

## OF ICE AND FIRE: STORIES FROM NORSE MYTHOLOGY

Sunday, February 25, 2024

2:00pm to 6:00pm, Blackbox Studio, Arts Court

### Stories and Tellers

#### Section I

Ragnarok

Daniel Kletke, Anne Schmitz, Johanna Kuyvenhoven,  
Marie Robertson

Creation

Jennifer Cayley

Lord of the Gallows

Daniel Kletke

Mead of Poetry

Johanna Kuyvenhoven

Building Asgard's Wall

Marie Robertson

#### Section II

Gifts for the God

Anne Schmitz

Loki's Children

Daniel Kletke

Idunn's Apples

Anne Schmitz

Skadi & Nord: A Marriage

Anne Schmitz

Thor's Hammer Stolen

Marie Robertson

#### Section III

Baldr's Dreams

Anne Schmitz

Baldr's Death

Daniel Kletke

Loki Provokes the Gods

Johanna Kuyvenhoven

Ragnarok

Anne Schmitz , Johanna Kuyvenhoven, Daniel Kletke,  
Marie Robertson

A New World

Jennifer Cayley

### Music and Images

Takini Kluane



## **Welcome, Dear Listeners!**

It is a thrill to have you join us as we explore the grand and mysterious world of ancient Norse Myths!

To assist you in making this journey as meaningful and exciting as possible, you are encouraged to read the material in this package before the performance. These stories are strange and challenging, so acquainting yourself with characters and geography beforehand will assist you and your imagination in being fully present for the telling.

## **What Kind of Stories Will You Hear?**

Perhaps the most important thing to know as you come to these stories is that to some extent, you will need to let go of a need for consistent narrative logic and coherent characterization. This is part of the mythic nature of the work and also the fact that sources are, at best, fragmentary. At the same time, these stories offer the original and deep source of today's wildly popular Marvel comic book material. Listeners will hear the grand myths as they were first imagined, voiced, heard, and held in memory.

The cycle begins with the Norse creation myth. We follow the gods in the Norse pantheon through a number of adventures, focused on their struggles with the giants and on their dealings with the trickster Loki who will in the end, bring it all down. Loki is a puzzling, mercurial character, sometimes associated with fire, who is both giant and god and, at the same time, neither god nor giant. These stories have a fierce, dark energy and often a humour that is both sly and broad. The stories unfold within a fateful framework that is leading to total destruction at Ragnarok. The gods sometimes act in some awareness of this fate and at other times seem unaware of it. From a contemporary perspective, the Norse gods are often not at all "godlike" and though described as wise, are singularly foolish on occasion.

You will hear many unfamiliar names and places that cannot all be held and remembered as you listen to the telling. They can still be enjoyed if you experience them as a kind of music.

## **Where Do These Stories Come From?**

This is the mythology of the people we call Vikings who held sway in Europe from approximately 780-1070 AD. Archeological evidence suggests the stories took shape between 1000 BCE and the birth of Christ and there is some evidence that many aspects are even older.

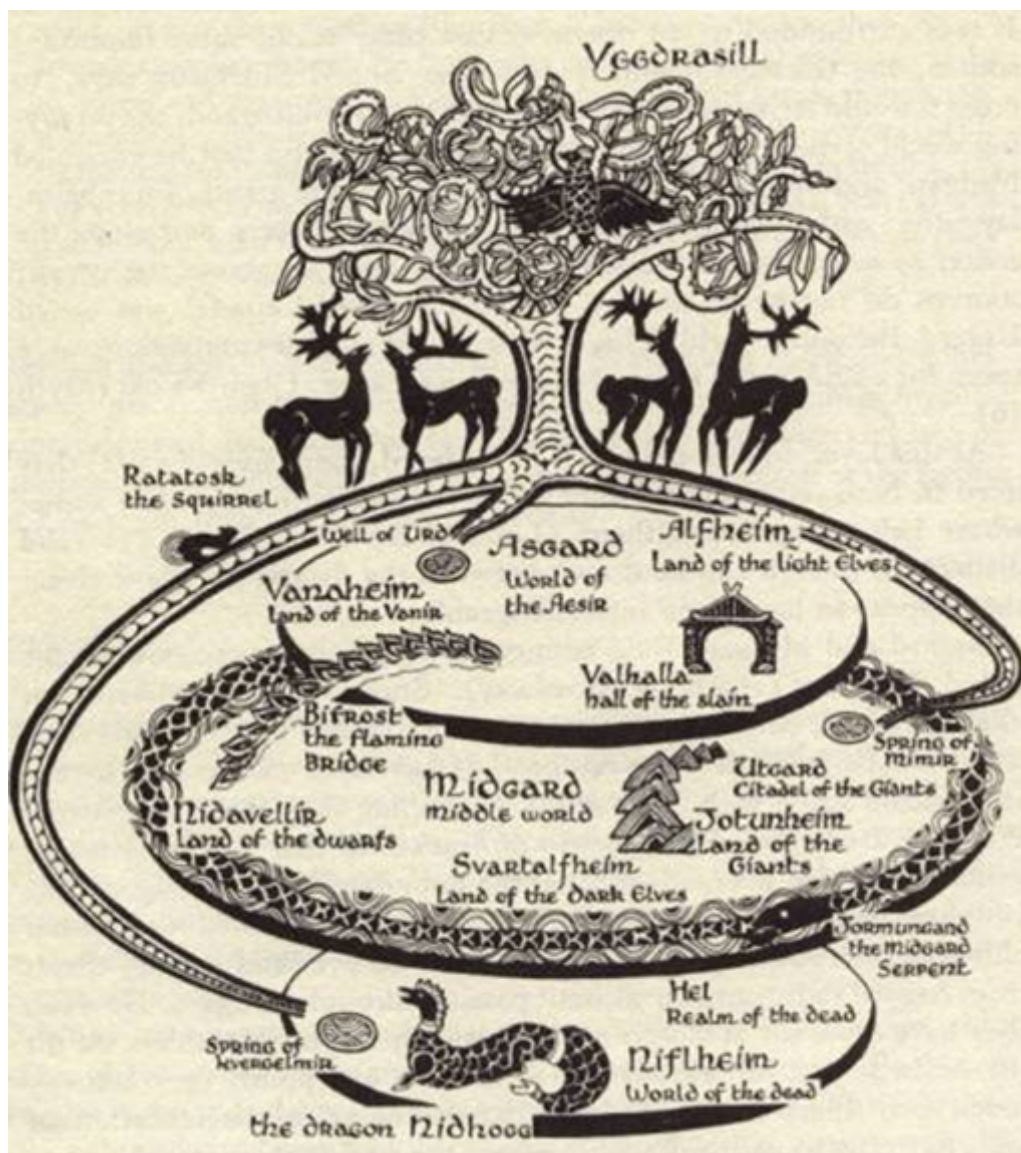
There is a complicated timeline attached to the literary sources of these stories but for the sake of simplicity, we can say that most of the stories are found in manuscripts of the 13th century. One of the important things to note here, is that this is well after the Norse had converted to Christianity. It is fair to assume that the fact that those who recorded these stories were Christians, had an impact on what is included in these texts concerning this ancient pagan religion.

Snorri Sturlson's work *The Prose Edda*, is considered the finest literary rendering of the stories. *The Norse Myths* by Kevin Crossley Holland has been the road map for finding a way to tell these stories here and now.

### Where Are These Stories Set?

The geography of the Norse myth is wild and complex. It is impossible to make a coherent map of it or understand quite how the people of the time pictured it. The axis is Yggdrasil, the world tree. The tree exists always, before creation and after the destruction of Ragnarok. It holds the nine worlds in its branches and encompasses everything that happens. There are essentially three layers of worlds enfolded in Yggdrasil's branches; upper, middle and lower. These layers move from light at the top to all manner of darkness at the bottom.

In the glossary of names and places, you will find a list of the nine worlds that make up creation. Below there is also a visual representation provided of how Yggdrasil holds and surrounds those nine worlds. Both the list and the picture are only one of a myriad of efforts to make the shape of this mythical world clear. Neither will agree in every particular with what you will hear in the stories.



## **What About the Music?**

In his original soundscape, Kluane Takhini has combined elements and influences from cinematic score, Nordic neofolk and nature, to create a journey of captivating rhythms and epic dimensions.

Inspired by the rich imagery of ancient Norse mythology, this music pays homage to and seeks to capture the legendary essence of the Norse myths. You'll hear uniquely melancholic Norse melodies, the distinct sounds of traditional Nordic pagan frame drums and soaring targelharpa fiddles, flutes and the harp-like lyre. All this blends with orchestral instrumentation and harmonies. The connection to nature is palpable: melodies are overlaid with the sounds of waves, howling wind and crackling fire.

Bragi was the god of music and had the divine task of welcoming and entertaining the fallen warriors into Valhalla with his poetry and music. According to Norse mythology, Bragi's music had the power to calm any fury and turn enemies into friends. May he approve of this musical homage.

## **Last Words**

This event is the latest iteration of a cherished Ottawa StoryTellers' tradition. Over several decades, in venues as varied as a small café, the National Arts Center and a lakeside retreat, Ottawa audiences have been treated to oral tellings of many of the world's great epics. Time and again, listeners have found themselves, often much to their surprise, delighted to be immersed in these rich dramas over many hours. You are about to embark on just such an adventure in extended and creative listening; a rare and precious thing in these sound bite defined times. While the journey will take you deep into an old time of myth and legend, if you really listen, you may find yourself discovering something of who you are and where you come from.

AND.....Whether you are inclined to prepare or not.... Know that the most important things you can bring to this experience are your eagerness to travel into another time, another realm, another reality; your willingness to listen, for the time of it, not just with your ears, but with all of who you are.

## Glossary of Proper Names, Places and Things

Main Characters: Major figures in the Norse Pantheon and/or characters who appear in a number of the stories in this program.

Balder	Beautiful son of Frigg and Odin, beloved of all the gods
Bragi	God of poetry, song and ceremony
Freyja	Goddess of fertility, daughter of Njord
Freyr	Fertility god of rain and sunshine, son of Njord
Frigg	Wife of Odin, goddess of the hearth
Heimdall	God who keeps watch over Asgard at Bifrost, son of Odin
Hod	Baldr's blind twin brother
Idunn	Goddess, responsible for the apples that preserve youth
Loki	Trickster, Odin's blood brother and son of giants
Nanna	Baldr's wife
Njord	God of the sea, Skadi's husband
Odin	The All Father, first and most powerful of the gods
Sif	Thor's wife, of the golden hair
Skadi	Daughter of giant Thiazi, wife of the sea god Njord
Thor	Eldest Son of Odin, strongest of the gods, owner of the hammer Mjolnar
Tyr	God of war, lost his right hand to Fenrir

### Secondary Characters

Angrboda	Giantess, mother of Loki's three terrible children
Ask	First man, created by Odin from a fallen ash tree
Baugi	Dwarf who leads Odin to mead of poetry
Buri	Grandfather of the gods who arises from the ice at the beginning
Brokk	Dwarf who fashioned, with his brother Etri, three gifts for the Gods
Etri	Dwarf who fashioned, with his brother Brokk, three gifts for the Gods
Embla	First woman, created by Odin from a fallen elm tree
Fjlar & Galar	Dwarf brothers who kill Kavasir and brew mead of poetry
Gunlod	Daughter of Suttang , guarding mead of poetry
Hel	Rules land of dead, half corpse, daughter of Loki & the giantess Angrboda
Hermod	Baldr's brother
Honir	The long-legged god
Hyrrokin	Giantess who helps launch Baldr's ship
Hymir	Giant who owned the huge beer making cauldron
Ivaldi's Sons	Dwarfs who made gold hair for Sif
Kavasir	Created from spittle of the gods, his blood is part of the mead of poetry
Lif & Lithrasir	Survivors after Ragnarok
Mimir	Guardian of the well of wisdom
Nanna	Baldr's wife
Narvi	Son of Loki, killed by his own brother
Sigyn	Loki's faithful wife, catches serpents poison after Loki's binding

Suttang	Giant, steals the mead of poetry from dwarfs
Thiazi	Giant who steals the golden apples
Thokk	Giantess who refuses to weep for Baldr, Loki in disguise
Thrym	Giant, steals Mjollnir
Vali	Son of Loki, turned into a wolf
Villi & Vi	Odin's brothers, helped with the creation
Ymir	First living being, the worlds were made from his body

### Creatures

Audumbla	Great, hornless cow, feeds Ymir and licks Buri into being
Fenrir	Ferocious, huge wolf, son of Loki and giantess Angrboda
Garm	Hound of Niflheim
Gullinbursti	Golden boar, made by dwarfs for Freyr
Jormungand	Great serpent of Midgard, child of Loki and Angrboda
Nidhogg	Dragon in Niflheim, eats Yggdrasil's roots
Ratatosk	Squirrel, carries messages up and down Yggdrasill
Sleipnir	Odin's eight legged horse, offspring of giant's horse and Loki when mare
Svadilfari	Exceptionally strong stallion, belongs to the builder of Asgard's wall

### Things

Brisingr	Freya's fine, dwarf-made necklace
Draupnir	Gold arm band, made by dwarfs for Odin, reproduces itself
Gleipnir	Ribbon crafted by the dwarfs, binds Fenrir
Gungnir	Odin's spear, by dwarfs
Hlidskjalf	Odin's seat where he sees all that happens in the worlds
Mjollnir	Mighty hammer, made by dwarfs for Thor
Nafalgar	Ship made of dead men's finger nails
Skidbladnir	Magic ship, made by dwarfs for Freyr
Ringhorn	Baldr's ship
Yggdrasil	Eternal world ash tree

### The Nine Worlds

Asgard	Realm of the gods
Alfeim	World of the elves (not in the told stories)
Jotunheim	Part of the earth set aside for the giants
Hel	Land of the dead
Midgard	The part of the earth world set aside for human kind
Muspelheim	A burning world
Niflheim	An icy, poisonous world
Swertlheim	Part of the earth set aside for dwarfs
Vanaheim	World of the Vanir (not in the told stories)

## Other Places

Bifrost	Rainbow bridge that connects Midgard and Asgard
Franang's Falls	Where Loki hides from the Gods as a salmon
Ginnungagap	The great void between Muspelheim and Niflheim
Gimli	Best of worlds after Ragnarok
Gladshheim	Council and feasting hall in Asgard
Lyngvi	Island where Fenrir is bound
Svartalfheim	Underground world set aside for the dwarfs
Thrymheim	Giant Thiazi's fortress in Jotunheim
Plain of Ida	Large grassy, rocky area of Asgard
Utgard	Sub-region of Jotenheim
Vigrid	Site of final battle in Asgard

## For Future Reference

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Gaimon, Neil	<i>Norse Mythology</i> . W.W. Norton & Company
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