

Evija Skuķe
ROSTRUM 2015

Ainulindalē (2015)

Recorded at the Rīga Concert Hall on January 25, 2015, and premiered as part of the DD Orchestra programme for young composers.

The DD orchestra and choir, conductor Jānis Liepiņš

"In high school, I started reading books by J.R.R. Tolkien, the first being *The Silmarillion*. While I was reading, I heard the music of the text as clearly as if someone were performing it nearby. Since then, I've read the book twice more, and it took me approximately five years of thinking to compose the Music of the Ainur, the music of the very beginning of a non-existing reality or *Ainulindalē*. I was lucky in that Jānis Liepiņš decided to perform the piece with the DD orchestra, because that gave me motivation to finally finish it.

"I have always been fascinated by the construction of sound, but only recently I began to study the ways of spectralism. I had never spent so much time in planning every detail of a composition as I did this time. I wanted to preserve the exact form or a fragment from the very beginning of *The Silmarillion*, which may explain the seemingly random and static fragment that exists between the crescendo form elements. I recorded a man with a deep voice speaking the words of Iluvatar, the mightiest god, and I transcribed the spectrum of his speech. This is the only part of the opus that I didn't fully compose from within myself, because it was informed by a recording.

"The lyrics that are sung by the choir consist mostly by vowels, but they form the names of the demi-gods, the Ainur, who do engage in many good and bad deeds further on in the chronicles. The last words for the choir are 'mighty are the Ainur' and 'mightiest among them is Melkor.' That character can perhaps be compared to Lucifer in the Bible, because he was also the most capable of the angels and became too demanding. Thus the dreading finale of *Ainulindalē*, the prediction of things that are yet to come."

Evija Skuķe was born in Rīga in September 1992. She began her musical education at the Rīga Dome Choir School and began studying composition at age 10 under Pauls Dambis. Skuķe attended the Emīls Dārziņš High School of Music, where she studied music theory and was taught composition by Pēteris Vasks. She is currently finishing her bachelor's degree studies at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music under Selga Mence, and she is planning to pursue a master's degree in composition under Jānis Petraškevičs. Skuķe was named student of the year at the academy in 2014. She won first prize in the contemporary music competition *Citta di Udiene X* with her string quartet opus *Trans(S)*. Skuķe has composed music for various chamber ensembles, and her opuses have been performed at workshops and festivals in Latvia. Since September 2009, the composer has been a singer with the globally renowned *Kamēr...* choir. It and other semi-professional youth choirs have commissioned compositions from Skuķe that have been professionally recorded on CD (*The Wordless Moon Song* and *Neigh, Neigh* by *Kamēr...*, and *The Wordless Wind Song* by *Sola*).

Principal works:

Ainulindalē for symphony orchestra and choir, based on the very beginning of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

Tram (2014) for string orchestra

I Do Not Cry (2014), an arrangement of a Lettalian folk song for mixed choir and traditional singers

Hanging Bunch (2013), performed with electronics

The Wordless Wind Song (2013) for mixed choir

Drone (Trance) (2013) for string quartet

TYPUS, STEREO (2013) for tenor and piano

The Wordless Moon Song (2012) for mixed choir

I Am (2012) for viola and tape electronics

Vocalist's Dies Irae or Extreme Fatigue for One Voice (2012) for a soprano with a very wide vocal range

Jānis Liepiņš (b. 1988) joined the *Kamēr...* youth choir as the substitute conductor (2006-2012), becoming its artistic director and chief conductor in 2012. That year, *Kamēr...* won two first prizes and the Grand Prix at the Bela Bartok choir competition in Debrecen, Hungary. This allowed the choir to take part in a further competition in Arezzo, Italy, in 2013, where *Kamēr...* received the European Grand Prix in choral singing for a second time. In honour of these achievements and in recognition of successful debut concerts with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and *Sinfonietta Rīga*, Jānis Liepiņš received the Latvian Great Music Award as "Young Artist of 2013." Since 2014, he has also been working at the Latvian National opera, where he has conducted performances of *Il Trovatore*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Le Villi* and *Gianni Schicchi*.

The DD Orchestra was established by Jānis Liepiņš in 2013 as a laboratory for young composers. The orchestra consists of young professional musicians who wish to explore contemporary music. DD stands for "draugi un domubiedri," or "like-minded friends." Since 2013, the orchestra has premiered 14 pieces composed specifically for it. It also has a repertoire of classical music and has appeared together with soloists such as Inese Galante, Egīls Siliņš, Aleksandrs Antoņenko, and others.