Last Song

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir
Tinna Þorsteinsdóttir

Unmeasured Prelude No. 7 *Louis Couperin (1626-1661)* *arr. Una Sveinbjarnardóttir & Tinna Þorsteinsdóttir*	1:55
Three Marian Prayers	
Máríuvísur (Song for Maria)	2:40
Maríukvæði (Poem for Maria)	2:56
Haustvísur til Máríu (Autumn Song for Maria)	1:45
Atli Heimir Sveinsson (1938-2019)	
Melodie *Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787)* *arr. Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)*	2:38
Icelandic Suite	
Ávarp (Prologue)	3:07
Óttusöngur (Serenade)	2:38
Þjóðlag (Traditional)	3:03
Fiðlulag (Violin Song)	3:21
Vikivaki (Dance)	3:26
Jórunn Viðar (1918-2017)	
I Ensomme Stunde *Ole Bull (1810-1880)* *arr. Una Sveinbjarnardóttir*	2:57
Meditation *Jules Massenet (1842-1912)*	4:10
Winter *Karólína Eiríksdóttir (b. 1951)*	1:22
In a Dream *Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson (1925-2005)*	3:00
Lullaby *Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson*	1:11
Aubade Provencale *Louis Couperin* *arr. Fritz Kreisler*	2:20
Ave Maria *Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)*	1:21
Anima Processional *Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)*	2:46
Last Song before the News *Una Sveinbjarnardóttir (b. 1975)*	4:25
Total Time	51:11

Last Song before the News

The project is inspired by the moment before the realization of something that drastically changes your life, the moment of just being, existing in the moment.

That moment in time is free and full, mindfulness-ish and unaffected by misery, sorrow, regret, shame, anxiety and depression. In my mind it is bright and has a sense of nostalgia.

The title also refers to a daily tradition on Icelandic radio Rás 1, where a song, “last song before the news” would be played just before the news hour at noon. The song would typically be an Icelandic one, sometimes a lullaby, a love song or an ode to scary and gorgeous nature. Or an Icelandic traditional, sometimes an Italian canzone or a Scandinavian sorrow.

Jórunn Viðar’s piece Icelandic Suite sums up all these elements, a piece written for the 2000 years anniversary of inhabitation in Iceland in 1974.

The lightness and the longing are with us throughout the program except in the title piece of mine, Last Song before the News, where apocalyptic visions are awfully obvious and take over early on.

The album is dedicated to my father, Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, whose lightness and passion for music, poetry and history along with his sense of humor has been a lifeline to many people.

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir

violin

Una is a violinist and 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, worked with 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. Early music plays a major role in her musicianship. Una is founding member of Siggi String Quartet and concertmaster of Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra. Una was nominated Performer of the Year as 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 are *Loss* for soprano and violin (2018), *Gátt* for cimbalom and harp (2017) as well as theater music to *Doll House Part 2* (Reykjavik City Theater 2018) and *Darkness and Rain* (2019) written for Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra for Dark Music Days Festival 40 years anniversary in 2020. Una scored "*Konur á rauðum sokkum*"(Women in Red Stockings), documentary on the Women's Rights Movement in Iceland directed by Halla Kristín Einarsdóttir.

Una lives in Reykjavík and spends her free time in Art Galleries and playing tennis.

Tinna Þorsteinsdóttir

piano, prepared piano, toy piano

Tinna has a broad experience with new music and has premiered numerous works written for her. She works on a regular basis with Icelandic composers, is active in the experimental music scene in Iceland and has worked on solo works with Helmut Lachenmann, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Peter Ablinger, Morton Subotnick, Cory Arcangel and Mme Yvonne-Loriod Messiaen.

As a performance artist she has made installations, soundscapes and performance works with materials like piano parts, her own brainwaves, hot and cold glass and electronic music.

Bylta, an interactive sound- and performance work with glass blowing by Tinna and Alli Hoag, was premiered at Corning Museum of Glass, NY in 2015. Following, their work *Sending* was premiered at Chrysler Museum of Art and UrbanGlass, NYC in 2017. The series of works *Shield I-III*, an installation with glass, video and sounding brainwaves, a collaboration between Tinna and Aesa Bjork, was showcased at the biennial European Glass Context 2016 in Denmark. *Shield II* was awarded the Grand Prize at the triennial Toyama International Glass Exhibition 2018. *Shield III* was showcased in Venice during the 58th Biennale 2019 at San Marco Square.

Her solo CD *Granit Games* with Icelandic piano music was released in 2007 with Bad Taste Records.

She was awarded the DV Culture Prize for Music in Iceland 2013.

I met Jórunn Viðar in 2007 at her house in Laufásvegur. Nico Muhly and I spent an amazing time with her on the *Suite* before performing it at Gljúfrasteinn Museum. Jórunn is the grand lady of music in Iceland and she was a brilliant pianist with great passion for the old Icelandic heritage. Her compositions reflect the traditionals, the landscape, and most importantly the people on the island. She has had vast influence on us all.

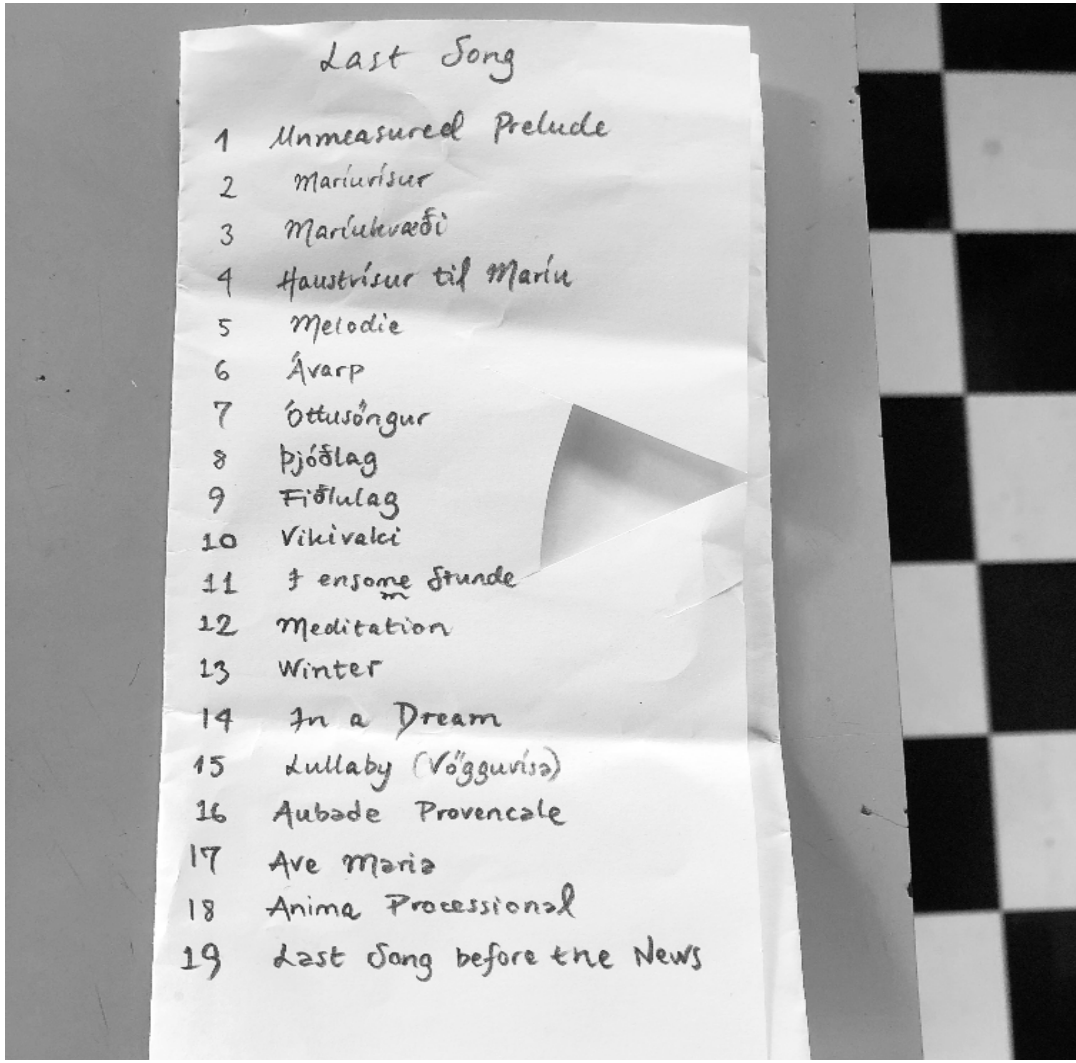
Atli Heimir Sveinsson was a mentor and a dear friend to me. His joy and brilliance were infectious to all who knew him. He was in Cologne with Stockhausen and Zimmermann in the sixties and he was generous with his knowledge and spirit. Atli and I started a duo really late and the *Maria prayers* were our standards. Atli wrote the three prayers to poems by Jón Helgason who was the brother of my grandma Ingibjörg, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Halldór Laxness.

Karólína Eiríksdóttir is the younger one of the two pioneer women in Icelandic composition. When she joined the Icelandic Composers Society Jórunn Viðar was the only woman there. I met Karólína in the nineties and I used to hang out with Tinna her daughter, at her beautiful house in Álftanes and rehearse Shostakovich, listen to all kinds of music and have philosophical discussions with Kaja who always made us teenagers feel like we were grown-ups.

Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson was a leader in experimental music in Iceland. He wrote songs and theater music as well as electronic pieces of music and progressive music in the sixties. Tinna premiered his cycle *Sonorities* brilliantly in 2012 and I played his *Dimension* from 1961 at Tectonics Festival 2012. He was a role model to my friends Atli Heimir and Jóhann Jóhannsson, master of melodies but also experimental and radical. After hearing Ásgerður Júníusdóttir sing his *In a Dream* I got obsessed, the *Lullaby* we found in the National Library of Iceland.

Ole Bull was a Norwegian violin virtuoso. He knew Schumann and played in a duo with Franz Liszt. He shared an apartment in Paris with Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, the virtuoso violinist who wrote *Last Rose of Summer* and *Grand Caprice* on *Erlkönig*. His songs are romantic and inspired by the Norwegian fiddle tradition. *I Ensomme Stunde* is one of those.

Louis Couperin was the uncle of the famous Couperin. He was an organist in the Church St. Gervais in Paris. He is the inventor of the *Unmeasured Preludes*, where the duration of each note is left to the performer. Tinna and I are fascinated by his works, none of which were published during his lifetime. Many of his works were discovered in the 20th century, and the arrangement of the *Aubade Provencale* by Fritz Kreisler is wonderfully timeless.



The Kreisler arrangement of Gluck's *Melodie* from *Orpheus and Eurydice* is more dramatic but still has a sense of eternity about it.

Meditation from the second act of Jules Massenet's opera *Thais* is marked Andante religioso. The Opera was premiered in 1894 at Opera Garnier in Paris.

Ordo virtutum or Order of the Virtues of Hildegard von Bingen was premiered in 1151 in her Abbey in Rupertsberg. In this medieval play the soul, anima, faces the struggle between good and evil, very much like in Massenet's opera 700 years younger, and many more.

Sacrae cantiunculae (Sacred Songs) for three voices by Claudio Monteverdi was his first publication issued in Venice 1582. He was fifteen and still studying with the kapellmeister in Cremona Cathedral, Marc'Antonio Ingegneri. His *Ave Maria* is twenty-five years older than his opera *Orfeo*, premiered in 1607.

The piece *Last Song before the News* came to me as I was trying to get my act together just before playing at my friend's funeral. Jóhann Jóhannsson died in February 2018 and he is sorely missed. He was a great friend and I treasure the years of making music, touring, discussing and laughing. Tinna and I experimented with sounds and it has an apocalyptic feel. Like an omen, or just an entr'acte to what might be in store.

Thanks to our families.

Birgir Jón Birgisson in Sundlaugin Studio,
Dan Merceruio and Dan Shores, and Collin R and Josh of Sono Luminus.
Sigurður Kristinsson.

Jórunn Viðar and Karólína Eiríksdóttir pioneers among women composers in Iceland.

Atli Heimir Sveinsson, Halla Helgadóttir, Davíð Helgason, Úlfur Sveinbjarnarson, Örn Óskarsson og Ólöf Þórarinsdóttir, Lovísa Fjeldsted, Ómar Sverrisson.

And thanks to Sveinbjörn Rafnsson whom this album is dedicated to.

Recorded in Pyramix with Merging Technologies Horus. Mastered with Merging Technologies Hapi. Recorded in DXD at 24 bit, 352.8kHz in Native 7.1.4

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LEGACY

DSL-92248

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