



Fridrich BRUK

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FIVE
SYMPHONY NO. 13, THE ARTIST KAZIMIR MALEVICH (1878–1935)
SYMPHONY NO. 14, THE SCREAM

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra
Imants Resnis, conductor

TWO PAINTERLY SYMPHONIES: FRIDRICH BRUK'S NOS. 13 AND 14

by David Hackbridge Johnson

When Fridrich Bruk was 61, an age when most composers might look back at a worklist with groups of compositions tidily arranged by genre, he started a symphonic odyssey that is now 26 years in the journeying and has yet to arrive at its symbolic Ithaca. Since then, he has written a symphony almost every year, reaching his 23rd in 2021. A survey of the entire series has yet to be written,¹ but amongst this unbroken thread of orchestral compositions can be discerned patterns of musical, geographical and cultural thought that speak not only of Bruk's personal experiences but also of upheavals, distortions and erasures that characterise aspects of twentieth- and early-21st-century history, as they relate to Bruk's topographical footprints: from Kharkov (now Kharkiv, in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union), where he was born in 1937 and where he graduated from the Conservatoire, to St Petersburg (then called Leningrad) for further study under Boris Arapov, to Petroskoi in Karelia; from there back to St Petersburg, where he became head of the Lennauch studio for TV and film music, a brief sojourn in the USA, followed by permanent emigration to Finland, where he now lives in Tampere. These arrows on the map offer a trace of movement but they conceal the distressed fault-lines of history as they impinge on family life. Bruk's Jewish grandparents were deported from their Latvian homeland, hence his engagement with both Latvian and Jewish folksongs (as in Symphony No. 18, *Daugavpils*).² His mother, the concert pianist Ada Bragilevsky-Bruk, perished in 1943, most probably because of a deliberate form of biological warfare perpetrated by the Nazis through their release of disease-bearing mosquitos (encapsulations

¹ I carried out a partial survey of Bruk's symphonies, including the ones contained in two previous Toccata Classics albums of his music, for a Toccata blog post: <https://toccataclassics.com/too-many-symphonies-part-two-fridrich-bruk/>.

² On Fridrich Bruk, *Orchestral Music, Volume One* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0455).

of this tragedy can be heard in Bruk's Symphony No. 2). And Bruk continues to be fascinated by the songs of minority peoples straddling the borders of Russia, Finland and the Baltic States – his works seeking a triangulation of identities lost in the wake of racist ideology and steamrolling armies.³

Whereas the previous Toccata Classics albums of Fridrich Bruk's symphonies have emphasised extra-musical influences from historical or socio/linguistic disciplines, the two works here pay homage to two painters who made an impression on the composer: Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) in the case of Symphony No. 13, and Edvard Munch (1863–1944) with Symphony No. 14. One might call No. 13 a commentary on the external forces acting upon an artist: Malevich was almost purged by the KGB, having been threatened with execution for spying for Poland in 1930. No. 14, as its subtitle 'Huuto' ('The Scream') suggests, reflects more on the torment of the psyche, an essentially internalised drama. In a sense the two symphonies might be paired as 'outer' and 'inner' realms of musical argument.

Symphony No. 13, *The Artist Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935)* (2014)

Bruk's Symphony No. 13 was written in 2014 and is scored for modest forces: pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, three horns, percussion and strings. The first movement 1, entitled 'Kazimir', stands as a portrait of the artist, based on Malevich's *Self-Portrait* painted between 1908 and 1910, with its Fauvist colours and livid-pink background nudes. Bruk's introduction to this movement reads as follows:

The first movement of the symphony is based on the motifs of *Self-Portrait* (1908) by the artist Kazimir Malevich. This painting portrays a strong-willed personality embroiled in a ruthless struggle with the surrounding *petit bourgeoisie*, a personality opposed to the myopia and stagnation of artistic vision.

³ A partial list of Bruk compositions inspired by minority or threatened cultures would include: Symphony No. 3, *Taiteilija Chagall* (which sets Bruk's own text in Yiddish; 2000); Symphony No. 4, *Karelia* (2001); Symphony No. 5, *In the Jewish Mode* (2002); Symphony No. 9, *In the Finnish Mode* (2009); Symphony No. 10, *Klezmorim II* (2010); Symphony No. 19, *Tunes from the Ghettos* (2019); Symphony No. 23, *In the Ingrian Mode* (2021); and the song-cycle *I am a Green Birch Tree*, for soprano and orchestra, with text from the Kalevala translated into Russian by Marat Tarasov (1962).

Malevich, who was born in Ukraine in the city of Kiev, belonged to the Polish minority. At that time Poles and Jews were deemed undesirables in Ukraine. Therefore, already as a child he became conscious of his different ethnicity vis-à-vis the majority of the Ukrainian people.⁴

This lengthy multi-section movement, like much of Bruk's music, proceeds organically; signposts that might prove useful to the listener follow. The opening is dominated by a theme heard on the horns and suggestive of heroic struggle. The rising fourths in Ex. 1 may remind some listeners of Hindemith, although Bruk's way of harmonising the theme in blocks is his own.

Ex. 1



By 1:46 the music based on this theme has climaxed on a *tutti* statement of Ex. 1, after which shimmering percussion emerges to create an overlap to the next section, which is based on a series of static chords – like frozen shapes on a canvas. At 2:31 a languid waltz begins, with sinuous wind solos over lush, jazzy string chords. The strings offer a lyrical view of this material at 3:00, which culminates in a climactic release into wind and percussion fragments and a cadential close.

A lonely bassoon (4:23) starts the next section, and its noble soliloquy is taken up by a solo oboe over a dance-like accompaniment of *pizzicato* strings and suspended cymbal (4:56). This strange dance quickly falls into more argumentative, even sardonic, material, which ebbs and flows until another pause at 6:30. Whole-tone chords rise up to herald another section with cymbal and *pizzicato* strings. A martial element introduced at 7:06 prefaces a return of the 'languid waltz' material, with the addition of much virtuosic xylophone writing. A timpani flourish brings about another heroic horn

⁴ Composer's note, Tampere, 27 February 2015.

theme at 7:37, which, although not identical to Ex. 1, retains some of the leaping triplets that act like sigils of some creative spirit. These vaunting phrases carry the music to the next cadence, ending at 8:55.

Out of this cadential pause another lyrical episode of Mahlerian intensity rises as a mirror to that which occurred at 3:00. The culmination of this passage is a series of rhetorical discords (10:00). The wind tentatively take up material using the triplet figures of Ex. 1, before solo oboe and solo violin ruminate over figures from the earlier bassoon solo; the accompaniment is fragrant, almost Skryabinesque. Joining these strange blossoms are clarinet, flute, solo cello and bassoon. More definite gestures emerge at 11:59, with percussive punctuations. Bruk's favourite block-chord dissonances lead to more solo passages for cello and bassoon in music of tender yet searching feeling – the music taking on all the glimmers and shadows of the night. A solo horn (14:12) sounds a valedictory note, as if the heroism of the opening has been distilled by experience and regret. A flute, by the simplest of gestures, heralds the almost miraculous appearance of E minor, and stillness reigns as the xylophone ghosts the flute into silence.

The second movement [2] is subtitled 'The Two Squares, Black and Red (1915)' and is in the manner of a scherzo with robust alternations of highly volatile material, thus creating a rondo structure. The subtitle refers to Malevich's 'Suprematist' painting of 1915, a monolithic black square seemingly undermined by a red square set at a jaunty angle beneath it. Of interest is Malevich's alternative title for the painting: 'Painterly Realism of a Boy with a Knapsack – Colour Masses in the Fourth Dimension' – perhaps it is this more playful element that attracted Bruk. Certainly, the heavy chorale-like passages seem portentous in the extreme, and the scampering wind-and-string passage-work offer a worthy foil to such posturing. Bruk's introduction focuses more on the background than the music:

In 1915 Kazimir Malevich's paintings were shown at exhibitions held in Paris and in St Petersburg. These exhibitions signalled the début of Russian Suprematist artists in the international arena (this artistic movement subsequently became world famous under the name of the Russian *avant-garde*). Works by Malevich included *Red Square*, which comes

before the viewer's eyes like a manifesto of a revolution in art. His *Black Square* for its part portrays the outburst of the nation's hatred, sorrow and the sending of heroes on their final journey. These paintings use clear-cut geometrical lines in contrast to the decorative style of classical art prevailing at the time.

Gradually a noxious web of rumours, lies and discrimination was woven around Malevich and his *œuvre*. Nevertheless Russian art of the *avant-garde* (Malevich, Wassily Kandinsky and later also Marc Chagall) made a bold entrance into the world arena.⁵

After a helter-skelter chromatic opening, the horns (0:37) bring a halt with a signal not unlike Ex. 1 in mood. A deeply serious and dissonant chorale ensues on the strings; it is 'tenderised' by a pair of clarinets in thirds at 1:19. Plaintive wind solos follow in a mood that recalls the first movement: there are repeated allusions to the falling triplet figure of Ex. 1. At 1:49 the *pizzicato*/cymbal sonority returns and the tempo picks up once more, as the flute and xylophone recapitulate chromatic figures from the opening of the movement. The horn signal emerges again at 2:21, and its mode of utterance is taken up by a clarinet. At 2:46 the horns in parallel chords of major seconds make a central panel of foreboding – like threatening beasts escaped from Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Timpani and strings add to the baleful atmosphere, although the violins in parallel thirds somehow evoke the richness of a Hollywood film score – one by, say, David Raksin. Rapid *glissandi* on the xylophone presage the return of the darting chromatic figures, which recur at 3:31 in all their rough humour. At 4:01 a new episode based on the same figures begins, with a solo violin leading the way with Hindemith-like pattern-work. The addition of woodblocks at 4:53 adds a macabre element. At 5:04 the strings outline a dense chorale; it is underpinned by timpani rolls. The discordant thickets are partially cut away by the horns sounding a hope of mollification (5:30). The returning Hollywood-esque thirds in the violins bring added relief. At 6:08 percussion instruments break any hopes of repose, with timpani rumbles and woodblock and xylophone bone-shakings. The coda restores the primacy of the chromatic scampering and brings the music to a precipitous end in an abrupt but logical-sounding G major.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Bruk's commentary on the third and final movement, subtitled "The Revolution" ^[3], again looks to his proximate inspiration rather than the more immediate impulses behind the music:

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was welcomed with open arms by the representatives of the Russian *avant-garde*. Yet as early as in 1919 Wassily Kandinsky left Russia, and in the spring of 1923 Marc Chagall and his family escaped from the Soviet Union, which had come into being the previous year, whereas Kazimir Malevich, in complete contrast, became one of the official leaders of the new Soviet art, which acted as a certain kind of a cultural front for socialism.

As Joseph Stalin consolidated his power towards the end of the 1920s, the revolutionary *avant-garde* in Russian art fell foul of the artistic taste of the Stalinist Soviet leadership and its dictatorial aspirations. From 1932 the artists of the *avant-garde* were subjected to overt persecution. In 1934 Sergei Kirov, secretary to the central committee in Leningrad and a close associate of Stalin, was murdered, after which an unprecedented whirlwind of terror swept through the entire Soviet Union.

Kazimir Malevich's life came to an end in 1935, the official cause of death being tuberculosis. After his demise his paintings were removed from museum exhibition rooms in the Soviet Union for several decades.⁶

The movement starts with a boiling pot of motifs with a prominent part for piano – as if something else of Prokofiev is being recalled, a fragment of a lost concerto, perhaps. Amid fast march-rhythms there are signals, fanfares, tocsins, ricocheting bullets, one might say, of a revolution in progress. A cinematic analogy can be made; the music responds to the jump-cuts of an editor, bent on capturing moment by moment the surge of feelings and actions: the simplest of desires for bread on the faces of starving people, a snapshot of Tsar Nicholas, the soldiers advancing, fear on the face of an emaciated woman, the soldiers joining the people, banners of victory, a snapshot of Kerensky. In writing this section Bruk may well be tapping into his experience of writing for films;

⁶ *Ibid.*

in the 1960s he was head of music at the Lennau studio. Malevich embraced the Revolution and expressed his ardour in his attitude to old forms of society and art, advocating destruction rather than preservation: 'Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us'.⁷ He even advocated the complete burial of the past: 'thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on a single chemist's shelf'.⁸ This alarming image reduces corpses to the distilled contents of apothecary jars, with the implication that the chemist's laboratory is also where some of the artist's pigments can be obtained: 'people will examine the powder from Rubens and all his art'.⁹ Like many initial supporters of this brave new world, Malevich became a victim of the constantly shifting goalposts of Soviet policy towards the arts, eventually being arrested and suffering the suppression of his work.

Bruk presents both the heady atmosphere of revolutionary fervour and more salutary reflections on its results in passages of aching lyricism tinged with dark regrets. By 1:03 the first rush of upheaval gives way to a typical Bruk texture: a rustling bed of *tremolandi* strings, very much like the brush strokes of a painter. This passage is immediately interrupted by snatches of what sound like revolutionary songs. At 1:33 flutes and triangle chime over nervous strings and clarinet trills. Wind solos survey what feels like a devastated landscape; the piano provides rich, Skryabin-like chords. There is both stillness and foreboding before a rhetorical passage of discords arrives at 2:54. Bell sounds from the piano give eerie resonance. At 3:40 chilly flutes begin a new paragraph related to that occurring at 1:33. Wind solos and rolled chords in the piano recur. Horns enter at 5:36 with urgent rhythms, and the lower strings give out dotted rhythms in the manner of Shostakovich. They are joined by stentorian octaves on the piano. Scherzo-like patterns related to those in the second movement ratchet up the tension at 6:22. March and scherzo styles are combined until a massive *tutti* is

⁷ Kazimir Malevich, 'On Museums,' quoted in Boris Groys, *Becoming Revolutionary: On Kazimir Malevich*, e-flux journal No. 47, September 2013.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

achieved (at 7:30). A bassoon spits out imprecations, and the music rises once more to boiling point. In the wake of this climax, a yearning melody begins on the high violins at 8:13 – like a perfumed garden in which not all the flowers are health-giving. At 9:04 the pace quickens and the music jump-cuts between explosive percussion outbursts and shimmering landscapes redolent of deep mourning as wind solos descend by semitones. At 10:00 the music races on once more and the *concertante* piano part is much to the fore. A passage of crashing chords feels like a coda as a hard-won heroism strives for attainment (10:51). The music is both highly discordant and yet it yearns for resolution. At 11:48 B minor is achieved; massive blasts of percussion and depth charges of piano prove it to be the home key, making a rising triad of tonalities – E minor, G major, B minor – when the symphony is taken as a whole.

Symphony No. 14, *The Scream* (2015)

Fridrich Bruk's Symphony No. 14, *Huuto* ('The Scream'), is a massive Expressionist translation of Edvard Munch's masterpiece of suffering and flight. Together with thousands of others, Bruk saw the painting when it was exhibited in Helsinki in 2015. The painting presents a tormented figure, its hands clasped either side of its face, in apparent flight along the seafront – or more strictly speaking, along the fenced shoreline of a fjord near Oslo. Water and sky form the garish backdrop, as if created as a consequence of the screaming protagonist. Munch described the clouds as forming a stream of blood or pillars of fire. He wrote at the bottom of one 1895 print: 'Ich fühlte das grosse Geschrei durch die Natur' ('I felt the large scream pass through nature'). Although the protagonist appears to be the one screaming, the implication is that it is also the surroundings that scream. And what of the ominous pair of tall figures at the left of the painting? They seem to be strolling, not chasing the one who screams. In all versions of *The Scream* (there are two paintings, two pastels and some prints), the figures are top-hatted; they appear impassive. Are they friends of the painter, taking a stroll? Are they attendants of the asylum where Munch's sister was held? Or are they a pre-echo of those sinister executioners who march Josef K. to his death in Kafka's *The Trial*? Whatever externals one chooses to frame the painting, for many viewers

(including this one) *The Scream* remains perhaps the one of the most terrifying images of internal distress, a deep trauma-site of inner pain that presages Expressionism and Existentialism – the crushed individual in a hostile world.

Brok's introduction to the work makes his intentions clear:

In 1893 the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944) exhibited his new painting portraying a human form in the thrall of extreme despair. The name of the work, *The Scream*, was short and chilling. Since then this painting has been the subject of constant fascination among the artistic public. An exhibition of works by Munch mounted in Helsinki a while ago attracted over fifty thousand visitors.

For me this painting is above all a portrayal of the individual's inner turmoil and less a description of the physical aspect of suffering. How then does this *cri de cœur* manifest itself? I believe that it is the specifically musical sound and emotional content with which the composer imbues it which can answer this complex question.

Those whose misfortune it has been to experience suffering and humiliation do not necessarily cry out publicly, not even in their sleep, nor are they always vociferous in their demands for public trials and judgements on those who inflicted them with such torture, humiliation and spiritual annihilation. The path of suffering which they have trodden and the amount of cruelty and inhumanity which has pervaded their inner being is reflected most clearly, I believe, in the depths of the sufferers' eyes.

This is why the screaming being in Munch's painting – a kind of embodiment of a human's most profound life experience – commands our attention so compellingly, conveying its acuteness, nakedness and authenticity.

I hope that my symphony *The Scream*, inspired by experiences of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch's most famous painting, might draw the listener's thoughts also to some aspects of human existence experienced by our fellow mortals who are in most dire need of our help, consideration and sympathy.¹⁰

¹⁰ Composer's note, Tampere, 27 February 2015.

With a work cast in a single movement lasting over half an hour [4], there is all the more reason to provide signposts for the listener. The orchestra used by the composer is larger than that for Symphony No. 13; there are woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, a large percussion section, celesta and strings. All these instruments are taxed to the extreme in a work that by the import of what it attempts affords it an important position in the composer's output. Violent contrasts characterise the music; there is a brief, fast introduction set alight by the crack of a whip – like a door opening momentarily on hell's kitchen – and characterised by a leaping trumpet figure that is used in many transformations throughout the symphony – before the celesta, which has almost a *concertante* role within the orchestra, lays out music of utmost fragility, like a rocking lullaby, under which a bass clarinet begins a sombre melody, taken up by bassoon, strings and trumpet in turn (Ex. 2)

Ex. 2



The sinuous nature of this theme, with its many tritones and its pervasive influence on the music, gives the work a dark countenance; the segments of the theme present inescapable pockets of intervals and create a claustrophobic atmosphere akin in mood, if not in style, to some of the minor-key symphonies of Myaskovsky; one thinks of No. 4 in E minor, with its lonely flutes and anguished responses, or the murkily oppressive No. 7 in B minor. At 0:51 angular woodwind propel the music forward. A huge climax of jagged dissonance arrives, before the celesta and bass clarinet lament in its wake, at 1:32, with fragments of Ex. 2 shared with bassoon, oboe and flute. A single tam-tam stroke provides a full stop before, at 2:06, aggressive and iterative chords from the strings section begin the next segment, providing a bed from which brass fanfares spring, only to be mocked by a skittish piccolo. Semiquaver patterns pervade the texture before, at 2:51, a solo oboe plays with loose inversions of Ex. 2 over a wash of celesta. Other wind instruments take up this material, with special emphasis

on the bass-clarinet trill derived from Ex. 2. A muted trumpet adds spice to these interactions at 3:44, before the strings offer a lyrical expansion. At 4:26 the rocking motif reappears from the celesta and its bass-clarinet partner in a restatement of Ex. 2, followed by another yearning string extension, which at its peak gives way to the full brass in a threatening *tutti*.

At 5:19 the clarinet begins another paragraph over rustling strings and is answered by a brief brass passage. A decidedly eerie slow waltz begins at 5:57, with the oboe leading the way over dance steps that sound hobbled by peculiar *pizzicato* sonorities. Anxiety clouds this waltz further until a quickening tempo abruptly ends the apparition. At 6:56 the strings lay down repeated chords once more, with the added spur of the whip-crack that began the symphony. A trumpet announces further alarms before, again, this tableau is snatched away by a throbbing, pullulating chord at 7:37 – like a ‘no entry’ sign in bright-red letters. With flute, bass clarinet and bassoon the music moves through further dense undergrowth. At 8:45 the brass, timpani and triangle give directions for the journey of a scherzo-like section in semiquaver motion. Solo oboe calls a brief halt at 9:29, before the tempo quickens once more, the music proceeding by a series of jump-cuts similar to those which characterised the last movement of Symphony No. 13. A vast climax occurs at 11:34 followed by frangible noises lurking in its aftermath. At 12:00 the celesta begins a new rocking rhythm – another uneasy lullaby. This gesture provides wind instruments with room for ruminative solos. With gently pulsating strings the music feels about to settle, before a jazzy cymbal and bass *pizzicato* constitute an interruption. Ghostly *tremolo* strings flit across the field of vision, until at 14:09 wind and percussion provide a jaunty response. The pace slackens towards the end of a string passage before a trumpet enters at 15:19, followed by a trombone. A furious *tutti* emerges, and its energy dissipates into chiming tuned percussion chords and solo oboe at 16:29. Further wind solos follow before the music passes from one section of the orchestra to another in the manner of a camera panning around a landscape. The jazzy cymbal returns at 18:30, and the rapidly changing textures create a kaleidoscopic picture of mounting discomfort until the tam-tam signals a release at 19:30.

A solo flute rises from this rubble and a shimmering aftermath paints the saddest of views. Lamenting strings commence at 20:28 in the manner of a slow movement. The music cannot remain settled for long, as forces rise up via brass and timpani. At 22:15 the listener is afforded another strange vision of hallucinogenic unease as a solo violin appears through the misty surface of the music – a deeply expressive fragment, like a snippet of one of Szymanowski’s concertos. The cymbal is the harbinger of more propulsive material taken up by the whole orchestra at 23:58. Timpani and tam-tam, so often used as indicators of new directions in Bruk’s music, signal another passage of flitting wind solos and violent eruptions – much of the previous modes of utterance passes in review. Further tension is achieved via woodblock and whip-cracks, trilling woodwind and, at 26:23, the rising menace of horns and trombones. Waves of climaxes occur towards the end of the symphony despite one more lonely passage of wind solos at 28:18. As might be expected, the bass clarinet reiterates variants of Ex. 2 before at 29:31 the cymbal beat returns to instil unrest. The music gathers itself to a peroration of extreme violence, with suitably screaming woodwind trills and a yawning abyss of *glissando* brass and, to top it all, an air-raid siren wailing in the final bars. In this score, one of Bruk’s darkest and most turbulent, the composer has created a Finnish *Erwartung* of terrifying power – a musical transcription of a person in torment evoked on the broadest of orchestral canvases.

David Hackbridge Johnson has written over 500 works, some of which can be heard on three recent Toccata Classics releases with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, all conducted by Paul Mann. Lowell Liebermann has recorded an album of his piano music for Steinway. His most recent projects have been operatic: in 2021 Surrey Opera, conducted by Jonathan Butcher, premiered Madeleine, and in spring 2023 Welsh National Opera premiered his Blaze of Glory, to loud applause from critics and public alike. When not composing, performing or teaching music, he writes poetry.

Imants Resnis, born in Riga in March 1949, is a prominent Latvian conductor. He received his first international recognition in 1988, with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, at the 'Prague Spring' festival. In 1992 he became the artistic director and principal conductor of the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, a post he held until 2009. In 1993, he founded the International Pianism Stars Festival, which – now called the Liepāja International Stars Festival – takes place there in the second week of March every year, with the participation of musicians from around the world. He conducted the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra in Germany, Malaysia, Spain and Sweden, and has visited Colombia, Mexico, Portugal and Turkey as a guest conductor; in 2000 he performed in Egypt with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra.



From 1956 to 1967 he studied cello at the Emils Dārziņš Music School, the specialist junior music school in Riga. In 1972, he graduated from the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music as a cellist, and in 1982 as an orchestral conductor, honing his conducting skills at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatoire with Gennady Rozhdestvensky. Since 1967, his music-making has been directly associated with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, first as cellist and since 1987 as conductor.

In both 1995 and 2006 Imants Resnis won the Latvian 'Grand Music Award', and in 2007 the newly established 'Latvian Music Award' for his systematic contribution to the creativity and popularisation of Latvian music. He was awarded a letter of appreciation from the Liepāja City Council in 1998, was 'Liepājan of the Year' in 1999, and in 2006 he received a bronze 'Gloria Artis' medal for services to culture from the Polish government. In 2007 he was awarded the Order of the Three Stars for his services to Latvia, and in 2022 he received another Latvian 'Grand Music Award', on this occasion for lifetime achievement.

The **Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra** was founded in 1940 by the composer, conductor and pianist Balys Dvarionas. Its first concert, conducted by Dvarionas, was held on 21 January 1940, at the Vilnius City Theatre (the programme included Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, Čiurlionis' symphonic poem *In the Forest*, Dvořák's Ninth Symphony and Haydn's D major Piano Concerto, with Stanisław Szpinalski as soloist. The summer of 1941 was supposed

to mark the beginning of a national tour, with 45 concerts scheduled, but it was interrupted by the war, which forced many Jewish and Polish musicians to leave. On 1 November 1941, therefore, the LNSO amalgamated with the Vilnius Radiofonas Orchestra, with the composer Jeronimas Kačinskas as conductor. From 1944 to 1958 it was led by Abelis Klenickis, from 1958 to 1961 by Dvarionas again, and from 1961 to 1963 by Margarita Dvarionaitė. In 1964 Juozas Domarkas, at the time completing his studies in Leningrad (now St Petersburg), was offered the position of principal conductor, which he occupied until 2015. Since then, the artistic director and principal conductor has been Modestas Pitrenas, previously (from 2004) assistant to the principal conductor. Robertas Šervenikas is the second conductor, and Juozas Domarkas the honorary conductor.

The geographical coverage of LNSO performances is vast: it has visited many European countries, Japan, South America and South Korea, and has given concerts in some of the most prominent concert-venues of the world, among them the Musikverein in Vienna, the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Berlin, the Barbican Centre in London, Alte Oper in Frankfurt, the Berwaldhallen and Town Hall in Stockholm, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Metropolitan and Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Festival Hall in Osaka, the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai and the Cultural Centre of Thailand. It has also performed at a large number of prestigious festivals.

Over the years, the Orchestra has been conducted by many important musicians, not least Christoph Eschenbach, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Justus Frantz, Richard Hickox, Neeme Järvi, Kurt Masur, Krzysztof Penderecki and Mstislav Rostropovich. The LNSO has collaborated with instrumentalists and vocalists of all generations and nationalities, including the singers Montserrat Caballé, Sergei Larin, Jessye Norman and Violeta Urmana, the pianists Dmitri Bashkirov and Emil Gilels, the violinists Leonid Kogan, Gidon Kremer, Julian Rachlin and Vladimir Spivakov, and the cellists David Geringas, Misha Maisky, Ivan Monighetti and Mstislav Rostropovich.

Alongside the mainstays of the repertoire, the LNSO actively promotes Lithuanian music, and has performed many important scores, from the symphonic poems by Čiurlionis to works by Bajoras, Balakauskas, Balsys, Barkauskas, Bartulis, Dvarionas, Germanavičius, Juzeliūnas, Malcys, Martinaitytė, Narbutaitė, Rekašius, Šenderovas and Šerkšnytė, as well as works by younger composers.

Recordings by the LNSO have been released by Accentus Music, Avie, Col legno, Ella Records, Marco Polo, Melodiya, Naxos, Ondine and Toccata Classics.



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