

National Anthems Online

REPUBLIC OF ICELAND: Lofsöngur (*Song of Praise*)

The Icelandic national anthem was originally a hymn, written for part of the ceremonies celebrating the first thousand years of Iceland's history. It was first performed during the commemoration services at Reykjavík Cathedral in 1874.

The words were written during the winter of 1873-74 by Matthías Jochumsson, considered one of the most important Icelandic poets. The melody was written by Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson: the son of one of the highest officials in the country. The composer spent the greater part of his life abroad. His music education began in Copenhagen, later in Edinburgh and then in Leipzig. He returned to Edinburgh to make a living as a music teacher and pianist. In 1873, Jochumsson showed Sveinbjörnsson the opening verse of the poem, who eventually set the words to music, evidently with difficulty and considerable delay. The choral arrangement arrived just in time for the national celebrations.

It probably never occurred to the poet and the composer (who were old school-friends) that the song might eventually become the national anthem of their country. Sveinbjörnsson made many musical settings of Icelandic poems but became better-known as a composer in Britain than in his home country. He lived in Edinburgh for much of his life, but the last eight years were spent in Winnipeg, Reykjavík and Copenhagen.

In 1918, Iceland became a sovereign state in union with Denmark and finally became an independent republic in 1944. When sovereignty was proclaimed, the song was played as the national anthem at the ceremony, and has remained so ever since. During 1948-49, the Icelandic Government acquired the copyright of the melody, which had previously been held by a Danish publisher. When performed by a choir it is often taken at a much slower pace than indicated here. Although the original poem had three verses, only the first is normally sung. The translation of the title is often given as "Our Country's God", taken from the first line of the text.

♩ = 72

Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson (1847-1926)

Arranged by Colin Kirkpatrick

The musical score is arranged for a six-part choir and a percussion ensemble. The choir parts are labeled Part 1 through Part 6. Part 1 is in the treble clef, while Parts 2 through 6 are in the bass clef. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The score begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and later changes to *mf* (mezzo-forte). The percussion parts include Timpani, Cymbals, Snare drum, and Bass Drum. The Timpani part has a note indicating it is to be played in Eb, Bb, and G. The drum parts are marked with a common time signature and a note value of 'e' (half note).

You may download the score and the instrumental parts free of charge, making as many copies as you need. However, these may not be subsequently sold. Feedback from users is always welcomed. If you would like to report any mistakes in the music, make comments or suggestions (in English) please contact Colin Kirkpatrick at doctorcolin@cslxinfo.com.

If you perform, record or broadcast this arrangement, please notify the Performing Rights Society (in the UK) or the equivalent performance rights organisation in your own country (e.g. [ASCAP](#) in the USA; [SOCAN](#) in Canada), listing the name of the anthem and the arranger.

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1
2
3
4
5
6
Timp.
Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

Musical score for measures 6-10. The score includes six string staves (1-6) and four percussion staves (Timp., Cym., S.D., B.D.). The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The dynamic markings are *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The percussion parts are mostly silent, with some activity in the Timp. part at the end of the section.

1
2
3
4
5
6
Timp.
Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

Musical score for measures 11-15. The score includes six string staves (1-6) and four percussion staves (Timp., Cym., S.D., B.D.). The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The dynamic markings are *mf* (mezzo-forte), *f* (forte), and *p* (piano). The percussion parts are more active, with a crescendo in the Timp. part and some activity in the S.D. and B.D. parts.

1 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

2 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

3 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

4 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

5 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

6 *mf* *cresc.* *rit.* *ff* *f*

Timp. *mf* *rit. e cresc.* *ff*

Cym. *ff*

S.D. *mf* *rit. e cresc.* *ff*

B.D. *ff*

1 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

2 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

3 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

4 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

5 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

6 *a tempo* *p* *molto rit.*

Timp. *p* *molto rit.*

Cym. *f* *a tempo*

S.D. *f* *a tempo*

B.D. *f* *a tempo*