

SÆUNN THORSTEINSDÓTTIR

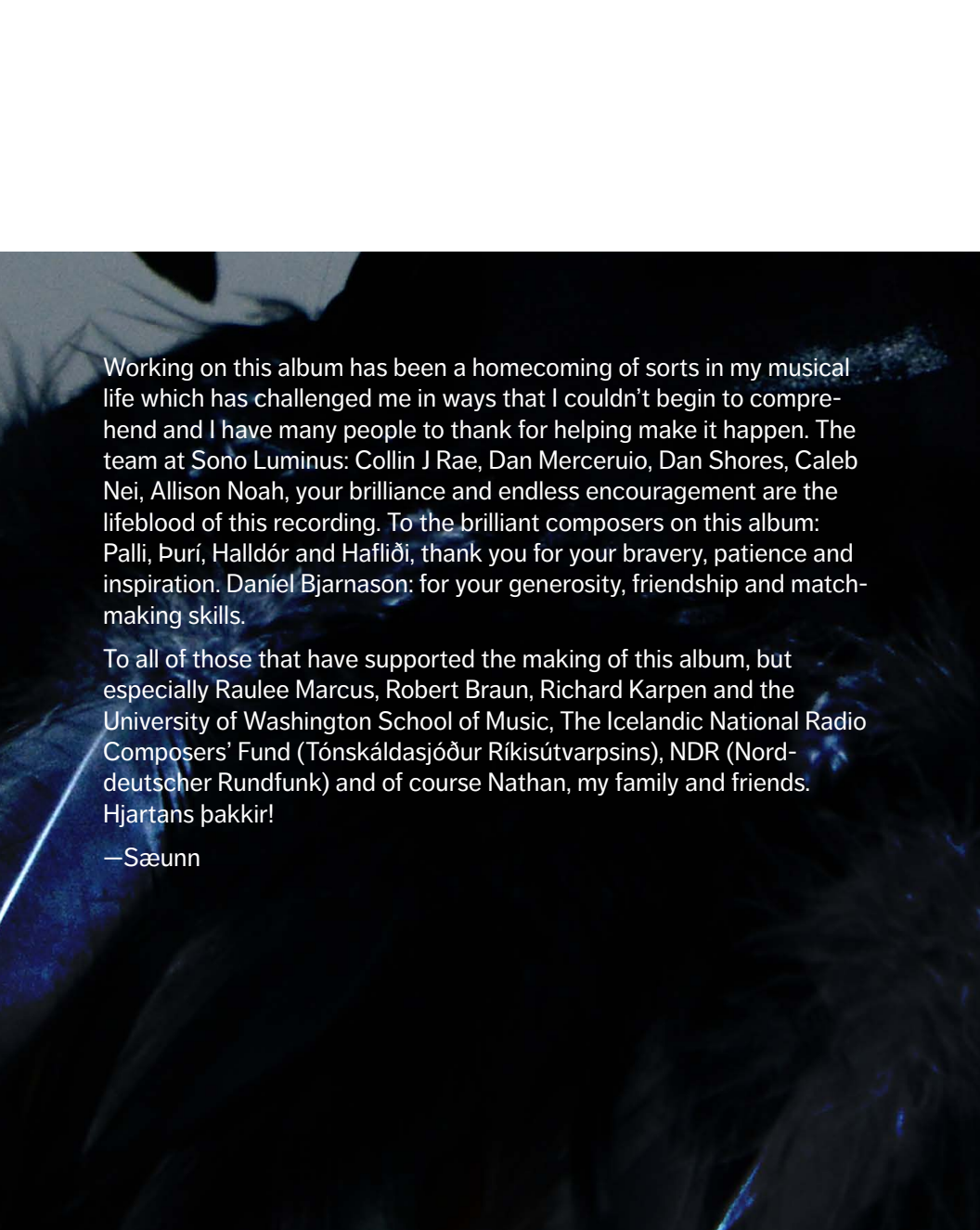


VERNACULAR

Páll Ragnar Pálsson	1	Afterquake	14:09
Þuríður Jónsdóttir	2	48 Images of the Moon	15:03
Halldór Smárason		O	
	3	I. Ljós	3:54
	4	II. Minni	3:56
	5	III. Slokkna	2:05
Hafliði Hallgrímsson		Solitaire	
	6	I. Oration	2:30
	7	II. Serenade	2:12
	8	III. Nocturne	5:45
	9	IV. Dirge	3:49
	10	V. Jig	3:06
		total time	58:07

I dream in Icelandic despite having spent most of my life outside of Iceland. My native language shows itself in other ways too, as I found out early in my musical development when my teacher pointed out that I am extremely sensitive to the textures and harmonic overtones, probably related to the abundance of unvoiced consonants in Icelandic. It is an old language, preserved by isolation, adapting to a quickly changing world. I see classical contemporary music sharing a similar process, finding new sounds and ways of expression through old means in a dynamic dialogue with our way of life.

This project is a collection of pieces by composers that not only share my mothertongue and culture, language and music, but each composer has spent meaningful time abroad, as I have in the US; Páll in Estonia, Þurí in Italy, Halldór in New York and Hafliði in the United Kingdom, and each brings their unique perspective and expression to their work. From the moment that I played Solitaire for the first time, I felt a connection, not only to the music but also physically, as a cellist. The more recent pieces are collaborations with Halldór, Páll and Þuríður and I couldn't have asked for more generous artists to come into my life and allow me to explore my voice through their music.



Working on this album has been a homecoming of sorts in my musical life which has challenged me in ways that I couldn't begin to comprehend and I have many people to thank for helping make it happen. The team at Sono Luminus: Collin J Rae, Dan Merceruio, Dan Shores, Caleb Nei, Allison Noah, your brilliance and endless encouragement are the lifeblood of this recording. To the brilliant composers on this album: Palli, Þurí, Halldór and Hafliði, thank you for your bravery, patience and inspiration. Daníel Bjarnason: for your generosity, friendship and match-making skills.

To all of those that have supported the making of this album, but especially Raulee Marcus, Robert Braun, Richard Karpen and the University of Washington School of Music, The Icelandic National Radio Composers' Fund (Tónskáldasjóður Ríkisútvarpsins), NDR (Nord-deutscher Rundfunk) and of course Nathan, my family and friends. Hjartans þakkir!

—Sæunn

SÆUNN THORSTEINSDÓTTIR

Icelandic-American cellist, Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, enjoys a varied career as a performer, collaborator and educator. She has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Iceland Symphony, among others, and her recital and chamber music performances have taken her to many of the world's prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall, Elbphilharmonie and the Barbican Center. The press have described her playing as "charismatic" and "riveting" (NYTimes) and praised her performances for their "emotional intensity" (LATimes). Born in Reykjavík, Iceland, Sæunn serves on the faculty of the University of Washington in Seattle, teaching cello and chamber music and she is cellist and founding member of Decoda, Affiliate Ensemble of Carnegie Hall.

For more information, please visit www.saeunn.com

PÁLL RAGNAR PÁLSSON

Páll Ragnar Pálsson holds a PhD from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre where he studied composition with Helena Tulve. Páll seeks inspiration from East-European art music. His compositions can be described as organic linear transformations with a spiritual undertone. At the same time Páll's past as a rock musician indirectly affects his approach to sound. In 2017 Páll released his first composer album, *Nostalgia*, on the Smekkleysa label, internationally known as Bad Taste Records. In the 65th International Rostrum of Composers held in Budapest, May 2018, Páll's work *Quake* for cello and chamber orchestra was selected by the delegates as most outstanding in the general category. This piece was the beginning point to cooperation between Páll Ragnar and Sæunn. *Afterquake* for cello, published on this album, is a direct continuation of that project.

pallragnarpalsson.com

A quake

sky-high on the edge of a cliff

right there where the stones crumble into the abyss

look at the beauty

how it glitters in the deep dales beneath the sheer mountains

while the sun shines

look at the blazing brightness,

it bathes the whole world

everything...

always and forever

the waves can never wash away its traces.

Auður Jónsdóttir. *The Big Quake*, 2015.

Text selected and edited by the author.

PURÍÐUR JÓNSDÓTTIR

Puríður Jónsdóttir studied flute and composition at The Reykjavik College of Music and at the Conservatory of Music in Bologna, Italy where she received her diploma in flute, composition and electronic music. Compositions by Jónsdóttir have been commissioned and performed by such ensembles as Caput, Adapter and Curious Chamber Players and by the institutions Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, Radio France, Nord-Deutscher Rundfunk, West-Deutscher Rundfunk, The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, Reykjavik Arts Festival and Nomus. Her works have been performed at festivals Présences radio festival in Paris, Dark Music Days in Reykjavik, Klang Festival in Copenhagen, Nordic Music Days, ISCM and New Directions. Jónsdóttir's compositions have been nominated for the Icelandic Music Awards and for the Nordic Council Music Prize in 2006, 2010 and 2012. In 2004 her piece Flow and Fusion Fusion was selected in "top ten" at The International Rostrum of Composers in Paris (UNESCO). Mrs. Jónsdóttir was awarded a Civitella Ranieri Music Fellowship in 2016.

thuri.is

"48 Images of the Moon" was commissioned by the NDR Elbphilharmonie and was premiered as part of one of the first concerts in the Kammermusiksaal in the new Elbphilharmonie in February 2017. With this piece, Puríður expands the sonic color-palette of the cello, so much so that notating some of these new sounds is quite difficult, therefore working closely with her was both illuminating and inspiring.

To me, this piece is a time capsule, a short meditation in nature. The cello quite literally breathes, each breath slightly nuanced. Although random, I cannot help but instinctively respond to the natural sounds on the field recording, captured here in one continuous take.

—Sæunn

Field recording credit: Magnús Bergsson, made at night close to Holtstangi in Önundarfjörður, Iceland.

HALLDÓR SMÁRASON

Halldór Smárason graduated from the Manhattan School of Music with a M.M.-degree in 2014, as a Fulbright-grantee. His main teachers include composers Dr. Reiko Füting and Atli Ingólfsson, as well as receiving lessons from Beat Furrer. Among others, Halldór has worked with Ensemble intercontemporain, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart des SWR, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Siggí String Quartet, Psappha, Talea, TAK, Oslo Sinfonietta, MSM Symphony, Decoda and Reykjavík's Trio. Furthermore Halldór received the Manhattan Prize and has participated at the Manifeste 2017, Ung Nordisk Musik 2013-2017, Nordic Cool in 2013, Sonic in 2014 and was a composer-in-residence at Við Djúpið 2011, Podium Festival 2014 and Musiikin aika in Viitasaari. Additionally Halldór received the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship in 2018.

Halldór has performed on numerous occasions as well as appeared on recordings as pianist.

halldorsmarason.com

Written for me in 2017, the musical concept piece O is an exploration of light and darkness in three movements by Halldór Smárason for solo cello.

Halldór takes the concept of a candle both literally and figuratively, as the lighting of a candle in the middle movement, but also in form, structure, concept, sound world and meaning. In Iceland, darkness in the winter months has created a need for light and warmth for centuries, and candles continue to be a source for both. This piece explores the meaning and associations with the intimacy, warmth, and the wild yet contained energy of the light of the candle and its effect on the darkness surrounding it.

—Sæunn

HAFLIDI HALLGRIMSSON

Cellist and composer Haflidi Hallgrímsson was born in Akureyri Iceland 1941. After graduating from the Music School in Reykjavík in 1962, he continued his studies with Enrico Mainardi in Rome and subsequently at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he was awarded a Recital Medal and the Madame Suggia Prize. On leaving the Academy he studied composition privately with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. As a cellist he was active as a member of many chamber groups and orchestras including the English Chamber Orchestra, the Haydn String Trio, and the Mondrian Piano Trio. He made his debut at the Wigmore Hall as cellist in 1971 to a great critical acclaim. He was appointed a principal cellist of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in 1977, and left the orchestra in 1983 to devote himself to composition.

His compositions have been performed widely and won several prizes, including the first prize in the 1975 International Viotti competition for VERSE I, and the Wieniawski Prize for POEMI for violin and strings. POEMI was also awarded the prestigious Nordic Council Prize in 1986.

hallgrimsson.org.uk

Solitaire is my first acknowledge composition. It has undergone several revisions. I gave the first performance of Solitaire in 1969 in the Nordic House in Reykjavík, surrounded by my own drawings and paintings.

In 1991 I decided to examine this work more closely and give it a permanent and final form. The 1991 version was premiered by it's dedicatee Gunnar Kvaran on the 29th of september 1991, in the National Gallery of Art in Reykjavík.

A great deal of the original material from 1969 was reinstated with some modifications. The revision resulted in five movements that are very different in nature and character.

Solitaire explores extensively the sound world of the cello available to the contemporary cellist. The first movement is an epigrammatic Oration, followed by a Serenade played pizzicato throughout. The third movement is a Nocturne, and forms the heart of the composition. Then follows Dirge that is lyrical in nature and hints at darker thoughts, leading eventually to the last movement which is a lively and energetic Jig.

—Haflidi



SÆUNN THORSTEINSDÓTTIR VERNACULAR

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sonoluminusstudios.com

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legacyaudio.com



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