



ONDINE

EDUARDAS BALSYS

Violin Concerto No. 1

Dramatic Frescoes · Reflections of the Sea

Džeraldas Bidva, violin · Indrė Baikštytė, piano
Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra
Modestas Pitrenas



EDUARDAS BALSYS

EDUARDAS BALSYS (1919–1984)

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| | Violin Concerto No. 1 (1954) | 26:14 |
| 1 | I. <i>Allegro moderato ed agitato</i> | 11:45 |
| 2 | II. <i>Andante cantabile e sostenuto</i> | 8:01 |
| 3 | III. <i>Allegro vivo</i> | 6:25 |
| 4 | Reflections of the Sea (1981) Poem for string orchestra <i>Prelude – Toccata</i> | 11:47 |
| 5 | Dramatic Frescoes (1965) for violin, piano and symphony orchestra | 28:13 |

DŽERALDAS BIDVA, violin (1–3 & 5)
INDRĖ BAIKŠTYTĖ, piano (5)

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MODESTAS PITRĖNAS, conductor

Even though Eduardas Balsys (1919–1984), one of the most talented Lithuanian composers of post-war generation, spent his most productive years in the period of Soviet regime, his music stood out for its high artistic standard, and still remains appealing and fresh-sounding. The leader of stylistic breakthrough of the 1960s and one of the most influential figures in the post-Stalinist resurgence of Lithuanian music, the composer is ascribed to moderate modernist trend. The most important part of his output consists of large-scale compositions – a ballet, an opera, oratorios, and concertos. Balsys was one of the best masters of orchestration in Lithuania, and also an excellent teacher of composition. He has educated a number of today's leading composers and musicologists.

Eduardas Balsys was born near Nikolaev, Ukraine on December 12, 1919. The Balsys family returned to Lithuania in 1921, and settled in Skuodas. Later, in 1928, the family moved to Klaipėda. While studying at the Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium in Klaipėda, from which he graduated in 1939, he played althorn and tuba in the gymnasium's wind orchestra. In 1940, he entered Military School in Kaunas from which he graduated as a lieutenant. Here, in the cadet soirees, his first songs were performed.

During the war, Eduardas Balsys taught chemistry, physics, mathematics, physical training and music at the Gymnasium of Kretinga. It was during this time when he decided to become a composer. He graduated from the Lithuanian State Conservatoire in 1950, where he had studied with Antanas Račiūnas. During the years 1950–53 he studied with Viktor Voloshinov as a postgraduate student at the Leningrad Conservatoire.

Eduardas Balsys taught composition and orchestration at the Lithuanian State Conservatoire. Since 1960 he chaired the composition department of the same institution, and in 1962–72 served as a chairman of the Lithuanian Composers' Union. The composer was twice awarded the State Prize – first for his ballet *Eglė, Queen of the Grass-snakes* (1960) and later for his oratorio *Don't Touch the Blue Globe* (1974). Balsys died in Druskininkai on November 3, 1984.

As a composer, Balsys underwent a considerable evolution of style from his String Quartet, written in classical form, to his late expressionistic opera *Journey to Tilsit*, based on dodecaphonic technique. His oeuvre reflects turns and twists of the development of Lithuanian music, from ideologically motivated 'folkloric' romanticism (until 1958) toward new stylistic trends and compositional techniques (such as dodecaphony and aleatoric composition, starting from the mid-1960s). His creative output can be divided into three periods:

1950–1958. In search for his idiom, Balsys was influenced by Classical and Romantic music and had to comply with the official requirements of 'folkloric' style, which can be easily traced in his String Quartet. Other important works of the period include *Heroic Poem* for symphony orchestra, Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 1, and a new orchestration of M. K. Čiurlionis' symphonic poem *The Sea*.

1958–1965. This period marked a stylistic change in Lithuanian music. The composer often employed elements of popular music (e.g., rumba rhythm), quartal harmony and extended tonality. Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 2 – the most popular Lithuanian violin concerto – is a perfect example of innovations of the period. The Concerto, and the subsequent ballet *Eglė, Queen of the Grass-snakes*, display Neoclassical features – vivid themes, concise development of the musical material, motoric rhythm and sharp contrasts.

1965–to his death in 1984. Balsys' music abounds with expressionistic elements and dodecaphonic procedures. The latter unifies his markedly different works of this period, including *Dramatic Frescoes*, oratorio *Don't Touch the Blue Globe*, opera *Journey to Tilsit*, orchestral poem *Reflections of the Sea*, and Concerto for solo violin.

In addition to the works mentioned, Balsys has also left a number of works for wind orchestra, popular songs, as well as music for film and theatre.

As already indicated, Balsys underwent considerable evolution of style from the String Quartet, written in the classical form, to the expressionist opera *Journey to Tilsit*, based on dodecaphonic technique. His first creative period, related to postgraduate studies in Leningrad and his search for an own idiom, is marked by the influence of Classical and Romantic works, showcased in his *Heroic Poem* for symphony orchestra, **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1** and in the String Quartet, an opus Balsys started working on while still a student. With his concerto it became clear what a great master of instrumentation Balsys was. In the rich symphonic texture, the composer was able to impressively reveal romantic colours, through an interplay of folk intonations, melodiousness and drama.

"He sketched the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 in St. Petersburg and completed it in Lithuania: the composer always worked very diligently, without rushing, giving as much time as the work needed", Ona Narbutienė mentions in the monograph about Balsys. "The composer orchestrated his First Violin Concerto three times, until the score fully corresponded to his idea. Perfecting was the most difficult stage of his compositional process in preparing the work for the first performance", wrote violinist Aleksandras Livontas.

"The first Concerto for Violin and Orchestra was the zenith of his first creative period, a summary. He mastered large form, instrumentation of symphony orchestra, achieved picturesqueness and contrasts of musical fabric. He completely abandoned the quotation of folk melodies. Balsys seems to have taken the first step towards a new style. On the other hand, it is still a traditional work, over which, although not so obviously, the shadow of the great Tchaikovsky still hovers, one can also feel the influence of the then very popular Khachaturian's Violin Concerto. But in Balsys' hands all this has taken an idiosyncratic shape.

The three-movement work has a typical classical scheme – a dramatic first movement, a lyrical second movement and a playful finale. The composer's refined mastery is especially evident in the formation of themes – the search for the interconnection of themes and the focus on polyphony. For example, in one

episode of the finale, the composer juxtaposes three themes: the cellos revisit the theme of the second movement, the violin solo – the theme of the second episode, and the flutes and clarinets, having joined a little later, repeat the motif of the introduction to the finale. This is already a multifaceted way of thinking, which later became characteristic of many of Balsys' works." (Extracts from Ona Narbutienė. *Eduardas Balsys: Monograph*. Vilnius, 1999).

Reflections of the Sea, a poem for string orchestra (1981) was dedicated to the closing of the Third Festival of Chamber Orchestras in Vilnius, where it was performed by three string orchestras joined together. The work consists of two movements, Prelude and Toccata, saturated with expressive moods and sharp contrasts. By using *divisi* technique, the composer has an abundance of voices at his disposal. He makes use of horizontal lines of independent voices as well as various ways of polyphonic development (imitation, canon, etc.).

A short introduction, marked by dynamic contrasts and wide tonal palette, ushers the listener into the atmosphere of *Reflection of the Sea*. Here the work's thematic material is introduced. The Prelude (*Andante*) is based on a passionate motif, which is exhibited in different voices, here as close imitation accompanied by ornate passages. A syncopated, expressive introduction theme reappears in the middle section.

Toccata (*Allegro molto vivace*) is brimming with spontaneous force and continuous motion. As its contrast, the main themes of the Prelude and the Introduction are presented in the middle section. Showcasing all the registers of the chamber orchestra, Toccata solemnly concludes the opus.

Dramatic Frescoes for violin, piano and symphony orchestra (1965) is a work in which the composer sums up dramatic conflicts of our era, the threat of war, which disturbs and persuades the whole progressive humanity to think. The one-movement symphonic work merges the features of several genres: instrumental concerto, poem and symphony. Solo instruments are treated here as the main elements of the orchestra.

Dramatic Frescoes consist of five closely intertwined movements. Their arrangement corresponds to sections of the sonata form: the first fresco is the main theme, the second – the second theme, the third – the development, and the fourth and fifth embody mirror recapitulation. However, each fresco has its own form as well: the first is written in a sonata form, the second – three-movement form, the third – one-movement form, the fourth – three-movement form, and the fifth – rondo form. Encased in a dramatic mood, the five frescoes undergo an array of expressions – sadness, sarcasm, anger and distressing contemplation. The composer employs a dodecaphonic technique to evoke a mood of anxiety. From the twelve-tone series he generates the leitmotif and all themes of the work. In forming the series, the composer tries to bring its sound closer to the structure of a folk song and uses intonations of lament in the development. In the third fresco, which is the dramatic climax of the opus, a new, wilful and energetic motif emerges. It represents the forces of light that have blocked the way for darkness and violence.

Ona Narbutienė

"Virtuoso, able not only to solo, but also to conduct an orchestra and keep track of the ensemble at the same time, a great concertmaster with whom the orchestra members feel each other's shoulder and breathing", so is the violinist **Džeraldas Bidva**, the principal violin of Kremerata Baltica and the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra (LCO), described.

Graduate of the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Arts, the LAMT and Paris Conservatoire, Bidva also appears as a soloist: he performs with various chamber ensembles at festivals in Salzburg and Lockenhaus (Austria), Gstaad and Les Muséiques in Basel (Switzerland), the Risior Chamber Music Festival (Norway), Kronberg (Germany) and elsewhere.

He has presented many impressive programs and projects with Gidon Kremer, as well as concerts with prominent performers and conductors, including Gustav Dudamel, Christoph Eschenbach, Simon Rattle, Martha Argerich, Daniel Trifonov, Mario Brunello, Oleg Maisenberg, Sergej Krylov and others. Young violinists from all over the world come to Bidva's master classes *Ars SummerFest* in Lithuania, and the international Mažeikiai Art Festival led by him boasts a high artistic level and an abundance of world-renowned musicians.

As the orchestra's principal violin (without conductor), he has recorded over 20 albums with orchestras, many of which have won prestigious ICMA, Grammy and Echo Klassik awards. Bidva singles out his solo album, released by the Odradek record company in 2018, together with the LCO, where he documented concerti for violin and orchestra by P. Vasks, A. Šenderovas and J. Juzeliūnas. The album is a significant and worthwhile gift to Lithuania on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Restoration of the State. Currently, Bidva plays Antonio Stradivari's "Baron Feilitzsch, Heermann", the violin made in Cremona in 1734.



DŽERALDAS BIDVA

Indrė Baikštytė is the grand-daughter of Eduardas Balsys. She studied at the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Arts, the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT, under prof. O. Šteinberg, I. Armonienė, D. Balsytė, P. Geniušas), and honed her skills at the Berlin University of the Arts. In 2015, she defended her dissertation on the collaboration between soloist and pianist-concertmaster, and was awarded a PhD in Art.

Baikštytė is a laureate of more than ten national and international solo, concertmaster and chamber ensemble competitions in Canada, Romania, Sweden and the Ukraine. As a soloist she has appeared with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra, Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, Klaipėda Chamber Orchestra and St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra. She collaborates with Lithuanian and foreign performers, has given concerts in many European countries, as well as in Canada, Russia and Israel. Since 2009, Baikštytė has enjoyed invitations to perform solo piano parts with Kremerata Baltica. In 1995, the pianist started performing with violinist Rūta Lipinaitytė. The musicians have formed *Domino Duo*. Willingly performing and promoting the works of Lithuanian composers, Baikštytė took part in the recording of albums of music by A. Šenderovas, F. Latėnas, J. Juozapaitis, Š. Nakas, Ž. Martinaitytė, and other composers.

The *FortVio* Trio occupies an important place in the pianist's activities. As a member of this ensemble, she has repeatedly won laurels in competitions – 1st prize in the International Stasys Vainiūnas Piano and Chamber Ensemble Competition as well as 3rd prize in the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Austria (2006), 2nd prize in Sergey Taneyev International Competition of Chamber Ensembles in Russia (2008) (Prof. Dalia Balsytė was instrumental in the ensemble's preparation for these competitions). In 2013, *FortVio* won the Grand Prix at the International Master Competition for Music Teachers in Warsaw. The ensemble performs in Lithuania and abroad. In 2012, it became an active member of the ECMA (European Chamber Music Academy). In 2014 and 2016 the Trio released

CD albums. In 2015, as a member of *FortVio* Baikštytė was honoured with the Government Culture and Art Prize.

In 2002–2003, Baikštytė worked as a concertmaster-tutor at the Berlin University of the Arts. Currently, she is an associate professor at the Chamber Ensemble Department of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and a teacher at the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Arts where she also heads the Chamber Ensemble Department.



INDRĖ BAIKŠTYTĖ

The **Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSO) has been active for more than seven decades. The leadership of The Vilnius City Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1940, was entrusted to the famous composer and conductor Balyš Dvarionas. In 1964, a new stage started with the young conductor Juozas Domarkas, who took his place at the orchestra's podium. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, in 1990 the Orchestra was given the name and status of the National Symphony Orchestra.

The Orchestra prepares and performs symphonic music programs not only in the National Philharmonic, but also in various Lithuanian cities. For many years it has carried on with the Palanga Summer Concert Series, the Michał Ogiński International Music Festival in Plungė, as well as representing Lithuanian culture abroad: concerts were given in prestigious halls in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Minsk, Madrid, Berlin, Bern, Antwerp and Stockholm, major cities in Great Britain, France, and particularly a great number of concerts have taken the Orchestra to neighboring Poland. The Orchestra has also appeared in the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany, Prague Spring in the Czech Republic, Musica Romantica in Switzerland and other famous European music festivals and concert halls, such as the Musikverein in Vienna, London's Barbican Centre, Cologne Philharmonic, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Moscow Conservatory Great Hall and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. In 2013, for the first time the Orchestra toured in South America (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador), performed in the ceremonial opening and closing of the Lithuanian Presidency of the European Council in Klara Festival (Brussels) and Białystok Philharmonic in Poland. In 2018, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania, the LNSO performed with the Warsaw Philharmonic and the Berlin Konzerthaus under the baton of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm with the Swedish Radio Choir where an ambitious contemporary program was conducted by Giedrė Šlekytė.

The LNSO has accumulated an extensive, colorful and significant repertoire, embracing works of the oratorio genre and symphonic opuses of the past epochs as well as modern contemporary music with the works by Lithuanian composers occupying an important place. Since 1991, the Orchestra has been a regular participant of the Contemporary Music Festival Gaida, annually presenting premieres by Lithuanian composers. It could be claimed that almost all the symphonic works by Lithuanian composers have been premiered by the LNSO, many of them are dedicated to maestro Juozas Domarkas. Thanks to the maestro, a large part of the Lithuanian music today is being performed not only in the concerts but also from many recordings released in Lithuania and abroad.

Playing around 50 annual concerts, the LNSO nurtures unique traditions significantly contributing to fostering of the high music culture, encouraging the artistic ambitions of young Lithuanian composers and performers, indulging the audience with both large-scale opuses certifying the Orchestra's maturity, as well as symphonic miniatures prompting the imagination of the listeners.

One of the leading Lithuanian conductors MODESTAS PITRĖNAS has taken the duties of the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the LNSO in of 2015. In 2009–2014, he has served as the principal conductor of the Latvian National Opera (LNO). In 2006–2011, he was the principal conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. Since August 2018, the maestro also serves as Principal Conductor of the St. Gallen Opera Theatre and symphony orchestra (Switzerland).

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One of the leading Lithuanian conductors **Modestas Pitrenas** has taken the position of the principal conductor and artistic director of the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) in autumn of 2015. In 2003, Pitrenas won the 1st prize and gold medal at the 7th Grzegorz Fitelberg Conducting Competition in Katowice (Poland) and was awarded a special prize of the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra. This has led him to collaborate with Poland's leading symphony orchestras. In 2009–2014, he served as the principal conductor of the Latvian National Opera (LNO) and as the conductor of the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre (LNOBT). In 2006–2011, he was the principal conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. For his contribution to Latvian music culture Pitrenas has been decorated with Latvian awards including the Cross of Recognition. In 2012, he was honoured with the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize. In 2015, the Baltic Assembly jury awarded the Maestro with the Baltic Assembly Prize for the Arts. Starting August 2018, he will enjoy an invitation to serve as the principal conductor at the Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland.

Together with the LNSO, the Latvian National Orchestra, Krasnoyarsk State Orchestra, the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra and the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra Pitrenas has prepared and performed several symphonic opuses. With the aforementioned ensembles he has given concerts in many European countries, the USA and China. Lately, he has been conducting in Latvian and Lithuanian theatres, the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf, the national opera theatres in Cologne and Helsinki as well as the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. In the Theater St. Gallen he has led over 30 opera and ballet productions. In 2014, under the baton of Pitrenas Wagner's *Rienzi* became one of the key events in the program of "Riga European Capital of Culture" 2014, and the same year Pitrenas gave the world premiere of Arturs Maskats' opera *Valentina* in the LNO. Later, the opera production was taken to Deutsche Oper in Berlin.

Pitrėnas studied choral and opera conducting at the Salzburg Mozarteum (prof. Walter Hagen-Groll and prof. Karl Kamper) 1995–1996. He also pursued his studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT), from which he graduated as a choral conductor in 1997 (prof. Lioginas Abarius), an orchestral conductor in 2002 (prof. Juozas Domarkas), and earned Art Lincientiate Diploma in 2004. He has participated in seminars and master courses led by conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jorma Panula and Helmuth Rilling among others. During the years 1990–2000, he led the Psalmos choir. The choir went on several tours in Europe and the USA, and won prizes in many international choral competitions and festivals. Pitrėnas has recorded over 15 albums of choral and symphonic music. Since 2003, he has taught conducting at the LAMT, where in 2015–2017 he served as the head of the Conducting Department.



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Composer photos: Eduardas Balsys, 1950s (inlay). Courtesy of the family;

Eduardas Balsys at home, standing next to a stained glass
by Antanas Galeckas, 1960s (page 2). Photograph by Valerij Koreškov.

Courtesy of the Music Information Centre Lithuania



Photo from the recording sessions



ODE 1358-2

MODESTAS PITRĖNAS

EDUARDAS BALSYS (1919–1984)

- 1–3 **Violin Concerto No. 1** (1954) **34:46**
- 4 **Reflections of the Sea** (1981) **11:47**
- 5 **Dramatic Frescoes** (1965) **28:13**

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LITHUANIAN NATIONAL
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[66:15] • English notes enclosed

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