



ORDINE

TĀLIVALDIS ĶENIŅŠ

Symphonies Nos. 5 & 8
Aria

Iveta Apkalna, organ
Latvian National Symphony Orchestra
Andris Poga



TĀLVALDIS ĶEINIŠ

TĀLIVALDIS ĶENIŅŠ (1919–2008)

Symphony No. 5 (1976)

20:21

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1 | Molto animato – | 2:15 |
| 2 | Doppio lento – | 5:21 |
| 3 | Largo espressivo – | 6:25 |
| 4 | Vivace e con fuoco | 6:20 |

Symphony No. 8, "Sinfonia concertata" (1986)

23:44

for organ and orchestra

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 5 | I. Moderato | 6:53 |
| 6 | II. Chorale: Largo | 9:50 |
| 7 | III. Toccata | 7:01 |

Aria per corde (1984)

8:27

for string orchestra

Iveta Apkalna, organ (5–7)

LATVIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANDRIS POGA, conductor

Tālvāldis Ķeniņš is one of Latvia's most important composers, an individual inclined to Neoromanticism, plain-spoken, and full of vitality, in addition to being a composer of great technical virtuosity. Born in Latvia, educated in France, he lived the remainder of his life in Canada.

Ķeniņš' body of work comprises mainly instrumental music including eight symphonies, symphonic miniatures, more than ten instrumental concertos, an impressive array of chamber music, piano, and organ works, as well as solo and choral pieces, three cantatas, and an oratorio.

His abilities, knowledge, and talent bloomed at the Paris Conservatory which he attended after fleeing Latvia shortly before the second Soviet invasion, along with thousands of other members of the Latvian intelligentsia.

His schooling in Grenoble and later studies in Paris permanently imbued his signature style with a Cartesian attitude. He came to believe that truth and value only come through that which is constructed with the utmost logic and rationality. A laconic style of expression becomes his motto, and at his core he remained a Latvian composer and not a French composer.

In person, Tālvāldis Ķeniņš was somewhat brusque and direct, but also warm-hearted. He valued his family highly—the wonderful Valda he married in Paris and who later gave birth to two sons. After Grenoble, he enjoyed alpine skiing, but also played tennis and avidly followed hockey. He loved to travel, was fascinated by high-speed rail schedules, liked bridge puzzles, appreciated old French films, even though composing remained his true pastime.

In his musical language Ķeniņš has been described as a "contemporary romantic" and a "conservative modernist". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* remarks upon its structural clarity and masterful use of counterpoint. In her expansive book *Starp divām pasaulēm* [Between Two Worlds], the noted Latvian musical historian Ingrīda Zemzare provides a compelling analysis of his love of fugue and the concertante principle.

Tālvāldis Ķeniņš wrote eight symphonies — the first when he was forty years old and his eighth at the age of sixty-seven. His second is known as the *Sinfonia concertante* while Ķeniņš named his last one the *Sinfonia concertata*. Thus Ķeniņš' concerto also happily entered his symphonies. The composer acknowledged that there is little use for new symphonies in the twentieth century for they are rarely performed, yet he does like to write them.

It was from Tony Aubin in Paris that Ķeniņš learned to create larger scale works — how to build both grand and small scale climaxes, how to incrementally return to piano from forte fortissimo or all of a sudden. Similarities with the world of visual art and painting were helpful. Aubin's broad horizons left a tremendous impression on the young Latvian, "In conversations about art, literature, poetry, dramaturgy, theatre, and philosophy... He quoted Pascal, Descartes, Nietzsche and so on. The French really have a wonderful understanding of culture."

Ķeniņš did not create piano scores, but wrote immediately to full score. He sketched out his ideas on sheets of paper — rhythmic formulae, how it all works out canonically, harmonic progressions, even polytonal aspects.

Perhaps in his symphonies more than in other genres, Ķeniņš shows us the depths of human nature in a way that is possible only in music. Yes, music comes from deep inside a person, said the composer once in an interview, "My music is very dark. People have complained about that! Well, I don't know. It is possible that is one of the ways in which I view the world — there is actually nothing there... I am neither a melancholy nor a serious person. I like to joke around and I have good friends, but the realm of the serious often beckons me in music... You know, at times I feel quite happy, my entire family is here with me, everything brings me joy, we enjoy life, and I compose music... But there is often something dramatic with dark overtones hidden somewhere deeper inside me... I would say that my music is written not by me but by an alter ego with whom I can't always identify."

Tālvāldis Ķeniņš' musical foundations were laid in the Romantic tradition that was highly regarded in the Republic of Latvia between the two world wars. Latvia was somewhat of an enchanted island surrounded by the winds of Modernism,

Constructivism, Neoclassicism, and Serialism, but Latvian composers found serene solace in a National Romantic boat that rocked gently and did not transport listeners to unknown shores.

Ķeniņš says: "My musical palate seemed to be developing in the direction of Romanticism and it continues to be part of my music despite of all the change I have experienced."

Yes, that can be heard, however, Ķeniņš' Romanticism lies in stratified layers among the skills in counterpoint and fugue that were inculcated in Paris, his passion for rhythmic play (Messiaen and his rhythmic Indian formulas) and a dazzling professionalism.

Hearing Arthur Honegger's *Symphonie Liturgique* in 1946, was a strong blow that knocked Ķeniņš out of the comfortable space that Jāzeps Vītols, the patriarch of Latvian music, had nurtured. Honegger's music and ideas also resonated in the teachings of Tony Aubin, who was great friends with Honegger.

Ķeniņš told his biographer, Edgars Kariks: "I think I am an eclectic composer. One of the composers I admire is Saint-Saëns. He was not a genius, but he had a marvellous technique. The overture to *Samson and Delilah*... It's one of the greatest pieces of music ever written. The choral overture before the curtain is raised and the choir ... you know, *Les Enfants d'Israël* ... and the fugue which follows ... ah ... marvellous. I'm eclectic just as Saint-Saëns could be eclectic and ... I don't think it's a drawback, because it expresses different aspects of my feelings for certain things."

Ķeniņš is intelligent enough to be honest in his self-appraisal. He understands that he may possibly be a little short on ideas, however, he is skilled at putting them to good use.

Anyway — what is a symphony? Most often it is something important and out of the ordinary, otherwise we would be dealing with a symphonic tone poem or something like that. There is no programme in Ķeniņš' music, however, we do hear in his symphony how the experiences at the end of World War II continue to churn along with the smouldering thoughts of the lost homeland against the backdrop of exile life (for many years seeming as if it would never to be seen again) and, of course, the elements of tragedy in the contemporary world.

It is hard to believe that Ҷеиїš thought about all of this while composing. No, while composing you concentrate on technique, not on metaphysics. However, Ҷеиїš doesn't deny that this level exists, but it does not submit to analysis and it cannot be spoken of in precise words, and that is why Ҷеиїš elects not to speak.

Symphony No. 5 (1976)

The Symphony No. 5 was premiered on June 30, 1976, at Toronto's Massey Hall conducted by Latvian maestro Alfrēds Štrombergs (1922–2006). Štrombergs was an important man in Canadian music life — associated first with the Canadian Opera Company and the Stratford Festival (1950s–70s). In education he distinguished himself as a vocal teacher, opera house programming director, and as a specialist in 18th and 19th century stage song with appointments at the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta.

The Symphony was commissioned by the organising committee of the Sixth Latvian Song Festival in Canada. While it formally has three parts of equal length, in reality it comprises a single monolithic structure. The mastery with which Ҷеиїš conjures up two irreconcilable worlds in the first two minutes is dazzling. There is a robust, contemporary world and then a fairy tale world which glitters with the magic of dusk in the Latvian countryside — perhaps fireflies.

At the beginning of the second part (around 7:30), a set of motifs emerges more clearly recalling an archaic traditional melody from Ҷеиїš' birthplace of Kurzeme, the so-called "long call", as well as the serf's folksong of later centuries which erroneously become a symbol of the occupied homeland among exile composers. This motif weaves through the entire second part in a variety of ways.

In the third part, we return to the activity of the first, but Ҷеиїš would not be Ҷеиїš if around 15:45 he did not evoke a small *fata morgana*, a mirage. The conclusion, on the other hand, allows one to forget the industrial aggression and with a light touch the motif of the second part meanders away into nothingness.

The premiere was covered by Canadian newspapers. John Kreglund compared the work to Stravinsky, heard some sombre themes, and noted its unusually modern mood. William Littler concluded that Ķeņiņš is the most progressive of the conservatives, while another critic wrote that, "It is not clear whether there is a programme in this music, but it sounds like it discusses some very dark themes".

Symphony No. 8, "*Sinfonia concertata*" (1986)

The Symphony No. 8 was premiered on July 6, 1986, at Roy Thompson Hall with the North American Latvian community's irreplaceable Anīta Rundāne at the organ. The festival orchestra was (once again) conducted by Alfrēds Štrombergs.

Ķeņiņš said: "I was trying to work out something and I finished all [of] the first movement. I gave the music to the organist, and he said: "It's marvellous! It sounds just like Poulenc or Saint-Saëns". You know, I was not really thinking about these composers."

Still, it is Poulenc who comes to mind during the second part's middle section with its punctuated rhythms.

In a conversation with Edgars Kariks, the composer said: "I use percussion to accent the dramatic elements in my music. For instance, the Toccata in my last symphony wouldn't exist without percussion... it wouldn't even be possible. Even the coloristic elements in the slow chorale in the same symphony are also very much underlined by things you find in the mallet instruments. That is not a case of *Gebrauchsmusik*. It is a part of the music I feel."

The Symphony No. 8, commissioned by the organising committee of the Latvian Song Festival in Canada, was dedicated not to a fellow Latvian but to the Canadian organist Patrick Wedd (1948–2019), who was almost certainly Ķeņiņš' student at the University of Toronto in the late 1960s, when Ķeņiņš was teaching his Keyboard Harmony course for pianists and organists which included, among other topics, improvisation and instruction on reading scores. The composer's son,

Juris Ķeniņš, wonders whether anyone at the university at that time could have competed with his father in the field of improvisation.

In 1982, Patrick Wedd had the honour of being first to play the new organ at Roy Thompson Hall. It is certain now that we will never know what the nature of the connection between Symphony No. 8 and Patrick Wedd was. Juris Ķeniņš suggests that while writing the symphony his father may have consulted with Wedd about the instrument's possibilities. It is worth noting that Tālvāldis Ķeniņš himself was an excellent organist.

The Symphony was first performed in Latvia on the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth with a reading by the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra and Andris Poga.

Iveta Apkalna was at the organ that night: "The opportunity to participate in the performance and recording was truly a great gift because I discovered a gem in the repertoire for organ and symphony orchestra. It was surprisingly fresh, contemporary, and appealing with a clear musical message."

An interpretation and understanding of Ķeniņš' musical world initially seems like a tremendous challenge, however, upon arrival it has a very strong draw and leaves an inextinguishable musical mark.

This work calls for a combination of masterful solo organ skills. In addition to excellent technique and a deep understanding of complex forms, a fine sense of the organ's registers is also required, so that the organ part can both blend and shine in a surprising balance of musical pattern and orchestral instrumentation.

Although Ķeniņš music is full, powerful, and evocative, each performance supplies clarity and purity of thought and encourages the development of self-knowledge in new, hitherto unknown musical horizons."

The Symphony No. 8 lends itself to analysis but not to description. In this work, Ķeniņš has quite possibly attained his highest metaphysical peak. From the storms of the first part and some longed for unattainability, through the second part's luminous chorale to the finale of the third part with its eight double and triple beats, it concludes with a single beat and transcendence.

Aria per corde (1984)

The premiere took place on April 29, 1984, at St John's Church in Toronto performed by a musical group under the direction of Canadian-Latvian violist Arturs Jansons.

In 1984, the *Aria* was performed by a quintet in which, it seems, Jansons was Ķeniņš' only fellow Latvian. This album includes a version for string orchestra. Honegger's influence is palpable in this fairly sombre cantilena that has the sense of having been touched by eternity. However, it should be noted that now that the author is close to his highest peaks, this statement sounds, at the very least, childish. Looked at in a different way — a similar thought pattern and tendency to related gestures gives us great beauty from the sixth minute until the end that is not characteristic of the 1980s.

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In remembrance and utmost gratitude for the life of Australian-Latvian flautist and composer Edgars Kariks (1955–2020) who left us invaluable notes from several important conversations with Tālivaldis Ķeniņš and graciously permitted their use.

Orests Silabriedis

(Translation: Dace Veinberga)

Latvian organist **Iveta Apkalna** is considered as one of the leading instrumentalists in the world. Since 2017 she has served as the titular organist of the Klais organ at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany. Iveta Apkalna regularly performs in Europe's, North America's and China's most renowned concert venues.

Since Iveta Apkalna's debut with the Berlin Philharmonic under the baton of Claudio Abbado in 2007 she has performed with several of the world's top orchestras including the Bavarian Radio Symphony, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. She has collaborated with renowned conductors such as the late Mariss Jansons, Marek Janowski, Kent Nagano, Thomas Hengelbrock, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Antonio Pappano and Andris Nelsons and frequently appeared at the Lucerne Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Mecklenburg Vorpommern Festival.

Iveta Apkalna is dedicated to contemporary music and collaborates frequently with contemporary composers. Apkalna has premiered works by such composers as Philip Glass, Pascal Dusapin, Peter Eötvös, and Pēteris Vasks, to name a few.

In 2018 and in 2020 she was awarded with the Latvian Grand Music Award in the category of Concert of the Year. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia, Iveta Apkalna was awarded the Order of the Three Stars. Furthermore, she was appointed as cultural ambassador of Latvia by receiving the Excellence Award in Culture 2015 from the Latvian Ministry of Culture. Iveta Apkalna became the first organist to receive the title of Best Performing Artist award at the 2005 ECHO Klassik awards.

Iveta Apkalna's discography has grown extensively during the years forming a significant contribution to the art form. Iveta Apkalna's most recent recording *Triptychon* (2021), featuring cornerstone works of the organ solo literature by Bach, Liszt and Vasks, entered the German classic charts immediately upon its release.

Born in Latvia, Iveta Apkalna makes her home in Berlin and in Riga.

www.apkalna.com



IVETA APKALNA

The **Latvian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSO) is one of the cornerstones of Latvian national culture, its history spans almost a century. The LNSO is a six-time winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award.

From 2013 to 2021 the music director of the LNSO has been maestro Andris Poga, a conductor sought after by top orchestras from around the world.

The orchestra's most notable former music directors are Jānis Medīņš, Leonīds Vīgners, Edgars Tons, Vassily Sinaisky (the LNSO's honorary guest conductor since 2017), Olari Elts, and Karel Mark Chichon.

On its most recent tours the LNSO teamed up with the dazzling Latvian violinist Baiba Skride, the outstanding cellist Alexander Knyazev, the brilliant pianists Nicholas Angelich and Boris Berezovsky, and the rising stars Lukas Geniušas and Lucas Debargue.

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Andris Poga is the Chief Conductor of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra since 2021/22 season. He was the Music Director of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) from 2013 till 2021 and will continue to collaborate with the LNSO as its Artistic Advisor.

He is frequent guest conductor with the leading orchestras of Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Scandinavia. After the first successful collaborations he has been invited back to the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, DSO Berlin, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester Hamburg, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, SWR Symphony Stuttgart, WDR Sinfonieorchester, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo and many others. He has also conducted the Wiener Symphoniker, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre National de France, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony.

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ANDRIS POGA