

SYMMETRIA PARIO
CREATION

Pekka Kuusisto, violin

Joonas Ahonen, piano

Russell Ward, executive producer



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1	Clarice Assad	<i>SYMMETRIES</i>	11:24
2	Mehmet Sanlikol	<i>KÛN كن SEVEN SUFI VIGNETTES</i>	11:27
3	Yuko Mabuchi	<i>EVOLUTION OF THE ONE</i>	9:06
4	Ricky Kej	<i>ARAMBHAH</i>	6:34
5	Adam Knight Gilbert	<i>TRIPTYCH AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME</i>	7:40
6	Cecilia Damström	<i>CURA</i>	7:22
7	Harrison Birtwistle	<i>DOCKDOING BIRD</i>	3:43
8	Missy Mazzoli	<i>DISSOLVE, O MY HEART</i>	7:52
9	Hannah Kendall	<i>WERDON WERDON</i>	7:12

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producer's notes

Just as we pondered our origins 50 or 100,000 years ago, human beings continue to wonder and worry about our origins and the origin of what we think of as the universe. Within the next few years, the James Webb telescope may redefine or expand our theories all over again. Whether it is part of our survival instinct, or remains an entertaining puzzle for great minds, **we want to know**. We want to know how it all began, whether through a magnanimous creative act of divine power or by spontaneous eruption from a single point into an ever-expanding universe bursting outward at many times the speed of light.

Executive producer Russell Ward spearheaded this recording and generously underwrote Yarlung's six new commissions, performed and recorded so eloquently by **Pekka Kuusisto** on violin and **Joonas Ahonen** on piano. Russell is my friend and co-conspirator in all things quantum, and he asked me and our musicians and composers to explore various stories about the moment of creation through music. Russell hears music even in the computer generated blips and bleeps captured as digital data (and expressed with note values) from experiments in quantum physics such as conducted at CERN in Switzerland.¹

For this new chapter in our exploration, Russell and I reached out to two of the finest musicians in their fields, superstar Finnish violinist **Pekka Kuusisto** and firebrand contemporary virtuoso pianist **Joonas Ahonen** who often perform together in concert. Joonas is also Finnish, but lives in Vienna. We commissioned six composers to write works for Pekka and Joonas exploring wide-ranging ideas about the beginning of things.

¹ One of Russell's enduring questions remains whether music must be human in origin, or whether the sounds of nature, or these digital files simulating and expressing the earliest billionths of a second after the "Big Bang," are music too. Indeed they can be beautiful to the human ear. Russell is not alone of course. One need only to think of French composer Olivier Messiaen who said much the same thing about bird song. To hear more in this vein, please check out Yarlung's original *Symmetriä Pario* album from 2020. Or *Symmetriä Varjo*, which Russell is releasing separately.



photo l to r: Joonas Ahonen and Pekka Kuusisto

SYMMETRIES

Clarice Assad, whose stepmother Professor Angela Olinto teaches quantum physics at the University of Chicago, opens our album with ***Symmetries***. Clarice's work expresses her vision of the earliest fractions of moments after the Big Bang in six through-composed movements, *Spin, Inertia, Energy, Space, Time* and *Momentum*. As when listening to this music by all the great composers Pekka and Joonas recorded on this album, one does not need to know anything about science or even the inspiration behind these works to enjoy this music. Clarice's work proves this instantly upon hearing.²

KÛN

Next follows **KÛN کن** ***Seven Sufi Vignettes*** by **Mehmet Sanlikol**. Mehmet's piece takes inspiration from the mystical Islamic Sufi tradition describing the creation of the universe in seven days. Mehmet is a successful contemporary composer and jazz musician, but focuses his scholarship and research on Ottoman court music at the New England Conservatory. Mehmet was happy to imagine a number of great Sufi dervishes pondering our origins, offering us his musical take on specific passages in the Koran as well as on Sufi philosophy. Indeed it gives me great pleasure to pretend that a great Sufi mystic like Rumi speaks through Mehmet, sharing Rumi's joy and insight into recent developments in our ever-evolving understanding of physics and quantum theory. Mehmet's seven movements are *NUR* (Light), *KÛN* (Be), *EFLÂK* (Galaxies), *ANÂSIR* (Elements), *MEVÂLÎD* (Kingdoms), *ÎNSAN* (Man), and finally *HÛ* (He).

² Incidentally, Clarice was nominated for three GRAMMY® Awards this year, including one for Yarlung's *Confessions* with soprano Laura Strickling. Clarice is on a roll!



EVOLUTION OF THE ONE

Yuko Mabuchi's *Evolution of the One* began as an expression of a Yoruba creation myth from West Africa, but quickly grew to take inspiration from ancient and more recent Native American traditions as well. *Evolution* investigates six periods since emergence from the singularity beginning with the origin of stars and galaxies, followed by the accumulation of matter into the earth and oceans and dry land. Then life develops out of the oceans, and eventually comes the age of dinosaurs and finally the arrival of human beings. The last two sections focus on the emergence of human civilizations and finally the age of science, the Internet, and space travel. What a romp! Pekka and Joonas could not stop grinning while playing this work, especially during their improvisatory sections. Yarlung fans know Yuko well from her first two Yarlung albums *Yuko Mabuchi Trio* and *Yuko Mabuchi plays Miles Davis*.

ARAMBHAAH

Our friend **Ricky Kej** wrote *Arambhah* (or The Beginning) taking inspiration from Vedic creation stories from Ricky's native India that predate Hinduism as we know it today. I love Ricky's deceptively sweet theme and the arrangements, almost cinematic in color and scope, that develop from the kernel of his composition. One can envision Brahma and the egg-shaped universe and four Vedas emerging throughout Ricky's piece. The *Srimada Bhagavatam* describes the order of things, beginning with time itself, then matter, then sense-related powers (of which sound is the first), through the eventual emergence of human beings and demigods. Multiple GRAMMY-winning Ricky Kej also serves with UNESCO and as a United Nations ambassador for climate. Ricky thanks Manoj George, Lonnie Park and Don Hart for their additional arrangement input on the *Arambhah* score.



TRIPTYCH

Adam Knight Gilbert's *Triptych at the Beginning of Time* explores and pokes fun at Renaissance concepts of world order and musical order. Our opening movement titled "*Tigris in principio*" starts with a seemingly straightforward clock-like beat that conceals an untexted setting of William Blake's poem *The Tyger* which ends with "what immortal hand or eye/could frame thy fearful symmetry?" The piece soon devolves into a chaotic fugue for the middle section *Fuga inebriate in media tempore* before reassuring us with the tranquil and transcendent third movement: *Mi la choreas ad astra* as the universe takes the majestic shape we perceive today. Adam leaves us at the conclusion of this third section with celebratory tongue-in-cheek variations on the symmetrical *Folia* chord progression, a wild dance.

Triptych opens with the heartbeat of the early universe. To illustrate the subsequent decay into chaotic expansion, Gilbert writes us an inebriated fugue (the English translation of the movement is "Drunken Fugue at the Middle of Time") careening forward seemingly without order. Adam writes the third movement in two parts, the first pristine and hinting at a return to order, followed by the frolicking *Folia* reminding us we only think we know what we know. The English translation of this third movement would read "Mi La Dances to the Stars." "Mi" and "La" refer to the notes solfège ascribes to "Linda," my mother's name. She was a big fan of Adam's and she died of leukemia while Adam was writing this commission for us. My sweet mom would have loved *Triptych* as much as I do. Yarlung fans know Adam Gilbert from our two Ciaramella Ensemble recordings: *Music from the Court of Burgundy* and *Ciaramella Dances*, as well as *Woods and Brooks*, the opening track on Jung-A Lee's Yarlung debut *A Private Organ Recital in Walt Disney Concert Hall*.



CURA

Pekka premiered **Cecilia Damström's *Cura*** on July 9th with pianist Tiina Karakorpi three weeks before our recording sessions. Damström wrote it in 2020 for the covid-delayed wedding of Leena and Antti Ihmuotila. Cecilia knew Pekka wanted to record this work with us and gave us this additional gift. *Cura* reflects loss and misery during Covid, almost as a memorial, while taking heart in the coming joy and healing nature of the new relationship it was written to celebrate. This reminds me of one of the most famous “wedding gifts” ever written, Jacopo Peri's *Euridice*, which premiered at the Pitti Palace in Florence for the wedding of King Henry IV of France and Maria de Medici in October of 1600. Both *Cura* and *Euridice* grapple with enormous loss and the eventual triumph of music and transformed love.

DOCKOOING BIRD

Joonas performs **Harrison Birtwistle's haunting *Dockooing Bird*** for solo piano on track 7. This is Birtwistle's earliest surviving composition, published in 2000 but written five decades earlier when the composer was about 15 years old. The first time I heard this work, Thomas Adès played *Dockooing Bird* as an encore at a concert he conducted with Pekka as violin soloist in Walt Disney Concert Hall. I asked Pekka about it afterward and Pekka said “Let's record it with Joonas in August!”



DISSOLVE, O MY HEART

Jenny Koh premiered solo violin work ***Dissolve, O My Heart*** by **Missy Mazzoli** at the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Green Umbrella series on May 24th, 2011. I remember the premiere. Mazzoli named the work after Bach's aria *Zerfließe, mein Herz* from Bach's *Johannes-Passion* oratorio. Pekka told Missy we were recording together at Segerstrom Center and Missy enthusiastically supported including this piece. She wrote the work in three sections, the first and third for muted strings. *Dissolve* opens with the evocative chord that opens Bach's Partita in D Minor.

WEROON WEROON

We end our album with Yarlung's first commission from **Hannah Kendall**. Ms. Kendall graciously wrote ***Weroon Weroon*** (My God My God) in honor of Pekka Kuusisto for this recording. The title comes from Martin Carter's poem written in 1954. Since finishing *Weroon Weroon*, in late 2021, its musical ideas have inspired more of Hannah's compositions. We look forward to this evolution in coming years. Hannah wrote *Weroon Weroon* for cuffed violin; the score indicates detailed instructions for preparing the instrument with three aluminum dreadlock cuffs. Hannah offers the following text from *Psalms* 8: 3-4 to introduce the work:

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place...

Thank you Hannah, Yuko, Clarice, Missy, Cecilia, Adam, Harrison, Mehmet and Ricky for your creations that indeed do justice to the origin of the universe itself. Thank you Joonas and Pekka for realizing this music so magnificently.

Russell Ward contributed these thoughts, relating this music to elementary physics: “All music fans know that the performance of a piece of music will vary from one performance to the next. Nevertheless, within an acceptable degree of difference, a piece of music is invariant in time: setting aside interpretive differences for a moment, the music sounds the same regardless of when it is played. This models conservation of energy, in which the total amount of energy contained in a system is unchanged with time. Within an acceptable degree of difference, a piece of music sounds the same regardless of where it is played. This models conservation of momentum, which is a characteristic of spatial translations. If the performance sounds the same regardless of how it - or the listener - is oriented (tilted or rotated) in space, this models conservation of angular momentum, which quantifies spin. Such invariances are called symmetries. These principles are expressed in this quote from astroparticle physicist Dr. Angela Olinto, whose stepdaughter Clarice Assad composed our opening six-fold piece of music for Joonas and Pekka. Professor Olinto’s words underlie the theme for our album, which musically explores the creation and evolution of the universe:”

Nature expresses itself through a balance of order and chaos. Symmetries are the clearest signs that Nature has an underlying order. Symmetries in Nature generate conservation laws. In time, symmetries give us the powerful conservation of energy, which is constantly being transformed, but never vanishes. Motion through space is a constant transformation of inertia, momentum, and spin. These six pieces honor Nature and its mysteries, its language, its dance and enchantment.³

³ [Astroparticle Physics Professor Angela Olinto, Dean, Physical Sciences Division, University of Chicago](#)



Shortly after Russell and I dreamed up this project to celebrate the origin of things with violin and piano, I called two friends to ask advice about a violinist and pianist who might really enjoy these commissions and Yarlung's approach to recording. First I called Chad Smith, who runs the Los Angeles Philharmonic. I explained the concept and talked about some of the composers we had in mind. Chad's first recommendation was that we reach out to Pekka Kuusisto, whose extreme talent, ebullient sense of humor and status as one of the world's most important contemporary violinists suggested he might be the right person. Chad knows that our label records complete takes in multiple formats, so he had to recommend someone with the ability to play musically (yet accurately) for complete movements. And someone who would not be unduly nervous about the results. I spoke with J Schlichting the next day. J and his wife Helen have not only commissioned almost 200 new pieces of music in recent years, but J serves on Yarlung's board of directors and he generously advises us on new music as well. J's first recommendation was that we reach out to Pekka Kuusisto as well, but warned that his schedule was so tight it might be impossible. He knew Pekka was the superstar we were looking for and suspected his good nature would get a kick out of the Yarlung recording process.

Happily, Pekka said yes during our first phone call. He suggested we reach out to Joonas Ahonen, Pekka's friend and frequent concert collaborator, the technically virtuosic pianist living in Vienna. Pekka prized Joonas' innate musicality and wanted his extraordinary keyboard skills to ensure we could create the entire album without edits. Joonas accepted with enthusiasm during our first conversation and he and Pekka were indeed the perfect choices. I could not be happier with the results in this recording, or with the fun we had making this album together. Russell joined Arian and me in Samueli Theater, including the lengthy microphone and hall setup. Russell didn't miss a take.



Contemporary music fans will know Joonas Ahonen through his many recordings on the wonderful BIS and Ondine labels, or have heard his many live piano concerto performances with orchestras around the world, but he also specializes in Romantic and Classical repertoire. Joonas records Beethoven and Mendelssohn on fortepiano. Joonas and I share a love of New Mexico too; Joonas teaches regularly in Santa Fe in the summer. On our recording, Joonas plays New York Steinway 549654, kindly given to Segerstrom Center by my friend and Yarlung patron Michelle Rohe, and tuned for us by Kathy Smith and her wonderful team. For more information about Mr. Ahonen, please visit joonasahonen.com

photo: Julia Wesely



Pekka Kuusisto performs not only as a violin soloist with the major orchestras on the planet, but he also conducts regularly, and like Joonas, has released superb recordings with Ondine and BIS, but also recently Pentatone, for which he recorded *First Light* as violinist soloist and director of Nico Muhly's superb *Shrink* alongside works by Phillip Glass. *First Light* is Pekka's inaugural release as artistic director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. I am fortunate to own many of Pekka's earlier recordings, including his performance of Bach's violin concertos which he performs with his brother Jaakko Kuusisto (also on Ondine). Pekka performs regularly with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra and Helsinki Philharmonic, where he is Principal Guest Conductor, as well as Mahler Chamber Orchestra and many elite ensembles around the world. Pekka plays the 1709 "Scotta" Stradivarius, generously loaned by a patron through Tarisio. Pekka used Westminster, Larsen and Dominant Pro strings for our recording. For more information about Mr. Kuusisto, please visit harrisonparrott.com/artists/pekka-kuusisto

Fellow recording engineer and equipment designer **Arian Jansen** and I used SonoruS Holographic Imaging technology in the analog domain to refine the stereo image, Yarlung's SonoruS ATR12 to record analog tape, the Merging Technologies HAPI to record 256fs DSD in stereo and surround sound and the SonoruS ADC to record PCM. We used our friend **Ted Ancona**'s AKG C24 microphone previously owned by Frank Sinatra, and vacuum tube microphone amplification by Yarlung executive producer and designer **Elliot Midwood**. Our hearty thanks to executive producer **Russell Ward** for underwriting this album and our six remarkable commissions.

—Bob Attiyeh, producer





Our cover includes the November 16, 2022 James Webb telescope Near-Infrared Camera image of the birth of star L1527. We nickname the shape on "Hourglass Nebula," the matter from which feeds the forming star. This is 460 light years from earth in the constellation Taurus.

On our album tray, Joonas emerges from the "Pillars of Creation" star factory, part of the "Eagle Nebula," captured by NASA's James Webb Near- and Mid-Infrared Cameras in the constellation Serpens and released November 30th, 2022. This nebula sits approximately 6,500 light years from Earth.

Space images courtesy of NASA

Russell Ward executive producer

Recording: Bob Attiyeh and Arian Jansen

Mastering: Steve Hoffman, Arian Jansen and Bob Attiyeh

DSD Mastering: Tom Caulfield

Microphone Preamplification: Elliot Midwood

AKG C24 microphone: Ancona Audio

Steinway Technician: Kathy Smith

Cooper Bates Photography

Graphic Layout: MikeDesign



SYMMETRIA PARIO
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Pekka Kuusisto, violin

Joonas Ahonen, piano

Russell Ward, executive producer



Breaking the Sound Barrier

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