

KAMER...

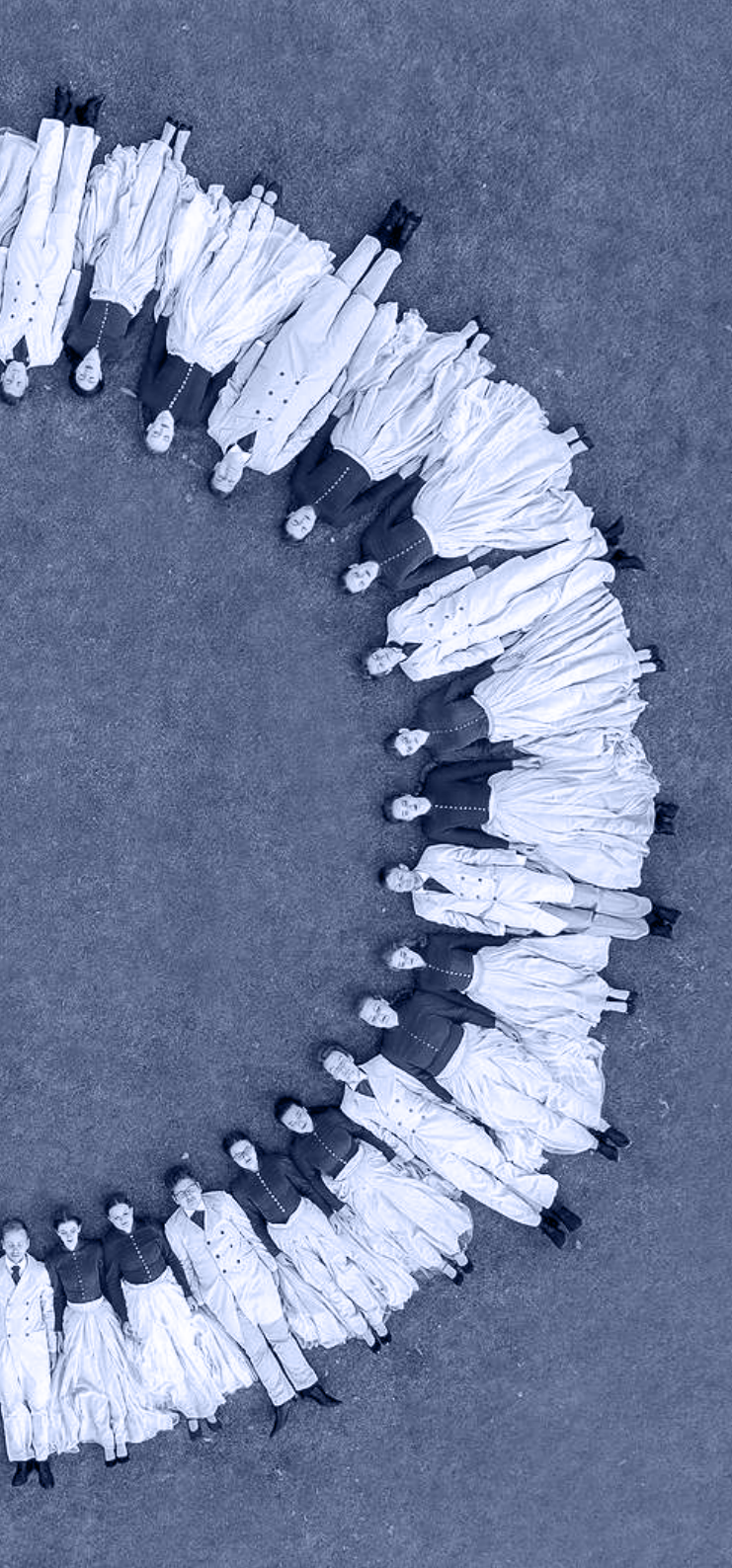


Youth Choir Kamēr...

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 Jurģis 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.



Notable projects

Over the years, Kamēr... has produced programs specially commissioned for the choir. Its biggest project to date is World Sun Songs (2008), which featured 17 new choral works inspired by the sun; the project included such world-renowned composers as Sir John Tavener, Giya Kancheli, Sven-David Sandström, Leonid Desyatnikov, John Luther Adams, Stephen Leek, Dobrinka Tabakova, Ko Matsushita, and others. Other examples of this concept includes the cycles Madrigals of Love (2010), Moon Songs (2012), and Amber Songs (2014), in which several celebrated composers wrote choral miniatures on love, the moon, or arrangements of Latvian folk songs, respectively.

More recently, Kamēr... has developed and taken part in various projects such as the concert exhibition "Kalpotājs. Blumbergs. Kamēr..." (2018), "Sea symphony" (2019, Aachen, Germany), musical "Westside story" (2019), "Penabur International Choir festival" (2019, Jakarta, Indonesia), documentary "Choir. Conductor. Kamēr... " (2019), performance "Kamēr... on the river" (2020), "Leading voices" festival (2022, Utrecht, the Netherlands), audiovisual performance "Silence falls" (2022), "The New Reflections of the Waves" (2022), theatre play "A Christmas carol" and musical "Lady in the dark" (2022/2023).



Achievements

Since its inception in 1990, "Kamēr..." has won numerous multiple national and international choir competitions, prizes and awards:

- 3-time winner of the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing in Goricia (2004) and Arezzo (2013, 2019);
- Winner of the International Harald Andersén Chamber Choir Competition in Finland (2016);
- 3 championship prizes and gold medals at the World Choir Games in Xiamen, China (2006);
- 1st prize at the International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf in Germany (1999);
- 6-time consecutive and current winner of Latvian Song festival "Choir wars" (1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018).
- Annual Latvian Music Recording Awards as the Best Album design (2018) and the Best Academic Music Album (2018, 2020)

"Kamēr..." has also been awarded the Latvian Grand Music Award four times:

- 1999: for high achievements in three choir competitions in Germany and Austria and for successful promotion of Latvian music and performing arts abroad;
- 2005: for the idea and performance of the project "Latvija – Saules zeme" (Latvia - Land of the Sun).
- 2020: for creative, bold and innovative artistry in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, with the performance "Kamēr... on the River," as part of the 2020 Cesis Art Festival.



Artistic principles

Over the last thirty years, Kamēr... has achieved its sound by cultivating its own signature performance style. Both full emotional surrender, a characteristic of amateur singers, as well as the strictest criteria for vocal quality, are of equal importance for the choir. This is expressed in the ellipsis encoded in the choir's name, Kamēr..., which means "while" in English. This entails the motto: *"While we are still young, anything is possible."*

Many of the choir's singers are highly skilled and experienced, a significant share of them also music students. This generally high level of vocal and musical skill helps maintain internal competition among the voice groups, which in turn ensures a high musical quality overall. Despite the perfectionism and attention to detail that sometimes goes even beyond professional standards, the choir is essentially amateur, its singers having other full-time occupations. Thus, musical education or previous choir experience is not a prerequisite for singing in Kamēr...

The choir begins a new season every September, when it holds auditions for new singers. These candidates are evaluated with regard to their vocal and pitch abilities. A high level of skill and experience is not obligatory, as the choir's vocal coaches later help develop the new singers' skills, as long as they exhibit enough talent, ability and commitment.

The aforementioned core values of the choir - emotional surrender and vocal quality - are both tested before every major concert programme, in individual or group singing examinations. There, the choir members are asked to perform all the pieces individually, and the choir conductors and vocal coaches then make a decision about the lineup for the concert, based on the singers' performance in this examination.

Conductors



Jurgis Cābulis (1992) is the artistic director and chief conductor of the youth choir Kamēr..., the artistic director of the Riga Cathedral Choir School Mixed Choir, as well as the head of the conducting department, and the conductor of the Riga Chamber Choir Ave Sol.

He has received his bachelor's and master's degrees in choral conducting at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music under Andris Veismanis and Kaspars Ādamsons. In 2017, he was awarded the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Annual Award for Young Musician. Jurgis Cābulis has been recipient of high-standing awards in the 5th Jāzeps Vītols international Choral Conductors Competition (2014); Towards Polyphony competition (2014); Jozas Naujalis International Competition for Choral Conductors (2017) and was a semi-finalist for the prestigious Eric Ericsson Award (2021).

In 2019, he recorded the choral music album AETERNUM by the composer J. Jančevskis with the Riga Cathedral Choir School Mixed Choir, under the distinguished British classical music recording company Hyperion Records.

In 2021, Jurgis Cābulis won the most acclaimed Latvian academic music award – the Latvian Grand Music Award – for the best concert of the year, AMAO OMI.

Conductors



Patriks Kārlis Stepe (1998) started his studies of choir conducting at Riga Cathedral Choir School, in the class of Mārtiņš Klišāns and his vocal studies with Valda Tračuma.

Since 2018 Patriks has finished his Bachelor studies of choral conducting at Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music with Andris Veismanis and now is continuing his Master's degree.

Patriks became a finalist and the winner of a special prize at Imants Kokars 2nd International Competition for Young Choir Conductors from Vocational Music Secondary Educational Institutions in 2016, more recently receiving a special prize in Fosco Corti International Choir Conductors Competition in 2022. Most notable occurrences as a conductor in 2022 are with the Latvian Radio Choir, Vidzeme Chamber Orchestra, choir conductor in Alfrēds Kalniņš opera production "Baņuta".

In Latvia, he has worked as choir conductor on various professional choral projects with different ensembles or choirs. From 2013 to 2018, he was the choirmaster of the chamber choir DeCoro and since 2018 he is the second conductor of the Youth Choir Kamēr... Since 2021 he has been working as a choir conducting teacher in Alfrēds Kalniņš Cēsis Music Secondary School, from 2022 being the head of the conducting department. In 2022 he became the artistic director and conductor of the mixed choir Beverīna.

Video recordings

- **Knut Nystedt - Great are you o Lord,**
Conductor: Jurgis Cābulis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc2RSMuv44o>

- **Ēriks Ešenvalds - O Salutaris Hostia**
Conductor: Jurgis Cābulis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5fapSQylzw>

- **Pawel Łukaszewski - Like as the Waves**
Conductor: Patriks Kārlis Stepe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APHa7MPau2w>

- **Eric Whitacre - Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine**
Conductor: Patriks Kārlis Stepe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74s-qklwu1c>

