



ONDINE

PĒTERIS VASKS
Songs of My Heart

Latvian Radio Choir
Sīgyards Kļava



Pēteris Vasks

PĒTERIS VASKS (b. 1946)

- | | | |
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*World première recordings **

Latvian Radio Choir
Sigvards Kļava, conductor

Pēteris Vasks was born on 16 April 1946 in Aizpute, a small, peaceful village some two hundred kilometres west of Riga, to a mother who was a dentist and a father who served as a Baptist pastor. Under Stalin, life under the roof of a clergyman was far from easy, and the Vasks family experienced this harsh reality on several occasions. For a long time, the doors of the Riga Conservatory remained closed to the future composer. His two sisters were only able to pursue their medical studies after many setbacks, while his brother was never admitted to law school. As for the courageous Arvīds, he was stripped of the right to conduct the orchestra he had founded in his parish. With the mass deportations of 1941 and 1949 still fresh in everyone's memory, the pastor, his wife and their children lived in a state of constant apprehension. Meagre bundles of belongings lay under the beds, ready for a possible night-time raid. Asked how he explains the fact that his family escaped deportation, Pēteris offers a simple hypothesis: "My mother was the only dentist in the region. Even the KGB agents sometimes suffer from toothache..." His paternal uncle, by contrast, endured seven long years in the Gulag.

Unsurprisingly, the young Pēteris's earliest musical impressions were steeped in sacred music. The choir of St John's Church, where Arvīds officiated, acquitted itself honourably. Yet the poverty of the repertoire, consisting largely of American hymns and canticles, repelled the young boy, who was soon seized by an irrepressible urge to compose. In the utmost secrecy, unsure of himself and convinced that his first attempts would interest no one, he filled his drawers with religious and other works. Only a few were sung in church; others, sent to an aunt living in the United States, resonated across the Atlantic – at least three of them, dating from the 1960s, were published there some twenty years later. Initially rejected by the Riga Conservatory because of his father's profession, Pēteris taught himself composition before enrolling in the cello class at the Vilnius Conservatory in Lithuania. He soon realised that, in the Soviet Union, the salvation of any ambitious composer lay in instrumental music. By now, Vasks aspired to have his music performed; only then could he acquire the experience necessary for his artistic development. Sacred music, however, was strictly forbidden at the time, and any other form of vocal music was acceptable only after passing through the censors' gauntlet. From the 1970s onwards, Vasks therefore wrote little vocal music, and virtually no sacred music, for more than two decades.

Although Pēteris Vasks regards himself primarily as a composer of instrumental music, his choral works have enjoyed considerable success in his homeland. Latvia – the 'Singing Country', which freed itself from Soviet rule through a 'Singing Revolution' – has a long-standing tradition of choral singing, marked by immensely popular song festivals, the first of which dates back to 1873, and a range of world-class choirs.

The first secular choral works Vasks composed during his student years reveal both his profound curiosity and the influence of the Polish School – Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki and Henryk Górecki. Drawn to aleatoric techniques and sonorism, he experimented freely, without ever abandoning the primacy of expression. These early attempts initially found little resonance among performers; the women's choir Dzintars and the Latvian Radio Choir, then conducted by Edgars Račevskis, were among the few ensembles willing to champion a composer considered *persona non grata* by the regime and undeterred by his innovative language.

The programme for this recording, conceived as a tribute to Pēteris Vasks on his eightieth birthday, spans a period of more than half a century. It deliberately avoids the more 'modernistic' scores – such as *Māte saule* (1975), *Ne tikai lirika* (1977), *Ķekatu dziesma* (1981), *Zemgale* (1989), *Litene* (1993) and *Zīles ziņa* (2004), all recorded elsewhere – in favour of the composer's short, intimate pieces for mixed *a cappella* choir, in which he employs a simple, languid and deliberately conventional musical language. Some of these works are recorded here for the first time, and one of them remains unpublished to this day. Three decades separate *Lūgšana (Prayer)*, written in 1961, from *Pater noster*, which marks a turning point in the composer's evolution and a return, in the realm of vocal music, to the simplicity and purity of his adolescence. On the occasion of an earlier Ondine release (ODE 1106-2, 2007), Vasks told the musicologist Ināra Jakubone that he now wished to convey a simple and fundamental message through transparent and unadorned sounds. The period of his life when experimentation seemed not only exciting but vital was over. The lack of harmony in our lives and in the world concerns him more than ever. He believes that music should remind us that balance is possible, that perfect harmony exists. Inspired by his father's sermons, whose mission as a preacher he seeks to continue in his own way, Pēteris aspires for his music to be immediately intelligible, just as any homily worthy of the name should be. Were we not familiar with Pēteris Vasks's oeuvre, we might be surprised to learn that these little gems were penned by the same composer who wrote such modern works as *Moments musicaux* for clarinet, *Touches* for oboe, *Partita* for cello and piano, *In memoriam* for two pianos and *Sonata of Loneliness* for guitar. They are nonetheless delightful. Many of Vasks' choral works were first premiered by the Latvian Radio Choir under its principal conductor, Sigvards Klāvis. It is therefore only fitting that they should be given a voice in the present recording.

Lūgšana (Prayer) [track 10] is the earliest composition by Pēteris Vasks to have emerged from his personal archives. The autograph score is dated 1961, and the work is thought to have been written when the composer was only fifteen years old. In E flat major, it is strophic in form, with particularly simple harmony. All these elements suggest that the piece was intended for the parish of Aizpute.

Its text, based on words by the pastor and poet Augusts Meters – *Vadi, Kungs, mani (Guide me, Lord)* – is openly religious. At the time, composing such a work was a daring undertaking. During the 1960s, Latvia was far from as liberal as Poland, where Krzysztof Penderecki, following the international success of his *St Luke Passion* in 1966, was able to perform several religious works without hindrance, including his *Magnificat, Paradise Lost* and *Te Deum*. In 1961, publicly identifying oneself as a composer of sacred music in a Baltic state constituted a direct affront to the Soviet regime. In the two decades following the end of the Second World War, dozens of Catholic priests, Protestant pastors and members of the Orthodox clergy were arrested and imprisoned. The monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church and some forty Russian Orthodox parishes were subsequently dissolved. Until the mid-1980s, no sacred music rooted in the Christian tradition was performed at concerts organised by the Latvian Composers' Union. Such compositions were not even discussed in the literature: in her monograph on Jāzeps Mediņš (1877–1947), the musicologist Laima Mūrniece was obliged to remove all religious works from the list of the composer's output. As for *Lūgšana*, although it was premiered at the St John's Church in Aizpute, this appears not to have occurred until 28 April 2006, when it was performed by the Latvian Radio Choir.

Savā tautā (Within My Nation) [track 19] was composed in 1990, as the Soviet empire was collapsing. “We were all in high spirits and ready to sacrifice everything to regain our lost independence,” recalls Pēteris Vasks. The piece is based on verses by Andrejs Eglītis (1912–2006), which provided the composer with deep and sincere inspiration. “I can identify with every word,” he remarked once the work was completed. A prominent figure in Latvian poetry, Eglītis was enlisted in 1943 in the Latvian Legion. Forced to fight his own compatriots in the Red Army, he endured intense suffering, which only left him at death. After the war, he emigrated to Sweden. Actively involved in the cultural life of the Latvian diaspora, he did not return to his homeland until 1998. “All my poetry,” he once said, “is dedicated solely to my homeland. All the books I have written are a tribute to my native land. Poetry is ingrained in me; every verse springs from my subconscious.” In B flat major and in ABA form, *Savā tautā* is to be sung “with deep emotion, without haste”. When it was premiered on 27 March 1991 at the University of Riga by the Latvian Radio Choir, Eglītis was profoundly moved by the work, in which, according to the press, two great Latvians had met.

Completed in 1995, ***Pater noster*** [track 3] is the result of a long process of maturation. When Arvīds asked his teenage son to write a Lord's Prayer that the faithful of his parish could sing together, Pēteris declined, feeling that he was not yet ready for such a task. It was only after his father's death in 1987 that the composer resolved to write the piece, “in an act of deep faith” and “in memory of my father and of our Father of all”. In a letter to his publisher dated 1991, he expressed

his intention to complete this *Our Father*, which he intended for the choir of the parish of Aizpute. As the USSR collapsed, many composers who had previously been subservient to Soviet power ceased to sing the praises of the Communist Party and suddenly rediscovered their faith. Vasks, by contrast, had never glorified the regime; nor had he waited until adulthood to express his faith in his works. *Pater noster* is the first of these pieces that Pēteris – usually deeply attached to his mother tongue – set to a Latin text, although he also produced a Latvian version. The work was premiered in its original version for mixed *a cappella* choir on 3 December 1995 in Gdańsk, by the Latvian Chamber Choir *Versija* under Juris Vaivods. Five years later, it was arranged for mixed choir and string orchestra *ad libitum*. Rarely used by composers, the marking *cantabilissimo*, which appears throughout the score, is also found in the second movement of the Third Symphony by one of Vasks's favourite composers, Henryk Górecki. That symphony marked a decisive turning point in Górecki's style, as he renounced the avant-garde of his early years in favour of a personal, tonal and lyrical language imbued with intense spirituality and profound melancholy. At the same time, the Latvian composer was pursuing a similar path. *Pater noster* is one of the works in which Vasks adopts a distinctly homiletic tone, paying close attention to the meaning of the prayer taught by Christ. The first climax, unsettling in character, occurs with the words: *Et ne nos inducas in tentationem* ("and lead us not into temptation"). Deliverance from evil (*sed libera nos a malo*) is expressed through a long, serene G major chord, the dominant of the opening C minor tonality, before an almost literal reprise of the first eighteen bars. The second climax, *fortissimo* and radiant, accompanies the evocation of divine glory. The piece ends *piano*, on a Picardy third (C major), haloed with peace at the close of a splendid cadence.

The Fruit of Silence [track 2] is among Pēteris Vasks's most frequently performed works. The original version for mixed *a cappella* choir was premiered on 18 August 2013 by the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Choir under Rolf Beck. Five years later, the composer revised the piece and, clearly pleased with the result, went on to produce numerous arrangements – for choir and piano, string quartet, piano quintet, choir and string orchestra, choir and organ, string orchestra and piano, as well as flute and orchestra. The Dutch composer of Hungarian origin Peter Vigh also arranged the work for choir and saxophone quartet. Following *Lord, open our eyes*, composed in 2011 for the Hilliard Ensemble, it was once again a prayer by Mother Teresa – often shared with those she encountered – that provided the creative impulse for this piece. It encapsulates her conception of love of one's neighbour as a source of peace, sustained by faith in God. As the opening verse of the prayer suggests, the music seems to emerge from the very edge of silence. The great sobriety of the writing, the muted dynamic range and the predominance of the major mode create an atmosphere of trust and serenity, faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the saint

of Calcutta's text, in which only the final words of each verse are emphasised through repetition. In E flat major, the work concludes *pianissimo* on a luminous C major chord. To date, *The Fruit of Silence* has been performed more than two hundred times worldwide. On 22 September 2025, it was performed in New York before the United Nations General Assembly on the occasion of the organisation's eightieth anniversary.

Pēteris Vasks had already paid tribute to Imants Ziedonis (1933–2013) in *Kantāte sievietēm* (*Cantata for Women*), completed in 1980. Some thirty years later, following the poet's death on 27 February 2013, Ziedonis once again inspired the composer, this time to write a cycle of love songs entitled **Mīlas dziesmas** [tracks 5–9]. The work was first performed on 12 June 2013 in Riga by the Latvian Radio Choir under Sigvards Kļava. Celebrating Latvian nature in all its forms, Ziedonis's texts resonate deeply with Vasks. The score calls for the cycle to be sung calmly, with languor and melancholy, in an intimate setting. Muted dynamics lend these five homophonic pieces a pastel-like quality. *Tāds gaišums* (*Such Lightness*) evokes the dissipation of darkness and the fears that accompany it. It opens in A flat major, modulates to C minor, then returns to its original key and melody. A further modulatory passage leads to an expressive climax at the end of a crescendo, before a *pianissimo* of profound tenderness, in F minor and coloured by a Picardy third, brings the piece to a close. The same serenity pervades *Un pēkšņi tāds klusums* (*And Suddenly Such Silence*). The third song, more chromatic in character, conveys a sense of unease reflected in its title, *Kur biju?* (*Where Was I?*). The fourth, *Tad apstājās laiks* (*Then Time Stopped*), contains a central passage that might almost be mistaken for a Slavonic hymn. Hesitating between D minor and G major, the final piece, *Ne lapa nekustas* (*Not a Leaf Is Moving*), is to be sung "with great tenderness". In 2017, Vasks arranged three of the five songs for voice and piano; these were published under the title *Trīs mīlas dziesmas* (*Three Love Songs*).

Mūsu kalni (**Our Mountains**) [track 18] dates from 2017. Based on verses by the composer's favourite poet, Knuts Skujenieks (1936–2022), it evokes a flat country – Latvia – whose only mountains are the clouds gathering above the plains. The composer indicates that the piece should be sung "with love". It was premiered on 15 February 2018 in Riga by the Latvija Choir, conducted by Māris Sirmāis.

Tēvu zeme (**Fatherland**) [track 20] was composed in 2018 and premiered on 17 October of the same year in Jelgava, in the composer's homeland, by the unfailing Latvian Radio Choir, once again conducted by Sigvards Kļava. Knuts Skujenieks's poem of the same name pays renewed tribute to Latvia, and the work was performed several times in October and November 2018 in

connection with the centenary of the declaration of independence on 18 November 1918. It is cast as a traditional *andante cantabile* in D minor.

Composed in 2021, **Actus caritatis** [track 1] is a hymn to charity, setting a text inspired by the Gospel according to St Matthew (22:37–39): “Jesus replied: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” Vasks has clothed these words in music imbued throughout with an atmosphere of contemplation, the dynamic level never exceeding *mezzo piano*. The work was premiered on 5 May 2022 at the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam by its commissioner, Cappella Amsterdam, conducted by Daniel Reuss.

Subtitled *Prayer to (Your) Guardian Angel*, **Angele Dei** [track 4] also dates from 2021. It sets to music a Catholic prayer invoking the intercession of a guardian angel, formerly attributed to the philosopher and Benedictine monk Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), but now thought by historians to originate from a text by Reginald of Canterbury (c. 1050–1109). Vasks regards the work as a reminder of the Creator’s unwavering love. Owing to the pandemic, this *adagio* in E flat major was premiered via livestream on 16 April 2021 in Cēsis by the Latvian Radio Choir under Sigvards Kļava. It was subsequently performed in concert, alongside *Actus caritatis*, on 18 April 2024 in Rome as part of the Concertando Festival, by the Polyphonic Choir of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, conducted by Walter Marzilli.

In recent years, Pēteris Vasks has increasingly turned to sober, slow-moving miniatures. In these works, the composer reiterates his faith, his love of nature and his attachment to his homeland. One such example is **Pirmā zāle (First Grass)** [track 11], a simple yet delightful madeleine for four-part mixed choir. Drawing on verses by Fricis Bārda (1880–1919), Vasks brings together all his favourite themes: the awakening of spring, the starry sky, the praise of slowness – without which no contemplation is possible – prayer, and God himself. The composer asks that the work, in A flat major and remaining almost throughout in a deeply serene *piano* or *mezzo piano*, be sung “with deep respect”. *Pirmā zāle* was premiered at the New Music Days in Riga on 9 May 2025, in the Great Hall of the University, by the Latvian Radio Choir under Sigvards Kļava.

When the Latvian Radio Choir, under the baton of the indefatigable Sigvards Kļava, premiered **Šesas dziesmas (Six Songs)** [tracks 12–17] on 22 March 2025 in the Great Hall of the University of Riga, the ink was barely dry. Once again, Pēteris Vasks turned to texts by Knuts Skujenieks, whose verses call for love of one’s country and one’s neighbour as the sole means of overcoming

darkness. *Pēc tā, ko mīlēju un mīlu (After what I loved)* is in A minor but ends with a Picardy third. In AA' form, it is tinged with folk colour, further enhanced by frequent changes of metre. *Saule nogrimst domās (The sun sinks in thoughts)*, in D minor, is based on one of Skujenieks's most emblematic poems, written after his imprisonment in the Mordovian Gulag, from 1962 to 1969. The text expresses spiritual resilience and faith in rebirth: the seed sown in snow becomes a clear metaphor for hope in the face of political and moral cold. The poem's opening lines embody this inward meditation, where light continues to dwell in the mind even as the outside world darkens. The third song sets one of Skujenieks's most laconic poems. In a single stanza – *Un nav vairs migla, un nav vairs rasa, pa baltām oglēm skrien dzīve basa (And there is no more fog, and there is no more dew, over white embers life runs barefoot)* – Vasks seems to translate, still in D minor, the frantic race of time and the precarious existence of humanity treading on hot coals. This is the least homophonic and most unstable piece in the cycle. Marked by offbeats, syncopations and chords featuring augmented seconds, it closes on a diminished chord built on the second degree. The opening lines of the fourth poem – *Kur tu jāsi, smuks puisīti, miglainā rītā? (Where are you riding, handsome boy, on a foggy morning?)* – echo a well-known *dainā* (Latvian folk song). The poet, however, diverts the original meaning of this pastoral love song to fashion a metaphor for individual and national destiny. Vasks mirrors the text's question-and-answer structure by alternating between a women's choir (SSAA) and a men's choir (TTBB). Following an ABA'B' design, he assigns a cheerful theme in G major to the former, answered in E minor by the latter. The fifth song, *Ir tava elpa kā virsotnes gaiss (Your breath is like the air of the peak)*, continues in the same key. Once again homophonic and scored for four mixed voices, it too concludes with a Picardy third. The final song, *Novēlējums (I Wish You)*, is suffused with light: in G major, it modulates unexpectedly in its closing bars before ending on a radiant E major chord, proclaimed *fortissimo*.

All of the composer's favoured themes find fertile ground in these miniatures: pantheistic faith, love, silence and homeland. Essentially tonal and diatonic, slow-moving, homophonic and syllabic, fluid and linear, these sketches may not always reveal the most quintessential Vasks – though some undoubtedly do – but they possess a discreet grace and a fragile luminosity that more than justify granting them a voice with increasing frequency. This recording is therefore to be warmly welcomed.

Olivier Vrans



Latvian Radio Choir

“A great musical power.”

– Washington Post

*“This chorus’s expertise in music pushes voices to extremes,
from ethereal high tones to uncannily sustained bass drones.”*

– The New York Times

“One of the world’s greatest choirs.”

– The Advertiser

The **Latvian Radio Choir** is a unique, award-winning ensemble of professional singers that offers its audiences an extraordinary variety of repertoire ranging from early music to the most sophisticated scores of contemporary compositions.

The choir has recorded the Grammy Award-winning album *Adam’s Lament* (ECM) composed by Arvo Pärt and conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste. It is a repeat winner of the Great Music Award of Latvia (the highest national award for professional achievement in music) and has received the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Award. The choir’s recording of Sergei Rachmaninov’s *All-Night Vigil* was praised by Gramophone as the best recording of February 2013 and ranked among the 25 best albums of the year by the American radio station NPR. The choir’s album of choral works by John Cage won a Gramophone Award in 2023.

The Latvian Radio Choir has performed at many of the world’s most renowned concert halls: Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw (the Netherlands), Elbphilharmonie (Germany), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and Cité de la Musique-Philharmonie de Paris (France), Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Duke University Chapel and the Walt Disney Concert Hall (USA), Konzerthaus Berlin (Germany), the Library of Congress (USA), Queen Elizabeth Hall (UK) and the Dresden Frauenkirche (Germany).

It is also a regular performer at leading musical events, such as BBC Proms (UK), the Salzburg (Austria) and Lucerne (Switzerland) festivals, the Festival of Radio France Occitanie Montpellier (France), the Baltic Sea Festival (Sweden), Printemps des arts de Monte-Carlo (Monaco), Klangspuren Festival (Austria), the White Light Festival (USA), Klangvokal Dortmund (Germany), Musikfest Erzgebirge (Germany), OzAsia Festival (Australia) and Soundstreams (Canada).

Often serving as a creative lab, the choir encourages composers to write new music that challenges the capabilities of the human voice. During the past 20 years, the ensemble has evolved into an unprecedented form of a choir where every singer has an individual mission and provides their unique contribution to the group's unique, defining blend of timbral qualities.

The choir regularly releases new recordings with Ondine, Hyperion Records, Deutsche Grammophon, ECM, BIS and Naïve, collaborating with outstanding guest conductors like Heinz Holliger, Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly, Gustavo Dudamel, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Peter Phillips. It has also partnered with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg and Concerto Copenhagen.

The Latvian Radio Choir was founded in 1940 by the legendary Latvian conductor Teodors Kalniņš, who led the ensemble until his passing in 1962. Following the artistic direction by Edgars Račevskis (1963–86) and Juris Kļaviņš (1987–92), the choir has had two conductors ever since 1992 – artistic director and principal conductor Sigvards Kļava and conductor Kaspars Putniņš.

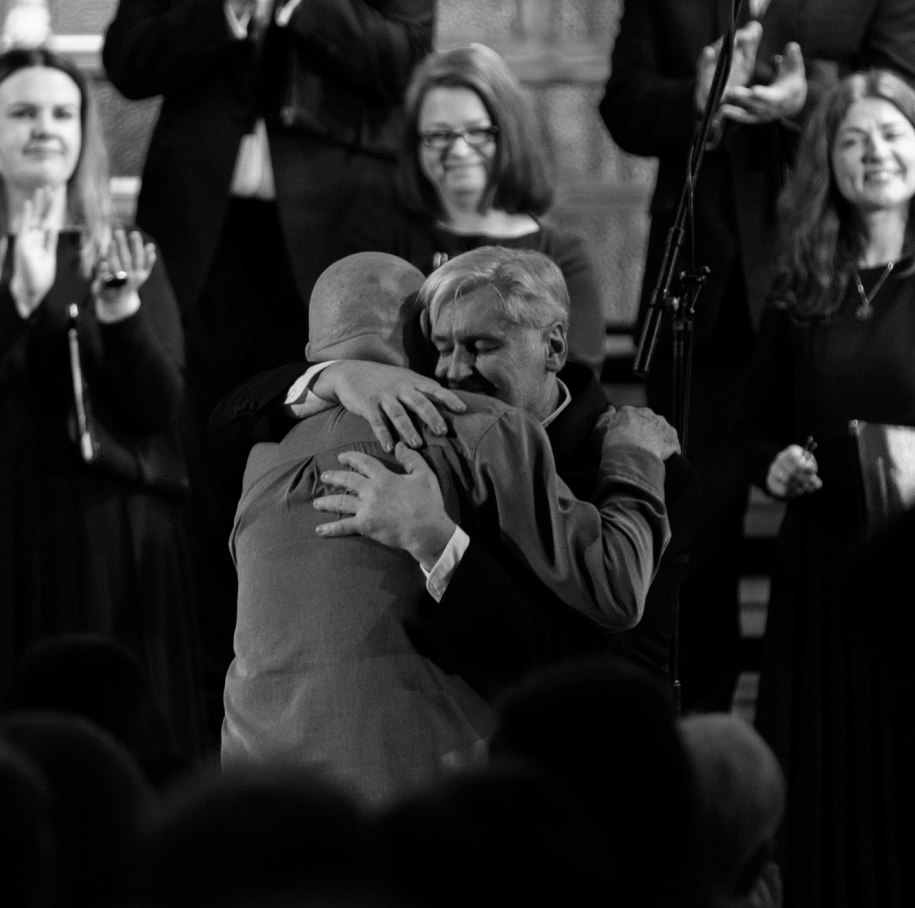
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Sigvards Kļava is one of the most outstanding Latvian conductors, also a professor of conducting and producer, music director of the Latvian Radio Choir since 1992. As a result of Sigvards Kļava's steady efforts, the Latvian Radio Choir has become an internationally recognized, vocally distinctive collective, where each singer possesses a creative individuality. Under Sigvards' guidance, the choir has recorded a number of choral works by little known or completely forgotten composers of the past, as well as formed a friendly collaboration with a number of notable Latvian composers. Sigvards Kļava is a professor at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. Kļava is a multiple winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award. He has performed at the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw of Amsterdam, Berliner Konzerthaus and Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Berwaldhallen in Stockholm, Dresdner Frauenkirche as well as in the New York Lincoln Centre.



SCIENTIAE ET PATRIAE

Sigvards Klāva conducting the première of Vask's
Six Songs (*Šešas dziesmas*) with the Latvian Radio Choir



SUNG TEXTS

1 **Actus caritatis**

Domine Deus, amo te super omnia
proximum meum propter te, quia tu es
summum, infinitum, et perfectissimum
bonum, omni dilectione dignum. In hac
caritate vivere et mori statuo. Amen.

2 **The Fruit of Silence**

The fruit of silence is prayer
The fruit of prayer is faith
The fruit of faith is love
The fruit of love is service
The fruit of service is peace.

Text: Mother Teresa

3 **Pater noster**

Pater noster, qui es in coelis:
sanctificetur nomen tuum;
adveniat regnum tuum;
fiat voluntas tua,
sicut in coelo, et in terra.
Panem nostrum quotidianum da
nobis hodie;

Act of Love

O my God, I love Thee above all things, with
my whole heart and soul, because Thou art
all-good and worthy of all love.
I love my neighbour as myself for the love of Thee.
I forgive all who have injured me, and ask
pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris;
et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.
Quia tuum est regnum, et potestas,
et gloria in saecula. Amen.

4 **Angele Dei**

Angele Dei,
qui custos es mei,
me tibi commissum pietate superna,
hodie illumina, custodi, rege et gubernas.
Amen.

5 **Mīlas dziesmas I. Tāds gaišums**

Tāds gaišums tikai ļoti retam rudenim
Tāds gaišums vēl nav bijis man līdz šim.
Ne ziemas bail, ne arī tumsa kaiš.
Jau pašā sajūtā ir kaut kas gaišs.
Kā balti dvieļi liedagi gar jūru,
Es eju krastu šo jau kuro reizi.
Un viss ir gaismā balts un sudrabots,
Es nezinu, par ko man tas ir dots.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Angel of God

Angel of God,
my guardian Dear,
To whom his love commits me here;
ever this day be at my side, to light
and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

Love Songs Such lightness

Such lightness so rare for autumn
Such lightness I've never seen before.
Not afraid of winter am I, nor does the
darkness bother me.
This feeling itself contains something light.
I've walked this coast so many times before,
The seaside breaches like white towels.
And everything aglow with sliver and white,
I don't know why I've been given this light.

6 **II. Un pēkšņi tāds klusums**

un pēkšņi tāds klusums
ka saule apstājas debesmalā
un arī stāv, elpu aizturējusi

varbūt mainīsies vējš
varbūt mainīsies sardze
varbūt mainīsies balss:
pārāk ilgi esmu bijis jauns

7 **III. Kur biju?**

Kur biju? Nezinu. Mans bijums
tik melns kā ievu ievārījums.
Un atvars ačgārniski maļ.
Uz ievu ziediem atpakaļ

8 **IV. Tad apstājās laiks**

Tad apstājās laiks,
Un tā bija mīlestība.
Jo tikai mīlestības priekšā tas apstājas.
Un sekundes varēja grābt kā smiltis
Un sviest uz vienu vai otru pusi –
Tam nebija nozīmes.
Un nebija ziedlapiņas.
Un nerūsēja dzelzs.
Un mēs vairs nemācējām skaitīt.
Un tas ir tas skaistākais –
Ka mīlestība neprot skaitīt

And suddenly such silence

and suddenly such silence
that the sun stops at the edge of the sky
and stands, holding her breath

maybe the wind will change
maybe the guard will change
maybe the voice will change:
I've been young for too long

Where was I?

Where was I? I don't know. My being
as black as hackberry jam.
And the whirlpool churns the wrong way around
Back to the hackberry flowers.

Then time stopped

Then time stopped. And that was love.
Because time stops only for love. Then time
stopped. And that was love. Because time
stops only for love. And the seconds could
be grabbed like sand. And thrown to one
side or the other – it didn't matter. And the
flower petals did not fall. And the iron did
not rust. And we forgot how to count.
And that is the most beautiful thing –
that love knows not how to count.

9 V. Ne lapa nekustas

Ne lapa nekustas
Es šonakt degšu sveci
un iešu, sveci rokās, tālu pļavās.
Varbūt caur kādu nezināmu teci
es pēkšņi iestaigāšu domās tavās.

Tu pļavu redzēsi. Un mūžību.
Iet puisēns mazs. Un pārvēršas par veci.
Un līdzi gaismu nez. Tā esi tu.
Es tik to jokam saucau tā par sveci.

10 Lūgšana

Vadi, Kungs, mani
Dzīves ceļā baigā
Neatmet mani
Prom no sava vaiga.
Ņem pats pie rokas
Savu bērnu vārgu
Tām tu par sargu.

Spēku man dodī
Klausīt Tevi vienumēr,
Tik Tavu prātu
Darīt katru dienu;
Lai ceļā grūtā
Nepagurst man kājas,
Pirms kļūstu mājās.

Not a leaf is moving

Not a leaf is moving
Tonight I will light a candle
and go, candle in hand, deep into the meadows.
And perhaps through some unknown flow
I'll unexpectedly walk into your thoughts.

You'll see the meadow. And eternity.
There goes a little boy. And turns into an old man.
And carries light with him. That's you.
I'm only joking when I call it a candle.

Text: Imants Ziedonis (1933–2013)

Prayer

Guide me, Lord,
Along the fearful path of life
Do not push me away
From Your presence.
Hold by the hand
Your fragile child
Be my guardian.

Give me strength
To obey You always,
Only Your will
To follow every day;
May on the arduous journey
My legs do not tire,
Before I reach home.

Tikai uz Tevi
Savu skatu raidu
Tikai no Tevis
Iepriecu sev gaidu.
Tik vien caur Tevi
Augšup gars man ceļas,
Spēku sev smeļas.

Only towards You
I turn my gaze
Only from You
Joy I await.
Only through You
Upwards my spirit rises,
Drawing its strength.

Text: Augusts Mēters (1887–1976)

11 Pirmā zāle

Kad pirmā zāle dīgst,
Tad zeme lūgšanas skaita,
Un zvaigznes debesīs
Apstājas savā gaitā.

Aiz zvaigžņu dūmakām
Debesis veras vaļā,
Un Dievs pats pa zemi iet
Pastalām zaļām.

First Grass

When the first grass sprouts,
The earth recites prayers,
And the stars in the sky
Pause on their way.

Beyond the mists of stars
The sky opens up,
And God Himself walks the earth
In green leather sandals.

Text: Fricis Bārda (1880–1919)

Šešas dziesmas

ar Kn. Skujenieka vārdiem

12 I.

pēc tā ko mīlēju
pēc tā ko ņems un neiedos
es gribu ūdens malķu zilu
un baltu elpu debešos

Six Songs

after what I loved
after what will be taken and not given
I want a sip of water blue
and white breath in the sky

par dzīvi neatrisinātu
par ceļu kas tik īss un ass
vēl tikai vienu labu prātu
ar kuru beidzas pasakas

about life unresolved
about the path which is so short and sharp
just one more good mind
with which the fairy tales end

13 II.

Saule nogrimst domās
Garā zelta vagā.
Smaga, smaga, smaga
Dienas zelta krava.

The sun sinks in thoughts
In a long golden furrow.
Heavy, heavy, heavy
The day's gold load.

Bērzu zaros gausos
Pirmā zvaigzne trīc.
Labs, kas ciests un pārciests.
Labs, kas padarīts.

In the sluggish birch branches
The first star trembles.
Good is what has been suffered and endured.
Good is what has been done.

14 III.

un nav vairs migla
un nav vairs rasa
pa baltām oglēm
skrien dzīve basa

and there is no more fog
and there is no more dew
over white embers
life runs barefoot

15 IV.

kur tu jāsi smuks puisīti
miglainā rītiņā?

where are you riding, handsome boy
on a foggy morning?

ne es jāšu ne drasēšu
šai zemē man palikt

I won't ride, I won't prance my horse
in this land I am to stay

vēja bērzus plivināt
raudus zirgu dzirdināt

nāc pie manis klētiņā
man gultiņa uztaisīta

vēlu vēlu tautu meita
cita gulta mani gaid

gari zāļu paladziņi
līdz viņai saulītei

to flutter the wind birches
to water roan horses

come to me in granary
my bed is made

too late, too late, young maiden
another bed awaits me

long grass bed sheets
till the other sun

16 **V.**

ir tava elpa kā virsotnes gaiss
var būt ka šis kalns man būs pēdējais

es augsti cēlies man ilgi slāpt
man palikt šai kalnā un nenokāpt

your breath is like the air of the peak
maybe this mountain is the last one for me

I've risen high, I've been thirsty for a long time
I am to stay on this mountain and not come down

17 **VI. Novēlējums**

Lai pie tavas pieres egle
Zaļu roku liek.
Lai neviena rūpe šonakt
Tevi nesatiek.

Lai tev drošu ceļu rādīt
Liela zvaigzne krīt.
Lai ikvienu sapni vari
Plaukstā pasvārstīt.

I Wish You

May on your forehead the fir tree
Place its green hand.
May no worries tonight
Come to you.

To show you a safe path
May a big star fall.
To let you every dream
Hold in your hand.

Lai ver vārtus katra sēta,
Kurp vien gaita ies.
Katrs avots, katra aka
Pasniedz padzerties.

Lai tu vari katram vienam
Abas rokas dot.
Un kā zelta mežābele
Sniegā salapot.

May every gate open wide
Wherever your path leads.
May every spring, every well
Offer you a sip of water.

So that you can to every one
Give both your hands.
And like a golden apple tree
Foliate in snow.

Text: Knuts Skujenieks (1936–2022)

18 **Mūsu kalni**

tik skaistu kalnu mums nav
mums mākoņi dzimst uz zemes
blakām vītola atvasēm
blakām stīrnas bērniem

un kad mākoņi salasās debesīs
tie ir tie mūsu kalni
kur mums augstu un balti domāt
tāpat kā visiem citiem

Our Mountains

we do not have such beautiful mountains
for us clouds are born on the ground
alongside the willow shoots
alongside the roe deer cubs

and when the clouds gather in the sky
these are the mountains of ours
where we can think high and white
as all others do

Text: Knuts Skujenieks (1936–2022)

19 **Savā tautā**

Man sen vairs savu sāpju nav,
Tik visas tautas.
Man sen vairs savu sāpņu nav,
Tik visas tautas.
Man savas dzīvības un nāves nav,
Tik visas tautas.

Tās rokās zobens es un puķe maiga.
Kā uguns ugunīs – ar brāļiem kopā
liedēts.
Tik daudzreiz dziļi ievainots un saldi
dziedēts,
Tik visas tautas.

20 **Tēvu zeme**

maza mana tēvu zeme
divu roku platumā,
mīļa mana tēvu zeme
divu roku siltumā,
dziļa mana tēvu zeme
visa mūža garumā.

Within My Nation

No more pain I have of my own
But of my people.
No more dreams I have of my own
But of my people.
No more life and death I have of my own
But of my people.

I am a sword and a tender flower in their arms,
As a fire in fires – united with my brothers
So many times deeply wounded and kindly
healed –
By my people.

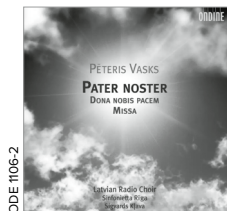
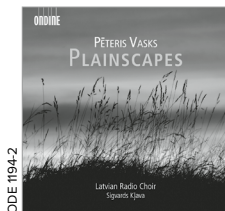
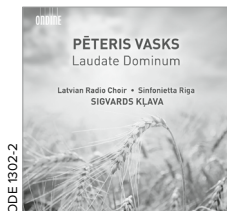
Text: Andrejs Eglitis (1912–2006)

Fatherland

small is my fatherland
in the breadth of two arms,
dear is my fatherland
in the warmth of two arms,
deep is my fatherland
all life long.

Text: Knuts Skujenieks (1936–2022)

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