



POINT OF DEPARTURE

Hildur Guðnadóttir

Performers: Nordic Affect

Duration: 8:30 min.

I wrote a solo violin piece for Halla Steinunn of Nordic Affect in 2014. At the premiere the other members of the group excitedly asked me when they would get to play a piece like this. So it has been on the drawing table for a while to write a piece like 'that' for the whole group. In the violin piece 2 Circles I was looking at the relationship between a musician with his instrument, and the violinist had to tune her voice with the instrument. The piece sounds rather simple, but great concentration is required from the hand and voice of the musician.

In the piece Point of Departure I continue to explore this delicate relationship between a person and her instrument, with the addition of the tuning together with other musicians and their voices. The musicians need to play as one instrument. One voice.

Hildur Guðnadóttir (1982) is an Icelandic cello player, composer and singer who has been manifesting herself at the forefront of experimental pop and contemporary music (e.g. with the band múm). In her solo works she draws out a broad spectrum of sounds from her instrument, ranging from intimate simplicity to huge soundscapes.

Guðnadóttir began playing cello as a child, entered the Reykjavík Music Academy and then moved on to musical studies/composition and new media at the Iceland Academy of the Arts and Universität der Künste in Berlin. Hildur has released four critically acclaimed solo albums: Mount A (2006), Without Sinking (2009), Leyfðu Ljósinu (2012) and Saman (2014). Her records have been nominated a number of times for the Icelandic Music Awards. Hildur's albums are all released on Touch. She has composed music for theatre, dance performances and films. The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, Icelandic National Theatre, Tate Modern, The British Film Institute, The Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm and Gothenburg National Theatre are amongst the institutions that have commissioned new works by Hildur. She was nominated for the Nordic Music Council Prize as composer of the year 2014.

Hildur has composed a number of film scores for films such as Sicario: Day of the Soldado (2018), Mary Magdalene (2018) and Strong Island (2017).

Among others Hildur has performed live and recorded music with Skúli Sverrisson, Jóhann Jóhannsson, múm, Sunn O))), Pan Sonic, Hauschka, Wildbirds & Peacedrums, Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Sylvian, The Knife, Fever Ray and Throbbing Gristle.

www.hildurness.com





Nordic Affect

Icelandic ensemble Nordic Affect has been hailed as 'multi-disciplinary force of nature' (A Closer Listen), as gem in Iceland's music life (Fréttablaðið) and for 'ineffable synergy between the performers' (San Francisco Classical Voice). Founded in 2005, Nordic Affect was formed by a group of period instrument musicians who were united in their passion for viewing familiar musical forms from a different perspective and for daring to venture into new musical terrain. In 2013 the ensemble was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize and was named Performer of the Year at the Iceland Music Awards in 2014.

Believing that music knows no boundaries, Nordic Affect has brought its music-making to contemporary and rock audiences alike and performed to critical acclaim at festivals in Europe and the US. The commissioning and performance of new works is integral to Nordic Affect's mission as it has, from the group's inception, combined new compositions with the music of the 17th and 18th centuries. Since their debut album in 2007, Nordic Affect's performances can be found on the Deutsche Grammophon, Bad Taste Records, Musmap, Brilliant Classics and Sono Luminus labels.

The artistic director of Nordic Affect since its founding has been Halla Steinunn Stefánsdóttir.

www.nordicaffect.com

'Decades ago the Sugarcubes proved to the rest of the world that Icelandic rock was its own original creation - now Nordic Affect promises to do the same for the country's new-music community.'

- The Chicago Reader



QUAKE

Páll Ragnar Pálsson

**Performers: Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir
Iceland Symphony Orchestra**

Conductor: Daníel Bjarnason

Duration: 14:40 min.

Quake for cello and chamber orchestra was co-commissioned by the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra and the LA Philharmonic. The European premiere took place at the Into Iceland festival at the newly-opened Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, February 2017, conducted by Jonathan Stockhammer. The US premiere was in the Walt Disney Hall in Los Angeles at The Reykjavík Festival in April, conducted by Daníel Bjarnason, who also curated both festivals.

The soloist in both cases was Icelandic cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir. The piece was then performed at Dark Music Days in Reykjavík, January 2018, and subsequently recorded at Eldborg concert hall in Harpa to be released in 2019 on a collaborative album between the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and American label Sono Luminus.

For the composition, Páll sought inspiration in the following text by the Icelandic writer Auður Jónsdóttir.

“For a thousand years, tension amassed in the lava, only to break apart in the blink of an eye during a great quake when the rock under my feet ruptured and fossils and silvery crystals broke through the surface, events long past entombed in age-old laws of minerals before unknown geysers erupted and everything that had been became something new—the landscape would never be the same. I stare into the abyss, into the chasm in my own life, and hear it shattering all around me.”

Auður Jónsdóttir “The Big Quake” 2015.

The piece was well received at both concerts and Mark Swed from the LA Times wrote in his review:

“Quake,” which is for cello solo and large chamber ensemble, is pretty much what its title suggests, the music of the ground not being steady under your feet. Nothing is settled, everything is in trills and tremolos and glissandi. The solo cello, excellently played by Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, creaks and moans. But the most effective musical quaking feels interior, evoking the quaking you feel in those first seconds when an earthquake begins, when you first sense the Earth may be moving but have no idea yet how much.

Páll Ragnar Pálsson (1977)

Having played for several years in the band Maus, Páll started studying at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2004. After completing a Bachelor's degree in composition in 2007 he entered Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn and graduated in 2009 with a Master's and a PhD in the same field in 2014. Páll studied composition with Prof. Helena Tulve and researched a 17th century Icelandic manuscript under the guidance of Urve Lippus, professor of musicology. During his studies Páll received individual lessons from several highly renowned composers, among others Arvo Pärt.

Having finished 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. Later the same year Páll had the opportunity to collaborate with Tallinn Chamber Orchestra on two occasions. Supremacy of Peace was commissioned and premiered at Estonian Music Days in Tallinn, conducted by Risto Joost. It has become Páll's most frequently performed piece with performances in Berlin, Reykjavík, Oslo, Ljubljana (ISMC 2015) and Switzerland.

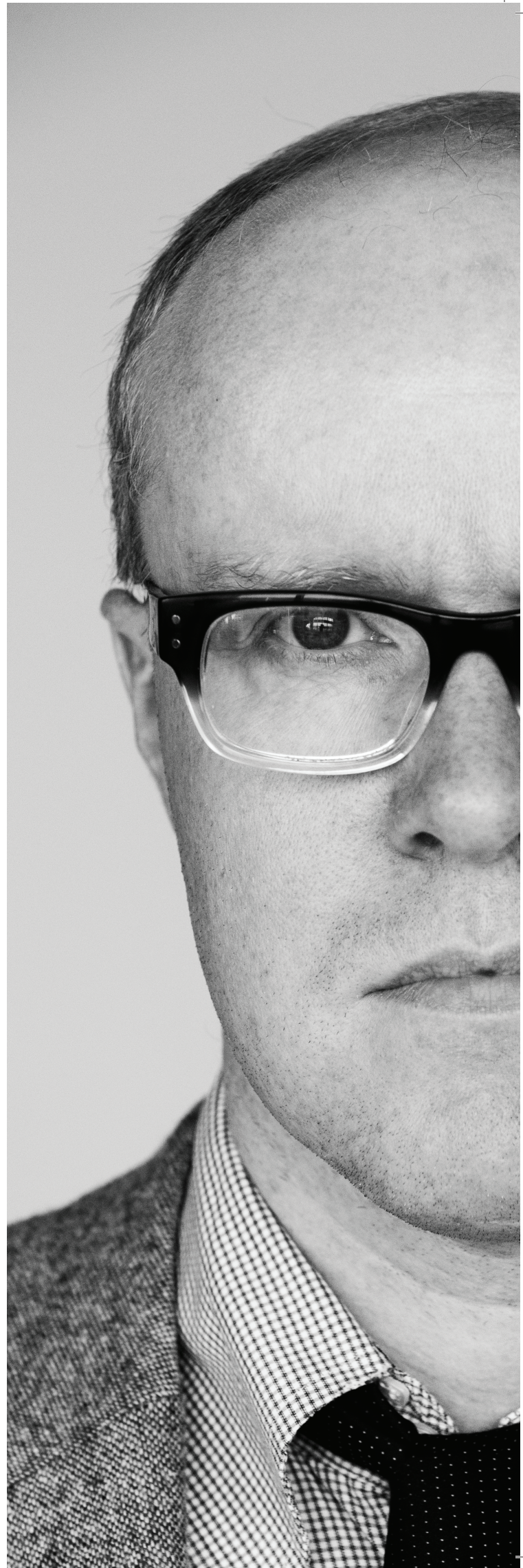
In January 2015 *Dämmerung* for soprano and string orchestra was premiered by Tui Hirv and the German-Nordic Youth Philharmonic at the Berlin Philharmonie.

Páll then started experimenting with cross-disciplinary art forms and based his next string piece on a mirror installation by Ólafur Elíasson called Spigeltunnel. The piece was premiered by SKARK string ensemble at Cycle Music and Art Festival and at Nordic Music Days in Reykjavík the year after.

In spring 2017 Páll's cello concerto *Quake* was co-commissioned by the Norddeutsches Rundfunk Orchester in Hamburg Elbphilharmonie and the LA Phil New Music Group in Los Angeles Walt Disney Hall. The piece was written for and premiered by cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir. *Quake* will be released in 2019 on a collaborative album between the ISO and American label Sono Luminus. A sister piece, *Afterquake* for solo cello, will be released on Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir's album on the same label in 2019.

Páll has worked with all the main contemporary music groups in Iceland, including Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra, Caput and Nordic Affect, and teaches at the Iceland University of the Arts.

<http://pallragnarpalsson.com>



Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir

“Charismatic” (NYTimes) cellist, Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Toronto and Iceland Symphonies, among others, and her recital and chamber music performances have taken her across the US, Europe and Asia. Following the release of her debut recording of Britten’s Suites for Solo Cello on Centaur Records, she has performed in some of the world’s greatest halls including Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall and Disney Hall. The press have described her as “riveting” (NYTimes) and praised her performances for their “emotional intensity” (LATimes).

Highlights of the 2017-2018 season include the US premiere of Betsy Jolas’ Wanderlied and the Hong Kong premiere of Sofia Gubaidulina’s Canticle of the Sun, as well as recitals and chamber music appearances in New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, Glasgow, London and Reykjavík. In addition to collaborating with Daníel Bjarnason on his award-winning composition Bow to String, Sæunn enjoys working with composers of our time such as Páll Ragnar Pálsson, Halldór Smárason, Þuríður Jónsdóttir and Melia Watras.

<http://www.saeunn.com>



