

Ólafur Arnalds - Found Songs (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Erla's Waltz* 2:15 2 *Raein* 3:07 3 *Romance* 1:48 4 *Allt Varð Hljótt* 3:22 5 *Lost Song* 3:41 6 *Faun* 2:47 7 *Ljósið* 3:28 Ólafur Arnalds - composer, performer

The concept for this record is heartfelt. Take seven simple piano songs, and release each one on Twitter throughout a week.

Each tweet is based on a theme invoking the concept of lost and found, musical sketches per se, that flick and flutter through atmosphere and dreamy, ethereality. It's a short set, a little over twenty minutes, but for what Iceland's foremost classically trained composer brings forth is an impressive amount of emotion in little time and space.

'Allt varð hljótt' is heart-breaking, as tainted violin streak across plaintive piano prods, while 'Faun' takes it one-step further, creating the paean to lost love, whether its with oneself or the world around them. It's striking, effective and successful. A terrific experiment.

---clashmusic.com

Ólafur Arnalds transcends that curiously archaic and often intransigent boundary that exists elsewhere between 'classical' music and music of any other kind. In this Icelander's compositions, delicate piano and chamber strings are mixed with subtle electronic sounds that together create dreamlike moments amid powerful, evocative moods.

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His first two releases, 2007's *Eulogy For Evolution* album and the follow-up EP *Variations Of Static*, introduced Arnalds to admirers from both sides of that divide, helping to erase it a little along the way. He toured as support to countrymen Sigur Rós and has scored choreographer Wayne McGregor's upcoming work *Dyad 1909*, which premieres at Sadler's Wells this autumn.

Now with the seven-song series *Found Songs*, Arnalds has taken classical music firmly into the here and now by recording a song every day for a week and making them available for free via Twitter. For added digital delight, the remastered 10" mini album and limited edition CD's artwork is made up of contributions from fans, submitted via Flickr.

Has the novel approach yielded surprising results? Aesthetically, *Found Songs* uses the same instrumental palette as his earlier recordings, though the weightings are shifted in favour of the piano and string quartet and away from the electronic effects, which this time are wispily sparse. Opening *Erla's Waltz* sets the scene as a piano solo.

That stark, calming moment prepares the ground for this recording's real progression: its emotional depth. Somehow in seven days Arnalds has created something not far removed from a requiem suite that, from the layered *Raein* onwards, tugs at the heartstrings in a manner which calls to mind Arvo Pärt and Sibelius. *Allt Varð Hljótt* brings the electronics further into the mix, but it too is a desolate work of power and beauty.

Found Songs is by turns reflective, sad, cinematic, beguiling and blissful, but by finale *Ljósið* a resolution appears to have been reached; it's the record's most optimistic, heartwarming, major-scale moment. By its closing notes it's as though we've been on a journey through turbulent waters but have returned home safe. If this essential record is what Arnalds can do in a week, his second album proper can't come soon enough. ---Michael Hubbard, musicomh.com

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