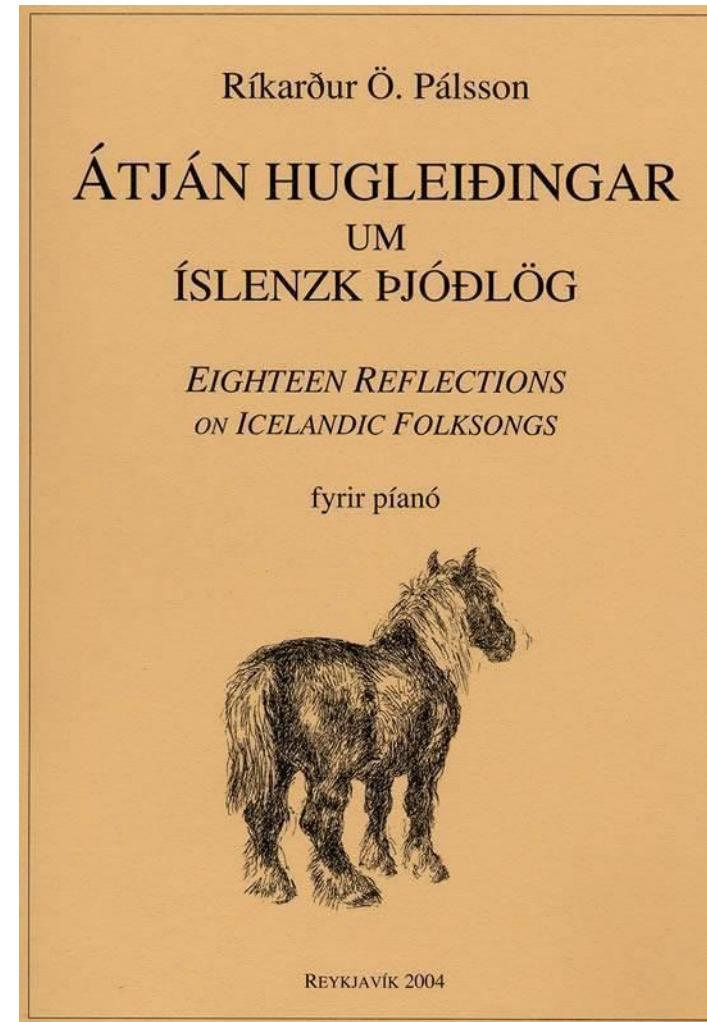


Eighteen Reflections on Icelandic Folksongs

- Arrangements for piano students by Ríkharður Örn Pálsson
- Most of the songs are from the monumental collections of Icelandic folksongs by Bjarni Þorsteinsson
- Music example : “Approach of Autumn” – a well known tune in Iceland



A Journey through the history of Icelandic traditional and classical music



Music life and population in 1840 and 2015

1840

- Population:
 - Iceland 56.000
 - Reykjavík 890
- Hardly any instruments, musicians or teachers
- The first pipe organ was put in Reykjavík Cathedral in 1840
- First organist in the Cathedral and one main piano teacher
- Three families moved to Reykjavík who had a fortepiano in 1837

2016

- Population:
 - Iceland 330.000
 - Reykjavík and surrounding municipalities 220.000
- Thousands of concerts, festivals all around the country, two symphony orchestras, icelandic opera company,...
 - 76.000 went to listen to a Symphony orchestra in 2014
- 80 music schools, 15.000 students, 600 music teachers, Iceland Academy of the Arts, ...

What happened in the last 150 years ?

Lúðurpeytarafélag Reykjavíkur 1876

Icelandic symphony orchestra 2015



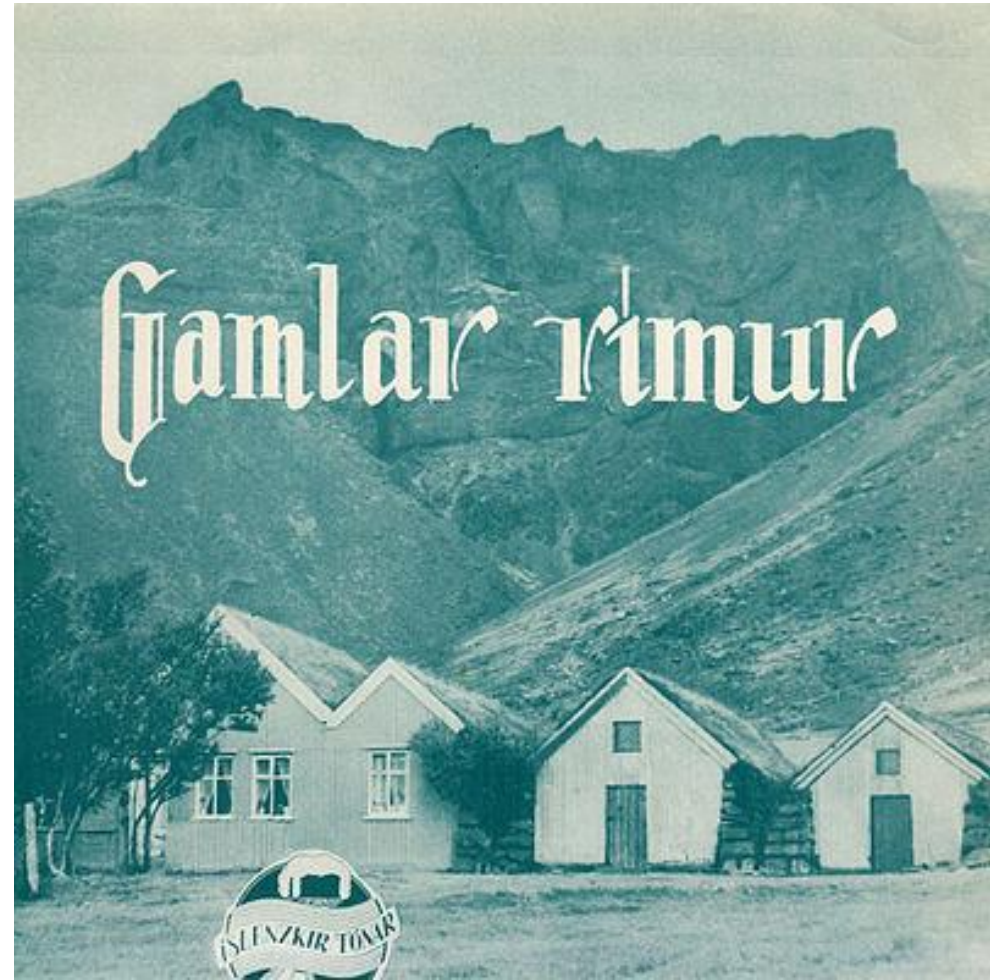
What kind of music was practiced in 870-1870 ?



Rímur – Rhymes

Söngvadansar – Singing ballads

- Singing ballads came from Scandinavia in the 12th century and are mentioned in the medieval nordic literature
- Rhymes are old nordic folk poetry from the 14th century
- An epic poem written in any of the so-called rímnahættir ("rímur meters").
- They are rhymed, they alliterate and consist of two to four lines per stanza.
- Singing ballads in 40-50 four line stanzas
- More than 2000 different types



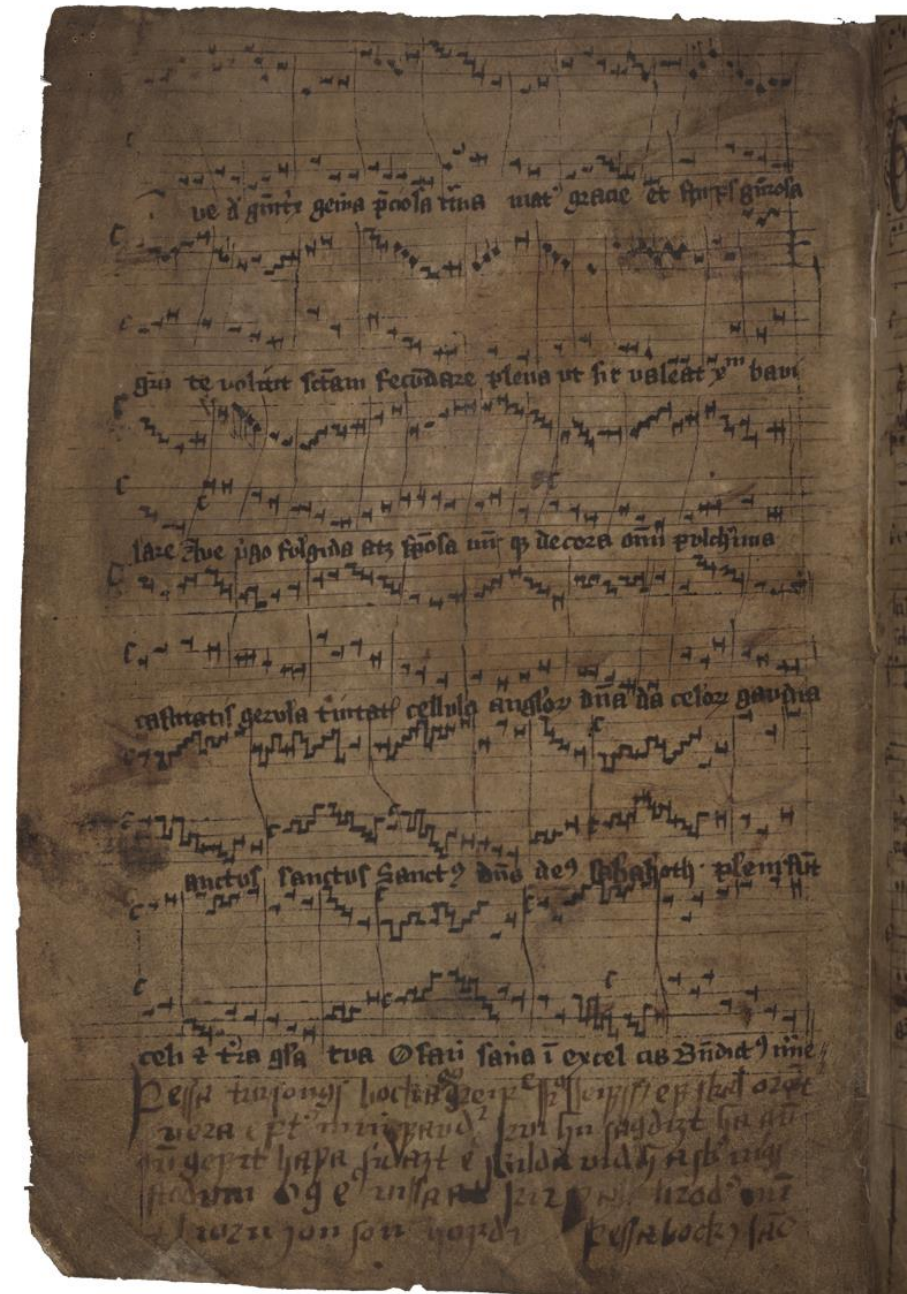
Rhymes and Vikivaki

- Rhymes are recited and the tune to a rhyme is called „stemma“, „rímnalag“ or „bragur“
- “rímnalag” – ballad song
- “bragur” - melody
- Sung at weddings and festivities.
- Vikivaki are the best known singing ballads and can be traced to the 11th century
- Vikivakar are dances, popular in 16th to 18th century
- <http://www.ismus.is/i/audio/id-1036932>



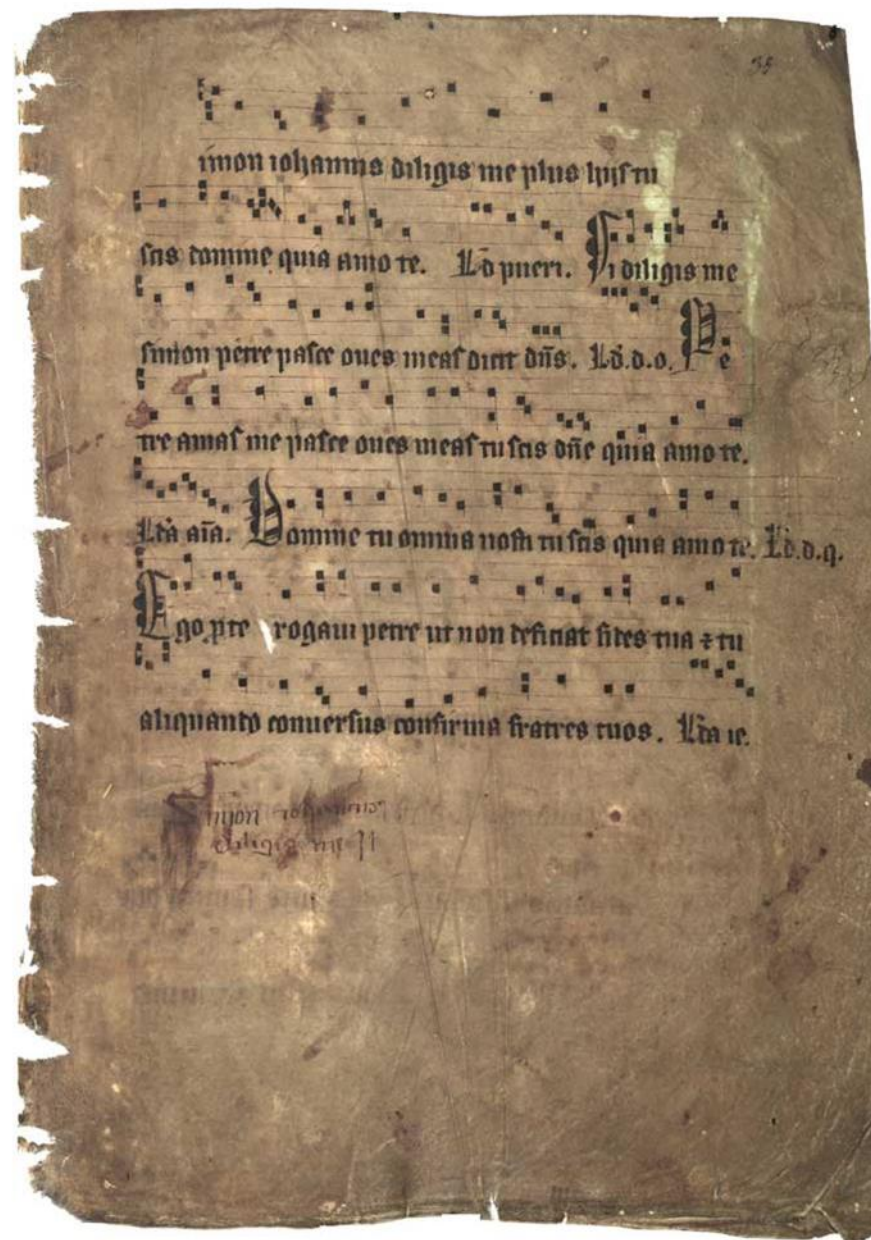
The Icelandic „Tvísöngur“ - a Quintsong

- Characteristic for the Icelandic medieval singing
- Practised for at least 700 years
- Orally memorised and sung by men only
- Main voice – vox principalis, tenor, one singer or a group
- Vox organgalis – one singer, a fifth below the man voice but crossed the main voice to be fifth above, called “to go up”
- Often Lydian Tonality
- The oldest manuscript with a Tvísöngur is a setting of the credo from 1487
- Photo: A manuscript with Tvísöngur from 1490-1510
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMredF5I6Lc>



Catholic singing – Gregorian Chant

- The word „singing“ is first used after Christianisation in Iceland in 1000 AD
- „Singing the mass“ – in Latin
- In the churches and Monasteries, - canonical hours
- 1107 Jón helgi Ögmundsson, first bishop in Hólar hired a french priest, Richini, to teach singing and verse making. The first known music teaching in Iceland
- Canonical hours were notated in books, Antiphonoria
- Þorlákstíðir is the largest manuscript with Gregorian Chant in Iceland, named after Þorlákur helgi Þorláksson who died in 1193 and is the only Icelandic Saint



Reformation 1550 and „Grallarinn“

- Monasteries closed and almost all manuscripts with music were destroyed
- Icelandic psalmsinging using Danish and German songs replaced the Gregorian Chant
- The first Lutheran psalmbooks were printed without music notations.
- In 1589 Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson published the first psalm book in Icelandic with music notation
- In 1594 Guðbrandur printed songbook for the mass called Grallarinn, Icelandic for Graduale
- Grallarinn was published 19 times untill 1779 and was the main songbook in church into the 19th century. In the 1st edition is a preface about singing by bishop Oddur Einasson. In the 6th edition is a preface by bishop Þórður Þorláksson which is the first article about the art of singing printed in Iceland.

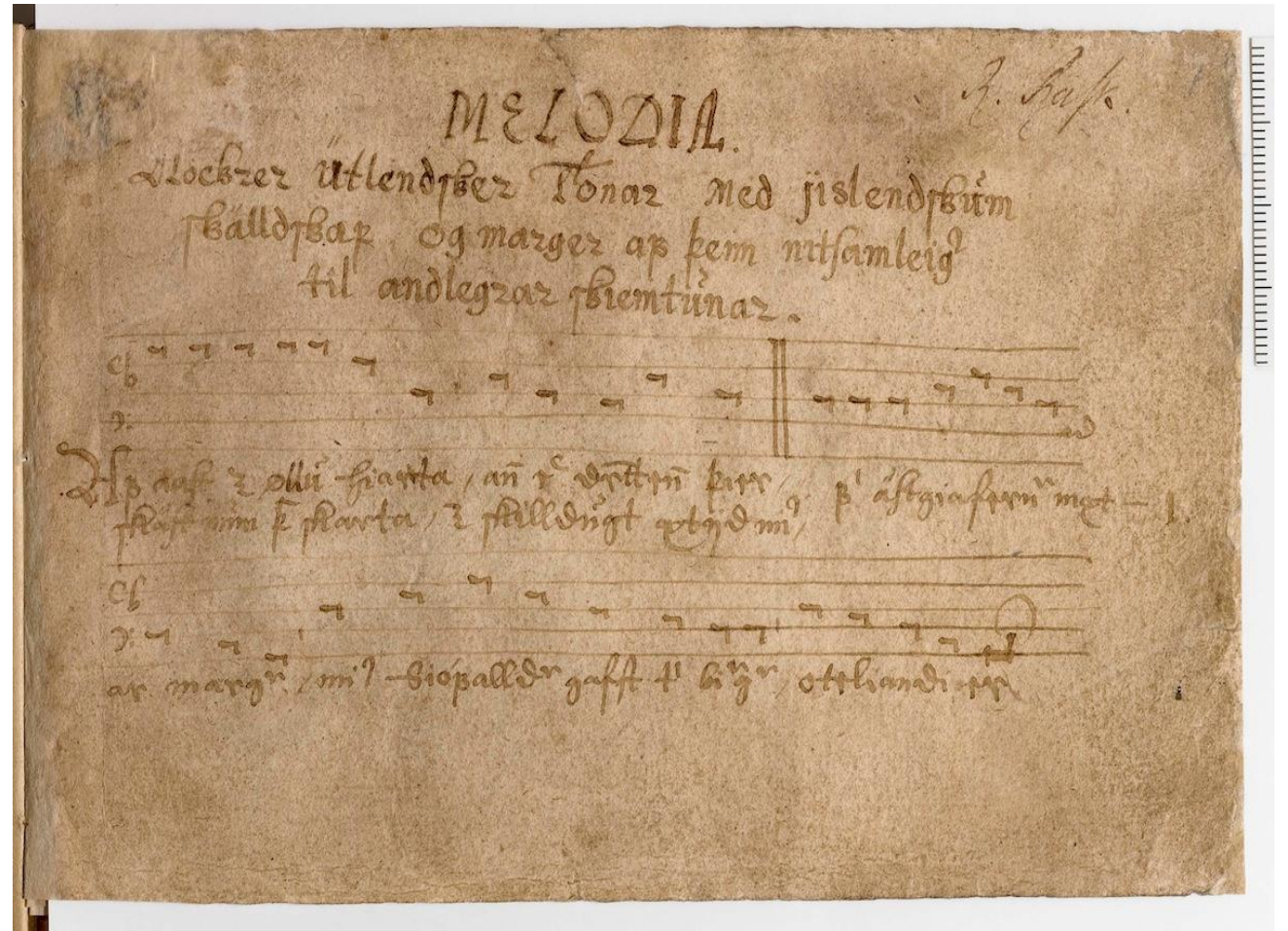


Danish trade monopoly 1602-1787

- blocked foreign contact and slowed down urbanisation
- medieval song, catholic liturgy or secular songs, dances and ballads were practiced in Iceland centuries after their popularity had expired in Europe where western classical music was developing
- The medieval traditions were developed according to the taste of the isolated Icelanders
- No baroque or classical period

Melodia

- Rask 98 – Rasmus Christian Rask
- The most important surviving Icelandic music manuscript
- 223 Songs
- Written around 1660
- A variety of music:
 - Folksongs
 - Icelandic, Danish and German hymns
 - Two part songs
 - Four part chanson
- Music example: „Weeping I come to thee my lord“ – A sinner’s prayer to God to receive him with mercy in spite of his burden of wrongdoing



Magnús Stephensen (1762-1833)

- Influenced by the Enlightenment
- Published a psalmbook for singing in the mass in 1801 called Aldamótabókin. There are the three psalms written with modern music notation
- Fought against „grallarasöngnum“ and the singing of vikivaki and rhymes
- Played both flute and „langspil“
- Imported an organ, harmonium, which was used in churches in Leirá and Viðey
- Sveinbjörn Egilsson, rektor in the college in Iceland, learned from Magnús and taught singing at the college
- Ari Sæmundsson learned about the art of singing by Magnús and published in 1855 the first book about music theory in Iceland



Instruments in Iceland until mid 19th century

- Lack of instruments
- Arngrímur lærði brought an organ he made himself to Iceland in 1329
- An organ was supposedly at the Bishopry in Skálholt in 1542
- Bishop Þórður Þorláksson brings regal og symfón (photo) to Iceland at the end of 17th century
- Icelandic fiddle, with two strings, was used from 16th to 19th century
- Langspil is mentioned in literature in 1705 and was popular until 19th century



„Langspil“ and „Icelandic fiddle“



Pétur Guðjohnsen (1812-1877)

- 1840 - first organist in the Cathedral in Reykjavik
- In 1840 the first pipe organ in Iceland was put in the Cathedral
- Taught singing at „Latínuskólinn“ (the college in Iceland) from 1846
- Published a psalmbook in 1861
- Translated a book by Gebauer about music theory in 1870 –the first Icelandic music theory words in print
- Published a book of psalms with three part settings



Olufa Finsen

(1835-1908)

- Came to Iceland in 1865 to Iceland and was married to a governor
- Musically educated and enthusiastic about music teaching
- Coached the first mixed choir in Iceland 1868
- Composed a cantata which was premiered at the funeral of national hero Jón Sigurðsson and his wife Ingibjörg, conducted and played the organ
- Taught Anna Pétursson who became the main piano teacher in Iceland



Anna Pétursson

(1845-1921)

- Learned piano playing by Ástríður Melsteð
- Started teaching piano at the age of fifteen
- Studied in Copenhagen and was the first Icelander to finish a piano teacher program
- Taught piano and hamonium playing for half a century and almost all musicians of the next generation were her students
- After 1880 more women started giving piano lesson and around 1900 it was common to have a piano in the homes of the upper class



Jónas Helgason (1839-1903) and Helgi Helgason (1848-1922)

- Jónas, a blacksmith, founded the first choir in Iceland, in 1862, a male choir of craftsmen, called Söngfélag Reykjavíkur. Turned into a mixed choir 1875 and was then called Harpan. Studied singing and organplaying in Copenhagen at age of 36
- Introduced singing in public schools and made 10 volumes of songbooks for teaching in 1882-1901, with two, three- and four part arrangements. After three years the students should be able to read music. Used a violin in lessons.
- Published a songbook in 7 volumes, called Hörpuheftin, 190 songs. Published three- and fourpart psalmsbooks.
- Organist in the cathedral 1877. Parliament granted Jónas 1000 kr. to teach organ playing in the churches around the country free of charge
- Helgi, a carpenter, founded the first band, Lúðurþeytarafélag Reykjavíkur, in 1876
- Made 10 books about singing to explain music notation to children.
- Made a violin, small organ and pipe organ
- Studies trumpet and violin in Copenhagen
- Lived in Canada 1902-14
- Composed a lot of choir works, solo songs and cantatas
- Composed the first work for orchestra in Iceland which was premiered in the funeral of Iceland's national hero Jón Sigurðsson and his wife Ingibjörg in 1880

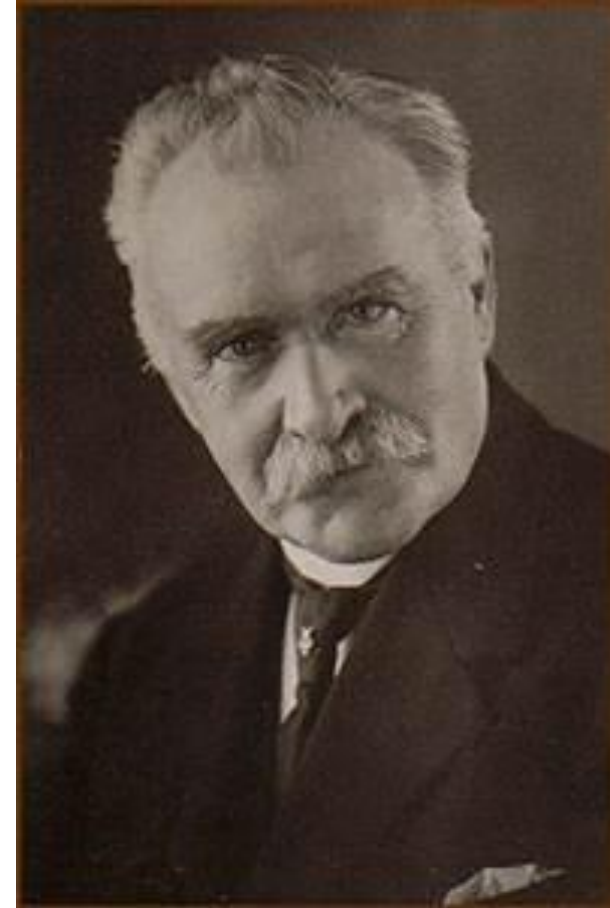
Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson (1847-1927)

- Studied in Edinburg, Copenhagen and Leipzig with Carl Reinecke
- First professional musician from Iceland. Lived and worked as a piano teacher and composer in Edinburg.
- Moved to Iceland in 1922, taught piano and conducted the student choir
- Composed the icelandic national hymn
- Composed many solo songs, choir works, piano music, chamber music, rhapsodies for orchestra and a cantata. Romantic style influenced by Mendelsohn and Grieg.
- Music example: „Vikivaki“ – referring to the past - arrangement of two Icelandic folksongs



Bjarni Þorsteinsson (1861-1938)

- Started notating Icelandic folksongs in 1880
- Studied Icelandic music manuscripts in Copenhagen in 1899 and 1903-4
- 1909 the Carlsberg fund published Bjarni's Anthology „Íslensk þjóðlög“ – Icelandic Folksongs – the most important source about Icelandic musical culture:
 - History of Icelandic singing
 - Songs from manuscripts such as Þorlákstíðir and Hymnodia sacra, the largest Icelandic collection of psalms from the 18th century.
 - Songs from printed books such as Hólabækurnar, Grallarinn and psalmsbooks
 - Notated folksongs
- Published „Íslensk vikivakalög og önnur íslensk þjóðlög“ 1929
- Composed a lot of choir music and solo songs



Icelandic folk songs – some common features

- Irregular rhythms
- Church modes, often lydian
- Ringing and sliding, - ornaments
- Narrow range
- According to Jón Leifs the nature of Icelandic folk songs is influenced by the nature and the catastrophes the people of Iceland have faced. The folksongs are serious and show hardship more than other folk songs... True icelandic spirit, fighting the difficulties. Sometimes religious but tough ...“

- **Sigfús Einarsson** was the first Icelander who earned his living from music making
- Studied in Copenhagen and conducted the Icelandic student choir
- Moved to Iceland in 1906 and taught singing at two Reykjavik colleges, - Latínuskólinn
- Apointed Cathedral organist 1913
- Edited a collection of 300 Icelandic songs in 1915-16, - very popular
- Wrote a books, articles, reviews and textbooks on music and singing



Sigfús Einarsson
(1877-1939)

- **Sigvaldi Kaldalóns** was self-trained in music
- Worked as a physician in some of Iceland's most remote districts and composed music in his spare time
- Composed around 350 songs, and many of Iceland's most popular and widely performed songs
- Composed in the romantic tradition and had great sense of writing melodies and capture the spirit of a poem.
- Other composers of the same generation were self-taught and composed songs in the romantic style like Árne Thorsteinsson, Jón Laxdal and Friðrik Bjarnason



Sigvaldi Kaldalóns
(1881-1946)

Guðmunda Nielsen (1885-1936)

- Organist in Eyrarbakki
- Taught organ playing and piano
- Accompanied singers and choirs
- Published music
- Lieder for organ and piano



Important dates for the music life in first half of 20th century

- 1907 The Danish King visited Iceland – Sigfús Einarsson and Sveinbjörn composed Cantatas
- 1920
 - The first educated violinist, Þórarinn Guðmundsson, founded a small orchestra
- 1926
 - new organ with 32 voices was put in the Cathedral
 - Hamburger Philharmonic played in Iceland, - the first symphony orchestra to visit Iceland
- 1930
 - Establishment of “Tónlistarskólinn í Reykjavík” , the first Music School in Reykjavík
 - Foundation of the National Broadcasting Service
 - The first large cantata in Iceland composed by Páll Ísólsson

- **Páll Ísólfsson** studied organplaying in Leipzig by Karl Straube
- Assistant and substitute organist in St. Thomas Church í Leipzig 1917-19
- Played an organ recital in 1920 with works by J.S.Bach
- First director of the first Music school in Reykjavík, 1930-57
- Head of the music department at the Icelandic broadcasting service
- Organist at the Reykjavík Cathedral
- Composed many solo songs, organ works, piano pieces and cantatas, like a cantata for the Parliament festivity
- Other educated musicians of the same generations are Björgvin Guðmundsson, Emil Thoroddsen and Sigurður Þórðarson
- Music example: Impromptu in f minor



Páll Ísólfsson
(1893-1974)

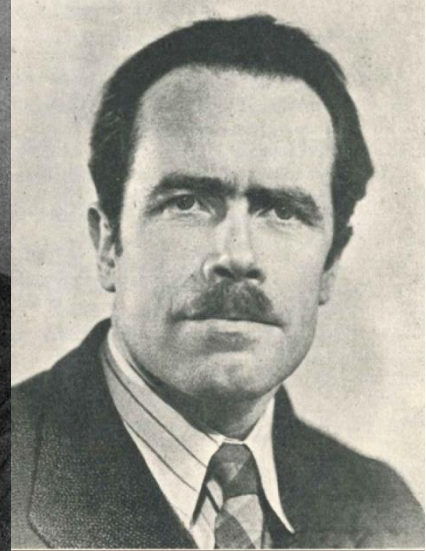
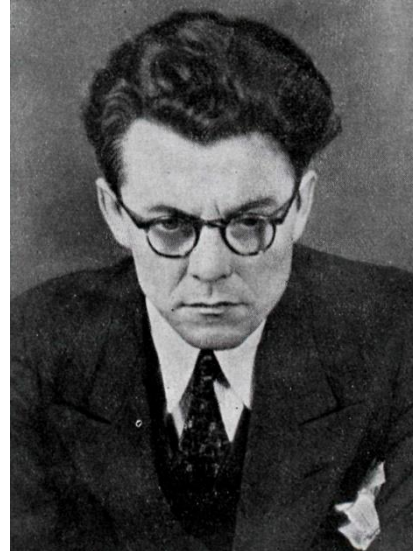
Jón Leifs (1899-1968)

- First Icelandic modernist and created a new style
- Primitivism, - harsh, unregular rhythms, chromatic chord, fifths and octaves instead of triadic harmonies
- Studied piano, composition and conducting in Leipzig
- Lived 28 years in Germany and conducted more than 30 orchestras
- Brought the Hamburg Philharmoniker to Iceland in 1926
- Travelled around Iceland 1925-28 and recorded, notated and collected Icelandic folk songs.
- Used Icelandic folksongs a lot in his compositions
- Composed symphonic works, chamber music, piano pieces, solo songs, choir works. The Edda oratorios are based on the Nordic Edda poetry
- Founded the Composers society in 1945, and STEF a performing rights society
- Music example: „Íslenskir dansar op. 14“



Important immigrants from Europe

- Highly educated musicians came from Europe and settled in Iceland. They taught music, and conducted choirs and orchestras
 - Dr. Franz Mixa taught piano and theory, conducted and played chamber music
 - Dr. Victor Urbancic, choir- and orchestral conductor, conducted the first opera which was performed in Iceland in the National Theater in 1950
 - Dr. Abraham Ottósson wrote his Phd about Þorlákstíðir and was head cantor by the church of Iceland and a docent at the University of Iceland
 - Dr. Heinz Edelstein founded a music school for children in 1952, Barnamúsíkskólann



- **Karl Ó. Runólfsson** learned to play the trumpet, violin and arrangements in Copenhagen
- Studied composition with Viktor Urbancic and Franz Mixa
- Composed theater music, songs and a trumpet sonata where the last movement is a rímnarondó and arranged a lot of folk songs
- Icelandic instrumental music was not born in Iceland until after second world war. Instrumental ensembles, small wind orchestras, had existed for decades but compositions in a idiomatic fashion of orchestral or chamber music format didn't exist



Karl Ó. Runólfsson
(1900-1970)

- **Jón Þórarinnsson** studied composition with Hindemith at Yale and Juilliard music school in USA
- Head of the composition and music theory department in Reykja music school 1947-68
- Head of the music department in Icelandic broadcasting Service 1968-79
- Composed songs and chamber music
- Wrote a lot about music, - icelandic music history
- After WW II most icelandic composers studied abroad.
- Music example: „Kvölda tekur“ from „Fimm gamlir húsgangar“ handa börnum, (Songs for children)



Jón Þórarinnsson
(1917-2012)

- **Jórunn Viðar** studied piano performance and composition in Berlin, in Juilliard in New York and later in Vienna
- Composed balletmusic: „Eldur“ and „Ólafur liljurós“
- Composed a piano concerto, „Slátta“ , piano pieces and many solo songs, often with an opening in recitative style
- Composed the first Icelandic film music to the movie, „ Síðasti bærinn í dalnum“
- Music example: „Meditation on five old Icelandic stemmur (ballads)“



Jórunn Viðar (f.1918)

- **Jón Ásgeirsson** studied composition with Viktor Urbancic and Jón Þórarinnssyni and later in London
- Composed the first Icelandic Opera 1974, „Þrymskviða“ and later the opera „Galdra-Loftur“. A lot of incidental music
- Composed a ballet „Blindisleikur“ and symphonic poem „Lilja“ and many choir works and songs
- Uses the folk music a lot as in „Fornir dansar“ and „Lilja“ and arranged many folk songs
- Other composers of the same generation are Sigursveinn D. Kristinsson, Árni Björnsson, Helgi Pálsson, Þórarinn Jónsson og Hallgrímur Helgason



Jón Ásgeirsson (f.1928)

Music school “boom”

- Musical Societies were established around the country to organize concerts and run music school’s with financial support of the state.
 - In 1961-2 there were 13 music schools with 866 students
 - New legislation in 1963, laws about financial support for Music Schools was very important for the growth of music teaching
 - 1963-4 there were 23 music schools and 1828 students
 - Today the music schools are around 80 and 15000 pupils
- Choirs and singing are extremely popular
 - In 2000 there were 250-300 choirs in Iceland with more than 5600 singers



New currents – atonality, indeterminacy, third stream, electronic music from Europe and America

- New currents from abroad influenced a new generation of composers (born before 1950): Magnús Blöndal Jóhannesson, Herbert Ágústsson, Jón Nordal, Fjölur Stefánsson, Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson, Leifur Þórarinnsson, Atli Heimir Sveinsson, Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson, Hafliði Hallgrímsson, Jónas Tómasson, John Speight, Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, Karólína Eiríksdóttir
- In 1968 the The Iceland Music Information Centre was established. It is the Icelandic national agency for Icelandic music, both contemporary and older. The collection comprises a diverse range of contemporary music resources available for hire and sale, <https://mic.is/>

- **Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson** studied in the Neatherlands and was a jazz musician, percussionist and teacher.
- The first composer who was from the beginning interested in jazz
- Composed for theater, church, amateur choirs and jazz clubs
- Composed more than 80 pieces, songs, choir works, organ, guitarmusic, chamber music and a lot of jazz influence
- Music example „Maður hefur nú...”



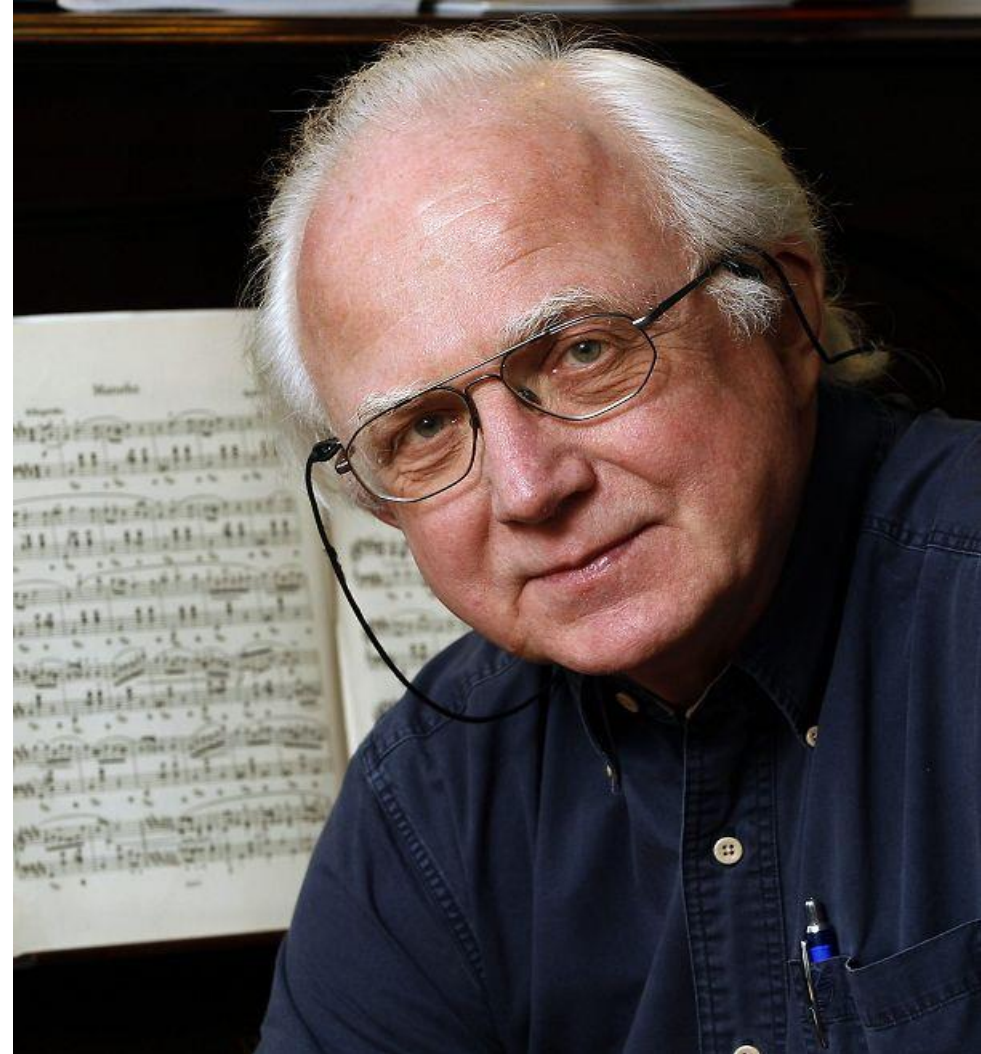
Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson
(1933-2008)

Leifur Þórarinnsson (1934-98)

- Studied with Jelinek in Vienna and Gunther Schuller in USA
- Composed symphonic works, concertos, chamber music and solo works, - incidental music
- Influenced by the second Viennese School
- Music example from “Barnalagaflokkur” (Children songs), - early work for piano students



- **Atli Heimir Sveinsson** studied in Cologne with Bernd Alois Zimmerman and Karlheinz Stockhausen
- Composed operas, ballet music, symphonic works widely performed. Religious music, choir music, theater music and many songs
- Nordic Council Prize for a flute concerto 1976
- A special touch for melody and beautiful harmonies
- Music example from „Dimmalimm“ for piano, originally incidental music



Atli Heimir Sveinsson (f.1938)

- **Porkell Sigurbjörnsson** was one of the leaders of Musica Nova a group founded 1960 to promote modern music
- Prolific composer and teacher og many composers of the younger generation
- Well known for his religous works.
- Composed religous choir music, symphonic works, orarotio, children opera, concertos, chamber music and electronic music
- Music example: „Hans variations“



Porkell Sigurbjörnsson
(1938-2013)

Generations of prolific composers

- Born in 1950's: Áskell Másson, Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, Hróðmar Ingi Sigurbjörnsson, Karólína Eiríksdóttir, Kjartan Ólafsson, Oliver Kentish, Snorri Sigfús Birgisson
- Born in 1960's: Atli Ingólfsson, Elín Gunnlaugsdóttir, Bára Grímsdóttir, Haukur Tómasson, Hildigunnur Rúnarsdóttir, Mist Þorkeldsdóttir, Ríkhartur Ö. Friðriksson, Sveinn Lúðvík Björnsson, Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson, Úlfar Ingi Haraldsson, Þuríður Jónsdóttir
- Born in 1970's: Anna S. Þorvaldsdóttir, Daníel Bjarnason, Hafdís Bjarnadóttir, Haraldur Sveinbjörnsson, Hugí Guðmundsson, Þórður Magnússon, Þóra Marteinsdóttir

- **Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson** studied with Atli Heimir Sveinsson and Þorsteinn Hauksson, and later in Vienna.
- Head of the music department in the Arts academy in Iceland
- Composed solo works, chamber music, choir works, ballet music and band music
- Many pieces for wind instruments as a former tuba player and band leader
- Humorous music
- Music example: „Meditation on an Icelandic folk song“ written for EPTA competition in 2009



Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson
(f. 1965)

Anna Þorvaldsdóttir (b.1977)

- One of the most successful Icelandic composers of the younger generation
- studied composition with John Speight, Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson and Mist Þorkelsdóttir
- Ph.D. in composition from The University of California San Diego
- Her pieces have been frequently performed in Iceland and in festivals and on other occasions for example in USA, The Netherlands, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Denmark.
- Nordic Council Award for the work Dreaming
- New York Philharmonic Kravis Emerging Composer award



Links and information about Icelandic music

- Icelandic Music Information Centre, <https://mic.is/>
- <http://shop.mic.is/OriginatorDetail/57676> - large part of Icelandic works for sale online. Demos.
- Ísmús , <http://www.ismus.is/> , homepage for Icelandic music- and cultural heritage, - manuscripts, historic printed music material, folksongs, musicians, recordings of folksongs, Anthology of Icelandic Folksongs by Bjarni Þorsteinsson, ...
- For questions regarding the notes: julianaindrida@gmail.com