

“*Storied Sounds* demonstrates that musical traditions are effectively pointless if they do not evolve or are never brought to new audiences. The album encapsulates this concept with breath-taking simplicity and vibrancy.” *Folk Radio UK* on Tuulikki Bartosik’s 2016 album *Storied Sounds*

“The character and feeling Tuulikki Bartosik injects into her compositions and arrangements allows for a renewed appreciation of the accordion as a contemporary instrument.” Scotland’s *The List* on Tuulikki Bartosik live at *Tallinn Music Week 2019*

“It’s about small things having bigger dimensions than they need, about details and how they develop,” says **Tuulikki Bartosik** of the title track of her new album *Tempest In A Teapot*. “In today’s global world, details tend to disappear but sometimes the small things can grow into big things although they do not need to do that.”

Tempest In A Teapot is the Estonian accordion stylist and musical experimenter’s second solo album, the follow-up to 2016’s internationally acclaimed *Storied Sounds*. Her new album is, she continues, a “story about me, my roots and where I find myself – the longing for nature and friends, how I work as an individual in nature, the desire to find a place in the world and also in the musical world. I hope it helps people think about their own lives, to find themselves in it.”

The journey through *Tempest In A Teapot* begins with the heart-rending “Crying Meadows” (“Nutvad Niidud” in Estonian), a meditative instrumental evocation of Rõuge (pronounced “roo-ga”), the South Estonia rural settlement where her family are rooted: the interwoven field recordings made there help assert her roots. It continues with the reflective “In Luce Amor” (meaning either “in light there is love” or “in love there is light”), composed by Tuulikki as an emotional reaction to being unable to attend a wedding.

It is followed by the extraordinary suite “Setting Sail For Freedom”. Its two sections, “Over The Sea” (“Lähme Üle Mere”) and “Coming Home” (“Kojusaabumine”) affectingly tell the story of Estonians forced to escape their own country during World War II. In 1940, Stalin’s Russia occupied Estonia. Then, in 1941, Nazi Germany replaced them. Russia returned in 1944. Tens of thousands of Estonians fled the serial occupations. Many went to Sweden. In July 1945, some found a 37-foot pleasure boat and decided to get to America. Sixteen men, women and children left Sweden the next month. Via Norway and the North Sea – they had heard Stalin’s forces were in France so didn’t navigate through the English Channel – they headed to Scotland, where sympathetic officials gave them passage through the Caledonian Canals to reach Ireland from where they proceeded south to Portugal and then plotted a course west across The Atlantic. After a storm off the coast of America on 14 December, the U.S. Navy found them. They arrived in America 128 days after leaving Sweden. On 18 November 1946, President Truman declared that Estonian political refugees were welcome in America.

Tuulikki recorded all the parts herself, creating an orchestra with her accordion. “Traditions travel by sea,” she says of “Setting Sail For Freedom”. “Water brings us together, creating something positive to balance the anxiety and imbalances in the world, to spread female energy through music. Even though ‘Setting Sail For Freedom’ tells the story of finding a new home it’s also about that if we want to keep our traditions, we cannot isolate them. To keep traditions alive, we need to travel and have other people coming to us.”

After this epic, transformative journey, *Tempest In A Teapot* returns to Estonia. The dynamic “Forgotten Village Polka” (“Mälutaguse Polka”) celebrates the great Estonian accordionist Karl Kikas. “Josefin’s Lullaby” (“Josefini Häällilaul”) was written for Tuulikki’s sister-in-law’s seventh birthday. “Tempest In A Teapot” (“Torm Veeklaasis) precedes “Rõuge Waltz” (“Rõuge Valss”), which is dedicated to the home of her ancestors. The album ends with “Dear Friends”/“Orukalda Waltz” (“Oh Sõbra”/“Orukalda Valss”), with Tuulikki playing the 11-string Estonian kannel, the zither-like instrument unique to the country. The words are those of poet Artur Adson, who wrote in the South Estonian Võru language. After leaving Soviet-occupied Estonia in 1944, he was never able to return.

While Adson’s words are heard and the album’s Swedish producer Jonas Knutsson assisted with the arrangements of the final track and “Tempest In A Teapot”, the album is Tuulikki’s own. That these are her compositions raises the knotty question of whether she plays folk or traditional music. Coursing through *Tempest In A Teapot* are the atmosphere of Philip Glass and Terry Riley. There is a kinship with Iceland’s Ólafur Arnalds and German minimalist Hauschka’s *Abandoned City* album. Tuulikki may have master’s degree in Traditional Music from Finland’s Sibelius Academy, but she was fired up by heavy metal during the period Estonia achieved independence from Russia and is an avowed fan of Queen.

Asked if she plays folk, Tuulikki counters “I feel more comfortable with, shall we say, ‘original music.’ This is my music, my tradition. Its roots are in Võrumaa but I’ve been living in different cultures and travelling, these have their impact.”

Indeed, Tuulikki has travelled in the run-up to the release of *Tempest In A Teapot*. She toured Japan in October 2018. Earlier in the year, she was at Glasgow’s Celtic Connections Festival. She also represented her country at the Euroradio Folk Festival in Moscow in 2018 and, in 2017, accompanied Estonia’s President Kersti Kaljulaid on her state visit to Finland for their centennial celebrations.

Collaboration is in her make-up too. She has worked with England’s Hannah James, the clog dancer and fellow accordionist (their joint album *Chatterbox* was issued in 2015). For Celtic Connections, she conceived the all-female accordion group Accordionesse. In Japan, she has worked with Hiroko Ara and Kato Kanako. Tuulikki is also pivotal to the Estonian Folk Orchestra. “All collaborations affect me, leaving their marks in my body and mind,” she reflects. “So new things come out of me. The right collaborations always have an impact on everything I do solo”.

Tempest In A Teapot though is a solo album, one distilling Tuulikki's search for personal expression; a quest encapsulated by the album's artwork. "There is a message in the fishes," she laughs. "Fish can swim anywhere, nobody can tell the fish where to swim. Sometimes I feel like a fish. It swims where it needs to swim."

Turning serious, Tuulikki states "There are many different fishes in the world. That is the message." With the self-possessed *Tempest In A Teapot*, Tuulikki Bartosik celebrates her own identity, her place in the world and how she sees it. She communicates through her music.