

# TÕNU KÕRVITS

You Are Light and Morning

*Sei la luce e il mattino*

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir

Tallinn Chamber Orchestra

Risto Joost





# TÕNU KÕRVITS (1969)

**You Are Light and Morning (2019)** 62:05

**Sei la luce e il mattino**

For choir and string instruments

Text by Cesare Pavese

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | <i>Fade in</i>  | 1:48 |
| 2  | I. Tu sei come una terra (You Are like a Land)                                      | 6:13 |
| 3  | II. To C. From C.   | 6:39 |
| 4  | III. Paesaggio VIII (Landscape VIII)  | 7:05 |
| 5  | IV. La casa (The House)   | 7:36 |
| 6  | V. Anche tu sei l'amore (You Also Are Love)   | 6:58 |
| 7  | VI. Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi<br>(Death Will Come and Will Have Your Eyes) | 8:13 |
| 8  | <i>Fade out</i>   | 0:39 |
| 9  | VII. Last Blues, to Be Read Some Day  | 4:55 |
| 10 | <i>Postludium. Landscapes</i>   | 3:35 |
| 11 | VIII. In the Morning You Always Come Back   | 8:17 |

Soloists: Marianne Pärna, alto (9); Leho Karin, cello; Hele-Mall Leego, soprano;  
Maarja Helstein, alto; Raul Mikson, tenor; Ott Kask, bass (6)

ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR  
TALLINN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

RISTO JOOST, conductor

*It is difficult to do justice to the poetry of the tragically fated Cesare Pavese in just a few words. His poems radiate love for land and nature. They are brimming with a sense of yearning, mourning, sorrow, beauty and nostalgia. Nevertheless, his texts are full of life and fluidity, mysteriously effervescent and pulsating. "Sei la luce e il mattino" is like a hymn to life and love sung from the abyss. – Tõnu Kõrvits*

## Light and Morning, Darkness and Death

*Sei la luce et il mattino* (2019) by Tõnu Kõrvits is a mystery about life, death and love, about the battle between light and shadow. The composer has used the Italian and English language texts of one of the major 20th century Italian authors – Cesare Pavese (1908–1950). Born in a small village in the Piedmont region of northwest Italy, Pavese studied in the faculty of literature and philosophy at the University of Turin and, from early on, began to translate American and English literature into Italian. Especially during the Mussolini regime, Pavese saw America as a symbol of freedom. Although he was opposed to the fascist dictatorship and participated in the resistance movement, Pavese was not one to man the barricades, fully armed – a fact he later regretted. It was also a reason for his joining the Communist Party at the end of World War II, just as many other Italian intellectuals did.

Pavese won his biggest accolade as an author in the last year of his life when his work *La bella estate* won the most prominent Italian literature prize. External acknowledgment is gratifying, of course, but awards do not soothe the internal sufferings of a creative person. On 27 August 1950, Pavese committed suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills at the 'Roma' hotel in Turin. He was only 41 years old. One factor, among others, was that the American actress Constance Dowling had finished their passionate love affair some time before. Yet Pavese had left a note in the hotel room, which said: "I forgive everyone and ask for everyone's forgiveness.

Do you agree? Try to refrain from gossiping." Some weeks before taking his own life, Pavese had written one of his most famous poems "Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi"/"Death Will Come and Will Have Your Eyes", which forms the sixth part of Kõrvits' composition.

The themes and symbols which fascinate Tõnu Kõrvits had preoccupied Pavese decades earlier. They include the land, wind, death, life, love, river, water, sea, time... Each part of *Sei la luce et il mattino* ends by fading out, evaporating into nothingness as if the wind has blown away memories, thoughts, hopes and dreams. Efforts are pointless, escape routes remain obscure, the only option is to disappear. Yet the love for life is inherent. One of Kõrvits' all-time favourite composers, Gustav Mahler, seems to beckon to us here with the tragic, resigned endings of many of his symphonies. But more than in Mahler's case, transience for Kõrvits is linked to nature – to the wind (*il vento*), which wipes everything away. Therefore, the recurring motif in Kõrvits' new cycle is the wind, evoked by strings (tremolo, flageolet). Everything vanishes into the wind but does not perish – as is the way with a mystery, the secret is kept safe somewhere else.

The *Fade in* to that mystery comes with an incredibly silent and darkly hued minor chord (B-flat minor) played by the orchestra. This returns towards the end of the cycle (*Postludium. Landscapes*) before the final part, but this time resonating more clearly and concretely (A-minor chord) and sung by the choir. The introductory motif (sung by altos) of the first part, *Tu sei come una terra* (*You Are like a Land*), offers the key to the mystery, which recurs throughout the part in vocals and the orchestra scoring as well as during the later parts of the cycle, for example played by the solo violin during the transition into the final part of the composition. It is especially significant that this motif is the key to the entire cycle.

The second part *To C. From C.* is Cesare Pavese's declaration of love to Constance. The third part *Paesaggio VIII (Landscape VIII)* brings in the river and water theme so dear to Kõrvits, vividly painted by the sound motifs in the choral and orchestral scoring. But the transience of life is contrasted with turning slowly into ice ("L'acqua è la stessa, nel buio, degli anni morti"/"The water is the same in this darkness, like in the dead years").

Memories and the ticking away of time (*pizzicato*-motifs of strings) come to the fore in the fourth part *La casa (The House)*, sung by the female choir and referencing the final lines of the poem ("Una voce di donna che suona segreta sulla soglia di casa, al cadere del buio"/"The secret voice of a woman stepping into the house as darkness falls"). The fifth part *Anche tu sei l'amore (You Also Are Love)* begins with tenors and basses, the entire part carried by a cello solo reaching new heights. The descending motif of the basses is repeated in the sixth part *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi (Death Will Come and Will Have Your Eyes)*, while other voices vary the motif and try to release themselves from its grip – this is a *passacaglia*, an old Spanish dance form which, especially in the works of Dmitri Shostakovich in the 20th century, acquired overtones of destiny and inevitability. The biggest changes in the harmonic structure of the theme accompany the culmination when the choir sings the phrase "sei la vita e sei il nulla"/"you are life and you are nothing."

Before the final two parts, the uninterrupted bass movement flows out into a unique caesura: the *Fade out*, where we once again hear the opening motif of the cycle – the key to the mystery – from the solo viola. In the seventh part titled *Last Blues, To Be Read Some Day*, the mezzo-soprano solo is accompanied by patterns played by strings. The final part of the cycle *In the Morning You Always Come Back* is a kind of coda for which the audience is prepared by the minor chord (A-minor) from the choir and the key motif by the solo violin. Some brighter hues can be sensed in the soundscape of this part –

"è finita la notte"/"the night has passed". The choir once again sings the introductory motif of the first part *Tu sei come una terra* (*You Are like a Land*), but with the text "sei la vita"/"you are life". The first violins play the same motif in the closing bars of the work, as the final thought in the cycle. We have come full circle. Light and morning, darkness and death – and life.

**Kristel Pappel**

*Translation: Ingrid Hübscher*

**The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (EPCC)** has established itself as one of the world's leading choral ensembles. The EPCC was founded in 1981 by Tõnu Kaljuste, who was the artistic director and chief conductor for twenty years. He was succeeded by Paul Hillier (2001–07) and Daniel Reuss (2008–13). Kaspars Putniņš has been the artistic director and chief conductor since 2014.

The choir's repertoire extends from Gregorian chant and the Baroque to music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a special focus on the work of Estonian composers, such as Arvo Pärt, Veljo Tormis, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Galina Grigorjeva and Tõnu Kõrvits. Each season, the choir gives about 60–70 concerts both in Estonia and abroad. The EPCC has cooperated with a number of outstanding conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Helmuth Rilling, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Olari Elts, Andrew Lawrence-King, Roland Böer, Frieder Bernius, Stephen Layton, Marc Minkowski, Sir Colin Davis, Paul McCreesh, Andrés Orozco-Estrada and Gustavo Dudamel. The EPCC has also worked with many leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Salzburg Camerata, Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, the Philip Glass Ensemble, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The choir has been a welcome guest at numerous music festivals and venues all over the world, including the BBC Proms, the Mozartwoche, the Festival Aix-en-Provence, the International Cervantino Festival, the Sydney Opera House, Wiener Konzerthaus, the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Lincoln Centre and Carnegie Hall in New York and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Another important aspect in the choir's life is recording, resulting in various award-winning albums. EPCC recordings have twice won a Grammy for Best Choral Performance: for Arvo Pärt's *Da Pacem* with conductor Paul Hillier and for Arvo Pärt's *Adam's Lament* with conductor Tõnu Kaljuste. In 2018 the recording *Schnittke – Psalms of*

*Repentance. Pärt – Magnificat & Nunc dimittis (BIS)*, conducted by Kaspars Putniņš, won Gramophone Award. All in all, the choir has received 15 Grammy nominations, and some of the choir's recordings have won awards such as the Diapason d'or, Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, Danish Music Award and de Choc de l'Année Classica 2014.

[www.epcc.ee](http://www.epcc.ee)

**Tallinn Chamber Orchestra (TCO)** was founded in 1993 by conductor Tõnu Kaljuste. During the past three decades it has become one of Estonia's signature orchestras and a welcome guest performer on numerous stages in Europe and all over the world. TCO has gained recognition for its artistically integral programmes, style-sensitive play and mastery of interpretation. The diverse repertoire of the orchestra includes music from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic era; an important part is also held by the musical works of the composers of 20th and 21st century, including less known pieces and premieres. TCO's musicians are highly rated string players, who also regularly perform as soloists and chamber musicians. Tallinn Chamber Orchestra has a long-standing cooperation with the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir – joint performances and recordings have gained international fame and recognition for both parties. In 1993, conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste they recorded Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum* for the ECM record company. The record earned high ratings from the world's leading music critics and remained for months in the top ten of record sales. Under the label of ECM, numerous other records have been released, such as Arvo Pärt's *Litany*, *In Principio* and *Adam's Lament*; also Erkki-Sven Tüür's *Crystallisation* and Heino Eller's *Neenia*. Tallinn Chamber Orchestra has also recorded music for Warner Music / Finlandia Records, Carus Verlag, Ondine etc. In 2017 released CD „*Lageda laulud*“ (Moorland Elegies) by Estonian composer Tõnu Kõrvits was awarded the Classics Album of the Year at Estonian Music Awards 2018.

Tõnu Kaljuste was the orchestra's first chief conductor in 1993–1995 and 1996–2001. Finnish conductor Juha Kangas collaborated with the orchestra as the chief conductor in 1995–1996 and as artistic adviser in 2001–2003. The following decade was curated by Tallinn Philharmonic Society's artistic director Eri Klas. In 2013–2019 the chief conductor of TCO was Risto Joost. The season of 2019/2020 welcomes Tõnu Kaljuste as the chief conductor again. As guest conductors, the following highly rated professionals have collaborated with TCO: John Storgårds, Pietari Inkinen, Kolja Blacher, Okko Kamu, Jaakko Kuusisto, Richard Tognetti, Terje Tonnesen, Alexander Rudin, Florian Donderer, Dmitri Sitkovetski, Peter Spissky, Maxim Rysanov, Andrew-Lawrence King, Dmitri Sinkovski; also acknowledged Estonian conductors like Olari Elts, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Kristjan Järvi, Vello Pähn, and many others.

TCO has performed in many prestigious music festivals such as festival of Bach's cantatas in Milan (Italy, 1996, 1997); Musikfest Bremen (Germany, 1998); MITO SettembreMusica (Milan/Turin, 2004, 2007, 2017), the Budapest Autumn Festival (2005), Kaustinen Chamber Music Week (Finland, 2005), Festival Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (Italy, 2007), Festival Cervantino (Mexico, 2012), Vale of Glamorgan Festival (Wales, 2015), MDR Musiksommer (Germany 2017); Euphonie (Poland, 2018), Baltic Sea Festival Stockholm (2019) etc. Concert tours have taken the orchestra to the USA, Canada, Japan, China, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and most European countries. Next to the famous concert halls in Europe, TCO has also performed in Carnegie Hall, New York City and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing.

In 2013, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra received the Estonian Music Council's Prize for Interpretation. TCO is one of performers on Arvo Pärt's record *Adam's Lament*, which won a Grammy in 2014.

[www.filharmonia.ee/tko](http://www.filharmonia.ee/tko)



TALLINN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR



The young Estonian conductor **Risto Joost** excels by his specialized versatility and has gained widespread recognition for his work both in the opera pit and on concert stage. The trained singer and Conductor-in-Residence of the Estonian National Opera has already held major artistic positions, such as Chief Conductor of the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and Artistic Director of the MDR Leipzig Radio Choir from 2015 to 2019. In August 2020 he started as Music Director and Chief Conductor of Vanemuine Theatre in Estonia and also continues as Conductor in Residence at the Estonian National Opera.

He has succeeded at important competitions and conducted some of the world's most distinguished orchestras. Risto Joost is in demand as a guest conductor with orchestras such as Helsinki Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, SWR Symphony Stuttgart, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Norwegian Opera Orchestra, Tampere Philharmonic, Strasbourg Philharmonic, Noord Nederlands Orkest, Prague Radio Symphony, Janáček Philharmonic, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra dell Teatro La Fenice, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Heilbronn Chamber Orchestra, Latvian National Symphony, Estonian National Symphony, Latvian National Symphony, among others. In addition, he has collaborated with the RIAS Kammerchor, SWR Vokalensemble, Ars Nova Copenhagen, Swedish Radio Choir, Rundfunkchor Berlin, and Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, among others. At the Estonian National Opera Risto Joost has led more than 20 premieres.

His repertoire ranges from Baroque to the most challenging works of contemporary composers. At the Birgitta Festival Tallinn he led *La Bohème* in 2018. The other highlights are his debuts with Copenhagen Philharmonic, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, South Netherlands Philharmonic, Trondheim Symphony, Brno Philharmonic,

and return visits with Helsinki Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Norwegian Opera Orchestra, Noord Nederlands Orkest, WKO Heilbronn, and various projects with Janáček Philharmonic. With the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony and Choir Risto Joost directs several programmes with works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Tõnu Kõrvits. His discography includes Tõnu Kõrvits' *Moorland Elegies* (Ondine) and works by Haydn with the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, Peeter Vähi with the Latvian National Symphony, Arvo Pärt with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Choir, and various recordings of Estonian music with the Estonian National Symphony and Tallinn Chamber Orchestra.

For his artistic activities in Estonia and abroad, Risto Joost received the music award of the Cultural Foundation in Estonia in 2016 and was awarded the Young Cultural Figure Award of the Estonian Republic in 2011. He was Prizewinner of the Malko Conducting Competition 2015 and Jorma Panula Conducting Competition 2012. Risto Joost has studied at the Estonian Academy of Music and received further training at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. In 2008, Risto Joost graduated from the Royal College of Music in Stockholm with a master's degree, majoring in orchestral conducting with Jorma Panula. He founded the chamber choir Voces Musicales in Estonia in 1999 and has been Artistic Director of the Birgitta Festival Tallinn.

[www.ristojoost.com](http://www.ristojoost.com)

„Sei la luce e il mattino.“

Cesare Pavese

I

Tu sei come una terra  
che nessuno ha mai detto.  
Tu non attendi nulla  
se non la parola  
che sgorgerà dal fondo  
come un frutto tra i rami.  
C'è un vento che ti giunge.  
Cose secche e rimorte  
t'ingombrano e vanno nel vento.  
Membra e parole antiche.  
Tu tremi nell'estate.

II

You,  
dappled smile  
on frozen snows –  
wind of March,  
ballet of boughs  
sprung on the snow,  
moaning and glowing  
your little « ohs » –  
white-limbed doe,  
gracious,  
would I could know  
yet  
the gliding grace  
of all your days,

Texts by Cesare Pavese (1908–1950)

I

You are like a land  
no one ever uttered.  
You wait for nothing  
if not for the word  
that will burst from the deep  
like a fruit among branches.  
There's a wind that reaches you.  
Dry and long-dead things  
encumber you and leave on the wind.  
Ancient words and limbs.  
You shiver in the summer.

the foam-like lace  
of all your ways –  
tomorrow is frozen  
down on the plain –  
you, dappled smile,  
you, glowing laughter.

### III

I ricordi cominciano nella sera  
sotto il fiato del vento a levare il volto  
e ascoltare la voce del fiume. L'acqua  
è la stessa, nel buio, degli anni morti.

Nel silenzio del buio, sale uno sciacquo  
dove passano voci e risa remote;  
s'accompagna al brusio un colore vano  
che è di sole, di rive e di sguardi chiari.  
Un'estate di voci. Ogni viso contiene  
come un frutto maturo un sapore andato.

Ogni occhiata che torna, conserva un gusto  
di erba e cose impregnate di sole a sera  
sulla spiaggia. Conserva un fiato di mare.  
Come un mare notturno è quest'ombra vaga  
di ansie e brividi antichi, che il cielo sfiora  
e ogni sera ritorna. Le voci morte  
assomigliano al frangersi di quel mare.

### III

Late in the evening, beneath the breath  
of wind, memories begin to lift their heads  
to listen to the speech of the river. Water  
is the same, in this dark, as in the dead years.

From the silence or the darkness the sound of  
water  
rises to join the distant laughter and voices;  
and along with the murmur, the useless color  
coming from sunlight, bright faces, shores.  
A summer of voices. Each face contains  
a taste of the past, like a ripened fruit.

Each glance that returns preserves the flavor  
of grass and of everything soaked with late sun  
on the beach. It preserves the breath of the sea.  
It's like the night sea, this hazy shadow  
of shuddering old anxieties that the sky touches,  
and that each evening returns. The dead voices  
recall the noise of that sea breaking on itself.

#### IV

Luomo solo ascolta la voce calma  
con lo sguardo socchiuso, quasi un respiro  
gli alitasse sul volto, un respiro amico  
che risale, incredibile, dal tempo andato.

Luomo solo ascolta la voce antica  
che i suoi padri, nei tempi, hanno udito, chiara  
e raccolta, una voce che come il verde  
degli stagni e dei colli incupisce a sera.

Luomo solo conosce una voce d'ombra,  
cazzante, che sgorga nei toni calmi  
di una polla segreta: la beve intento,  
occhi chiusi, e non pare che l'abbia accanto.

È la voce che un giorno ha fermato il padre  
di suo padre, e ciascuno del sangue morto.  
Una voce di donna che suona segreta  
sulla soglia di casa, al cadere del buio.

#### V

Anche tu sei l'amore.  
Sei di sangue e di terra  
come gli altri. Cammini  
come chi non si stacca  
dalla porta di casa.  
Guardi come chi attende  
e non vede. Sei terra  
che dolora e che tace.

#### IV

The man alone listens to the calm voice  
with half-closed eyes, as if a breath  
were blowing on his face, a friendly breath  
rising – astonishing – from a lost time.

The man alone hears the ancient voice  
that his fathers, in their day, heard, clear  
and collected, a voice that, like the green  
of ponds and hills, deepens with evening.

The man alone knows a shadow voice,  
caressing, that rises up in the calm tones  
of secret springs; he drinks it intently,  
eyes closed. Its presence isn't apparent.

This is the voice that once stopped the father  
of his father, and on back through dead blood.  
The secretive voice of a woman that comes  
from a doorway at the falling of dusk.

#### V

You also are love.  
Made of blood and earth  
like the others. You walk  
like one who won't stray far  
from your own front door.  
You watch like one who waits  
and doesn't see, You are earth  
that aches and keeps silent.

Hai sussulti e stanchezze,  
hai parole – cammini  
in attesa. L'amore  
è il tuo sangue – non altro.

## VI

Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi –  
questa morte che ci accompagna  
dal mattino alla sera, insonne,  
sorda, come un vecchio rimorso  
o un vizio assurdo. I tuoi occhi  
saranno una vana parola  
un grido taciuto, un silenzio.  
Così li vedi ogni mattina  
quando su te sola ti pieghi  
nello specchio. O cara speranza,  
quel giorno sapremo anche noi  
che sei la vita e sei il nulla.

Per tutti la morte ha uno sguardo.  
Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi.  
Sarà come smettere un vizio,  
come vedere nello specchio  
riemergere un viso morto,  
come ascoltare un labbro chiuso.  
Scenderemo nel gorgo muti.

You have bursts and lapses,  
you have words – you walk  
and wait. Your blood  
is love – that's all.

## VI

Death will come and will have your eyes –  
this death that accompanies us  
from morning till evening, unsleeping,  
deaf, like an old remorse  
or an absurd vice. Your eyes  
will be a useless word,  
a suppressed cry, a silence.  
That's what you see each morning  
when alone with yourself you lean  
toward the mirror. O precious hope,  
that day we too will know  
that you are life and you are nothingness.

Death has a look for everyone.  
Death will come and will have your eyes.  
It will be like renouncing a vice,  
like seeing a dead face  
reappear in the mirror,  
like listening to a lip that's shut.  
We'll go down into the maelstrom mute.

## VII

T was only a flirt  
you sure did know –  
some one was hurt  
long time ago.

All is the same  
time has gone by –  
some day you came  
some day you'll die.

Some one has died  
long time ago –  
some one who tried  
but didn't know.

## VIII

Lo spiraglio dell'alba  
respira con la tua bocca  
in fondo alle vie vuote.  
Luce grigia i tuoi occhi,  
dolci gocce dell'alba  
sulle colline scure.  
Il tuo passo e il tuo fiato  
come il vento dell'alba  
sommangono le case.  
La città abbrivisce,  
odorano le pietre –  
sei la vita, il risveglio.

## VIII

The glimmer of dawn  
breathes with your mouth  
at the end of empty streets.  
The gray light of your eyes –  
sweet drops of dawn  
on the dark hills.  
Your step and your breath  
flood over the houses  
like wind at daybreak.  
The city quivers,  
Stones scent the air –  
You are life, renewal.

Stella sperduta  
nella luce dell'alba,  
cigolio della brezza,  
tepore, respiro –  
è finita la notte.

Sei la luce e il mattino.

A star eclipsed  
by the light of dawn,  
a creaking breeze,  
warmth, breath –  
the night is finished.

You are light and morning.

Translated by Geoffrey Brock  
(from „Disaffections“, Copper Canyon Press,  
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*I would like to thank Serena who first introduced me to the creative works of Pavese,  
Massimo for his support, Davide for his assistance and great advice, Doris for the selection and  
translations into Estonian, Karl for his help, and Väino and Reet for their kind generosity.*  
– Tõnu Kõrvits

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A close-up portrait of a man with short, light brown hair and green eyes. He is wearing a black tuxedo jacket over a white dress shirt and a white bow tie. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is solid black.

RISTO JOOST