SONO LUMINUS

SIGGI STRING QUARTET

SOUTH OF THE CIRCLE

Daníel Bjarnason
1 **Stillshot** (2015) 9:52

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir
Opacity (2014)
2 More 2:38
3 Opacity 4:37
4 Elegia 3:16
5 Less 4:52

Valgeir Sigurðsson
Nebraska (2011)
6 Flat Water 3:12
7 Landlocked 2:46
8 Erosion 1:36
9 Plainsong 3:14

Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir
10 **Fair Flowers** (2018) 14:46

Haukur Tómasson
11 **Serimonia** (2014) 9:06

total time 59:55

UNA SVEINBJARNARDÓTTIR
VIOLIN

HELGA ÞÓRA BJÖRGVINSDÓTTIR
VIOLIN

ÞÓRUNN ÓSK MARINÓSDÓTTIR
VIOLA

SIGURÐUR BJARKI GUNNARSSON
CELLO

SIGGI STRING QUARTET

Siggi String Quartet was founded in 2012 during the Young Scandinavian Composers festival in Reykjavik. The quartet has actively collaborated with current composers and commissioned and premiered numerous works by various composers. The quartet's repertoire extends from the renaissance through the classical masters and Siggi String Quartet four members have great passion for 20. and 21. century repertoire. "Experimenting with sound and texture, improvisation and life electronics is an important part of our work. It does deepen our understanding of the standard repertoire indirectly, and it goes both ways. Playing a late Beethoven parallel to working on Haukur Tómasson Serimonia makes us aim for rhythmical super- precision and working on Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir *Fair Flowers* after performing the same Beethoven pushed us into the long long phrases, I imagined endless moss, grey and green and the tiny wild Icelandic flowers in bright violet and yellow. My piece *Opacity* is more free, the structure is simple and the improvisando feeling is reigning. It is a kind of In-the-moment play, also with timings and texture."

In 2017 Siggi String Quartet recorded the music of Philip Glass with prize-winning pianist Víkingur Ólafsson for Deutsche Grammophon. For this recording the quartet was branded "superb" by Gramophone Magazine and "top-notch" by National Public Radio.

Siggi String Quartet received the Icelandic Music Prize as Performer of the Year 2018.

siggistringquartet.com

Daníel Bjarnason wrote *Stillshot* in 2015. The piece is dreamy and nostalgic and in form resembles a chaconne, where the same chord progression repeats itself throughout. In the middle of the piece there is a retreat from the harmonic structure before it resumes the form until the end.

The composer describes the piece as depicting fragmented memories of a noblewoman. The recollections appear abruptly and vanish quickly, some of them distant but others more focused and clear. The title of the piece refers to the early days of photography where people would have to stay still for considerable time so the camera would produce a clear picture.

DANÍEL BJARNASON

Daníel Bjarnason's music has been described as "coming eerily close to defining classical music's undefinable brave new world" (*Time Out New York*), under conductors such as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, John Adams, Osmo Vanska, André de Ridder and Louis Langree in venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, Lincoln Center, Harpa and the Barbican. Daníel's versatility has also led to collaborations with a broad array of musicians outside the classical field including Sigur Rós, Brian Eno and Ben Frost.

Bjarnason's work has been recognized and nominated on numerous occasions for various rewards. In 2017 he won the Icelandic Music Award for Composition of the year for his opera *Brothers*; for the Album of the year, *Recurrence*, published by Sono Luminus, where he conducted the Icelandic Symphonie Orchestra; and for the Best Soundtrack for his score to the film *Under the Tree*. On that occasion he also got a special prize from the President of Iceland for his contribution to Icelandic music life. In 2018 his opera, *Brothers*, also won the Danish Reumert award for Opera of the year. In 2018 he also won the Nordic Film Composers award for his soundtrack to Hafsteinn Sigurðsson's *Under The Tree*. He has been nominated on different occasions for the Nordic Music Prize and in 2018 he received the Icelandic Optimist Award.

After studying piano, composition and conducting in Reykjavík, Daníel Bjarnason pursued further studies in orchestral conducting at University of Music Freiburg.

Daníel Bjarnason is represented by HarrisonParrott and published by Peters Edition.

Opacity is an experiment where I wrote long, movement-long solos for each instrument of the Quartet. Solos in the String Quartet repertoire are traditionally short and travel between the voices quite frequently. Here, I try to expand the idea of the individual solo and the result is *Opacity*: four columns, each representing the instruments of the String Quartet." The first movement "More" belongs to the second violin. The next movement, "Opacity" is a cello solo, the third "Elegia" a viola lament, and the 'ast movement "Less" is partly improvised by the first violin, spurring reaction from the other three instruments in time and timelessness.

—Una Sveinbjarnardóttir

/ə(ʊ)ˈpasɪti/ noun: **opacity**

the quality of lacking transparency or translucence

UNA SVEINBJARNARDÓTTIR

Una is a violinist/composer. She has premiered a number of compositions and worked closely with Björk (*Homogenic*, *Vulnicura*), Atli Heimir Sveinsson and Jóhann Jóhannsson. She has played with Ensemble Modern and Bedroom Community, in Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester and Deutsche Oper in Berlin, where she studied and lived until 2005. She has worked with Pierre Boulez, Krystof Penderecki, Mstislav Rostropovich, Marek Janowski, Heinz Holliger and Helmut Lachenmann and been guest concertmaster in several orchestras and ensembles. Una is a founding member of Siggi String Quartet and concertmaster of Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra. Una was nominated Performer of the Year as a solo artist, in the Icelandic Music Awards 2018.

Her acclaimed album *Umleikis* with a selection of her compositions for solo violin was released in 2012. Recent works others than String Quartet *Opacity* are *Vögguvísa 1*, (*Lullaby 1*) for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble, *Loss* for soprano and violin (2018) and *Gátt* for cimbalom and harp (2017) as well as theater music to *Doll House Part 2* (Reykjavik City Theater 2018). In her projects Una uses her Hardanger fiddle and chinese viola as well as her Camilli violin. Una wrote the music of "*Konur á rauðum sokkum*" (*Women in Red Stockings*), a documentary on the Women's Rights Movement in Iceland directed by Halla Kristín Einarsdóttir.

Nebraska Quartet was commissioned by The Chiara String Quartet and premiered at Lincoln Center's Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, January 2011. The piece also marked the first formal occasion where I was being asked to write a piece of concert music. Chiara was in residency at the University of Nebraska at the time, so I immediately had the idea to base the new piece on my imagined impressions of these faraway landscapes. Two pieces that I had written just prior as a part of my score for the film *Draumalandið* (*Dreamland*) *Past Tundra* and *Nowhere Land* were arranged for the Chiara Quartet for the same concert. Both of whom deal explicitly with Iceland, and therefore I wanted the new piece to deal with my impressions of Nebraska. I began to draw parallels between geological and geographical properties of Iceland and Nebraska. And notwithstanding obvious contrasts, these sparsely populated, erosive lands share a sense of isolation and timelessness, and vast open spaces. *Nebraska Quartet* is in four movements: i. "Flat Water," ii. "Landlocked," iii. "Erosion," iv. "Plainsong."

—Valgeir Sigurðsson

VALGEIR SIGURÐSSON

Valgeir Sigurðsson is an Icelandic composer and producer. His distinctive music often blurs the lines between contemporary classical writing and esoteric electronic production, sometimes to a point where one is indistinguishable from the other. Valgeir has composed orchestral and chamber music for City of London Sinfonia, Winnipeg Symphony, Crash Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, Nordic Affect and others. He founded the Bedroom Community label in 2006 with Nico Muhly and Ben Frost, where he cemented his sonic signature and his 4th LP *Dissonance* won Album of The Year at the 2018 Iceland Music Awards. He produced albums with Muhly, Frost, Sam Amidon, Daníel Bjarnason and Nadia Sirota on the label. He founded Greenhouse Studios and has worked a as producer, engineer, arranger and/or mixer with artists including Björk, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Feist, Tim Hecker, Anohni, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Víkingur Ólafsson and many others. Valgeir has written music for stage, dance and screen. His film scores include *An Acceptable Loss, The County and Dreamland (Draumalandið)*. He has collaborated with directors such as Falk Richter and Robert Wilson, and composed music for dance productions by Ballet National de Marseilles / ICK Amsterdam and The Stephen Petronio Company. He lives in Reykjavík, Iceland.

The String Quartet *Fair Flowers* was commissioned by Siggi String Quartet for Reykjavík Arts Festival and premiered June 3rd 2018 in Fríkirkjan Church Reykjavík.

The composition is based on a strict system of colors, Mamiko's analysis of a painting of flowers, work of the Icelandic artist Eggert Pétursson. The painting "Án titils" (no title) (2011) shows nature in Northern Iceland and Tröllaskagi Peninsula.

MAMIKO DÍS RAGNARSDÓTTIR

Mamiko Dís (1984) studied composition in Iceland Academy of the Arts graduating in 2008. Parallel to her compositions she is a classical pianist. Her roots in music also come from the jazz and pop genre and Mamiko has tutored on African Marimbas as well as classical piano and music theory. Mamiko has a strong connection to folk music and has made arrangements of folk songs for the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. Mamiko's chamber music pieces have been performed in various European venues. Her nine-movement chamber work *Draumórar* (*Dreaming*) was released in 2016. Mamiko has her own unique style among minimalists and works with specific forms and patterns in many of her projects.

"music of piercing clarity of vision and keenness of ear"
—BBC Music Magazine

Serimonia has a very rigid set up; five types of texture are exposed and repeated in different order, allways played very soft and without interpretation. The quartet should be amplified to allow details in tone-production to be heard. Perhaps this can be likened to a house with external plumbing. The piece was written for and premiered by Siggi String Quartet in 2014 and revised in 2018 for this recording.

HAUKUR TÓMASSON

Haukur Tómasson was awarded the 2004 Nordic Council Music Prize, the greatest honor awarded to a Nordic composer. This award, which Tómasson received for his chamber opera *Guðrún´s 4th Song*, firmly established his stature as one of Scandinavia´s most outstanding composers. The music of Haukur Tómasson is vibrant and scintillating, characterized by intense rhythmic activity, bright, colorful timbres, and a keen ear for novel and effective instrumental combinations. Tómasson´s music bustles with energy and is often quite complex, although the rapidly moving surface rhythm occasionally comes to a halt, giving way to slowly moving sonorities of imposing power and austere beauty. Besides a large body of chamber music, Tómasson´s work includes nine orchestral pieces, eight concertos and the opera *Gudruns 4th Song*. His music is released on BIS and various Icelandic labels.

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SIGGI STRING QUARTET SOUTH OF THE CIRCLE

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