



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press contact: Christina Jensen, Jensen Artists  
+1 646.536.7864, [christina@jensenartists.com](mailto:christina@jensenartists.com)

## Sono Luminus Releases

### *South of the Circle* Siggi String Quartet

Worldwide Release Date: May 24, 2019

[www.siggistringquartet.com](http://www.siggistringquartet.com) | [www.sonoluminus.com](http://www.sonoluminus.com)

Review CDs and downloads available upon request.

Siggi Quartet recently joined Víkingur Ólafsson on his Deutsche Grammophon album *Philip Glass: Piano Works*



Sono Luminus announces the **May 24, 2019** worldwide release of *South of the Circle*, the first album on the label from leading Icelandic ensemble **Siggi String Quartet**. *South of the Circle* includes **Daniel Bjarnason's** *Stillshot* (2015), Siggi String Quartet violinist and composer **Una Sveinbjarnardóttir's** *Opacity* (2014), **Valgeir Sigurðsson's** *Nebraska* (2011), **Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir's** *Fair Flowers* (2018), and **Haukur Tómasson's** *Serimonia* (2014). Siggi String Quartet is **Una Sveinbjarnardóttir**, violin; **Helga Þóra Björgvinsdóttir**, violin; **Þórunn Ósk Marínósdóttir**, viola; and **Sigurður Bjarki Gunnarsson**, cello.

In 2017, the group recorded the music of Philip Glass with prize-winning pianist Víkingur Ólafsson for Deutsche Grammophon. For this recording the quartet was branded “superb” by *Gramophone Magazine* and “top-notch” by *National Public Radio*. Siggi String Quartet received the Icelandic Music Prize for Performer of the Year in 2018 and is a frequent performer at Nordic Music Days and Dark Music Days Reykjavík.

Siggi String Quartet was founded in 2012 during the Young Scandinavian Composers festival in Reykjavík. The quartet has actively collaborated with today's composers and commissioned and premiered numerous new works. Siggi Quartet's repertoire extends from the Renaissance through the Classical masters. Its members have great passion for 20th and 21st Century repertoire.

Sveinbjarnardóttir says, “Experimenting with sound and texture, improvisation, and live electronics is an important part of our work. It is of course part of our performance of new music, and also deepens our understanding of the standard repertoire. Playing a late Beethoven quartet while working on Haukur Tómasson's *Serimonia*, for example, makes us aim for rhythmic precision. Working on Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir's *Fair Flowers* after performing the same Beethoven pushed us to bring out long phrases. I imagined endless moss, grey and green, and the tiny wild Icelandic flowers in bright violet and yellow. My piece *Opacity* is freer – the structure is simple and an improvised feeling reigns. It is a kind of in-the-moment playing, also with timings and texture.”

#### About the Music on *South of the Circle*

**Daniel Bjarnason** wrote *Stillshot* in 2015. The piece is dreamy and nostalgic and in form resembles a chaconne, with the same chord progression repeating itself throughout. In the middle of the piece, there is a retreat from the harmonic structure before it resumes until the end. The composer describes the piece as depicting fragmented memories of a noblewoman. The recollections appear abruptly and vanish quickly, some of them distant but others are more focused and clearer. The title of the piece refers to the early days of photography when people would have to stay still for considerable amounts of time, so that the camera would produce a clear picture.

In *Opacity*, **Una Sveinbjarnardóttir** wrote movement-long solos for each instrument of the Siggi String Quartet. She says, “Solos in the string quartet repertoire are traditionally short and travel between the voices quite frequently. Here, I try to expand the idea of the individual solo and the result is *Opacity*: four columns, each representing the instruments of the string quartet. The first movement, ‘More,’ belongs to the second violin. The next movement, ‘Opacity’ is a cello solo; the third ‘Elegia’ is a viola lament, and the last movement ‘Less’ is partly improvised by the first violin, spurring reactions from the other three instruments.”

**Valgeir Sigurðsson's *Nebraska Quartet*** was commissioned by The Chiara String Quartet and premiered at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City in January 2011. The piece marked the first formal occasion that **Sigurðsson** was asked to write a piece of concert music. He explains, "Chiara was in residency at the University of Nebraska at the time, so I immediately had the idea to base the new piece on my imagined impressions of these faraway landscapes. I wanted the new piece to deal with my impressions of Nebraska. I began to draw parallels between geological and geographical properties of Iceland and Nebraska. And notwithstanding obvious contrasts, these sparsely populated, erosive lands share a sense of isolation and timelessness, and vast open spaces." *Nebraska Quartet* is in four movements: i. "Flat Water," ii. "Landlocked," iii. "Erosion," and iv. "Plainsong."

**Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir's *Fair Flowers*** was commissioned by Siggí String Quartet for the Reykjavík Arts Festival and premiered in June 2018 in Fríkirkjan Church in Reykjavík. The composition is based on a strict system of colors, and the composer's analysis of a painting of flowers by the Icelandic artist Eggert Pétursson. The painting "Án titils" (no title) (2011) shows nature in Northern Iceland and the Tröllaskagi Peninsula.

**Haukur Tómasson's *Serimonia*** was written for and premiered by Siggí String Quartet in 2014 and revised in 2018 for this recording. The piece has a rigid form – five types of texture are exposed and repeated in different orders, always played very softly and without interpretation. The quartet is amplified to allow details in tone production to be heard.

***South of the Circle* | Siggí String Quartet | Sono Luminus | Release Date: May 24, 2019 | Total time: 59:55**

1. Daníel Bjarnason: *Stillshot* (2015) [9:52]

Una Sveinbjarnardóttir: *Opacity* (2014)

2. More [2:38]

3. Opacity [4:37]

4. Elegia [3:16]

5. Less [4:52]

Valgeir Sigurðsson: *Nebraska* (2011)

6. Flat Water [3:12]

7. Landlocked [2:46]

8. Erosion [1:36]

9. Plainsong [3:14]

10. Mamiko Dís Ragnarsdóttir: *Fair Flowers* (2018) [14:46]

11. Haukur Tómasson: *Serimonia* (2014) [9:06]

###