

NAXOS

NEW NORDIC **POCKET CONCERTOS**

Gerstrøm · Järventausta · Kolstad
Rasmussen · Ruders · Tarrodi · Vaka



Niklas Walentin
Danish Chamber Players

NEW NORDIC POCKET CONCERTOS

SWEDEN

Andrea Tarrodi (b. 1981)
The Four Seasons (2022)

- ❶ I. Autumn
- ❷ II. Winter
- ❸ III. Spring
- ❹ IV. Summer

GREENLAND

Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm (b. 1977)
❺ Broken Inua (2022)

NORWAY

Aksel Kolstad (b. 1981)
❻ Apollo – The Ukrainian Violin Concerto (2022) **12:47**

DENMARK

Poul Ruders (b. 1949)
Pocket Concerto (2021) **7:12**

- ❿ I. Romanza 2:16
- Ⓜ II. Passione 2:10
- Ⓨ III. Aria 2:46

ICELAND

Veronique Vaka (b. 1986)
Ⓧ Erda
Concerto for two violins and ensemble (2024) **12:01**

FAROE ISLANDS

Sunleif Rasmussen (b. 1961)
Rósan í Vetrarljósi /
Die Rose im Winterlicht (2024) **15:17**

- Ⓛ I. Ein rósa á køldum vetri / Ein Ros im kalten Winter 3:16
- Ⓜ II. Tann rósan spretti fram / Und hat ein Blümlein bracht 7:35
- Ⓨ III. Ein ljósglæma á myrkum vetri /
Ein heller Schein im dunklen Winter 4:26

FINLAND

Joel Järventausta (b. 1995)
Songs, Games & Dances (2024) **18:50**

- Ⓛ Movement I. A slow chorale that soon morphs
into a disorientated dance 2:24
- Ⓜ Movement II. An interrupted, anxious violin
melody finds peace in a little lullaby 2:53
- Ⓨ Movement III. A quiet, silvery song.
Perhaps an echo of a beautiful bird 2:40
- Ⓛ Movement IV. A dreamy memory of a
mid-20th-century love-song 2:12
- Ⓜ Movement V. A yearning violin melody
grows increasingly agitated, accompanied
by static ensemble music 4:07
- Ⓨ Movement VI. A fiery cadenza sets the tone
for the coda, a rhythmic and slightly obsessive,
yet playful dance 4:34

New Nordic Pocket Concertos

Gerstrøm • Järventausta • Kolstad • Rasmussen • Ruders • Tarrodi • Vaka

Pocket-sized Violin Concertos

Recorded on this album is brand new music created especially for me and the Danish Chamber Players. Seven renowned composers from seven Nordic countries reinterpret the Romantic violin concerto into a condensed chamber music format.

Veronique Vaka from Iceland, Sunleif Rasmussen from the Faroe Islands, Andrea Tarrodi from Sweden, Aksel Kolstad from Norway, Arnannguaq Gerstrøm from Greenland, Joel Järventausta from Finland and Poul Ruders from Denmark have worked with this new miniature concerto format in very different ways, expanding the framework of what chamber music and the violin concerto combined can be.

The internationally renowned Danish composer Poul Ruders initially came up with the name 'pocket concerto' when dedicating his concerto to me. The Covid-19 pandemic led the Danish Chamber Players and I on to this new, intimate concerto form that explores how the violin concerto, traditionally played by a large symphony orchestra, could be interpreted anew as a genre based on the many limitations and restrictions the pandemic brought along. Therefore, many of the works were commissioned and premiered in close collaboration between myself and the Danish Chamber Players, recorded here for the first time.

These are short concertos that have proven to be a success when performed live. Several of the concertos have nature themes: Vaka's work is about glaciers, Gerstrøm's is about creaking ice, and Tarrodi's is a new Nordic interpretation of the four seasons. In some pieces, local folk music of the individual country can be heard in the tonal language and the soundscape of the instruments. The concertos have very different structures: Ruder's and Rasmussen's are in three movements; Kolstad's, Vaka's and Gerstrøm's are written as long one-movement pieces; Tarrodi's is in four parts, one for each season; and Järventausta's are six short, reflective movements.

Each work is recorded in a circle, which is intended to give the listener a cinematic feeling like entering a Nordic landscape of sounds.

Niklas Walentin

Andrea Tarrodi



Photo: Louisa Sundell

Andrea Tarrodi (b. 1981) is a Swedish composer based in Stockholm. She studied composition at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Conservatorio di Musica di Perugia, Italy, the College of Music in Piteå, Sweden, and completed her master's degree in composition at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm in 2009. Her works have been performed at several venues both in Sweden and abroad, among them the Royal Albert Hall at the BBC Proms in London in 2017, 2020 and 2023, the Philharmonie in Berlin, the Musikverein in Vienna and the Barbican Centre in London. In 2018 Tarrodi's CD *String Quartets* performed by the Dahlkvist Quartet was awarded with a Swedish Grammy for best classical album of the year. In 2010 her piece *Zephyros* for orchestra received First Prize in the Uppsala Composition Competition, which led to several performances of the piece by different orchestras around the world. During 2011–13 Tarrodi was Sveriges Radio P2's Composer in Residence, and in 2012 she was appointed Composer of the Spring Season in the Berwald Concert Hall. In the same year Tarrodi received the Swedish Music Publisher's Association Classical Music Award of the Year – Chamber Music for her piece *Empíreo* for strings, harp and percussion. During 2013–14 Tarrodi was the Västerås Sinfonietta's Composer in Residence. In 2015 she received the Carin Malmlöf-Forsling Award.

Andrea Tarrodi on *The Four Seasons*

The piece was inspired by Sweden's four seasons and starts with *Autumn* where I used deep and melancholic chords and melodies. Then comes *Winter*, where I imagined snow, at first snowflakes slowly falling that gradually develop into a snowstorm. The third part *Spring* was inspired by the ice melting, water streams and birds singing. The fourth and last part is *Summer* where everything is in bloom.

Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm



Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm (b. 1977) is a Greenlandic composer, conductor and flautist whose musical universe emerges from a fusion of classical tradition, Nordic roots and Greenlandic heritage rooted in Inuit culture. She draws inspiration from Arctic nature and from mythological storytelling, and she consciously incorporates the Greenlandic language – both directly and indirectly – as a sonic and meaning-shaping dimension in her works. Gerstrøm is deeply engaged in human relations and the complex dynamics that arise within societies and cultures in transition. This is occasionally reflected in her music. She is fascinated by constant movement and new approaches, while at the same time valuing immersion into detail. Born and raised in Greenland, her musical journey has taken her through studies in Denmark, Sweden and England, where she earned a Master of Fine Arts from the Academy of Music in 2004. After several years as a flautist and conductor, she began composing in 2009. Since then, her works have been premiered both locally and internationally by renowned soloists, ensembles and orchestras. Gerstrøm has received several awards and grants, including from the Danish Arts Foundation, the Nordic Culture Fund and the Government of Greenland's Cultural Fund. In 2025 she was awarded the Pelle Prize at Klang Festival – an honorary award presented to composers who create significant artistic imprints.

Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm on *Broken Inua*

In Inuit mythology lies the concept of *inua* – the soul and spirit that lives within all things on earth; in human beings, animals, plants, icebergs, mountains, lakes, the sun and the moon. Yet the soul can fracture. It can split like ice under pressure, torn apart by forces greater than ourselves – in both humankind and in nature.

Broken Inua is a musical echo of this fragility. Its soundscape moves through Arctic landscapes where icebergs calve with thundering force and melt into almost inaudible drops. The deep song of whales emerges through the resonance of the instruments, while the harp's mysterious overtones weave glimpses of vulnerability – fragments that break, yet also seek to be made whole again.

A persistent rhythmic pattern draws its inspiration from the *qilaat* – the Greenlandic drum that the angakkoq (the shaman) still uses to enter trance and open doors to the spiritual world. Here, rhythm becomes a pulse that holds the listener in a constant shift between unrest and silence, between collapse and renewal.

Broken Inua is a journey into both the fractures and the healing of the human soul and of nature. A sonic portrayal of the Arctic as living and fragile – where the fragments of the soul continue to vibrate in the sea, in the ice, in the wind, and within ourselves.

Aksel Kolstad



Norwegian pianist and composer, Aksel Kolstad (b. 1981), made his debut at Carnegie Hall in 2010 performing classical music and his own virtuoso compositions for solo piano. Kolstad studied composition with Wolfgang Plagge in Oslo, and since the age of 17 has performed his own virtuoso works for solo piano in many countries all over the world. Aksel Kolstad completed his bachelor piano degree under Professor Sigurd Slåttembrekk at The Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo in 2006. He completed his master degree at the same academy and also with Professor Slåttembrekk, performing all of George Gershwin's music for piano soloist and orchestra. Kolstad has composed music for all kinds of solo instruments, ensembles and orchestras, including several piano and violin concertos, and large-scale orchestral works, and has conducted many of his own orchestral works. He is also renowned for his virtuoso variations on classical music with an ability to improvise live in concert in various classical styles at the highest level – this makes him one of very few remaining so-called performing composers, representing an almost long-lost tradition where classical pianists perform their own music, especially their own piano concertos. Kolstad's music is published by Musikk-Husets Forlag.

Photo: Kilian Munch

Aksel Kolstad on *Apollo – The Ukrainian Violin Concerto*

Apollo was composed between 1 February and 10 March 2022. Prior to that I was well aware Russia was about to invade Ukraine. I had performed in Ukraine just before the war started and left in January. The concerto is dedicated to my dear friend the violinist Niklas Walentin. It is inspired by the Ukrainian violinist and soldier Moisei Bondarenko, and is also a homage to all Ukrainians, and the fearless violinist Moisei Bondarenko, who fights for Ukraine in addition to performing on his violin on the battlefields for his fellow soldiers as well as for audiences around the country. The concerto displays musical scenes from the war. You can hear missiles, fighting, alarms, sirens, terror and suffering, but also hope, peace, strength and the fearless Ukrainians winning on the battlefield. The clarinet also has a solo part in this pocket concerto which represents 'the free Ukrainian' where I pictured a Ukrainian soldier finding himself – though only for just for a few seconds – surrounded by the wonderful Ukrainian nature in all its colours, strong and bright, unaffected by the war, with birds singing, the sun shining on his face and body, and with peace and tranquillity embracing his soul. He is happy, alive and free. My very close friend the Ukrainian war journalist Ivan Lubysh-Kirdey (who is also a well-known Ukrainian hero) put Bondarenko in touch with me shortly after the concerto was written.

Poul Ruders



Photo: Lars Skaaning

Poul Ruders (b. 1949) is one of today's most highly regarded composers for the opera stage and the symphonic concert hall. His operas have been staged in Copenhagen, New York City, London, Toronto and Munich, and his orchestral music has been commissioned by orchestras including the Berliner Philharmoniker, New York Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Ruders lives a spartan life in the countryside of Denmark. The isolation has afforded him the opportunity to produce a deep and highly varied catalogue, which includes five operas, 45 symphonic works and concertos, and dozens of solo and chamber pieces. In July 2019, Poul Ruders celebrated his 70th birthday with the world premiere of his newest opera, *The Thirteenth Child*, staged by the Santa Fe Opera. From 2019 to 2021, performances of *The Handmaid's Tale*, inspired by the dystopian novel by Margaret Atwood, were conducted by The Boston Lyric Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen. It quickly became one of Ruders's best-known operas. The music of Poul Ruders has been well-documented by the record labels Dacapo (Denmark) and Bridge (USA) and is published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen.

Poul Ruders on *Pocket Concerto*

As suggested by the title, it doesn't take the translator of the Rosetta Stone to figure out that it's a short, very short piece of music, a 'portable' composition, figuratively speaking. I happened upon the idea for a title (so I guess I'm to blame for it all...) back in 2021, when I decided to transcribe the piano part of an older work, *3 Tiny Pieces for Great Friends*, for 7 instruments. The solo part remains unchanged. The original, so to speak, was written for violinist Rebecca Hirsch and pianist Rolf Hind, who premiered this little work in 1999 at a 50th birthday concert for me in Oxford, England. The work, now in a new guise, is dedicated to Niklas Walentin and the Danish Chamber Players.

As to the Nordic angle, well, Denmark is not *really* a Nordic country, except for its linguistic roots, and behind my cool Nordic looks beats a warm-blooded southern heart...

Veronique Vaka



Photo: Silvia Gentili

Veronique Vaka (b. 1986) is a composer based in Iceland. She studied classical cello performance at the Vincent d'Indy School of Music in Montreal, electroacoustic composition at the University of Montreal and completed a master's degree in music composition from the Iceland University of the Arts. Vaka's works are rooted in the geology and topography of Iceland. From the inner core of the Earth to its outer shapes, she explores the narrative of landscapes. Her orchestral piece *Lendh*, re-imagining the geothermal region of Krýsuvík, was internationally praised by critics and was nominated for the Icelandic Music Awards and the Nordic Council Music Prize. In 2020, she began a Glacier Series – a compilation of works with the transformation of glacial landscapes as its groundwork, to create awareness of climate change. Among these works is the cello concerto *Gemæltan* written for the renowned soloist Sæunn Þorsteinsdóttir, expressing the melting of the Síðujökull Glacier. *Gemæltan* received a nomination for the Icelandic Music Awards, Composition of the Year. Veronique Vaka has written symphonic works, concertos, and a variety of music for small and large ensembles. Her music has been performed by celebrated soloists and ensembles across continents. Since 2021 her works have been published by Universal Edition.

Veronique Vaka on *Erda*

Erda is the geological narrative of the events leading up to the 1996 eruption of Vatnajökull and its impact on the glacier above. The programme note is written by author, researcher and advocate Stephen Lezak, who works at the intersection of climate policy and environmental justice:

'Glaciers, more than any other form of existence, bridge the turbulent human world with the unfathomable realm of the eternal. They achieve this by being both timeless and ephemeral—they bear witness to prehistoric times, but threaten to disappear as our planet changes more rapidly with each passing year. And through their double life, they offer a unique wisdom: an invitation to connect the "deep time" of geology with the daily, fleeting time of humanity.'

– Stephen Lezak (2024)

Sunleif Rasmussen



Sunleif Rasmussen (b. 1961) has, more than anyone, put the Faroe Islands on the musical map of the world. In 2002 he was the first Faroese ever to win the Nordic Council's Music Prize for his first symphony *Oceanic Days* (1995). In many ways Rasmussen's aesthetic approach gives meaning to the concept of Nordic music. He was born on Sandoy ('Sand Island'), and the Faroese landscape and culture both play an important role in his music – not in the sense that the music paints the fury of the elements, the omnipresent Atlantic Ocean, or audibly draws on Faroese folk music and mythology – the references and associations are far more subtle. The national melodic material is split up into its smallest fragments and most of all has the function of musical building blocks. Nature is an important framework of understanding and thinking for the music and aesthetics. Sunleif Rasmussen was Composer in Residence for the South Jutland Symphony Orchestra during 2008–09 and for Ars Nova Copenhagen during 2009–10. A long succession of prominent orchestras and ensembles have performed works by Sunleif Rasmussen, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Lapland Chamber Orchestra, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Theatre of Voices and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, along with conductors and soloists including John Storgårds, Paul Hillier, Michala Petri and Bo Skovhus, among others.

Photo: Lars Skaaning

Sunleif Rasmussen on *Die Rose im Winterlicht*

While I was writing this piece and tried to construct the musical material, I found out that the musical material fitted in with the poem *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*. The creator of the melody is unknown, but it was harmonised by the German composer Michael Praetorius in 1609. The material also fitted with the natural harmonics of the violin. Especially the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th. These ideas are the musical material used in the concerto.

While I was working on the first movement, my good friend, the painter, composer and choir conductor Frits Johannesen passed away, and therefore I have dedicated this piece to his memory.

Joel Järventausta



Photo: Maarit Kytöharju

Spending his childhood in Luxembourg and Germany, Finnish composer Joel Järventausta (b. 1995) completed his studies in the United Kingdom, and was awarded a PhD in Composition from King's College London, where he studied with Sir George Benjamin and Professor Silvina Milstein, supported by the Arts & Humanities Scholarship. His work has been commissioned and performed by orchestras and ensembles such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Jyväskylä Sinfonia, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Danish Chamber Players, Helsinki Chamber Choir and Uusinta Ensemble. The 2025/26 season saw the world premiere of his *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* with soloist Joonas Ahonen and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ilan Volkov; three performances of the chamber opera *Ihminen parhaan kykynsä mukaan* at the Finnish National Opera, and the Dutch premiere of *Bacchanale* by the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Eva Ollikainen at the Concertgebouw. In addition, the London Symphony Orchestra released *Suns extinguished* on its *Panufnik Legacies IV* album and Jyväskylä Sinfonia released *Ripped Tapestry* and *Naava* on Alba Records.

Joel Järventausta on *Songs, Games & Dances*

In this concertino, *Songs, Games & Dances*, written for violinist Niklas Walentin, I explore different moods ranging from serious, melancholic and anxious, to more euphoric and playful ones. All six movements are relatively short, each with very different characters and musical ideas, hopefully resulting in a colourful listening journey through various sound worlds.

Movement I. A slow chorale that soon morphs into a disorientated dance

Movement II. An interrupted, anxious violin melody finds peace in a little lullaby

Movement III. A quiet, silvery song. Perhaps an echo of a beautiful bird

Movement IV. A dreamy memory of a mid-20th-century love-song

Movement V. A yearning violin melody grows increasingly agitated, accompanied by static ensemble music

Movement VI. A fiery cadenza sets the tone for the coda, a rhythmic and slightly obsessive, yet playful dance

It was a great pleasure to be invited to write a 'pocket concerto' for Niklas Walentin and the Danish Chamber Players. Performing without a conductor, the music gains a certain intimacy and intensity: the players need utmost aural concentration and musical collaboration, while remaining free and soloistic. And that is exactly what I found Niklas Walentin and the Danish Chamber Players offered, when working with them. It was also wonderful to form new connections to Denmark, and to be a small part of this cross-country Nordic project.

Niklas Walentin

Niklas Walentin has received more than 25 international music awards, released 11 albums and managed a row of festivals in Europe as an artistic director. Sought-after for his performances as a soloist and chamber musician, Walentin is especially acclaimed for performing works from the virtuosic and salon genres. Recently, he has made his debut with jazz, performing his own virtuosic arrangements for solo violin and jazz trio. He performs in prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall in New York, The Phillips Collection in Washington, Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg and Wigmore Hall in London, with celebrated conductors and musicians such as Mario Venzago, Marc Soustrot, Henrik Schäfer, Nabil Shehata, Hartmut Rohde and Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, among others. As a triple prize-winner of the 9th Carl Nielsen International Violin Competition, working with Carl Nielsen's music is a major part of Walentin's artistic identity. His award-winning album, *Carl Nielsen 4 Grand Works for Violin*, was released at Carnegie Hall, and he has been awarded the Carl Nielsen and Annemarie Brodersen Award, as well as The Carl Nielsen Society's Award of Honour for his work with Nielsen's music. Niklas Walentin plays a J.F. Pressenda violin, bought and loaned especially to him by The Augustinus Foundation. Strings are by Jargar Strings. www.niklaswalentin-official.com

Danish Chamber Players (Ensemble Storstrøm)

The Danish Chamber Players, based at the modern Art and Music House KUMUS at Fuglsang, is one of five national ensembles that provide music experiences of the highest quality in its contributing municipalities and in the rest of the country. The ensemble was founded in 1991 and consists of eight high-profile chamber musicians with a unique instrumentation: three strings, three winds, piano and harp. Each year the Danish Chamber Players perform around 100 concerts and events, and host two annual festivals. More than 120 new works have been commissioned by the ensemble from prominent composers of our time, with a special focus on Danish music. With over 30 CD recordings, numerous radio broadcasts on DR P2 and continuous digital visibility the Danish Chamber Players are a significant cultural institution in the Danish music scene, with an emphasis on international collaboration. They are supported by the Danish Arts Foundation, the Cultural Region of Storstroem and its four municipalities, Næstved, Faxe, Lolland and Guldborgsund. www.ensemblet.dk/en

Anne Marie Granau

The 2014 recipient of the Grethe Kolbe Mindelegat, Anne Marie Granau is establishing a solid reputation as a Danish-born conductor of considerable versatility in a wide range of repertoire. Dedicated to symphonic, operatic and contemporary repertoire, Granau has worked with some of the best ensembles and orchestras in Denmark, including the Aarhus and Aalborg Symphony Orchestras, South Denmark Philharmonic, The Royal Danish Opera Orchestra, Danish Chamber Orchestra, Athelas Sinfonietta, Den Jyske Opera and Ensemble Storstrøm. Granau has conducted the British Youth Opera, the St Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, and recently made her house debut at Malmö Opera in Sweden. In August 2023 she conducted Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the Copenhagen Opera Festival, and earlier that year she conducted two recordings issued on the Naxos and Dacapo Records labels with the Danish Chamber Players (Ensemble Storstrøm). In April 2024 Granau made her debut with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra as well as the Copenhagen Phil. www.annemariegranau.dk



Niklas Walentin

Photo: Tom Mckenzie



Danish Chamber Players

Photo: Jesper Van



Anne Marie Granau

Photo: Jeanette Philipsen

These seven new Nordic violin concertos were all composed for soloist Niklas Walentin and the Danish Chamber Players. Though compact in length, they range widely in expressive power. Some have nature themes – the sonic portrayal of the Arctic, the fragility of glaciers. One is a homage to Ukraine, another is a Swedish *Four Seasons*, while others embrace folkloric elements. Each concerto is to be performed in a circle, intended to give an immersive cinematic feel, enveloping the listener in a landscape of sounds.

NEW NORDIC POCKET CONCERTOS

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|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1–4 | Andrea Tarrodi (b. 1981): The Four Seasons (2022) | 12:07 |
| 5 | Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm (b. 1977): Broken Inua (2022) | 14:22 |
| 6 | Aksel Kolstad (b. 1981):
Apollo – The Ukrainian Violin Concerto (2022) | 12:47 |
| 7–9 | Poul Ruders (b. 1949): Pocket Concerto (2021) | 7:12 |
| 10 | Veronique Vaka (b. 1986): Erda
Concerto for two violins and ensemble (2024) | 12:01 |
| 11–13 | Sunleif Rasmussen (b. 1961):
Rósan í Vetrarljósi / Die Rose im Winterlicht (2024) | 15:17 |
| 14–19 | Joel Järventausta (b. 1995): Songs, Games & Dances (2024) | 18:50 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Niklas Walentin, Violin

Stéphane Tran Ngoc, Violin ¹⁰

Danish Chamber Players

Anne Marie Granau, Conductor ⁵ ^{7–9}

Recorded: 21–22 February 2023 ⁵ ^{7–9}, 23–24 February ^{1–4} ⁶, 8 October ^{14–19}, 9–11 October ^{10–13} 2024
at Concerthall in KUMUS at Fuglsang, Toreby, Denmark • Producer and mastering: Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir

Booklet notes: Andrea Tarrodi, Arnannnguaq Gerstrøm, Aksel Kolstad, Poul Ruders,

Veronique Vaka, Sunleif Rasmussen, Joel Järventausta, Niklas Walentin

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Edition Wilhelm Hansen ^{7–9} ^{11–19}, Universal Edition ¹⁰

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