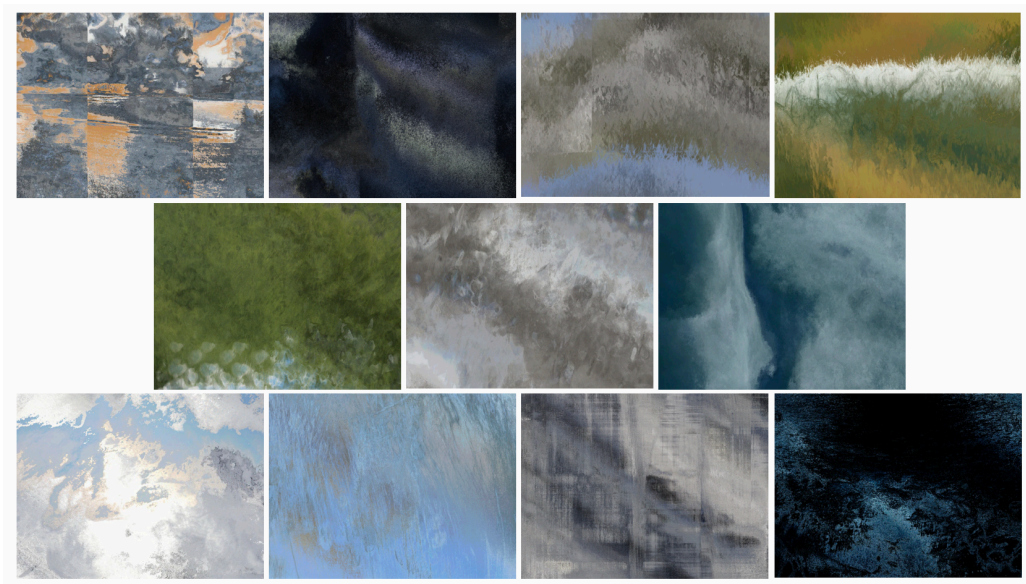


GULLI BJÖRNSSON

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LANDSLÖG



FOR SOLO GUITAR



# Landslög

## Gulli Björnsson

*for solo guitar*

*Landslag I. – dökkear sandþúfur með smá mosa // dark sand dunes with some moss*

*Landslag II. – leira í botni fjarðar // littoral mud in the bottom of a fjord*

*Landslag III. – grjóti þakin háslétta // rock covered plateau*

*Landslag IV. – lækjarsprænur í grænum dal // river creeks in a green valley*

*Landslag V. – birkikjarr í fjallsblöð // birch shrubs in a mountain slope*

*Landslag VI. – grjóthrun úr fjalli // fallen rocks from a mountain*

*Landslag VII. – ólga við ós // turbulence where a stream meets a lake*

*Landslag VIII. – viðfeðmur akur bulinn af lúpínu // vast lupine covered field*

*Landslag IX. – veðruð ísilögð strandlengja // eroded icy shoreline*

*Landslag X. – kelaki og snjór hylur tún // ice and snow covers a field*

*Landslag XI. – sprænur og ár í kapp niður gil // streams and rivers race down canyons*

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*for Tonebase*

2020



Landslög (landscapes) is a set of 11 pieces for solo guitar drawing inspiration from Icelandic landscapes. The pieces are composed through repetitive patterns and get progressively more difficult.

The pieces aren't really connected in any way, one advantage of that is that each one can stand on its own as a piece of music and the landscapes can also be played together in any fashion. I do believe however that when played together as a whole they compliment each other nicely, while still being unified through similar musical concepts and aesthetics.

For those interested you can perform the pieces with visual material. The visuals are created by processing various images and stock videos together through pixel processing and interactive shaders in Max. You can find a link to the visuals on my website as well as my contact info for any questions you might have.

- Gulli Björnsson

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*Gulli Björnsson* (b.1991) is a guitarist and composer from Iceland whose music typically ties *electronics, live instruments* and *visuals* to experiences in *nature*. Gulli's music has been described as "*hypnotic*" (*News Gazette*) "*a knockout – wondrously inventive*" (*Soundboard Magazine*) and "*Virtuosic, modern, occasionally discordant, but still accessible*" (*Classical Guitar Magazine*).



Gulli has received accolades for his compositions from *Changsha, Rust* and *Veria International Guitar Composition Competitions* and received grants from distinguished institutions such as *Fulbright, the American Scandinavian Foundation, Valitor, Landsbankinn* and *the International Advisory Board*. He has also been the recipient of multiple awards for his guitar playing: *1st prize* at *Nótan* (a national music competition in Iceland), winner of *the Lilian Fuch's Chamber Music Competition* and a finalist in the *ASTA National Solo Competition, European Guitar Award* and *the International Young Talents Competition*. Gulli was the recipient of the *Eliot Fisk Prize* and the *Andrés Segovia Award* for his studies at Yale School of Music and Manhattan School of Music.

You can find further info about Gulli on his website and artist pages:

<https://www.gullibjornsson.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/gulli.bjornsson/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/gulligitar/>

## Landslag I.

*dökkar sandþúfur með smá mosa // dark sand dunes with some moss*

The opening landscape is intended to get all the fingers moving, both of the right and left hands. The right hand arpeggios are repetitive ascending arpeggios in triplets while the left hand features different finger combinations for each chord.

Focus on making a good connection with the strings with the right hand and placing the various finger combinations of the left hand carefully so all the strings can resonate.

The repetitive triplets made me think of the black sand beaches and vistas in the south east of Iceland. There you can find 'sandþúfur' and 'sandöldur', which are these small sand dunes that sometimes have green moss and grass at their peaks, kind of like a green beanie.

# Landslag I.

dökkar sandþúfur með smá mosa // dark sand dunes with some moss

♩. = 76

steady flow, resonant

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

*p* *i* *a* *mp*

*p* *i* *m* *mf*

*p* *i* *m* *mf*

*p* *i* *a* *mf*

*p* *i* *a* *mp* *mf*

*p* *i* *a* *f* *mf*

*i* *m* *or* *a* *mf*

*i* *m* *or* *a* *poco rit.* *mp* *p*

*a tempo* *p* *i* *m* *mp*

*poco rit.* *p* *i* *m* *a* *p*

## Landslag II.

*leira í botni fjarðar // littoral mud in the bottom of a fjord*

Landscape II. features a chord progression that repeats itself, first time it's only chords and the second time it is ornamented through arpeggios featuring a simple melody.

Focus on making the connections from one chord to another smooth (look ahead) and the voices well balanced in the right hand. The piece features some shifting to the third and fifth positions of the guitar.

The image that came to my mind when composing this piece was of a mud covered beach in a fjord during low tide ('Leira' in Icelandic), with some rocks sticking out of the mud here and there.



# Landslag II.

leira í botni fjarðar // littoral mud in the bottom of a fjord

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

♩ = 72

*fragile, warmly, legato and balanced*

*pluck*  
*sim.*  
*mp*

9

*a tempo* *more melodic, let resonate*

17 *a* *m* *i* *i* *m* *a* *i* *a* *m* *i* *m* *a* *m* *i* *a* *i* *m* *a*

*p* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

*subito*

23 *i* *m* *i* *i* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a* *i* *a* *i* *m* *a* *m* *i* *a* *i*

*p* *p* *p* *mf* *p* *p*

29 *i* *a* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a* *i* *m* *a*

*p* *p* *p* *gliss.* *a* *a* *m* *i* *m* *poco rit.* *m* *i* *i* *m* *i* *p*

### Landslag III.

*grjóti þakin háslétta // rock covered plateau*

Landslag III. has a melodic bass line under repeated pedals that mostly use the top four open strings of the guitar in various combinations. The bass line moves around the fret board and has some fun syncopations against the pedal notes, including a 3 against 2 polyrhythm.

The bass line should be the focal point - not the pedal points, so make sure to make a good connection with the thumb on the bass strings so it projects, this will give weight to the bass line rather than a punchy sound. The pedal notes serve more of a harmonic function, apart from measures 16-22 when the top voice takes over.

I love going hiking in Iceland during the summers, typically rather short hikes up the many nearby mountains. Often when you reach the highest point of mountains in Iceland you don't really get the stereotypical 'high peak overlooking everything' but instead are greeted with a bumpy rock covered plateau.

# Landslag III.

♩ = 120

grjóti þakinn háslétta // rock covered plateau

*lyrical  
don't overproject the open strings  
vibrato on bassline*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

Guitar

*p* *mf* *p subito*

6 *mf* *f*

11 *mp* *p*

17 *mf* *mp*

23 *mf*

27 ② 4th finger - guiding finger *mf*

30 VII XII *rit.* *f* *mp subito* *p*

## Landslag IV.

*lækjarsprænur í grænum dal // river creeks in a green valley*

Landslag IV. is a contrapuntal piece featuring looping motives and ostinatos that clash against each other to create harmonies that are never totally settled. The top two voices interact with each other in a repetitive rhythmic pattern: 3-3-2, in this case it created arpeggio patterns that are equally melodic and harmonic.

The main thing is to keep a good balance between the voices so all of them can be heard and pay special attention to connect the chords smoothly so the voice leading sounds legato. The right hand fingerings I put in use the m and a fingers of the right hand in conjunction with the i finger, but it is also possible to play a lot of the passages only with i and m.

This simultaneous connectedness and independence of the different voices along with the rather sweet mood of the piece reminded me of a flat grass covered mountain valley in summertime where creeks freely meander, connect and disconnect.

# Landslag IV.

*lækjarsprænur í grænum dal // river creeks in a green valley*

♩ = 110

*legato, with great attention to different voices*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

*sweetly legato let resonate*

Guitar

*i m i m i m i a*

*mp* ————— *mf*

*i m i a*

*i m a i m a i a i a*

*i a m i a m i a i a*

*i a m i a m i a i a m i a m i a i a*

*poco meno mosso*

*mf mp*

*a i m i m i m i m i m i m i a i m i m i m i a*

*i m i m i a*

*i m a i m a i a i a*

*mf*

*i a m i a m i a i m a i m a i a i a m a m i a m i a m a m i a m i a i a m i a m i a*

*poco rit.*

*i m a i m a i a m i a m i a m i m i a m i a m i m i a m i a m i m i a m i a m i*

*p*

Landslag V.  
*birkekjarr í fjallsblöð // birch shrubs in a mountain slope*

Landslag V. started out as a simple melody that I developed in a fugal fashion, gradually adding other voices to it to create harmony before ornamenting it.

Technically there are tons of things to tackle: harmonics, glissandos, over ringing chords, suspensions, scales, jumpy shifts, slurs, pull-offs and grace notes - there is even one acciaccatura. It is quite obvious that there are no bar lines in the piece, but that doesn't mean there is no underlying pulse or a sense of meter (which is 4/4), it just means you can be rather loose with time; I wanted to emphasize freedom and give the guitarist time to tackle the technical diversity of the piece.

In my personal view birch shrubs are the quintessential 'tree' (if you can call it that) in Iceland, it's really a hybrid version of a tree and a shrub that often doesn't get much higher than a human. They are however ideally suited for the harsh climate and soil in Iceland and that's why you can find them in diverse landscapes all over the country; but I think their favorite place to grow is in mountainous slopes where they get some shelter from the winter winds.

# Landslag V.

♩ = 25

*birikjarr í fjallshlíð // birch shrubs in a mountain slope*

*very freely, expressive but sparse*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

The meter is 4/4, but with a very free feeling to it

Guitar

The score is written for guitar in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 1-10) starts with a *mp* dynamic and features a mix of chords and single notes. The second system (measures 11-20) includes a section labeled 'echo' with a *mp* dynamic and features several barre chords (VII, VII, VII, VII, V, XII). The third system (measures 21-28) is labeled 'more melodic' and features a *mf* dynamic with triplets, glissandos, and a 'let ring' instruction. The fourth system (measures 29-36) is labeled 'less melodic (more harmonic)' and features a *mf* dynamic with sustained chords and a final *mp* dynamic.

*mp* *mf*

11 VII VII VII VII V XII  
*echo*  
*mp*

21 *more melodic*  
*mf* *let ring* *mp*

29 *less melodic (more harmonic)*  
*mf* *mp*

## Landslag VI.

*grjóthrun í fjallsblíð // fallen rocks from a mountain*

Landslag VI. is composed through three voiced diatonic counterpoint in the gloriously sad key of c-minor. The key of c-minor tends to make everything a bit more challenging to play on the guitar as 4 of the open strings (E,A,D and E) have been flattened... But if you have not played many pieces in c-minor I think you will really enjoy playing in this key.

The piece is more about harmony than melodic contour of the voices, but still the top and bottom voices are the more important voices of the three. It moves quite a lot around the fretboard and I am sure you will encounter some voicing of some chord that you might not have played before.

The tragic sentimental atmosphere of the piece is in my view perfectly captured by fallen rocks from a mountain, now sitting scattered over the grass overlooking their previous epic place where they were part of the mountain.



# Landslag VI.

*grjófbrun úr fjalli // fallen rocks from a mountain*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

$\text{♩} = 60$   
*gentle, lonely, with vibrato (not too much though)*

Guitar

9 *mp* *mf*

17 *mp*

25 *p* *mf*

33 *mp* *poco rit.* *gliss.* *a tempo*

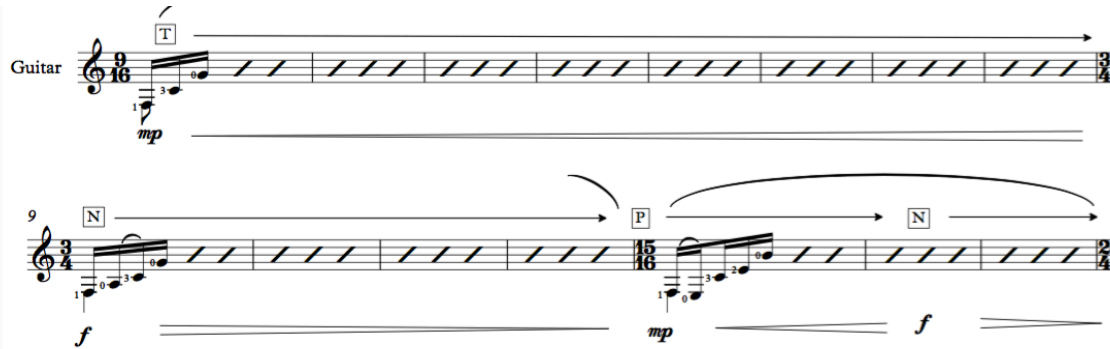
38 *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo* *poco rit.* *p* *mp* *p*



## Landslag VII.

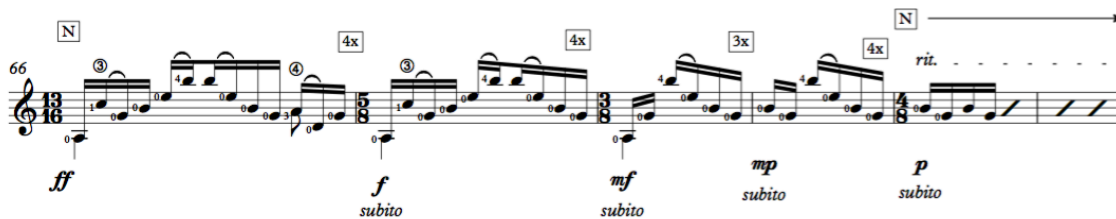
*ólga við ós // turbulence where a stream meets a lake*

Landslag VII. is a minimalist piece based on repeating arpeggios, slurs and hammer-ons of different lengths. The notational style of the piece might be foreign to many so here are some explanations of how it works.



This is the opening of the piece that starts with three different arpeggios of 3 different lengths. The dashes indicate to repeat the previous arpeggio pattern; the first arpeggio repeats as three 16<sup>th</sup> notes, the 2<sup>nd</sup> as four 16<sup>th</sup> notes and the third as five 16<sup>th</sup> notes. This is true through out the piece - the slash tells you to repeat the pattern before it.

At the climax of the piece I switched to a slightly different notational style:



Here the little boxed numbers [4x] [3x] at the end of each bar tell you how often to play each bar – 4x means play the bar 4 times, 3x means play it three times.

One more important thing is regarding the timbre changes for the right hand that I notated. [T] stands for Tasto (closer to the fretboard), [N] stands for Natural (near soundhole) and [P] stands for Ponticello (near the bridge). The arrows tell you to move gradually between.

There is lots to think about in this piece because on top of general technical things you have to count the number of repeats with the different arpeggio patterns while moving your right hand between Tasto, Natural and Ponticello as well as following the dynamic shaping. The most important thing is to avoid sounding mechanical, so feel free to sometimes slow down or speed up or hang on a note you like, wherever you want to. That will make the piece sound detailed and musical instead of like an arpeggiator (I do love arpeggiators though).

All these flowing rhythmic changes made me think of the place where a river meets a lake, creating turbulence and aerating the water. It might seem simple but if you look closely there is so much detail in how the water moves.

# Landslag VII.

not too fast,  
non-accented but continuous  
freely

ólga við ós // turbulence where a stream meets a lake

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

Guitar

1  
*mp*

9

1  
*f* *mp* *f*

16

1  
*p* *mp* *p* *mf*

27

3  
*mp* *f*

39

3  
*mp* *f* *mp*

46

0  
*f* *mp*

53 **N** *m i a i* **P** *i a m*  
*f*

60 **T**  
*mf*

66 **N** *i m a i m i* **4x** *i* **4x** *i m a i m i* **3x** *i a m i m i a m i* **4x** **N** *rit.*  
*ff* *f subito* *mf subito* *mp subito* *p subito*

72 **P** *a tempo* *i m i* **N** *move freely between tasto and pontichello* *i m a*  
*p* *mf*

80 *i m a* *i m a*

88 *i a m*  
*stay mf*  
*let resonate at end for as long as you can*

## Landslag VIII.

*víðfæðmur akur bulinn af lúpínu // vast lupine covered field*

Landslag VIII. Focuses on a 3 against 2 polyrhythm over a looping 4/4 - 3/4 meter scheme. It is contrapuntal in nature utilizing looped motives and ostinatos that clash against each other to create harmonies.

If you are unfamiliar with polyrhythms here is a brief explanation: it is when a beat, beats or a bar is subdivided into integer ratios that are non divisible with the simplest one being 3 against 2 or 2 against 3. Other examples include 4 against 3, 4 against 5, 7 against 3 etc.

Before attempting to play this piece I would highly recommend playing the following short exercises to familiarize your self with the right hand intricacies of playing a polyrhythm. I would recommend starting slowly and looping each exercise once you are comfortable with it. First let's start with two voices.

Exercise 1.a

Exercise 1.b

Now lets try three voices, played with p, i and m. It's important to feel how the triplet grouping alternates from m,i,m to i,m,i.

Exercise 2.a

Exercise 2.B

Now try accenting the change.

Exercise 2.c

Now try adding another bass note.

Exercise 2.d

Now try a moving bass note

Exercise 2.e

Now try it with a and i

Exercise 2.f

By now you should be ready to learn the piece! Try this passage from it for fun:



Excerpt from Landslag VII.

I think the most important thing when you play Landslag VIII. is to keep the momentum going and to look ahead, the biggest chance of making a mistake is if you don't anticipate the next change. And be patient if you are having a hard time playing the polyrhythm, day by day it will get easier and easier and before you know it you will have mastered it. One more advice I would like to give is to just use the sheet music when performing this piece, because it's a pain to memorize. Violinists and pianists use sheet music ALL the time, why can't we?

This piece has a fun and happy energy to it and for some reason it made me think of the Alaskan lupine that was introduced into the Icelandic flora in 1945 to bind the loose sandy soil that was eroding some areas in Iceland and causing mudslides. Lupine can now be found everywhere in Iceland, but there is much controversy about the plant as some think it is an invasive foreign plant that is ruining the pristine and sensitive Icelandic flora while others are happy that it grows where nothing else can; and find the purple and white lupine covered fields and mountain slopes a welcome and colorful sight.

# Landslag VIII.

*víðfeðmur akur hulinn af lúpinu // vast lupine covered field*

♩ = 76-80

*continous, happy*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

Guitar

*m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i*

*p sim.*

*mf*

*m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i a i a i a i a i a i a i*

*a i a i a i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i a i a i a i m i m i m i m i*

*m i m i m i sim.*



33 *m i m i m i sim.*

*mf*

37 *a i a i a i a i i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i i m i m i m i m i*

*p p sim.*

41 *sim.*

45 *m i m i m i a i a i a i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i sim.*

*SHIFT EARLY*

49

53 *m i m i m i m i m i m i a i a i a i*

*f*

56 *i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i m i*

*molto rit.*

*mf*

## Landslag IX.

*veðruð ísilögð strandlengja / / eroded icy shoreline*

I would describe the ninth landscape as an arpeggio based prelude. It is composed in a similar way to a chaconne where a short repeating chord progression is the vehicle for musical variation.

Think of highlighting the notes with tenuto markings (without over accenting them) while keeping a steady tempo and focus on resonance. The piece is supposed to be relaxing, except perhaps at the end when it gets a bit more dramatic, featuring notes above the 12<sup>th</sup> fret.

The somber, sad atmosphere of the piece reminded me of a shoreline with cliffs that are eroding by the ocean; reaching the endpoint of their existences as land and becoming sand.

# Landslag IX.

veðruð ísilögð ströndlengja // eroded icy shoreline

♩ = 60

rhythmically steady but dynamically shaped  
tired, numb  
let resonate tenuto marks highlight melodic voices

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

*mp*

5

9

13

*p* *mf* *mp*

17

21

*mp* *mf*

*molto rit.* <sup>XII</sup> *art.*

or l.h. thumb

*a tempo*

25

*mp* *poco rit.* *p*



## Landslag X.

*klaki og snjór hylur tún // ice and snow covers a field*

The 10<sup>th</sup> landscape is all open harmonics, essentially it is a SATB (4 voiced) lullaby in 6/8 along with an intro and outro.

The problem with harmonics is that they are very quiet so you need all the resonance you can get from your guitar so they can be heard. You don't want to bar often as that will kill off sympathetic resonance in other strings that you need to project well, also make sure to take the left hand fingers of the harmonic note quickly (but not too quickly) after playing a harmonic. Leaving the finger on the string will pretty quickly kill the harmonic. Finally I would recommend memorizing this piece; harmonics are a pain to notate and even more painful to read.

Harmonics have always made me think of coldness and stillness, in this case I thought of a field in winter that has been totally covered by ice and snow. The piece actually reminded me of lo-fi electronic music because of that detuned C# on the ninth fret of the 5<sup>th</sup> string. We are just missing some ambient beats, vinyl noise and nostalgic cartoons.

# Landslag X.

♩ = 32-36

*legato, resonant, melodic*

*klaki og snjór hylur tún // ice and snow covers a field*

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

Guitar

Tab.

8

*a tempo*

Tab.

14

Tab.

20

Tab.

26

VII VII XII VII XII VII

T 12 7 12 7 7 7 7 12 12 12 12 7 7 7 7 12 12 12 12 7 7 7 7

A 7 7 12 7 12 9 7 12 9 7

B 7 7 12 7 12 9 7 12 9 7

32

XII XII IX XII XII VII IX

*mf*

T 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 7 7 7 7

A 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 7 7 7 7

B 9 9 9 9 9 9 12 9 9 7 9

## Landslag XI.

*sprænur og ár í kapp niður gil // streams and rivers race down canyons*

The final landscape is a fast virtuosic piece centered around repetitive patterns mostly in triplets. The piece alternates between two main sections: choppy staccato cross-string scales (often referred to as campanella effect) and resonant cross string arpeggios. The form is loosely based on a 'Double Variation'/'Extended Ternary' form.

The notational style of the piece features boxed numbers [4x] [3x] at the end of each bar that indicates how often to repeat that bar. Note that if you see [1x] that means to only play that bar once, [2x] means to play it twice, [3x] play the bar three times and etc.

The dynamics and tempo changes that are marked above these repetitions happen over the course of all of the repetitions. Here is an example:

Guitar

*mp* *mf*

\* let resonate

Here the dynamic change from mezzo-piano to mezzo-forte happens gradually over the course of the 8 repetitions of the 3/8 bar and the 8 repetitions of the 9/16 bar. This is true throughout the piece, the notes repeat but the dynamics happen gradually. Here the above excerpt has been written out:

♩ = 150 or faster  
*short and accented*

*mp*

9

*mf*

\* slurs below staff over more than one note mean to let those notes resonate

17

\* let resonate

Another thing that might need clarification are the slurs below the staff. A passage, measure or a part of measure that has a slur under the staff is to be sustained, meaning the notes should resonate over each other. Here are some examples:



In the top left example only the first three notes are supposed to resonate, in the top right excerpt the first nine notes resonate and the bottom excerpt is a passage that should resonate through out all of the notes. The notes that don't have a slur underneath should be short/choppy, the open strings will of course resonate but the thumb notes should be short.

But how do we make the bass notes short? The easiest way to accomplish that is simply to lift the finger of the note after playing it, but it takes a bit of finessing to get right.

It is important that the thumb notes (usually the bass line) are louder than the other notes, even to the point of accenting all of the thumb notes. Another advice I would give is not to start playing the piece too fast, it might get you in trouble later on.

As I was composing this piece I had this image of streams and rivers falling down cliffs and canyons in the mountains. They always seem to be in some sort of a hurry, like they are racing each other to the bottom.

# Landslag XI.

*sprænur og ár í kapp niður gil // streams and rivers race down canyons*

♩ = 150 or faster

\* slurs below staff over more than one note  
mean to let those notes resonate

Gulli Björnsson (b.1991)

*short and accented*

Guitar

*pp* *mf* \* let resonate

9

*let resonate*

*f* *mf*

15

*molto rit.* *accel.* *short and accented a tempo*

*p*

19

*f*

23

*let resonate*

*mf*

27 *molto rit.* **f** **p**

*short and accented short and accented*

*resonant*

31 *poco accel.* - - *a tempo* **pp** *stay pianissimo!* **p** **mf**

36 **f** **ff**

40 **fff**

*take tons of time, enjoy the harmonies!  
relaxed, resonant*

44 **mf** *subito*

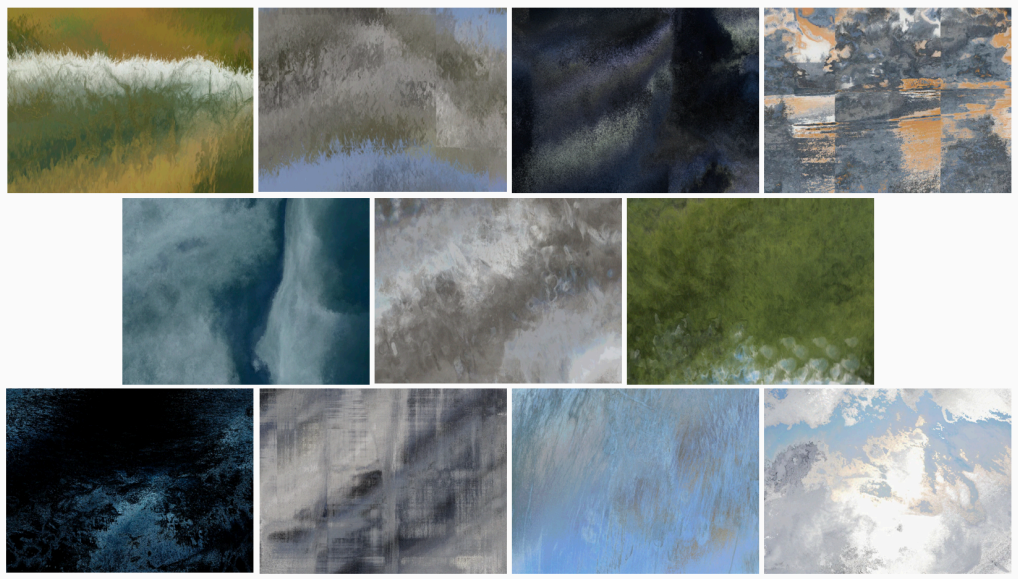
*molto rit.* - - - - - *short and choppy, agitated* *a tempo* *molto rit. on last repetition*

48 **p** **f** **p**

XII  
①  
②  
③  
④  
⑤  
⑥  
VII







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