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RAGNAR KJARTANSSON
*DER KLANG DER OFFENBARUNG
DES GÖTTLICHEN /
THE EXPLOSIVE SONICS
OF DIVINITY*

An opera by Ragnar Kjartansson and Kjartan Sveinsson
produced by Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin
presented by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

North American premiere
Théâtre Misonneuve, Place des Arts
March 3, 2016

For the first major Canadian exhibition devoted to the internationally acclaimed Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is delighted to present *Der Klang der Offenbarung des Göttlichen / The Explosive Sonics of Divinity* to a Montréal audience. Viewers will discover a moving and romantic universe tinged with a nostalgic, nineteenth-century theatricality. This “pictorial opera” is enacted through the music of an orchestra of 39 musicians and 16 choristers, and through the movement of the sets. There is no actor on stage.

“I grew up in the theatre, since my parents are both actors and directors, and I've always been in great awe of the non-narrative parts and the abstract components during rehearsals—the ceremonial mystique of a test phase when the actors are not yet on stage and there is nothing but the machinery, the props and scenery. Then you add a grand, romantic, musical element which brings in the emotional. I wanted to pay tribute to the mechanics and the formal elements of the theatre. It's a theatre play without actors that will only use the stage and the music as theatrical elements, intended as an homage to the machine, to the art of stage painting and scenery. Then, when one is cognac-soaked with the added element of music by Kjartan Sveinsson, orchestra, chorus and big emotions, one could also say it's opera without divas.”

Ragnar Kjartansson

During a stay in Berlin, I had the good fortune to attend a performance of *Der Klang der Offenbarung des Göttlichen* at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz theatre, and it was one of the most moving experiences I've ever had. In his work, Ragnar Kjartansson explores the tension between the sublime and the mundane. This extraordinary artist combines music, theatre, film and performance to create works filled with romanticism, along with a hint of irony. We must commend the choice of Berlin's Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz—a prestigious experimental theatre thoroughly committed to an aesthetic of deconstruction of romantic culture and the German past—to commission a piece by Kjartansson. In the specific setting of the Volksbühne, Kjartansson embarked upon creating an unabashedly romantic work using the beauty of elements of classic stage design. *Der Klang der Offenbarung des Göttlichen* / *The Explosive Sonics of Divinity* is one of a series of works inspired by the epic novel *World Light* by Halldór Laxness—a major figure in Icelandic literature and winner of the Nobel Prize—about the fate of an artist in love with beauty, eagerly seeking both transcendence and its deconstruction.

John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator

A compelling homage to classic scenography, *The Explosive Sonics of Divinity* exemplifies the scope and originality of Ragnar Kjartansson's artistic practice. Kjartansson himself painted the enormous canvases for these sets with his friends in Reykjavik in the summer of 2013. "I love it when canvas pretends to be tree," he says. "It ties into the essence of theatre. That's what a person pretends to do when they're on stage." Over the course of the performance, to the four-part music composed by Kjartansson's friend Kjartan Sveinsson, keyboardist with the post-rock group Sigur Rós from 1998 to 2013, the sets are transformed into a diorama of landscapes in motion. The presentation of *The Explosive Sonics of Divinity* is a bold venture which we could not have accomplished without the collaboration of the Orchestre Métropolitain and Place des Arts. We wish to thank Clothilde Cardinal, Director of Programming at Place des Arts, and Luc Chaput, of the Orchestre Métropolitain, who have shared our enthusiasm for this project from the very beginning. We are also grateful to the Goethe Institut, Esker Foundation, Icelandair and the team at Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. We hope you are as thrilled as we are by this production!

Louise Simard, Head of Multimedia

"This book is heroic, it makes me cry when I read it, and yet Halldór Laxness's tale is a masterpiece of irony. ... It is critical of the romantic spirit, yet full of love for it. I would say that this book is my bible."

Ragnar Kjartansson

Ragnar Kjartansson was born in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1976. He studied at the Iceland Academy of the Arts and the Royal Swedish Academy, Stockholm. His works have been shown in museums and institutions around the world, including the Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin (2011), and HangarBicocca, Milan (2013). Recent solo shows of Kjartansson's works have been presented at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012 and 2014), Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2013 and 2014), the New Museum, New York (2014), and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015). In 2009, Kjartansson represented Iceland at the *Venice Biennale*, and in 2011 he received the Malcolm McLaren Award at *Performa 13* in New York.



Artistic direction: Ragnar Kjartansson

Music: Kjartan Sveinsson

Visual dramaturge: Axel Hallkell Jóhannesson

Lighting: Johannes Zotz

Dramaturge: Henning Nass

Conductor: Dina Gilbert

Orchestre Métropolitain

First violins

Yukari Cousineau, concertmaster
 Marcelle Mallette, associate concertmaster
 Johanne Morin, assistant concertmaster
 Alain Giguère
 Monica Duschênes
 Caroline Klause
 Florence Mallette
 Linda Poirier
 Amélie Benoît-Bastien
 Ariane Bresse

Second violins

Lyne Allard, principal second violin
 Lucie Ménard, assistant principal second violin
 Sylvie Harvey
 Monique Lagacé
 Brigitte Lefebvre
 Claudio Ricignuolo
 Céline Arcand
 Helga Dathe
 Jean-Ai Patrascu
 Myriam Pelletier

Violas

Brian Bacon, principal viola
 Pierre Tourville, associate principal viola
 Gérald Daigle
 Julie Dupras
 Pierre Lupien
 Suzanne Careau
 Xavier Lepage-Brault
 Jean René

Cellos

Christopher Best, principal cello
 Caroline Milot, associate principal cello
 Louise Trudel, assistant principal cello
 Céline Cléroux
 Thérèse Ryan
 Christine Giguère

Double basses

René Gosselin, principal double bass
 Marc Denis, associate principal double bass
 Gilbert Fleury
 Réal Montminy

Percussion

Julien Bélanger, principal

Choir:

Sopranos 1
 Marie Magistry (principal)
 Isabelle Huchette

Sopranos 2
 Marie-Noëli Daigneault
 Gina Landry

Altos

Stéphanie Pothier (principal)
 Charlotte Cumberbirch
 Catharine Murray
 Michelle Sutton

Tenors 1

Mathieu Richer (principal)
 Phil Dutton

Tenors 2

Bernard Cayouette
 David Trower

Basses

Alain Duguay (principal)
 Claude Grenier
 Benoit Le Blanc
 Yves Sant-Amant

Performance time: 50 min

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