



# Toivo TULEV

## Magnificat

Summer Rain • Legatissimo  
Tanto gentile • Flow, my tears  
I said, Who are You? – He said, You

Ka Bo Chan, Countertenor  
Ieva Ezeriete and Inga Martinsone, Sopranos  
Vambola Krigul and Heigo Rosin, Percussion  
Virgo Veldi, Alto Saxophone • Age Juurikas, Positive Organ

Latvian Radio Choir • Tallinn Chamber Orchestra  
Kaspars Putniņš

## Toivo Tulev (b. 1958)

### Magnificat

'For me, music has to do less immediately with its aesthetic contents, but with the truth, the road, and the life', Toivo Tulev once wrote to me in a private correspondence. So begins a magnificent collection of the composer's recent work – a path, a road – on which the iconoclastic Tulev takes the listener – one that is unparalleled in his native Estonia, and uncrossed in contemporary music in any sense.



Unlike that of many of his contemporaries, Tulev's music can be experienced on a purely emotional, almost sensual level, in addition to the intellectual. It is also instantly characteristic of Tulev as a composer and as a man. Although he was born in 1958, Tulev's success has come in the last two decades, largely defined by a kind of maximalist aesthetic, an almost obsessive focus on religious mysticism, and the expansion of boundaries in the realms of technique and expression, particularly in vocal music.

Yet if the voice is star of the show on this release, it is the way that it is integrated into a lush instrumental texture, especially the Janus-like duality of saxophone and countertenor in *I said, Who are You? – He said, You*, that forms the constellation of *Magnificat*. It is also the close and long-standing relationship between composer, conductor and ensemble – in this case, Tulev's faithful collaborator Kaspars Putniņš conducting the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and Latvian Radio Choir (two of the region's outstanding professional ensembles) that defines an existential unity in the otherwise seemingly disparate strands of metal percussion, strings and voices.

The cosmopolitanism of Tulev's subject matter, its pan-spirituality, belies a composer who otherwise has

little use for outside musical influences. Though Tulev received his musical education mostly in Estonia, spending his formative years with Anti Marguste (1931–2016) and Eino Tamberg (1930–2010), his considerable sojourns abroad, encompassing studies with Sven-David Sandström (b. 1942) and at the electroacoustic music studio of the Musikhochschule in Cologne, presaged a more intense wanderlust that parallels the focus of his music. That Tulev considers the city of Istanbul, which spreads out between two continents and two worlds, a kind of numinous 'second home' is perhaps a material consequence of what has been the textual and super-textual inspiration for much of the music on this recording.

The relation of composer to place is strong here, but it is not only the spiritual place that is important, it is the physical: Tulev has chosen to settle deep in the Estonian forest in a particularly quiet part of a very sparsely populated nation, just off the highway from Tallinn to Riga, living in a house that until recently did not even have a foundation. If one follows that highway further, or at least, one draws a straight line, it essentially runs east as if separating the composer's material naturalism from an otherworldliness one may dub as Eastern, only because it is as powerful as it is intangible.

The first track of the recording, *Suvine Vihm* ('Summer Rain'), in the brilliant key of E flat major, the composer's favourite, issues both disturbing pronouncements and hopeful words in equal measure: 'Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just' / 'The arithmetic of pain, of death, of children killed, of endless hatred'. It is exactly what the title does not suggest: the music cannot be made sense of without going beyond the initial veneer of simplicity, of directness, into a more complex, multi-faceted, unsettled world. *Suvine Vihm* is as enigmatic as any of the composer's works. It forces the listener to return to it and listen again, to make sense of a music that does not offer answers easily.

Then there is *Legatissimo*, its inclusion as a percussion work on a recording of choral and vocal music is, at first, inexplicable and, at last, fundamental, if not sensible: If the *Magnificat* later engages the two percussion soloists in a kind of un-pitched exploration of the spiritual consciousness of the text, the textless *Legatissimo* works as a kind of double for the entire recording: serene, violent, explosive, austere.

Stripped of aggressive musical accompaniment, the overtly chromatic, modal and gently microtonal *Tanto gentile* is almost siren-like in its weightless allure. Its independent, ambulatory vocal lines feel as if they are suspended by imperceptible threads, swaying to and fro, sometimes jarringly with turns and trills, buffeted by a musical wind. The exceptional vocal balance of the music, aided through Tulev's use of overtones, uses the human voice not only as a trained 'instrument', but as an expressive source too. The composer's facility with free counterpoint is no coincidence: it formed the basis of much of his education, including a focus on Gregorian chant. Tulev also spent a significant amount of time as a singer in the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the same ensemble that later engaged him as a composer-in-residence. The Latvian Radio Choir's two-year exploration of microtonal and overtone techniques, the Concrescence Project – research project and aesthetic adventure alike – led to this commission.

In reconciling the composer's intangible aims with concrete reality, I return to *I said, Who are You? – He said, You*, which sits at this release's focal point. 'Now stands no more between the Truth and me...Truth': are these the words of the Sufi mystic Mansur Al-Hallaj (c. 858–922) or the composer himself? The lines are blurred. Even Tulev himself admits to coaxing the text to his own vision and needs: 'It happens now and then that the existing texts do not fully suit, be it because of their phonetic or other values, or the general atmosphere and focus of the music. In these moments I tend to hear, besides the music, also words and have dared to use them as an additional text source.' One hears even besides music and words, the trance-like state of Al-Hallaj

at his crucifixion, a role the countertenor Ka Bo Chan performs almost unknowingly, unwillingly.

*Flow, my tears*, at once operatic, otherwise almost ascetic in character in phrases that end on a spare unison, contains an almost incantation-like quality. Putniņš's ability to summon in the singers' voices an effortless control on the cusp of giving way to chaos underscores his more than 20-year tenure as the Latvian Radio Choir's chief conductor, as well as his ability to instantly and clearly read the message hidden (or perhaps apparent) in Tulev's music.

The recording's most ambitious piece is also the one that lends it its title. One may expect to understand a composer in his most honest form in the context of something like a miniature, a composition otherwise unencumbered by scale and ambitions toward grandeur. Yet, it is in the stratospherically high string writing and the wild percussion soli of what should otherwise be a sombre *Magnificat* that Tulev is most apparent; and it is in the way the piece begins, as if emerging directly from – and into – a blinding light, that the composer's otherwise seemingly irreconcilable aims are met.

This music should be impossible in many ways – but it is in its impossibility and its position on the boundary of possibility that one may best enjoy it. The virtuosity of the performances exhibited on this recording, necessitated by the music itself, makes this release not only a definitive statement on the state of music in Tulev's native Baltic region, but a statement on Tulev himself: without a conductor's dedication to such unusual and experimental writing, it may not have existed at all.

'For the moment, simplicity has no other function than to bore me. That has a lot to do with my own pretty obvious fluctuations between complexity and simplicity', says Tulev. His music, outwardly simplistic but imbued with a consummate internal complexity, satisfies none of the conditions predetermined for its easy classification on the modern music spectrum. It deserves deeper exploration. Let *Magnificat* be the beginning of such a journey.

Eugene Birman

### 1 Suvine Vihm (Summer Rain)

Text: Toivo Tulev, based on the hymn Rorate caeli and St John's Gospel

Rorate caeli desuper  
et nubes pluant justum.  
*[Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above  
and let the clouds rain the Just One.]*

The arithmetic of pain,  
calculation of destruction.

Rorate caeli desuper  
et nubes pluant justum.  
*[Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above  
and let the clouds rain the Just One.]*

The arithmetic of pain,  
of death, of children killed,  
of endless hatred.

Rorate caeli desuper  
et nubes pluant justum.  
*[Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above  
and let the clouds rain the Just One.]*

Calculation of destruction,  
of buried and of the unburied,  
of rain, endless rain,  
of death, of destruction,  
of pain, of pain, of pain,  
pain of the born and of the unborn.

Be not angry, O Lord,  
and remember no longer our iniquity:  
behold the city of thy sanctuary / Sitio  
*[I thirst]*  
is become a desert.  
Jerusalem, Jerusalem is desolate.

Rorate caeli desuper  
et nubes pluant justum / Sitio  
*[Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above  
and let the clouds rain the Just One / I thirst]*

Be not angry, O Lord,  
and remember no longer our iniquity:  
behold we have sinned  
and we are become as one unclean,  
and we have all fallen as a leaf;  
and our iniquities, like the wind,  
have taken us away.  
Thou hast hid thy face from us,  
and hast crushed us  
by the hand of our iniquity. / et nubes  
*[and clouds]*

Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, / pluant justum  
*[rain the Just One]*  
and let the clouds rain the Just One.  
Sitio, sitio, sitio.  
*[I thirst, I thirst, I thirst.]*  
Pain, pain,  
pain of the born and of the unborn.

Drop down dew, ye heavens,  
drop down dew.

### 3 Tanto gentile

Text: Dante Alighieri (c. 1265–1332), *La vita nuova*

Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare  
la donna mia quand'ella altrui saluta,  
ch'ogne lingua deven tremando muta,  
e li occhi no l'ardiscon di guardare.

Ella si va, sentendosi laudare,  
benignamente d'umiltà vestuta;  
E par che sia una cosa venuta  
da cielo in terra a miracolo mostrare

Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira,  
che dà per li occhi una dolcezza al core,  
che 'ntender no la può chi no la prova;

E par che de la sua labbia si mova  
un spirito soave pien d'amore,  
che va dicendo a l'anima: 'Sospira'.

*So noble and modest does my lady  
appear whenever she greets anyone,  
that all tongues in awe fall silent,  
all eyes fear to gaze upon her.*

*She goes forth, hearing her praises sung,  
benignly clothed in humility;  
it is as if she were a being sent  
from heaven to earth as proof of the miraculous.*

*So pleasing is she to all who see her  
that she sends from eyes to heart a sweetness  
knowable only by those who have felt it;*

*and from her lips there seems  
to float a gentle spirit, full of love,  
that speaks to the soul, saying: 'Sigh'.*

English translation: Susannah Howe

### 4 I said, Who are You? – He said, You

Text: Toivo Tulev, based on the utterances of and the verses of Mansur Al-Hallaj (c. 858–922) and T.S. Eliot (1888–1965)

I said, Who are You? – He said, You...

Now stands no more between Truth and me... Truth...  
For your sake, for your sake, for your sake,  
For your sake I cross the desert and split the mountain in  
two... two...  
And turn my face from all... All...

Ana al-Haqq, ana al-Haqq, ana al-Haqq...  
*[I am Truth, I am Truth, I am Truth...]*

Now stands no more between Truth and me... me,  
Now... kill me my faithful,  
Kill me my faithful friends,  
For in being killed is my life.

For your sake, for your sake I cross the desert...  
For your sake.

Ana al-Haqq, ana al-Haqq,  
*[I am Truth, I am Truth,]*  
For your sake...

I said, Who are You?  
He said... come upon me, come, come...

I said to my soul, be still and let the dark come upon You,  
I said, Who are You?  
He said... You,  
He said, You... You,  
He said...  
You.

English translations: Andrew Harvey

Excerpt from *Four Quartets* by T.S. Eliot.  
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## 5 Flow, my tears

Text: Toivo Tulev, based on John Dowland  
and *Improperias* from the Holy Week

Flow, my tears,  
fall from your springs,  
flow my tears, fall from your...  
Flow my tears,  
fall from your springs,  
fall, fall, fall,  
flow, flow, my tears, flow.  
Down, vain lights,  
shine no more,  
no nights are dark enough,  
no lights,  
shine no more,  
flow no more,  
no more.  
Flow down vain lights,  
shine no more,  
shine you no more.  
I led you in a pillar of cloud  
but you led me to...  
I gave you saving water,  
but you gave me gall  
and you gave vinegar.  
My people what have I done to you?  
What have I done to you, answer me.  
How have I offended you, you, you?  
I opened the sea before you,  
I opened the sea,  
but you opened my side with a spear.  
Flow, flow, flow down.  
Rain, drop down,  
cover the ground,  
drop down, my blood,  
flow, flow down,  
drop down,  
drop down, drop,  
flow, flow, flow,  
shine, flow, flow, shine!

Flow, my blood, flow,  
flow, drop, flow down.  
My blood spills from your wounds,  
drop, drop, drop,  
your wounds,  
flow, flow, flow down,  
flow, shine, drop, flow.  
Flow my tears, fall from your springs,  
flow, my blood.  
My blood, my blood spills from your wounds,  
my wounds,  
my blood,  
flow, blood, flow, flow,  
shine!  
Spills from your wounds  
my blood, shine!  
My wounds, my wounds,  
drop down, shine!  
From your, from my wounds,  
shine!  
Flow, drop down,  
shine!  
Flow, shine!  
my, your blood,  
shine!  
my blood,  
flow, shine, flow,  
shine! shine!  
fall, shine, fall, shine  
fall from your...  
flow, fall...  
Shine!  
Shine!

## 6 Magnificat

Text: St Luke's Gospel

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,  
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salvatore meo,  
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.  
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent  
omnes generationes,  
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,  
et sanctum nomen eius, et misericordia eius  
in progenies et progenies timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,  
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;  
deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles;

esurientes implevit bonis  
et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum,  
recordatus misericordiae,  
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,  
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

*My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,  
for he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth all generations  
shall call me blessed,  
for he that is mighty hath magnified me,  
and holy is his name, and his mercy is on them  
that fear him throughout all generations.*

*He hath shewed strength with his arm,  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts;  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat  
and hath exalted the humble and meek;  
He hath filled the hungry with good things  
and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

*He, remembering his mercy,  
hath holpen his servant Israel,  
as he promised to our forefathers,  
Abraham and his seed for ever.*

*English translation: Keith Anderson*

## Ieva Ezeriete



Photo: Jānis Deinats

Ieva Ezeriete has been a member and soloist of the Latvian Radio Choir since 1985 and the Latvian Radio Chamber Singers. She has received praise for her serene voice in performances of both classical and contemporary music, as well as her outstanding contribution to the leading roles in Rihm's opera *Jakob Lenz* and in the multimedia collaboration opera *War Sum Up*. As a soloist, Ezeriete frequently participates in the performance of large scale works and is a regular guest at several early music festivals. Ieva Ezeriete is a recipient of the Latvian Grand Music Award.

## Inga Martinsons



Photo: Jānis Deinats

Inga Martinsons was born in Limbaži (Latvia). She majored in choral conducting at the Latvian Music Academy and since 1993 has been a singer and soloist with the Latvian Radio Choir. Martinsons has participated in many independent musical and theatrical shows highlighting her talents as a true crossover artist.

## Ka Bo Chan



Countertenor Ka Bo Chan, a native of Hong Kong, moved to the United States as a teenager and later to Estonia in 1997. He graduated with a BA in financial management and received his MA from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. He has taken masterclasses with Carl Högset, Paul Esswood, Peter Kooij and Kirsten Buhl Möller, and has worked with conductors such as Eri Klas, Risto Joost and Kaspars Putniņš, among others. He has performed as a soloist in the Baltic States, Scandinavia, Europe, Israel, Russia and China, with a repertoire that ranges from early music to contemporary music.

## Virgo Veldi



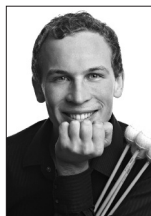
Estonian saxophone player, Virgo Veldi, is a graduate of the Sibelius Academy and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, where he continues now as a tutor. His early achievements include third prize at the Estonian Woodwind Players' Competition (1990), as well as first prize and the audience prize at the 'Con Brio' contest for young musicians (1996). Virgo Veldi has performed as a soloist with many orchestras including the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and Ohio Northern University's Symphony Orchestra, among others. He was active for several years as the music director of saxophone quartet SaxEst.

## Age Juurikas



Estonian pianist, Age Juurikas, combines the best traditions of the German and Russian piano schools in her playing. She started her music education aged four at the Tallinn Music High School, continuing her studies at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (with professors Nahkur and Lassmann), and later at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory (with professor Gornostayeva). Juurikas has won several top prizes at international piano competitions and regularly gives solo recitals, performs as a chamber musician and as a soloist with orchestras. She has recorded extensively for the Estonian national radio network.

## Heigo Rosin



Estonian percussionist, Heigo Rosin (b. 1989), has appeared frequently as a soloist with numerous orchestras and in solo recitals across Europe. In 2015 Rosin was accepted into the sponsorship programme of the Orpheum Foundation for the Advancement of Young Soloists. In the same year he was selected as principal percussionist with full scholarship to the World Percussion Group tour in the US. In January 2017 he made his debut in Carnegie Hall, New York. Heigo Rosin is endorsed by Mallettech Instruments and Sabian Cymbals.

## Vambola Krigul



Vambola Krigul is a well-known Estonian percussionist, active as a soloist and chamber musician. Krigul has successfully participated in several competitions including Eurovision Young Musicians in 2000 as finalist, and received first prize at the Yamaha Competition for Percussionists in 2001, and the National Percussion and Woodwind Competition in 2006. Krigul is an active member of ensemble U, he plays in the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, and teaches at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. He has given the premiere performance of many works by Estonian composers including Toivo Tulev, Galina Grigorjeva, Märt-Matis Lill, Lepo Sumera and Ülo Krigul.

## Latvian Radio Choir



Photo: Matīss Markovskis

The Latvian Radio Choir (LRC) ranks among the top professional chamber choirs in Europe. Working under the leadership of Sigvards Kļava and conductor Kaspars Putniņš, the choir is renowned for its tonal finesse and range of expression. The repertoire of the LRC ranges from the Renaissance to the most sophisticated modern scores. It could be described as a sound laboratory – the singers explore their skills by turning to the mysteries of traditional singing, as well as to the art of quartertone and overtone techniques. The LRC has participated in the top musical forums in Salzburg and Montpellier, the Baltic Sea Festival, Klangspuren Festival, La Musica, the Venice Biennale; and performed in renowned concert halls such as the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam, the Cité de la musique in Paris, and the Lincoln Center in New York. The LRC has collaborated with conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Heinz Holliger, Lars Ulrik Mortensen and many others. The choir has been widely recorded and has an extensive discography. [www.radiokoris.lv/en/choir](http://www.radiokoris.lv/en/choir)

## Tallinn Chamber Orchestra



The Tallinn Chamber Orchestra (TCO) was founded in 1993 by conductor Tõnu Kaljuste. In two decades it has become one of Estonia's signature orchestras and a welcome guest performer on numerous stages in Europe and all over the world. Risto Joost was appointed chief conductor in 2013 following on from a distinguished list of guest conductors including John Storgårds, Pietari Inkinen, Okko Kamu, Jaakko Kuusisto, Richard Tognetti, Terje Tønnesen, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Olari Elts, Arvo Volmer and Kristjan Järvi. The TCO has performed in many festivals including the MITO SettembreMusica Festival in Italy, the Budapest Autumn Festival, the Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Festival and the Vale of Glamorgan Festival. Concert tours have taken the orchestra to the US, Canada, Japan, China, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Tunisia and most European countries. In 2013 the TCO received the Estonian Music Council's Prize for interpretation. The TCO participated in Arvo Pärt's album *Adam's Lament*, which won conductor Tõnu Kaljuste a GRAMMY® Award in 2014. [www.filharmonia.ee/en/tko/orchestra](http://www.filharmonia.ee/en/tko/orchestra)

## Kaspars Putniņš



Photo: Jānis Deinats

Kaspars Putniņš has been conductor of the Latvian Radio Choir since 1992. In 1994 he formed the Latvian Radio Chamber Singers, an ensemble of soloists formed from the members of the Latvian Radio Choir. He regularly appears as a guest conductor with leading European choirs including the BBC Singers, the RIAS Kammerchor, the Berliner Rundfunkchor, the NDR Kammerchor and the Netherlands Chamber Choir, among others. He was appointed artistic director and chief conductor of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir in 2014. Although Kaspars Putniņš work encompasses a wide range of choral repertoire from Renaissance polyphony to works of the Romantic period, his foremost goal has always been that of promoting outstanding new choral music. He has forged close relationships with many composers in the Baltic states and elsewhere, developing new works while also exploring new musical languages and expression. Kaspars Putniņš has also initiated several theatrical projects in collaboration with visual and theatre artists. He often lectures and gives masterclasses internationally.

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Toivo Tulev ③ ④ ⑥

The Estonian composer Toivo Tulev has forged a unique sound world. His music, with its almost obsessive focus on religious mysticism, can be sensual and emotional but also cerebral and technically demanding. Tulev often takes inspiration from his extensive travels, in particular from the city of Istanbul which, like his vocal music, bridges East and West. His meditation on the words of Sufi mystic Mansur Al-Hallaj, *I said, Who are You? – He said, You*, conjures up a transcendent atmosphere, while his *Magnificat* departs from the text's traditionally solemn setting with its stratospherically high string writing and wild percussion solos.

**Toivo  
TULEV**  
(b. 1958)

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>1</b> <b>Suvine Vihm ('Summer Rain') (2006)</b><br>(dedicated to Vox Clamantis)        | <b>7:14</b>  |
| <b>2</b> <b>Legatissimo (2011)*</b>   | <b>10:18</b> |
| <b>3</b> <b>Tanto gentile (2010)</b><br>(for Kaspars Putniņš and the Latvian Radio Choir) | <b>10:24</b> |
| <b>4</b> <b>I said, Who are You? – He said, You (2007)</b>                                | <b>10:48</b> |
| <b>5</b> <b>Flow, my tears (2007)*</b><br>(for Paul Hillier and Ars Nova Copenhagen)      | <b>8:34</b>  |
| <b>6</b> <b>Magnificat (2013)*</b>  | <b>13:24</b> |

**\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Ka Bo Chan, Countertenor 4 • Ieva Ezeriete, Inga Martinsone, Sopranos 6**

**Virgo Veldi, Alto Saxophone 4 • Age Juurikas, Positive Organ 4**

**Heigo Rosin 2 6, Vambola Krigul 6, Percussion**

**Latvian Radio Choir 1 3 5 6 • Tallinn Chamber Orchestra 4 6**

**Kaspars Putniņš 1 3 4 5 6**

Full recording and publishing details can be found inside the booklet.

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and may also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/573735.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/573735.htm)

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