



Kristín Þóra Haraldsdóttir

[1979] is a composer and a performer of many mediums, with viola as her main instrument. Her compositions include songs, chamber music, symphonic work and physical-/music theatre, which have been performed by herself and groups such as Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, Nordic Affect, Trio XelmYa, Fengjastrútur and Kúbus, in Iceland and abroad.

Having an improvisatory and experimental approach to her compositions, she is interested in the physicality of a sound, exploring sensations through gesture and touch, creating sonic organisms, illuminating minute sounds and capturing silences.

As a performer, Kristín has a rich background in playing with groups and ensembles ranging in an array of styles. She has lent her voice and viola playing to dozens of records and is currently a member of the Icelandic-Belgian band Mógil and the Icelandic Óbó -the band of Ólafur Björn Ólafsson. She performs regularly with orchestras, chamber ensembles, singer/songwriters and fellow improvisors and has performed physical theatre and performance art in various group works. She has performed and premiered viola pieces written by her contemporaries at festivals such as Dark Music Days, Tectonics Glasgow and Dogstar festival in Los Angeles. She recently premiered a solo new-music theatre work for voice, viola and electronics written specially for her by Þórunn Gréta Sigurðardóttir.

Kristín is also a teaching artist and happily travels far to teach, learn and perform. She gives workshops in composition, improvisation and string playing and has recently been in Palestine and Greenland as a teacher and teacher trainer.

Kristín studied viola performance and composition at Iceland Academy of the Arts, and holds an MFA in performance/-composition from California Institute of the Arts. Her composition teachers were Úlfar Ingi Haraldsson, Anne LeBaron, Michael Pisaro and Ulrich Krieger.

Selected works:

Water's Voice [2015] for orchestra

Dalalæða [2015] for flute and clarinet

Sense [2014] for small ensemble

Touch [2014] for bass recorder, violin and cello

Emanate [2014] for baroque violin, -viola, -cello and harpsichord

Drops [2014] for toy piano

Einsteinungur [2013] for voice, viola, bass clarinet, trumpet and electric guitar

here (t)here [2013] electronics and fieldrecordings

Meridian nights [2012] for solo viola, electronics and fieldrecordings

Pacific [2012] for solo acoustic guitar

Freyðandi hrannir [2011] for voice, piano, flute, horn and bass clarinet

On Water [2010] for viola and violin

Spin and Weave [2010] for large ensemble

Medicine Wheels [2009] for viola and tape

Three tunes from Turón [2008] for flute, clarinet, viola and piano

Þríhringningur [2007] for flute, trumpet and accordion

About composing and Water's Voice

Being a performer myself, I tend to think just as much about the experience of the performer as of the audience. I want to invite the performers to explore the instrument and the performance situation, possibly in ways they don't normally do, and I leave certain simple aspects of the score and performance open to chance, such as harmonic overtones and quality of sound based on gesture and pacing. In this way, the music becomes more alive to me and I believe that it does so to everyone involved, the performers, the conductor and the audience.

When conductor Ilan Volkov invited me to write for Iceland Symphony Orchestra, it was natural to me to keep this same attitude towards writing. I am less interested in writing for the symphonic sound as such, thinking of the homogenized sound of the orchestra as a whole, than for a large group of musicians playing together, exploring the color of their individual instruments and projecting those to the people listening, so I thought of it that way and of how to provide them a framework to do so within. Having Ilan Volkov conducting, who is also an improviser, made it a perfect opportunity for me to try to bring an element of improvisation into the orchestra, so I provided each instrument and section with material that they could use freely during the opening of the piece, in order to establish an improvisatory feel and the fluidity that I wanted for the piece, like an organism coming to life and the conductor being a part of it, not controlling it. The material I used was essentially very simple and out of the 'organism' I brought a melody that I distributed between the instruments, while other instruments would either perform as elements of the organism or bleed into the melodic material, that melts in and out until the 'organism' fades out during the final breaths of the voice.

Before the inception of the piece I envisioned something translucent, and something appearing out of the translucency. Water was the element that appeared to me, as many times before. I often don't write program notes, but I like to have a title that can be meditated on and I wanted to invite people to meditate on water and whatever 'Water's Voice' means to them. To me it became a lament of water, I can't avoid thinking about the current situation of water in the world, water droughts, corporations capitalizing on water, water and oceans being destroyed by humans, and in general the thought that some humans do prevent other humans the access of essential water in one way or another. But at the same time, that we are half made of water, of the beauty and fluidity of water, that does not cease to inspire me.

Water's Voice was premiered April 16th in Eldborg Hall of Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavík, at the Tectonics-music festival 2015, curated by Ilan Volkov.

-KPH