

ONDINE

PENDERECKI

SACRED CHORAL WORKS

LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR

SIGVARDS KLAVA





KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI (1933–2020)

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LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR
SIGVARDŠ KLAVA, conductor

Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020) was one of the most prominent twentieth-century composers. Born in the south-eastern Polish town of Dębica, he belongs to the generation that witnessed and survived the horrors of the Holocaust only to further endure living under the totalitarian communist regime for almost four decades, between 1952 and 1989. Like for many artists of his generation, these experiences left indelible marks in his creative output. Penderecki started his musical journey by studying the violin in 1946, continuing his education at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, and then at the Kraków Academy of Music, where he also studied composition with Artur Malawski and later with Stanislaw Wiechowicz. After graduating in 1958, he took up a teaching post at the Academy, becoming its rector in 1972. In 2020 the academy was renamed after Krzysztof Penderecki. He also taught at Essen Folkwang Hochschule in 1966–68, and was on the faculty at Yale School of Music in 1973–78.

His international career as a composer was launched in 1960 with the *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, introducing his name and work to the broader public. Penderecki went on to compose a wide range of orchestral music, five operas (one of them for children), eight symphonies, concertante and chamber works, works for solo instruments, music for a dozen of documentary and feature films, and twenty-five animated films, both for children and adults. Penderecki's music has also been adapted for film soundtracks, which include Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) and the TV series *Twin Peaks* (2017). Among his vocal and choral compositions is a large number of sacred works, many based on sections of the Catholic Mass.

The defining characteristics of his compositional language are many, and his style evolved throughout his career. He experimented with graphic notation and various extended techniques, his use of dense chord clusters was one of the hallmarks of his pre-1970s period, and he was fascinated by the idea of liberating the sound from traditional means of production. For example, in the first of his three orchestral works titled *De Natura Sonoris I* (1966), he instructs the orchestra to employ non-standard techniques to produce original sounds and colours.

By the mid-1970s his style began to gravitate towards leaner sounds and textures, and traditional tonality. Having had the experience of two extremes – artistic limitations imposed by the totalitarian ideology of communist Poland, and the almost unlimited freedom of Western avant-garde, which resulted in a continuous destruction of form, he started to search for new artistic means of expression. He remarked about his opera *Paradise Lost*, commissioned by the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1975 that it is no longer the music 'by the angry young man I used to be' (*Washington Post*, 1 December 1978).

Although Penderecki's compositional approaches changed and evolved during his many decades of creative work, what remained constant is his ardent response to dramatic and tragic events in human history. Works such as the *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960), the *Polish Requiem* (1984, revised 1993), *Psalm No. 3* (2015), commemorating the Armenian Genocide of 1915, respond to human tragedy with direct communication and expression. He said: 'I did not live in easy times, I had to react with my music.' (TV interview by Marc-Christoph Wagner, 2013).

Penderecki's ability to communicate emotional responses to historical events, past or present, is perhaps best demonstrated in his choral music, where the human voice is the instrument connecting the mind to the heart.

Miserere (1965) and *In Pulverem mortis, Psalm 21* (1966), are both from Penderecki's remarkable *St Luke's Passion* (*Passio et mors Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Lucam*, or the *Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to St Luke*). Remarkable because this work was composed during the communist regime in the Polish People's Republic, a period marked, among other things, by strict adherence, at least officially, to atheism. With this work, the composer commemorated the thousand-year anniversary of the establishment of Polish Christianity by setting texts from the *Gospel of Luke* the *Stabat Mater*.

Artistically, Penderecki is in his avant-garde period, and the *St Luke Passion* is almost entirely atonal, with prominently featured tone clusters frequently played *fortissimo* by organ or brass. The work is written for large forces: a narrator, soprano, baritone, and bass soloists, three mixed choruses and children's choir, and a large orchestra, but the stark simplicity and powerful and direct emotional impact of the music immediately led to many repeat performances after its premiere on 30 March 1966.

Agnus Dei (1981) was written in 1981, as a reaction to the death of Penderecki's friend Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, believed by many to be a spiritual leader of the Polish nation in opposition to the Communist regime of Poland and the person credited for ensuring the survival of the Polish Christianity. *Agnus Dei* was later incorporated into the composer's *Polish Requiem*, and in 2007 Penderecki made an arrangement for eight cello as a response to the death of his other close friend, Mstislav Rostropovich. The personal grief, expressed with the opening falling semi-tone, slowly swells to become an impassioned, painful scream, eventually subdued into quiet reflection.

Penderecki wrote the *Song of Cherubim* (1986) as a gift for Mstislav Rostropovich on his 60th birthday. It is set to the text of the *Hymn to the Holy Trinity*, which accompanies the opening of the royal doors leading to the altar in the Eastern Orthodox liturgy. Written for unaccompanied mixed choir, it has three clearly defined sections, depicting the participation of the faithful, the priests, and angels. Beginning with quiet soprano monody, it gradually blossoms into an ecstatic, jubilant polyphony celebrating the sacred ritual, before retreating into a quiet world of reflection.

Composed in Oslo and bearing a dedication to the Autonomous University of Madrid, *Veni Creator* (1987) is a work for mixed choir (SSAATTBB) set to the text of Hrabanus Maurus. Born in the late eighth century into a noble family, Maurus became a senior figure in the Carolingian Church, and was an accomplished scholar famous for a set of sophisticated poems *De Laudibus Sanctae Crucis* (In Praise of the Holy Cross).

De profundis, Psalm 129, 1-5 (1996) is a part of Penderecki's oratorio *Seven Gates of Jerusalem*. Following the 'Yom Kippur' war, Penderecki first visited the city in 1974, and

it held a special place in his heart ever since. He was commissioned to write a work for the third millennium celebration of the city of David, composing the *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* in 1996. When the work received its Polish première, Penderecki decided to call it his Seventh Symphony.

O Gloriosa virginum (2009) is a short work for mixed choir a cappella (SSAATTBB). Lucid textures, clear harmonies, and floating vocal lines all make a very convincing case for this celebratory sentiment.

Missa brevis (2012):

Kyrie (2012), *Gloria* (2012), *Sanctus* (2008), *Benedictus* (2002), *Benedicamus Domino* (1992), *Agnus Dei* (2012)

Missa brevis (a short Mass without the Credo) was commissioned by the Bach Archive in Leipzig for the 800th anniversary of St Thomas's Church, but its six sections were actually written over the course of twenty years, 1992–2012. The sections were written in different order from that found in the canonical sequence of the Latin Mass with only the last, *Agnus Dei*, composed in the corresponding order. Despite the length of time it took for the disparate sections to become one work, it is musically consistent and coherent, and obviously written to embrace the specific sonority of children's voices. The length of *Missa brevis* is also unorthodox, which led some commentators to reflect on it being 'a collection of intricate musical miniatures of a cappella choir.' (Artur Matys, commentary to the recording released in 2014). A cappella polyphony captures the spirit of the Renaissance in Penderecki's own very distinct language within a laconic form.

Anastasia Belina

"A great musical power."
– Washington Post

*"This chorus's expertise in music pushes voices to extremes,
from ethereal high tones to uncannily sustained bass drones."*
– The New York Times

*"You can't but be stunned by the fearless skill of Sigurds Klava's choir ...
—the musical equivalent of climbing Mount Everest."*
– BBC Music Magazine

The **Latvian Radio Choir** is a unique, award-winning ensemble of professional singers that offers its audiences an extraordinary variety of repertoire ranging from early music to the most sophisticated scores of contemporary compositions.

The choir has recorded the GRAMMY Award-winning album *Adam's Lament* (ECM) composed by Arvo Pärt and conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste. It is a repeat winner of the Great Music Award of Latvia (the highest national award for professional achievement in music) and has received the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Award. The choir's recording of Sergei Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* was praised by Gramophone as the best recording of February 2013 and ranked among the 25 best albums of the year by the American radio station NPR.

The Latvian Radio Choir has performed at many of the world's most renowned concert halls: Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw (the Netherlands), Elbphilharmonie (Germany), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and Cité de la Musique-Philharmonie de Paris (France), Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Duke University Chapel and the Walt Disney Concert Hall (USA), Konzerthaus Berlin (Germany), the Library of Congress (USA), Queen Elizabeth Hall (UK) and the Dresden Frauenkirche (Germany).

It is also a regular performer at leading musical events, such as BBC Proms (UK), the Salzburg (Austria) and Lucerne (Switzerland) festivals, the Festival of Radio France Occitanie Montpellier (France), the Baltic Sea Festival (Sweden), Printemps des arts de Monte-Carlo (Monaco), Klangspuren Festival (Austria), the White Light Festival (USA), Klangvokal Dortmund (Germany), Musikfest Erzgebirge (Germany), OzAsia Festival (Australia) and Soundstreams (Canada).

Often serving as a creative lab, the choir encourages composers to write new music that challenges the capabilities of the human voice. During the past 20 years, the ensemble has evolved into an unprecedented form of a choir where every singer has an individual mission and provides their unique contribution to the group's unique, defining blend of timbral qualities.

The choir regularly releases new recordings with Ondine, Hyperion Records, Deutsche Grammophon, ECM, BIS and Naïve, collaborating with outstanding guest conductors like Heinz Holliger, Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly, Gustavo Dudamel, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Peter Phillips. It has also partnered with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg and Concerto Copenhagen.

The Latvian Radio Choir was founded in 1940 by the legendary Latvian conductor Teodors Kalniņš, who led the ensemble until his passing in 1962. Following the artistic direction by Edgars Račevskis (1963–86) and Juris Kļaviņš (1987–92), the choir has had two conductors ever since 1992 – artistic director and principal conductor Sigvards Kļava and conductor Kaspars Putniņš.

www.radiokoris.lv



LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR

Sigvards Kļava is one of the most outstanding Latvian conductors, also a professor of conducting and producer, music director of the Latvian Radio Choir since 1992. As a result of Sigvards Kļava's steady efforts, the Latvian Radio Choir has become an internationally recognized, vocally distinctive collective, where each singer possesses a creative individuality. Under Sigvards' guidance, the choir has recorded a number of choral works by little known or completely forgotten composers of the past, as well as formed a friendly collaboration with a number of notable Latvian composers. Sigvards Kļava is a professor at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. Kļava is a multiple winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award. He has performed at the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw of Amsterdam, Berliner Konzerthaus and Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Berwaldhallen in Stockholm, Dresdner Frauenkirche as well as in the New York Lincoln Centre.

1 O gloriosa virginum

O gloriosa Virginum,
Sublimis inter sidera,
Qui te creavit, parvulum
Lactente nutris ubere.

Quod Heva tristis abstulit,
Tu reddis almo germine:
Intrent ut astra flebiles,
Coeli recludis cardines.

Tu regis alti janua,
Et aula lucis fulgida:
Vitam datam per Virginem,
Gentes redemptae plaudite.

Jesu, tibi sit gloria,
Qui natus es de Virgine,
Cum Patre, et almo Spiritu
In sempiterna saecula.

2 De profundis

De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.
Domine exaudi vocem meam
fiant aures tuae intendentes in vocem
deprecationis meae.

O Queen of all the Virgin choir,
Enthroned above the starry sky;
Who with pure milk from thy own breast
Thy own Creator didst supply.

What man hath lost in hapless Eve,
Thy sacred womb to man restores;
Thou to the sorrowing here beneath
Hast open'd Heaven's eternal doors.

Hail, O refulgent Hall of light!
Hail, Gate sublime of Heaven's high King!
Through thee redeem'd to endless life,
Thy praise let all the nations sing.

O Jesu! born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee,
O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice
let thine ears be attentive to the voice

Si iniquitates observabis Domine
Domine quis sustinebit.
Quia apud te propitiatio est propter
legem tuam sustinui te Domine
sustinuit anima mea in verbum eius.
Speravit anima mea in Domino.

3 In pulverem mortis

In pulverem mortis deduxisti me.
Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos,
dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea.
Ipsi vero consideraverunt
et inspexerunt me.
Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea,
et super vestem meam miserunt sortem.
Tu autem, Domine, ne elongaveris auxilium
tuum a
me, ad defensionem meam conspice.

4 Song of Cherubim

Izhe kheruvimy tayno obrazuyushche,
i zhivotvo ryashchey Troitse trisvyatuyu
pesn' pripevayushsche, vsyakoe nyne
zhiteyskoe otlozhim popechnie.
Yako da tsarya vsekh pod'imem

of my supplications.
If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
that thou mayest be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,
and in his word do I hope.

Thou hast brought me down into the
dust of death.
They pierced my hands and my feet,
they have numbered all my bones.
They stand staring
and looking upon me.
They part my garments among them,
and cast lots upon my vesture.
But be thou not far from me, O Lord:
thou art my succour, haste thee to help
me.

Let us the cherubim mystically
representing,
and unto the life-giving Trinity
the thriceholy chant intoning,
now lay aside all earthly care:

angel'skimi nevidimo
dorinosima chinmi.
Alliluīa, alliluīa, alliluīa.

5 Veni Creator

Veni, Creator Spiritus,
mentes tuorum visita,
imple superna gratia
quae tu creasti pectora.

Accende lumen sensibus:
infunde amorem cordibus:
infirmi nostri corporis
virtute firmans perpeti.

Hostem repellas longius,
pacemque dones protinus:
ductore sic te praeviso
vitemus omne noxium.

Deo Patri sit gloria,
et Filio qui a mortuis
surrexit, ac Paraclito,
in saeculorum saecula. Amen.

That we may raise on the King of all,
by the angelic hosts invisibly attended.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
from thy bright heav'nly throne;
come, take possession of our souls,
and make them all thine own.

O guide our minds with thy blest light,
with love our hearts inflame;
and with thy strength, which ne'er decays,
confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our deadly foe;
true peace unto us bring;
and through all perils lead us safe
beneath thy sacred wing.

All glory to the Father be,
with his coequal Son;
the same to thee, great Paraclete,
while endless ages run.

6 Miserere

Miserere mei Deus quoniam
conculcavit me homo tota die
inipugnans tribulavit me.

Have mercy on me, O God,
for man hath trodden me under foot; all
the day long
he hath afflicted me fighting against me.

7 Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of
the world, grant them everlasting rest.

MISSA BREVIS

8 Kyrie

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

9 Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.

Glory to God in the highest.
And on earth peace to people of good
will.

Laudamus te, benedicamus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi propter magnam
gloria tuam.

We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens. Jesu Christe.
Agnus Dei, Filii Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostrum.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus
Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

10 Benedicamus Domino

Benedicamus Domino.
Laudate omnes gentes.
Laudate eum omnes populi.
Quoniam confirmata est super nos
misericordia eius.
Laudate, et veritas Domini manet in
aeternum.

Lord God, heavenly King,
O God almighty Father, Jesus Christ.
Lamb of God, Son of The Father.
You take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
You take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
You are seated at the right hand of the
Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone
are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God
the Father.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Praise him, all nations.
Praise him, all peoples.
For his mercy has been confirmed over us.
And the truth of the Lord remains for all
eternity.

Laudate omnes gentes.
Benedicamus Domino.
Alleluia.

Praise him, all nations.
Let us bless the Lord.
Alleluia.

(Psalm 117)

11 Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra.
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full
Holy Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

12 Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of
the Lord.
Glory in the highest.

13 Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis mundi,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away
the sins of the world,
have mercy on us,
grant us peace.

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