

KAMÉR...

NORTHERN ECHOES

PRIMA
CLASSIC

KAMĒR...

Kamēr... is a Latvian mixed youth choir based in Riga, Latvia, founded in 1990 by Māris Sirmāis. A winner of multiple national and international prizes and awards. Kamēr... became the first and currently the only choir in the world having won the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing three times (2004, 2013, and 2019). The choir performs in various events both in Latvia and worldwide, and collaborates with renowned composers, musicians and orchestras.

Since June 2022, the artistic director and chief conductor of the choir is Jurgis Cābulis. The second conductor of Kamēr... is Patriks Kārlis Stepe. The former artistic directors are its founder Māris Sirmāis (1990-2012), Jānis Liepiņš (2012-2018) and Aivis GreTERS (2018-2022).

The choir has two vocal coaches: Ansis Sauka, who works with the choir since its founding in 1990, and Jolanta Strikaite-Lapiņa, who joined our choir family in 2016, after the retirement of Aina Bajāre. Ansis works mostly with the male voices, and Jolanta with the female voices.

Tracklist



1. Lux nova (New Light) (Eric Whitacre, 2015)
2. Rudens Dziesma (Autumn Song) (Jānis Ivanovs, 1964)
3. Immortal Bach (Knut Nystedt, 1987)
4. Actus caritatis (Act of Charity) (Pēteris Vasks, 2022)
5. O salutaris hostia (Ēriks Ešenvalds, 2009)
6. Nothern lights (Ola Gjeilo, 2007)

Northern echoes

Program notes

1. Lux nova (New Light) (Eric Whitacre, 2015)

Light is a worldly symbol – it brings together the real values that are needed in today’s world – peace, trust, redemption and consciousness. In the new realities of the modern world, light as a sign of hope for the future is perhaps no longer as self-evident as it used to be. Those given the opportunity to form light must strengthen it, honor it and carry it to others who crave and need it.

“Lux Nova” is a reimagination of Whitacre’s best-selling “Lux Aurumque”, where a middle section of new material from his musical “Paradise Lost” has been added. “Lux Nova” is performed in a pure, balanced, shimmering tone with strict attention to the dynamic colors and a slow, luscious pacing. With poetry by Edward Esch translated into Latin by celebrated American lyricist, Charles Anthony Silvestri.

*Lux,
Calida gravisque pura velut aurum
Et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.*

*Light,
Warm and heavy as pure gold
And angels sing softly
To the new-born babe.*

A black and white portrait of a man with short, light-colored hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark, and a vertical golden light streak is visible on the left side of the image.

Jurģis Cābulis



2. Rudens Dziesma (Autumn Song) (Jānis Ivanovs, 1964)

An unpretentious small four-voiced vocalise. A warm, disarming melodies, phrase developments characteristic of instrumental music, deeply breathing harmonic sequences containing parallel fifths, like a relic from an ancient shepherd's song. The voices create an autumnal mood, illustrating a mild, yet colourful landscape, and form a connection with life and nature. The central themes – personal insight, philosophic contemplation, a genuine and unadulterated emotional character tormented by irreconcilable psychological controversies.

Rudens Dziesma (Autumn Song) was composed by Jānis Ivanovs during the peak of his creative life (1960s). Its soft and melodic nature stood out markedly during an era of harsh style in Latvian art, poetry, music and culture. Actually, most of his music (especially the experimental and expressionistic symphonies) fit into this atmosphere well.

3. Immortal Bach (Knut Nystedt, 1987)

It is an arrangement of the first line of Bach's four-part setting of the funeral song "Komm, süßer Tod". (from "Geistliche Lieder", published in 1736). The first three lines of the song are sung, and then repeated – this time the parts are moved in time in relation to one another, coming together in a consonant major chord at the end of each line. According to composer Vladimir Morosan, the device, at first glance, may strike one as an intellectual gimmick; but the result may be described as 'theology expressed in sound': Bach's 'immortality' is symbolized by making his music literally 'time-less'. In the process, his simple chorale setting is elevated into something far more profound, allowing us to catch a little glimpse, however fleeting, of eternity. The spatial element is an important part of the composer's reworking: the choir is divided into five equal groups spread around the concert hall or church. The surround technology of Dolby Atmos reproduces the three-dimensional effect as envisaged by the composer.

*Komm, süßer Tod
Komm, sel'ger Ruh
Komm führe mich in Friede*

*Come, sweet death
Come, blessed rest
Come lead me to peace*

4. Actus caritatis (Act of Charity) (Pēteris Vasks, 2022)

One of the most personal and intimate conversations between oneself and God, a vow of absolute and unconditional love for God and all mankind. The piece is essentially a prayer expressed through the musical colourful, long and winding harmonies characteristic of Pēteris Vasks. A relatively new piece, commissioned by the Cappella Amsterdam choir in 2021.

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.

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 neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

5. O salutaris hostia (Ēriks Ešēvalds, 2009)

O Salutaris Hostia by Ēriks Ešēvalds is a choral piece that features two solo sopranos and choir. It's a beautiful and moving piece that is often performed during religious services. The piece is known for its soaring melodies and lush harmonies, which create a sense of reverence and awe.

This full-choir version of Aquinas's hymn for the Feast of Corpus Christi was originally scored for female voices. It is a meditative piece which never gets particularly loud, suitable for adoration of the blessed sacrament, the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ in Christian belief. The quiet chords sung by the choir provide the foundation for the glorious soprano soloists' duet. Their voices, high above the rest of the choir, weave in and out of each other, sometimes together in harmony, sometimes echoing each other, to make a gorgeous, prayerfully ecstatic whole.



Patriks Kārlis Stepe



*O salutaris Hostia
Quae caeli pandis ostium.
Bella premunt hostilia;
Da robur, fer auxilium.
Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria:
Qui vitam sine termino,
Nobis donet in patria.
Amen.*

*O saving victim opening wide
The gate of heaven to all below.
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.
To Thy great name be endless praise
Immortal Godhead, One in Three;
Oh, grant us endless length of days,
In our true native land with Thee.
Amen.*

6. Northern lights (Ola Gjeilo, 2007)

Set to the Latin *Pulchra Es* text from the Song of Solomon, Gjeilo's *Northern Lights* draws significant influence from the ethereal aurora borealis phenomenon. As the composer comments, 'looking out from the attic window that Christmas in Oslo, over a wintery lake under the stars, I was thinking about how this "terrible" beauty is so profoundly reflected in the northern lights, or aurora borealis...it is one of the most beautiful natural phenomena I've ever witnessed, and has such a powerful, electric quality that must have been both mesmerizing and terrifying to people in the past, when no one knew what it was and when much superstition was attached to these experiences.'

The repeated '*Pulchra Es*' of the first section is notable with its simple stepwise melody being harmonised in a variety of ways - a tide of sound that sends a hint of the northern light landscape - before a calmer central section builds to a grand climax, resulting in a dissonant held chord. The work concludes with a held note which disappears to nothing, evoking perhaps a sensation of the great space and endless peace, but also the eventual and inevitable vanishing of such a phenomenon, highlighting its tenderness and fragility.

*Pulchra es, amica mea,
Suavis et decora filia Jerusalem,
Suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me,
Quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.*

*You are beautiful, my love,
Sweet and lovely daughter of Jerusalem,
Sweet and lovely as Jerusalem,
Awesome as an army set in array.
Avert your eyes from me
Because they made me flee.*

Credits

Executive producer: Edgardo Vertanessian

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