

Tuulikki Bartosik **Fýri** album BIO

Fýri is Tuulikki Bartosik's follow-up to her critically acclaimed 2019 solo album *Tempest In A Teapot*, the successor to 2016's internationally praised debut *Storied Sounds*. She is firmly established on the world stage, and **Fýri** has been eagerly awaited.

The Estonian musical experimenter's new release is a four-track EP which builds from the experience of creating *Tempest In A Teapot* and from a newly learnt understanding of how her music is crafted. Encountering fellow Estonian sonic auteur Arvo Pärt helped clarify her vision. The arresting, shape-shifting result is an unfiltered expression of who she is.

Where *Tempest In A Teapot* (*Torm veeklaasis* in Estonian) was completed in a traditional recording studio, **Fýri** was recorded in the forest of the Lahemaa National Park in north Estonia, 70 kilometres east of capital city Tallinn. Surrounded by trees, beneath the canopy of their branches and foliage, she was enclosed. A totally organic environment, yet not so far from being indoors.

Listeners to her music have realised the natural world is never far. Considering *Tempest In A Teapot*, Britain's *Songlines* magazine said the "album is rather like a long walk with Tuulikki Bartosik, as the leaves rustle underfoot, and the birds sing high in the trees...conjuring images of swirling forest mists and other vistas of enchantment."

Explaining why she chose to record **Fýri** in such an unusual way, Tuulikki says "I had filmed a live streamed concert in Sweden from the Lejondals Nature Reserve in 2020 and then I wanted to search for the perfect forest spot for recording. I had visited Lahemaa quite a few times when I was a small child, it's on the Juminda peninsula where the forest meets the sea, so I thought of there for recording. It was magical to sit in the forest with my accordion and hear the waves in the background. I really felt that nature is my living room and forest is my studio. Those rooms are always open."

Choosing when to record required precision. "I had to record at an exact moment – it's not like booking a studio," explains Tuulikki. "You need the weather as well as the right place. When I recorded at the beginning of May the birds are back, everything is awakening. Also, there were no mosquitoes yet."

Birds were even singing in the trees. "It was almost like a concert in the forest for the birds, laughs Tuulikki. "It was not neutral like recording in a studio."

Deciding to record in such a naked, unadorned way without the overdubbing and other enhancements brought by working in a studio came after thinking about what *Tempest In A Teapot* represented. "*Tempest In Teapot* was the first album where I played everything, where I deliberately said no to any guest artists," she explains. "**Fýri** is part of that continuum. That was a good thing I learned from *Tempest In A Teapot*, that I can play solo because I am enough – on my own, I'm talking through music and expressing what I'm thinking, what I'm doing."

Once she had chosen so unfiltered an approach, another realisation came – that the way she composed had also become more free, more organic. “I recognised I am not the kind of person who puts something in the computer, records phrases and then puts them together. I have to play first. So I played and played and played to get the form of the pieces. That’s a freedom. And an advantage of playing solo.”

Tuulikki composed the new pieces at the Arvo Pärt Centre outside Tallinn, on the shores of the Baltic at Laulasmaa. At the home base of the renowned composer, it’s possible to book what’s called The Creative Room. Tuulikki worked there for a day a week in the run-up to recording – playing and playing and playing. Sometimes, Arvo Pärt was in the next room. His crystalline, minimal yet potent piano playing fed into what Tuulikki was crafting. She heard how he composes. The calmness in the centre and presence of Arvo Pärt himself helped Tuulikki confirm that she is enough, that any accompaniment was unnecessary. The time at the Arvo Pärt Center was meditative. Rather than drawing inspiration from the world around her, the experiences, and encounters of day-to-day life, **Fýri** exposes the raw essence of her creative soul.

And why an EP rather than an album? “I needed to get things in my head out of my system and it couldn’t wait,” reveals Tuulikki. **Fýri** is born from a need to express.

What was recorded in early May 2021 were four compositions representing different stages of a spiritual process: documenting how writing from within articulated how she felt. The EP’s journey begins with denial and ends in the light.

Fýri opens with the brooding “Synja” which articulates the fear of not being able to create and doubts about getting inspiration back. Tuulikki dug deep to connect with these feelings and used them as a spur to create. Next, “Efni” chronicles moving away from that fear, the struggle with facing it and the realisation that only she counters it. “Sigra” documents the understanding that this situation has to be embraced to win over the doubt, fear and hesitation. The EP ends with “Lysa”, where clarity arrives with accepting the situation, accepting yourself with all the fears, doubts and hesitations: you just are – and that is enough.

Tuulikki knew all along that she was going to record in the forest and chose **fýri** as the EP’s title. The word is Old Norse, and specifically means coniferous forest. “I am Estonian, south Estonian,” she explains. “But I’ve spent time in Finland and Sweden and found that there’s a Nordic person in me too. I looked for a word describing the coniferous forest and found **fýri**. I really like the way it sounds and how it connects with Estonia. Estonia has played a significant role in Nordic history.”

“Tallinn was always multi-national,” she continues. “The Hanseatic merchants were here, and Old Norse must have been spoken here. To me, Estonia has always been a melting pot of cultures. My Estonian ancestors spoke Russian, German, French, Latvian and of course Estonian – all the languages were needed here, and with Estonia’s history of being occupied it was necessary to speak the language of the people in power. Once I chose **fýri**, it became natural that the EP’s other pieces also had titles in Old Norse.”

The ease of finding an evocative title, where to record and the straightforward recording process contrasted with the emotional deep diving feeding into each piece. There were multiple takes, and Tuulikki chose which best represented the feeling she wished to convey. "There are some mistakes," she confesses. "But I left them in there. Each composition will change when I play live, but this will never happen again. One message from the EP is that I am in the moment."

After pausing to contemplate what she's just said, Tuulikki declares that while recording **Fýri** she "felt inspiration flow into my veins. I felt hope. This is the authentic me."