



The Music of Failure (Fesler-Lampert Minnesota Heritage)

Bill Holm

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“The ground bass is failure; America is the key signature; Pauline Bardal is the lyrical tune that sings at the center; Minneota, Minnesota, is the staff on which the tunes are written.” So begins the masterful title piece from Bill Holm’s first book of essays, *The Music of Failure*. This collection introduced to many the singular vision and voice of literary giant Bill Holm, a writer who had traveled well and widely but came back to his hometown of Minneota—the town of his immigrant Icelandic ancestors—as, in his words, “for all practical purposes a failure.”

What emerges from these pages, and from Holm’s cherished writings over the next two and a half decades, is anything but failure. From his ruminations on life in Minneota, family history, and the “horizontal grandeur” of the Midwestern prairie to a poetry-reading tour of Minnesota nursing homes and an account of a naked man eating lilacs out of his garden, *The Music of Failure* is a lyrical and surprising compilation that finds Holm mining the stories and places that captivated him and continue to enthrall his many readers.

This 25th anniversary edition includes poignant portraits of Holm and the history of *The Music of Failure* by Jim Heynen and David Pichaske, along with an essay Holm requested be added to this new edition, “Is Minnesota in America Yet?” With beautiful black-and-white photographs by Tom Guttormsson, *The Music of Failure* is Bill Holm at both his early and quintessential best, an inimitable and much-missed writer who illuminates our private and common lives through both our quiet victories and our sublime failures.

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