



HUGI GUÐMUNDSSON

WIND BELLS

REYKJAVÍK CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

ÁSHILDUR HARALDSDÓTTIR

HILDIGUNNUR EINARSDÓTTIR



ABOUT THE MUSIC

The title piece, *Equilibrium IV: Windbells*, was the seed this whole album grew from. It was premièred under rather unusual circumstances at the 2005 World Expo in Japan in a venue that more closely resembled a stadium than a concert stage for classical music. I was an integral part of the performance due to the interactive electronics in the piece. We had practiced that I would maintain eye contact with the musicians during performances, just a few meters from the stage. However, the mixer I was operating at the concert was housed in something that resembled an air traffic control tower some 100 meters away from the stage. Or at least it felt that way. From my perspective, the musicians were like tiny ants in one corner of the enormous stage and they could not see me at all. Despite these outlandish circumstances, we somehow managed to perform the piece. It has since become one of my most performed chamber pieces and has received several awards and recognitions. It has never been recorded in a studio up until now. So, after a recent performance with Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra, where it received very warm reviews, we decided it was time to do something about it. That snowballed into what is now this album.

Equilibrium IV: Windbells is the oldest piece on the album, which spans seventeen years of my career. Looking back at this composition now, I almost feel like I'm again in that surreal air traffic control tower in Japan. I can also see early patterns emerging in this relatively early piece. Patterns that echo throughout the album. There are the contrasts of Crumb, the meditateness of Messiaen and the atmospheric dramaturgy of my uncle and great musical influence Hafliði Hallgrímsson. There are plenty of other influences, and I have long since given up on hiding them or being ashamed of them. On the contrary, I find it fascinating how one composer can plant a seed that germinates within another composer. It is a process as organic and natural as life itself.

One of the early things I see is a fascination with the concept of time and transitions from order to chaos, and vice versa. That is the very concept of *Entropy*, where the whole idea behind the two contrasting movements is that they are like snapshots of a universe that at first is dense and compact, but in the second movement the very same musical material is in a higher state of entropy—less dense and very slowly starting to fall apart. *Entropy* was commissioned by Ensemble Prisme.

Lux, meaning 'light' in Latin, actually deals with very similar concepts. Starting out in at least a partially rhythmical order, it ends up breaking apart with the same motive becoming slower and deeper while the solo flute seeks upwards, towards the light. It was originally written for solo flute and a flute choir of twelve flutes, but my plan from the start was to make a version for solo flute and electronics using only the flute sounds as a source for the electronic part. The piece was written for Melkorka Ólafsdóttir, who performs all the flute sounds heard in the electronic part.

Brot ('Fragments') deals with a different aspect of time than the previous pieces. I wanted to base it around three very contrasting musical fragments or sketches that I had lying around. Somehow the idea arose that in order to get from one to the next, one would need to travel back in time through the previous movement. The electronics in the intermezzos are therefore mostly a recording of the previous movement, played in reverse. This sort of time travel is obviously very dangerous and can bring you to unexpected places, as it does in the last movement of the piece. The piece was commissioned by the ensemble Contemporánea.

Songs from Hávamál II is one of several pieces where I use verses from Hávamál ('Words of the High One'), an old Icelandic poem which is preserved in a 13th-century manuscript. Attributed to the Nordic god Odin, the poem imparts wisdom and good advice on life and proper conduct. Conceptually, the piece is possibly the odd one out on this album. However, there are links in it to my fascination with time and "time travel" in the form of hints of music from the past that are both eerily familiar and new at the same time. The piece was commissioned by the Reykholt Summer Music Festival, but is presented here in a new and revised version for a larger ensemble.

Hugi Guðmundsson

SONGS FROM HÁVAMÁL II

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|----|---|--|----|--|---|
| 13 | Ungur var eg forðum,
fór eg einn saman,
þá varð eg villur vega,
auðigur þóttumst
er eg annan fann.
Maður er manns gaman. | Young was I once,
I walked alone,
and bewildered seemed in the way;
then I found me another
and rich I thought me,
for man is the joy of man. | 15 | Voðir mínar
gaf eg velli að
tveim trémönnum.
Rekkar það þóttust
er þeir rift höfðu,
neis er nökkvinn halur. | My garments once
I gave in the field
to two land-marks made as men;
heroes they seemed
when once they were clothed;
'tis the naked who suffer shame! |
| 14 | Mildir, fræknir
menn best lifa,
sjaldan sút ala.
En ósnjallur maður
uggir hotvetna,
sýtir æ glöggur við gjöfum. | Most blest is he
who lives free and bold
and nurses never a grief,
for the fearful man
is dismayed by aught,
and the mean one mourns over giving. | 16 | Hrörnar þöll
sú er stendur þorpi á,
hlýr-at henni borkur né barr.
Svo er maður
sá er manngi ann,
hvað skal hann lengi lifa? | The pine tree wastes
which is perched on the hill,
nor bark nor needles shelter it;
such is the man
whom none doth love;
for what should he longer live? |
| | | | 17 | Lítilla sanda,
lítilla sæva,
lítill eru geð guma.
Því að allir menn
urðu-t jafnspakir,
hálf er öld hvar. | Little the sand
if little the seas,
little are minds of men,
for ne'er in the world
were all equally wise,
'tis shared by the fools and the sage. |



Icelandic composer **HUGI GUÐMUNDSSON** studied composition at the Reykjavík College of Music and the Royal Danish Academy of Music, and electronic music at the Institute of Sonology in The Hague. His composition teachers included Hans Abrahamsen and Bent Sørensen. Hugi Guðmundsson has received several awards and recognitions for his work, including multiple Icelandic Music Awards, nominations for the Reumert Awards and the Carl Prize, two nominations for the Nordic Council Music Prize and multiple recommendations at the International Rostrum of Composers. He has lived most of his professional life in Denmark, where in 2014 he was awarded the prestigious three-year grant by the Danish Arts Council. In 2015, he received the most prestigious award given to Icelandic artists, the Optimism Award, awarded to one artist each year by the president of Iceland. Among Hugi Guðmundsson's large-scale works are the oratorio *The Gospel of Mary*, premièred in 2022, and the opera *Hamlet in Absentia*, which has received several awards and nominations, including a nomination for the Nordic Council Music Prize in 2018. The present album, *Windbells*, is Hugi Guðmundsson's third portrait album, but his music—works for choir in particular—has been featured on numerous other albums. His fourth portrait album, *The Gospel of Mary*, will be released by Dacapo Records in 2023.

—hugigudmundsson.com



Photo: @Jó.B.

Icelandic flutist **ÁSHILDUR HARALDSDÓTTIR** studied at The Juilliard School and the Paris Conservatory where she was the first flutist to enroll in the 'Cycle de perfectionnement'. She has won prizes at many international competitions, including The New England Conservatory Commencement Competition, The James Pappoutsakis Memorial Flute Competition and The Tunbridge Wells International Music Competition. Áshildur Haraldsdóttir has appeared in concert with orchestras such as I Solisti Veneti and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. She has appeared on radio and television in more than twenty countries. She has recorded six solo albums in Sweden and Iceland, the last of which was nominated for the Icelandic Music Awards. Áshildur Haraldsdóttir is a member of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra and teaches flute at the Reykjavík College of Music.



Photo: @ Saga Sigurdardóttir

Icelandic mezzo-soprano **HILDIGUNNUR EINARSDÓTTIR** graduated with an ABRSM Diploma from the Reykjavík Academy of Singing and Vocal Arts in 2010, where her teachers included Signý Sæmundsdóttir and Ólöf Kolbrún Harðardóttir. She studied in Berlin with Janet Williams and Kathryn Wright, and attended private classes with Jón Þorsteinsson in Utrecht. She has performed as a soloist with the Icelandic Opera, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and various orchestras in Iceland and abroad, notably in the *St John Passion* and the *Christmas Oratorio* by Bach, and in *Messiah and Judas Maccabaeus* by Handel. Hildigunnur Einarsdóttir has premièred numerous compositions by Icelandic contemporary composers and has held several lieder concerts. She was nominated as the Singer of the Year in 2014 at the Icelandic Music Awards.

REYKJAVÍK CHAMBER ORCHESTRA was founded in 1974 under the leadership of Rut Ingólfsdóttir. The orchestra performs in groupings ranging from three to 35 musicians. Its members are active in the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, as teachers and as freelance musicians, with all of them sharing the goal of enriching Icelandic musical life with performances of chamber music from various periods. The orchestra is well known for its wide-ranging repertoire and excellent performances, notably its popular Baroque Christmas concerts. The group has premiered a host of Icelandic and foreign works, many of which have been composed especially for it. Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra has worked with a number of distinguished conductors, performs regularly in Iceland and abroad, and has recorded extensively for Icelandic radio and television. The orchestra is a frequent guest at Reykjavík Arts Festival and has appeared at numerous festivals in other countries. Since the opening of the Harpa Concert Hall in 2011, Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra has held regular concerts there, continuing to be an important feature of musical life in Iceland.

—kammersveit.is



PERFORMERS

Áshildur Haraldsdóttir ↔ Flute, Piccolo Flute

Julia Hantschel ↔ Oboe, Cor Anglais

Rúnar Óskarsson ↔ Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Conductor (13–17)

Helga Bryndís Magnúsdóttir ↔ Piano

Guðmundur Pétursson ↔ Guitar

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir ↔ Violin

Bryndís Pálsdóttir ↔ Violin

Sarah Buckley ↔ Viola

Hrafnkell Orri Egilsson ↔ Cello

Richard Korn ↔ Double Bass

Hildigunnur Einarsdóttir ↔ Mezzo-Soprano

Asbjørn Ibsen Bruun ↔ Conductor (4–7)

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CREDITS

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ENTROPY (2019)

Flute, Clarinet, Cello, Piano

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|-------|--|-------|
| [1] | I. Arrow of Time | 02:52 |
| [2] | II. Asymmetry of Time (Hommage à Olivier Messiaen) | 06:30 |

[3] LUX (2009/2011) 10:33

Flute, Electronics

EQUILIBRIUM IV: WINDBELLS (2005)

Bass Flute, Bass Clarinet, Cello, Guitar, Piano, Electronics

- | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------|
| [4] | I. Agitated | 04:51 |
| [5] | II. Funeral in a Deserted Church | 03:00 |
| [6] | III. Wind Interrupt | 03:16 |
| [7] | IV. Foreign | 03:50 |

BROT (2011)

Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Double Bass, Electronics

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|--------|-------------------|-------|
| [8] | I. Ostinato | 01:44 |
| [9] | II. Intermezzo I | 01:31 |
| [10] | III. Chorale | 02:50 |
| [11] | IV. Intermezzo II | 01:55 |
| [12] | V. Danse Macabre | 02:42 |

SONGS FROM HÁVAMÁL II (2014/2021)

Flute/Piccolo, Oboe/Cor Anglais, String Quintet, Piano, Mezzo-Soprano

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|--------|------------------------|-------|
| [13] | I. Ungur var eg forðum | 02:30 |
| [14] | II. Mildir, frækni | 02:01 |
| [15] | III. Voðir mínar | 02:19 |
| [16] | IV. Hrörnar þöll | 03:55 |
| [17] | V. Lítilla sanda | 04:37 |