

LAWO
CLASSICS

HAFLIDI
HALLGRÍMSSON

Lebensfries



SSENS TRIO

LEBENSFRIES

OP. 56 (2022)

For Violin, Viola and Cello

Commissioned by the Ssens Trio and dedicated to the memory of the Norwegian painter Lars Hertervig.

The original version of *Lebensfries* had the title *String Trio Op. 54*. It was much shorter than the new version, which has been enlarged and given the title *Lebensfries Op. 56*. The title is borrowed from the great Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944). The original *String Trio Op. 54* had its first performance in the small auditorium at the Norwegian Opera House in February 2020, given by the Ssens Trio. As I listened to the performance, I came to the conclusion that this cycle of short pieces was little more than sketches that needed to be developed further. A few months later, I began developing these pieces and started to add new ones. They accumulated gradually to form a cycle consisting of twelve pieces.

It was my wish to incorporate an element of Norwegian culture in one way or another. I soon decided to dedicate *Lebensfries* to Lars Hertervig – the great Norwegian painter (1830–1902) – to honour his memory and to celebrate my own discovery of his art, which had by then become engraved in my memory. When listening

to *Lebensfries* now, the dedication seems to me to be very apt. Soon after the discovery of his art, I read a short article on Hertervig by the art critic Ole Henrik Moe, and learned about Hertervig’s tragic life, his poverty, and the fact that he died a pauper.

It was my intention to compose a number of individual pieces, each having its own characteristics, which would in performance give the impression of a substantial cycle of multifaceted pieces, with short silences in between each of them, and imbued with an atmosphere of harmonic unity throughout. *Lebensfries* was premiered in Harpa in Reykjavík in 2021 in its present form by the Ssens Trio.

The chords heard at the very beginning of *Lebensfries* reappear several times, but always in different guises. These chords play an important role in creating the overall atmosphere and harmonic “aura” that permeates the work, even when the music is fastmoving or very slow. Interrelated thematic procedures are heard at various stages, but always transformed. The spectrum of unusual sounds that can be obtained from string instruments comes to the fore now and then, but always in the service of a musical idea or gesture.

There is a dreamlike stillness and a strong poetic atmosphere in Hertervig’s oil

paintings, in particular, that inspired me to a degree, as well as the story of his life. It was never my intention to try to emulate his paintings in sound, nor to dwell on the story of his tragic life, but listening to *Lebensfries* now, I have to admit that his world, as I imagined it to be – both as a human being and an artist – has found its way into the music in what I can only describe as by osmosis or unconscious assimilation

HAFLIÐI HALLGRÍMSSON

Hafliði Hallgrímsson is a well established composer with a growing international reputation. He was born in 1941 in the small town of Akureyri on the north coast of Iceland, and began to play the cello at the age of eleven. He studied the cello full time at the Music school in Reykjavík from 1958–1962 and graduated with an honorary degree. He went on to study with Enrico Mainardi in Rome that same year, and became a member of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra from 1963 –1964. He continued his studies in London at the Royal Academy of Music from 1964–1977, and was awarded on his graduation with the coveted Madame Suggia Prize. He made his debut in Iceland with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra performing the Haydn cello concerto in C major in 1968, and made his formal debut in England in 1971 at the Wigmore Hall in London, with a highly successful cello recital.

In the following years he studied composition privately with Elizabeth Luthyens, Dr. Alan Bush and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. For many years Hallgrímsson was active as a freelance cellist in London, both as a soloist and as a member

of various chamber groups and chamber orchestras, notably the English Chamber orchestra. From 1977–1983 he was a principal cellist with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and lived in Edinburgh until 2003, when he moved to England and settled with his wife Ragnheiður Árnadóttir in Bath. They have three sons, Almar, Andri and Stefán.

Hallgrímsson has been awarded several honours, among them the first prize in the Viotti International competition in 1975, a second prize in the Wieniavski International competition in 1976, and a four years Nesta Fellowship that allowed him to complete several major compositions. In 2006 he was awarded “The order of the Falcon” for his services to music by the Icelandic government. He achieved international recognition in 1976 when he was awarded the Nordic Council Prize for *Poemi* for violin and string orchestra, which was the first commission of many that he has received over the years from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He has composed close to 100 works, ranging from simple pieces for young performers, chamber music, concertos, choral works to an opera entitled; *Die Walt der Zwischenfalle*, based on an absurdist texts by the Russian writer Daniil Kharms, which was commissioned by Lubeck Theatre in Germany and *Netzeit* in Vienna. Hallgrímsson has twice



been a resident composer with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and has been commissioned by many famous orchestras and soloists who have performed his music in many parts of the world.

SSENS TRIO

SØLVE SIGERLAND, VIOLIN

HENNINGE LANDAAS, VIOLA

ELLEN MARGRETE FLESJØ, CELLO

The **Ssens Trio** (pronounced 'Essence') was established in 2014 by three musicians with a wealth of experience in the international music scene. The trio has appeared in concert with Geir Inge Lotsberg, Håvard Gimse and Leif Ove Andsnes, among others.

Their first CD, *Beethoven: String Trios Op. 3 & 8* (LAWO Classics), received *Pizzicato Magazine's* "Supersonic Award" and a prestigious ICMA Awards nomination in 2018. *Fanfare Magazine* wrote:

"With absolutely no hesitation I will say that it goes right to the top of my Beethoven String Trios list." (Jerry Dubins).

And the following from a review in *Pizzicato Magazine* under the heading 'Beethoven With A Communicative Joy of Music Making':

"Their performance is brimming with the joy of playing together. An outstanding 'trialogue', with each performer fully sensing the other. Through this interactive music making, which in the Adagio and Minuet movements invokes a remarkably intimate mood,

Beethoven's works gain in depth and sensuousness. And when one combines the sensitive playing with a wonderfully eloquent virtuosity, the way is clear for pure listening pleasure." (Alain Steffen).

In 2019, the Ssens Trio released a CD of music by W. A. Mozart on LAWO Classics.

The recording received excellent reviews in, among others, *Classica* (France), *Fanfare Magazine* and *Pizzicato Magazine*, and was nominated for the ICMA Awards and the highly prestigious Opus Klassik Award in Germany.

The CD *Ricercare*, featuring music by Johan Kvandal, Finn Mortensen, Edvard Fliflet Bræin and Bertil Palmar Johansen, was released in 2022. It has received glowing reviews in, among others, *Gramophone*, *The Strad*, *Pizzicato Magazine* (where it received the Supersonic Award), *Sonogramma* in Spain, and in the Netherlands. *Ricercare* was nominated for the ICMA Awards and Opus Klassik in 2023. Their most recent recording, featuring Beethoven's three trios Op. 9, completes their release of Beethoven's complete works for string trio. This recording, too, has been met with high praise in both Norwegian and international press.

The Ssens Trio is supported by the Arts Council Norway.

Solve Sigerland has devoted the greater part of his career to chamber music, while appearing as soloist with leading Scandinavian orchestras conducted by Andrew Litton, Daniel Harding and Walter Weller, among others. In 1993 Sigerland represented Norway at the Nordic Soloist Biennial in Stockholm, and later he won two prizes at the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition in Sion, Switzerland. As a member of the Grieg Trio, he has performed in Europe, the USA and Asia and received prizes for both performances and recordings. Solve Sigerland has served as a jury member in competitions such as the ARD Competition in Munich, the Trondheim TICC, and the Schubert and Modern Music competition in Graz, Austria.

Henninge Landaas was co-principal violist in the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra for 18 years and a member of the internationally renowned Vertavo String Quartet, with which she performed in concert halls the world over. The ensemble's critically acclaimed recordings include works by Carl Nielsen, Brahms, Bartok, Grieg and Debussy, among others. With the quartet she shared the Norwegian Music Critics' Prize, Spellemannprisen (Norwegian Grammy), and the prestigious French award, Diapason d'Or. Henninge Landaas has released

several CDs on the LAWO Classics label, among them, Johannes Brahms: Sonatas for Viola & Piano, Op. 120 and The Golden Hindemith. She plays a G.B. Guadagnini viola on loan from Dextra Musica.

Ellen Margrete Flesjø was a founding member of the Grieg Trio in 1987. With this ensemble she has performed in Europe, the USA and Asia and has released critically acclaimed recordings on EMI, Virgin and Simax Classics labels. Prizes she has received include the Parkhouse Award, First Prize and two additional prizes at the Colmar International Chamber Music Competition (Colmar, France), the Norwegian Music Critics' Prize, and Spellemannprisen (Norwegian Grammy). She has performed as a soloist with the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and has served as section leader in the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. From 2004 to 2009, Ellen Margrete Flesjø was co-artistic director of the Stavanger International Chamber Music Festival, together with her colleagues in the Grieg Trio.



SSENS TRIO

SØLVE SIGERLAND, VIOLIN
HENNINGE LANDAAS, VIOLA
ELLEN MARGRETE FLESJØ, CELLO

HAFLIDI HALLGRÍMSSON (1941*)

Lebensfries Op. 56

01. *Largo* 06:56
02. *Allegro* 02:39
03. *Largo* 03:06
04. *Andante* 05:22
05. *Adagio* 06:06
06. *Largo – molto calm* 03:37
07. *Andante* 04:28
08. *Largo* 04:26
09. *Andante* 03:47
10. *Andante* 04:59
11. *Largo* 06:14
12. *Larghetto* 10:28

RECORDED IN GRORUD CHURCH,
20. – 22. OCTOBER 2024

PRODUCER: VEGARD LANDAAS
BALANCE ENGINEER: THOMAS WOLDEN
EDITING: VEGARD LANDAAS
MASTERING: THOMAS WOLDEN
BOOKLET NOTES: HAFLIÐI HALLGRÍMSSON
BOOKLET EDITOR: TORGEIR M. LANDAAS
COVER DESIGN: ANNA-JULIA GRANBERG / BLUNDERBUSS

COVER & ARTIST PHOTO SSENS: BÅRD GUNDERSEN
ARTIST PHOTO HALLGRÍMSSON: BRUNO SCHRECKER

THIS RECORDING HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM:
CREO – THE UNION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE,
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