’s historical place in Scandinavia in comparison to Sweden and Denmark. *HH*)



Askeladden

Tancred Ibsen was the grandson of those two great icons of Norwegian culture, Henrik Ibsen and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. His father was Sigurd Ibsen, the Prime Minister of Norway in Stockholm from 1903 to 1905, and his mother was the famous mezzo-soprano Bergliot Ibsen. Tancred practically had royalty status when he was born in 1893 and so was doomed from the start to fail to live up to the Norwegian ideal. It must often have seemed to him that everything went downhill from the moment he was born. When he started school, it became clear that he was not a scholar like his grandfathers and his father. His talents seemed to lie more in athletics and when he joined the Norwegian Air Force as a young man, he showed himself to be quite a daredevil. But without any higher level education, he had no opportunity for advancement so he started his own airline, which went bankrupt.

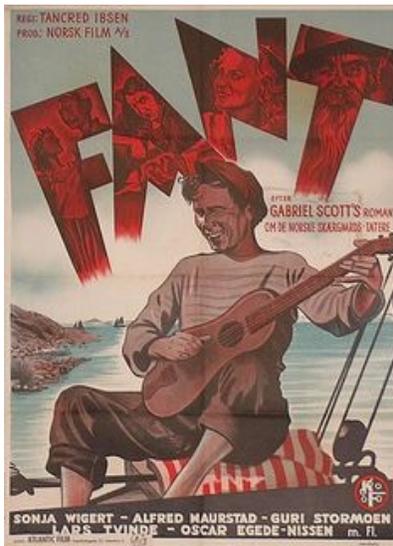
He married the Norwegian dancer and actress Lillebil, living in the shadow of her talent and fame and following her around as she acted in major films in Europe, danced on the stage in Berlin, and played the role of Anitra in a performance of “Peer Gynt” in New York. When Lillebil became a famous star on Broadway, Tancred tagged along, getting to know some very prominent American actors of that era. While his wife pursued her successful career, Tancred started going to the movies just to pass the time. He was not impressed with what he saw and decided he wanted to put his own mark on the cinema - to “Ibsenize” film. His connections in the major movie-making circles helped him to get a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Hollywood, but six months later he left them without having accomplished much.

In 1926 he headed back to Norway where the films that were being made were mostly rural romantic dramas, not the type of film that Tancred was interested in making. But a play set in Oslo’s factory district in the 1920’s caught his attention and inspired him to make his first film, “Den Store Barsedåpen” (my translation - “The Big Baptism”). It depicted working class people in their daily lives and struggles. Tancred strove for an authentic depiction of such people, including making sure that the actors spoke the way they actually spoke in real life. The first full-length feature film made



in Norway that featured sound, it was a big and immediate success. It would revolutionize Norwegian cinema and have a major impact on Scandinavian cinema as a whole. If you understand Norwegian, it is still very watchable and worth viewing on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g0FnTHE9ql>.

In the following years, Tancred Ibsen directed a number of Swedish light comedies as well as a few more Norwegian films. Then in 1937 he directed the Norwegian film “Fant”, (“The Tramp”) which was destined to become a Norwegian classic. Definitive proof that Norway was capable of making popular films that met international standards, it signalled the start of the golden age of Norwegian cinema. (It is also available, in Norwegian, on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLDsuYMoqM>.)



His next big success was a film called “Gjert Baardsen.” Based on the true story of a Norwegian outlaw in the 1800’s, it would become another perennial favourite on Norwegian television. You can view it in Norwegian on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb0jJG34iI0>.

During World War II, Ibsen assisted the Norwegian Armed Forces. As a result he was arrested in 1943 by the German occupiers of Norway and imprisoned until the end of the War. On his release, he got back into film-making, but his moment had passed. He misjudged the appetite of his audience, who were hungry for dramas about the occupation. The comedies and experimental films he directed were complete flops.

In 1950, Tancred Ibsen made the film that Professor Iversen considers to have been his masterpiece. It is called “To Mistenkelige Personer” (Two Suspicious Persons), and is based on an actual Norwegian murder case from 1926. But the Norwegian High Court banned the release of the film to protect the privacy of one of the men imprisoned for the murder. Although made in 1950, the film was finally shown for the first time in 2007, 29 years after Ibsen’s death, and then only in a few select venues. The film was posted to Youtube on March 22, 2017 and as of this writing has had only 67 views. If you understand Norwegian, this is your chance to be one of the early viewers of

this film, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVQJn_G9r94) a truly remarkable one according to Professor Iversen.



Tancred Ibsen at work

Ibsen made fewer and fewer films after that - his big successes had been in the 1930's. But those films remain Norwegian classics and in the end Tancred Ibsen did leave his own mark on Scandinavian cinema.

These days around 30 films are made every year in Norway, financed at least in part by the state. "Trolljegeren" (The Trollhunter) a 2010 "mockumentary," is a recent one that has been distributed internationally to positive reviews. (I have seen it and recommend it.) Its producers are now working on a new film to be called "Askeladden".



Professor Iversen's talk was a real eye-opener for many of us and we were very pleased to hear that he has accepted a permanent appointment at Carleton University. Perhaps he will consider joining the Canadian Nordic Society, or at least returning in the future to share some more of his deep knowledge and appreciation for Scandinavian cinema.

New CNS Council and Plans for Upcoming Season (2017-18)

Our Annual General Meeting was held on May 24 resulting in the following new Council:

- President Karin Birnbaum
- Vice-president Trygve John Ringereide
- Treasurer Lennart Nylund
- Secretary Astrid Ahlgren
- Councillor Brendon Fraser
- Councillor Hilde Huus
- Councillor Hanne Sjøborg

Many thanks were extended to Tim Mark and Bruce Miller for everything they have done for the Canadian Nordic Society.

The 2016-17 Council has already got the ball rolling on some exciting plans for the upcoming season. Some of our activities are focused on Finland's big year of 2017 - the centenary of its independence. Lots of prep work has already been done for a special Nordic Gala on November 9, as well as a concert of Finnish music on October 21, which is being organized in partnership with the Canadian Friends of Finland.

June Luncheon

The final luncheon of the season takes place on Monday, June 5, at the Army Officers' Mess, 149 Somerset Street West, at noon as usual. Come out for one last visit with your fellow members before the summer!

Trygve Ringereide's Life Story Can Now Be Read Online

The life story of **Trygve Ringereide** is now available online at: <http://canadiannordicsociety.com/Trygve-Ringereide.pdf> On February 15, his son and our new Vice-President Trygve John Ringereide told the CNS the fascinating story of his father's escape from Nazi-occupied Norway in 1941, his subsequent career at Little Norway in Canada, and his very active and extremely accomplished life afterwards. It makes for very interesting reading and is illustrated with photos.

Other Recommended Summer Reading

If you enjoy Nordic Noir crime stories, you may want to check out Jo Nesbø's latest Harry Hole thriller, "**The Thirst**". It is apparently very dark indeed, but has had great reviews. A couple of our members found it "very entertaining, typical Norwegian crime, and easy summer reading".

I bought “**The Nordic Theory of Everything: In Search of A Better Life**”, by Finnish author Anu Partanen after reading a positive review of it in the *New York Times*. The author moved to the United States after having married an American and has lots of interesting observations about both Finnish society and American society. I learned a lot about both when I read this book.

CNS was recently contacted by McGill-University Press about a book that they have just published called “**A Grand Adventure, the Lives of Helge and Anne Stine Ingstad and Their Discovery of A Viking Settlement in North America.**” You can read a review of it by *Atlantic Books Today* here: <http://atlanticbookstoday.ca/a-grand-adventure-a-scientific-feminist-love-biography-of-helge-and-anne-stine-ingstad/>

Upcoming Events of Interest

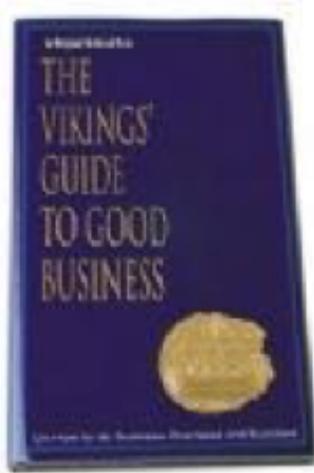
- There are still spots available for the special presentation “**Lessons from the Antarctic - How Amundsen Won the Race to the South Pole**”. Mr. Geir Kløver, Director of the Fram Museum in Norway, will be giving the presentation on Friday, **June 2** at 12:00 noon at the Clarkstown Kitchen and Bar, 94 Beechwood Ave. The price is \$30 plus tax/gratuity. Please confirm your presence by email to secretary@canadianordicsociety.com. This event is open to non-members. Free parking.
- Danish short film **Vitello Digs a Hole** will be screened in Ottawa at the [Fourth European Union Festival](#) which runs from **June 2 to June 4**. “How do you find a new friend when you’re bored? In the short film by the Danish director Dorte Bengtson, the young boy Vitello is bored and has no one to play with. Until he meets Brat. Brat comes up with the idea that in order to find Vitello a new friend they have to dig a hole in the bicycle path and catch the new friend, but things do not go according to Brat’s plan...” Check [Fourth European Union Festival](#) webpage for schedule.
- **A Classical Treat**: Every year in early June, the Embassy of Sweden has been inviting two students of classical music to come and perform in the spirit of the great Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. This year for the first time the Canadian Nordic Society will be co-sponsoring the Jenny Lind Concert with the Embassy of Sweden. This “Classical Treat Concert”, will take place on Wednesday, **June 7**, 7:30 PM at [McKay United Church](#), 39 Dufferin Road, at Mackay Street, Ottawa. The concert is being organized by CNS member Costa Kapsalis. The students are soprano Ylva Stenberg and pianist Allan Timofeitchik. (You can hear a sample of Ylva Stenberg’s singing at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rws8d98a0kY>). (Admission is free but freewill donations are gladly accepted, suggested \$10) Wine and cheese reception to follow.
- **Juhannus celebration** on Sunday, **June 25**, at 6:00 PM at [Billings Estate](#), 2100 Cabot Street, Ottawa. Further details to come via CNS-announce.

Contributions to Nordic News

We appreciate receiving your articles and news to include in the *Nordic News*! Please email them to the editor, Hilde Huus, at communications@nordicsociety.com

www.canadiannordicsociety.com
email: info@canadiannordicsociety.com
facebook.com/canadiannordicsociety

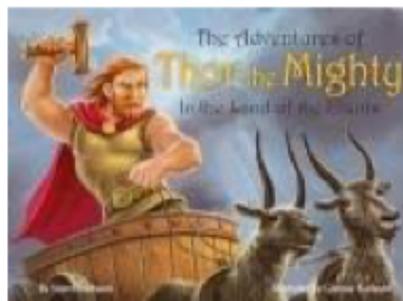
Gudrun Publishing



Gudrun Publishing was established in Reykjavik in 1992. Gudrun books are now represented in museums and bookshops right across Scandinavia and all over the world.

Our focus is on books about Scandinavian literature and culture. We offer a number of series on these topics. The best-known is called "The Viking Series". It includes the "Vikings Guide to Good Business", "The Sayings of the Vikings", "The Viking Gods", and many more.

Children can learn about Nordic mythology in "The Adventures of Thor the Mighty".



Gudrun Publishing also offers the book series "Art Souvenir". They introduce the reader to different Scandinavian artists and art genres, for example Edvard Munch and Viking Art.

To view the books we have on offer, please visit our website www.gudrunpublishing.com

Join CNS

You can join CNS online, by mail, or in person. We encourage you to pay online using PayPal. This is the quickest and most efficient method.

Online

To join online, go to the CNS website (<http://www.canadiannordicsociety.com/join-cns.html>) and complete the membership form . Payment may be made through PayPal.

Note: it is not necessary to have a PayPal account.

By mail

Please print and complete the membership form below, enclose a cheque payable to the Canadian Nordic Society and mail to:

Canadian Nordic Society
240 Sparks Street
Box 55023
Ottawa, ON
K1P 1A1

In person

You can join in person when you attend one of our luncheons or speaker events. Please speak to any one of our Council members



Canadian Nordic Society

240 Sparks Street, PO Box 55023, Ottawa, ON K1P 1A1

www.canadiannordicsociety.com

Membership Application/Renewal

Date: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone (home): _____ Phone (work): _____

Email: _____

Family Membership \$45, Individual Membership \$30, Student \$20