Daníel Bjarnason

Conductor/Composer

Daníel Bjarnason is one of Iceland’s foremost musical voices today, increasingly in demand as conductor, composer and programmer. He is Principal Guest Conductor with Iceland Symphony Orchestra, an appointment that follows a tenure as Artist in Residence. He keeps a busy composing schedule alongside his conducting commitments, with many of his works being taken up beyond their premieres and regularly programmed around the world.

As guest conductor he debuts this season with Norrlandsoperan orchestra in Umeå, Sweden, and has previously appeared in Europe with Göteborgs Symfoniker, Gävle Symfoniorkester, Aalborg Symfoniorkester and Turun Filharmoninen Orkesteri, while in North America he has conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony orchestras, and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra in Japan.

This season his new Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra, dedicated to Martin Grubinger, debuts with Gothenburg Symphony led by Santtu-Mattias Rouvali. The soloist will also perform the work with Dresdner Philharmonie in concerts in Dresden and Munich. A new short piece will also debut with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, which has previously commissioned other works from him.

Bjarnason maintains a close connection with Los Angeles Philharmonic, which commissioned him to write a work for Gustavo Dudamel, Zubin Mehta and Esa-Pekka Salonen to perform together at its Centennial Birthday Celebration Concert and Gala in 2019, titled *From Space I Saw Earth*. The Orchestra is also part of an upcoming song cycle commission by the Crash Ensemble, together with Musiekgebouw Frits Phillips Eindhoven – where Bjarnason has been Composer in Residence since 2016, and which already requested him to write a new concerto for piano and orchestra for a coming season.

In 2017 the Los Angeles Philharmonic premiered Bjarnason’s Violin Concerto at the Hollywood Bowl, in a co-commission with Iceland Symphony for Pekka Kuusisto, while he co-curated the orchestra’s Reykjavík Festival, an eclectic and multi-disciplinary 17-day event, in which he featured as conductor and composer.

Violin Concerto became a success with audiences and orchestras and remains very popular. Kuusisto has performed it with Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony and Finnish Radio Symphony orchestras. This season he plays it with Gothenburg Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony and National Arts Center orchestras, MDR Sinfonieorchester and NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester. Bjarnason will conduct the recording of the work with Kuusisto, as part of the final instalment of a three-album recording project with Iceland Symphony for Sono Luminus focussing on Icelandic music and composers.

Since its premiere in 2017, his first opera, *Brothers*, for the Danish National Opera and directed by Kasper Holten, based on the Susanne Bier film of the same name, was also revived in Reykjavík by The Icelandic Opera in 2018, and opened Budapest’s 2019 Armel Opera Festival.

Bjarnason conducted the world premiere of Jóhann Jóhannsson’s *Last and First Men*, a multimedia work narrated by Tilda Swinton, at the 2017 Manchester International Festival with BBC Philharmonic, and subsequently at the Barbican with the London Symphony Orchestra the following year.

A recipient of numerous accolades, in 2018 he was awarded the Optimism prize by the President of Iceland, won the 8th Harpa Nordic Film Composers Award for the feature film *Under the Tree*, and was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize. He also won Composer of the Year, Best Composer/Best Composition and Best Performer at the Icelandic Music Awards in recent years.

Bjarnason studied piano, composition and conducting in Reykjavík and pursued further studies in orchestral conducting at Hochschule für Musik Freiburg. He released several albums for the label Bedroom Community

Daníel Bjarnason is published by Peters Edition.

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