



Baltic Voices 2

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Paul Hillier

PRODUCTION **USA**

Baltic Voices 2



1–5

Urmās SISASK

Five songs from *Gloria Patri* (1988)

16:19

1 I Surrexit Christus 1:16 2 II Omnis una 3:27 3 IV Benedicamus 1:11

4 XXIII Oremus 8:12 5 XIX Confitemini Domino 2:13

6

Toivo TULEV

And then in silence there with me be only You (2002) **CD premiere** 13:34

7

Per NØRGÅRD

Winter Hymn (1976/84)

9:01

8–12

Galina GRIGORJEVA

On Leaving (1999) **CD premiere**

21:50

8 Lord, have mercy 4:43 9 Ode 1* 4:47 10 Odes 7-8 4:52

11 Kondakion 2:19 12 Ikos 5:10

* Tiit Kogerman, tenor; Neeme Punder, baroque flute

13–15

Alfred SCHNITTKE

Three Sacred Hymns (1983/4)

6:51

13 O Holy Virgin, rejoice 1:54 14 O Lord, Jesus Christ 1:21

15 Our Father in heaven 3:35

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor

Paul Hillier director

Baltic Voices 2

To the traveller from the West, crossing through Finland or Estonia towards Russia, the intermittent appearance in the landscape of an onion-shaped dome topped by an unfamiliar form of the cross is a reminder of just how far east one has come. The prime building material has become wood or large stone rather than brick, and public signs start to appear in both Cyrillic and the local variant of Finno-Ugrian. It is quite possible to understand neither one of them. A fragment of Swedish may be overheard, and suddenly, even to the non-speaker, there are familiar sounds in the air whose meanings can be comfortingly half-guessed at. One notices also a style of architecture and painting which might call to mind the Art Nouveau movement, but seems in these regions to have tapped into deeper Nationalist roots and so to have acquired a more lasting significance than its counterparts further west. Visit the cathedral of St. John in Tampere, for example, or see the paintings of Akseli Gallen-Kallela and his museum-house of Tarvaspää on the outskirts of Helsinki. The same impulse flowered also in Russia, where the re-imagining of folk art and medievalism stimulated a renewal of ecclesiastical art, and this in turn impressed itself upon the avant-garde of Malevich and Goncharova.

Because of its size and supposed cultural autonomy, it comes as almost a surprise to realise that Russia is a Baltic state too. Peter the Great confirmed this when he built St. Petersburg in the 18th century as his 'window onto the West,' and although her foothold on the Baltic may appear slight, when a country as vast as Russia wiggles its toe, it creates ripples which spread out into the whole region in many surprising ways—apart from the obvious militaristic one.

A natural exchange of goods and cultural inspiration has always occurred between neighbouring countries around the Baltic. To take one example: the Russian nobility, and artists and composers like Tchaikovsky often spent their summer vacations on the western coast of Estonia, and in the 19th century a railway link was established between St. Petersburg and Haapsalu, the home town of Cyrillus Kreek (see *Baltic Voices 1*). (The photo of the Choir on page 14 in this booklet shows them standing in what is known as the Tsar's Station in Haapsalu). Later, the violinist David Oistrakh holidayed at the nearby summer resort

town of Pärnu, where he established a summer music festival that continues to this day.

But the influence is not all from one direction. For several centuries there was a large Swedish population in western Estonia (where Stockholm is in fact in closer proximity than St. Petersburg), and there still are many local words of Swedish origin. Estonia had been under Swedish rule until it was ceded to Tsarist Russia in 1721. But it was only in 1944, when the Soviets invaded, that most of the Swedish population emigrated to Sweden—from where some of them are now returning to claim their grandparents' land.

Sometimes the historical process has given one group of people the advantage over another; sometimes a more egalitarian kind of fusion has taken place; and sometimes the different forces are content to remain themselves and simply coexist. Throughout the Baltic, what seems here or there to the outsider to be exotic, standing as it were in quotation marks—whether it is a style of window, or a recipe, or a type of hat, or the quality of someone's voice—has often long been rooted in that particular part of the world, and is regarded as perfectly normal by the locals. Then it is one's own expectations that have to be adjusted.

This second CD in the *Baltic Voices* series concentrates on sacred music. Three religions are represented, or rather the three branches of one religion, Christianity, which are to be found in the Baltic area: Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. The works by Schnittke and Grigorjeva each evoke the traditional sound of Russian Orthodox music, though working from two different reference points within that tradition—the late Romantic and the Medieval, respectively. Furthermore, the choice of Schnittke allowed me very conveniently to represent Germany as well, as he became a German citizen and lived the latter part of his life in Hamburg.

Catholicism is represented here by the works of Sisask and Tulev. I suppose Sisask's music must be accounted as Catholic, simply because of its use of Latin and the emphasis of some of his music on Marian texts. His personal reference points are, however, on a different plane altogether, as the note on his piece explains below. Tulev's Catholic focus is more specific in the work heard on this CD, being dedicated to the Brigittine nuns living in Estonia. The Brigittine order was founded by St. Bridget

of Sweden in the 14th century and contributed greatly to the culture of Estonia, Scandinavia and Germany. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the order was nearly destroyed when its houses were suppressed and confiscated. In 1911, the modern Brigittine order was founded in Rome, and, in 1942, it was recognized by the Holy See as an offshoot of the ancient order.

Finally, in keeping with the pan-Baltic mission of this series, I have included a work by the Danish composer Per Nørgård. This work is not strictly speaking sacred in the sense of 'liturgical'—if we read the note (below) by the poet Ole Sarvig carefully—but its ethical disposition and its hymn-like structure seem to me wholly linked to the Protestant world. Such a work could only have been made in a country which has managed to sustain a tradition of churchgoing and at the same time found a way to link this heritage meaningfully to the modern humanist democracy which pays for its keep.

Western secular humanism and the Russian Orthodox Church lie at opposite ends of numerous spectra, just as they emerge from opposite ends of the Baltic Sea. In all areas of the world we find a similar tug of war between neighbouring heritages and the larger pull of cultural forces from further afield, but in the Baltic there is a unique fusion of West and East, and today the region is enjoying a breath of political fresh air and economic confidence and, most precious of all, tolerance.

— Paul Hillier

- 1 **I**
Christ is risen on this day.
Halleluja.
- 2 **II**
Let us all, our voices raising,
Jesus Christ as one be praising.
He, the child of Virgin bright,
Shines today on us his light.
- 3 **IV**
Let us praise the Father.
Let us praise the Son.
Let us praise the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.
- 4 **XXIII**
Let us pray.
- 5 **XIX**
O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
Glory to the Father...

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Psalms 136: 1

- 6 Hail Mary, full of grace,
Hail Mary, full of grace!
Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women.
Hail Mary, full of grace!
- The Virgin, weighed
with the Word of God
Comes down the road:
If only you'll shelter her.
- Blessed art thou amongst women/
the fruit of thy womb
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus, Jesus
blessed fruit Jesus
blessed/
the fruit of thy womb
blessed
- and blessed is the fruit of thy womb
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
- and blessed is the fruit of thy womb/
the fruit
Jesus, the fruit Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
- The Virgin, weighed
with the Word of God
Comes down the road:
If only you'll shelter her.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
- Holy Mary, Mother of God,
for us sinners
now and at the hour of our death
pray God/
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Mother of God, pray for us Jesus
now and at the hour ... Jesus ... of death.
- Jesus ... if only you'll shelter her
If only you'll shelter him
Jesus, Jesus comes down the road/
If only you'll shelter him.
- Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus...

Translation: T. Tulev

- 7 The passing year will pass its deep.
So shall our mind reach winter's sleep.
And as the tree stands leafless, bare
is winter's realm: our minds aware.
- A heaven-germ on winged foot
thrust deep into the earth its root
and grew unto a tree of might
like dark streams longing towards light.
- You souls who live on Tellus' round,
see: It is white, frost-bitten, -bound.
And life's sweet summer sleeps below
in deep oblivion under snow.
- So, know, you mind so bit with fear:
Thus has a germ of grace come near,
cannot be seen by everyone,
but only by the lonely, gone –
- to plunge into oblivion's bath
by all seed's long and wintry path.
If you are purely you, alone,
a You shall meet you and atone:
He is that life the year let fly
that had to fall so deep and die
and darkly take the unborn age
through winter's wounds and noise and rage.
- He grows of you: Your heart a bud.
He is your life. You are His blood.
Now silence reigns on Earth, and snow
muffles the words of grace that glow:
- You, who have lost, lost all, I will
stay with and in and wait until
unseen by worldly eyes the breath
of life's new summer conquers death.
- And not one soul shall see it thus
who does not snow-clad watch with us
under these frosty winterdays
where life its budding secret lays.

English version by Ole Sarvig Galina GRIGORJEVA

On Leaving

8

1
Amen.
Lord, have mercy!
To Thee, O Lord, amen.

Canon on the separation of the soul from the body

9

2
Like drops of rain
my evil days and few,
dried up by summer's heat,
already gently vanish:
O Lady, save me.

(Ode 1)

10

3
The night of death, gloomy and moonless,
hath overtaken me,
still unready, sending me forth
on that long and dreadful journey unprepared.
But let thy mercy accompany me,
O Lady.

Lo, all my days are vanished,
of a truth, in vanity, as it is written,
and my years are also in vain;
and now the snares of death,
which of a truth are bitter,
have entangled my soul,
and have compassed me round about.

(Ode 7)

Vouchsafe that I may escape
the hordes of bodiless barbarians,
and rise through the abysses of the air,
and enter into heaven;
and I will glorify thee forever,
O holy Birth-giver of God.

When the last great trumpet shall sound unto
the frightful and dread Resurrection of the
Judgment Day, and all shall rise from the dead;
then remember thou me, o holy Birth-giver of God.

(Ode 8)

After the soul leaves the body

11

4
With the Saints give rest, O Christ,
to the souls of Thy servants,
where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow,
nor sighing, but life everlasting.

(Kondakion)

12

5
Thou only art immortal,
who hast created and fashioned man.
For out of the earth were we mortals made,
and unto the earth shall we return again,
as Thou didst command
when Thou madest me, saying unto me:
For earth thou art,
and unto the earth shalt thou return.
Whither, also, all we mortals wend our way,
making our funeral dirge the song:
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

(Ikos)

*Service Book of the Holy Orthodox
Catholic Apostolic Church*

Alfred SCHNITTKE

Three Sacred Hymns

13

1
O Virgin and mother of God,
rejoice, Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you!
You are blessed among women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,
for you gave birth to the Saviour of our souls!

14

2
O Lord, Jesus Christ,
O, son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.

Luke 18: 13

15

3
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today
our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts
as we also have forgiven
our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
now and forever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9–13



Urmas SISASK

Estonian, born 1960.

Sisask studied composition under René Eespere and graduated from the Tallinn Conservatory in 1985. He is described as a composer and amateur astronomer, but these two activities are in fact closely interlinked. In a modern echo of Kepler, Sisask has worked

out theoretical sound values for the rotations of the planets in the solar system. This reduces to a 'planetal scale' of five tones: C-sharp, D, F-sharp, G-sharp and A, which by coincidence he found matches the Japanese scale *kumayoshi*. This scale forms the melodic and harmonic basis for **Gloria Patri**, a collection of twenty-four sacred songs exploring a varied range of contrapuntal techniques, from which I have selected five to form a small cycle. Sisask has composed music in many genres, not always associated with the stars, though perhaps his most well-known opus to date is the large-scale *Starry Sky Cycle* for piano, in two sets, one for each hemisphere, in which the shapes of certain constellations and their mythic significance are realised in music. Sisask lives in the village of Järeda where he gives concerts and lectures in his Musical Planetarium situated in the tower of an old manor house.

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Toivo TULEV

Estonian, born 1958.

Tulev studied composition with Anti Marguste, Eino Tamberg, Sven-David Sandström and at the studio of electroacoustic music in the Musikhochschule, Cologne. He has also been a student of Gregorian chant and, in the 1980s, was a singer in the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir. Amongst his strongest influences has been his involvement as a performer of pre-Baroque music, but despite the primarily vocal nature of such music, his works thus far have been mostly for orchestra or smaller instrumental ensembles. Tulev is composer-in-residence with the EPCC in 2004–5.

And then in silence there with me be only You was composed in 2001–2 and is dedicated to the Brigittine nuns, a semi-contemplative order who live in Pirita, Estonia. The text is a composite of *Hail Mary* in Malayalam and Italian and of a tiny poem by Juan de la Cruz in Spanish. Tulev writes: "The Brigittine connection to the Malayalam is very close as a number of them come from Kerala, a region believed to be Christianized by St. Thomas in the 1st century. Although they use different rites like Malabar and Syrian rather than Latin, they all belong to the Catholic Church. The 'official' language of the order is Italian, but they also use their mother tongue communicating to each other. I came to know the language as I often stayed in the monastery. Besides its rhythm and *klang* I also became seduced by the palindromic structure of the word 'malayalam,' its symmetry and immutability. This should explain the dedication, and my deep gratitude. The other two languages, Italian and Spanish, were also being spoken in the monastery during the period when I wrote the piece." The work is recorded here for the first time.

Helle Råhback



Per NØRGÅRD

Danish, born 1932.

One of Denmark's most famous composers, Nørgård has written symphonies, operas, and a substantial body of choral music. His use of the so-called 'infinity series' has played a fertile role in his work in conjunction with proportional relationships such as he describes below. Another important influence has been the surrealist paintings and writings of Adolf Wölfl (1864–1930), a schizophrenic Swiss artist who lived the greater part of his life in a mental hospital. One of the works inspired by this encounter, *Wie ein Kind* (also using text by Rilke), has become one of the most performed choral works in Scandinavia—but as it has already been so often recorded I decided not to include it in this series.

Winter Hymn (*Vintersalmer*) is an arrangement by the Swedish choral conductor, Gunnar Eriksson, of Nørgård's *Winter Cantata*, incorporating material from a family of works, including the larger scale *Frost Psalm*. The original hymn-like text by Ole Sarvig is in Danish, but the poet himself made an English version so that the music might be more accessible to choirs and audiences in other countries. I had the pleasure of meeting Nørgård in 1997 when I conducted the first performance of this English language version with the Danish Vocal Group Ars Nova.

Nørgård writes: "Just as we all live amidst a multitude of fast and slow activities at the same time, the melodies in **Winter Hymn** unfold in several time relationships across one another—and yet together—not unlike the ideas behind the proportional canons etc. of certain of the Renaissance composers... Thus the music approaches the many time-progressions of nature and of the mind which Ole Sarvig's simple yet profound hymn texts are about."

And Sarvig: "Hymns' do not form a genre among other poetic genres; rather they are an intensification of experiences. The few 'hymns' or 'psalms' I have been able to write so far are intended for 'two or three voices, possibly a few more or a few less'; that is, they are not for a congregation."



Galina GRIGORJEVA

Ukrainian/Estonian, born 1962 in the Crimea.

She studied at the Odessa Conservatory and later at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After marrying an Estonian she moved to Estonia and furthered her studies with Lepo Sumera at the Estonian Academy of Music. **On Leaving** was composed in 1999.

History almost repeats itself. I first heard Grigorjeva's music a couple of years ago on tapes of concerts by Hortus Musicus, the Estonian early music group directed by Andres Mustonen. These included a purely instrumental performance of **On Leaving**, which I immediately recognised as a work I wanted to perform—with voices. This process imitates what happened with Arvo Pärt's earliest *tintinnabuli* music, which Hortus Musicus premiered in the 1970s. Although I did not hear the original Pärt versions until after I had performed the works myself, I do want to acknowledge Mustonen's crucial role in advancing the work of these two composers.

Grigorjeva writes: "For this composition I turned to the prayer book and selected certain lines from the 'Canon to Jesus Christ Our Lord and the Virgin Mary on the Hour of Leaving of Orthodox Souls' (parts 1–3) and from the chapter 'On Burying Lay People' (parts 4–5). While working on the composition I acquainted myself with the 15th–17th century tradition of polyphonic singing and with various forms of Russian sacred poetry. The natural dissonance and the almost impenetrable rhythmic organisation of heterophonic polyphony I find most remarkable. It's these very elements, to my mind, that give the national musical culture its distinctness." The work is recorded here for the first time.

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Alfred SCHNITTKE

Russian/German, 1934–1998.

Born in Engels, on the Volga River, in the Soviet Union: his father was born in Frankfurt to a Jewish family of Russian origin who had moved to the USSR in 1926, and his mother was a Volga-German born in Russia. Schnittke began his musical education in 1946 in

Vienna where his father, a journalist and translator, had been posted. In 1948, the family moved to Moscow, where Schnittke studied piano and received a diploma in choral conducting. In 1962, Schnittke was appointed instructor in instrumentation at the Moscow Conservatory, a post that he held until 1972. Thereafter he supported himself for many years chiefly as a composer of film scores. Beginning in 1990, Schnittke resided in Hamburg, maintaining dual German-Russian citizenship.

The **Drei Geistliche Gesänge** ("Three Sacred Hymns") were composed in 1983. The Russian conductor Valery Polyansky had requested an a cappella work for his choir, and though at first Schnittke seemed reluctant, he apparently woke in the middle of the night and wrote down these three pieces, and handed the manuscript to Polyansky the following day. The work was only published posthumously.

Certain melodic figures and scale passages bind the three pieces together, as does the harmonic plan. The first piece uses the two choirs antiphonally and in strict canon, one measure apart, the first choir singing in E-flat major, the second choir a minor third lower in C minor; the second piece, a dramatic supplication rising from *piano* to *fortissimo* in a single brief arch, is in C minor; while the third piece, the most harmonically varied of the three, is in E-flat major.

— Paul Hillier



Arvo Aun

Paul Hillier

- His musical interests range from medieval to contemporary music and include singing, conducting, and writing. In 1990, after many years as Music Director of the Hilliard Ensemble, he founded the Theatre of Voices and began his series of acclaimed recordings for **harmonia mundi usa**. From 1996 to 2003, Hillier was Director of the Early Music Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington. In September 2001,

he was named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, with which he launched a cycle of recordings (of which this is the second) exploring the choral tradition of the Baltic Sea countries. *Baltic Voices 1* met with unanimous praise and won Hillier a GRAMMY® nomination. His second recording with the Choir, *The Powers of Heaven*, was a much-admired program of Russian Orthodox sacred music. In 2004 Paul Hillier was awarded the Estonian Cultural Prize.

In 2002 he was made Honorary Professor in Music at the University of Copenhagen, and in 2003 accepted the post of Chief Conductor of Vocal Group Ars Nova (Copenhagen). Hillier is the author of a monograph "Arvo Pärt" (1997) and editor of "The Collected Writings of Steve Reich" (2002), both published by Oxford University Press. His latest project is a book about consort singing.



Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir

The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (*Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor*) was founded in 1981 by Tõnu Kaljuste, its principal conductor and artistic director until 2001, when he invited conductor Paul Hillier to take over the post. The Choir has an extensive repertoire ranging from Gregorian chant to twentieth-century music, with special emphasis on Estonian composers, including Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis. The Choir tours regularly in Europe, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia. In addition to concertising, the Choir has made numerous recordings, many of which have received the highest critical acclaim, including five GRAMMY® nominations. The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir works with many world-class conductors and orchestras, and has a long-standing partnership with the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra.

For more information about the EPCC, please visit www.epcc.ee

Soprano

Kaia Urb
(solo, tracks 5, 7)
Vilve Hepner
Eha Pärj
(solo, track 7)
Kädy Plaas
Veronika Portsmouth
Annika Ilus
Kristiina Under
Else Torp

Alto

Iris Oja
(solo, tracks 5, 7)
Karin Salumäe
Juta Roopalu-Malk
Tiiu Otsing
Risto Joost
(countertenor)

Tenor

Mati Turi
(solo, track 7)
Tiit Kogerman
(solo, tracks 5, 9)
Toomas Tohter
Martin Lumi
Arvo Aun
Toivo Kivi
Kaido Janke

Bass

Aarne Talvik
(solo, track 5)
Rainer Vilu
Allan Vurma
Tõnu Tormis
Kalev Keeroja
Esper Linnamägi
Märt Krell
Vladimir Miller
(basso profundo,
Tracks 8–12)

Principal Conductor and Artistic Director:
Paul Hillier

Choirmaster: Mikk Üleoja

acknowledgments

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