

VOCAL FABRIC

vLaams
RADIOKOOR

A day in Kyiv

**A SPOTLIGHT
ON
UKRAINIAN
COMPOSERS**

**BRUSSELS
THÉÂTRE MARNI**

16.11

Vlaams Radiokoor
Brussels Philharmonic Soloists
Antonín Dvořák
Sylvain Klava conductor

vlaamsradiokoor.be



with the support of the Belgian Tax Shelter & Russian Tax Shelter



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PROGRAMME

Kindly refrain from applauding between the various works

Miroslav Skoryk (1938-2020)

Melody in A Minor

Oleksandr Shchetynsky (°1960)

Requiem: Requiem et Kyrie

Valentin Silvestrov (°1937)

Nostalghia

Dmitry Bortniansky (1751-1825)

Sacred Concerto No. 32:

I. Lord, Make Me to Know Mine End

II. Remove Thy Stroke Away from Me

III. O Spare Me, That I May Recover Strength

(soprano: Evi Roelants; alto: Sandra

Paelinck; tenor: Ivan Goossens; bass: Conor

Biggs)

Valentin Silvestrov (°1937)

The Messenger

Oleksandr Shchetynsky (°1960)

Requiem: Dies Irae

Valentin Silvestrov (°1937)

Maidan 2014, Cycle IV:

III. Prayer for Ukraine

Borys Lyatoshynsky (1751-1825)

Prelude, op. 38

Valentin Silvestrov (°1937)

Diptychon: II. Testament

*(soprano: Jolien De Gendt; tenor: Michiel
Haspeslagh)*

Valentin Silvestrov (°1937)

4 Pieces, op. 2: No. I. Lullaby: Moderato

Oleksandr Shchetynsky (°1960)

Requiem: Agnus Dei

*(soprano: Sarah Van Mol; alto: Estelle Lefort;
tenor: Michiel Haspeslagh; bariton: François
Heraud)*

Levko Revutsky (1889-1077)

Song

ARTISTS

Sigvards Klava (conductor)

Antonii Baryshevskiy (piano)

Vlaams Radiokoor

(soprano) Sarah Abrams, Jolien De Gendt, Karen Lemaire, Lissa Meyvis, Valeriia Pieters, Evi Roelants, Sarah Van Mol, Veerle Van Roosbroeck

(alto) Maria Gil Muñoz, Eva Goudie-Falckenbach, Estelle Lefort, Lieve Mertens, Sandra Paelinck, Noëlle Schepens

(tenor) Gunter Claessens, Paul Foubert, Ivan Goossens, Michiel Haspeslagh, Paul Schils, Roel Willems

(bass) Conor Biggs, François Heraud, Paul Mertens, Andrés Soler Castaño, Thomas Vandenabeele, Jan Van der Crabben, Harry Van der Kamp

Soloists Brussels Philharmonic

(1e viool) Eric Baeten, Juliette Janssen,
Gabriele Filiberto Galleri, Anouk Lapaire

(2e viool) Véronique Burstin, José
Manuel Jiménez Garcia, Bram Van Eenoo

(altviool) Sophie Gailly, Helena
Raeymakers

(cello) Bénédicte Legrand, Maria Palazon

(contrabas) Ben Faes

PROGRAMME NOTES

'I try, with my music, to safeguard and preserve a day of peace. Today, it seems to me, this ought to be art's primary aim.'

– Valentin Silvestrov

On 6 March 2022 the 86-year-old composer Valentin Silvestrov (1937), together with his daughter, granddaughter and a suitcase full of manuscripts, fled from Kyiv, the city where he had lived for more than half a century, to Berlin. Like many others, he left his native Ukraine facing an uncertain future. Although he had never been involved in politics, in 2014 he responded to the bloody protests in Kyiv with the song cycle *Maidan*. As a musical protest against the violence. The louder the war bells rang, the softer the music he composed; although at that time he could not

have imagined how topical his music would still sound ten years later.

For a long time, the cycle was seldom performed outside Ukraine, but since the Russian invasion in the spring of 2022, the work of Ukrainian composers has been played more than ever. The large-scale Sacred Concertos by Dmitry Bortniansky (1751–1825) have been part of the choral repertoire for several decades, but composers such as Miroslav Skoryk (1938–2020) and Oleksandr Shchetynsky (1960) are not at all familiar to us. Nevertheless, they play an important role in the history of Ukrainian music. For example, Skoryk's *A Melody* was proclaimed Ukraine's spiritual anthem.

Symphonic choral music

The oeuvre of Dmitry Bortniansky was unknown for a long time. With its Early Romantic impact, it was no longer part of the classical period, and for a long time Bortniansky's music was considered too Italian-sounding by the 19th-century nationalists. Even during the Soviet era, when all religious music was banned, his music was forgotten. But Bortniansky is hard to ignore: with his large-scale Sacred Concertos, he westernised the Slavic music tradition. This had much to do with his training with the Italian composer Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785), who, at the invitation of the Russian Empress Catherine II, worked as Kapellmeister and court composer in St Petersburg between 1765 and 1768. When Galuppi returned to his hometown in Venice, Bortniansky followed. He stayed there until

1779, and in those years composed three operas, instrumental music and a number of liturgical works based on Latin texts.

Upon his return to Russia, Bortniansky was able to work successively as Kapellmeister and director of Tsar Paul's court chapel. There he expanded the choir, with whom he performed not only his music and that of his compatriots, but also compositions by Western composers – from Handel's Messiah to Beethoven's Missa Solemnis. In his own works, Bortniansky reaped the benefits of his training with Galuppi and used all possible means to make the strictly a cappella compositions sound as symphonic as possible – the Orthodox liturgy did not allow for any instrumental accompaniment. With evocative melodies, flexible grouping of the voices and alternating use of tutti and solo passages, he provided a hitherto unprecedented approach

to choral music. In total he composed about 45 Sacred Concertos, of which 35 are for four-part mixed choir and ten for double choruses.

The choral concerts soon became one of the attractions of St Petersburg and also influenced its successors, including Rachmaninov and Stravinsky. Even the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) was a fan: after hearing one of the concerti during a trip to Russia in 1840, he praised Bortniansky for the ‘incredibly free combination of voices and textures’ and played some of his concerti in Paris. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was less fond of his music, but did hugely admire Sacred Concerto No. 32, O Lord, make me to know mine end. It is a very contemplative work, ending with a long and poignant fugue in which Bortniansky

expresses both the resistance to and final acceptance of death.

Echoes from the past

Valentin Silvestrov was born in Kyiv in 1937, when Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union. During his studies he eagerly absorbed all styles from twentieth-century modernism and the post-war avant-garde. As a result, his earliest compositions are an expression of all these influences, something that the Union of Soviet Composers frowned upon, regarding his work as undesirable modernism. The continuous opposition caused a radical change in Silvestrov's compositional style in the course of the 1970s, resulting in silent and spiritual compositions. He explained the about-turn as follows: 'The most important lesson of the avant-garde was to be free from all preconceived ideas – especially those of

the avant-garde.’ He henceforth referred to his style as ‘meta-music’, an echo of what already exists.

A beautiful example of such a reminder of earlier music is *The Messenger* from 2016, written in memory of his deceased wife Larysa Bondarenko. Inspired by the writings of philosopher Jakov Droeskin (1902–1980) in which a ‘messenger’ forms the link between this world and an alien, Silvestrov combines in his work a contemporary musical language and passages that bring to mind Mozart’s music. He himself describes his composition as follows: ‘It is as if a visitor from some other dimension in time came to us with a message ... perhaps Larysa herself, perhaps some distant muse speaking in the language of the late eighteenth century. This archaic and yet vitally contemporary language is filtered through a profoundly postmodern sensibility.’

Also in the solo work for piano from 2001, *Nostalghia*, we hear a longing for what used to be. It is a refined work, in which the few notes, fragments of melodies and deep silences make you the listener long for what is still to come, while at the same time clinging to what you've just heard. Like the music of Arvo Pärt, it exudes a special and timeless power precisely because of its simplicity.

‘The world singing of itself’

It took a while for Silvestrov to venture into choral music: ‘Being an individualist, choirs were never my initial interest. The piano – there lies my fate.’ One of his first choral works was *Diptychon* from 1995. Silvestrov compares the two-part work with an altarpiece in the church, depicting not only Christ himself, but also the life of the saint. This is done in the second part ‘Testament’,

using the text of the poem Zapovit (devotion) by the Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). Like Bortniansky in his large-scale choral concertos, Silvestrov splits the choir into smaller, flexible groups to achieve different sound effects.

Silvestrov's most impressive choral composition is undoubtedly Maidan, a song cycle he composed in response to the protests in Kyiv. In November 2013, the population revolted en masse against the decision of then pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych not to sign the free trade agreement with the European Union. In February 2014, the protests escalated into the bloody Revolution of Dignity, which eventually led to the removal of the president and the signing of the treaty with the European Union. Unfortunately it also gave rise to the occupation of Crimea by Russia, and in the

aftermath of that, the current war. Instead of looking at all this in anguish, Silvestrov responded by composing a piece of music every day in February 2014. On Maidan Square he recorded the prayers and folk songs of the protestors, the bellringing and the gunshots. Armed with his piano and voice, he wrote his own musical eyewitness account. Later Silvestrov grouped the pieces into four cycles, which together form one large choral work and are in principle performed as a whole. The work ends with a serene lullaby, which was a very deliberate move by Silvestrov: 'I'm neither able nor willing to duplicate the noise of this terrible war. Instead, I want to show how fragile our civilisation is.'

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert

SIGVARDS KĻAVA

www.radiokoris.lv

Sigvards Klava has been the artistic director of the Latvian Radio Choir (LRC) since 1992. As a result of his steady efforts, the LRC has become an internationally recognised, vocally distinctive musical group welcome at the top music festivals and invited to collaborate with the most outstanding composers and conductors.

Sigvards Kļava studied conducting at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLAM), the Bachakademie Stuttgart, the St. Petersburg Conservatory and masterclasses at the Oregon Bach Festival. He has been a professor in the conducting department at JVLMA since 2000.

ANTONII BARYSHEVSKYI

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Antonii Baryshevskyi is a prominent Ukrainian pianist and a laureate of prestigious international piano competitions, such as the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition, Premio Jaen, and F. Busoni International Piano Competition. Baryshevskyi gives masterclasses in Ukraine and abroad, serving as a guest professor at the Davidsbündler Music Academy in The Hague and as a regular member of the International Summer Academy of Music in Ochsenhausen, Germany.

Antonii Baryshevskyi is a frequent guest at renowned festivals such as Progetto Martha Argerich, the Klavier Ruhr Festival, the Busoni Festival, and projects by the Musica Insieme Fondazione, among others.

As a soloist, he has performed on major stages, including Wigmore Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin, Berliner Philharmonie, Kölner Philharmonie, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Warsaw Philharmonic, and Teatro Comunale di Bologna. He has given concerts in almost all European countries, as well as in Israel, Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

Baryshevskyi has shared the stage with some of the leading European orchestras, including the Munich Radio Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini, conducted by maestros Asher Fisch, Frederic Chaslin, Howard Griffiths, Oksana Lyniv, Andrey Boreyko, Kirill Karabits, and many others.

VLAAMS RADIOKOOR

www.vlaamsradiokoor.be

The Vlaams Radiokoor (Flemish Radio Choir) was founded in 1937 by the Belgian public broadcaster of the day. Today, the Vlaams Radiokoor is renowned for vocal music in Flanders and Europe, and is counted among the top ensembles both at home and abroad.

The young Belgian conductor Bart Van Reyn is the musical director of the Radiokoor. A shared passion for baroque and contemporary repertoire, the belief that the voice is the ultimate interpreter of our emotions, and the commitment to make our vocal heritage accessible to singers and audiences alike are what binds the ensemble together.

The Vlaams Radiokoor is an institution of the Flemish Community.

TEXTS

OLEKSANDR SHCHETYNSKY REQUIEM: REQUIEM ET KYRIE

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux
perpetua luceat eis.

Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion, et tibi reddetur
votum in Jerusalem;

exaudi orationem meam; ad te omnis caro veniet.

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.

DMITRY BORTNIANSKY SACRED CONCERTO NO. 32

Скажи ми, Господи, кончину мою,
и число дней моих, кое есть, да разумею,
что лишаюся аз.

Се, пяди положил еси дни моя,
и состав мой яко ничтоже пред тобою:
обаче всяческая суета.

Убо образом ходит человек,
обаче все мятется: сокровиществует,

и не весть, кому соберет я.

Отстави от мене раны твоя:
от крепости бо руки твоя аз исчезох.
Услыши молитву мою, Господи,
и моление мое внуши,
слез моих не премолчи.

Ослаби ми, да почию,
прежде даже не отиду, и ктому не буду.

*Lord, make me to know my end,
and what is the measure of my days,
that I may know how frail I am.
Indeed, Thou hast made my days as
handbreadths,
and my age is as nothing before Thee.
Surely all things are vanity.
Man walks about like a shadow;
surely he busies himself in vain; he heaps up
riches,
and does not know who will gather them.*

*Remove Thy plague from me;
I am consumed by the blow of Thy hand.
Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and give ear to my cry;
do not be silent at my tears.*

*Remove Thy gaze from me, that I may regain
strength,
before I depart and be no more.*

OLEKSANDR SHCHETYNSKY

REQUIEM: DIES IRAE

Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla:
Teste David cum Sybilla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando iudex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus.
Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.
Mors stupebit et natura,

Cum resurget creatura,
Judicanti responsura.
Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus judicetur.
Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet apparebit:
Nil inultum remanebit.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus?
Cum vix justus sit securus.
Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.
Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae:
Ne me perdas illa die.
Quaerens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus:
Tantus labor non sit cassus.
Juste judex ultionis,
Donum fac remissionis,

Ante diem rationis.
Ingemisco, tanquam reus,
Culpa rubet vultus meus;
Supplicanti parce, Deus.
Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.
Preces meae non sunt dignae,
Sed tu bonus fac benigne,
Ne perenni cremer igne.
Inter oves locum praesta,
Et ab hoedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.
Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis:
Voca me cum benedictis.
Oro supplex et acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis.
Gere curam mei finis.
Lacrimosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla
Judicandus homo reus.

Huic ergo parce Deus.
Pie Jesu Domine
Dona eis requiem.

Amen.

**VALENTIN SILVESTROV
MAIDAN 2014, CYCLE IV: III. PRAYER FOR
UKRAINE**

Боже, Україну храни. Дай нам сили, віри й
надії. Отче наш.

*Lord, protect Ukraine. Give us power, faith and
hope. Our Father.*

**VALENTIN SILVESTROV
DIPTYCHON: II. TESTAMENT**

Як умру, то поховайте
Мене на могилі
Серед степу широкого
На Вкраїні милій,
Щоб лани широкополі,

І Дніпро, і кручі
Було видно, було чути,
Як реве ревучий.

Поховайте та вставайте,
Кайдани порвіте
І вражою злою кров'ю
Волю окропіте.
І мене в сем'ї великій,
В сем'ї вольній, новій,
Не забудьте пом'янути
Незлим тихим словом.

*When I am dead, bury me
In my beloved Ukraine,
My tomb upon a grave mound high
Amid the spreading plain,
So that the fields, the boundless steppes,
The Dnieper's plunging shore
My eyes could see, my ears could hear
The mighty river roar.*

*Oh bury me, then rise ye up
And break your heavy chains
And water with the tyrants' blood
The freedom you have gained.
And in the great new family,
The family of the free,
With softly spoken, kindly word
Remember also me.*

OLEKSANDR SHCHETYNSKY

REQUIEM: AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius es.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.