

BALTIC SOUNDSCAPES

ČIURLIONIS 150

Music for cello and piano

Gleb Pyšniak | cello

Rokas Zubovas | piano



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The first impulse for this album came from four bars of an unfinished work for cello and orchestra by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, a highly versatile Lithuanian artist whose creative explorations often surpassed the artistic development of his time. The four bars were all that was written down, but it was enough of a musical cue to ignite artistic curiosity of the musicians. For cellist Gleb Pyšniak and pianist Rokas Zubovas, these four bars became the beginning of the path to a project dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the birth of Čiurlionis.

The album features ten works by Čiurlionis, arranged for cello and piano by Lithuanian cellist Juozas Čelkauskas. These arrangements open a new window for experiencing the piano works of Čiurlionis as chamber music, while his pictorially enhanced musical vision remains intact.

In addition to the pieces by Čiurlionis, the album introduces three contemporary opuses composed especially for this project by Lithuanian composer Žibuoklė Martinaitytė, Latvian composer Arturs Maskats and Estonian composer Mihkel Kerem. Each of them, drawing personal inspiration from Čiurlionis, not only wrote a new composition for cello and piano, but also dedicated their creative efforts to the Čiurlionis' anniversary and this duo of performers, thus making this album not only a retrospective, but also a lively, creative dialogue between eras, cultures and personalities.

This album is not merely a musical recording. It is a return to the source for the journey, during which the four bars of an unfinished work are transformed into a newly born world.



COMPOSERS ON THEIR COMPOSITIONS

'Unda, unda...inundare' (2024)

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Every work has its own origin story where all the hints and pre-motivations form into a certain pattern of being, and from this pattern later emerge the sonic formations that correspond to it. I heard about the project 'Dedication to M. K. Čiurlionis' from pianist Rokas Zubovas, the great-grandson of Čiurlionis. We talked about this commission at Čiurlionis House on Savičiaus street in Vilnius surrounded by a special atmosphere of calm that is still present there. It was a somewhat mystical moment – as if the creator himself, on some dimension of existence, was present in our conversation... I reflected on how the personality and ideas of Čiurlionis are naturally woven into my perception of the music and my view of the world. Čiurlionis' mystical paintings, which open up immeasurable planes of imagination, have been with me since my childhood like an inner beacon, communicating about the infinite yet undiscovered worlds that are possible to reach with the power of one's own intuition and creativity...

I often tend to trust the initial creative impulse, even if it is not logically explainable. The idea for 'Unda, unda...inundare' grew from just such an initial musical spark – a fast upward rising glissando

from the lowest register of the piano. It evoked obvious associations with the beginning of Čiurlionis' symphonic poem 'The Sea'. The image of the sea led to the waves, which became the basis of the idea of the work. The translation of the Latin title 'Unda, unda... inundare' into English 'wave, wave...inundates' describes the fundamental principle of the work – the waves of various nature and duration where both instruments merge into a single sound that floods the listener's consciousness...

Poetic inspiration also came from Čiurlionis' description of the sea:

Powerful sea. Great, infinite, boundless. The sky envelops your waves with its blue, while you, full of grandeur, breathe calmly and peacefully, since you know that there are no limits to your power and your grandeur, your existence is infinite. The great, powerful, wonderful sea! Half the world is looking at you at night, distant suns drown their blinking, mysterious, slumbering glances in your depths, while you, eternal queen of giants, breathe peacefully and quietly, for you know that there is only you and nobody reigns over you.

(Čiurlionis, 'The Sea')

'A Haunting from the Past' (2024)

Mihkel Kerem

'A Haunting from the Past', is exactly what I thought and felt when writing this piece. An idea, a journey that started a hundred years ago but only got to its destination now and by different souls to those who were at the starting line.

The musical language I felt I needed to use for this work had to be something of yesteryears, close to Čiurlionis' own musical language, yet I could not finish the work for him, so to speak. Hundred years has passed since the initial idea and our experience as listeners has changed drastically. What then felt like a shock, has become ordinary now. Yet we listen to music that has real value, art that has stood to the test of time, with great anticipation and interest as it has something new to tell us with each listen.

Even though we have been numbed with tonal discord, some music, great artists like Čiurlionis wrote, is as fresh and shocking to us now as it was to people who listened that kind of music for the first time hundred years ago.

I am in no way attempting to put myself on the same level with him, but I am hoping to explain the why of the musical language that I used for my version of this work. I picture it as a person that left all these years ago and has finally reached its destination with all the derby and dust on its coat that it has collected on the journey.

'Čiurlionis in Lūznava Manor. Plenair 1906' (2024)

Arturs Maskats

First, in early youth, at the age of 13 or 14, I got to know Čiurlionis as a painter at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art in Kaunas. It was like a revelation to me – I felt like I had never known such a fascinating and fantasy-filled world of paintings before. Soon, the symphonic poem 'In the Forest' became one of the strongest musical influences of my youth. I could listen to the vinyl recording of this work over and over again.

And now, thanks to the suggestion of the wonderful cellist Gleb Pyšniak to create a composition dedicated to Čiurlionis, the vivid youthful impressions of Čiurlionis music and paintings have been summed up, as if merged together.

I was happy to learn that in the summer of 1906 Čiurlionis had visited also my homeland Latvia, the Lūznava Manor, where he drew inspiration, painted and created music. May the spirit and art of Čiurlionis continue to inspire us!





- 1 Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911). Dedication, VL 169 *2'34*
- 2 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in F minor, VL 197 *3'18*
- 3 Žibuoklė Martinaitytė (*1973). Unda, unda... inundare *14'52*
- 4 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in F sharp minor, VL 185 *2'30*
- 5 M. K. Čiurlionis. Nocturne in F sharp minor, VL 178 *3'22*
- 6 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in B minor, VL 182 *2'10*
- 7 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in D minor, VL 239 *1'47*
- 8 Mihkel Kerem (*1981). A Haunting from the Past *12'51*
- 9 M. K. Čiurlionis. Pastoral, VL 187 *1'14*
- 10 M. K. Čiurlionis. Nocturne in D minor, VL 183 *4'24*
- 11 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in A minor, VL 312 *0'57*
- 12 M. K. Čiurlionis. Prelude in A minor, VL 188 *1'12*
- 13 Arturs Maskats (*1957). Čiurlionis in Lūznava Manor. Plenair 1906 *10'52*

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Cellist Gleb Pyšniak and pianist Rokas Zubovas started performing together in 2020. This is their second album.

More information about the artists:

www.glebpysniak.com

www.zubovas.lt