



OCCURRENCE

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Daníel Bjarnason, conductor

Pekka Kuusisto, violin

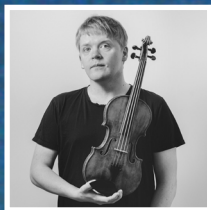
Mario Caroli, flute

ISO PROJECT VOL. 3

	Daniél Bjarnason	
1	Violin Concerto	[23:41]
	Cadenza composed & performed by Pekka Kuusisto, violin	
	Veronique Vaka	[11:36]
2	Lendh	
	Haukur Tómasson	[7:13]
3	In Seventh Heaven	
	Þuríður Jónsdóttir	[20:49]
4	Flutter	
	Mario Caroli, flute	
	Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson	[7:19]
5	Adagio	
	Total Time:	[70:42]

“This is the third and last album of the ISO project, dedicated to recording the music of Icelandic composers with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. It has been a remarkable collaboration and one I am thrilled to have been a part of. I want to thank the entire team at Sono Luminus for their wonderful wizardry. I also want to thank all my fellow composers for writing such beautiful music, and of course the orchestra and soloists for embracing this project with enthusiasm. I hope these recordings manage to find their way to many curious ears around the globe.”

Daniél Bjarnason,
Conductor



PEKKA KUUSISTO

Violin

Violinist, conductor and composer Pekka Kuusisto performs with orchestras around the world with programmes spanning a broad range of repertoire.

He is Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Artistic Partner of the Saint Paul and Mahler chamber orchestras. He has close relationships with San Francisco Symphony, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt and Milton Court at the Barbican.

An advocate of new music, Kuusisto's upcoming / recent premieres include concertos and chamber works by Bryce Dessner, Djuro Zivkovic, Enrico Chapela, Sauli Zinovjev, Calliope Tsoupaki, Philip Venables, Andrea Tarrodi, plus concertos written for him by Daniel Bjarnason, Anders Hillborg and Nico Muhly.

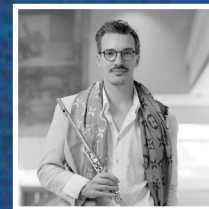
MARIO CAROLI

Flute

Born in Italy, Mario Caroli is one of the most successful solo flutists in today's international concert scene.

He studied with Annamaria Morini and Manuela Wiesler and won the coveted "Kranichsteiner Musikpreis" in Darmstadt at the age of 22.

Mario has performed in the most prestigious concert halls around the globe with prestigious orchestras and conductors. Many of today's biggest composers have written beautiful solo flute pieces and concertos for him. Mario, a polyglot and cosmopolitan artist, lives in Strasbourg, France, and he holds the flute chair at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, whose successful flute class is recognized worldwide.



Occurrence is the third, and at least for now the last, in a hugely illuminating series devoted to works by contemporary Icelandic composers, as performed by Iceland's 70-year-old national orchestra. Speaking for myself – and surely for many others, as well – the series has been a milestone project, one that any conscientious collector of symphonic music simply must have on the shelf. Across three CDs now, Sono Luminus has capitalized shrewdly on swelling global interest in the music of Daniel Bjarnason and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, using their works as a means by which to introduce seven more composers with original, substantial voices.

Three of the composers represented on *Occurrence* return from previous installments in the series. In addition to Bjarnason – who also has served as an insightful, sympathetic conductor throughout – we hear new works from Þuríður Jónsdóttir, whose *Flow and Fusion* opened the initial album, *Recurrence*, and from Haukur Tómasson, whose *Piano Concerto No. 2* was a highlight of the second release in the series, *Concurrence*.

These repeat engagements prove serendipitous, showing off fresh facets of these newly familiar creators. One, Bjarnason's own *Violin Concerto*, scarcely requires introduction, having proved its merits

and attractions already on concert platforms around the globe since its 2017 world premiere at the Hollywood Bowl. Pekka Kuusisto, the violinist for whom the piece was written, demonstrates his consummate skill as a virtuoso, a collaborator and – not least – a whistler, and the orchestral accompaniment, no surprise, is vivid and alert.

Where in *Flow and Fusion* Þuríður Jónsdóttir fashioned an electronic component derived from sounds produced by orchestral instruments, in *Flutter* she invites the outside world in. Commissioned to create a piece marking the centenary of Olivier Messiaen, who famously incorporated birdsong into his music through transcription, Jónsdóttir accompanies solo flute and orchestra with sampled grasshoppers and crickets—who prove charming accompanists.

A similar continuity of technique and spirit applies in Tómasson's *In Seventh Heaven*, which, like the previously heard piano concerto, eschews athletic display and histrionic gestures in favor of continuously shifting textures. The music, composed for the opening of Reykjavik's stunning Harpa Concert Hall, shimmers, glints, recedes, and jolts, transforming with the elemental unpredictability of light playing across Harpa's dramatic crystalline exterior.

Each of the two newcomers to the ISO Project heard on Occurrence, Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson and Veronique Vaka, reveals still further aspects of the ongoing story that is Icelandic music. Jóhannsson (1925–2005), a composer, pianist, conductor, and radio producer who completed his education at the Juilliard School, is viewed as Iceland’s first 12-tone composer, and among its electronic-music pioneers, as well. But in *Adagio*, composed in 1980 after a silence of nearly a decade, Jóhannsson abandoned his previous tools, embracing instead a melancholy lyricism all his own.

If Jóhannsson’s piece suggests that Icelandic music flourishes when a creator dispenses with imported techniques and idioms, Vaka’s *Lendh* offers proof that Iceland will gladly welcome a newcomer who arrives ready to embrace its spirit and custom. Vaka, a Canadian composer and cellist, completed her master’s degree in Reykjavik, and then settled in southern Iceland. She based *Lendh* on her impressions of Krýsuvík, a gorgeously rugged geothermal area 35 kilometers away from the capital.

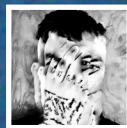
“I have analysed the geologic and geographic features of the area,” Vaka wrote in a program note that accompanied the work’s premiere in 2019, “and transformed the landscape as I perceive it into musical

notation.” If the question of whether a country can be heard in the sound of its music is one that has run throughout the three volumes of *The ISO Project*, the precipitous contours and roiling energy of *Lendh* provide a potent affirmation.

— Steve Smith

Steve Smith writes about music for The New Yorker, The New York Times, and his own Substack newsletter, Night After Night, spun off from his ASCAP Deems Taylor Award-winning blog of the same name.





“What an incredible journey. With this album we complete a vision that Daniel, the ISO and Sono Luminus have worked on together for the last 4 years. In my eyes this is simply one of the most important surveys of new music on the market currently.

All of the composers and artists who contributed have been simply incredible. This really is not an ending but rather a gateway to a next phase. Cheers to all involved. A magnificent achievement!”

Collin J. Rae,
Executive Producer





ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra gave its first concert in 1950 and has since expanded from a part-time ensemble of forty players to an internationally renowned orchestra of eighty-five full-time musicians.

As Iceland's national orchestra, resident at Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik and funded in large part by the Icelandic state and the city of Reykjavik, it gives around a hundred concerts each season, its repertoire ranging from classical masterworks to contemporary and film music. It has worked with such renowned musicians as Daniel Barenboim, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Jonas Kaufmann, Isabelle Faust, and Evelyn Glennie. Currently Conductor Laureate, Vladimir Ashkenazy has conducted the Orchestra regularly since the early 1970s. Among the orchestra's former Chief Conductors are Petri Sakari, Rumon Gamba, Ilan Volkov, and Yan Pascal Tortelier.

Osmo Vänskä is Honorary Conductor, having worked closely with the orchestra since his tenure as Chief Conductor in the 1990s, and the highly acclaimed Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir is Composer-in-Residence. The Finnish conductor Eva Ollikainen

assumed the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director in September 2020.

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra's wide-ranging international discography includes highly praised cycles of the symphonies of Sibelius and orchestral works by Jón Leifs. The first volume in the series devoted to orchestral works by Vincent d'Indy with Rumon Gamba was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2008. Its most recent release, of symphonies by Charles Gounod, was an Editor's Choice in Gramophone and CD of the week in The Sunday Times. The Iceland Symphony Orchestra has appeared widely throughout Europe, including performances at the BBC Proms and Wiener Musikverein, and in 2018 embarked on a highly successful three-week tour of Japan with Ashkenazy. It has also appeared twice in Carnegie Hall, New York. Writing in The New York Times, the critic Alex Ross described its performance under Osmo Vänskä as "sensational... one of the finest Sibelius performances I have encountered."

en.sinfonia.is

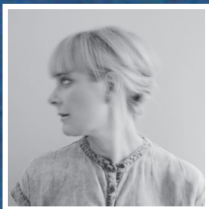
DANIEL BJARNASON

Composer, Conductor

Daniel Bjarnason is one of Iceland's foremost musical voices today. Principal Guest Conductor with Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He keeps busy conducting and composing schedules. His Violin Concerto, written for Pekka Kuusisto, has become one of his most popular works since its premiere in 2017 at the Hollywood Bowl. It has since been performed by Kuusisto with numerous renowned orchestras around the world and continues to be regularly scheduled in future seasons.

As a guest conductor, he has been invited by orchestras such as Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Toronto Symphony and Tokyo Symphony orchestras; and recent commissions include works for Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, The Holland Festival and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.
danielbjarnason.net





THURÍÐUR JÓNSDÓTTIR

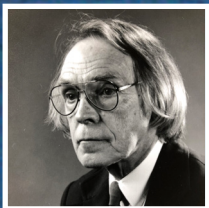
The works of composer and flutist Thuríður Jónsdóttir have been performed worldwide. Among them are pieces for solo instruments, ensembles and orchestra, some of them accompanied by electronic sounds or field recordings, some even with the participation of the audience, others with some theatrical

interaction. Mrs. Jonsdottir has collaborated with artists like Bjork, Saeunn Thorsteinsdottir and Mario Caroli and received commissions from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Icelandic Symphony, National radios of Iceland, France and Germany, among others. She was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Price in 2006, 2010 and 2012 and awarded a Civitella Ranieri Music Fellowship in 2016.

thuri.is

MAGNÚS BLÖNDAL JÓHANSSON

Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson (1925–2005) was among the first true modernists of Icelandic music. He began formal music studies at age eight; at 11 he became the youngest student ever admitted to the Reykjavík School of Music. His talent was matched by his ambition, and in

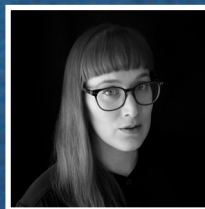


1946 he was admitted to the Juilliard School in New York, where he studied piano and composition for five years. It was at this time that Jóhannsson began experimenting with serial composition, including the Webern-inspired Four Abstractions (1950), the first Icelandic twelve-tone work.

By the 1970s, Jóhannsson's career was in decline. After the death of his wife, he fought a long and demeaning battle with alcoholism and composed nothing between 1972 and 1980. He returned with the stunningly simple Adagio for strings, celeste, and percussion in 1980.

- Árni Heimir Ingólfsson

VERONIQUE VAKA



Veronique Vaka, born in 1986, is an Icelandic-based Canadian composer. She took a step towards a more abstract approach to her music when she started her research: From Landscape to Music Notation. Her work intends to create a poetic context between what she sees, hears and feels in the unspoiled nature, and combine it into music. Her composition style can be described as organic, with an emphasis on small details such as rhythmic, textural, and timbral elements.

Veronique Vaka's works have been performed in Europe and North America and at festivals such as Dark Music Days and Sumartónleikar í Skálholti. Her orchestral work Lendh was nominated for The Icelandic Music Awards 2020 in the category 'Composition of the year and the Nordic Council Music Prize 2020.

veroniquevaka.com

HAUKUR TÓMASSON



Haukur Tómasson (Reykjavík, 1960) was awarded the 2004 Nordic Council Music Prize, the greatest honour awarded to a Nordic composer. This award, which Tómasson received for his chamber opera Guðrún's 4th Song, firmly established his stature as one of Scandinavia's most outstanding composers.

The music of Haukur Tómasson is vibrant and scintillating, characterized by intense rhythmic activity, bright, colorful timbres, and a keen ear for novel and effective instrumental combinations. Tómasson's music bustles with energy and is often quite complex, although the rapidly moving surface rhythm occasionally comes to a halt, giving way to slowly moving sonorities of imposing power and austere beauty. (Árni Heimir Ingólfsson)

haukurtomasson.com

Recorded in Pyramix with Merging Technologies Horus. Mastered with Merging Technologies Hapi. Recorded in DXD at 24 bit, 352.8kHz in Native 7.1.4



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ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OCCURRENCE

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