



Music Department

Masters of Music (NAIP)

# TARINOINTI

*Visual Storytelling*

A thesis for a MA Degree in Masters of Music (NAIP)

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Spring 2017

## ABSTRACT

Storytelling has withstood the test of time, preserving culture, history and communication. With the evolution of creative forms and communication methods, we observe how traditional storytelling has changed, adapted and transformed with time. With the development of technology we observe how technology hyperconnects us while simultaneously disconnecting us. To investigate new methods of creating human connection through storytelling, music will be experimented as a storytelling medium and further combined with visuals to produce a cinematic and creative listening experience.

Through the creative process and artistic reflection of the project, *Tarinointi*, this paper aims to explore a nine month process of constructing an idea, composing music and working in collaboration with three filmmakers. *Tarinointi* is an exploration of storytelling through music and composed visuals inspired by the music. Themes that emerged from the artistic research include collaboration, vulnerability, trust and human connection. This idea of visual storytelling will further be contextualised by investigating into similar projects and artists who are creating projects within a similar framework. The presence of visual storytelling is increasing in a number of areas, especially within the artistic and musical worlds. The importance, the evolution and the future of storytelling is integral to this project, observing how artists are moving in new directions combining their music with other art forms.

Keywords: storytelling, visual storytelling, film, music, creative process

# TARINONTI

VISUAL STORYTELLING



REUBEN FENEMORE

PROFESSIONAL INTERGRATION PROJECT

NAIP EUROPEAN MASTERS OF MUSIC  
MASTERS IN MUSIC: CREATIVITY,  
COMMUNICATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ICELAND ACADEMY OF THE ARTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I give my deepest gratitude to Sigurður Halldórsson, for his mentorship over the past two years. Without his encouragement I would not have grown and matured as an artist, let alone move all the way to Iceland to complete my Masters. His constant support has been essential throughout my studies and I am very thankful for his endless generosity. It has been a real pleasure to work alongside him.

Thank you to Berglind María Tómasdóttir for her artist guidance, and encouraging me to undertake many exciting opportunities during my studies.

My endless gratitude to Henrika Kurkimäki, Lisa Hakola and Anni Savolainen. Without whom Tarinointi would not exist. Thank you for your trust, your support, and your enthusiasm in collaborating with me. Thank you for sharing your stunning visual work with the world and me.

To my storytellers, María Oddný Sigurðardóttir, Florence Lam and Ingvi Hrafn Laxdal Victorsson (Krummi), you have my heartfelt gratitude for sharing your beautiful stories. Thank you for your trust and for being incredibly brave in opening up in front of an audience.

To my dear mentor, Jesper Pedersen, there is not enough thanks I could give you that would repay your mentorship over the past two years. The laughs, the stories, the memories, you taught me so much more than just music during our time together. I will treasure that for years to come, and thank you for your great impact on my development as an artist and my journey into discovering my own sound.

To the friends I have made during my stay in Iceland, you are all wonderful, supportive and inspirational. Thank you for being my family and making me feel at home here.

I extend my thanks to Mengi for hosting Tarinointi. Thank you for constantly hosting new, exciting and inspiring artists and events.

Finally, thank you to my parents and family. Even though I moved to the other side of the world, you have always been so supportive of me. You continue to encourage me even though we are 15,000km+ apart.

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# STORIES

*"Everybody's got a different way of telling a story and has different stories to tell."*

— Keith Richards <sup>[1]</sup>

## CATALYST

*"Stories are a communal currency of humanity."*

— Tahir Shah <sup>[2]</sup>

I honestly cannot remember when the obsession began, how or even why. Was it something that was encouraged as a child, or something that resulted from my environment or developed from my personality? All I know is that I have an all-consuming curiosity for stories. *Real stories.*

Take a moment to reflect, when was the last time you sat down with someone and listened with unwavering concentration to his or her story. By this, I mean without interrupting them every few minutes with your own anecdotes. I mean sitting there, exercising your ears and drinking in their words like a golden elixir. Did you feel like you were living vicariously through their lives, immersed within a film, replaying the scenes frame by frame. Did you envision yourself walking side by side, re-enacting their journey and seeing it unfold from their point of view. Did you ever find yourself craving to know what they know, see what they have seen, and experience what they have done.

*I did.*

During my own travels, I have had the pleasure of listening to people's stories from around the world. Each unique and captivating in their very own way. Part of my love for travel stems from being able to connect with people from all over the world to communally exchange stories and share memories before forming our own together.

I remember one story that was shared with me by my friends' mother during my first visit to Sweden. *"You have to travel when you are young! I remember spending all my summers road tripping around Europe with my husband. The endless weeks we spent in his very first tiny car, bathing in sun and sweat. We met so many people on our journey, enjoying great hospitality, laughs and company. It is amazing how young and carefree we were then, but we made the greatest memories together and we definitely learned more about each other and of course fell deeper in love."*

Once again, why the fascination with stories. Well in my own personal experience, stories have the ability to move you, to inspire you, to set your imagination on fire, to draw out curiosity, to expand your knowledge, to tug at your heartstrings, to build compassion, to awaken nostalgia, but most importantly, to form a connection with another human being.

## ORIGINS

*“Storytelling is among the oldest forms of communication. Storytelling is the commonality of all human beings, in all places, in all times.”*

— Rives Collins <sup>[3]</sup>

Humans are truly remarkable creatures. More than seven billion of us coexist on this planet, and with that, all leading separate lives.

With the rapid development of technology, we observe how the Internet plays an integral role in modern communication. In a world where messages, photos and videos can be sent and received within an instant, technology seemingly connects humans, while almost alienating them at the same time.

Nevertheless, humans are naturally curious creatures. We are all born with an innate desire to understand how everything works. This curiosity is an instinct from when you are a baby. From curiosity arises exploration, this is how humans and animals survive and adapt through this process of learning, a desire to acquire knowledge and skill. As we grow, we continue craving to comprehend what is happening around us, both in our own lives and even everyone else's (Stafford, 2012., Berlyne, 1954).

From a young age we discover that fire is hot and learn to be careful around open flame. This knowledge is useful for survival, and yet why are we so curious about everyone else's lives surrounding us? As I previously mentioned, stories have the power to touch us in many ways. We empathise, we grieve, we are inspired, and we cheer on other people through their stories. I believe this sentiment is well captured through the Humans of New York project, initiated by Brandon Stanton. This project gives us an opportunity to peer into unfiltered recounts of peoples' stories from around New York (Stanton, 2010). These short moments or previews into everyday people on the street really puts into perspective how you think you know everyone around you, however in reality, you actually know nothing about them. You come to grips with the reality that you truly have no idea what lives people who surround you have led. Through this project Brandon has had the opportunity to go abroad and uncover stories from around the world. With a following of nearly twenty million, it is safe to say this project certainly tickled peoples curiosity.

*Ergo, where did this human curiosity come from?*

For as long as humans have existed, storytelling has existed. Originally an oral tradition, storytelling was a method of preserving stories, history and cultural traditions of ancestors. Oral communication is a fundamental form of communication, whether or not humans once communicated with primitive grunts. Language is evidence that humans are social creatures who use language to communicate (Ochs, 1986). Spoken language existed before written language. This is evident even within the past few hundred years where we observe a number of languages that only existed in the spoken form with the written form developing at a later period. The Finnish language is an example where it existed for a long time purely as a spoken language, thus when it became a written form it is pronounced exactly as it is written (Lyovin, 1997). However, there are still a number of languages that exist today that are purely spoken and have no written form.

With time, spoken language developed a written language counterpart, with even some languages developing various scripts. Consequently, storytelling evolved to a written form, and many cultures began to document their own stories and history. Text documents are regularly studied and even translated into modern language. These documents provide a treasure trove of historical information. Without storytelling as documentation, valuable history and culture would otherwise have been lost. With the passing of generations, often in consequence the language and culture disappears as well. However, documentation often outlives those who inscribed it, therefore preserving their history, culture and stories. A valuable example is the Icelandic Sagas, which are a preservation of Icelandic history through narrative prose. The Sagas or stories reveal the strong focus on genealogical history, which is still a very important part of Icelandic culture today (Ross, 2010).

Within the pictorial and script realm of language, the Egyptians invented hieroglyphics and the Chinese invented the Hanzi, which were later adapted into Japanese Kanji. An interesting fact about the Hanzi/Kanji is that they were small pictures simplified and adapted into a writing system (Boltz, 1994). For example, here are three examples of Hanzi/Kanji:

木

Tree

川

River

山

Mountain

When observing these characters, it is not so difficult to establish how the characters derived from drawings of the original thing.

One of the best examples of storytelling comes from the Australian indigenous population. The Aborigines are famous for their cave paintings, dot paintings and stories about the dreamtime. Their culture and history is carefully preserved through their cave painting allowing them to remember and continue to pass down stories through the generations. These stories are integral to preserving and passing on their culture, history and identity (McKay, et al., 2001).

*“Visual storytelling of one kind or another has been around since cavemen were drawing on walls.”*  
— Frank Darabont <sup>[4]</sup>

Once written forms were invented, many literary forms of storytelling came into being. Storytelling evolved from an oral tradition into literature, poetry and plays. Visual art forms such as drawing and painting developed as a method of freezing moments or images in time. Then photography was invented, which had the ability to capture and recreate exact moments in time in the form of a photograph. It was not long after when film was invented where seconds, minutes and hours could be captured, recorded and watched at a later time.

Storytelling is ultimately a method of communication, preserving the past, culture and history. It is perhaps a fair observation to infer that human curiosity is born from storytelling. While human curiosity begins as a baby, it never really disappears. We always remain curious, the urge to understand new concepts, discovering new facts and gaining new knowledge. Perhaps we can attribute this to our survival instincts. Regardless, we are all curious about everything that goes on in the world. In this modern age, with information at the click of a button, we can access countless stories from around the world. It is simply remarkable how we can know someone’s story without ever meeting them physically. It is interesting to observe the evolution of storytelling from an oral tradition and harnessing a physical connection between humans to something visually documented and disconnecting from the physical. How is it we make a connection with someone we have never met before?

*That is the power of storytelling...*

*“It may be in the cultural particularities of people — in their oddities — that some of the most instructive revelations of what it is to be generically human are to be found.”*  
— Clifford Geertz <sup>[5]</sup>

## EXPRESSION

*"A good story should make you laugh, and a moment later break your heart."*  
— Chuck Palahniuk <sup>[6]</sup>

Storytelling is all around us. Whenever you meet people, whether old friends or new acquaintances, you always exchange dialogue. Dialogue, which is full of stories, anecdotes and recounts of life. These small stories are windows into a person's life. If you really listen, you will actually peer through their window, rather than strolling right past it. It is this insight that sparks a connection, bringing people together.

Of course, as humans, we naturally enjoy embellishing or dramatising when we recount our lives. Yet, is that not a technique of storytelling? Are we not weaving our stories to captivate our audience? To make them laugh, to emphasise a point and to make them sympathise with our every day struggles (of a potentially mundane life). I truly appreciate when someone uses descriptive and vivid language in storytelling, it really helps me visualise their story. Although in this modern age everyone has smartphones that can take pictures. I guess we no longer have to leave much up to the imagination when you can just look at pictures.

*"Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?"*  
— Charles Bukowski <sup>[7]</sup>

In the modern age, storytelling has expanded from an oral tradition to written and visual forms, encompassing visual, aural and kinaesthetic senses. Authors weave words to create stories, breathing life into a whole alternate universe, dancers use their body as a canvas for expression, photographers freeze stories and moments in time, film recreates a visual experience, and music evokes an abstract aural journey. While each medium is powerful in their own right, by combining mediums, we witness a transcendental effect.

That said oral traditions have not disappeared completely. Instead, it has evolved and we observe its collaboration with other art forms. We often witness how storytelling is used more and more for activism, though provocation and political statements. Often campaigns or activists cite historical moments, especially the ones illustrating overcoming difficult times and trials. This contextualisation allows the public to empathise as it utilises a very human element.

Combining mediums establishes a powerful impact. Deconstructing the previously mentioned example, Brandon Stanton, we observe his use of photography in collaboration with interviews to present a persons' story. Instead of the classic take of taking portrait photos of people, Brandon initiates conversation with the people of New York, providing a deeper insight into his subject whilst maintaining this element of human interaction. What makes his work powerful is the clever use of visual association, as combining stories with a photograph helps audiences to build a connection and empathise with his subject.

If we read stories, whether fictional or not, we are often left to our own devices, imagining their entire appearance. However, when a portrait of someone is presented, we have the opportunity to witness what they look like, leaving nothing to the imagination. Likewise, we are able to examine their body language, their demeanour, their expression and their eyes. What creates an impact is the fact we are observing everyday people on the street. This singular factor immediately creates a connection where we can empathise with the common everyday person. Ultimately, we truly do not know peoples' stories or what they have personally gone through. We walk past them everyday, and we recognise that this is real life. This raw humanity and honesty allows oneself to open up and empathise with the given subjects. Human connection is the key to storytelling, but how is that affected through new forms and expressions?

It is interesting to view how many art forms work in partnership or rely on music to bring it to fruition. Dance often relies heavily on music, film and music are a perfect marriage of mediums, theatre and particularly musical theatre uses music. While not all forms rely or work in partnership with music, it is fascinating to see what music brings to partnerships between mediums. Music is an abstract art form, thus one must question whether it is possible to use music as a storytelling medium. It is complex to understand and interpret music, and often it is too abstract to even explain through words. So we must question, what is the significance and importance of music? Music is everywhere, from your car radio, to shopping centres and cafés, from TV shows, commercials, films to your daily commute to work. Why is music so present in our day-to-day lives, and what makes music powerful when used in collaboration with other art forms.

*"We must not forget. Storytelling is all around us..."*  
(Journal Entry: RF)

# TARINOINTI

*"I believe that one of the secret engines that allows cinema to work, and have the marvellous power over us that it does, is the fact that for thousands of years we have spent eight hours every night in a 'cinematic' dream-state, and so are familiar with this version of reality."*

— Walter Murch <sup>[8]</sup>

## CONCEPT

*"I aspire for my works to compose an experience, one that cannot be recreated through words..."*  
(Journal Entry: RF)

As an artist, I express concepts, ideas or feelings through my work. My intention is to communicate an experience, an experience unique to each individual. We all interpret the world through our own unique perspectives. Similarly this is my aim, and I want audiences to understand my works in their own personal way or make their own interpretation.

You know those moments when words absolutely fail you. When you are unable to describe exactly what you are experiencing in that moment. However, that experience provoked something wonderful and awe-inspiring within you. I have had the pleasure of experiencing a number of these moments in my life. These moments serve as great inspiration for my work.

*"Almost nothing need be said when you have eyes..."*  
— Tarjei Vesaas <sup>[9]</sup>

Within the context of storytelling, the role of the storyteller is seducing the listener and recreating experiences through words. Storytelling can be a powerful tool in influencing people. Within my work, storytelling is realised through the medium of music. Music is abstract, and can evoke or draw out emotions or feelings deep inside. There is a beautiful word in the Japanese language that accurately describes my aesthetic: Yuugen (幽玄) refers to the awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses that are too mysterious and deep for words. I see my primary role as an artist working as a communicator. Music has the power to be a transcendental experience. Likewise, listening is a creative experience and watching film is a visual experience.

My aim is to evoke experiences within my works. If this experience is put into words, it alters the organic nature of the experience. We witness how everyone has their own unique taste, smell, touch, and as such sense, understand and interpret events very differently to others. This resonates with how I understand the world through felt knowledge and 'learning through doing'.

My work draws upon real life experiences and expressing this through diverse artistic mediums. As a visual storyteller, I rely heavily upon visual mediums such as photography and film. Combining these ideas with words and music, I am able to form shared or communal experiences. I am a visual and aural learner, yet words form a huge part of my inspiration and consequently documentation and reflection. I constantly find myself writing notes or my thoughts down to understand my creative process. Likewise, I am constantly collecting quotes that inspire me, challenge the way I think, or express something in a more poetic way that I can.

Through the desire to create human connection and collaborate with other artists, I wanted to construct a project based around communal storytelling. To bring this idea of visual storytelling to fruition, the project was realised through combining music and film, thus, Tarinointi was born.

*“As long as I am breathing, in my eyes, I am just beginning...”*  
— Criss Jami <sup>[10]</sup>

TARINOINTI is a collaborative project between three filmmakers, Henrika Kurkimäki, Lisa Hakola, Anni Savolainen and myself, Reuben Fenemore. A curated series of short films were created based on music I had composed, where the filmmakers composed visuals, bringing to life stories inspired by the music. Tarinointi, the Finnish word for “Storytelling” is a compelling title, which seemed to be the right mood for this project. Also without realising it, all my wonderful collaborators are Finnish, so it seemed fitting for a Finnish word to be the title.

The aim of this project was collaborating with other artists who use storytelling in their art to create short, narrative, visual pieces. Without the use of words, I wanted to take the audience on a creative listening and visual journey of cinematic stories, rather than through the traditional oral means. As avid storytellers, we seek to explore and communicate stories through different mediums. The final product saw six music compositions and consequently six films that emerged from the music.

To complement the visual storytelling element, in presenting the project I integrated traditional storytelling as a means of cultivating human connection. In collaboration with four storytellers, we openly shared how through travel experiences and being immersed in several cultures have shaped our identity. We all touched on themes based around sense of national identity, being displaced, vulnerability and connecting with other humans through stories. In comparison to visual storytelling, which could be perceived as abstract, the verbal storytelling offered a human element where the audience could perhaps relate to on a deeper level.

*"You connect yourself to the viewer by sharing something that is inside of you that connects with something inside of him. All you have as your guide is that you know what moves you."*

— Steven Brust <sup>[11]</sup>

I am neurotic about the role of music in relation to storytelling. I want to exploit it, delve into it, and continue to explore the realm in which you cannot understand fully the concept. This is what I like to do in my own work, exploiting realms, ideas and concepts words cannot touch, or fully explain. Music can evoke an abstract, transcendental experience and sometimes words do not do justice.

Can you imagine everything you experience in life having an explanation or description of how you should experience or interpret it? Of course, this is an extreme case in point, however, nonetheless thought provoking. It does stand to consider how does this difference in perception affects how others see art. People observe, understand and interpret situations differently. Often, individuals who are extremely perceptive are able to interpret works exactly as the artist intended, or even go as far to provide an angle that the artist themselves overlooked. It is astounding how the human brain functions.

In a similar vein, even human ears are all shaped differently, consequently affecting how we hear and perceive sound or music (Science Buddies, 2015). Imagine each of your ears being in two different rooms or spaces and hearing a piece of music. How does that influence how we interpret music? Moreover, we can only interpret sounds and music based on what we have already heard during our lifetime.

*"Closing your eyes, listening to music and letting your mind wander.*

*Those are the times you go on a journey beyond the physical.*

*That is where inspiration is found..."*

*(Journal Entry: RF)*

Within the art world, artists provide context and background information about their works. Likewise, audiences require explanations of each work, often to help them understand the work or the artist's intentions more clearly. My artistic vision and intentions work against this grain of thought. I believe in audiences having full freedom to interpret my work. I want to avoid clearly labelling the idea or concept behind my works, as in this influences the audiences' perception of the work. I do not always have a pre-programmed emotion or idea with my work. Merely, I work as someone to facilitate an experience or creating a space for this to take place.

*“What does music do to you?”*

*Can you name a song that brings you joy no matter how many times you listen to it?  
Can you name a song that brings back childhood nostalgia, a song that brings tears  
to your eyes, a song that pumps you full of energy?*

*Music does all this and more...”  
(Journal Entry: RF)*

For something that is as personal as storytelling, the idea is for the person to draw someone in, and enthrall them with words. Weave a story so great that it leaves an impact on their lives. Stories can be so influential that they teach, inspire and motivate. Others can allow us to reflect, learn and grow through their words.

Music and video both serve as powerful mediums for storytelling. The marriage of these elements gives birth to the powerful medium of film. It is no secret that music is integral to film. Music adds a significant dimension to the film’s narrative. Music has the power to enhance the tension or atmosphere, tear at the heartstrings of the viewer, and enrich the emotional experience.

However, within films, it is often a combination of narrative, dialogue and music, which bring the story to life. What happens when narrative music dictates the storyline and the video enhances what the music expresses?

*“Any experience of reality is indescribable...”  
— R. D. Laing<sup>[12]</sup>*

Tarinointi is an exploration of storytelling through music. With the idea of composing pieces of instrumental music, I wanted to investigate the storytelling properties of music. In collaboration with filmmakers, the vision was to facilitate a visual representation of the story.

In keeping with my organic creative process and approach to my work, I provided very little direction to the filmmakers. Instead, I gave them complete artistic freedom and my complete trust. My only input was to create a visual story that the music evokes. In addition to composing the music, I offered artistic direction with their works, all the while keeping my distance and allowing them to create a visual storytelling piece. I have no idea what the results of this collaboration would bear, however, I trusted the notion of communal storytelling and creating an experience.

The results of the project varied from each filmmaker. The common link between the films is evident that the combination of music and visual storytelling is a powerful medium. Why is that? It stimulates both the visual and aural senses, delivering a more memorable impact for the brain. Likewise, as there is no 'lyrics' or 'dialogue', it leaves audience members to make their own sense of the abstract realm of music and visuals, crafting their own story in order to understand it in their own way. This nurtures an experience that transcends words.

My roles in this project were as the creative director, composer and filmmaker. It was an interesting process to observe both sides of this project from the music and from the film realm. The original idea was investigating what stories emerged from my music, although this evolved and I found myself seeing what story I could weave from my own music. As an artist who combines art forms, it was difficult to separate the composer from the filmmaker. Instead, this experience really cemented my personal ideology that there are no borders between art forms. Thus, I must emphasise that I was not able to separate the project roles. Upon reflection, I approached this project as a holistic artist, and not as singular roles.

My creative process is highly intuitive, based on my experiences and how I learn and interpret the world. For me, storytelling and narrative play a significant role in my work, this is how I connect with other humans, and absorb new experiences. When I think about how I want to present my work, I ultimately consider how the audience will experience it. Stories act as abstract inspiration, and often my work is very narrative driven. This is clearly influenced from how I view and understand the world. This is both my approach in my musical composition and how I construct a visual piece or film.

*"There might be a proper age to know how to tell a story, but there's no proper age to start telling them..."*  
— Xavier Dolan <sup>[13]</sup>

As I previously expressed, my creative process is highly intuitive and this applies wholly to my compositional process. My inspiration stems from my own experiences of the world, often taking musical gestures and rhythms from the nature. From the rhythmic rocking waves of the ocean to the cacophony of wind whistling through the landscape, I find myself immersed in the music of Mother Nature. I find narrative inspiration from my travels and am influenced by listening to other people's stories. I find myself deeply inspired to write music through embodying worldly, listening and visual experiences, and also through improvisation.

Coming into this project, I wanted to investigate the narrative qualities of instrumental music. I did not approach each composition with a set narrative or story. However, I worked intuitively to create each composition. It is perhaps accurate to describe this process as digging deep within myself and translating an 'experience' into a musical sound. Thus during the process I was searching for sounds and shapes. Interestingly, each piece was between five and six minutes long. This was not intentional, however, felt rather natural in the compositional process. Each piece had a very 'felt' duration. I composed what I felt like at the time, and there is not necessarily continuity between each piece perhaps, but there is piano consistency throughout each work, tying it all together.

*"Our life is composed greatly from dreams, from the unconscious, and they must be brought into connection with action. They must be woven together..."*  
— Anais Nin <sup>[14]</sup>

The interesting aspect of being a filmmaker for this project was trying to maintain a slight disconnection between the music and visuals. Naturally the process would cross into bias, as I wrote the music. If I combine film and music in my own works, I consider how both mediums communicate throughout the entire creative process. In order to experiment with disconnecting with my work, I tried to view the music and film as two separate works. Seeing as I wrote the music first, once the works were completed, I then constructed a visual story after listening to it as a whole a few times. That was something new and interesting for me to experience, however, it felt very natural and intuitive all the same. While I overall found it difficult to separate the composer from the filmmaker, I tried to view the music from a different angle and try to disconnect from it as the composer. However, I found that both being the composer and filmmaker, I had an added dimension of understanding the music in an intuitive way, and thus perhaps the narrative used in the films used the same intuitive 'inner experience' as inspiration.

My curiosity does peak, in light of my intentions to create individual experiences for audiences, I am a little curious as to whether bringing together music and visuals to communicate an atmosphere, idea, or narrative is effective, or whether others interpret it completely different to the artist's intentions.

*"A film is - or should be - more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later..."*  
— Stanley Kubrick <sup>[15]</sup>

## REUBEN FENEMORE:

I created two films to two of my own tracks. My approach as a filmmaker and visual storyteller is to communicate experience, whether through realistic or abstract narrative. Reflecting through my own journal, I came across something I wrote last year during the inception of this project: *"How do we communicate an experience? How do we harness the human connection that is so powerful in traditional oral storytelling and translate that into visual understanding?"* This ideology really underpins my project, Tarinointi, and reflects holistically how I approached creating my films.

*"To live means to experience – through doing, feeling, thinking. Experience takes place in time, so time is the ultimate scarce resource we have. Over the years, the content of experience will determine the quality of life. Therefore one of the most essential decisions any of us can make is about how one's time is allocated or invested..."*

— Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi <sup>[16]</sup>



[ 1 ] Film No. 1 by Reuben Fenemore

[ 2 ] Film No. 2 by Reuben Fenemore

## LISA HAKOLA:

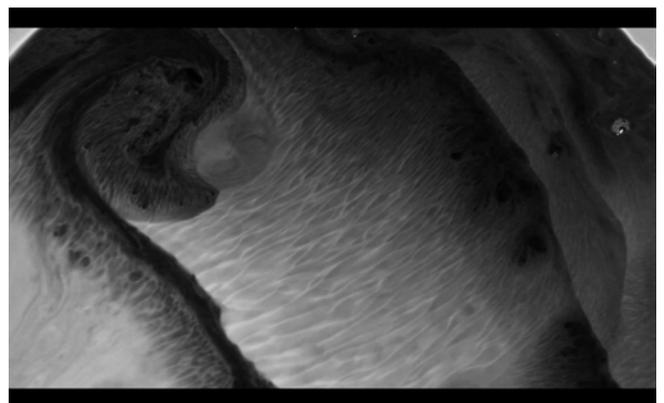
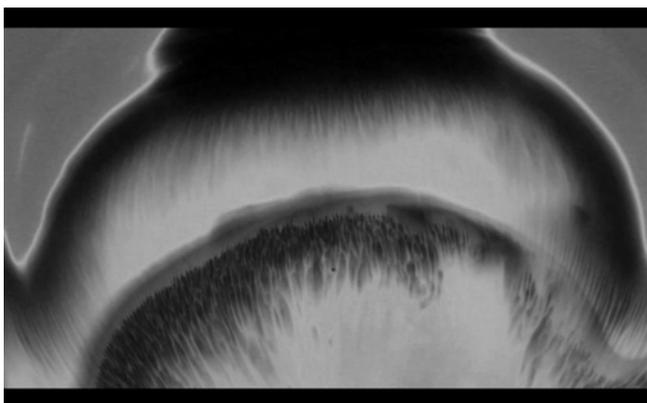
Lisa Hakola conveys a highly realistic visual element in her work. I have known Lisa since high school, and I have always found her to be a highly motivated and visually creative individual. Her passion for travel, storytelling and adventure serves as her inspiration and is evident in her work. She has strong intuition for visual storytelling and drawing audiences in, allowing them to feel apart of the story. We share many similar ideologies and creative approaches to our work.



[ 3 ] Film No. 3 by Lisa Hakola

## ANNI SAVOLAINEN:

Anni Savolainen created a mesmerising abstract film, echoing this ideology that music is also abstract. I had the pleasure of working alongside Anni during an artist residency and festival in Finland. Her compelling artistic intuition is evident through her unique approach to her work, crossing into the realms of abstract. We have many similar ideologies and philosophical approaches to how we view the world and process it. In addition, we both possess a strong connection to the Arctic and Nordic culture.



[ 4 ] Film No. 4 by Anni Savolainen

## HENRIKA KURKIMÄKI:

Henrika Kurkimäki directed two films, and has a very Nordic aesthetic and mood in her work. I met Henrika during an interdisciplinary performance project I co-created and led in Stockholm. We are very similar in our creative process and ideas about cross medium communication. I sensed her ideas and concepts would work really well in the context of Tarinointi. We both understand very well the concept of trust and vulnerability. I find this awareness very strong in all her work.



[ 5 ] Film No. 5 by Henrika Kurkimäki

[ 6 ] Film No. 6 by Henrika Kurkimäki

This collaboration truly bore beautiful fruit, reinforcing in my mind the limitless possibilities that can emerge from artist dialogue and cross-collaborative projects.

*“As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people’s ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life.”*

— Amy Poehler <sup>[17]</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

*"Something impacts me emotionally, art is a kind of outlet, and I figure it's the same for a lot of artists. The way my mind deals with things is cinematic..."*

— Ryan Coogler <sup>[18]</sup>

Music is primarily an abstract art form as it is not something you can physically see. Music being noise, vibrations and frequencies, we can hear and experience the consequences but not actually see music. Often people close their eyes and experience music in other ways, whether visualising something through their 'minds eye' or through synaesthesia.

Therefore in the realms of using music as a storytelling mechanism, we often rely on 'the minds eye'. Music is often paired with something visual, be it film, dance, music video or commercials, and if not, we often associate feelings or ideas with the lyrics. The concept of live music as well provides another dimension, physical presence, live music (not-recorded) and seeing the musicians perform live. This creates a human connection, also creating a physical experience and memory.

*"Music is a total constant. That's why we have such a strong visceral connection to it, you know? Because a song can take you back instantly to a moment, or a place, or even a person. No matter what else has changed in your or the world, that one song says the same, just like that moment..."*

— Sarah Dessen <sup>[19]</sup>

Music is termed to enhance experiences, mood or atmosphere of something. Whether a film or dance, why is this? Is it because it transcends the physical or because is it abstract? Is it not cumbersome the amount of times you hear how music is so emotional. Why is this though? Is the music itself emotional, or is it the association and pre-existing notion of what sad music should be like. Naturally, we would associate a song with something sad, emotional if it were represented with a death scene in a film or television series. On the other hand, if the same music was played by itself, what would we imagine in our heads instead?

*"Music makes everything better..."*

(Journal Entry: RF)

In regards to film, television and commercials, the music is usually secondary to a script, storyboard or concept. Music is always carefully considered to enhance or emphasise a certain emotion, feeling or atmosphere. In a sense, the writers and directors use music to influence the story, which has already been preprogrammed or planned. Thus we must consider the role of music in these situations, whether it is enhancing or narrating, or perhaps both.

In contrast, dance can go either way. Dancers have the ability to either find music to better convey or fit with their story or choreograph to a particular song, emphasising the theme or narrative in the music. The tendency though is for this music to have lyrics, providing a somewhat more concrete idea or disposition to work with. In the event, dancers create a story to instrumental music, that brings to life whether the dancer or the music is really painting the story, and who is supporting who.

*“Music can move us to the heights or depths of emotion. It can persuade us to buy something, or remind us of our first date. It can lift us out of depression when nothing else can. It can get us dancing to its beat. But the power of music goes much, much further. Indeed, music occupies more areas of our brain than language does—humans are a musical species...”*  
— Oliver Sacks <sup>[20]</sup>

I believe the strongest connection between music and emotion is the idea of association and memory. When music is played alone, our imagination can run wild, or base it on only what we already know. When music is played with film, or dance, we can't help but associate it with that and similar experiences and images. How we interpret music is unique to each person. We can only base our ideas on what we have heard in our lifetime. Of course that can easily be influenced by lyrics or someone else's interpretation

As listeners, we are constantly feeding back and comparing what we hear with what we have already heard. Creating connections by analysing what it sounds like or reminds us of in our auditory vocabulary. Music has an extraordinary capacity to get lodged in many parts of our brains, so that even when diseases that target parts of our brains, music still reaches parts of the brain that have not been touched by disease (Sacks, 2007).

*“Memories warm you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart...”*  
— Haruki Murakami <sup>[21]</sup>

If we as listeners are always creating connections to understand music, how does combining music with another medium influence how we interpret the work? Similar to music, we can only base our interpretation on what we have experienced, seen or what we already know. We cannot associate it to something we have no knowledge about. I exploit idea in my work, where everyone will interpret my work differently based on their own experiences. I express myself through my art, and I want my audience to receive it and make sense of it in their own personal way.

*"Memory is multi sensory, I experience this everyday. Whether it is something visual, aural, scented, palatable or kinaesthetic, as soon as I see it, I remember in my mind's eye. As soon as hear it, my ears animate. As soon as I smell it, my nose is aroused. As soon as I taste it, my tastebuds dance as I and as soon as I touch it, the warmest feelings return to my fingers. Memory is embedded in everything we encounter..."*  
(Journal Entry: RF)

The arts have been used for centuries as a method of self-expression and storytelling. Many artists, continuing to blur the distinction, have exploited dialogue between art mediums. In order to explore this interaction between music and visuals, we observe the combination of music and other mediums in a variety of settings. There is an abundance of musicians and artists who combine music and visuals. It is important to examine and discuss their intentions of their work in relation to how music can be viewed as storytelling and how films bring a visual representation of it to life.

I believe it is the multi-sensory aspect of interdisciplinary projects that inspire a greater impact. Thus, combining music with visuals to weave a story arguably tells the story better than just music. An important factor in using combining mediums is ensuring that a delicate balance is adhered to. In film, the music and visuals cannot both be at a hundred per cent all the time. This create an over saturation of the senses, and can destroy or compromise the impact. The delicate balance must gently transfer between the mediums, stepping forward and stepping backwards. This balance ensures the mediums compliment each other, rather than in competition with each other.

*"Art works because it appeals to certain faculties of the mind. Music depends on details of the auditory system, painting and sculpture on the visual system. Poetry and literature depend on language..."*  
— Steven Pinker <sup>[22]</sup>

To contextualise this concept of combining art forms, I will observe and discuss a curated selection of artists who are of significant inspiration to my work and myself. Their various projects will be isolated and examined in how we can recognise storytelling or narrative through their work. The curated artists I will be deconstructing are: Sigur Rós, Ólafur Arnalds, Hammock, Akira Kosemura, The Tallest Man on Earth and four filmmakers who work with short travel films or dance.

*“There are two things that don't have to mean anything; one is music, and the other is laughter...”*  
— Immanuel Kant <sup>[23]</sup>

## Valtari Experimental Film Project:

The Valtari Experimental Film Project was inceptioned in 2012 by the Icelandic band Sigur Rós. In releasing their new album, Valtari, they simultaneously launched the Valtari Experimental Film Project (Sigur Rós, 2017). Instead of explaining the album and the music, they had others explain it for them:

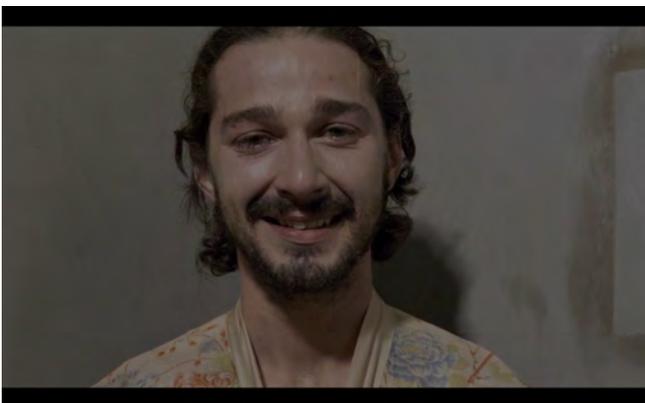
*"We never meant our music to come with a pre-programmed emotional response. We don't want to tell anyone how to feel and what to take from it. With the films, we have literally no idea what the directors are going to come back with. None of them know what the others are doing, so hopefully it could be interesting..."*  
— Sigur Rós <sup>[24]</sup>

There are many parallels to be drawn between this project and Tarinointi. I resonate deeply with the idea that my music does not come with a pre-programmed emotional response. There were two layers to the Valtari Film Experiment. Sigur Rós gave fourteen filmmakers a modest budget to create a film based on what the music inspired. Furthermore, they initiated an open competition for any filmmaker to create a film to their music.

The results of this experiment were incredible, and likewise for Tarinointi. Similarly, the idea was to allow for complete freedom for the filmmakers, allowing them to create a visual piece to the music. My only guideline was to create a visual story based on what they thought the music narrated or inspired. However, as the composer and creative director of this project, I also created films to my own music. This added a new dimension, as it is interesting to be in the role as both the composer and visual artist, considering I have inside knowledge of the entire project.

Similarly, while Sigur Rós' music is ethereal, it contains human voice in the music (Icelandic and Hopelandic lyrics), which to most audiences' means nothing. On the other hand, I aimed to investigate the narrative qualities of instrumental and ambient music. People interpret what they want and add their own ideas or experiences to narrate the music, or perhaps the music itself can take them to other places.

Observing the films without music (or from the stills), could you tell what story is being told, or could you imagine what music would go with this. Possibly people with previous knowledge of Sigur Rós' music and style would be able to imagine something. Whereas with my own music, they have no previous knowledge of, and would be interesting to see what story they grasp from my music or from the films.



[ 7 ] Film No. 14: Valtari by Christian Larson

[ 9 ] Film No. 10: Ekki Múkk by Nick Abrahams

[ 8 ] Film No. 11: Dauðalogn by Ruslan Fedotow

[ 10 ] Film No. 3: Fjögur Píanó by Alma Har'el

## HEIMA | INNÍ

Sigur Rós are no strangers to working with film and other film mediums. Prior to the Valtari Experimental Film Project, they produced 'Heima' a documentary film of their tour around Iceland in 2006. Existing now as live documentation, Heima preserves the story of their series of intimate concerts, without the distraction of the often-large scale, grandiose performances with visuals (Sigur Rós, 2017). Heima's intimate and rare insight into how Sigur Rós performs, exploiting their origins, history and evolution. You grasp a beautiful emphasis on the importance of building a community and acknowledging the role and influence it has had on their music. Likewise we are able to observe how they cultivate a communal experience through their performances.

Inní, a project inceptioned in 2011, saw Sigur Rós weave footage of live performances into a cinematic retelling. *"Inní focuses purely on the band's performance, and stands as a stark counterpoint to Heima's kaleidoscopic richness. Filmed in a manner that invites both intimacy and claustrophobia, Inní cocoons the viewer in a one-on-one relationship with the band, eschewing the audience for closeness, depicting how it feels for both band and fan to experience Sigur Rós live."* (Sigur Rós, 2017). Similar to the insight given in Heima, Inní translates this through a new perspective. These films masterfully capture Sigur Rós's story from two different perspectives, drawing the audience in closer and delivering a powerful and unforgettable experience.



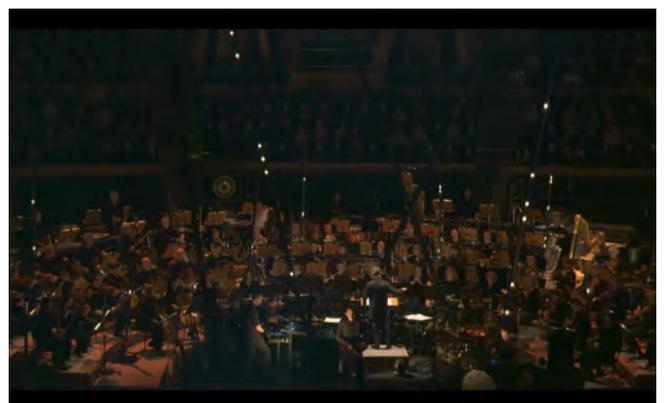
[ 11 ] Heima – Excerpts

[ 12 ] Inní – Excerpts

## Route One | Sigur Rós LIVE with the Los Angeles Philharmonic

Sigur Rós continue to mesmerise their audiences by taking them on a creative musical journey around Iceland. Route One was a project that occurred during Summer Solstice in 2016 where “*Sigur Rós unveiled a 24-hour ‘slow TV’ event live on Iceland’s national television – and streamed live globally via YouTube – set to a constantly evolving soundtrack based around elements of their latest song Óveður. ‘Route One’ is a 1332km journey the whole way round Iceland’s coastal ring road, you can now relive that journey in full.*” (Sigur Rós, 2017). Similar to Heima, Route One navigates Sigur Rós’s home country, exploiting a unique way of presenting both their music and cultivating a visual insight into the inspirational landscape of Iceland.

Sigur Rós recently live streamed their concerts during the Reykjavík Festival in Los Angeles. While this concept of ‘live streaming’ is relatively new, many musicians, artists and even orchestras are circumnavigating the concept to reach audiences in live time. Advances in technology allow for artists to communicate with a greater spectrum of audiences in real time. There is something satisfying about being able to be apart of an experience in real time, despite not being in the space physically. This directly relates to the idea discussed in the introduction where we no longer have a direct physical connection with a live experience, however, we experience live performance in a new way visually through the internet.



[ 13 ] Route One – Excerpts

[ 14 ] Sigur Rós Live Stream – Excerpts

## Island Songs – Ólafur Arnalds

Ólafur Arnalds, an Icelandic multi-instrumentalist, completed a seven-week journey across Iceland to record a series of compositions. He collaborated with other musicians in each location to create each individual track. In collaboration with film director Baldvin Z, they created small live performance documentary films to accompany each track. Each track was released over the seven weeks (Arnalds, 2017).

What is important to highlight in this project was how Ólafur Arnalds weaves a story through his music. Each track inspired by the Icelandic nature and small cosy villages. Island Songs is essentially a storytelling project inspired by site-specific locations.

Music inspired by nature and by travel, essentially one could not complete this without making a human connection with the artists. Stories were exchanged, and music was inspired. I feel the same when I travel and listen to stories, while I've never really completed a project based on site-specific compositions, I've always had the idea of creating cityscape pieces based on cities I have visited and through the locals I met.

I understand the importance in human connection in storytelling and likewise the beauty of creating music or art communally. Arnalds worked closely with musicians from each place in Iceland to create music. My opinion is that with the added collaboration of musicians from the places adds a greater weight to the music and project. I believe if Arnalds simply went to each place and composed music based on what was inspired, that would be fine, but the added collaboration was without a doubt more effective.

Finally, in collaboration with Baldvin Z, creating these documentary style films to accompany the music really brought an added human element to the project. By adding the visual element to the music, it really intensified the effect. That said each piece of music was very moving with a definite feeling of a story behind it. Although, reflecting on it now, had I not known these were site-specific compositions, would I have understood the pieces completely or within the right context. In this case, I believe the films enhanced what the music already communicated.



[ 15 ] Raddir ft. South Iceland Chamber Choir

[ 17 ] Doria

[ 16 ] Dalur ft. Brasstrío Mosfellsdals

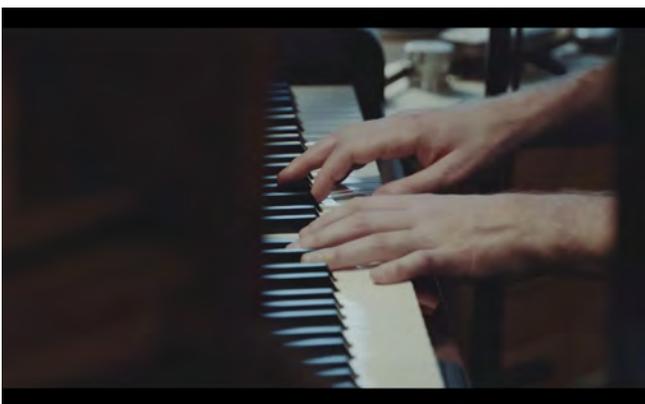
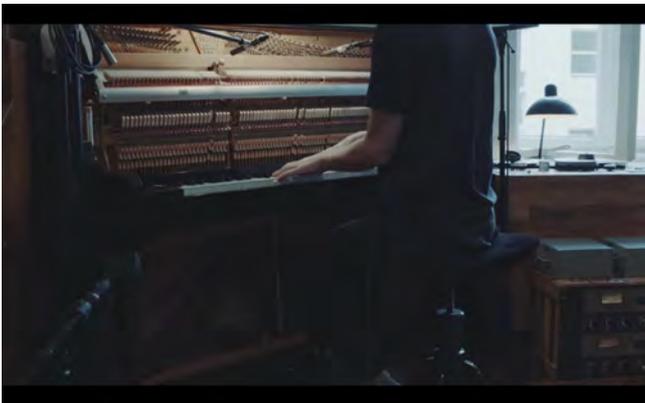
[ 18 ] Particles ft. Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir

## Trance Frenz — An evening with Ólafur Arnalds and Nils Frahm

Further elaborating on the documentary style film concept of Ólafur Arnald's *Island Songs*, we can observe, *Trance Frenz*, a film documenting the collaboration with Nils Frahm. *Trance Frenz* is an improvisation based collaborative project.

*“On the 28th of July 2015 Ólafur Arnalds and Nils Frahm met up at Nils's Durton Studio in Berlin, and invited Alexander Schneider and his camera to document it. But instead of ending the session after the first take we continued to improvise throughout the night, ending up with several new pieces written and recorded in 8 hours with no overdubs and no edits.”* (Arnalds & Frahm, 2015).

What immediately resonated with me in this film was how the documentary style filming really harnessed an atmosphere of capturing a story. In essence the film is just rolling while Ólafur Arnalds and Nils Frahm are improvising for hours, however, on a deeper level it is a very intimate insight into their creative process. This film allows human curiosity to surface seeing the artists at work and almost demystifying what they do. Overall, I find it the film beautifully captures a story of how they express themselves through their art.



## The Chopin Project – Ólafur Arnalds and Alice Sara Ott | Ólafur Arnalds

The Chopin Project was a collaboration with Alice Sara Ott, where Ólafur Arnalds reimagined and interpreted Chopin's compositions in his own trademark style (Arnalds, 2015). 'Reminiscence' is the lead track from the album, illustrating how Arnalds' new works in this project are based on Chopin's themes. It is interesting to see how the music video created for 'Reminiscence' relates with the music. The music video itself is highly narrative driven, showing off athletes taking part in the sport of 'Icelandic Glima'. Yet Arnalds' music effortlessly creates a wistful, reflective atmosphere, a fine example of how music enhances film instead of narrating it.

Focusing on Ólafur Arnalds solo work, his style is a mixture of ambient, instrumental, electronica and contemporary classical music. Arnalds has a number of music videos for his instrumental tracks. It is interesting to evaluate how a visual narrative is constructed from instrumental pieces. In *Tarinointi*, I gave my filmmakers freedom in this aspect. Thus in viewing the music video for "This Place Was A Shelter," it was an interesting mixture of seeing how the music could inspire a visual narrative and how the intense build up in the music enhanced the dramatic moments in the music video. Similar to *Tarinointi*, Arnalds' music existed before the visuals.



[ 20 ] Reminiscence – Ólafur Arnalds

[ 21 ] This Place Was A Shelter – Ólafur Arnalds

## Ambient and Instrumental Artists – Hammock and Akira Kosemura

Echoing the notion of creating visuals to ambient and instrumental music, I will contextualise this by discussing two artists, Hammock, an ambient post rock band from the US and Akira Kosemura, an ambient, electronic and contemporary classical artist from Japan. Whereas Hammock and Kosemura have composed many ambient, instrumental tracks, they have also composed tracks with singers and lyrics, however, I will only focus on their instrumental tracks.

With *Tarinointi*, it was made clear that the visuals were inspired by the music. Although in the case of ambient, instrumental artists, it is interesting to see to what extent the music influences the visuals and vice-versa. As musical artists, it is the same case as with Ólafur Arnalds where the music existed before the visuals for Hammock and Kosemura. Thus, it is accurate to deduce the music dictates the visuals in the case of music videos. Taking into consideration that you cannot visualise something without a form of stimulus or narrative. This is similar to *Tarinointi* as my filmmakers relied on my music. If ambient instrumental music is considered abstract, then it would make sense if the visuals that emerged from the music were also abstract.

Hammock's music has evolved over the years, whereas their older work was more ambient and evolving, their later work is almost more cinematic. This is evident in their music video for 'Breathturn' where we observe cinematic shots and a build up to a climatic point in the music. Whereas the video for an older track, 'Mono no Aware' (a Japanese phrase roughly translated as "a melancholic appreciation of the transiency of existence") is more abstract, reflecting the slow evolving ambient sounds.

In viewing the music videos to Akira Kosemura's music, there is a sense of a rather simple or mundane narrative. This aesthetic is something that is very dominant within Japanese art and cinema. I certainly get the feeling from his music that it is a slow moving musical journey where the listener is in a different place by then end of the piece than they were in the beginning. This echoes a very minimalist aesthetic. Thus, I can see how the music inspired the narrative and visuals. However, it is interesting how the music also enhanced the visual story.

I find this dissection of music verses visuals within the narrative realm rather fascinating. Elias Constantopedos, who founded a music technology business, asserts, "*Music needs to become an invisible puppet master doing the job film editors and directors used to do. Music must become the director.*" (Constantopedos, 2017) I would agree with his statement considering how music has an incredibly important role and influence in many visual environments, such as film and television.



[ 22 ] Hammock – Breathturn

[ 24 ] Akira Kosemura – Luna

[ 23 ] Hammock – Mono No Aware

[ 25 ] Akira Kosemura – You

## The Tallest Man on Earth

Revisiting how film can capture an artist in new ways, as observed with Sigur Rós and Ólafur Arnalds, we explore the work of The Tallest Man on Earth, a folk, indie artist from Sweden. The Tallest Man on Earth, or Kristian Matsson, has an unparalleled poetic quality about his lyrics and music. Matsson's lyrics are very descriptive and evocative lyrics, and his folk style almost echoes the idea of a troubadour. I find his lyrics rich with stories and his delivery very impacting, yet heartfelt, delicate and sensitive at the same time.

Generally speaking, songs with lyrics are very explicit in helping form a narrative or visual experience. Even if the lyrics are abstract, words have a way of creating associations. Thus in Matsson's case with his poetic lyrics, it would be easy for the music video director to either create a visual representation of the narrative in the lyrics, or to present a nonrepresentational visual narrative. Thus, in this case, we will be focusing on a variety of Matsson's live acoustic sessions presented in a documentary style.

Filmmakers and directors are teaming up more and more with artists and musicians, seeking to provide a new angle on live performances. I really see the importance and engagement it creates between an artist and their audiences. Often music videos are beautiful works of art in their own right, but it does not provide the same connection as a live performance does. Again, I believe this comes down to human connection. However, what if an artist's audience are not able to see them live, we have the middle ground of live performances presented in a documentary-like style. I believe like traditional verbal stories, by viewing a live performance, even if recorded, engages the audience more, because they know it is real and nothing has been edited. It strips the artist back to their raw talent, without the fancy recording studio that created a perfected track. It harnesses this vulnerability seeing and listening them playing live, we are with them when they succeed and with them even if something goes amiss. They cannot complete multiple takes live like in the studio.

Thus with the help of visuals, we can see how Matsson tells a story through his lyrics and music. The intimate setting of each of his live session films really draws me in as an audience member. Along the lines of the artists I have discussed, we can see how they are all exploiting a new way of communicating and connecting with audiences. It is clear that they are using visuals in combination with music to share an experience. I feel we can relate to that on a human level.

*"Oh, sometimes the blues' just a passing bird, why can't that always be?"*  
— *The Tallest Man on Earth* <sup>[25]</sup>



[ 26 ] Pitchfork.tv Session – Director: Michael Garber

[ 28 ] City Of Music – Director: Dan Huiting

[ 27 ] Yours Truly & Pitchfork.tv Session – Director: Nate Chan & Britton Caillouette

[ 29 ] Secret Garden Session – Director: Sarahana

## Storytelling through Short Travel Films

Film is considered the most holistic medium when it comes visual storytelling. However, instead of concentrating on Hollywood or repertory cinema that is very narrative driven, we look to filmmakers who make stunning short travel films.

According to Marmoset, a music licensing company: *"A lot can happen in just a few minutes. Short films are a testament to this idea by proving that compelling stories can be told in little time. We believe that music plays a large role in shaping a powerful story through picture. A perfect soundtrack can cut to an emotional core and leave a lasting, powerful impression long after the credits roll."* (Marmoset, 2015). They really 'hit the nail on the head' regarding how music works in enhancing film.

We observe through both Leonardo Dalessandri and Ben Steensels short films the embodiment of visual storytelling through travel documentation and music. Their music driven films capture their experiences whilst travelling, weaving them together to create a visual masterpiece. In addition to the films being visually spectacular, the careful treatment and editing to the music soundtrack really bring the entire film to life. We are taken on a captivating journey through their experiences in Turkey and New Zealand. These films are fine examples of how travel documentation can be transformed into an amazing balance of musical and visual harmony.



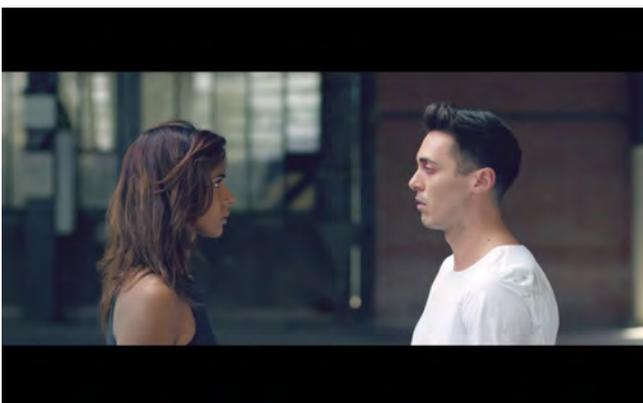
[ 30 ] Watchtower of Turkey – Leonardo Dalessandri

[ 31 ] Lost In New Zealand – Ben Steensels

## Storytelling through Dance, Movement and Film

Dance is widely considered a powerful medium for storytelling. Using the body as a canvas we observe how movement or dance can translate and express an entire story filled with emotions and conviction. Barbara Kaufmann describes dance in the most poetic way: *“Whether set to music, drums or silence, dance invokes a certain power that can only come from the core of the human body to ooze an evocative pathos that cannot be spoken, only felt. Often the product is joy merged with awe that is hard to define or perhaps a sorrow that clutches and tears at the human heart—a live and beating part of the very instrument of communication—the body... Dance is another language altogether and often not of this world. Dance, like music, can be transcendental, archetypal, ethereal—for the dancer, for the subject that is danced, and for the audience that watches the drama unfold. Movement and sway has the power to inspire awe or take the breath.”* (Kaufmann, n.d).

Dance relies heavily upon music, sharing a special relationship of being an abstract form of communication. Combining these elements with film, we take dance out of the realm of just performance art, capturing and documenting it as a timeless piece that tells a story over and over. Directors David LaChapelle and Charles Baldassarra take us out of the familiar one-dimensional view and offer us a visually stunning multiple-perspective view of the performances, which we otherwise would never see.



[ 32 ] Take Me To Church – David LaChapelle

[ 33 ] Medicine – Charles Baldassarra

## Visual Storytelling: Thoughts, Reflections and Conclusions

Within the context of musicians and artists, visual storytelling is clearly something that is being explored. It is exciting to delve into the creative projects of artists are combining music and film to weave stories. It is fascinating to observe how music has the power to operate as both a narrative and enhancer when merged with film. Without a doubt, visual storytelling is another approach to creating human connection, accomplished through pairing visual experiences with music.

Through examining a handful of musicians and artists working with film and visuals, we are able experience how their music is communicating to their audiences through visual representations. From the examples presented, we witness how many artists use film to visually express themselves through their music. Films are clearly a fantastic medium to document artists communicating stories through their art.

With the development of technology, musicians have the ability to connect with their audiences through live-streamed performances. While watching a performance through a computer screen is the polar opposite of human connection, I find that live streaming cultivates something akin to a physical experience. We are still experiencing something in real time from all over the world. In addition, we are able to connect with vulnerability that occurs from performing live, as opposed to recording. Despite not being a physical human connection, one can see and perhaps experience that visual communication can act as a powerful tool as well.

In general, I see great importance in any method that progresses the idea of human connection and experience through storytelling. Reflecting on my experience with Tarinointi, when musicians want to work with visuals, they often have to collaborate with filmmakers, directors and artists. I find it comforting that cross collaboration projects are bringing artists together, rather than isolating them. Thus, as long as these visual stories still bring people together, rather than alienating us, I can see a brilliant future ahead for these projects and initiatives.

*"Music was the only voice of cinema for a very long time before we had sound; it's organically linked to cinema itself..."*

— Xavier Dolan <sup>[26]</sup>

## DIALOGUE

*"An artist's concern is to capture beauty wherever he finds it..."*  
— Kazuo Ishiguro <sup>[27]</sup>

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**RF:** This project would not have been realised without the collaborative partnership with filmmakers Lisa Hakola, Henrika Kurkimäki and Anni Savolainen. Could you please briefly introduce yourselves?

**LH:** I'm a 24-year-old Australian, with roots extending from the outback to Scandinavia, primarily Finland and Sweden. Life has led me through study and work, with a focus on progressing a creative career path within the film and media industry. My goal is to find myself continually contributing to the visuals we see on our screens every day.

**HK:** I am a 26-year-old Finnish energy-healer and visual artist. Currently I work as a freelancer, mainly as an energy-healer, painter, photographer, tattoo-artist and filmmaker. Reuben and I met in Stockholm last year at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where I danced to his live playing. Back then I was already making short films, but started uploading my small budget music videos on YouTube about a half a year after our project together, which is when Reuben contacted me about this one. Of course I said yes.

**AS:** I'm a 25-year-old Finnish media researcher and visual artist. Over the past few years I've lived in Finland, Iceland and Sweden, working as a communicators coordinator, journalist, film festival assistant, editor-in-Chief, and assistant in a photography store. I do a lot of visual art on my own, collaborating and being involved in different projects.

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**RF:** The project is called 'Tarinointi' a word from the Finnish language. What does the word Tarinointi mean to you?

**LH:** The word and concept of Tarinointi is not unusual, as it derives from a language I use every day. With a direct translation to 'storytelling' I find myself revolving towards a Scandinavian sentimentality, wistfully recalling a number of memories and feeling a sense of melancholia regarding what's to come.

**HK:** As a Finn myself, the Finnish word "Tarinointi" creates multiple associations in my mind. I think there exists an ancient tradition of story-telling in every human culture, so the Finnish word for me even in the more modern context means a sort of tribal gathering in which the participants tell stories of their recent or less-recent life-experiences, or re-tell stories that are passed on from generation to the next. "Tarinointi" is a means to keep a culture alive, it is a ritual of elevating the cultures characteristics and passing on old knowledge. In my mind though the key of "tarinointi" is creating an atmosphere that inspires the hearers of the story to see the world around them as something to respect, to learn from and to be inspired by. "Tarina" should show the power, the beauty as well as the dangers of life, and teach us to broaden our perception about what we experience with our senses every day.

**AS:** Tarinointi is a beautiful way to show that art isn't only something one person does and others consume. Art can be done together, even if the people cooperating don't live in the same country. In fact, working on this remotely from Sweden made me feel like the experience is even more magical.

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**RF:** What were your experiences and/or thoughts on composing film for music, rather than the orthodox way of finding music to fit the film?

**LH:** I originally wanted to experiment and play with the concept of stillness, slow motion and family. The piece you sent over really allowed me to extend my shots and piece together a puzzle of participants, environment and colour. The final product feels like a nice balance between my original view and the surprises you encounter when filming.

**HK:** For me composing a film for music was an already familiar experience, as I had made music films before. I like it, the piece gives me inspiration around which I can create my own visual world. It might be especially inspiring for me as a dancer to combine my idea of the connection between music and movement with a visual creation. Also the fact that the shape of most of my music videos is rather an arch than progressive slope fit well with Reuben's music, as it follows the same pattern and enabled a symmetrical approach to the filmmaking. I found that our visions matched on many levels, which made the project simply enjoyable.

**AS:** This was the first time I was given a song and asked to make a film for it. I spent a lot of time just listening to the song while walking around in Stockholm, where I was living at that time. My film is based on many of my conversations with Reuben. I also wanted to make the film look like him. Or to make it look like how I see him.

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**RF:** What are your thoughts on this idea of visual storytelling through your own art?

**LH:** Visual storytelling is truly a unique art form, as it allows the creatively inclined to work to their own style. I find incredible enjoyment in composing, shooting and processing images to convey a particular emotion or moment in time, and find myself fortunate to extend these ideas into my professional life as well.

**HK:** Storytelling for me is not something I plan or concentrate on, the story is always formed on its own as I enter the flow of creating visual art. I guess we all store thoughts, visions and feelings in our unconscious that pop up as soon as we are given the opportunity to create freely, especially if the frames of that process, in this case the music, is inspiring, i.e. helps us to release those thoughts and feelings that we unconsciously carry with us until they are created into something concrete. As these thoughts and feelings spring from our life-experiences, there is not one human among us who didn't have a story to tell. An artistic flow for me means that I am not limiting these thoughts and feelings from colouring the artistic vision. And so a story is inevitable created.

**AS:** I'm a visual storyteller so I like to convey a sense of nostalgia. Telling a simple story is not as interesting as keeping things a little bit obscure.

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**RF:** Finally to wrap up, do you have any favourite quotes, pieces of writing, or inspiration you would like to share?

**LH:** Memorable quotes of late:

"I have always thought that by observing things with a great deal of attention you eventually wrest some of their secrets from them, making them utter what they would most like to keep to themselves."

— Julien Green, *Paris*

"The boy and his heart had become friends, and neither was capable now of betraying the other."

— Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

**HK:** "There is not one human among us who didn't have a story to tell..."

— Henrika Kurkimäki

**AS:** "There are no shortcuts to any place worth going."

— Beverly Sills

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# LEGACY

*“Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you...”*

— Shannon L. Alder <sup>[28]</sup>

## REALISATION

*“You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this...”*  
— Henry David Thoreau <sup>[29]</sup>

In presenting Tarinointi, the idea was to really create a safe and intimate environment in which communal storytelling could take place. Hosted in the venue, Mengi, the concert was full house. Mengi was chosen specifically as it is a small, close and very intimate space. Having attended many concerts there and also the pleasure to perform there a few times, I really felt a strong love for this venue. Mengi has hosted so many interesting and moving performances, and I am grateful for the opportunity to listen, experience and meet remarkable musicians and artists over the last two years. With a project like Tarinointi, hosting the event in a small cinema would have produced an entirely different atmosphere. I think the simplicity and warm atmosphere of Mengi really complemented the project.

To accompany the presentation of the six films, I curated a series of four storytellers (plus myself) who were asked to exchange stories from their lives and converse how travel and cultural experiences have shaped who they are today. The evening was arranged so that in between each film there was a storyteller. The idea was to maintain the human connection throughout the evening. The combination of films and live storytelling added another dimension to the atmosphere. The four storytellers I was joined by were María Oddný Sigurðardóttir, Jesper Pedersen, Florence Lam and Ingvi Hrafn Laxdal Victorsson (Krummi).

In concluding the evening, I invited audience members to leave a message for me to read later. I set up a jar in the front with pens and paper, with a note saying:

*“Thanks for joining tonight’s event ‘Tarinointi’. If you have any thoughts, comments, quotes, greetings or stories you would like to contribute, please feel free to write it down and put it in the jar...”*

Lastly, it was so heart warming to interact with the audience members after the performance. I received human connection in the form of hugs, gratitude and reflective thoughts.

## REFLECTION

*“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.”*

— Haruki Murakami <sup>[30]</sup>

At the conclusion of presenting Tarinointi in Mengi, I was overwhelmed with the final product. It exceeded my own expectations and I feel it will still take me a while to digest and process the entire experience. It was a marathon of emotions and experiences to undertake. I am very content and happy with the final result.

Reflecting on the entire process, I think in the lead up to the performance, through stress and overthinking, I almost forgot to relax and let the experience take place. After the presentation, I understood that stress was making me focus on the wrong aspect. Instead of focusing on how the audience would receive my work, I should have focused on letting everyone experience it in their own way.

Shared experiences require input from not just myself, but by trusting the audience, and the people in the space. Without everyone, this would not have worked and I believe everyone took something personal away with the performance. There is something so special about shared experiences and storytelling that cannot be recreated.

In all honesty, I was a little nervous presenting Tarinointi to a full house. Often when I listen to peoples’ stories or share my own, it is often one-to-one or in a small group. I felt very vulnerable before and during the event, but I was met with an abundance love and support and I was so humbled by that. By opening myself to the audience and being completely honest with everyone it really curated a feeling that we are all human. There exists a raw or primitive feeling when you know someone is being completely honest with you. You are able to relate, form a connection and grow as a person.

I am grateful to everyone involved in the project for their trust and their honesty, both in making the films and storytelling. I am so grateful for María, Raven, Jesper and Florence who opened themselves up, pouring out their personal stories from the heart for the audience. Their stories moved me emotional on a deep level, in a way I cannot even begin to explain in words.

This entire project has been a wonderful experience and a steep learning curve. I believe that by digging deeper I discovered more about myself. I definitely believe this experience has taught me to trust myself wholeheartedly, because without this foundation, the entire project rests on unsteady ground. I must prioritise and put trust into my vision, and consequently how I plan, carry out and execute my work. I remember scribbling down an immediate afterthought from the performance: *"I have learned something, and I have been changed from the start to the end, and the final evening changed me in ways I couldn't even know. I've been changed..."*

Finally, I am grateful to everyone who left little notes for me after the performance. I was incredibly moved and even had tears reading some very beautiful words left for me:

*"What you all did tonight guys, literally saved my life...."*

*"Roads not taken. I had opportunities that could have led to having a French or German or Polish or Russian or New Zealand life. But – in 1994 my then partner wouldn't co-operate in planning a summer trip. I said, "Go to hell – I'm going to Iceland!" God knows I said that, but the die was cast. Here I am, 18 years later, a citizen, speaking Icelandic, plus Swedish.  
Ég er ánægður. I'm content..."*

*"If life is what you make it, then I want mine to be a story. Change is what drives every good tale. So why should our lives be any different. Fear of change should only be a motivation not a hindrance..."*

*"I leave you 2 words:  
Confidence – To reveal the truth within.  
Sacrifice – To make whole.  
To offer your truth to something greater than you..."*

I have nothing but gratitude, tears in my ears and a smile stretching across my face. My heart is full...

*"We are all different human beings, and we all have different backgrounds, and we stem from different social strata. That is what defines how you hear people talk, how you want to quote them when you speak. We all have different fears and doubts and complexes and this is what shapes the way we see other people. Especially character..."  
— Xavier Dolan <sup>[31]</sup>*

## AFTERTHOUGHTS

*“Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity...It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity.”*  
— Clifford Geertz <sup>[32]</sup>

This entire creative process over the last nine months for Tarinointi has genuinely allowed me to explore what I want to do with my work and my own self. I remember writing in my first semester, *“I have to know myself before I can create and express what I want to through music and my work.”* This project, in collaboration with a number of people once again confirmed that art is something that can be made communally and does not just have to be artist versus audience. This has also left a strong conviction within myself about the importance of storytelling and pursuing this further. While it has always been an interest of mine, I realise there is more to experiences and human worth in continuing this work of presenting ‘experiences’. It was a humbling experience to be told that what I am doing has worth, has meaning and is important. I felt like I gained more confidence in myself. Likewise confidence in what can be achieved through connecting with humans through communal experiences.

The future of Tarinointi is to continue develop the concept and explore different methods. The aim is also to keep project itself alive by submitting it to film festivals, art galleries for exhibitions and as work to extend through artist residencies. Following the project, there are a number of projects that are branching off this concept. I will continue to collaborate and explore visual storytelling further through projects with filmmaker Henrika Kurkimäki. Through the encouragement of Anni Savolainen, there will be a guerrilla-style film and music project that will be an open call through the Internet. In the long-term woodwork is writing and publishing a novel based on my experiences and storytelling. I will continue to work and create projects utilising the mediums of text or word, music, photography and film. Ultimately, I aspire to continue to work with musical and visual artists and create similar projects to Tarinointi, whether as projects or in residencies.

*“Creativity is a type of learning process where teacher and pupil are located in the same individual.”*  
— Arthur Koestler <sup>[33]</sup>

Understanding myself personally as well as an artist has been a key process in this project. I always find myself writing notes, thoughts and ideas down, and often reflecting on moments or experiences. It has been nice to use this experience as an artistic reflection and research into my creative process. It is like staring at yourself in a mirror for an extended amount of time until it becomes almost 'cringe-worthy' awkward. Yet, it brought clarity and fine-tuned the noise in my head. I found my path and made sense out of the distractions. I found this crucial in understanding how I work. I now feel more confident and discovering more ways to be more efficient yet open within my creative process. Without a doubt, I have learnt an invaluable amount of knowledge from reflecting on my life experiences and why storytelling is such an important aspect of humanity.

*"Travel is about discovering yourself, meeting people from all around the world, exchanging smiles, collecting stories and sharing laughs. Through travel, I've come to a realisation that communal storytelling breaks down borders, nationalities, prejudices and revealing that in the end we are all human beings, each with a unique story to tell..."*  
(Journal Entry: RF)

I think in this day and age where we are so isolated by social media and the Internet, that genuine human connection is what is needed to bring people together, build communities and heal the human condition. For now, I will continue to present my story through my work. I will continue to travel, learn through my experiences and be open to adventure.

I am content.

*"Now you are at the very crossroads of your life and all your roads lead to strange places..."*  
— Mike Mignola <sup>[34]</sup>

# F O R W A R D

*"You may tell a tale that takes up residence in someone's soul, becomes their blood and self and purpose. That tale will move them and drive them and who knows that they might do because of it, because of your words. That is your role, your gift..."*

— Erin Morgenstern <sup>[35]</sup>



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- [2]: Shah, 2008, p. 138.
- [3] Cooper, et al., 1992, p. 1.
- [4] Kelly, n.d., para. 18.
- [5] Geertz, 1993, p. 43.
- [6] Palahniuk, 2011, p. 103.
- [7] Bukowski, 1971, p. 23.
- [8] Murch, 2001, preface.
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- [11] Forman, 2013, p. 66.
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- [14] Nin, 1974, p. 40.
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- [20] Sacks, 2007, preface.
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- [22] Pinker, 2002, p. 417.
- [23] Cage, 2009, para. 6.
- [24] Sigur Rós, 2017, para. 3.
- [25] Matsson, 2010, verse 1.
- [26] Dolan, n.d., para. 63.
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- [29] Brown, 2015, p. 77.
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- [31] Dolan, n.d., para. 28.
- [32] Vaughan, 1996, p. 79.
- [33] Converse, 1995, p. 139.
- [34] Mignola, 2002, p. 22.
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# F I L M I N D E X

- [ 1 ] Film No. 1 by Reuben Fenemore [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 2 ] Film No. 2 by Reuben Fenemore [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 3 ] Film No. 3 by Lisa Hakola [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 4 ] Film No. 4 by Anni Savolainen [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 5 ] Film No. 5 by Henrika Kurkimäki [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 6 ] Film No. 6 by Henrika Kurkimäki [ FILM UNRELEASED ]
- [ 7 ] Film No. 14: Valtari by Christian Larson [ <https://vimeo.com/53394874> ]
- [ 8 ] Film No. 11: Dauðalogn by Ruslan Fedotow [ <https://vimeo.com/50997631> ]
- [ 9 ] Film No. 10: Ekki Múkk by Nick Abrahams [ <https://vimeo.com/50053037> ]
- [ 10 ] Film No. 3: Fjöfur Píanó by Alma Har'el [ <https://vimeo.com/45185028> ]
- [ 11 ] Heima – Sigur Rós (Sample) [ <https://youtu.be/Sd9huOgBg7Q> ]
- [ 12 ] INNÍ – Sigur Rós (Sample) [ <https://youtu.be/E0wOV-w1ObI> ]
- [ 13 ] Route One – Sigur Rós [ <https://youtu.be/G54tlj-SKI> ]
- [ 14 ] Sigur Rós Live with the Los Angeles Philharmonic  
[ <https://youtu.be/oetn6etktGk> ]
- [ 15 ] Raddir ft. South Iceland Chamber Choir– Ólafur Arnalds  
[ <https://youtu.be/3VG1B7lpALc> ]
- [ 16 ] Dalur ft. Brasstrío Mosfellsdals – Ólafur Arnalds  
[ <https://youtu.be/w-8aANPUDR4> ]

- [ 17 ] Doria – Ólafur Arnalds [ <https://youtu.be/wFp6xnJbs0w> ]
- [ 18 ] Particles ft. Nanna Bryndís Hilmarsdóttir – Ólafur Arnalds  
[ <https://youtu.be/wEj7xYyj9n4> ]
- [ 19 ] Trance Frenz – Ólafur Arnalds & Nils Frahm [ <https://youtu.be/iwS9YmF22Po> ]
- [ 20 ] Reminiscence – Ólafur Arnalds & Alice Sara Ott  
[ <https://youtu.be/hffMLTmRe9A> ]
- [ 21 ] This Place Was a Shelter – Ólafur Arnalds [ <https://youtu.be/8eo1xMC7VbU> ]
- [ 22 ] Breathturn – Hammock [ <https://youtu.be/RjXltK5shW8> ]
- [ 23 ] Mono No Aware – Hammock [ <https://youtu.be/PtnZhHw0zfo> ]
- [ 24 ] Luna – Akira Kosemura [ <https://youtu.be/cnx4tC0ujxA> ]
- [ 25 ] You – Akira Kosemura [ <https://youtu.be/jqDQKzkHbWk> ]
- [ 26 ] Rivers – The Tallest Man on Earth & yMusic | Pitchfork.tv Session: Directed by  
Michael Garber [ <https://youtu.be/Uh1uQoLLFyw> ]
- [ 27 ] My Journey To The Sky – The Tallest Man on Earth | Yours Truly & Pitchfork.tv  
Session: Directed by Nate Chan & Britton Caillouette  
[ <https://youtu.be/Xd-IBEYthXE> ]
- [ 28 ] Revelation Blues – The Tallest Man on Earth | City of Music: Directed by Dan  
Huiting [ <https://youtu.be/mblz0tzWaDQ> ]
- [ 29 ] Secret Garden Video Series – The Tallest Man on Earth  
[ <https://vimeo.com/5099681> ]

[ 30 ] Watchtower of Turkey by Leonardo Dalessandri

[ <https://vimeo.com/108018156> ]

[ 31 ] Lost in New Zealand by Ben Steensels [ <https://vimeo.com/127360181> ]

[ 32 ] Take Me To Church – Hozier | Directed by David LaChapelle

[ <https://youtu.be/c-tW0CkvdDI> ]

[ 33 ] Medicine – Zack Benitez | Directed by Charles Baldassarra

[ <https://youtu.be/E5NaiEBoe48> ]