



ONDINE

ČIURLIONIS

THE SEA
IN THE FOREST
KĘSTUTIS OVERTURE

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MODESTAS PITRĘNAS



Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis with Sofija Kymantaitė, 1908

Mikalojus Konstantinas ČIURLIONIS (1875–1911)

- 1 **Kęstutis**
Symphonic Overture (1902) 9:33
Orchestration by Jurgis Juozapaitis
World première recording
- 2 **In the Forest** (Miške)
Symphonic Poem (1900–01) 17:15
Reconstructed original version
- 3 **The Sea** (Jūra)
Symphonic Poem (1903–07) 32:24
(Organ: Evelina Staniulytė)
Reconstructed original version

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MODESTAS PITRĖNAS, conductor

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. Symphonic music.

“I would like to create a symphony from the murmur of waves, the rustling of centenary forest, the shimmering of the stars, our little songs and my unending longing.”

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis

This quotation is taken from a letter, written in St. Petersburg in November 1908, to his fiancé and future wife Sofija Kymantaitė, composer and artist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) has summarised in one sweeping sentence his most important sources of inspiration and his life’s ambition – to combine sound and colour in a single work of art, and to express in it the grandeur of nature together with the soul of his beloved Lithuanian nation.

Čiurlionis was first schooled as a composer on a scholarship, provided by Prince Michal Oginski, in Warsaw Music Institute in 1894–1899 and in Leipzig Conservatoire in 1901–1902, where he especially concentrated on the newest tendencies in orchestration. From 1903 Čiurlionis immersed himself into the world of painting and from that point on was devoting his talent to both realms of self-expression. Praise for his paintings gained at exhibitions in Warsaw, Vilnius and St. Petersburg at first seemingly overshadowed his notoriety as a composer, but Čiurlionis never ceased to develop his musical ideas. Yet, the continuous flow of new creative musical ideas and plans together with total lack of performance opportunities warranted the situation in which, after untimely death at 35, majority of Čiurlionis’ music compositions were left in a sketchy, often unfinished state. The situation was even more inflated by the fact that number of his known music works were lost during the two world wars, and some musical compositions, in the same way as his stylistic classification defying

paintings, were conceptually ahead of time. Therefore, music of Čiurlionis had to wait for its renaissance until last decades of the twentieth century, when its uniqueness and aesthetic value could be fully appreciated.

Today the catalogue of music compositions by Čiurlionis, compiled by the famous scholar Vytautas Landsbergis, consists of 346 entries. The catalogue contains ten listings of symphonic music, over sixty works of choral music, six positions of chamber music, twenty works for organ, and the rest is music for piano solo. From ten works for symphony orchestra, only two symphonic poems *In the Forest* (1900–1901) and *The Sea* (1903–1907) have survived intact until our days, while several other compositions, including overture *Kęstutis* (1902), now exist in orchestrated versions by contemporary Lithuanian composers.

In November 1900, it took just twelve days for inspired Čiurlionis to compose symphonic poem *In the Forest* (VL 1). Composer indicated at the beginning of the manuscript: *Poem (In the Forest), dedicated to E. Morawski, begun on 14th of November, Thursday; Vivat! Finita la comedia; finished on 25th of November*. Orchestration of the work took several months. The score indicates another detailed, if somewhat whimsical, inscription by the composer about the end of orchestration: *W lesie (In the Forest) Poem; K. Czurlanis; 3 April, Wednesday, 6 o'clock 52 minutes in the afternoon; 1901*. As to the source for the inspiration and imagery of the poem one could consult letters of the composer. A year after the completion of the poem, Čiurlionis wrote from Leipzig to his friend: *I want you to hear my “In the Forest”, performed by a famous orchestra, with me conducting. It interests me if you remember anything from that composition? I believe, I have performed fragments of it for you, do you remember? It begins with the soft, wide chords that are alike the soft and wide rustle of the Lithuanian pines.*

In 1901–1902, while studying composition in Leipzig under the famous composer and professor Carl Reinecke, Čiurlionis submerged himself into investigation of orchestrations of Hector Berlioz and especially Richard Strauss. He is full of orchestration ideas and in his letters there are numerous references to several orchestral compositions that he is working on, including Symphony in E minor (VL 4), two overtures and Concerto for cello and orchestra (VL 10). Unfortunately, only a clavier version of overture *Kęstutis* (VL 2a), also dedicated to his dear friend and fellow composer E. Morawski, survived until our time. By chance, the title page of the manuscript of the orchestrated score also exists, so we again know very precise details of the completion of composition: *Overture, sketch started January 25, 1902. Orchestration finished on March 12.* Čiurlionis' letters from Leipzig also contain many fascinating details about the progress of this work, as well as composer's desire to bring it to the liking of his teacher Carl Reinecke so it could be performed by the student orchestra of Leipzig Conservatoire. Attempts to adjust the overture in order to please his teacher was causing the young composer much emotional distress, because of very dissimilar musical tastes. In one of the letters Čiurlionis also comments that he succeeded to squeeze into the score "only two Lithuanian fragments". Because of references in his letters about the scope and structure of the overture, it was possible for the composer Jurgis Juozapaitis in 2000 to reconstruct missing passages of the existing clavier manuscript and orchestrate the overture, thus bringing back from oblivion this important cultural artefact. The overture was first performed in this newly restored and orchestrated version on September 22, 2000 to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Čiurlionis.

In December 1903, Čiurlionis started working on his largest surviving symphonic poem *The Sea* (DK 248/VL 5). The poem is scored for a large orchestra and organ. The

use of organ in the score might be directly influenced by *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which was performed, among other works of Richard Straus in Warsaw that year, under the baton of the composer. The first sketch of *The Sea* was also composed very quickly, but it was the time, when most of Čiurlionis' time and energy was devoted to the study of painting, therefore it took four years to finally complete this composition, epic in its scope and ambition. Most likely the idea of the sea slowly germinated for three years before composer finally sat exactly to the day three years later in December 1906 to redraw the sketch, now twice the size of the initial one, and orchestrate the work. As with the two previous symphonic works, composer leaved us very precise time of the completion of the work on the title page of the score: *MKČ "Marės" (Dzukian for the Sea) symphonic poem for the large orchestra, dedicated by the author to Missis Bronislawia Wolman, Finished in Warszawa on March 30th, 1907, 5 o'clock in the morning.*

The path to the stage of the composer's symphonic works after his death was also very complicated. First performance of symphonic poem *In the Forest*, organized in St. Petersburg in 1912 to commemorate a year of passing away of the composer, due to unknown circumstances turned to be a great disappointment. In Lithuania the tradition of the performance of this work only started after the First World War, after Lithuania gained independence and established basic cultural institutions. Due to greater performance forces required than were available at the time, symphonic poem *The Sea* had to wait for the first performance until 1936. And even then it was performed in edition of composer Vytautas Bacevičius. Sadly, a tradition "to improve" this composition remained viable following the Second World War. In 1965, *The Sea* was newly edited by composer Eduardas Balsys, who not only considerably altered orchestration, but also cut out 46 measures of the climax of the work. Incredibly, the cut was not even acknowledged in the published version of the score.

All three symphonic works were reborn in the twenty first century. In 2000, overture *Kęstutis* was newly orchestrated and performed for the first time. Also, in 2000 Jonas Petronis' publishing house in Kaunas published scores and parts of both symphonic poems cleared of editions by other composers, thus finally bringing to the listener the original versions of the two symphonic poems of Čiurlionis, the way the composer envisioned them almost a hundred years ago.

In the Forest (1900–1901) and *The Sea* (1903–1907) remain the cornerstones of Lithuanian symphonic repertoire. *In the Forest* brings Lithuanian professional academic music into existence, while *The Sea* remains an unsurpassed peak in the history of Lithuanian symphonic literature. One can only guess in what way his orchestral writing would have developed, had he had the chance to bring to fruition his other numerous symphonic ideas, such as symphonic poem *The Creation of the World*, sketched in 1908, or his *Second Pastoral Lithuanian Symphony*, that he started sketching in 1910, or how would have his opera *Jūratė* sounded that he started composing in St. Petersburg in late autumn of 1908.

Rokas Zubovas

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) has been active for more than seven decades. Leadership of Vilnius City Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1940, was entrusted to a famous composer and conductor Balys Dvarionas. In 1964, a new stage started with a young conductor Juozas Domarkas, who took his place at the orchestra's podium. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, in 1990 the Orchestra was given the name and status of the National Symphony Orchestra.

The Orchestra prepares and performs symphonic music programs not only in the National Philharmonic, but also in various Lithuanian cities. For many years it has carried on with Palanga Summer Concert Series, Michał Ogiński International Music Festival in Plungė, as well as represented the Lithuanian culture abroad: concerts were given in prestigious halls in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Minsk, Madrid, Berlin, Bern, Antwerp and Stockholm, major cities in Great Britain, France, and particularly great number of concerts have taken the Orchestra to neighbouring Poland. The Orchestra has also appeared in Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany, "Prague Spring" in the Czech Republic, "Musica Romantica" in Switzerland and other famous European music festivals and concert halls, such as the Musikverein in Vienna, London's Barbican Centre, Cologne Philharmonic, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Moscow Conservatory Great Hall and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. In 2013, for the first time the Orchestra toured in South America (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador), performed in the ceremonial opening and closing of the Lithuanian Presidency of the European Council in Klara Festival (Brussels) and Białystok Philharmonic in Poland. In 2018, celebrating 100th anniversary of the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania, the LNSO performed in Warsaw Philharmonic and Berlin Konzerthaus under the baton of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and Baltic Sea

Festival in Stockholm with Swedish Radio Choir where an ambitious contemporary program was conducted by Giedrė Šlekytė.

The LNSO has accumulated an extensive, colourful and significant repertoire, embracing works of oratorio genre and symphonic opuses of the past epochs as well as modern contemporary music with the works by the Lithuanian composers occupying an important place. Since 1991, the Orchestra has been a regular participant of the Contemporary Music Festival “Gaida”, annually presenting premières by Lithuanian composers. It could be claimed that almost all the symphonic works by Lithuanian composers have been premiered by the LNSO, many of them are dedicated to maestro Juozas Domarkas. Thanks to the maestro, a large part of the Lithuanian music today is being performed not only in the concerts but also from many recordings released in Lithuania and abroad.

Playing around 50 annual concerts, the LNSO nurtures unique traditions significantly contributing to fostering of the high music culture, encouraging the artistic ambitions of young Lithuanian composers and performers, indulging the audience with both large-scale opuses certifying the Orchestra's maturity, as well as symphonic miniatures prompting the imagination of the listeners.

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One of the leading Lithuanian conductors **Modestas Pitrenas** has taken the position of the principal conductor and artistic director of the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) in autumn of 2015. In 2003, Pitrenas won the 1st prize and gold medal at the 7th Grzegorz Fitelberg Conducting Competition in Katowice (Poland) and was awarded a special prize of the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra. This has led him to collaborate with Poland's leading symphony orchestras. In 2009–2014, he served as the principal conductor of the Latvian National Opera (LNO) and as the conductor of the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre (LNOBT). In 2006–2011, he was the principal conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. For his contribution to Latvian music culture Pitrenas has been decorated with Latvian awards including the Cross of Recognition. In 2012, he was honoured with the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize. In 2015, the Baltic Assembly jury awarded the Maestro with the Baltic Assembly Prize for the Arts. Starting August 2018, he will enjoy an invitation to serve as the principal conductor at the Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland.

Together with the LNSO, the Latvian National Orchestra, Krasnoyarsk State Orchestra, the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra and the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra Pitrenas has prepared and performed several symphonic opuses. With the aforementioned ensembles he has given concerts in many European countries, the USA and China. Lately, he has been conducting in Latvian and Lithuanian theatres, the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf, the national opera theatres in Cologne and Helsinki as well as the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. In the Theater St. Gallen he has led over 30 opera and ballet productions. In 2014, under the baton of Pitrenas Wagner's *Rienzi* became one of the key events in the program of "Riga European Capital of Culture" 2014, and the same year Pitrenas gave the world

premiere of Arturs Maskats' opera Valentina in the LNO. Later, the opera production was taken to Deutsche Oper in Berlin.

Pitrėnas studied choral and opera conducting at the Salzburg Mozarteum (prof. Walter Hagen-Groll and prof. Karl Kamper) 1995–1996. He also pursued his studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT), from which he graduated as a choral conductor in 1997 (prof. Lionginas Abarius), an orchestral conductor in 2002 (prof. Juozas Domarkas), and earned Art Lincentiate Diploma in 2004. He has participated in seminars and master courses led by conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jorma Panula and Helmuth Rilling among others. During the years 1990–2000, he led the Psalmos choir. The choir went on several tours in Europe and the USA, and won prizes in many international choral competitions and festivals. Pitrėnas has recorded over 15 albums of choral and symphonic music. Since 2003, he has taught conducting at the LAMT, where in 2015–2017 he served as the head of the Conducting Department.

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