

Haukur Tómasson  
Reaction

EKKI MINNA

Haukur Tómasson (b. 1960)

## Reaction

EKKI MINNA

Jónas Ásgeir Ásgeirsson, accordion  
Andrew Power, cello

**Reaction** (2006, rev. 2021)

Version for accordion and cello

1	I	2:14
2	II	2:25
3	III	3:41
4	IV	3:12

World premiere recording

Total 11:33



Haukur Tómasson

# From Ethereal Heights to Sonorous Depths

By the Dacapo Records staff in collaboration with EKKI MINNA

*Reaction* (2006) by Icelandic composer Haukur Tómasson opens with an almost hesitant exchange between the two instruments, accordion and cello – as if they were old acquaintances cautiously resuming a conversation. This gentle opening sets the scene for a work that constantly shifts in the relationship between the two instruments – merged and in playful opposition – unfolding in a series of contrasting episodes. Bright, lively passages with energetic rhythmic elements alternate with slower, more majestic and harmonically rich sections. In this way, Tómasson explores the instruments' unique characteristics and possibilities, from ethereal heights to sonorous depths.

At times, the accordion functions as a kind of artificial overtone machine for the cello, an idea reflected in Tómasson's working title for the piece, *Die künstliche Obertonmaschine*. This concept allows the composer to create complex timbres and harmonic textures that blur the boundaries between the two instruments. Elsewhere, they engage in a more pronounced dialogue, reacting to each other in what sound engineer Sebastian Vinther Olsen aptly describes as 'two old brawlers having a go at each other'.

The piece reaches its climax in the third movement, where the two instruments connect in an energetic uni-

son section. This passage, brimming with shared *joie de vivre*, encapsulates the spirit of the entire work. From this point, the instruments hurl themselves from the highest registers to the lowest, as if to embrace the full spectrum of their expression.

*Reaction*, which Tómasson originally scored for accordion and double bass, was reworked in 2021 for accordion and cello at the request of EKKI MINNA. The composer took the opportunity not just to arrange the piece, but also to undertake a comprehensive revision, which he himself called a 'recomposition'. After the premiere in Copenhagen that same year, Tómasson made further adjustments before the work was recorded by EKKI MINNA in Tingbjerg Church in June 2023.

Like grand sonatas and miniature works, *Reaction* draws on music history whilst remaining distinctly contemporary. The work's alternation between connected textures and contrapuntal dialogue is reminiscent of Baroque concerto forms, while its rhythmic vitality and tonal exploration lend it a decidedly modern expression. In this way, Tómasson speaks to both past and present, creating a work that is at once familiar and refreshingly new.

**EKKI MINNA** performs, curates and collaborates.

Through their multifaceted interdisciplinary approach, they discover and share genre-fluid avenues of expression and communication. Described as ‘self-consciously quirky’ and ‘melt[ing] us all, via choreography, into another plane altogether’, they consciously expand the accordion and cello formation beyond instrumentation into something introspective and conscious.

Through their collaborative compositional methodology, the duo takes a hands-on approach to co-creation with composers and artists, from conception to realisation, often with a loose determination and a raw experimentalism free from boundaries. Combining media such as documentation, multimedia, dance, choreography, and light design, they often compose interludes curating an overarching audio-visual experience.

Their collaborations have included *a lot of Angels to Consider* with Áslaug Magnúsdóttir, premiered at Dark Music Days, Iceland; the choreographed installations *A( )part & B(e)part* co-composed with Magnúsdóttir; augmented performances in dialogue with Johannes Kreidler and Sarah Nemtsov; and productions of Stefan Prins’s *Generation Kill* alongside K!ART. The duo recently made a reappearance at the Dark Music Days festival, as well as premiering new commissions by Magnúsdóttir, Jeppe Just Christensen and Mads Emil Dreyer in their self-curated project *Augmentations*.

EKKI MINNA is currently collaborating with composers Matthew Grouse and Niklas Ottander on large-scale works exploring extra-musical elements and integrated multimedia, with a planned performance at MINU Festival in 2025.

The Icelandic composer **Haukur Tómasson** studied at the Reykjavík College of Music and earned a master’s degree from the University of California, San Diego. His works span the full range of classical music, including concertos for violin, viola, flute, two double basses, and piano. He was awarded the 2004 Nordic Council Music Prize for his opera *Guðrún’s 4th Song*. In 2017, his Piano Concerto No. 2 was premiered in Hamburg by Víkingur Ólafsson, with the NDR Elbphilharmonie conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Tómasson’s musical language is characterised by its vibrancy and scintillating quality. His compositions pulsate with intense rhythmic activity, painting sonic landscapes with bright, colourful timbres. He displays a remarkable talent for crafting novel and effective instrumental combinations, pushing the boundaries of traditional orchestration.

The energy in Tómasson’s music is palpable, often manifesting in complex structures that challenge both performers and listeners. Yet, amidst this intricate tapestry, Tómasson demonstrates masterful control over pacing and dynamics. The rapidly moving surface rhythms that define much of his work occasionally give way to moments of profound stillness, where slowly moving sonorities emerge. These passages, imbued with imposing power and austere beauty, provide a striking contrast to the bustling energy that surrounds them.



EKKI MINNA

## Fra æteriske højder til klangfulde dybder

Af Dacapo Records i samarbejde med EKKI MINNA

*Reaction* (2006) af islandske Haukur Tómasson åbner med en nærmest tøvende ordveksling mellem to instrumenter, akkordeon og cello – som var det to gamle bekendtskaber, der forsigtigt genoptager en samtale. Den blide åbning sætter scenen for et værk, der konstant skifter i forholdet mellem de to instrumenter – sammen-smeltet og i legende opposition – og udfolder sig i en række kontrasterende episoder. Lyse, livlige passager med energiske rytmiske elementer veksler med langsomme, mere majestætiske og harmonisk fyldige sektioner. På denne måde udforsker Tómasson instrumenternes særkender og muligheder, fra æteriske højder til klangfulde dybder.

Til tider fungerer akkordeonet som en slags kunstig overtonemaskine for celloen, en idé der afspejles i Tómassons arbejdstitel til værket, *Die künstliche Obertonmaschine*. Dette koncept giver mulighed for at skabe komplekse klangfarver og harmoniske teksturer, der slører grænserne mellem de to instrumenter. Andre steder engagerer de sig i en mere markant dialog, hvor de reagerer på hinanden i, hvad tonemester Sebastian Vinther Olsen rammende beskriver som ”to gamle slagsbrødre, der går i kødet på hinanden”.

I værkets tredje sats, hvor de to instrumenter forenes i et energisk unisont afsnit, når stykket sit klimaks. Denne passage, fyldt med fælles livsglæde, indkapsler hele

værkets ånd. Fra dette punkt kaster instrumenterne sig fra de højeste registre til de dybeste, som for at omfavne hele spektret af deres udtryk.

*Reaction*, som Tómasson oprindeligt instrumenterede for akkordeon og kontrabas, blev i 2021 omarbejdet til akkordeon og cello på opfordring af EKKI MINNA. Komponisten benyttede lejligheden til ikke blot at arrangere stykket, men også til at foretage en omfattende revision, som han selv kaldte en ”rekomposition”. Efter premieren i København samme år foretog Tómasson yderligere tilpasninger, inden værket blev indspillet af EKKI MINNA i Tingbjerg Kirke i juni 2023.

Ligesom store sonater og miniatureværker trækker *Reaction* på musikhistorien, samtidig med at det forbliver udpræget nutidigt. Værkets vekslen mellem forbundne teksturer og kontrapunktisk dialog minder om barokkens koncertformer, mens dets rytmiske vitalitet og klanglige udforskning i høj grad tilfører det et moderne udtryk. På denne måde taler Tómasson til både fortid og nutid og skaber et værk, der på én gang er velkendt og forfriskende nyt.

**EKKI MINNA** optræder, kuraterer og samarbejder. Duoen, der består af cellist Andrew Power og akkordeonist Jónas Ásgeir Ásgeirsson, er især kendt for at turde udfordre de traditionelle rammer for musik og kunst. Med en tværfaglig tilgang opdager og deler de nye måder at udtrykke sig på, på tværs af genrer og medier. Duoen er blevet beskrevet som både ”bevidst skæve” og ”smeltende os alle, gennem koreografi, til et helt andet plan”. Deres innovative arbejde strækker sig langt ud over de konventionelle roller for deres instrumenter og henimod noget mere introspektivt og bevidst.

Gennem deres samarbejdende kompositionsmetode tager duoen en praktisk tilgang til samskabelse med komponister og kunstnere, fra idéudvikling til færdiggørelse. Ofte foregår dette med en fri struktur og en rå, eksperimenterende stil uden begrænsninger. Ved at kombinere medier som dokumentation, multimedie, dans, koreografi og lysdesign skaber de ofte små mellemspill, der sammen danner en overordnet audiovisuel oplevelse.

Deres samarbejder har blandt andet inkluderet *a lot of Angels to Consider* med Áslaug Magnúsdóttir, der havde premiere ved Dark Music Days i Island; de koreograferede installationer *A( )part* og *B(e)part*, som også er skabt sammen med Magnúsdóttir; udvidede optrædener i samarbejde med Johannes Kreidler og Sarah Nemtsov; og produktioner af Stefan Prins' *Generation Kill* i samarbejde med K!ART. For nylig optrådte duoen igen ved Dark Music Days og præsenterede nye værker af Magnúsdóttir, Jeppe Just Christensen og Mads Emil Dreyer i deres selvkuraterede projekt *Augmentations*.

**EKKI MINNA** samarbejder i øjeblikket med komponisterne Matthew Grouse og Niklas Ottander om storskalaværker,

der udforsker ekstramusikalske elementer og integrerede multimedier, med planlagt førsteopførelse på MINU Festival i 2025.

Den islandske komponist **Haukur Tómasson** studerede ved Reykjavík Musikkonservatorium og har en mastergrad fra University of California, San Diego. Hans værker dækker hele spektret indenfor klassisk musik, herunder koncerter for violin, bratsch, fløjte, to kontrabasser og klaver. Han blev tildelt Nordisk Råds Musikpris i 2004 for sin opera *Guðrúns 4. sang*. I 2017 havde hans Klaverkoncert nr. 2 premiere i Hamborg, hvor Víkingur Ólafsson var solist sammen med NDR Elbphilharmonie, dirigeret af Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Tómassons musik er kendetegnet ved sin livlige og glitrende kvalitet. Hans kompositioner er fyldt med intens rytmisk aktivitet og maler lydlandskaber med klare og farverige klange. Han har et særligt talent for at skabe nye, effektive kombinationer af instrumenter, der udfordrer traditionelle opfattelser af orkestrering.

Musikkens energi er tydelig og viser sig ofte i komplekse strukturer, der både udfordrer musikere og lyttere. Alligevel formår Tómasson at styre tempo og dynamik med stor præcision. De hurtigt skiftende rytmer, som dominerer mange af hans værker, giver til tider plads til stille øjeblikke, hvor langsomt bevægende klangbilleder træder frem. Disse passager, præget af en imponerende kraft og stram skønhed, står i skarp kontrast til den hektiske energi, der omgiver dem.

Recorded at Tingbjerg Kirke on 18 June 2023

Recording producers: Sebastian Vinther Olsen, EKKI MINNA

Sound engineer: Sebastian Vinther Olsen

Engineering, mixing, mastering: Sebastian Vinther Olsen

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Liner notes written by the Dacapo Records staff in  
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