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 Artist in Collaboration with Iceland Symphony Orchestra, an appointment that follows his tenures as Principal Guest Conductor and Artist in Residence.

As guest conductor, highlights over 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons include debuts with

Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonisches Orchester Freiburg and Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra alongside his regular presence in Reykjavik with Iceland Symphony Orchestra throughout the season.

Keeping a busy composing schedule alongside his conducting commitments, many of his works are taken up beyond their premieres and regularly programmed around the world. This season sees performances of his Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra, *‘Inferno’* written for Martin Grubinger, with Orchestre de Paris and Elim Chan at Philharmonie de Paris. Additionally, Gothenburg Symphony will premiere Bjarnason’s new work for orchestra, *A Fragile Hope*. Co-commissioners Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra perform the US premiere and Iceland Symphony Orchestra perform the European premiere of ‘*I Want to Be Alive – Trilogy for Orchestra’ First Part: Echo/ Narcissus*. The Trilogy was premiered in 2022/23 with co-commissioners Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Gustavo Gimeno. In 2021/22, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, *FEAST*, written for Víkingur Ólafsson, performed at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles by Ólafsson and Esa-Pekka Salonen

He has previously conducted Gothenburg Symphony, Gävle Symfoniorkester, Aalborg Symfoniorkester and Turun Filharmoninen Orkesteri in Europe, while in North America he has appeared with Los Angeles Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony orchestras, and in Japan with Tokyo Symphony Orchestra.

Bjarnason maintains a close connection with Los Angeles Philharmonic, having written *From Space I Saw Earth* for Gustavo Dudamel, Zubin Mehta and Esa-Pekka Salonen to conduct together at its Centennial Birthday Celebration Concert and Gala in 2019. In 2017 they 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 ‘Scordatura’, 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, National Arts Center orchestras, Swedish Radio and Finnish Radio symphony orchestras, Göteborgs Symfoniker, MDR Sinfonieorchester and NDR Elbphilharmonie. Bjarnason conducts 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.

In 2023, Bjarnason was named Guest Artist in Residence at Copenhagen Opera Festival, where a co-production of his first opera, *Brothers*, by Den Islandske Opera, Malmö Opera and Copenhagen Opera Festival was performed. Since its premiere in 2017, the opera 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. Bjarnason has continued to collaborate with Jóhannsson, conducting Iceland Symphony Orchestra on Jóhannsson’s latest Deutsche Grammophon album release.

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.