



ONDINE

ARTURS MASKATS

Accordion Concerto

Tango

Cantus Diatonicus

My River runs to thee...



KSENIJA SIDOROVA, accordion
Latvian National Symphony Orchestra
ANDRIS POGA



ARTURS MASKATS

ARTURS MASKATS (b. 1957)

- 1 **Tango** (2002) **11:15**
(Accordion solo: Artūrs Noviks)

Accordion Concerto,

- “What the Wind Told Over the Sea”** (2021) **19:10**

(“*Ko stāstīja vējš pār jūru*”)

- 2 I. Andante, misterioso – 3:52
3 II. Allegretto – 6:11
4 III. Blues – 3:54
5 IV. Cadenza. Moderato. Toccata 5:06

- 6 **Cantus Diatonicus** (1982) **6:56**

- 7 **“My River runs to thee...”** (2019) **16:31**
Homage to Emily Dickinson

Ksenija Sidorova, accordion (2–5)

Latvian National Symphony Orchestra

Andris Poga, conductor

Arturs Maskats (b. 1957) is a romantic and a lover of the theatre. Already on four occasions he has received Latvia's highest music award — the Grand Music Award. One of those was given for his work *Tango*, which is included on this album and is one of the most popular classical music works in Latvia.

Arturs Maskats' body of work is varied. There is a significant amount of music for the theatre, and that is understandable, since, already at the age of 25, Maskats became the music director at one of Latvia's leading theatres — the Daile Theatre. He composed music for dozens of performances, and, for his theatre music, he was also nominated for the *Spēlmaņu nakts* (*Performer's Night*) award, which he received on multiple occasions. Maskats was not as active in film but composed music for some dozen films.

Arturs Maskats has also actively worked in the field of academic music. He has composed a symphony, symphonic miniatures, and many distinguished instrumental concertos; several impressive vocal instrumental works, including a mass and a prayer to St Cecilia — the patron saint of music. He has also written solo songs, choir works, and instrumental works.

In addition to the previous, Maskats has also composed an opera and a ballet. The opera *Valentīna* (2014) was dedicated to the notable film and cultural researcher Valentīna Freimane (1922–2018), a Holocaust survivor, who inspired many of those who worked in the field of culture. This is, possibly, one of the very few examples where the protagonist of an opera is someone who was still alive. In the world of ballet, Maskats worked with Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' work *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, arranged for dance.

Among Latvian poets, Maskats is particularly fond of Aleksandrs Čaks, the passionate poet of Riga, and Ojārs Vācietis, who possessed a brilliantly exposed soul. Among foreign poets, Emily Dickinson has a notable role in Maskats' creative work,

and her echo is also heard on this recording. When, in 1994, the ferry *Estonia* sank, Maskats reacted with the painfully fiery *Lacrimosa* for choir and organ. He wrote a song about Venice's *acqua alta* for soprano and piano quartet — *Venēcijas rindas* (*Venetian Stanzas*) which received the 2011 Latvian Grand Music Award. He finds his music at the perennially flowering magnolia by the Latvian National Opera. Maskats composes not just for Riga, but his music can also evoke the atmosphere of Paris and wine celebrations somewhere in the wineries of France. He enjoys everything Southern European, tangos are frequently encountered in his creative work, but he can also write a moving musical letter to a country home in Latvia.

The music of Arturs Maskats is tonal, harmonically traditional, with expressively subjective moods. Arturs is famous for the large interval leaps in his melodies — in this aspect, he has no competition in Latvia. The intonative material is individualized — Maskats' music is instantly recognisable.

Maskats remained at the Daile Theatre for 15 years. In addition, he was the director of the Latvian Composers' Union for three years. Later he moved from the Daile Theatre to the Latvian National Opera and, in 1996, became its artistic director, and worked in this role until 2013. Currently, Maskats is the programme director for the State Concert Agency *Latvijas Koncerti*.

Arturs Maskats is particularly fascinated by the Latin Southern European culture, especially French and Italian poetry. Among Maskats' opuses, alongside the deified Ojārs Vācietis we will find texts by authors such as Éluard, Michelangelo, Pasolini, or Verlaine. The Mediterranean cypress trees are reflected in many of the composer's works — his music is characterised by dark colour and sharpened sorrows. That is not the hopelessness of the endless northern winters, but more the intense atmosphere of an Italian summer night, where there is a sense that life has come to a halt, it has enveloped you like a slightly painful happiness.

In society, Maskats is well known for his accurate judgements of music and his lightly sarcastic jokes about his surroundings. The Latvian Radio archives even has recordings of Maskats' unique laughter!

Andris Poga says: "Maskats' music has a kind of poetry and pain, which is not often heard in the works by other contemporary composers. It is certainly music of emotion and fantasy, more Dionysus than Apollo."

Tango (2002)

Arturs Maskats' *Tango* (2002) was born from the impressions of a journey to Italy. Not long after its premiere, it was included in the prestigious symphonic composition competition *Masterprize* (UK), and, from 800 works in the competition, it was among the six finalists.

Maskats says: "Tango — it is a dance, a life story, also a way of life, fate, passion. A metaphor that cannot be explained in words. A state of the soul, where Heaven can be mixed up with Hell, creating a kind of new reality, a new view of an already known form of expression. The past century has elevated this dance from the small cafés that poet Aleksandrs Čaks wrote about, to the heights of great concert halls. Tango — in bars, on night-time city streets illuminated by flashing fire, and tango — in the larger theatres, famous concert halls. Tangos were composed by Stravinsky, Ravel, Shostakovich, also our Jānis Medīņš, and many, many others. The tango classic Astor Piazzolla is one of the most recognisable personalities of the late 20th century. I wanted to unite varied tango characteristics in a unified dramaturgy for symphony orchestra. It has its own inner contents, like roles in a theatre production. Ravel achieved this with the waltz at the beginning of the 20th century. And I wanted to try to do this with the tango!"

Maskats' *Tango* has been performed in two versions by the Latvian National Opera Ballet Group. After Emīls Dārziņš *Melanholiskais valsis* (*Valse mélancolique*), this is possibly the second most popular work of Latvian symphonic music.

Maskats says: "It slowly became clear to me that I wanted to get closer to both fields: the lofty academic and the gently flying balloon of theatre music, which is such a vital nerve. I wanted to join these spiritual allusions and not distinguish which is high art, which is lower. I have understood that I will never be a true abstract or academic, nor a modern avant-gardist." (from an interview in the magazine *Mūzikas Saule*)

Tango is a characteristic example of the dualism in Maskats' music — there are many occurrences where the composer balances on the border between endless sadness and passionate, but not particularly enjoyable games.

Accordion Concerto, "*What the Wind Told Over the Sea*" (2021)

The accordion has a vital role in the symphonic poem *Tango* and overall in Maskats' creative work. The composer himself does not play the accordion, though he did play it a bit in childhood. Sadly, he was encouraged not to pursue it, as not to ruin the atmosphere at home — God forbid that a child would keep on playing...

The Accordion concerto *Ko stāstīja vējš pār jūru* (*What the Wind Told Over the Sea*) is dedicated to Ksenija Sidorova: she inspired both the creation of the music, and, to a certain degree, the title, since the concerto was created in the restrictive era of the pandemic, when a sea journey was, for the most part, possible only through thoughts and dreams. "But, in the end, this entire world is longing," says the composer and stresses — "it is my very good fortune to work together with a musician of this calibre."

The accordion as a musical instrument and the orchestra — acoustically and technically it is a battle to combine these two elements. “However, in the hands of a talented musician this battle can turn into a musical experience,” says Maskats, “but it is easy neither for Ksenija, nor the orchestra, since the accordion is an interesting, but peculiar personality; over the course of our collaboration, I learned a lot from Ksenija, she is a good teacher. We communicated via Zoom, and she showed me many different performance approaches and tricks and indicated which sections will sound good and which ones would need modification. I have learned much from musicians.”

Most of the Accordion concerto was composed in Vecsalaca, just a few kilometres away from the Gulf of Riga. The windows of the work room in the residence of the Composers’ Union reveal the calm and inevitable Salaca River flowing by. There is a massive oak tree by the riverbank and the surroundings are unbelievably peaceful.

Arturs Maskats: “In the 1990s, I lived by the sea both during the winter and during the summer, and, since that time, I cannot live without the sea. The games of the waves can be lyrical, dramatic, dance-like, and this dance can, at times, become quite boisterous. My Accordion concerto is like that, but it is all one whole image, and it is, without a doubt, the Baltic Sea.”

Ksenija Sidorova: “I fully support the idea that the work sounds like our sea, the shine of our amber. It is a very beautiful and nostalgic concerto. Arturs was truly thinking of my performance when he composed this concerto! I really enjoyed the technical sections, but, even more – the beautiful melodies, and that is why I wanted Arturs to compose for me, since I knew that harmonies and melodies are his strength. Already at the first rehearsal, when only the orchestra was playing, I knew: the entire concerto is beautiful. When the orchestra is playing and I am sitting in the middle, I get goosebumps from these sounds — the sound that envelops me.” (From an interview with Latvian Radio 3 *Klasika*)

There are intriguing notes on the score — ‘blues’ (10:05) and ‘spring’ (15:23). With less than a minute left in the work, the orchestra members become singers (18:35).

The concerto was premiered in May 2021 at the Riga Great Guild and was video recorded without an audience.

Cantus Diatonicus (1982)

Arturs Maskats composed *Cantus Diatonicus* as his thesis when graduating the Latvian Academy of Music, where he studied with the erudite, pre-war Latvian gentleman Valentīns Utkins. The score does not include a dedication; however, it is clear that the opus is highly personal. The composer says: “It was my Godmother, to whom, in my thoughts, I dedicated the work. She was seriously ill but recovered. I wanted to dedicate a work that was bright and calming to the person closest to me, who educated me, gave me a beautiful childhood, and everything, everything. It seemed that she may not survive, but she survived and lived many more years. This work was kind of a prayer, and perhaps it also helped.”

At the end of the work, we hear the Latvian orphans’ song *Saulīt tecēj tecēdama* (*The Sun Flowed*) — it is brought to life in the clear sound of the celestas.

The work was premiered in June 1982 by the LNSO and conductor Imants Resnis. At the end of the 1980s, *Cantus Diatonicus* again appeared in concert programmes when it was performed in Liepāja and Riga, but had to wait its rebirth until 2022.

“My River runs to thee...” (2019)

The symphonic poem *My River runs to thee...* was commissioned by two orchestras led by Andris Nelsons: the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. The work was composed in the summer and autumn of 2019, and, in November, the work was premiered in Boston. The performance in Leipzig was cancelled due to the pandemic, and, in 2022, the opus was heard for the first time in Lithuania and Latvia.

The title of the work comes from the first line of a poem by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) which in its entirety is as follows:

My River runs to thee —
Blue Sea! Wilt welcome me?
My River waits reply —
Oh Sea — look graciously —
I'll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks —
Say — Sea — Take Me!

Arturs Maskats says: “In my belief, the river here represents life, freedom, definitely also love. It is, in every way, something that we are given from above and rules our life. The work is dedicated to Andrejs Žagars, who had recently passed away. He was also a close friend of Andris Nelsons, and Andris considered Andrejs to be one of his mentors.”

Andrejs Žagars was the director of the Latvian National Opera (1996–2013), and, during his tenure, Arturs Maskats was the artistic director. Andrejs Žagars and

his closest associates reanimated the Latvian National Opera from an artistic and financial decline, and, in a few years, achieved a vivid artistic growth and international recognition. To a great degree, thanks to the creative tandem of Žagars and Maskats, the LNO trumpeter Andris Nelsons was recognised and supported as a potential opera conductor. From 2003 to 2007 Nelsons was the lead conductor at the LNO, prior to departing for international waters.

Arturs Maskats first encountered the poetry of Emily Dickinson some twenty years ago, when he composed a small cycle for choir: “Dickinson was a revelation to me. Also, I began to better understand English and I could sense the many meanings in every word of hers. What a hidden and, at the same time, deeply passionate world! [Latvian American composer] Dace Aperāne brought me to the Dickinson Museum. Dace and I are the only two Latvians who have composed works with her poetry. I would like to, one day, return to this poet.” Now he has returned.

Orests Silabriedis

(Translation: Egils Kaljo)

Encouraged to take up the instrument by her grandmother steeped in the folk tradition of accordion playing, **Ksenija Sidorova** started to play the instrument aged eight under the guidance of Marija Gasele in her hometown of Riga. Her quest for more exposure to both classical and contemporary repertoire took her to London where she became a prize-winning undergraduate and postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music studying under Owen Murray.

Praised as “revelatory” (New York Times) with “breathtaking virtuosity” (The Observer), Ksenija Sidorova is the leading ambassador for the classical accordion. Both a unique and charismatic performer, Ksenija is passionate about showcasing the vast capabilities of her instrument. Her repertoire spans from Bach to Piazzolla, from Efreim Podgaitis and Václav Trojan, to Erkki-Sven Tüür and George Bizet, as well as new accordion concertos composed especially for her, plus a multitude of chamber projects.

Ksenija has worked with many leading orchestras including Munich Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchester-Zurich (residency in 2020/21), Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (Paavo Järvi), National Orchestra of Belgium (Aziz Shokhakimov), NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, MDR-Sinfonieorchester, Atlanta Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Kammerorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, NHK Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Camerata RCO and Tiroler Symphonieorchester Innsbruck.

She continues her artistic collaborations with Avi Avital, Pietro Roffi and her chamber music partners include Nemanja Radulovic, Andreas Ottensamer, Miloš Karadaglić, Camille Thomas, Goldmund Quartet, Juan Diego Flórez, Nicola Benedetti. Ksenija often appears at Ravinia, Cheltenham, Mostly Mozart, Schleswig-Holstein, Gstaad Menuhin, Verbier and Rheingau music festivals.

She has released a new album called *Piazzolla Reflections* on *alpha* classics in 2021.

www.ksenijasidorova.com

Arturs Maskats was born on December 20th, 1957 in Valmiera. He studied at the Jāzeps Mediņš Music School, where among his teachers were Jānis Līcītis (harmony) and Marija Mediņa (the musical form, instrumentation) – a representative of a notable family of Latvian composers and the spiritual motivator of Arturs Maskats's further progress. He finished the composition class with Valentīns Utkins (1982) at the Latvian State Conservatory, and, during his years of study, he received the top award at the All Nations Young Composer Festival (1981) in Yerevan, Armenia.

The focus of the composer's creative life is the theatre. As the Music Director at the Rainis Dailes Theatre (1982–1997) he composed original music for almost one hundred productions, among them the distinguished Reawakening Period production *Mūžības skartie* (*Those Touched by Eternity*) (1987) by Aleksandrs Čaks, which poet Jānis Peters called that era's purification. Arturs Maskats composed for other theatres' productions too.

He was the chairman of the executive board of the Latvian Composer's Union (1993–1996), and the artistic director of the Latvian National Opera (1996–2013). As of November 2013, he is the programme director of State LTD Latvijas Koncerti. He is one of the creators of the Cēsis Art Festival.

Arturs Maskats has been awarded the Lielā mūzikas balva (Grand Music Award) in 1996, 2001, 2002 and 2011. His work *Tango* was performed at the final of the 3rd international symphonic composition competition Masterprize in London (2003).

An intensive musical thinking and expressiveness of thought characterize the works of Arturs Maskats. This also has required choosing an appropriate form of expression. These musically created impulses are not infrequently drawn from a particular sensitiveness (Ojārs Vācietis) or in the lyrically noble word. Since his youth, he has been captivated by French poetry and Latin culture (Paul Verlaine, Michelangelo, Pier Paolo Pasolini). He also draws from the world of dance. In his

work *Salve Regina*, notable in the musical text is the expressive sonic mildness of the cello, the performance's carriage at times behind the fingerboard. At the same time the music is advisedly organized. The rhythm of the gold section can be discerned in the compositional form of his *Concerto grosso*. It will resolve in the concerto's intensified emotional space. One of the composer's works – *Tango* for symphony orchestra – seems to vibrate on a hot pole. One is able to speak about a contemporary romantic interpretation, especially in the dramaturgical aspect, in the music of Arturs Maskats.

Lolita Fūrmane | LMIC

The **Latvian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSO) is one of the cornerstones of Latvian national culture. Founded in 1926 as the Riga Radio Centre Orchestra, the LNSO has borne its current name since 1990.

The orchestra is a six-time winner of the Grand Music Award, Latvia's highest honour in classical music. In May 2022, Finnish Tarmo Peltokoski became the Music and Artistic Director of the LNSO. In Autumn 2021, Estonian Kristiina Poska, Chief Conductor of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra, became the Principal Guest Conductor of the LNSO.

The orchestra has been led by many brilliant talents and experienced significant growth under the baton of Vassily Sinaisky, Conductor Emeritus of the LNSO since 2017. More recently, notable contributions have been made by Olari Elts, Karel Mark Chichon, and Andris Poga, who was the Music Director and Chief Conductor of the LNSO from 2013 until 2021, when he became the Chief Conductor of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Adviser to the LNSO.

In recent years, the LNSO has performed at the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Philharmonie de Paris, the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, the Grand Théâtre of Aix-en-Provence, among many other important European concert halls. The orchestra has participated in the Festival de La Roque-d'Anthéron in France, the Bratislava Music Festival in Slovakia and has taken the stage in Germany, Switzerland, and the Baltic States.

Giving concerts in Latvia and abroad, the LNSO has collaborated with Ksenija Sidorova, Baiba Skride, Eva Bindere, Frank Peter Zimmermann and Vineta Sareika, Kristina Blaumane and Alexander Knyazev, Nicholas Angelich, Boris Berezovsky, Lucas Debargue, Lukas Geniušas, Daumants Liepiņš, Andrejs Osokins, Georgijs Osokins, Vestard Shimkus and Reinis Zariņš.

The LNSO regularly features in recordings of the Finnish label Ondine, focusing on the music by the most prominent Latvian composer of the 20th century Tālivaldis Ķeniņš, as well as the Latvian national record label SKANI.

In the second half of the 20th century, the LNSO collaborated with Arvīds Jansons, Kurt Masur, Yevgeny Svetlanov, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Kirill Kondrashin, Yuri Simonov, Neeme Järvi, Krzysztof Penderecki. Many maestros have guided the LNSO in recent times as well: Paavo Järvi, Mariss Jansons, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Andris Nelsons, Jean-Claude Casadesus, Gintaras Rinkevičius a.o. The orchestra has also worked with renowned young conductors such as Klaus Mäkelä, Maxim Emelyanychev, and Tarmo Peltokoski.

lno.lv

Andris Poga is the Chief Conductor of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. He was the Music Director of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra from 2013 till 2021 and continues to collaborate with the LNSO as its Artistic Advisor.

Highlights of recent years have included concerts with the leading orchestras of Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Scandinavia. After the first successful collaborations he has been invited back to the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester Hamburgs, Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, SWR Symphony Stuttgart, 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.

The season of 2022/23 includes the subscription concert series with both the Stavanger SO and LNSO, tour of France with the LNSO, returns to Japan and China as well as to the Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, WDR Symphony Cologne, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, SWR Symphony Stuttgart, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Orchestre National de France. Debuts with the Gothenburg Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg and Konzerthausorchester Berlin among others.

In 2010, Andris Poga was the First Prize winner of the Evgeny Svetlanov International Conducting Competition, which thrust him into the international scene. He was an assistant to Paavo Jarvi at the Orchestre de Paris from 2011 to 2014, and from 2012 to 2014 he served as an assistant conductor for the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

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ANDRIS POGA

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KSENIJA SIDOROVA