SONO LUMINUS

ATMOSPHERIQUES

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Daníel Bjarnason

Vol. I

Thorvaldsdottir | Mazzoli | Bjarnason | Sigfúsdóttir | Gísladóttir

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Anna Thorvaldsdottir
1 **CATAMORPHOSIS** [21:18]

Missy Mazzoli
2 **Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)** [09:12]

Daníel Bjarnason
3 **From Space I Saw Earth** [13:06]

María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir
4 **Clockworking for Orchestra** [09:03]

Bára Gísladóttir
5 **ÓS** [06:14]

Total Time: [58:57]

DANÍEL BJARNASON

Composer, Conductor

Daníel Bjarnason is a composer and conductor from Iceland. As Artist in Collaboration with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, he maintains a close relationship with the ensemble through commissioning, recordings, and performances. Bjarnason has conducted and composed for orchestras around the world, including the Los Angeles and Helsinki Philharmonics, Gothenburg, Toronto, Frankfurt Radio, Tokyo, Cincinnati, and London symphony orchestras. As well as collaborating with artists outside the classical field including Brian Eno, Ben Frost and Sigurrós, Daníel has worked with Martin Grubinger, Pekka Kuusisto and Víkingur Ólafsson who have all premiered concertos written for them by Daníel. Writing music for film also remains a constant part of his output.

harrisonparrott.com/artists/daniel-bjarnason

At the risk of getting doxxed by my musician colleagues, I'm going to divulge a dark truth about classical music: it's never as captivating or molecule-altering for anyone as it is for us on stage.

Which is why I often find classical records, especially those of the orchestral persuasion, so underwhelming. So not…immediate. *Which* is why I am approaching zealot status in my admiration for Sono Luminus and the way in which it submerges listeners within reach of the Atlantis that is the on-stage experience. *Which* is why, save for live performance, the often inimitable new-music originating in, or in proximity to, Iceland (homeland to an unreasonable percentage of the composers living rent-free in my headphones for more than a decade) has found its most ardent advocate and most clarion amplifier in Winchester, Virginia. Certainly its exceptional national orchestra has.

Despite a bewildering insistence by journalists to characterize music written by those with Icelandic surnames as a monolith, the entries on this tracklist are as singular as hand blown glass. The inclusion of American sonic clairvoyant Missy Mazzoli is a helpful geographic foil here, but there is one element fusing all of these inventions: Your person is about to feel minuscule or massive, by contrast to – or motivated by – these sounds.

Anna Thorvaldsdottir's music is often intimidatingly cyclopean, and *Catamorphosis* at times mimics the cosmic indifference of Lovecraft-ian deities, but it simultaneously introduces an iridescent hope I have not encountered before in her music. Mazzoli's *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* catapults us from one end of a pulsing solar system to the other while Daníel Bjarnason's *From Space I Saw Earth* improbably stretches perspective from earth to the moon and back, seeming somehow both terrestrial and paranormal within a single phrase. Maria Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir's *Clockworking for Orchestra* bridges a similar expanse, coexisting within the measurable realm of time-keeping…and the immeasurable realm of what occurs as the seconds tick by. Is Bára Gísladóttir's *ÓS* gasping in air, or desperately exhaling? Whatever your observation, and as with every waypoint on this illusory itinerary, the answer is likely: both.

– Doyle Armbrust

ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Since its inaugural concert in 1950, the **Iceland Symphony Orchestra** has expanded from a part-time ensemble of forty players to an internationally renowned orchestra of ninety full-time musicians. As Iceland's national orchestra, resident at Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavík, it gives around one hundred concerts each season, its repertoire ranging from traditional classical works 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, Evelyn Glennie, Barbara Hannigan, and Víkingur Ólafsson.

Coinciding with the Orchestra's 70th anniversary concert in 2020, Eva Ollikainen assumed the position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director. Vladimir Ashkenazy is Conductor Laureate and has conducted the Orchestra regularly since the early 1970s. Rumon Gamba was Chief Conductor and Music Director from 2002-2010, succeeded by Ilan Volkov and then, in 2016, by Yan Pascal Tortelier.

Osmo Vänskä, currently Honorary Conductor, has worked closely with the Orchestra since his tenure as Chief Conductor in the 1990s, and acclaimed Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir is Composer-in-Residence.

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra has appeared widely throughout Europe, performing at the BBC Proms in Royal Albert Hall, Usher Hall in Edinburgh, and Wiener Musikverein, among other venues. In 2018, under the baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy, the Orchestra took a highly successful three-week tour of Japan. It has also appeared twice in New York's Carnegie Hall.

The Iceland Symphony Orchestra records regularly for leading music labels and has received many international awards, as well as two Grammy nominations for Best Orchestral Performance.

ANNA THORVALDSDOTTIR

Anna Thorvaldsdottir's "seemingly boundless textural imagination" (*The New York Times*) and striking sound world has made her "one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary music" (*NPR*). Her "detailed and powerful" (*The Guardian*) music is composed as much by sounds and nuances as by harmonies and lyrical material. It is written as an ecosystem of sounds, where materials continuously grow in and out of each other. Anna's music is widely performed internationally and has been commissioned by many of the world's leading orchestras, ensembles, and arts organizations including the Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, BBC Proms, and Carnegie Hall. Her "confident and distinctive handling of the orchestra" (*Gramophone*) has garnered her awards from the New York Philharmonic, Lincoln Center, the Nordic Council, and the UK's Ivors Academy.

MISSY MAZZOLI

As an established composer on the contemporary music scene, Missy Mazzoli's talent draws audiences equally into concert halls, opera houses and rock clubs. Praised for her "apocalyptic imagination" (Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*), she inhabits an exquisite and mysterious sound-world that melds indie-rock sensibilities with formal training.

Chosen by Ricardo Muti as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony (2018-2021), Mazzoli was named "2022 Composer of the Year" by *Musical America*. Her music has been presented by festivals and organizations such as the Edinburgh International Festival, Adelaide Festival, BBC Proms, Los Angeles Opera and Scottish Opera. Among orchestras and ensembles that have championed her work are the Detroit Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia and the Kronos Quartet, as well as soloists including Emanuel Ax, Maya Beiser, and Jennifer Koh. Mazzoli has received considerable acclaim for her operatic compositions and she is also active as composer for TV and film. Her works have been recorded and released on several labels.

Herself an active pianist and keyboardist, Missy Mazzoli often performs with Victoire, a band she founded in 2008 dedicated to her own compositions. In the past decade they have played in venues all over the world including Carnegie Hall, the M.A.D.E. Festival in Sweden, the C3 Festival in Berlin and Millennium Park in Chicago. The recipient of numerous prestigious awards, grants and distinctions, Missy Mazzoli attended the Yale School of Music, the Royal Conservatory of the Hague and Boston University. Among her teachers and mentors are (in no particular order) David Lang, Louis Andriessen, Martin Bresnick, Aaron Jay Kernis, Martijn Padding, Richard Ayres, John Harbison, Charles Fussell, Martin Amlin, Marco Stroppa, Ladislav Kubik, Louis DeLise and Richard Cornell. She has been on faculty at the Mannes School of Music and New York University, and is currently a professor of composition at Bard College.

MARÍA HULD MARKAN SIGFÚSDÓTTIR

María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir (b. 1980) is a composer and a violinist. She graduated as a violinist from the Reykjavik College of Music in 2000 and with a Bachelor's degree in composition from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2007.

Maria is a member of the band amiina from 1999. amiina has released and recorded several albums and performed their music around the world as well as collaborated with various artists. With amiina, Maria was a touring member and collaborator of Sigur Rós from 2000-2008.

Maria has composed music for orchestras, various sized ensembles, choir, choreography, visual arts and films. Maria's compositions have been recorded and released internationally. *Clockworking, Sleeping Pendulum, Aequora, Spirals, Loom, Oceans and Kom vinur* all have been released on the US label Sono Luminus. Her compositions have been performed in Iceland, USA, Australia and Europe.

Her piece, *Loom*, was on the top 25 list of best classical music tracks of 2018 in The New York Times. The album *Concurrence*, which includes Maria's piece *Oceans*, performed by the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Daníel Bjarnason was on the top 25 list of best classical music albums of 2019 in The New York Times as well as nominated for the Grammy awards 2021 for best performance.

As well as composing her own music, Maria has recorded and collaborated with a range of artists and bands including Los Angeles Philharmonic, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Joan Jonas, Spiritualized, Nordic Affect, London Sinfonietta, Francesco Scavetta, Brice Dessner, Mike Ott, Yann Tiersen, Ragnar Kjartansson, Kjartan Sveinsson and Daniel Roberts.

BÁRA GÍSLADÓTTIR

Bára Gísladóttir is an Icelandic composer and double bassist based in Copenhagen. Her work is generally based on thoughts regarding the approach and concept of sound as a living being.

She studied composition in Reykjavík, Milan and Copenhagen. Her music has been performed by ensembles and orchestras such as Athelas Sinfonietta, Copenhagen Phil, The Danish National Symphony Orchestra, The Danish National Vocal Ensemble, Duo Harpverk, Elektra Ensemble, Elja Ensemble, Ensemble Adapter, Ensemble InterContemporain, Ensemble New Babylon, Ensemble recherche, Esbjerg Ensemble, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, loadbang, Marco Fusi, Mimitabu, NJYD, Nordic Affect, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Riot Ensemble, Siggi String Quartet, TAÏGA String Quartet, Solistenensemble Kaleidoskop, Staatstorchester Hannover and TAK Ensemble. Gísladóttir's pieces have been selected for festivals such as Dark Music Days, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, International Rostrum of Composers, KLANG Festival, Nordic Music Days, SPOR Festival, TRANSIT Festival, Ung Nordisk Musik, Warsaw Autumn and Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik. She has received the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation's Talent Awards, Gladsaxe Music Prize, Léonie Sonning Talent Prize and The Reykjavík Grapevine's Music Awards. She has been nominated for the Carl Prize, the Kraumur Music Awards, the Icelandic Music Awards and the Nordic Council Music Prize.

Gísladóttir has released several albums - most recently *SILVA* via Sono Luminus and ESP-disk. She is an active performer and regularly plays her own music, as a soloist or with her longtime collaborator Skúli Sverrisson. In addition to this, she is the double bassist of Elja Ensemble. Her works are published by Edition·S.

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legacyaudio.com

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Norðurljós Recital Hall, November 12, 2021
Daníel Bjarnason, *From Space I saw Earth*
Conductors: Daníel Bjarnason, Eva Ollikainen, Kornilios Michailidis
Concertmaster: Sigrún Eðvaldsdóttir
Crotales: Members of ISO Youth Orchestra, LHÍ, and The Bell choir of Reykjanesbær Music School
Eldborg Hall, May 9 – 12, 2022
Anna Thorvaldsdottir, *CATAMORPHOSIS*
Missy Mazzoli, *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*
María Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir, *Clockworking for Orchestra*
Bára Gísladóttir, *ÓS*
Conductor: Daníel Bjarnason
Concertmaster: Vera Panitch