

The International Guttormur J. Guttormsson Lecture Series
Nov. 21, 2024, 15:00 – 17:00
Veröld – House of Vigdís, Auðarsalur

Ambassador Jenny Hill,
Descendents of Guttormur J. Guttormsson
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the University of Iceland, it is a great honor to welcome you all to the annual Guttormur J. Guttormsson Lecture.

The International Guttormur J. Guttormsson Lecture Series is held in memory of the poet, avant-garde playwright, musician and farmer Guttormur J. Guttormsson, who during his lifetime was referred to as the Poet of New Iceland.

Heather Alda Ireland, daughter of Bergljót Guttormsson Sigurdson, Guttormur's 3rd daughter, and former Honorary Consul General of Iceland for British Columbia and Yukon, is the benefactor of the Lecture Series. She has been a most valued collaborator, also during the University of Iceland's fundraising campaign for The Stephan G. Stephansson Endowment Fund. In 2016, together with her late husband, William Ireland, Heather Alda was instrumental in assisting us during the application process that secured the University of Iceland a registered donee status in Canada.

We are immensely grateful for all of this, including the fact that today, we are in the company of more than one descendant of Guttormur. The following individuals crossed the Atlantic with Heather Alda: Dr. Ronald Clarke, (son of Hulda Guttormsson Clarke, Guttormur's 4th daughter); Caleb Gardner, (grandson of Ron Clarke and recent graduate of the University of Victoria), and Jordan Kristine Sayer, (granddaughter of Heather Alda Ireland and graduate of the University of British Columbia).

The Lecture Series is held in collaboration with the Vigdís International Centre of Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, which operates under the auspices of UNESCO. As was the case with other major authors of Icelandic Canadian literature, Guttormur J. Guttormsson only wrote in Icelandic. However, different from authors like Stephen G. Stephansson, Undína, and Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason, who all arrived in North America during the exodus from Europe in the 19th century, Guttormur, the son of Icelandic immigrants, was born in Canada and lived there all his life. Hence, the far-reaching intercultural enterprise one encounters in his work.

The International Guttormur J. Guttormsson Lecture Series was inaugurated in 2023 by the Canadian poet, classicist, translator and essayist Anne Carson, the 2023 laureate of the International Vigdís Prize. This year, the lecture is given by Dr. Magnús Þór Þorbergsson, a scholar of theatre and currently a dramaturg at the Reykjavík City

Theatre. No stranger to the transatlantic legacy of Guttormur's unique plays, Magnús Þór conducted his post-doctoral research into the history of theatre among Icelandic settlers of North America, and the excitement for this lecture has been mounting on both Canada's west coast and in Reykjavík.

This would also be the moment to thank Andrew McGillivray, Associate Professor at the University of Winnipeg, the University of Iceland's professor Ármann Jakobsson, and the University of Iceland's Research Specialist and former Chair of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba, Birna Bjarnadóttir, members of the Lecture Series' Board.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ambassador Jenny Hill, another most valuable collaborator in the University of Iceland's transatlantic cultural enterprise.