

ONDINE

TĀLIVALDIS KĒNIŅŠ

Symphony No. 1
Two Concertos

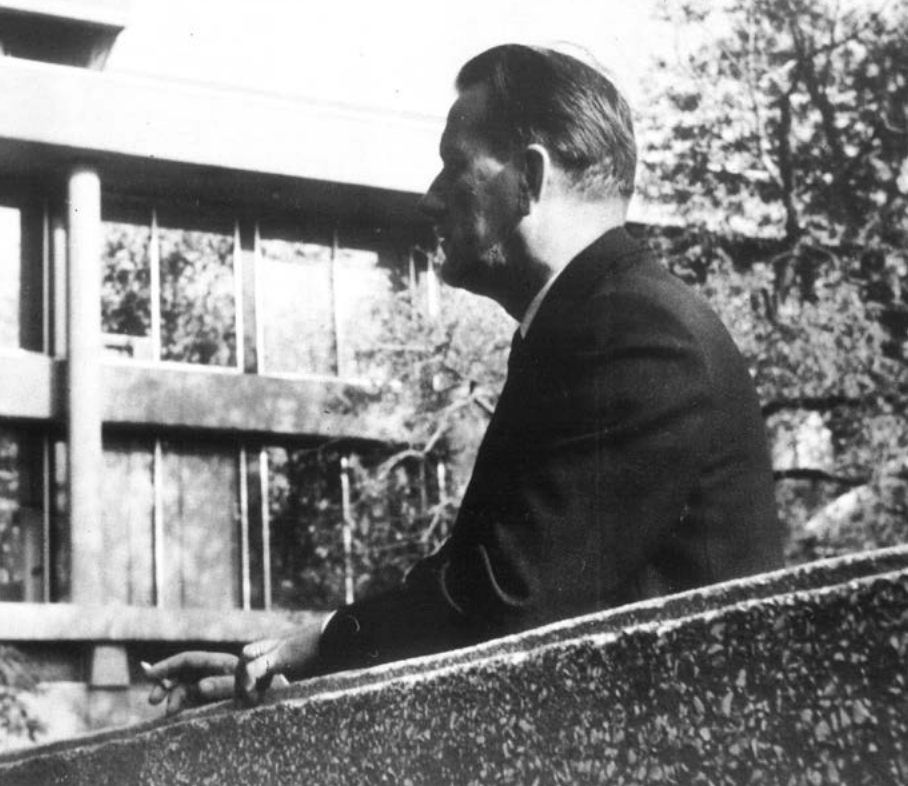
Agnese Egliņa, *piano*

Latvian National Symphony Orchestra

Andris Poga · Guntis Kuzma



TĀLIVALDIS ĶENIŅŠ



TĀLIVALDIS ĶENIŅŠ (1919–2008)

Concerto di camera No. 1 (1981) **20:28**
for piano and chamber ensemble
(flute, clarinet and string quintet/small orchestra)

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Moderato con moto | 6:50 |
| 2 | II. Lento cantabile | 6:45 |
| 3 | III. Vivo e marcato | 6:53 |

Concerto for Piano (1990) **19:22**
with string orchestra and percussion

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------|
| 4 | I. Molto vivace | 7:59 |
| 5 | II. Largo quasi una Passacaglia | 7:50 |
| 6 | III. Presto – Prestissimo | 3:33 |

Symphony No. 1 (1959) **17:59**

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. Moderato ma non troppo | 3:23 |
| 8 | II. Largo e sostenuto | 7:12 |
| 9 | III. Allegro molto | 7:24 |

Agnese Egliņa, piano (1–6)
Tommaso Pratola, flute (1–3)
Mārtiņš Circenis, clarinet (1–3)
Edgars Saksons, percussion (4–6)

LATVIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Guntis Kuzma, conductor (1–6)
Andris Poga, conductor (7–9)

Tālvāldis Ķeniņš is one of Latvia's most important composers, an individual inclined to Neoromanticism, plain-spoken, and full of vitality, in addition to being a composer of great technical virtuosity. Born in Latvia, educated in France, he lived the remainder of his life in Canada.

Ķeniņš, one of Canada's most performed composers, taught for many years in the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. A full professor since 1973, he was also active in the Canadian League of Composers, its president for two years, the subject of many radio broadcasts, and a member of countless musical juries. Ķeniņš' achievements have been recognised by both the university and the Canadian government. During his lifetime, a street in the Ottawa suburb of Kanata was even named in his honour.

Ķeniņš' body of work comprises mainly instrumental music including eight symphonies, symphonic miniatures, more than ten instrumental concertos, an impressive array of chamber music, piano, and organ works, as well as solo and choral pieces, three cantatas, and an oratorio.

Ķeniņš' parents were Atis Ķeniņš and Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa. His father, a Neoromantically inclined poet, was also a keen politician, his mother a notable social activist. As a teenager, Tālvāldis received his baccalaureate from the Lycée Champollion in Grenoble, subsequently beginning his musical studies in Rīga. However, neither his ability, nor drive were remarkable at this stage. Ķeniņš would later write that he took his first steps in music as a "first-rate ugly duckling".

His abilities, knowledge, and talent bloomed at the Paris Conservatory which he attended after fleeing Latvia shortly before the second Soviet invasion, along with thousands of other members of the Latvian intelligentsia. Ķeniņš' father had already been arrested by the Soviets in 1940 and later deported. Tālvāldis was to have met his mother in Berlin at the end of the war, but that never came to

be. He was conscripted into the military, serving as an army organist and clerk, while his mother took ill and returned to Latvia occupied by the Soviets. The experience of war and the urgent need to leave his homeland marked Tālvāldis Ķeniņš indelibly for the rest of his life: "In the hell of Pomerania, I vowed that if I were to ever get out of here, I would head for Paris, regardless of what might become of me."

In Paris, Ķeniņš studied composition with Tony Aubin, musical theory with Simone Plé-Caussade, and analysis with Olivier Messiaen. After graduation, Aubin presented him with a photograph inscribed "To Tālvāldis, who is both my son and my brother." Simone Plé-Caussade remembers Ķeniņš as a real Parisian with a somewhat brusque manner but a wonderful heart. These three outstanding teachers were the force that decisively changed Ķeniņš' musical thinking.

His schooling in Grenoble and later studies in Paris permanently imbued his signature style with a Cartesian attitude. He came to believe that truth and value only come through that which is constructed with the utmost logic and rationality. A laconic style of expression became his motto, and at his core he remained a Latvian composer and not a French composer. In an interview at the age of thirty, Ķeniņš said, "While working with some young, very gifted Romanian and Hungarian composers, I came to the conclusion that through interaction with French methods, the national element in the art of these two nations acquires new foundations, new rights, and a new affirmation of their existence. It is my conviction that I will not be an exception."

Still, in his rationally constructed works, Ķeniņš rarely remains at the surface level of the music although there are such examples. It is almost always worthwhile for listeners to consider what kind of lived, remembered, imaginative, or emotional realms the composer drew on as inspiration for a particular work. In his notes on one chamber work, Ķeniņš wrote, "In my music the listener can hear whatever

they like: be it nature with its never-ending transformations and dominion over us; my personal emotions of peace in my soul or existential anxiety, the vagaries of human destinies, or finally the tragic destiny, unrest, and hardships of our nation. The creative process can never fully be defined or explained. As Boulez said in a different musical context, 'In the beginning there is darkness, shadow, then clarity, structure, and details are revealed, and finally ... there is a return to darkness, because ultimately there is no explaining a musical work's deepest spiritual being or meaning.'

In person, Tālvāldis Ķeniņš was somewhat brusque and direct, but also warm-hearted. He valued his family highly – the wonderful Valda he married in Paris alongside his two sons. After Grenoble, he enjoyed alpine skiing, but also played tennis and avidly followed hockey. He loved to travel, was fascinated by high speed rail, enjoyed bridge puzzles, appreciated old French films, even though composing remained his true pastime.

Ķeniņš considered chamber music as the highest form of music. In his musical language, he has been described as a "contemporary romantic" and a "conservative modernist". The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians makes a remark on its structural clarity and masterful use of counterpoint. In her expansive book, *Starp divām pasaulēm* [Between Two Worlds], the noted Latvian musical historian Ingrīda Zemzare provides a compelling analysis of his love of fugue and the concertante principle.

Ķeniņš was highly respected in Canada which is reflected in the countless obituaries found in newspapers as well as on the internet. Today, the composer is deserving a wider commemoration in Latvia where his significance still waits to be appreciated and the full body of his work illuminated. A crucial point is that Ķeniņš' music is timeless.

Concerto di camera No. 1 (1981)

In 1981, with the support of the Ontario Arts Council, Tālvivaldis Ķeniņš composed the Concerto di camera No. 1, which was premiered at the Latvian Song Festival in Toronto at the University of Toronto's MacMillan Theatre on July 1, 1981.

The composer's notes are sparse. "This is not a virtuoso romantic concerto but rather a work held within the baroque and classical framework in a concertante style, where the thematic material is in a never-ending development and takes shape in the dialogue between the solo instrument and other members of the chamber group. Mozart's concertos are the best examples of this style. In the first part, the theme is worked out in fugal form while the slow section is marked by ornate piano passages, and the finale by rhythmic accentation, although the drama is moderated by the stylistic limitations of the chamber music form."

The minor seconds in the first part bear a certain similarity to the familiar BACH motif. Ķeniņš remarked, "I always say that my best teacher was Johann Sebastian Bach. My second favourite composer was Robert Schumann." The piano part in the second movement distantly reflects Bartók, in the opinion of this writer. The third part is toccato-like, and accords with the composer's acerbic wit and cogent judgments of his own and his colleagues' music.

With respect to key, Ķeniņš once said, "My music is not so much founded on major or minor, but rather on tonal or modal considerations." For example, parts of the Concerto di Camera No. 1 begin and conclude with an E. The third movement starts with a sharp dissonance, while the second ends with a chord based on E. This chord gestures toward the major in a very quiet G sharp found in the alto part, although the oscillation between major and minor represents a much stronger idea, and this is what makes Ķeniņš' music uniquely fascinating.

Concerto for Piano, String Orchestra and Percussion (1990)

In 1990, with the support of the Ontario Arts Council, Tālvivaldis Ķeņiņš composed his Concerto for Piano, String Orchestra and Percussion, which was premiered at the Latvian Song Festival at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto on July 5, 1990.

In the summer of 1989, for the first time since going into exile, Ķeņiņš visited Latvia, at that time still part of the USSR. This was a time of national revival in Latvia. The tensions and contradictions between governing circles, the KGB, and people experiencing the easing of spiritual restraints were becoming particularly acute. A declaration of independence was issued on May 4, 1990, expressing the country's desire to separate from the USSR, while in January of 1991, human lives would be sacrificed and impressive barricades of resistance built in the streets of Rīga.

The composer would later say of his new composition that, "The texture of the sound might create an impression of impulsive strength and of a confident explosion of sound but it rather points out to feelings of bitterness, anguish, and shock brought on by the tragic recent events in my homeland."

One might think that the absolutely surreal second movement might bring a moment of rest to the atmosphere of tension, but even here there is a backdrop of foreboding against which the violin solo shines like a lonely star (LNSO concertmaster Raimonds Ozols on this recording).

On July 6, 1991, Tamara Bernstein wrote in *The Globe and Mail*, "The three-movement work follows classical models in many respects, but the interest (to me) was not in the relationship of the piano to the orchestra, but that of percussion to piano. Wood-blocks, chimes, xylophone, cymbal, vibraphone and assorted drums shadowed the piano like an alter ego."

In his memoirs, the Latvian actor Juris Strenga tells the story of what happened in a bar after the premiere when one Latvian gentleman called out from an adjacent table, "You heard how Ķeniņš was sold out to the Canadian government and now writes avant-garde music for them, for which he is, of course, well-paid." But Ķeniņš calmly replied, "I do not search for new things in music. I search for new ways of expressing old ideas."

Symphony No. 1 (1959)

Tālvāldis Ķeniņš composed eight symphonies, all of which are entirely different. His first symphony, dedicated to the Indianapolis Sinfonietta, was premiered at the Indianapolis Latvian Song Festival on July 2, 1960, led by violinist Viktors Ziedonis who had been a very promising musical talent in Latvia before the war. After immigrating to the United States, he was a violinist for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, as well as concertmaster and conductor of the affiliated Indianapolis Sinfonietta.

Ķeniņš was forty years old when he wrote this symphony. By that time, he was no longer considered a foreigner; he was highly regarded by his colleagues at the university and his music was being performed. In the 1950s, his duties as director of a Latvian church choir spurred him to compose cantatas, oratorios, and choral music. Most of his twenty songs for solo voice were also written during this period, although he also wrote chamber music. Still, the first symphony is his first serious foray into the realm which would become dominant for him – the interplay between different instruments in a variety of settings.

The first part of the symphony is perhaps a little reminiscent of the harmony and tonality of Dmitri Shostakovich, but that is not generally typical of Ķeniņš. Any similarity, though, lies in musical language rather than in appeal to pathos. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) would later report that the variations

were based on an American theme, but it has not been possible until now to identify the specific source.

The second movement is a good example of the previously noted fusion of a Latvian core with a French mode of expression. The lyrical line begun by the bassoon and continued by the other instruments is closer to the centuries old Latvian folk music. Any imagined idyll is shaken by the second theme's angry ascending seventh as this theme blooms brightly into a contrapuntally intense episode for strings, but only momentarily, as the pleasing lyrical motif returns, this time in the voice of the horn.

The composer chose a fugato for the third movement. The active theme is defined most clearly and initially demonstrated by the trombone, but the other motifs are also noteworthy. In its entirety, it all literally shimmers in the composer's imagination, delivering intense episodes of power, even as the slower segments captivate the listener with their elegant beauty.

The eminent Latvian exile critic Jānis Cīrulis observed that "taken together, it all creates a mighty symphonic edifice, which rises far above our local musical structures." Soon after its premiere in Indianapolis, *Keņiņš'* first symphony was also performed in concert halls in Vancouver and Winnipeg and broadcast over the CBC.

Orests Silabriedis
(Translation: Dace Veinberga)

Agnese Egliņa, winner of many international competitions, earned Latvia's Grand Music Award 2010 for outstanding work in an ensemble. She collaborates with other musicians in various chamber ensembles and is one of the most sought-after pianists in Latvia. She has premiered over 50 newly written pieces by Latvian composers, including compositions dedicated to her contemporary music trio *Art-i-Shock*.

Egliņa is a frequent guest-performer at LNSO concerts playing both as a soloist and chamber musician, producing new chamber music programmes.

She has appeared in *Promenade* at Lusaka, Zambia, at Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, International Montpellier Music Festival, Zakhar Bron Violinist Festival, VII Kremerata Baltica Festival, Moscow Chamber Music Days, among others. She performs regularly and teaches in workshops in Spain, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, and Africa.

Her musical education began in Liepāja and Rīga. From year 2011 to 2013 she received Swiss government scholarship for the studies at Zurich University of the Arts.

agnese-eglina.com

Tommaso Pratola is the principal flute of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra since December 2019. Formerly, Tommaso was a member of the EU Youth Orchestra and Italian Youth Orchestra and the first flutist of the Teatro Petruzzelli Orchestra in Bari. In 2017, he received a scholarship from the Haus Marteau masterclass with Andrea Lieberknecht and an honourable mention at the Società Umanitaria International Competition.

Pratola has been selected as Academist in several renowned music festivals, including the Young Artists Festival in Bayreuth, Pacific Music Festival, and Zermatt Music Festival. He was invited to participate at the Rome Chamber Music Festival in 2012 and 2017. Tommaso substituted for the first flute at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in February 2020.

Mārtiņš Cīrcenis is the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra's principal clarinetist since 2015, and solo clarinetist of the Latvian National Opera orchestra since 2006. Since January 2020, Cīrcenis is also the principal clarinetist of the Sinfonietta Rīga chamber orchestra.

Member of the LNSO since 2002, former member of the Riga Chamber Players and the Riga Festival Orchestra, Cīrcenis is Lecturer at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music since 2011. Cīrcenis was nominated for Latvia's Grand Music Award for outstanding work in an ensemble in 2013. Cīrcenis is laureate of international competitions, including second prize in the Concertino Praga competition. He is also former member of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester.

Cīrcenis has partaken in several recordings on the radio and is founder of the woodwind quintet *Quintus Anima*. Together with Agnese Egliņa Cīrcenis has played a number of programmes.

Edgars Saksons is a solo performer, chamber musician, orchestra player, and participant in various musical stage productions. Saksons is laureate of Latvia's Grand Music Award 2001. Edgars' stage partners include Steve Reich, Jonathan Haas, Ludwig Albert, Emmanuel Séjourné, Pavel Giunter, Marta Klimasara, Frédéric Macarez, and other renown masters of percussion.

Saksons is member of the LNSO since 1996 and the orchestra's principal percussionist since 1998. Saksons is also Chairman of the Board of the LNSO Foundation. Lecturer at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music since 1995, he is currently associate professor and head of the Department of Percussion. He is teacher at the Jūrmala Music School since 2016.

Edgars Saksons is the artistic director of the International Festival *Percussion Ukmergē* since 2014. He both organises and teaches in workshops and in seminars in Latvia, Lithuania, France, Belgium, Russia, and Belarus, and has participated in the PAS percussion festivals perKumania in Paris in the 2000s. He has created continuing education programme and is a frequent jury member in international competitions.



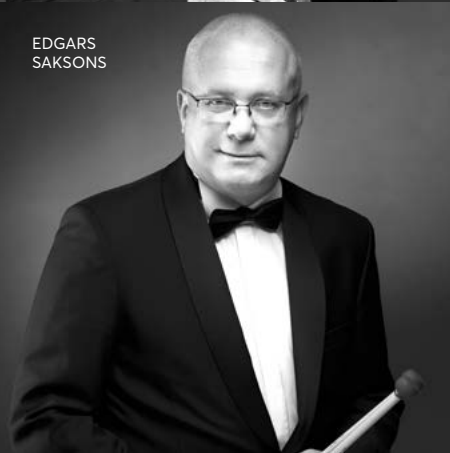
AGNESE
EGLIŅA,



TOMMASO
PRATOLA



MĀRTIŅŠ
CĪRCENIS



EDGARS
SAKSONS

The Latvian National Symphony Orchestra is one of the cornerstones of Latvian national culture, its history spans almost a century. The LNSO is a six-time winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award. Since 2013, the music director of the LNSO is maestro Andris Poga, a conductor sought after by top orchestras from around the world.

The orchestra's most notable former music directors include Jānis Medīnš, Leonīds Vīgners, Edgars Tons, Vassily Sinaisky, Olari Elts, and Karel Mark Chichon.

The orchestra has participated in music festivals in France, Germany and Switzerland as well as the Bratislava Music Festival. On its most recent tours the LNSO teamed up with world-renowned soloists such as Latvian violinist Baiba Skride, cellist Alexander Knyazev, pianists Nicholas Angelich, Boris Berezovsky, Lukas Geniušas and Lucas Debargue.

Inso.lv

Andris Poga has been the music director of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra since 2013/2014 season. After a series of successful collaborations he has been invited back to the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, WDR Symphony Cologne, Munich Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Dresden Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig.

Poga has also conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Wiener Symphoniker, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Orchestre National de France, Shanghai Symphony and Sydney Symphonym among many others. Poga will commence his tenure as the Chief Conductor of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra starting the 2021/2022 season.

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

www.andrispoga.com

Guntis Kuzma was appointed conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra starting the 2014/2015 season. Other appearances include frequent collaborations with chamber orchestras Sinfonietta Rīga and Sinfonia Concertante, the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLMA) Symphony Orchestra, and the Latvian Festival Orchestra. Kuzma received Latvia's Grand Music Award in 2018 for outstanding interpretation of Ādolfs Skulte's Symphony No. 5 with the LNSO, as well as for his solo in Sebastian Fagerlund's Clarinet Concerto with Sinfonietta Rīga and conductor Normunds Šņē.

Kuzma is former principal clarinetist of the LNSO (2008–2014) and the Sinfonietta Rīga chamber orchestra since it was established in 2006 until 2015. Kuzma is both lecturer and former Head of the Department of Wind Instruments at the JVLMA Academy. Besides being an active participant in chamber music projects, Kuzma also enjoys performing contemporary music. He has participated in the first performances of numerous new works both as clarinetist and conductor.

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ANDRIS POGA



GUNTIS KUZMA