



Baltic Voices 3

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Paul Hillier

acknowledgments

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at Tallinn Methodist Church, Tallinn, Estonia.

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& Editor: Brad Michel

Co-Engineers: Chris Barrett (October 2004)

& Mairo Maadik (April 2005)

DSD Engineer: Chris Barrett

PRODUCTION USA

Baltic Voices 3

- Vaclovas AUGUSTINAS**
1 *Treputė Martela* (1994) 4:19
(*The Stomping Bride*)
Ene Nael *harpsichord* · Tõnu Jõesaar *viola da gamba*
Neeme Punder, Leonora Palu *recorders*
Madis Metsamart, Iris Oja, Tiit Kogerman, Kaia Urb *percussion*
- Pelle GUDMUNDSEN-HOLMGREEN**
2 *Statements* (1969) 5:50
- Kaija SAARIAHO**
3 *Nuits, adieux* (1991, 1996) **CD premiere** 11:29
- Rytis MAŽULIS**
4 *Apstulbusi akis prarado amą* (1992) 4:44
(*The dazzled eye lost its speech*)
- Erik BERGMAN**
5–8 *Vier Galgenlieder, Op. 51b* (1960) 6:14
(*Four Gallows' Songs*)
5. Das große Lalula 1:20 **6.** Tapetenblume 1:04
7. Igel und Agel 2:07 **8.** Unter Zeiten 1:43
- Algirdas MARTINAITIS**
9 *Alleluia* (1996) 3:56
- Erkki-Sven TÜÜR**
10 *Meditatio* (2003)* **CD premiere** 17:49
- Henryk Mikolaj GÓRECKI**
11–15 *Five Kurpian Songs, Op. 75* (1999) **CD premiere** 23:25
11. Hej, z góry, z góry! 3:54 **12.** Ciamna nocka, ciamna 3:08
13. Wcoraj, dziwcyno, nie dzisiaj 4:51 **14.** Z Torunia ja parobecek 2:25
15. Wysla burzycka, bandzie desc 9:08

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor
with Raschèr Saxophone Quartet* (Christine Rall, Elliot Riley, Bruce Weinberger, Kenneth Coon)
Paul Hillier *director*

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“When one lives far away, one hears only of the major artists in the galaxy and is often satisfied with merely knowing their names; but when one draws closer, the twinkle of stars of the second and third magnitude becomes visible until, finally, one sees the whole constellation – the world is wider and art richer than one had hitherto supposed.”

Thus wrote Goethe in his *Italian Journey* (visiting an art gallery in Verona) and the comment perfectly sums up my feelings at the conclusion of this series of three CDs devoted to Baltic composers. I am also keenly aware of numerous composers who have not been represented and should have been, not to mention the omission of important works by those who have. The recordings therefore represent an ongoing journey and, like Goethe’s travel book, are essentially letters posted to friends at home. My sights are indeed set on other pieces of Baltic music, but these will be presented in different contexts.

Listeners will probably agree that this third CD is the most varied in content. It will always be a leap to go from Górecki’s slow-moving, pan-sonant harmonies to the wailing saxophones and tooth-mark dissonance of Tüür; and I have contrasted Lithuanian minimalism and Holmgreen’s constructions in white with two Finnish modernists, though again there is quite a jump from the Francophile intimacies of Saariaho to the Germanic surrealism of Bergman’s *Morgenstern* settings.

Choral music tends to be more conservative in style than instrumental music, mostly for the practical reason that singers enjoy and find it easier to sing music that is rooted in tonality. Many instrumentalists prefer it too, if the truth be known, but it is easier to play difficult notes than to sing them. By sustaining a strong choral tradition, the Baltic area has fostered a continuing respect for tonal music, and when the pendulum of music fashion started to move away from the avant-gardism of the 1960s and ’70s, many Baltic composers found themselves on the crest of a wave: the obvious examples include Pärt, Vasks, Górecki, and Tormis. But it would paint a very false picture indeed to suggest that the region has ignored modernism, either generally or even specifically in the choral sphere. To some extent



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this CD will redress that balance. However, if I have favoured the more tonal styles, this is because there are many more composers who have produced fresh and exciting choral music in that language, than those using a more experimental vocal style or a more instrumental idiom. It is interesting, moreover, to note that those who are successful at bridging this gap are usually themselves singers or have strong choral-conducting experience.

The Baltic Voices of my title are not only the composers who wrote the music, but also the singers who perform it. Music still enjoys a privileged position in Estonian life, but in the post-Soviet era there have been many changes, and as Western influences grow stronger and stronger, it is clear that the intimate world of Estonian music, which was its strength, is now under some strain, and the process of adjustment is sometimes painful and even wasteful. I must say, however, that the high quality of its musicians, the composers especially, remains incredible for such a tiny population. One of the groups at the heart of this musical microcosm is the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir – though of course, through touring, their “public” is international. Every time I conduct the Choir, I am reminded how privileged I am. Their unique timbre, their multifaceted musicianship, and their resilience and commitment in performance, all come together to create a powerful entity. The individual singers who make up this wonderful group deserve every recognition that comes their way. Several of them have been in the Choir for nearly twenty-five years and have given their entire careers to it; others, of course, have joined much more recently, bringing new energies and ideas with them, and it is this balance of tradition and change that provides the vitality to sustain the Choir, allowing it to mature without growing old!

The central Baltic experiences have to do with land and water (whether coast or lakeside), darkness and light, the midsummer bonfire and the sauna. In the middle of the Baltic

Sea lie the Åland islands, scattered between Sweden and Finland like a broken necklace. As I flew over them earlier this year (to give a concert in Mariehamn) it was impossible to tell where the land ended and the sea began, everything was frozen over and white. We saw a car driving in the middle of a field and then realised it was in fact driving over the sea ice. On one of these islands a few years ago lived a writer, Tove Jansson, whose books sum up for me the Baltic idea – the realities of the place, of course, but also the dreams they give rise to. Here, from *Moominpappa goes to sea* (1974), is a passage about the end of summer:

‘I thought it was about time we started having a lamp now that the evenings are drawing in. At least I felt so this evening,’ said Moominmamma.

Moominpappa said: ‘You’ve put an end to the summer. No lamps should be lit until summer is really over.’

‘Well, it’ll have to be autumn then,’ said Moominmamma in her quiet way.

The lamp sizzled as it burned. It made everything seem close and safe, a little family circle they all knew and trusted. Outside this circle lay everything that was strange and frightening, and the darkness seemed to reach higher and higher and further and further away, right to the end of the world.

‘In some families, it’s the father who decides when it’s time to light the lamp,’ muttered Moominpappa into his tea.

– Paul Hillier



Vaclovas AUGUSTINAS Lithuanian, born 1959.

Composer and choral conductor, and since 1992 director of the Vilnius-based choir Jauna Muzika. The original title of *The Stomping Bride* (1994) is *Treputė Martela*, which resists translation (the composer says). But I found it hard to

relinquish the association I had formed on first hearing the piece under its curious English title – which for me conjures up images of the rather heavy women featured at one stage in the paintings of Picasso and Léger. The composer's note adds that the music is based on an old Lithuanian folksong about a young girl plucking, stretching and spinning flax while dancing at the same time. The choice of both percussion and melodic instruments (for this recording we used recorders, viola da gamba, and harpsichord) is somewhat free.



Pelle GUDMUNDSEN-HOLMGREEN Danish, born 1932.

Holmgreen is a composer I encountered only after I started working in Denmark, but I regard him as one of the most interesting figures in new music. *Statements* (1969) is an early piece and no longer typical of his work which has developed in many curious and delightful ways. Nevertheless, I

consider it a fine example of a certain sculptural minimalism – a kind of lyrical 'concretism' – that found its way into music and poetry during the 1960s and '70s. The piece, originally in Danish, is in two sections of uneven length: first, *Epic Text*, and then, *Statements*. The piece is essentially monophonic, but as the voices start to hold certain pitches, echoing the main melody in slower tempo, diatonic clusters are formed of increasing complexity, before returning to the opening simplicity for the second section. A quick look at the text itself (see page 34) will immediately show the shape of the music.



Kaija SAARIAHO Finnish, born 1952.

Composer Kaija Saariaho has been living and working in Paris since 1982, enjoying the resources of IRCAM and its potential for computer-assisted music, yet retaining a distinctive and lyrical style of expression. Her first opera, *L'Amour de loin*, is based on the life of troubadour Jaufre Rudel, whose complete

works (all six of them) I have the honour of having recorded for harmonia mundi! *Nuits, adieux* was originally composed in 1991 for a quartet of singers and electronics. This later version from 1996 retains the use of four soloists, but transfers the electronic effects (echoes, delay, etc.) to the choir. The work is here recorded for the first time.



Rytis MAŽULIS Lithuanian, born 1961.

Rytis Mažulis studied at the Lithuanian Academy of Music, where he now teaches composition. His music bears the unmistakable imprint of minimalism, though again, I was initially entranced by the title of his piece – *The dazzled eye lost its speech* (1992) – which leaves so much open to the reader's invention.

This composer's works demonstrate a fascination in canonic process, and concentric structure involving a homogeneous group of instruments (in this case voices). The piece sets up a pattern using the whole-tone scale and is described by the composer as an endless spiral canon.



Erik BERGMAN Finnish, born 1911.

Erik Bergman is one of the senior figures in Finnish music and has composed a large number and wide range of choral works, distinguished by their mastery of the entire spectrum of modernist choral writing. This achievement is perhaps best summed up in his 1988 opera *The Singing Tree*, which contains significant

choral writing. To be fair, the *Vier Galgenlieder* (1960) for "Sprechchor" are not the most typical of his music, and I selected them here both for their contrast with the other pieces, and also (of course) because I admire their wit and have enjoyed performing them over many years.



Algirdas MARTINAITIS Lithuanian, born 1950.

Martinaitis studied composition at the Lithuanian Academy of Music. The lively sprung rhythms of the *Alleluia* (1996) are typical of his style, which combines folk influence, sound poetry, theatre music, and an approach to composition which he calls "writing by hand."



Erkki-Sven TÜÜR Estonian, born 1959.

Tüür represents the middle generation of Estonian composers, between Pärt, Tormis and the late Lepo Sumera (with whom Tüür studied), and the younger composers such as Helena Tulve and Toivo Tulev. Although Tüür is primarily an instrumental composer, he has written some very strong choral works which have played a

prominent role in the EPCC's repertoire (especially the 1994 *Requiem*). His use of dense textures and dynamic rhythmic figures together forms a compelling style, one which embraces modernism as much as Pärt and Tormis stay away from it. In his earlier years he was the leader of a rock band, In Spe, and this perhaps accounts for the powerful exuberance exerted by his music. On *Meditatio* (2003), which is recorded here for the first time, the composer writes: "The listener should not be misled by the title: *Meditatio* does not imply here some kind of superficial, New Age relaxation, but rather, a very deeply concentrated and intense absorption into one particular state of mind, which might be described as a cry for eternity by one who has lost his faith: rebellion and resignation, hope and hopelessness, melded together. The piece was commissioned by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk and premiered in Cologne by the WDR Choir and the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet in 2004. The music uses what I call vectoral technique, as the principle of voice-leading in the wider sense follows projections of vectors in differing directions. In the saxophone parts I have used some multiphonics, especially at the beginning of the piece, where the sound recalls the stretched echo of cracked church bells. My warmest thanks to Professor Marju Lepajõe of Tartu University, who introduced me to the book by Anselm of Canterbury, *Orationes sive Meditationes*, and to Bruce Weinberger of the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet, who untiringly fed me the idea of writing a piece for such an extraordinary combination [of forces]."



Henryk MIKOLAJ GÓRĘCKI Polish, born 1933.

The Kurpie region is situated in north-eastern Poland, a land of forests separated by farmlands. The main cities of the Kurpie region are Myszyniec, a centre of Kurpie culture, and Ostroleka, with its ancient monastery and Kurpie Museum. The folk art of Kurpie manifests itself in architecture and

crafts such as wood-carving and weaving, and in traditional songs and dances in areas where the local dialect can still be heard. The *Five Kurpian Songs* (1999) is a relatively recent work by Górecki, combining the familiar mesmeric repetitions that have become hallmarks of his style since the Third Symphony (1976) with the secular stimulus of folksong. The work is dedicated to his first grandchild, Jasio, who appears, so to speak, in one of the songs. (Szymanowski also composed a set of Kurpian Songs back in 1929.) It is recorded here for the first time.

– Paul Hillier



From left to right
Christine Rall,
Kenneth Coon,
Bruce Weinberger,
Elliot Riley

The Raschèr Saxophone Quartet is renowned for its unique homogeneous tone quality, virtuosity and dynamic interpretation of new and old music. Since its formation in 1969, the Quartet has appeared regularly at the major concert halls in Europe and the USA: New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Paris's Opera Bastille, London's Royal Festival Hall, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and Vienna's Musikverein. The ensemble carries on a tradition established in the 1930s by its founding member and pioneer of the classical saxophone, Sigurd Raschèr: the Quartet has inspired hundreds of composers to write music especially for it – the list includes Luciano Berio, Erik Bergman, Philip Glass, Sofia Gubaidulina, Per Nørgard, Sven-David Sandström, Erkki-Sven Tüür, and Iannis Xenakis. Please visit www.rsq-sax.com for more information.

The **Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir** (*Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor*) is recognized as Estonia's best-known classical music ensemble and one of the finest choral groups in the world. 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 concerting, the Choir has made numerous recordings, many of which have received the highest critical acclaim, including six 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



Paul Hillier's 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 third) exploring the choral tradition of the Baltic Sea countries. *Baltic Voices 1* and *Baltic Voices 2* met with unanimous praise and each won Hillier a GRAMMY® nomination. Another recording with the Choir, *The Powers of Heaven*, was a much-admired program of Russian Orthodox sacred music; it was followed by their deeply spiritual reading of Sergei Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*, Op. 37. 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 he 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.

For more information, please visit www.paulhillier.net



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Soprano
 Kaia Urb*
 (solo, tracks 3 & 7)
 Vilve Hepner
 Kristiina Under
 Annika Ilus
 Eha Pärj
 Hele-Mall Leego
 Kädy Plaas
 Maarja Kukk

Tenor
 Mati Turi
 (solo, track 3)
 Martin Lume
 Toomas Tohert
 Arvo Aun
 Raul Mikson
 Kaido Janke
 Tiit Kogerman*
 (solo, tracks 5 & 7)

Alto
 Iris Oja*
 (solo, tracks 3, 6-7)
 Karin Salumäe
 Kairi Tammaru
 Tiitu Otsing
 Külli Erimäe
 Juta Roopalu-Malk
 (solo, track 7)

Bass
 Aarne Talvik
 Tõnu Tormis
 Kalev Keeroja
 Allan Vurma
 (solo, tracks 3, 5, 7)
 Rainer Vilu
 Ranno-Eduard Linde
 Esper Linnamägi

Choirmaster: Veronika Portsmuth

Principal Conductor and Artistic Director: **Paul Hillier**

*Percussion, track 1