

IN THE LIGHT OF AIR

ICE

PERFORMS

ANNA

THORVALDSDOTTIR

In the Light of Air is a tetralogy of works that together form a unified structure, written for viola, cello, harp, piano, percussion & electronics. The four main movements are titled *Luminance*, *Serenity*, *Existence* and *Remembrance*, and are connected by *Transitions* to form a seamless flow throughout the work. The work also has a *Prologue* and an *Epilogue*.

The work streams from one movement to the next through a flowing texture of sound materials and harmonies. The music material is constructed with a focus on subtle nuances and poetic textures that form lyrical gestures throughout the work. Melodies are generated just as much by sounds, gestures and nuances as by pitched lyrical material.

For the work I designed an installation of metallic ornaments that are used in a solo in the percussion part in *Remembrance*. The ornaments, called *Klakabönd* in Icelandic (which translates as “a bind of ice”), are created by Svana Jósepsdóttir.

Parts of *Remembrance* insisted on echoing the melody of a song that my husband – Hrafn – wrote and dedicated to me in 2000. I am deeply thankful for this presence in the work.

“In the Light of Air” was written for the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) in 2013/2014 as part of their ICElab. Live performances of the work include a light constellation that was designed in collaboration with ICE. The work was premiered by ICE at the Reykjavik Arts Festival on May 25th 2014, followed by performances at various venues, such as at the Park Avenue Armory in NYC in August 2014, as part of Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in April 2015.

Transitions was written for Michael Nicolas in 2014. The theme of the work is ‘man & machine’, as commissioned by Michael, and is represented in that the cellist becomes both in the piece – man & machine. *Man* indicates expression and emotion, and *machine* indicates maximal technical accuracy, a somewhat stricter approach to the music. These two approaches transition from one to another throughout the work.

—Anna Thorvaldsdottir

annathorvalds.com



Kyle Armbrust, viola

Michael Nicolas, violoncello

Nuiko Wadden, harp

Cory Smythe, piano

Nathan Davis, percussion

Hailed by critics from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, “brilliantly assured” cellist **Michael Nicolas** is one of the rising stars of his generation and a dynamic performer on the classical and contemporary music scene, in demand as a soloist, chamber musician, recording artist, teacher, and music writer. He captivates audiences across North America, Europe, and Asia with his ravishing tone, refined musicality, and probing interpretations of a wide variety of repertoire. After graduating from the Juilliard School, Michael was appointed Associate Principal Cellist of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, with which he played over the course of four seasons, but made the uncommon decision to trade a stable, tenured job for a more flexible and multifaceted career path, and also to dedicate more time and energy to a particular passion of his: the music of the present. Michael is currently a member of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and has worked with many distinguished composers – Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, Mario Davidovsky, Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho, Charles Wuorinen, John Zorn – as well as countless others of his own generation. His many festival appearances around the world include the Bridgehampton, Chamber Music Northwest, Huddersfield Contemporary Music, Iceland Airwaves, Lincoln Center White Light, Marlboro Music, Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, and Wien Modern festivals. Michael is also a member of Ensemble Ditto, a chamber music group based in South Korea that has garnered extraordinary success in reaching new and more diverse classical music audiences. They have achieved a massive fan following, selling out concert halls all over Korea and Japan, and have released albums through the Universal Korea label. Of mixed French Canadian and Taiwanese heritage, Michael was born in Winnipeg, Canada, and currently resides in New York City.

Nuiko Wadden is the principal harpist of Pittsburgh Opera and Ballet Orchestras as well as the Des Moines Metro Opera and the Cabrillo Festival. She is also a member of janus, a trio based out of Brooklyn, and the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). Ms. Wadden has been a prizewinner in numerous competitions, recognized by the Minnesota Orchestra

(WAMSO), Ann Adams, ASTA, and American Harp Society. As a soloist she has appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Skokie Valley Symphony, the Chicago Metropolitan Symphony, and the Northwest Symphony. She serves as a substitute harpist for the Minnesota, Houston, Milwaukee and Baltimore Symphonies. To date, Ms. Wadden has appeared on the New Amsterdam, Cedille, Bridge, New Focus, and North/South recording labels.

Pianist **Cory Smythe** engages a broad repertoire of new, classical, and improvised music. He has performed widely, making appearances as a soloist, as a member of the International Contemporary Ensemble, and in recital with violinist Hilary Hahn, with whom he recorded the 2015 GRAMMY®-winning album, *In 27 Pieces: The Hilary Hahn Encores*. The *Washington Post* recently praised Smythe for “...the ferocity and finesse of his technique.” His debut album of original and improvised material, *Pluripotent*, is available for free download at: corysmythe.bandcamp.com.

Kyle Armbrust started playing the viola at age three. Since giving his New York solo debut with Kurt Masur and the Juilliard Orchestra in Avery Fisher Hall, he has created a multidimensional career performing and recording a wide range of music. Kyle is a founding member of the Knights Chamber Orchestra and principal violist of the Westchester Philharmonic. He performs regularly with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and Philadelphia Orchestra, and has worked with Claudio Abbado, Elliott Carter, Herbie Hancock, Itzhak Perlman, and John Zorn. Kyle has performed as soloist with The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields in Switzerland, and spent five summers at the Marlboro Music Festival. He has recorded for the Ancalagon, Cedille, Interscope, Naxos, Ondine, and Sony labels, and is featured on Vijay Iyer’s latest release, *Mutations*, on ECM. Kyle has three degrees from the Juilliard School. He plays a Carlo Antonio Testore viola made in Milan in 1752.

Percussionist and composer **Nathan Davis** “writes music that deals deftly and poetically with timbre and sonority” (*NY Times*). Lincoln Center inaugurated the Tully Scope Festival with the premiere of Nathan’s landmark work *Bells* and presented other premieres at the Mostly Mozart Festival. Commissioned by the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), American Opera Projects, Calder Quartet, Yarn/Wire, La Jolla Symphony Chorus, Steven Schick, Donaueschinger Musiktage, and the Ojai Festival (with sound sculptor Trimpin), Nathan’s music has been performed at NYC’s Carnegie Hall, Park Avenue Armory, Miller Theatre, LPR, Roulette, in a portrait concert at Spoleto USA, and internationally at Darmstadt, Helsinki Musica Nova, Aspekte Salzburg, and Acht Brücken Köln. He has received awards from Meet The Composer, Fromm Foundation, Copland Fund, Jerome Foundation, American Music Center, and MATA. With Phyllis Chen he scored Sylvia Milo’s acclaimed monodrama *The Other Mozart*. Other CDs of his music include *The Bright and Hollow Sky*, one of *TimeOut NY*’s top 5 classical albums of 2011. As a percussionist, Nathan is a member of ICE and has appeared as a concerto soloist with the Seattle Symphony, Tokyo Symphony, and Nagoya Symphony. nathandavis.com



International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)

“the new gold standard for new music” — The New Yorker

“bracing, illuminating, reassuring” — Financial Times

“extraordinary” — New York Times

The International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), described by the *New York Times* as “one of the most accomplished and adventurous groups in new music,” is dedicated to reshaping the way music is created and experienced. With a modular makeup of 35 leading instrumentalists, performing in forces ranging from solos to large ensembles, ICE functions as performer, presenter, and educator, advancing the music of our time by developing innovative new works and new strategies for audience engagement. ICE redefines concert music as it brings together new work and new listeners in the 21st century.

Since its founding in 2001, ICE has premiered over 500 compositions — the majority of these new works by emerging composers — in venues spanning from alternative spaces to concert halls around the world. The ensemble has received the American Music Center’s Trailblazer Award for its contributions to the field, the ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming, and was most recently named Musical America Worldwide’s Ensemble of the Year in 2013. From 2008 to 2013 ICE was Ensemble-in-Residence at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. ICE musicians serve as Artists-in-Residence at the Mostly Mozart Festival of Lincoln Center, curating and performing chamber music programs that juxtapose new and old music. In 2014 ICE began a partnership with the Illinois Humanities Council, the Hideout in Chicago, and the Abrons Art Center in New York to support the OpenICE initiative.

ICE has released acclaimed albums on the Nonesuch, Kairos, Bridge, Naxos, Tzadik, New Focus, New Amsterdam and Mode labels. Recent and upcoming highlights include headline performances at the Lincoln Center Festival (New York), Aspekte (Austria), Acht Brücken Music for Cologne (Germany), Festival de Música de Morelia (Mexico), Teatro Amazonas (Brazil), and performances with the Nagoya Philharmonic and Seattle Symphony. ICE has worked closely with conductors Ludovic Morlot, Matthias Pintscher, John Adams and Susanna Mälkki. Since 2012, conductor and percussion soloist Steven Schick has served as ICE’s Artist-in-Residence.

In 2011, with lead support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ICE created the ICElab program to place teams of ICE musicians in close collaboration with emerging composers to develop works that push the boundaries of musical exploration. ICElab projects have been featured in more than one hundred performances from 2011 to 2014, and are documented online through ICE's blog, and DigitICE, its online library of performance videos. In 2014, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation renewed its leadership support to launch the OpenICE initiative, which brings the full scope of ICE's programming and educational activities for free to broader audiences around the world.

ICE's commitment to build a diverse, engaged audience for the music of our time inspired *The Listening Room*, an educational initiative for public schools without in-house arts curricula. Using team-based composition and graphic notation, ICE musicians lead students in the creation of new musical works, nurturing collaborative creative skills and building an appreciation for musical experimentation.

Read more at iceorg.org.

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* denotes ICE Artist Partner



Composer **Anna Thorvaldsdottir** frequently works with large sonic structures that tend to reveal the presence of a vast variety of sustained sound materials, reflecting her sense of imaginative listening to landscapes and nature. Her music tends to portray a flowing world of sounds with an enigmatic lyrical atmosphere.

Anna's music is frequently performed internationally and has been featured at several major venues and music festivals, including portrait concerts at Lincoln Center's esteemed Mostly Mozart Festival in NYC with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) and at the prestigious Composer Portraits Series at NYC's Miller Theatre with Either/Or Ensemble. Other orchestras and ensembles that Anna has worked with include the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, BIT20, Musiques Nouvelles, Yarn/Wire, and CAPUT Ensemble.

Anna's works have been nominated and awarded on many occasions - most notably, she is the recipient of the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize 2012 for her work "Dreaming," and The New York Philharmonic's Kravis Emerging Composer Award. Anna holds a PhD from the University of California, San Diego.

International Contemporary Ensemble
In the Light of Air: ICE Performs Anna Thorvaldsdottir
DSL-92192

Recorded at Sono Luminus Studios, Boyce, Virginia — April, 6-9, 2015
sonoluminusstudios.com

Producer: Dan Merceruio
Recording, Mixing & Mastering Engineer: Daniel Shores
Assistant Engineer: David Angell
Editing Engineer: Dan Merceruio
Piano Technician: John Veitch
Piano: Steinway Model D #590904 (New York)
Photography: Hrafn Ásgeirsson (cover, p. 10), Strider
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Recorded in DXD at 24bit, 352.8kHz in 9.1 Surround Sound



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