



SILVESTROV

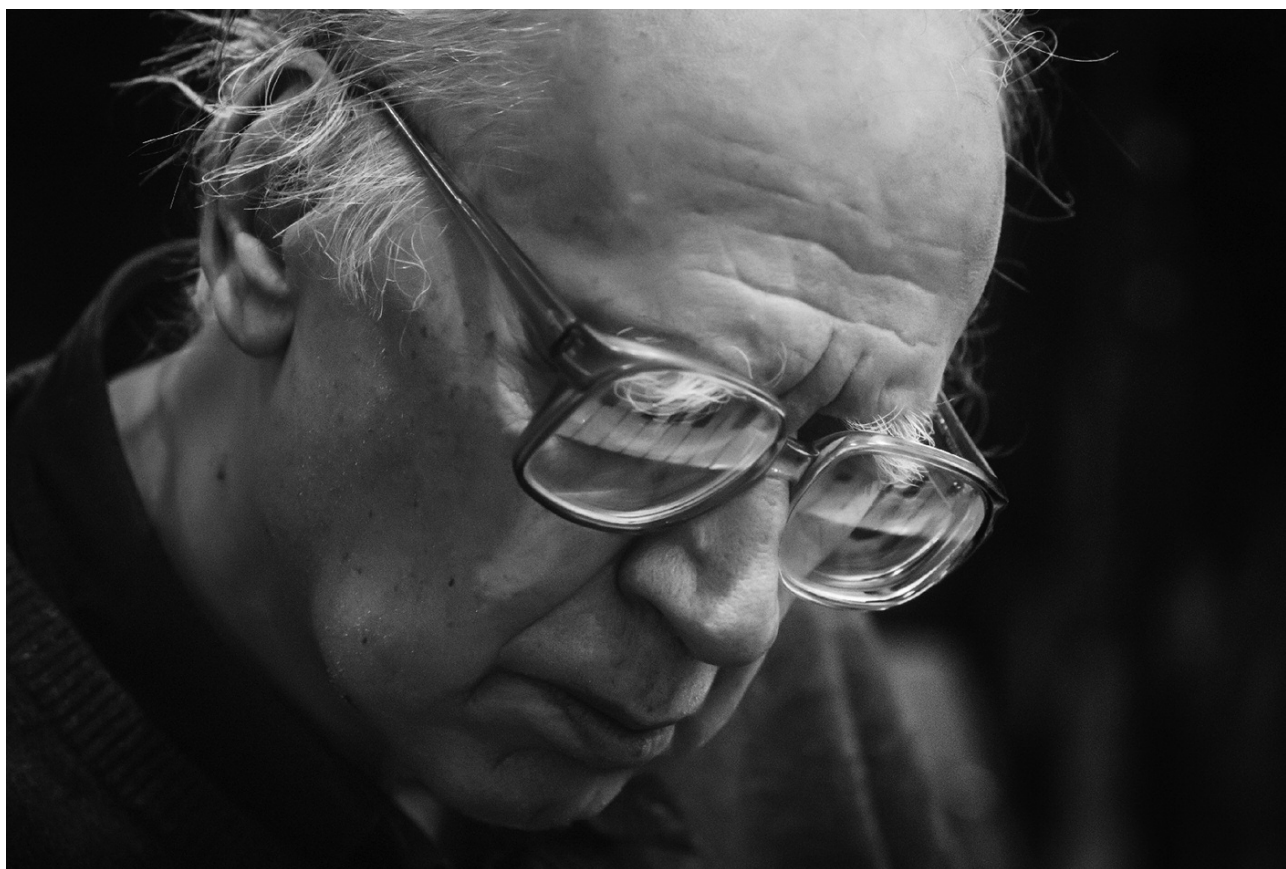
Symphony No. 7

Ode to a Nightingale • Piano Concertino

Inna Galatenko, Soprano • Oleg Bezborodko, Piano

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra

Christopher Lyndon-Gee



Valentin Vassil'yevich
SILVESTROV
(b. 1937)

1	Ode to a Nightingale (1983) (Text: John Keats, 1795–1821; Russian translation: Yevgenij Vitkovskij, 1949–2020)	19:06
	Cantata No. 4 (2014) (Text: Simeon Ivanovich Antonov, 1866–1938 2 ; Taras Shevchenko, 1814–1861 4 ; Pavlo Tychyna, 1891–1967 5)	11:30
2	I. Диптих – 1 (Diptych – 1): Песня Силуана (Pesnia Siluana) ('Silouan's Song')	2:18
3	II. Диптих – 2 (Diptych – 2): Пастораль (Pastorale)	2:08
4	III. Дві Пісні – 1 (Two Songs – 1): Вечір (Vechir) ('Evening')	3:56
5	IV. Дві Пісні – 2 (Two Songs – 2): Блакить мою душу обвіяла (Blakyt' moyu dushu obviyala) ('My Soul Swathed in Celestial Azure')	2:55
	Concertino for Piano and Small Orchestra (2015)	19:11
6	I. Prelidium	4:05
7	II. Pastorale	6:46
8	III. Serenade	3:30
9	IV. Postliudium	4:41
	Moments of Poetry and Music (2003) (Text: Paul Celan, 1920–1970; Russian translation: Mark Byeloruset, b. 1943 10)	5:39
10	I. Стихотворение Пауля Целана (Stikhotvorenije Paulya Tselana) ('A Poem of Paul Celan')	1:58
11	II. Мелодия (Melodiya) ('Melody') – 'post scriptum'	3:41
12	Symphony No. 7 (2003)	17:16

Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937): **Ode to a Nightingale** • **Cantata No. 4**
Concertino for Piano and Small Orchestra • **Moments of Poetry and Music** • **Symphony No. 7**

Of Valentin Silvestrov, Paul Griffiths has written,

'Time in Valentin Silvestrov's music is a black lake. The water barely moves; the past refuses to slide away; and the slow, irregular stirrings of an oar remain in place. Nothing is lost here. A melody which will rarely extend through more than five or six notes, will have each of those notes sounding on, sustained by other voices or instruments, creating a lasting aura. Elements of style, hovering free of their original contexts, can reappear, from Webern, from Bruckner, from Mozart, from folksong. But yet everything is lost. Every melody, in immediately becoming an echo, sounds like the reverberation of something that is already gone. Every feature of style speaks of things long over. Silvestrov's creative destiny for many years has been the postlude ...'¹

This tentative definition of that elusive style development that has come to be known as postmodernism has rarely been better expressed.

Postmodern is the melancholia of realising that our era and our culture are passing. Postmodern is the nostalgia for sounds half-heard, barely remembered from a past full of beauty and spiritual aspiration. Postmodern is recall through a veil or a fog of uncertainty, of that which in the past meant everything to us, but is now disappearing under the onslaughts of a more brutish culture.

When Silvestrov seems to allow a quotation from Mozart, or Chopin, or Webern, or Mahler to invade his hesitant musical textures, these are in fact not citations but allusions; the composer putting on the clothes, for an instant or a truncated phrase, of one of these illustrious predecessors – never an actual quotation, but a shadow presence of pastiche, a half-remembered nostalgic wish, inevitably altered by all that has come since. For in Silvestrov, everything is a postlude to that which is

slipping, inevitably and unceasingly from between our fingers.

John Keats's great poem, *Ode to a Nightingale* – his longest, yet penned in a single day – was written merely two years before the poet's death at the age of 25, in 1821, when he already knew himself to be sorely ill with the tuberculosis that would kill him. The poem springs from hearing the nightingale who sang upon Hampstead Hill, probably in the garden of Spaniard's Inn, close to Keats's home at Wentworth Place; leading to a reflection upon human mortality, the brevity of our existence, whose song sputters and fades; the ever-constant spectre of death; the poet buried beneath a sod of earth, while the nightingale (representing the whole of the natural world) sings on.

Darkling I listen, and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death ...
... Now more than ever seems it rich to die, ...
... Still would'st thou sing, and I have ears in vain –
To thy high requiem become a sod.

John Keats, 1795–1821 (sixth stanza)

Silvestrov's *Ode to a Nightingale*, setting a fine Russian translation by Yevgenij Vitkovskij (who died only months before release of this recording, in February 2020) is possibly the most unselfconsciously 'modern' work in this collection; a masterly response to Keats's unsentimental masterpiece; a musical reflection of Keats's evocation of that water that we are unable to hold in our hands for more than a few seconds – our life.

A traditional 'through-setting' of such a long and complex poem would have been a structural nightmare. Rather, the composer builds his score as an endlessly varying mosaic of filigree elements, that unify the 80 lines of the poem as a single continuum. The soprano has a basic vocabulary of (in terms of their first appearance)

eight melodic phrases, which appear, for example, in the order:

I – II – III – IV – V – VI – VII – VIII, then:

IV – I (orchestra) – V – VIII – VII – VIII – V – VI – VII, and subsequently:

IV – VIII (eight times, varied) – I (orchestra) – V – VI – VII – II – IV – I (orchestra), and so on.

The endlessly permuted combinations of these melodic elements are accompanied by an uncannily accurate (the favourite perfect fourth of the bird-musician!) secondary mosaic of the nightingale's song by the solo piano, harp, vibraphone and wind instruments, occasionally joined by the upper strings. The whole is supported above a chord sequence reflecting varying degrees of tension, based around a common tone of F, coming to resigned repose upon an assonant D flat major over the last twelve pages of the score. Yet, the song, the wind and piano filigree, goes on, unperturbed, immune, unresting, fading into the distance; the eternal unchangingness of the natural world.

Ode to a Nightingale was first performed in a chamber version by the Bolshoi Soloists in February 1985, with Nelli Li, soprano, and Alexander Lazarev conducting; and then lay unperformed until its world premiere – incorporating numerous intervening changes to the score – in this orchestral version by the present soloists and conductor, with the Ky'iv Philharmonic Orchestra on 16 August 2018, subsequently recorded in January 2019 in Vilnius.

The *Cantata No. 4* occupies completely contrasting emotional and sound worlds to that of the *Ode*. Indeed, its short, caressing phrase lengths are a re-evocation of the affecting intimacy of the *Romances* and *Melodies* of Félix or Sigismund Blumenfeld, of Joseph Wihtol or of Nikolas Sokolov that typify the intimate atmosphere of St Petersburg salon music of the nineteenth century. Its meditative yet festive opening verse offers striking insight into the mind of the Russian-born mystic Silouan the Athonite, baptised Simeon Ivanovich Antonov (1866–1938), who, after serving in the Imperial Army as a young

man, spent the remainder of his life at the Monastery of Mount Athos (hence, 'the Athonite'). He was subsequently honoured as Saint Silouan (the Russian form of Silvanus, the Roman god of forests) by the Russian Orthodox Church after his death. [Not to be overlooked is the etymon Silvanus – Silouan – Silvestrov]

O Adam, our father, sing to us the song
of the Lord so that the whole earth
may hear, and all your sons raise their minds
to God, and rejoice in the
sounds of heavenly song, and forget their grief
on the earth.

from Adam's Lament
by Silouan the Athonite, 1866–1938
(English translation by Oleg Bezborodko)

Silvestrov echoes St Silouan's lines, '... rejoice in the sounds of heavenly song, and forget their grief upon earth' with the sweetness of a sustained, rising arpeggio of the major ninth over B natural; a motif immediately taken over in the purely instrumental second movement, a *Pastorale* for the solo pianist and strings. And the *Pastorale* itself, after playing with the ambiguity of major/minor inflections of this theme, stretches its aspiration still further, to conclude on the major eleventh.

The nightingale is after all a presence in the third movement of the *Cantata*, in which the Ukrainian national poet Taras Schevchenko's most famous poem, *Вечір* ('Evening'), distils everything that is "dear to the national soul" of Ukraine. Who knows whether Schevchenko (writing in 1847) was referenced in his play of 1903 by Anton Chekhov (whose grandmother was Ukrainian, and who wrote his last play, *The Cherry Orchard*, at Yalta, on the Crimean peninsula).

A cherry orchard by the house.
Above the cherries beetles hum.
The plowmen plow the fertile ground
And girls sing songs as they pass by.
It's evening – mother calls them home.

A family sups by the house.
A star shines in the evening chill.
A daughter serves the evening meal.
Time to give lessons – mother tries,
But can't. She blames the nightingale.

It's getting dark, and by the house,
A mother lays her young to sleep;
Beside them she too fell asleep.
All now went still, and just the girls
And nightingale their vigil keep.

Taras Schevchenko, 1814–1861
(English translation by Boris Dralyuk
and Roman Koropecykj)

A focus upon the beauty and innate spirituality of the natural world connects St Silouan's mysticism, too, with the final poem, *Блакить мою душу обвіяла* (Blakit moju dushu obvijala – 'My Soul swathed in celestial azure'), by the Ukrainian Pavlo Tychyna. The poem is a gentle paean to simple things:

... The stream within the grove is like a little ribbon,
The butterfly on the flower is like a little candle.

Illumined through these few evocative images, his delicate verse epitomises a people's abiding love for the landscape and rhythms of a country deeply rooted in a rural way of life.

The *Pastorale* second movement of the *Cantata* is directly reprised in the *Concertino for Piano and small orchestra*, whose overlapping thematic material clearly identifies it as a companion work. In the *Concertino*, however, the *Pastorale* functions as the *scherzo*, its most energetic episode, filled with powerful momentum and restless dialogue with the orchestra; yet at the same time, a halting exploration, in which no phrase is ever quite sustained beyond a couple of measures. Rather, it is the other three movements of the *Concertino* that resonate with the triadic motives and emotional world of the *Cantata*.

Just as in his *Violin Concerto* and *Symphony No. 8*, in the *Concertino* Silvestrov toys with the idea of treating a 'great form' in a different, more intimate way – the opposite of grandiose. And the entire *Concertino* is fundamentally monothematic; its fourth movement ending with the questing innocence of a circling phrase, sometimes echoed in the harp, enveloped in a cloud of string harmonics or clusters that do not quite obliterate it.

The tentative, elegiac, almost underconfident nature of this companion pair of the *Cantata* and *Concertino* perfectly embodies Malcolm MacDonald's much quoted characterisation, that Silvestrov 'seems to compose, not the lament itself, but the lingering memory of it; the mood of sadness that it leaves behind.'²

Composed in 2003 to a masterful translation by Mark Byelorusets of a fragment by Paul Celan, *Moments of Poetry and Music* is the epitome of the twin polarities of Silvestrov's music: its aphoristic, twelve-tone first section, *A Poem of Paul Celan*, for piano and soprano alone, and the contrast of Mahlerian euphony in the second part, *Melodiya – 'post scriptum'*. Starkness contrasted with elegiac melancholy.

The tone row of the Celan setting irresistibly evokes the unforgettable '*Je t'apporte l'enfant d'une nuit d'Idumée*'³ ('I bring you the child of an Idumean night'), the unmistakable opening phrase of Pierre Boulez's *Pli selon pli*.

Its fragmentary text is taken from the eighth stanza of *Stimmen* ('Voices'), part of the poet's 1959 collection *Sprachgitter* ('Speech-sieve'). Far from being a 'text for singing', it is a text that resists expression in a succession of barely connected images. 'The voice fails' ... 'the gift of your thoughts ... hardens, refuses to heal.'

Paul Celan belongs to the Ukraine, as he was born to a German speaking family in 1920 in Cernăuți, in what was then Romania, but was absorbed in 1944 into present-day Ukraine as Chernivtsy (Чернівці), an imposing and architecturally distinguished city, the largest of the north western Bukovina region, straddling the river Prut. Celan sought to return there after the Second World War, but (by way of Bucharest and Vienna) famously ended up settling in Paris and marrying a Frenchwoman, continuing to write in German until his untimely death in 1970.

Though he quickly became a native speaker of French, Celan memorably said: 'There is nothing in the world for which a poet will give up writing, not even when he is a Jew and the language of his poems is German.'⁴

A mirror image, perhaps, of Valentin Vassil'yevich Silvestrov's tenacious embrace of music, in an age of loss and decay, in which it is hardly possible to hear anything present, only the resonances of that which refuses, not only in our memory but in the make-up of our very cells, to die.

The voice fails –
A late-heard noise,
Alien to the hour,
gift of your thoughts,
here, awakened
hither at last:
leaf of a fruit,
as big as an eye, deep ridden; it
hardens, refuses to
heal.

Paul Celan, 1920–1970
(English translation © Christopher Lyndon-Gee)

In the same year of 2003, a year of quest and of ambiguity, the single movement *Symphony No. 7* was composed. No work could better embody the duality of Silvestrov's musical nature, alternating eruptions of violence or anguish with moments of elegiac tenderness. And the latter character reveals that this is a companion work, seven years on, to the work Silvestrov wrote soon after the untimely early death in 1996 of his wife, Larissa Bondarenko: *Requiem for Larissa*. Moments of melting beauty and yearning intervene throughout the *Symphony* – a nostalgic, though unsentimental piano cadenza is the central fulcrum of the work. And then, on the final two pages of the score, the unspoken, unsung name 'Larissa' is inscribed under repeated A sharps, assigned primarily to harps and vibraphone, over and over, as the work unravels, fading into silence ...

Herbert Glossner puts it this way, referring to the *Sixth Symphony*,

'The spacious euphony pauses for ... [several] minutes of Mahlerian expressivity, fractured by the experiences of the twentieth century. Valentin Silvestrov's art allows us to recapture the lost music of the past, enveloped in the music of the present. It is no longer the same.'⁵

The *Seventh Symphony* is at the core of everything that is memorable and deeply affecting in Silvestrov's lament for what we are still in the midst of losing. Personal loss; civilisation's loss.

As Raymond Tuttle expresses it, 'Silvestrov's music is usually in the process of fading into nothing ...'⁶

But his is in the end a 'nothing' filled, not with lament, but with the richness and beauty and depth of that which is never finally lost, for it stays in the memory and the heart even when no longer instantly present to the eyes, the ear or the soul.

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The available sung texts, transliterations and translations can be found at www.naxos.com/libretti/574123.htm

¹ Paul Griffiths (b. 1947), booklet notes to ECM New Series 1778, B0002283-02 Silvestrov *Requiem for Larissa*, Munich © 2004

² Malcolm MacDonald, in a concert review cited by Seth Brodsky at www.allmusic.com/artist/valentin-silvestrov-mn0001901195/biography

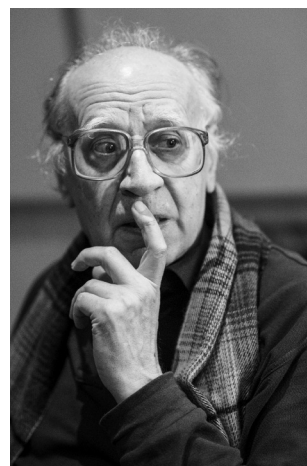
³ The opening line of Stéphane Mallarmé's 1865 masterpiece, *Don du poème*.

⁴ cit. in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, edited and translated by John Felstiner (2000) (W. W. Norton, New York, ISBN 978-0393049992, published 2001)

⁵ Herbert Glossner, booklet notes to ECM New Series 1935, 476 5715 Silvestrov *Symphony No. 6*, Munich © 2007

⁶ Raymond Tuttle, review of the *Requiem for Larissa* at *Classical.net*, 2004
www.classical.net/music/recs/reviews/e/ecm01778a.php

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Valentin Silvestrov



Aleksandra Kerienė, Valentin Silvestrov, Evelina Staniulytė



Aleksandra Kerienė, Valentin Silvestrov, Inna Galatenko, Oleg Bezborodko

Inna Galatenko

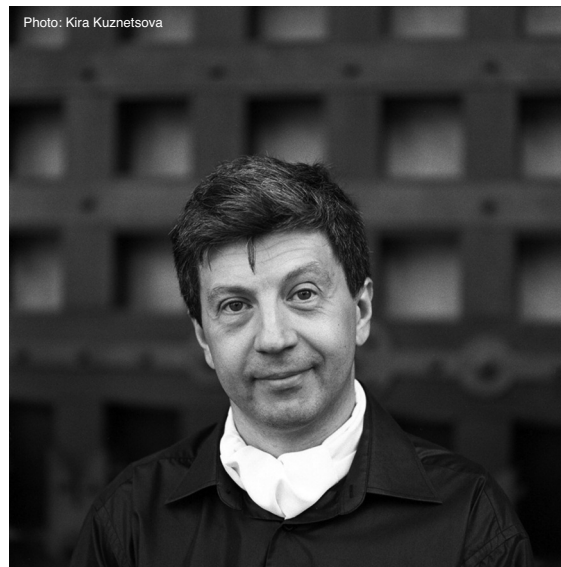
Photo: Dmitriy Matvejev



Soprano Inna Galatenko is a soloist with the National Ensemble 'Kyivska kamerata'. Her wide vocal range, subtle sense of artistic style and powerful stage energy have allowed her to perform music of different styles and eras. In 2003, she made the first recording in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, gave Russian and Ukrainian premieres of Denisov's large-scale song cycle *На Снежном Костре* ('*On the Snow-Fire*'), and the Ukrainian premiere of Volkonsky's *Wandering Concerto*. Galatenko has performed in the Ukraine, Germany, France, Austria, the US, Lithuania, China and Switzerland. Over the last 15 years Valentin Silvestrov has written all his vocal works specifically for her voice, and she was highly praised by the Austrian press for her performances of his songs at the Austrian festival Klangspuren Schwaz Tirol ('Tone-Routes at Schwaz in the Tirol'). The composer himself says about her: 'Inna has a wonderful, fresh voice. But in my music there is nowhere to show it because I am always asking to sing *'sotto voce'*. And she is one of the few who can find a compromise between her own nature and the requirements of the composer.'

Oleg Bezborodko

Photo: Kira Kuznetsova



Composer and pianist Oleg Bezborodko studied in Switzerland and the Ukrainian National Academy of Music where he now serves as a professor. A member of the National Union of Composers of Ukraine, Bezborodko is a prizewinner of many national and international piano competitions and scholarships including the Revutsky Prize (2008) and Lysenko Prize (2017). Bezborodko is in high demand as an interpreter of contemporary music and as a chamber musician. He has performed and premiered piano and chamber works of almost all the major contemporary Ukrainian composers, including *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* by Valentin Silvestrov. In 2014–17, together with soprano Inna Galatenko, he presented a programme of Valentin Silvestrov's chamber vocal compositions, *Music of Poetry*, in the Ukraine, Germany, France and the United States with the participation of the composer. Bezborodko writes symphonic, chamber and choral music. His works have been performed around the world by artists such as Stephen

Gutman, Dima Tkachenko, Kirill Karabits and Natalia Ponomarchuk. During the 2019–20 season Bezborodko served as a composer-in-residence at the National Odessa Philharmonic Orchestra.

www.bezborodko.webs.com

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra



The Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) has been active for almost eight decades. It has long represented Lithuanian culture abroad, appearing at various festivals and concert halls across Europe. In 2013 the LNSO performed in the ceremonial opening and closing of the Lithuanian Presidency of the European Council at the Klara Festival, Brussels, and at the Białystok Philharmonic in Poland. In 2018, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania, the LNSO performed at the Warsaw Philharmonic and the Konzerthaus Berlin under the baton of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, and the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm with the Swedish Radio Choir, where an ambitious contemporary programme was conducted by Giedrė Šlekytė. The LNSO has accumulated an extensive repertoire, and its discography contains numerous significant examples of Lithuanian symphonic music. Leading Lithuanian conductor Modestas Pitrenas has served as principal conductor and artistic director of the Orchestra since autumn 2015.

www.nationalphilharmonic.eu

Christopher Lyndon-Gee



Internationally renowned conductor Christopher Lyndon-Gee's approach on the podium is rooted in his scrupulous, refined, highly regarded work as composer. Honoured as Laureate of the Onassis Foundation, Athens for his ballet score *Il Poeta muore*, his music has also won the Adolf Spivakovsky Prize, three Sounds Australian awards, and two MacDowell Fellowships. His overture *Intrada Cubana* has been widely played in many countries, most recently in celebration of Sofia Gubaidulina's 80th birthday in Poland. Included among the 300 conductors featured in Naxos's *A to Z of Conductors*, Lyndon-Gee was nominated for GRAMMY Awards in 1998 for the first volume of his ground-breaking series of the complete works of Igor Markevitch (originally released on Marco

Polo), 2003 for the world premiere recording of George Rochberg's *Symphony No. 5* and *Transcendental Variations* on Naxos American Classics, and again in 2007 for Hans Werner Henze's *Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 3*. Others of his more than 80 releases have received accolades such as *Gramophone* magazine's Editor's Choice, *Fanfare* magazine's Outstanding CDs of the Year, multiple Rosettes and Key Recordings listings in *The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs*, and the *Pizzicato* prize in Luxembourg. Frequently invited to Poland, at the jubilee 50th Anniversary Warsaw Autumn Festival he conducted four world premieres in a single concert – new symphonies by the Slovakian composer Roman Berger, Lithuania's leading female composer Onutė Narbutaitė, and the Polish composers Jerzy Kornowicz and Aleksander Lasoń's *Fourth Symphony*. Nine years later, Lasoń insisted on Lyndon-Gee for the world premiere of his *Fifth Symphony* in 2016. Since an auspicious 2013 debut, he has been invited several times each year to return to guest-conduct the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, both in the Philharmonic's own subscription series and at the renowned GAIDA Festival of contemporary music in Vilnius, most recently with world premieres of several younger Lithuanian composers alongside David Lang and Arvo Pärt, in the presence of all the composers. Lyndon-Gee studied conducting under Franco Ferrara in Rome and Rudolf Schwarz in London, and Leonard Bernstein invited him to study at Tanglewood after hearing him conduct a student concert in Rome. At Tanglewood and after, he was mentored especially by Maurice Abravanel, as well as by Erich Leinsdorf and Kurt Masur. He worked as Bruno Maderna's assistant at La Scala, Milan, later becoming second conductor at the Teatro Regio in Turin, and with the RAI Symphony Orchestra of Turin. With composer Lorenzo Ferrero he co-founded Ensemble Fase Seconda, who premiered dozens of commissioned new works throughout Italy, Germany, France and at many international festivals. As a composer, he studied with Goffredo Petrassi in Rome, Luciano Berio, Sylvano Bussotti, Pierre Boulez and Jean Martinon. Britain's great musicologist and composer Arthur Hutchings remains a powerful guiding influence, several decades on.

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Inna Galatenko, Valentin Silvestrov



Aleksandra Kerienė, Oleg Bezborodko,
Valentin Silvestrov, Christopher Lyndon-Gee,
Inna Galatenko, Evelina Staniulytė



Valentin Silvestrov, Inna Galatenko, Oleg Bezborodko

Valentin Silvestrov's elusive post-modern style is rich in nostalgia for the lost music of a barely remembered past filled with beauty and spiritual aspiration. *Ode to a Nightingale* is a masterly response to Keats' unsentimental reflection on human mortality, contrasting with the beauty and affecting intimacy of the *Cantata No. 4* and the resonant emotional world of its companion piece, the *Concertino*. Starkness set against elegiac melancholy are the shared features of *Moments of Poetry and Music* and the *Seventh Symphony* – an embodiment of Silvestrov's dual musical nature of anguish and tenderness.

Valentin
SILVESTROV
(b. 1937)

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***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING [†]OF THE ORCHESTRAL VERSION**

Inna Galatenko, Soprano **1 2 4–5 10**

Oleg Bezborodko, Piano **1–11**

Marija Grikevičiūtė, Piano (cadenza) **12**

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra **1–9 11–12**

Christopher Lyndon-Gee

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet. The available sung texts, transliterations and translations can be found at www.naxos.com/libretti/574123.htm

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