

## **NARGENFESTIVAL**

### **ON THE WINGS OF TORMIS 2021: ESTONIAN CALENDAR SONGS. Tormis 91**

7 August at 19 at the Grand Hall of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn

**Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir**

**Choir masters Lodewijk van der Ree, Mai Simson**

**Conductor Tõnu Kaljuste**

#### **Veljo Tormis (1930–2017)**

**Kord me tuleme tagasi / One Day We Will Return** (*Our Shadows*, 1969/1993), formerly translated as **Once We Will Reappear**, lyrics by Jaan Kaplinski

#### **Estonian Calendar Songs / Eesti kalendrilaulud (1966–1967)**

**I Martinmas Songs / Mardilaulud (1967)**, for male choir

Lyrics folklore (Kuusalu parish), arranged by Ruth Mirov

1. *Martinmas Beggars Behind the Door / Mardid ukse taga*
2. *Greeting / Teretamine*
3. *Words of Blessing / Önnistussõnad*
4. *Dance / Tants*
5. *Casting a Spell / Lausumine*
6. *Begging for Gifts / Andide palumine*
7. *Thanking / Tänamine*
8. *Wishes / Soovid*
9. *Ending / Lõpetus*

**II St. Catherine's Day Songs / Kadrilaulud (1967)**, for female choir

Lyrics folklore (Põlva), arranged by Ruth Mirov

1. *Entering / Sissetulemine*
2. *Dance (Saying Hello) / Tants (Teretamine)*
3. *Begging for Gifts / Andide palumine*
4. *Thanking, Wishes, and Leaving / Tänamine, soovid ja lahkumine*

**III Shrovetide Songs / Vastlalaulud (1967)**, for male choir

Lyrics folklore

1. *Vistel-Vastel* (based on a folk song from Simuna/Väike-Maarja/Kadrina)
2. *Spell Upon Flax / Lina loitsimine* (based on a folk song from Paistu)
3. *Sledding Song / Liulaskmise-laul* (based on a folk song from Sangaste)

#### **IV Swing Songs / Kiigelaulud (1966), for female choir**

Lyrics folklore

1. *The Narrow Swing / Kitsas kiik (Muhu)*
2. *The Sea Under the Swing / Meri kiige all (Rõngu)*
3. *A Pretty Girl on the Swing / Ilus neiu kiigel (Kuusalu)*
4. *The Swing Asks for Gifts / Kiik tahab kindaid (Harju-Jaani)*
5. *Shy on the Swing / Kiigel kartlik (Harju-Jaani)*
6. *Apple Tree / Õunapuu (Koeru)*

Soloist **Mariliis Tiiter**

#### **V St. John's Day Songs / Jaanilaulud (1967), for mixed choir**

Lyrics folklore

1. *Call to the Midsummer Bonfire I / Kutse jaanitulele I*  
Soloists **Karin Salumäe, Marianne Pärna**
2. *Call to the Midsummer Bonfire II / Kutse jaanitulele II*
3. *Can't be Caught by a Gun / Ei ole püssil püütav*
4. *Why We're Waiting for St. John's, formerly translated as Why St. John is Awaited / Miks Jaani oodatakse*
5. *St. John's Steed / Jaani hobu*
6. *Fire Incantation, formerly translated as Fire Spell / Tulesõnad*  
Soloist **Rainer Vilu**
7. *St. John's Song / Jaanilaul*  
Soloist **Annika Lõhmus**

#### **The Viru Oath (1980) / Viru vanne, lyrics Hando Runnel**

Soloist **Henry Tiisma**

#### **TORMIS 91**

Tõnu Kaljuste and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir celebrate the 91st birth anniversary of **Veljo Tormis** with concerts dedicated to Tormis' music, where they look back on works composed decades ago. The programme's centrepiece is *Estonian Calendar Songs*, a major cycle linked to important holidays in the traditional calendar and completed in 1967. Its five groups of songs became a turning point for the composer: his dedication to the study of Estonian folk songs and in-depth examination of the musical treasure-trove led to a profound understanding of the essence of the runic song (*regilaul*) and its structural integrity, and a realisation of how to sustain the integrity in musical compositions. Veljo Tormis said that the world of the runic song was complete, there was no need for us to improve it or develop it, and that we could only have a glimpse into the world and make it visible to others for a moment. "I

finally realised that runic songs should not be arranged as I had done in the *Kihnu Wedding Songs* (1959). The very value of the runic song lies in its melody, repetitions and non-functionality in harmony. There is more cluster harmony there [in *Calendar Songs*] and parallel movement with triads and seventh chords. At the beginning there were parallel triads, but later, in *St. John's Day Songs* already parallel clusters for example, six-voice chords, which produce a massive sound together." That was the moment when he found his niche as a composer, a niche for the rest of his life.

Tormis and the runic song met thanks to *Men's Songs* (1964–1965) although he used newer folk songs there. He liaised with the folklore archives of the Estonian Literary Museum as he was writing the cycle. The museum's folklorists later helped him with arranging the texts of the *Calendar Songs*. Tormis has also mentioned the influence of the Estonian writer Jaan Kaplinski with whom he used to discuss the runic song a lot. Tormis found the tunes of the *Calendar Songs* in the five-volume collection *Estonian Folk Songs with Tunes* (1956–1965) compiled by Herbert Tampere. The collection was the source of many of his future works and a major inspiration for several other Estonian composers.

The idea to write a multi-movement choral cycle was not there immediately but took shape gradually during composing. The runic songs that the cycle is based on are from Volume 2 of Tampere's collection which was the first that Tormis read, and which contains runic songs sung at traditional holidays and family events. *Swing Songs* was the first, completed in 1966 and followed in 1967 by *St. Catherine's Day Songs* and *Martinmas Songs*, then *St. John's Day Songs* and finally *Shrovetide Songs*. The cycle alternates men's and women's voices until the last part, *St. John's Day Songs* which is sung by both voices together. The songs in each group have been selected to match the complete set of rituals of a given holiday. The runic songs in the cycle originate in different parts of Estonia: *Martinmas Songs* in Tormis' home parish of Kuusalu, *St. Catherine's Day Songs* in Põlva, and *Shrovetide Songs*, *Swing Songs* and *St. John's Day Songs* elsewhere. *St. John's Song*, the last in the *St. John's Day Songs* group is from Hargla located in Valga County near the Latvian border. It is probably a Latvian tune, a typical song sung at Latvian Midsummer. Tormis replaced the Latvian *liigo*, *liigo* chorus with *jaani*, *jaani* and *jaaniko* that were more Estonian, and because of the 'Caesarean section' the Latvian song sung by Estonians got an „Estonian“ chorus.

The entire *Estonian Calendar Songs* cycle was premiered by the men's choir and women's choir of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and conductor Arvo Ratassepp on 6 April 1968.

Tormis' vocal music has always been guided by lyrics – the musical solution and mood follow from the text. He has set music to both folklore and poetry. Tormis was on good terms with the poets of his time; Paul-Eerik Rummo, Jaan Kaplinski and Hando Runnel are the ones with whom he collaborated most. Today's concert sees the *Calendar Songs* framed by choral works set to the texts of Jaan Kaplinski and Hando Runnel.

Tormis composed the first works to Kaplinski's poems in 1966. It was the miniatures cycle *Ten Haikus* for solo voice and piano and *Spring Sketches* for women's choir. Since then, Kaplinski

seems to be the poet with whom Tormis worked most frequently. The lyrics of the *One Day We Will Return* or *Our Shadows* for men's choir is from Kaplinski's collection of poems *Of Dust and Colours* published in 1967, which Tormis happened to read in 1969. In the same year, Tormis wrote two more pieces to lyrics from the collection – *Ballad of Mary's Land* and *One and Only Land* for men's choir. They were among the works he composed for the song contest celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Estonian National Men's Choir.

*Our Shadows* is one of the pieces where Tormis experimented with dodecaphony – the song consists of two musical lines that make up twelve tones. The piece was premiered by the Estonian National Men's Choir and conductor Olev Oja at the Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn on 5 December 1970. Tormis arranged the song for mixed choir in 1993.

Tormis composed his first piece to a text by Hando Runnel in 1968. It was the cantata *The Beginning of the Song*. He wrote more pieces to Runnel's lyrics in the 1980ies - the choral works *The Viru Oath* (1980), *Reflections with Hando Runnel* (1981), *An Estonian's Little Songs* (1981), *Loyal Little Songs* (1981), *Little Songs of "Stagnation Time"* (1981), *Virumaa and Pandivere* (1987) and many others. In the period of songs of political sarcasm Tormis tried to say with music things that could not have been uttered aloud. The Estonian musicologist Professor Toomas Siitan has suggested *musica poetica*, a German music theory term from the 16th-17th century meaning a composition method using traditional musical symbols to refer to meanings outside music. Tormis said that everything that he did in music was actually outside music: „I never really aimed for just music-making /--/, I aimed for the pain and suffering of life. And words are the most important thing for me in music. “Musical form follows the lyrics in *The Viru Oath*, a choral piece written for both men's choir and mixed choir in the same year. The main mood is set by gammas in minor that occasionally pile up in canons and shape the song's character. The song is dedicated to the conductor Ants Soots. It was premiered by the Estonian National Men's Choir and conductor Olev Oja at the Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn on 18 October 1980.

**THE ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR (EPCC)** is one of the best-known Estonian music ensembles in the world. The choir was founded in 1981 by Tõnu Kaljuste, who was its artistic director and chief conductor for twenty years. In the years 2001–2007, the English musician Paul Hillier took over. Daniel Reuss collaborated with the choir as its chief conductor in 2008–2013 and Kaspars Putniņš in 2014–2021. Since the season 2021/2022 the artistic director and chief conductor is again Tõnu Kaljuste.

The repertoire of the choir extends from Gregorian chant and baroque to the music of the 21st century, with a special focus on the work of Estonian composers, such as Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Galina Grigorjeva, Toivo Tulev, Tõnu Kõrvits and introducing their output to the world. Each season the choir gives about 60–70 concerts both in Estonia and abroad.

The EPCC has cooperated with a number of outstanding conductors and orchestras including Claudio Abbado, Helmuth Rilling, Eric Ericson, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Roland Böer, Frieder Bernius, Stephen Layton, Peter Phillips, Marc Minkowski, Christoph Poppen, Sir Colin Davis, Louis Langree, Paul McCreech, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Gustavo Dudamel, Richard Tognetti etc.

The EPCC has also worked with the following world-class orchestras such as the Norwegian, Australian, Prague and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestras, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Berlin Rundfunk Orchestra, Concerto Copenhagen, the Salzburg Camerata, Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, the Philip Glass Ensemble, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Basel Chamber Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Korean Chamber Orchestra, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra.

The EPCC has been a welcome guest at numerous music festivals and outstanding venues all over the world, for instance at the BBC Proms, the Mozartwoche, the Abu Gosh Music Festival, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Musikfest Bremen, the Salzburg Festspiele, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Festival Aix-en-Provence, the International Cervantino Festival, the Vale of Glamorgan Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Sydney Opera House, Wiener Konzerthaus, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Barbican Centre in London, the Flagey Concert Hall in Brussels, the Esplanade Concert Hall in Singapore, the Soul Arts Center, the Hong Kong City Hall, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the Kennedy Center in Washington, Carnegie Hall in New York, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles etc.

Another important aspect in the choir's life is recording music for ECM, Virgin Classics, Carus, Harmonia Mundi, Ondine, resulting in award-winning CDs. The EPCC recordings have won twice GRAMMY-Award for Best Choral Performance: for the album Arvo Pärt. Da Pacem with conductor Paul Hillier (Harmonia Mundi, 2007) and Arvo Pärt. Adam's Lament with conductor Tõnu Kaljuste (ECM, 2014). All in all, the choir has 15 Grammy nominations with the works by Arvo Pärt, Erkki-Sven Tüür and the music of Nordic countries. In 2018 the album with works by Schnittke and Pärt (BIS), conducted by Kaspars Putniņš, won Gramophone Award. The EPCC recordings have won also Diapason d'Or, Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik etc. In 2020 BBC Music Magazine has named the EPCC as one of the 10 best choirs in the world.

**TÕNU KALJUSTE** is a world-renowned choir and orchestra conductor. His most historic achievement to date is the Grammy for Best Choral Performance for the Arvo Pärt album Adam's Lament in 2014. His recordings have had a number of Grammy nominations in various categories from opera (David and Bathsheba of the Norwegian composer Ståle Kleiberg) to symphonic music. In 2019 he won the International Classical Music Award for the recording of Arvo Pärt's symphonies with the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra. Kaljuste's recordings have won several other prestigious prizes such as the Cannes Classical Award (1999), Diapason

d'Or (2000), Edison Musical Award (2000) and Classic BRIT Award (2003). He has recorded for the ECM Records, Virgin Classic, BIS and Caprice Records labels.

Collaboration with leading orchestras and choirs in Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA has added an extra dimension to Kaljuste's international renown. Kaljuste has been the Principal Conductor of the Swedish Radio Choir and the Netherlands Chamber Choir. He was named Conductor Laureate of the Swedish Radio Choir in 2019.

Tõnu Kaljuste served as Professor and Chair of the Conducting Faculty of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre from 2010 to 2020. He is the founder of the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra (1993) and since autumn 2019 once again its Principal Conductor and Artistic Director. Kaljuste founded the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir in 1981 and is back after 20 years, from August 2021 as its Principal Conductor and Artistic Director. Kaljuste has served as Artistic Director of Nargen Opera, the project theatre that he launched, since 2004. He has led Nargenfestival, a notable event in Estonia's music calendar, since 2006.

*Program Kai Kutman  
Translated by Ülle Leis*