

SONO
EDIZIONE



ATONEMENT

The Music of Páll Ragnar Pálsson
Caput Ensemble Tui Hirv

- 1. Atonement** [9:22]
(2014)
soprano, flute, piano, violin, viola, cello
- 2. Lucidity** [9:02]
(2017)
flute, clarinet, piano, percussion, violin, cello
- 3. Stalker's Monologue** [9:53]
(2013)
soprano, flute, clarinet, harp, piano,
percussion, violin, viola, cello
- 4. Midsummer's Night** [5:54]
(2018)
flute, clarinet, harp, percussion, recited poem
- 5. Wheel Crosses under Moss** [9:55]
(2011)
soprano, flute, clarinet, piano, violin, cello

Total Time: [44:11]



Composing is a meditative process I embark on in every piece I compose. It doesn't feel like beginning a new journey with each composition though, rather continuing from where I left off in the last one. This continuity reflects in my music – one sound grows out of the last one, like branches of a tree. Associations and encounters find their way directly to the music, in terms of narrative, atmosphere or structure. It is a conscious process of translation of some kind, and I gratefully allow it to happen, never applying force or excess intellectual argumentation. All the technique I have learned is in service of that unstoppable movement, never dictating the flow.

Exploring the DNA of my artistic development, I'd say there are two major factors that have influenced me. One of them is to have been born in Iceland, growing up in a protected environment that leaves one with the feeling (or illusion) that one is free to do anything he wants. Then again moving to Estonia to study composition made me re-evaluate my perceptions on life and art so far. The brisk salty breeze of the ocean got replaced by scent of burning wood rising from the chimneys of old houses near the forest and the playful indie scene of Reykjavik by sophisticated academic concert life in ancient churches and guildhalls of Tallinn. It was the environment where I found my musical language, plunged into East-European art and history, travelled and made friends, connected deeply with the spiritual approach Estonians have to music and their somewhat ancient character. One of those old souls I got to know is my wife Tui who sings on this album. Our singer-composer collaboration started right away and has tied together our professional and personal lives in an especially fulfilling way.

The compositions on this album illustrate the shift of us moving back to Iceland and continuing life there with a new perspective. The oldest piece on the album was composed in 2011 when we lived the slow-paced life of young parents in the countryside-like outskirts of Tallinn whereas the latest piece was composed in Iceland and premiered in Berlin 2018. The texts chosen for the compositions demonstrate my influences during the time quite appropriately. Stalker, Tarkovsky's famous screenplay from where I borrowed the monologue, was shot in Tallinn and cleverly displays references to Estonia's troubled history. Wheel Crosses under Moss contains excerpts of folk hymns from Vormsi, an island off the West coast of Estonia once inhabited by Swedes, until the whole community was evacuated in fear of the Soviet Army. Other texts are by Icelandic artist and poetess Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, whom I have collaborated with on numerous occasions. In the album's title-piece poem, Atonement, Ásdís Sif sensitively describes a feeling of re-connecting with herself and finding inner peace. The word itself – atonement – indicates my approach to composition in music and life.

Páll Ragnar Pálsson

Páll Ragnar Pálsson

Páll Ragnar Pálsson was born in 1977 in Reykjavik, Iceland. For most of his youth he played the guitar in a rock band called Maus but took a decisive turn towards acoustic composition in his late twenties. Páll obtained an undergraduate degree in composition at Iceland Academy of Arts in 2007 and continued his studies at master's level at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre under the guidance of Helena Tulve. From there he graduated with a PhD in composition in 2014.



After finishing his studies in Estonia, Páll moved back to Iceland and established a career as a composer. His first major performance back home took place at Dark Music Days in early 2013 when Una Sveinbjarnardóttir and Icelandic Symphony Orchestra premiered Nostalgia for violin and orchestra, conducted by Ilan Volkov. The piece was selected composition of the year at Icelandic Music Awards and gave name to Páll's first composer album, Nostalgia, released by Smekkleysa (Bad Taste Records) in 2017.

Páll still keeps close contact with Estonian music scene and the best contemporary music collectives that define it, such as Ensemble U: and Tallinn Chamber Orchestra. Supremacy of Peace, commissioned by the latter in 2013, has become Páll's most frequently performed piece with performances wide across Europe and spotlights such as the ISCM New Music Festival in Ljubljana.

In 2018 Páll became the first Icelander to win the International Rostrum of Composers. The acclaimed piece, cello concerto Quake, was co-commissioned by the NDR Orchestra in Hamburg Elbphilharmonie and the LA Phil New Music Group in Los Angeles Walt Disney Hall on the initiative of conductor Daniel Bjarason. Written for cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, the piece was then recorded with ISO and released on Concurrence, a Sono Luminus trilogy of Icelandic new orchestral music. From the collaboration with Sæunn sprouted a piece for cello solo by the name of Afterquake that made its way to her solo album Vernacular on the same label.

Páll is very open for triggers and impulses from the outside world and experiences that find their way to his music either in terms of the content behind or textural matters.

Páll's sense for sound was refined throughout countless studio hours where music was perceived rather as masses of noise than melodic-harmonic patterns and processed in a physical and instinctive than intellectual and analytical manner. Though instrumentation has changed, impulses gathered in the world of rock indirectly still have an impact on Páll's art today. He has his personal and sophisticated way to process these stimuli, so the outcome is unlike anything the listener might envision having heard such unsimilar genres mentioned together. Páll has built up an abundant musical vocabulary that is distinctively his and offers countless nuances to explore, without hesitating to demonstrate most contradictory states of mind, while remaining completely in control.

Atonement

Walking into
(the) summer
with an
altered
belief system
:seeing crystal
clearly and
realizing who
you are (once
again).

Praying to mother
nature
and
Valkyries (and)
not afraid
of being
serious anymore:
Coming to terms
with a new
world, finally the
moment you were
waiting for.

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir

Tui Hirv - soprano
Björg Brjánsdóttir - flute
Valgerður Andrésdóttir - piano
Zpigniew Dubik - violin
Pórunn Ósk Marínósdóttir - viola
Sigurður Bjarki Gunnarsson Cello

Lucidity



Björg Brjánsdóttir - flute
Grimur Helgason - clarinet
Valgerður Andrésdóttir - piano
Steef van Oosterhout - percussion
Zpigniew Dubik - violin
Sigurður Bjarki Gunnarsson - Cello

Stalker's Monologue

Let everything that's been planned come true.
Let them believe.
And let them have a laugh
at their passions;
because what they call passion
actually
is not emotional energy,
but just a friction between their souls
and the outside world.
But most important,
let them believe in themselves,
let them be helpless like children,
because weakness is a great thing,
but strength is nothing.
When a man is born,
he is weak and flexible,
when he dies, he is hard and insensitive.
When a tree is growing,
it is tender and pliant,
but when it is dry and hard,
it dies.
Hardness and strength are
death's companions.
Pliancy and weakness
are expressions of the
freshness of being.
Because what has hardened,
will never win.

From the film "Stalker"
by Andrei Tarkovsky
(1932-1986). Used
by kind permission.
English translation by
Tui Hirv.

Tui Hirv - soprano
Björg Brjánsdóttir - flute
Grimur Helgason - clarinet
Valgerður Andrésdóttir - piano
Elísabet Waage - harp
Steef van Oosterhout - percussion
Zpigniew Dubik - violin
Þórunn Ósk Marinósdóttir - viola
Sigurður Bjarki Gunnarsson - Cello

Midsummer's Night

When we walked in High Volume
the clouds were opened and
You opened your mouth
a drink of gold dripping from sky
sun shining as we walked towards it
glowing into you
the bliss of a new day
holding hands.
Eyes reflecting in each other's
belonging to new era
a new world
on the other side of
the rainbow.
Paradise Found on Earth.

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir

Björg Brjánsdóttir - flute
Grimur Helgason - clarinet
Elísabet Waage - harp
Steef van Oosterhout - percussion
Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir - poem

Wheel Crosses Under Moss

Now one day has ended
and the night is on the way.
Stay with us Jesus Christ,
give us firm belief
and guard us eternally
so that we without fear
can go to sleep.

Now the whole world rests
The air has darkened.
But you, my soul, must be
awake
To taste the sweetness of
prayer
And not be tired while
praying.

Tui Hirv - soprano
Björg Brjánsdóttir - flute
Grimur Helgason - clarinet
Valgerður Andrésdóttir - piano
Zpigniew Dubik - violin
Sigurður Bjarki Gunnarsson - Cello

Lord in his mercy explains,
answers with the heart of a
father:
Could I possibly leave you?
Can a mother see the trouble
of
her child and not feel
sympathy?

Oh, lord, let my departure
float in my thoughts,
so that I can strongly resist
the temptations and the
world.
Yes, teach me how to die,
before
I die, so that at the moment
of
dying
I will not be afraid of death.

Text assembled from various
Swedish hymns from Vormsi
Island in West Estonia

Tui Hirv

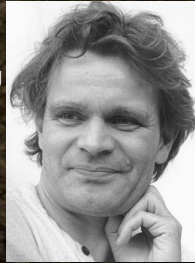
Singer and musicologist Tui Hirv was born in Tallinn, Estonia in 1984. Tui Hirv graduated from Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre with a BA degree in singing in 2007 and MA in musicology in 2009. From an early age and until moving to Iceland in 2013 she was very active in Estonia's vivid and highly professional scene of choral music. For a period of time she was a member of some of the most renowned vocal groups such as Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and Vox Clamantis. Both ensembles have extensive international reach and regularly record albums for leading labels such as ECM New Series and Harmonia Mundi. Over time they have placed emphasis on the music of Arvo Pärt, their fellow Estonian and one of the most performed composers at a global scale. Tui sings lead in Pärt's L'Abbé Agathon for choir and chamber orchestra on the 2014 ECM release of Adam's Lament. Led by EPCC's founding conductor Tõnu Kaljuste, the album received the Grammy Award for best choral performance.

Contemporary chamber music plays no less a part in Tui's artistic profile. While in Estonia, she worked with new music ensembles and occasionally premiered pieces written for her by local composers. Tui's collaboration with her composer husband Páll Ragnar Pálsson has been especially fruitful, resulting in more than ten pieces for Tui as soloist and ensembles of varying scale. Together they have developed a distinctive tonal language, which this album proudly represents.



Guðni Franzson

Guðni Franzson was originally educated as a clarinetist in the Netherlands and received, among others, the Léonie Sonnings prize during his studies. He has developed a career as a soloist on an international scale, especially in the field of contemporary music. Guðni has been working as a composer, with a focus on music for theatre and dance. Currently, he works as a conductor with CAPUT Ensemble which he co-founded in 1988, touring internationally, recording, and also conducting orchestras and ensembles in Northern Europe. Guðni has worked closely with many Icelandic composers, among them Golden Globe winner late Jóhann Jóhannsson, and his daughter, Oscar winner Hildur Guðnadóttir. Guðni is active as a music educator, running Tóney centre for creative music education.



Caput Ensemble

CAPUT has established itself as a force in Icelandic cultural life and as one of the leading new music ensembles in Nordic countries. Founded in 1987 by Icelandic musicians, the sole purpose of the ensemble was performing and recording new music. The long list of Icelandic and foreign composers that have collaborated with CAPUT unmistakably reflects the immense diversity of musical creation in the late 20th century and early 21st century. Over its decades of activity, CAPUT has performed at prestigious festivals internationally and published over 20 albums under labels like BIS, Naxos, Classico, GM Recordings, Touch, Bad Taste and Deutsche Grammophon, to name a few, until their paths crossed with Sono Luminus.

CAPUT is supported by the City of Reykjavík and the Icelandic Ministry for Culture and Education.

www.caput.is



Commissions & Premieres

Atonement for soprano, flute, violin, viola, cello and cembalo commissioned by Nordic Affect. Premiered at Dark Music Days in Reykjavík 2014. Poem by Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir.

Lucidity for flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, violin and cello co-commissioned by Caput ensemble and Ensemble U: who premiered the piece in Tallinn 2017. Iceland premiere at Dark Music Days 2019.

Stalker's Monologue for soprano, flute, clarinet, percussion, harp, violin, viola and cello commissioned and premiered by Caput in 2015. Text from Andrei Tarkovsky's film Stalker. Used by kind permission.

Midsummer's Night for bass flute, clarinet, harp, percussion and recited text commissioned by Ensemble Adapter. Premiere in Berlin 2018. Poem written and recited by Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir.

Wheel Crosses under Moss for soprano, flute, clarinet, piano, violin and cello. Premiered in Tallinn. Iceland premiere by Caput at Dark Music Days 2015. Text gathered from folk hymns in Vormsi, island West-Estonia.

Credits

All works written by Páll Ragnar Pálsson
pallragnarpalsson.com

All works performed by Caput and Tui Hirv. Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir recites her own poem in Midsummer's Night.

caput.is

asdissif.com

All works conducted by Guðni Franzson

Text editor: Tui Hirv

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24 bit, 352.8kHz in Native 7.1.4

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