



# HĪBER

Bára Gísladóttir, double bass and electronics

Composed by Bára Gísladóttir

1	SUĪ	10:01
2	VĒXŌ	1:43
3	no afterlife thanks	5:47
4	her palms faced down forever after	6:36
5	tvíhirta	5:50
6	cuspid day	10:45
7	GRAVIS	5:21
8	fists clenched	1:12
	Total	49:38

World premiere recording

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# Through the door in fifty ways

by Jens Povlsen

It's intense when she lets herself go the most. Intense when she caresses your cheek with her sound. It sometimes feels like it is happening at the same time, and in a way it is quite relentless but 30-year-old Bára Gísladóttir is a composer of a very special cast. Her art feels very little calculated, very little artificial. Instead, she boldly creates her own paths on untrodden land. Bára is Bára, and her sound is *hers*. No one else's.

Like a guide, she takes us on her meticulous sound journeys through beautiful, collapsed landscapes of ambient sounds, broken tones and stray, fleeting whims. Ready to expand horizons.

Bára Gísladóttir herself is also on a journey. She is on many journeys all the time – for when does everyday life end, and when does the journey begin? One of the longest journeys of her life is her music. A journey she knows will never end. 'For me, music is there all the time. I cannot say that there I stop creating music, and there I start with something else. The music is part of everything I do,' she explains.

As the most unpredictable practitioner in a generally docile and well-behaved generation of composers in Danish art music, Bára Gísladóttir is anything but mindless copy and unimaginative habitual thinking. She trained as a composer at the Royal Danish Academy of Music (graduation 2020), and she writes music both for the concert hall community and when you sit at home with your head in your hands.

She is impossible to predict or to pigeonhole, and Bára Gísladóttir even has a weakness for not quite ordinary ways of handling instruments. Her own double bass included – the instrument that grabbed hold of her after many years of violin lessons, which she hated while growing up in Norway.

Like all people, Icelandic Bára Gísladóttir is shaped also by where she comes from. From the sagas onwards, human life in Iceland appears to be shaped by fire and ice. That reality is also heard in Bára Gísladóttir's music, but it is not something she is aware of – that nature is a strong force in her music. Rather, the realization that nature and its whims are a lot in life that we cannot wrestle with. Even if nature and life today do not feel in harmony with each other: 'Today we live our lives very linearly, even though the reality we are in – nature – for me to see is circular. It depresses me

sometimes that we can only experience time and life as linear. In other cultures, such as the ancient Greek, time was experienced as circular, with an eternal cosmos. Instead, we are constantly chasing the next event, the next experience,' she says.

More than anything else, it is her perception of the world, nature included, that Bára Gísladóttir lets flow through her music. As a resonant space for the ambivalence or direct leadership of the modern world, which is currently tormented by both climate and corona crisis. About how the things we surround ourselves with and which we have learned to take for granted are starved out instead of serving the common good.

Bára Gísladóttir has it all in her art, which holds a genuinely deep and self-reflected calm. There is a sensuous enigma about her works, and although one can never quite guess what her works depict, even though the work titles often lead one on the way, one can, in turn, rejoice that they never confirm the reality one knows. Although you might think so at first.

And this is how it goes when she creates music: 'Before I started making music for HĪBER, I decided on the album's titles. It helps me a lot to do that first. I do not think tones first, because music

is so many different things to me. It's texture and sounds, and I think of it more as a matter of sound or silence and sensing the world. One has to have a curiosity about all the sounds the world has when doing so. And when I – as on HĪBER – write for my instrument, the double bass, it's also for me about exploring the instrument and its possibilities of *being* in the world. But there's always a direction to what I do. It's not like I'm trying to open fifty different doors when I get started. Instead, I try to walk through the door in fifty different ways.'

The solo album HĪBER is an exploration of texture and darkness in eight parts, written for double bass and electronics and played by Bára Gísladóttir herself. HĪBER is an album that allows itself to be immersed in the hibernation state of winter, the winter lair, in a completely natural way. Not as an escape from life, but a necessary break. As animals that have a hard time finding enough food in the winter and therefore go into hibernation to save energy, yes save life.

In **SUĪ** [1] it is the self that Bára Gísladóttir deals with. The self of the individual who soon goes into hibernation and prepares for that condition. **VĒXŌ** [2] simply means 'to shake' in Latin – a rather noticeable shaking of the ears. As a kind of trembling transition to the doze that is found right after in

**no afterlife thanks** [3], and whose prayer in the title according to the composer must be taken quite literally. 'Nothing can seem more exhausting or frightening to me than the thought of an afterlife,' says Bára Gísladóttir. 'I'm so happy with the life I have that I would not know what to do with another.'

Everything calms down on **her palms faced down forever after** [4], as if hibernation had now occurred. A natural but chillingly beautiful farewell with something that was. In Bára Gísladóttir's case, her upturned palms: 'Shortly after I started working at HĪBER, I experienced a turning point in my life where I was suddenly no longer able to sleep with my palms up, as I always did. My palms are still facing down when I sleep. It made me a little sad. But it is a fact and something I see both as a defence reflex, but also as something closed, suffocating, stressful and even warm and safe.'

In **tvíhirta** [5] you feel the life-giving beat of the pulse propagating in the body. The title itself has Gísladóttir's composed of 'tví', which means 'two' in Icelandic and the self-invented word 'hirta', which is intended as a feminine noun of the word 'heart': '*tvíhirta* deals with an organism that has two hearts. A thought about a body that is involuntarily given an extra heart,' she explains.

The void and stillness take over right after in **cuspiday** [6], while **GRAVIS** [7] is a heavy, restless piece where deep strokes are laid in layers so that it eventually rumbles in one's consciousness. Although **fists clenched** [8] sounds aggressive (and it is certainly meant to), the piece serves as an extension of *her palms faced down forever after*, which also deals with Gísladóttir's sleep: 'Around the time certain palms began facing downwards, the same hands sometimes took the form of clenched fists, to the great dissatisfaction of their owner.'

**Bára Gísladóttir** (b. 1989) is an Icelandic composer and double bassist based in Copenhagen. Her music has been performed by ensembles and orchestras such as Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, Duo Harpverk, Elektra Ensemble, Elja Ensemble, Ensemble Adapter, Ensemble InterContemporain, Ensemble New Babylon, Ensemble recherche, Esbjerg Ensemble, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, loadbang, Marco Fusi, Mimitabu, NJYD, Nordic Affect, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Riot Ensemble, Siggi String Quartet, TAÏGA String Quartet and TAK Ensemble.

Bára Gísladóttir's pieces have been selected for festivals such as Dark Music Days, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, International Rostrum of Composers, KLANG Festival, Nordic Music Days and Ung Nordisk Musik. She has received the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl Nielsen Foundation's Talent Awards, Léonie Sonning Talent Prize, The Reykjavík Grapevine's Music Awards, and been nominated to the Carl Prize and The Icelandic Music Awards.

Bára Gísladóttir is an active performer and regularly plays her own music. In addition to this, she is the double bassist of Elja Ensemble. She has also performed with Ensemble Adapter, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and S.L.Á.T.U.R.





# Gennem døren på halvtreds måder

af Jens Povlsen

Det er intenst, når hun slår sig allermest løs, intenst når hun aer din kind med sin lyd. På en og samme tid føles det indimellem som, og på en måde er det ganske ubarmhjertigt. Men 30-årige Bárá Gísladóttir er en komponist af en helt særlig støbning. Hendes kunst føles meget lidt kalkuleret, meget lidt kunstig. I stedet skaber hun dristigt egne stier på ubetrådt land. Bárá er Bárá, og hendes lyd er *hendes*. Ingen andens.

Som en guide tager hun os med på sine minutløse lydrejser gennem smukke, sammenbrudte landskaber af ambiente klange, bristede toner og vildfarne, flygtige indfald. Klar til at udvide horisonter.

Bárá Gísladóttir selv er også på en rejse. Hun er på mange rejser hele tiden – for hvornår slutter hverdagen, og hvornår begynder rejsen? En af hendes livs længste rejser er hendes musik. En rejse, hun er helt med på, aldrig får ende. ”For mig er musikken der hele tiden. Jeg kan ikke sige, at dér stopper jeg med at skabe musik, og dér begynder jeg med noget andet. Musikken er med i alt, jeg laver,”

forklarer hun. Som det mest uberegnelige element i en generelt modig generation af komponister i den danske kunstmusik går Bárá Gísladóttir imod bevidstløs kalkering og fantasiløs vanetænkning. Hun er uddannet som komponist fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium (afgang 2020), og hun skriver musik både til koncertsalens fællesskab, og når du sidder derhjemme med hovedet i hænderne.

En umulighed at forudsige, umulig at sætte i bås, og så har Bárá Gísladóttir også en svaghed for ikke helt almindelige måder at håndtere instrumenter på. Hendes kontrabas inklusive. Det var den, der for alvor fik tag i hende efter mange år med violinundervisning, som hun hadede at gå til, mens hun voksede op i Norge.

Som alle mennesker er islandske Bárá Gísladóttir også formet af, hvor hun kommer fra. Fra sagaerne og fremefter forekommer menneskelivet i Island at være formet af ild og is. Den virkelighed høres også hos Bárá Gísladóttir, men det er ikke noget, hun er bevidst om – at naturen er en stærk kraft i hendes musik. Nok snarere at naturen og dens luner er et lod i livet, vi ikke kan vriste os løs af. Også selvom naturen og livet i dag ikke føles at være i overensstemmelse med hinanden. ”Vi lever i dag vores liv meget lineært, selvom den virkelighed, vi

befinder os i – naturen – for mig at se er cirkulær. Det deprimerer mig af og til, at vi kun kan opleve tiden og livet som lineært. I andre kulturer, for eksempel den antikke græske, oplevede man tiden som cirkulær, med et evigt kosmos. I stedet jagter vi hele tiden den næste begivenhed, den næste oplevelse,” siger hun.

Mere end noget andet er det sin egen sansning af verden, naturen inklusive, Bárá Gísladóttir lader flyde gennem sine værker. Som et resonansrum for den ambivalens eller direkte lede ved den moderne verden, som helt aktuelt pines af både klima- og coronakrise. Om hvordan de ting, vi omgiver os med, og som vi har lært at tage for givet, udsultes i stedet for at tjene til fælles bedste.

Bárá Gísladóttir har det hele med i sin kunst, der ejer en helt særlig dyb og selvreflekteret ro. Der hviler en sanselig gådefuldhed over hendes værker, og skønt man aldrig helt kan gætte sig til, hvad hendes værker skildrer, selvom værkstitlerne ofte leder én på vej, så kan man til gengæld fryde sig over, at de aldrig bekræfter den virkelighed, man kender. Selvom man måske først tror det.

Og sådan går det for sig, når hun skaber musik: ”Inden jeg gik i gang med musikken til HĪBER, havde jeg bestemt albummets titler. Det hjælper

mig meget at gøre sådan først. Jeg tænker ikke toner først, for musik er for mig så meget andet. Det er tekstur og klange, og jeg tænker det mere som et spørgsmål om lyd eller stilhed og en sansning af verden. Man er nødt til at have en nysgerrighed over for alle de lyde, verden har, når man gør det sådan. Og når jeg – som på HĪBER – skriver for mit eget instrument, kontrabassen, handler det for mig også om at udforske instrumentet og dets muligheder i forhold til at være i verden. Men det har altid en retning, det jeg foretager mig. Det er ikke sådan, at jeg prøver at åbne halvtreds forskellige døre, når jeg går i gang. Jeg prøver i stedet at gå gennem døren på halvtreds forskellige måder.”

Soloalbummet HĪBER er en udforskning af tekstur og mørke i otte dele skrevet for kontrabas og electronics og spillet af Bárá Gísladóttir selv. HĪBER er et album, der lader sig nedsænke i vinterens dvaletilstand, vinterhiet, på en helt naturlig måde. Ikke som en flugt fra livet, men en nødvendig pause. Som dyr, der har svært ved at finde mad nok om vinteren og går derfor i hi for at spare på energien, ja livet.

I **SUĪ** [1] er det selvet, Bárá Gísladóttir behandler. Selvet hos individet, der snart går i dvale og forbereder sig på tilstanden. **VĒXŌ** [2] betyder simpelthen 'at ryste' på latin – et temmelig mærkbart

skælv, der her sendes gennem ørerne. Som en art dirrende overgang til døsen, der findes lige efter i **no afterlife thanks** [3], og hvis bøn i titlen ifølge komponisten skal tages helt bogstaveligt. ”Intet kan for mig virke mere udmattende eller skræmmende, end tanken om et efterliv,” siger Bárá Gísladóttir. ”Jeg er så tilfreds med det liv, jeg har, at jeg slet ikke ved, hvad jeg skulle stille op med et andet.”

Alting falder til ro på **her palms faced down forever after** [4], som var dvaletilstanden nu indtrådt. En naturlig, men kuldegysende smuk afsked med noget, der var. I Bárá Gísladóttirs tilfælde hendes egne opadvendte håndflader: ”Kort efter jeg begyndte at arbejde på HÍBER, oplevede jeg et vendepunkt i mit liv, hvor jeg pludselig ikke længere var i stand til at sove med mine håndflader opad, som jeg ellers altid gjorde. Mine håndflader er stadig vendt nedad, når jeg sover. Det gjorde mig lidt trist. Men det er en kendsgerning, og noget jeg ser både som en forsvarsmekanisme, men også som noget lukket, kvælende, stressende og endda varmt og trygt.”

I **tvíhirta** [5] mærker man pulsens livgivende slag forplante sig i kroppen. Selve titlen har Gísladóttirs sammensat af 'tví', der betyder 'to' på islandsk og det selvopfundne ord 'hirta', der her er ment som en feminin udgave af navneordet 'hjerte': ”*tvíhirta*

beskæftiger sig med en organisme, der har to hjerter. En tanke om en krop, der ufrivilligt bliver udstyret et ekstra hjerte,” forklarer hun.

Tomrummet og stilstanden rammer lige efter i **culp day** [6], hvis titel kan forstås som dagen, der blev et vendepunkt, mens **GRAVIS** [7] er et tungt, uroligt stykke, hvor dybe strøg lægges i lag, så det til sidst knurrer i ens bevidsthed. Selvom **fists clenched** [8] lyder aggressivt (og det er bestemt også ment sådan), er værket ment som en forlængelse af *her palms faced down forever after*, der også beskæftiger sig med Gísladóttirs egen søvn: ”Omkring det tidspunkt, hvor visse håndflader begyndte at vende nedad, tog de samme hænder undertiden form af knyttede næver, til deres ejers store utilfredshed.”

**Bára Gísladóttir** (f. 1989) er en islandsk komponist og kontrabassist med base i København. Hendes musik er blevet opført af ensembler og orkestre som Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen, DR Symfoniorkestret, DR Vokalensemblet, Duo Harpverk, Elektra Ensemble, Elja Ensemble, Ensemble Adapter, Ensemble InterContemporain, Ensemble New Babylon, Ensemble recherche, Esbjerg Ensemble, Frankfurt Radiosymfoniorkester, Helsingborg Symfoniorkester, Islands Symfoniorkester, Ioadbang, Marco Fusi, Mimitabu, NJYD, Nordic Affect, Det Polske Radiosymfoniorkester, Riot Ensemble, Siggi String Quartet, TAÏGA String Quartet og TAK Ensemble.

Bára Gísladóttirs stykker er valgt til festivaler som Dark Music Days, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, International Rostrum of Composers, KLANG Festival, Nordic Music Days og Ung Nordisk Musik. Hun har modtaget Carl Nielsen og Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Fondens Talentpris, Léonie Sonning Talentpris, Reykjavík Grapevines Music Awards og været nomineret til Carl Prisen og The Icelandic Music Awards.

Bára Gísladóttir er en aktiv udøver og spiller jævnligt sin egen musik. Derudover er hun kontrabassist for Elja Ensemble. Hun har også optrådt med Ensemble Adapter, Islands Symfoniorkester og S.L.Á.T.U.R.

Recorded by Bára Gísladóttir, 2017 - 2019  
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Dacapo Records, Denmark's national record label, was founded in 1989 with the purpose of releasing the best of Danish music past and present. The majority of our recordings are world premieres, and we are dedicated to producing music of the highest international standards.