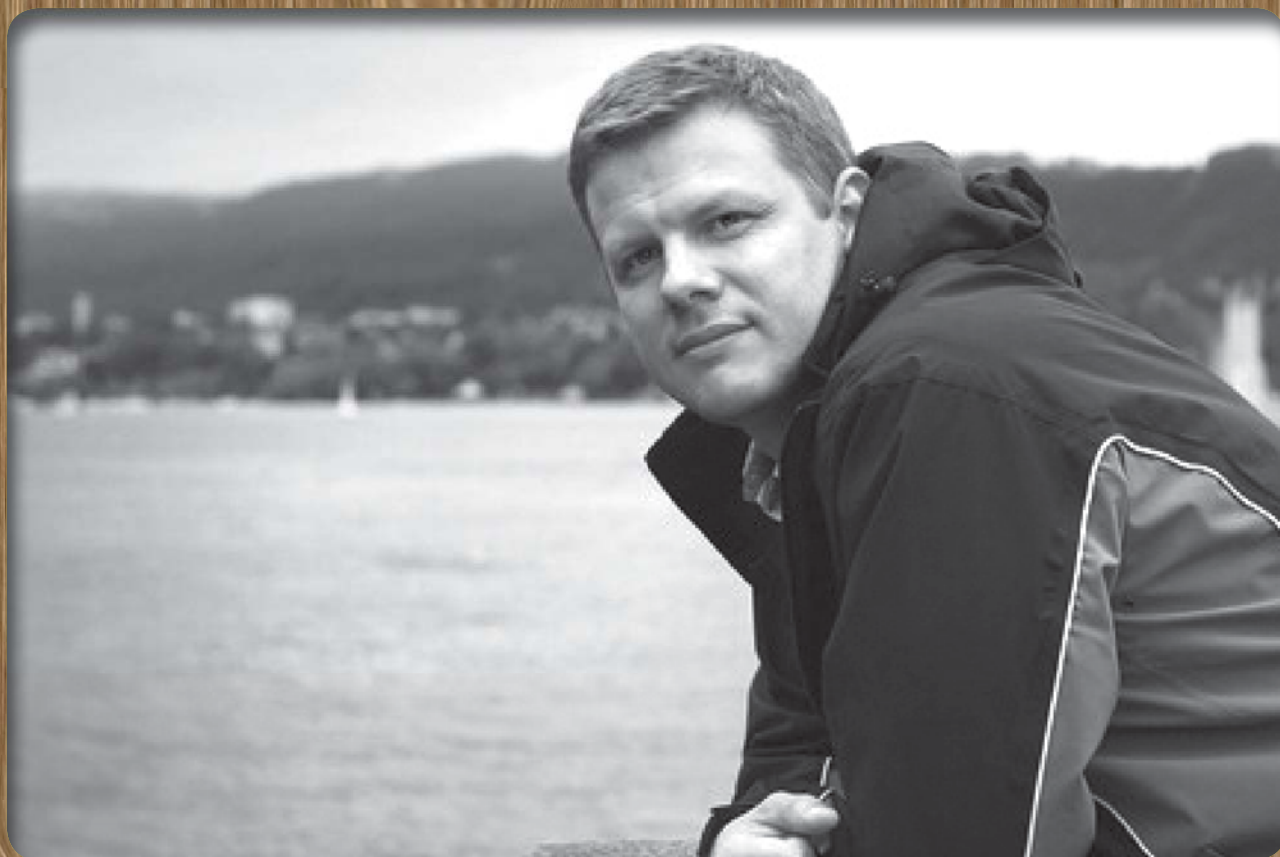


Ē r i k s E š e n v a l d s

Latvia's Choral *Enfant Extraordinaire*

V a n c e W o l v e r t o n



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Earlier installments of this series of articles explored the music of two of the founding fathers of Latvia's art music tradition (Jāzeps Vītols, *Choral Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2003; Emilis Melngailis, *Choral Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 9, 2005) and the contemporary composer Peteris Vasks (*Choral Journal*, Vol. 49, No.4, 2008). This article focuses on the choral output of another rising star among the ranks of contemporary Baltic composers, Ēriks Ešenvalds. Ešenvalds has had works commissioned by The Utah Chamber Singers, Bradley Allred, conductor; the University of Louisville Cardinal Singers, Kent Hatteberg, conductor; and Polyphony, Stephen Layton, conductor, among others. His works have been recorded on major labels including Quartz and Hyperion. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of Ešenvalds's most important choral output to date.



Ēriks Ešenvalds

The young Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds (pronounced *eh-shen-vahlds*) is rapidly gaining an international reputation through performances and recordings of his works. He is one of only a handful of composers worldwide who compose equally well for amateur and professional choirs. His output comprises music for every type of choral ensemble, chamber music, opera, and works including folk instruments such as the *kokle*, a type of zither.

Ēriks Ešenvalds was born on January 26, 1977, in Priekule, Latvia. He studied at the Priekule School of Music (1983–1991), the Liepāja 1st Secondary School (1992–1995), and at the Latvian Baptist Congregation Theological Seminary (1995–1997). He received his bachelors degree (2002) and masters degree (2004) in composition with Selga Mence at the Latvian Academy of Music. He furthered his study at international master classes, including the Latvian Young Musicians Camp in Ogre (2000, 2002) with Martin Herman and Dana Paul Perna, and the De Villecroze Summer Academy in France (with Richard Danielpour, 2001), Česki Krumlov in the Czech Republic with Michael Finnissy, Guy Reibel, and Marek Kopelent (2001), in Germany with Klaus Huber, the in-

ternational GAUDEAMUS music week in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with Trevor Wishart, David Land, and Richard Ayres (2003), in France with Jonathan Harvey and Philippe Manoury (2004), in Norway with Ole Lützw-Holm and Nils Henrik Asheim (2005/2006), and others. He has been rewarded with the Jāzeps Vītols Prize (1999, 2002) as well as the Vernisāža Musical Centre and Latvian Creative Fund Award (2002), and the Latvian Culture Ministry Scholarship (2003, 2004).

For his work *Iespaidi Sāremā* [Impressions of Saaremaa], he received an Honorable Mention diploma at the International Clarinet Association competition in Miami (2000). He has received the Latvian Great Music Prize in 2005 and 2007. For his work *Legende de la Femme Emmuree* [Legend of the Walled-in Woman], he was awarded first place at the 2006 International ROSTRUM for Composers in the Young Composers category. He is a laureate of the AKKA/LAA Copyright Award (2006) and Diena's Annual Culture Award (2007); British Composer Awards Nomination (2010); The Year's New-Composer Discovery, Philadelphia Inquirer, USA (2010); and the Composition Teaching Achievement Award by Riga Dom Choir School (2010).

His music has been performed at the festival YoungEuroClassic in Germany (2002), IV Bergen Internasjonale Kammermusik Festival in Norway (2003), Festival Muzyki Nowej in Poland (2003), Europamusical in Germany (2004), Klangspuren in Austria (2005), the New Music festival ARENA in Latvia (2005), the XII Latvian Organ Music Festival in New York (2005), Internationales Gitarre Festival in Münster, Germany (2006), World Choir Games in China (2006), Christopher Summer Festival in Lithuania (2006), NATO Summit in Riga, Latvia (2006), Aksamitna Kurtyna II in Ukraine (2006), МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЕ ВСТРЕЧИ in Belarus (2007), Bodenseefestival in Germany (2007), Eckelshausener Musiktage in Germany (2007), Sshwetzinger Festspiele in Germany (2007), Tenso Days/3ème Biennale d'Art Vocal in France (2007), Kurzeme Song festival in Talsi, Latvia (2007), Glasperlenspiel in Estonia (2007), Riga Opera Festival, Latvia (2007), the VIII and X International Sacred Music Festival in Latvia (2005, 2007), the XII Latvian Song Festival in Indianapolis (2007), Europalia EUROPA in Belgium (2007), the Haarlem Choir Biennale, the Netherlands (2009), Baltic Sea Festival, Sweden (2010), Usedomer Music Festival, Germany (2010), University of Louisville New Music Festival, USA (2010), and the ACDA National Conference (Chicago, 2011).

He has worked as a teacher at the Riga 3 1st Secondary School. From 2002 to 2009, he was a member of the State Choir LATVIJA. In 2002, he became a member of the Latvian Composers' Union. In March of 2011, he was selected to serve as a Fellow Commoner [Composer in Residence] in the Creative Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge. The official announcement reads as follows:

Trinity College, Cambridge, is pleased to announce that the Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds will be joining the College as Fellow Commoner in the Creative Arts for two years from October 2011. Ešenvalds was born in 1977 and studied for Bachelors and Masters degrees in composition at the Music Academy in Riga. He then undertook a wide range of occasional studies: with Jonathan Harvey and Michael Finnissy from the United Kingdom, with the American Richard Danielpour, and with Klaus Huber from Switzerland, among others. "To contribute to the artistic education of its members, and to assist creative artists at the beginning of their careers, Trinity has for thirty

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years supported a series of Fellow Commoners in Creative Arts, one in residence in Cambridge at any one time, each staying for two years. Areas covered have ranged across music, painting, poetry, sculpture, and literatures. Ēriks Ešenvalds is the latest in a distinguished line of composers appointed to the post including Nicholas Maw, Judith Weir, Thomas Adès, Richard Causton, and, most recently, Tarik O'Regan."

The remainder of this discussion will focus on Ešenvalds' choral *oeuvre*.

Musica Baltica, represented in the

United States by Edition Peters, publishes all of Ešenvalds' choral works. As of November 2011, his Web site <www.eriksesenvalds.com> lists 24 pieces for mixed choir, five for women's choir, one for youth choir, and one for combined choirs. Most of Ešenvalds's choral works are either in English or Latin, with a few exceptions. Chronologically the earliest choral work listed is *Eight Japanese Haiku* (2003), a song cycle for women's choir in 12 parts, with classical Japanese text and Latvian translation.

The first piece in English, an unaccompanied mixed choir setting of *Amazing*

Grace (SSAATTBB with soprano solo), followed soon after in 2004. This arrangement features the soprano soloist on the traditional melody with lush chordal accompaniment provided by the choir. In fact, the harmonic content of the arrangement is what makes this arrangement so interesting. The composer deftly manages several chromatic key changes (G major/F# major/F major/A^b major/G major) with a graciousness that entirely suits the folk-like character of this well-known hymn (Figure 1: mm. 62–80). When one considers some of Ešenvalds's more complex compositions

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Ēriks Ešenvalds

62

S1 be, life en - - dures. Bright shin - ing as the

S2 be, my shield, life en - - dures. Bright shin - ing as the

A1 As long as life en - dures. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright shin - ing

A2 As long as life en - dures. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright shin - ing

T1 be, As long as life en - dures. Shin - ing

T2 be, As long as life en - dures. Shin - ing

B1 be, As long as life en - dures. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright shin - ing as

B2 be, As long as life en - - dures. Shin - ing as

72 *cresc.* *allargando* *a tempo* *f* *poco dim.* *mf*

S1 sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun. We've

S2 sun, the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun. We've

A1 as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise We've

A2 as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise We've

T1 as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun.

T2 as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun

B1 the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun.

B2 the sun, We've no less days to sing Gods praise Than when we first be - gun.

Figure 1. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Amazing Grace*, mm. 62–80.
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such as *Passion and Resurrection* (oratorio, see discussion below), it seems all the more remarkable and laudable that he continues to fashion works such as *Amazing Grace* that are at once accessible to amateur choirs while simultaneously qualifying as significant works of art.

Another example of Ešēnvalds's empathy for amateur choirs is his stunningly beautiful arrangement of *Long Road* (SATB *divisi*, unaccompanied; triangles, recorders or ocarinas *ad libitum* on given motives). *Long Road* is a setting of a love poem by Paulīne Bārda (1890–1983), widow of the eminent poet Frīcis Bārda; set in the original Latvian [*Tāla ceļš*], it is Ešēnvalds's contribution to *Love Madri-*

gals, a collection of new commissions to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the extraordinary Latvian youth choir Kamer. The English version by Elaine Singley Lloyd (b. 1957) was specially made for Stephen Layton and Polyphony, to whom it is dedicated. The English text follows:

I love you night and day as a star in the distant sky. And I mourn for this one thing alone that to love, our lifetime was so short. A long road to heaven's shining meadow and never could I reach its end. But a longer road leads to your heart which to me seems distant as a star. High above the arch of heaven bends and light so clear is falling. Like a flow'ring tree the

world is blooming. Overwhelmed, my heart both cries and laughs.

Long Road is typified by five- to six-part chords whose measured, but mostly unresolved dissonances tend to mask any sense of a definite key center. The result, for this listener, is a particularly effective reflection of Bārda's poignant text. The composer also features a small group of singers set against and alternating with the larger choir. A descant for soprano and alto carries the climactic "golden section" of the piece (Figure 2: mm. 72–82). Gabriel Jackson, in his liner notes for the Polyphony recording of the piece, has

The image shows a musical score for the choral piece "Long Road" by Ēriks Ešēnvalds, measures 72-82. The score is arranged for SATB choir and includes piano accompaniment. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) have lyrics written below them. The piano part features complex chords and textures. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). A tempo marking of *allargando* is present. The score is divided into two systems, with measure numbers 72 and 77 indicated. The lyrics are: "Ah... Ah... Ah... and laughs... road to heaven's shining meadow, and never could I reach its end... But a longer road leads to your heart, a longer road leads to your heart, my love! love! love!"

Figure 2. Ēriks Ešēnvalds, *Long Road*, mm. 72–82.
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Eriks Ešenvalds

described *Long Road* thus:

It has the plain sincerity of a hymn, being homophonic throughout, and its thorough-going diatonicism is straightforward yet lush. At the midway point, a gentle surruration of bell-sounds and ocarinas appears unexpectedly, there is a brief downwards shift of a third, followed by an elated return to the home key, decorated by soloistic descants, before a sustained vocalise and a return of the evanescent tinkling ushers the piece to its close.

Passion and Resurrection (2005) is one of two oratorios, the other being *At*

Sunset (2010), by Ešenvalds. *Passion and Resurrection*, oratorio in four sections, is scored for mixed choir (SSAATTBB), soprano soloist, SATB quartet, SS soloists, and string orchestra. Eschewing the single narrative perspective that characterizes the great Passion settings of the past, Ešenvalds has assembled an interlocking mosaic of texts from the gospels, from Byzantine and Roman liturgies and from the Old Testament. Jean-Yves Duperron has written the following about *Passion and Resurrection*:

In just a little over three minutes, Latvian composer Eriks Ešenvalds (1977–), by means of a perfectly

seamless transition, time travels through 500 years of human religious history, and demonstrates that even though everything has changed, it still remains the same. *Passion and Resurrection* opens with segments of a four-voice choral work [“Parce mihi, Domine”] by sixteenth-century composer Cristobal de Morales, a typical musical Figure of dark, mysterious, late middle ages reverence [sic] for God, which slowly and almost imperceptibly metamorphoses, by the gradual inclusion of strings, into twenty-first century doubt and remorse, with a style of writing that very much resembles Arvo Pärt’s choral music. And all of this in just the introduction of this great new work that embodies a coming together of old and new. A work that juggles very well a range of extreme emotions from deep serenity to violent anger, and takes advantage of the text’s power to sustain the music’s energy.

The Academic State Choir Latvija, with financial support of Valsts Kultūrkapitāla Fonds, commissioned *Passion and Resurrection*. The first performance was given in the VIII International Festival of Sacred Music in St. Peter’s church, Riga, Latvia, by Kristīne Gailīte (soprano), Academic State Choir Latvija, Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and conductor Māris Sirmāis on August 27, 2005. As noted, the motet “Parce mihi, Domine” by Cristobal de Morales (c. 1500–1553) opens *Passion and Resurrection* and time-travels seamlessly via the composer’s introduction of strings to the texture (Figure 3: Part 1, mm. 25–50). Part 2 of *Passion and Resurrection* covers Judas’s betrayal of Jesus through the crowd’s clamoring for his crucifixion. The composer has paired the accented shouts of the crowd with nervous twitching in the strings to depict the tension of the moment (Figure 4: Part 2, mm. 50–60). Part 3 offers a beautiful contrast to the ugliness of the betrayal through the comforting words from the cross, “Today thou shalt be



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25

S
er - ga e - um cor tu - - - um? *mp* Us - que

A
er - ga e - um cor tu - - - um? *mp* Us - que

T
er - ga e - um cor tu - - - um? *mp* Us - que

B
er - ga e - um cor tu - - - um? *mp* Us - que

Vln. I
sul tasto

Vln. 2
sul tasto, div. p

Vla.
sul tasto, div. p

Vlc.
sul tasto p

32

S
quo non par - cis mi - hi, nec di - mit - tis me, ut glu - ti - *cresc.*

A
quo non par - cis mi - hi, nec di - mit - tis me, ut glu - ti - *cresc.*

T
quo non par - cis mi - hi, nec di - mit - tis me, ut glu - ti -

B
quo non par - cis mi - hi, nec di - mit - tis me, ut glu - ti -

41

S
am sa - li - - - vam me - - - am? *mp* Cur - non

A
am sa - li - - - vam me - - - am? *mp* Cur - non

T
am sa - li - - - vam me - - - am? *mp* Cur - non

B
am sa - li - - - vam me - - - am? *mp* Cur - non

Vln. I
p

Vln. 2
p

Vla.
p

Vlc.
p

Figure 3. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Passion and Resurrection*, "Part 1," mm. 25–50.
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Ēriks Ešenvalds

50

S
A
T
B

him,
cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy,
him,
cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy,

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Cb.

55

S
A
T
B

cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy!
cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy, cru-ci-fy!

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Cb.

*Play the figure independently from others, imitating extremely nervous clamours of seagull (tremolo, glissando in narrow range, crescendo as fast as possible).

Figure 4. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Passion and Resurrection*, "Part 2," mm. 50–60.
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with me in Paradise" underlaid by gently flowing string harmonies (Figure 5: Part 3, mm. 32–41). The piece concludes at the open tomb on Easter morning with the dialogue between the risen Jesus ("Mariam") and Mary Magdalene ("Rabboni") (Figure 6: Part 4, mm. 94–103). There is a truly mystical quality infusing this touching dialogue between the holy woman and her risen Lord.

The year 2005 was especially productive for young maestro Ešēnavds. In addition to *Passion and Resurrection*,

he also penned *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*, scored for unaccompanied mixed choir (ensemble ATTB and choir SSSAATTBB) and *Rain, Rain, Go Away [Aizej, lietinj]*. *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* is based upon an Albanian folksong. The text is a combination of an Albanian folksong (pronunciation guide provided in the score) and English. Another text that is used in this piece is the poem *Vendit tem [My Land]* by Albanian poet Martin Camaj (1925–1992), used by permission of Erica Camaj (see texts

below). The Latvian Radio Choir, with the financial support of the State Culture Capital Foundation, commissioned *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* and premiered it at the Klangspuren Festival in Schwaz, Austria, on September 25, 2005, under the direction of Sigvards Klāva. The ancient Albanian folksong quoted in this piece tells the legend of three brothers who began to build a castle to protect themselves from Roman and Greek invaders. The brothers worked during the daytime, but at night their

The image displays a page of a musical score for measures 35 to 41. It features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and five string staves (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass). The vocal parts have lyrics in both English and Latvian. The English lyrics are: "thee, to - day thou shalt be with me in Pa - ra - dise! in Pa - ra - dise, in Pa - ra - dise, in Pa - ra - dise,". The Latvian lyrics are: "tē, šodien tu būsi ar mani Parādīzē! Parādīzē, Parādīzē, Parādīzē, Parādīzē,". The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *p*, and performance instructions like *simile* and *unis.*. The string parts consist of flowing, harmonic patterns.

Figure 5. Ēriks Ešēnavds, *Passion and Resurrection*, "Part 3," mm. 35–41.

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work was mysteriously destroyed. One night, their mother had a dream: one of the brothers had to offer his wife as a sacrifice, then the castle would stand firm. None of the brothers wanted to sacrifice his wife, but they agreed not to tell their wives about the dream. Every day, one of the wives would go to the castle with food for the brothers. They decided that the wife who came to the castle with food the next day would be sacrificed in the foundation of the castle. That evening the two older brothers told their wives about the dream, and warned them not to go to the castle the

next day. The youngest one did not tell his wife anything. The next day she set off for the castle to bring them food, and there she was entombed inside the foundation. It is believed that this folksong dates from the time when the castle of Shkodër [Shkodra] in northern Albania was built—some 2700 years ago. And a legend does indeed tell of a woman sacrificed in the foundation of the castle.

In the 53rd International Rostrum of Composers (IRC) which took place at the Maison de la Radio in Paris, June 6 to 9, 2006, organized by the International Music Council in cooperation with Radio

France and with the financial support of UNESCO, in the "young composers" category, the work selected as most worthy for worldwide broadcasting was *Legend of the Walled-In Woman*.

Gabriel Jackson's description of the piece in the liner notes for Polyphony's recording of *Legend of the Walled-In Woman* follows:

Like *Passion and Resurrection*, the work begins with an *objet trouvé*—in this case an Albanian folksong that is the source of the legend. Again, with its strange ululations and glissandi, its ornamentation and

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Ēriks Ešenvalds

keening repetitions, the folksong is immediately established as an alien musical presence. Similarly, the story is told not as a straightforward narrative, but through ellipsis; the piece is not dramatic but contemplative. Its structure is simple: three times material from the original folk song (sung by a solo quintet at a distance) is followed by a setting of the same words for the full choir. The texture is characteristically sonorous, with multiple divisi; the harmony is tonal, invigorated by passing dissonances, the tessitura wide, as intertwined upper voices soar above more slow-moving deeply rooted lower parts. In an extended *coda*, polyphony dissolves into homophony; tolling, incantatory chords create a static pulsation that underscores plaintive wisps of melody from one, then two solo sopranos, who intone (in English) an epitaph for the walled-in woman. Gradually

tendrils of folksong are re-woven into the texture, their tonality finally reconciled with that of the choir, as the music recedes into silence.

The Albanian text and translation follow:

Atje te ura në lumë, Oooooi, E mjera unë, Most a bëre të bëje punë, Oooooi, E mjera unë.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së madhe, Oooooi, Bjeru bukën mos të valë, Oooooi, E mjera unë.

Qi fletë vjehrra nusës së vogël, Oooooi, Bjeru bukën mos të valë, Oooooi, E mjera unë.

Në themelët e Kalasë, Oooooi, Është pendu se ja dhanë një vashë, Oooooi, E mjera unë.

There at the bridge o'er the river, Woe, oh woe is me, Do not set forth a working, Woe, oh woe is me.

To her eldest son's wife speaks the mother: Woe, woe Take them food, do not fail, Woe, oh woe is me.

To her youngest son's wife speaks the mother: Woe, woe, Take them food, do not fail, Woe, oh, woe is me.

To the foundations of that fortress, Woe, woe, They regret that they once gave a girl, Woe, oh woe is me me.

(English translation by Robert Elsie; used by permission)

Additional text by Robert Camaj:

My land
When I die, may I turn into grass,
On my mountains in spring,
In autumn I will turn to seed.

When I die, may I turn into water,
My misty breath
Will fall onto the meadows as rain.

When I die, may I turn into stone,
On the confines of my land
May I be a landmark.

[*Vendit tem*, from the volume *Lirika midis dy moteve*, Munich 1967, translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie and first published in English in "An elusive eagle soars, Anthology of modern Albanian poetry," London: Forest Books 1993, p. 32]

Legend of the Walled-In Woman is nothing less than a lament for the loss of an innocent life in an horrific manner. The weeping and wailing of mourners draws the piece to a haunting close (Figure 7: mm. 141–end).



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141

A O - - - - - oi, O, (v)a - (sh)ē

Ens. O - - - - - oi, Ēsh-tē pen - du - se ja dha-nē njē va - shē

T O - - - - - oi, Ē(shte) (p)e(n) - (d)u (s)e(ja) (dh)ja(nē) (nj)ē (v)a - (sh)ē,

B O - - - - - oi, Ē(shte) (p)e(n) - (d)u (s)e(ja) (dh)ja(nē) (nj)ē (v)a - (sh)ē,

B O - - - - - oi, O, (v)a - (sh)ē,

Choir

146

A O - - - - - oi, O,

Ens. O - - - - - oi, O,

T O - - - - - oi, O,

B O - - - - - oi, O,

B O - - - - - oi, O,

Choir

151

A O, O, O, O - - - oi.

Ens. O, O oi.

T O, O oi.

B O - - - - - oi.

B O - - - - - oi.

Choir niente

Figure 7. Eriks Ešenvalds, *Legend of the Walled-in Woman*, mm. 141–end.
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Oh let me like the birds
Sing before night.

The main focus of Ešenvalds's setting is opulent harmony. The men mostly provide background as the women are given the melodic content. The tempo is slow (quarter note=56) and the composer employs a series of alternating meters (3/4, 4/4, 6/4, 2/4, 7/4, 5/4), thereby camouflaging any sense of a strong downbeat (Figure 8: mm. 1–13).

Other Teasdale texts set for choir by Ešenvalds include *Only in Sleep* (2010), *Sunset: St. Louis* (2010), and *Stars* (2011).

Only in Sleep was commissioned by the University of Louisville Collegiate Chorale and Cardinal Singers, Kent Hatteberg, conductor. The text follows:

Only in sleep I see their faces,
Children I played with when I was a child,
Louise comes back with her brown hair braided,
Annie with ringlets warm and wild.

Only in sleep Time is forgotten—
What may have come to them, who can know?

Yet we played last night as long ago,
And the doll-house stood at the turn of the stair.

The years had not sharpened their smooth round faces,
I met their eyes and found them mild—
Do they, too, dream of me, I wonder,
And for them am I too a child?

Ešenvalds has set this nostalgic text for unaccompanied mixed choir (SSAA-TTBB) and a soloist (unspecified). The piece is in G^b-major and the harmonies

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Stuart Younse

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Work o' the Weavers



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Susan Brumfield

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Ēriks Ešenvalds

are mostly diatonic with characteristic gentle dissonances imparting color and poignancy. The meter is 3/4 throughout and the tempo is marked at quarter note = 80–86. Much of the choral writing is *bocca chiusa*, in support of the solo. The solo part is quite florid requiring

great agility (Figure 9: mm. 87–108).

A third Teasdale text set by Ešenvalds is *Sunset: St. Louis* (2010), commissioned by the Latvian Radio Choir, Kaspars Putniņš, conductor. The composer has set this poem for unaccompanied mixed choir (SSAATTBB) with electronics and

anvil. This setting is arguably the most experimental, *avant garde* treatment by the composer to date. He calls for numerous special effects including whistling, whispering, humming through a paper and comb, and singing into a ewer [large jug] while changing the distance from the jug

87 **Meno mosso** ♩ = 66

Sop. Solo
child? Am I a child... Oh Oh

S
Mm...

T
Oh...

Perc. Instr?? Lv. *mp pp mp pp mp*

94

Sop. Solo
a child... Oh Oh am I a child...

S
(mm...)

T
(oh...)

Perc. *pp mp pp*

101 *rit.*

Sop. Solo
Oh a child... am I a child... a child...

S
(mm...)

T
(oh...)

Perc. *mp pp mp*

Figure 9. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Only in Sleep*, mm. 87–108.
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Latvia's Choral *Enfant Extraordinaire*

to the mouth. The piece is relatively long (ca. 11'30") and appropriate for only the top professional choirs. The text follows:

Hushed in the smoky haze of summer sunset,
When I came home again from far-off places,
How many times I saw my western city
Dream by her river.
Then for an hour the water wore a mantle
Of tawny gold and mauve and misted turquoise
Under the tall and darkened arches

bearing
Gray, high-flung bridges.
Against the sunset, water-towers and steeples
Flickered with fire up the slope to westward,
And old warehouses poured their purple shadows
Across the levee.
High over them the black train swept with thunder,
Cleaving the city, leaving far beneath it
Wharf-boats moored beside the old side-wheelers
Resting in twilight.

Ešvalds employs alternating meters and ubiquitous dissonance in *Sunset: St. Louis* (Figure 10: mm. 1–20).

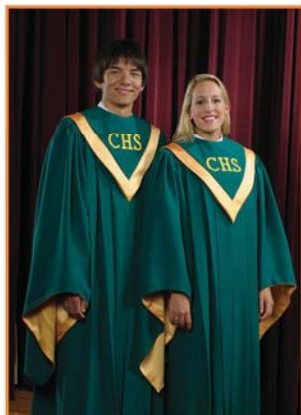
Ešvalds's most recent setting of a Teasdale text is *Stars* (2011). *Stars* was commissioned by the Salt Lake Vocal Artists/Salt Lake Choral Artists, Brady Allred, conductor. The piece is set for unaccompanied mixed choir (SATB) with Tibetan singing bowls and tuned glasses. The text follows:

Alone in the night
On a dark hill

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Ēriks Ešenvalds

1 **Lontano** $\text{♩} = 48$

10"

35-45"

Elec.

S1
whistle sufficiently rare
[H] - Hushed in the

S2
M
vibr. vibr.
[H] - Hushed in the

A
M
vibr. vibr. vibr.
[H] - Hushed in the

T
15^{ma}
pp 2. 1.
whistle sufficiently rare
M
pp
vibr.

B1
pp
O O O
M

B2
pp
O O O
whistle sufficiently rare
15^{ma}
pp 2. 1.
vibr.

7

Elec.

S1
smok - y [h] - haze of sum - [m] - mer [s] - sun - [n] - set,
vibr. mp

S2
smok - y [h] - haze of sum - [m] - mer [s] - sun - [n] - set,
vibr. mp

A
smok - y [h] - haze of sum - [m] - mer [s] - sun - [n] - set,
vibr. mp

T
[h] - haze of sum - [m] - mer [s] - sun - [n] - set,
vibr. mp

B1
p
vibr. vibr.
[s] - sun - [n] - set,
mp

B2
15^{ma}
pp
[s] - sun - [n] - set,
mp

Figure 10. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Sunset: St. Louis*, mm. 1–11.
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Latvia's Choral *Enfant Extraordinaire*

With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
The aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill
I watch them marching
Stately and still.

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

Stars is rather brief (76 measures) and tonal throughout. The meter is 2/2 and the tempo slow (quarter note = 76–84). The tuned glasses play a major role throughout the piece, while the Ti-

betan singing bowls are employed only at the end (Figure 11: mm. 62–76).

In 2010, Ešēnvalds returned to the large oratorio form with *At Sunrise*. Whereas the text of his earlier oratorio, *Passion and Resurrection* (see above), deals with Lenten and Holy Week themes, *At Sunrise* follows the biblical progression forward to Easter. *At Sunrise* is scored for mixed choir (SATB) with full symphony orchestra. The piece opens with the men chanting in Latin about the crucifixion, however the remainder of the text is in English. The composer skillfully and creatively

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Ēriks Ešenvalds

Solo voices
f (light)

Meno mosso pochissimo

62

S Ah

mf dim. Oh Mm Oh Mm *mp dim. poco a poco* Oh Mm Oh

A *mf dim.* Oh Mm Oh Mm I know I am hon - ored to be wit - ness of *mp dim. poco a poco* Oh Mm Oh

T *mf dim.* Oh Mm Oh Mm *mp dim. poco a poco* Oh Mm Oh

B *mf dim.* Oh Mm Oh Mm *mp dim. poco a poco* Oh Mm Oh

Glasses The rest of the singers leave the group gradually The group *mp*

69

S *(dim.)* Mm Oh Mm Oh Mm *lunga p* Oh

A *(dim.)* so much maj - es - ty, maj - es - ty. *lunga p* Oh

T *(dim.)* Mm Oh Mm Oh Mm *lunga p* Oh

B *(dim.)* Mm Oh Mm Oh Mm *lunga p* Oh

Tibetan Singing Bowls Start (approx.) here to warm up 3-4 Tibetan Singing Bowls producing high A, D, and E pitches *pppp* *lunga mp*

Glasses *lunga **

*All singers (except those who have G and F# glasses)

Figure 11. Ēriks Ešenvalds, *Stars*, mm. 62–76.
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Latvia's Choral *Enfant Extraordinaire*

25 *a tempo*

Bsns. 1, 2 *ff*

B♭ Tpts. 1, 2 *ff*

Tbn. 1, 2, 3 *ff*

Timp. *p* *f* *p* *f* *fp* *ff*

Perc. *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

S *ff*
Ah

A *ff*
Ah

T *ff*
Ah

B *ff*
Ah

Vln. 1 *a tempo* *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff* *div.* *p*

Vc. *div.* *ff* *p*

Cb. *ff* *p*

Figure 12. Ēriks Ešēvalds, *At Sunrise*, “Episode 2,” mm. 25–32.
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utilizes the orchestra to portray the powerful dramatic content of the crucifixion to resurrection story. The piece proceeds through a series of “episodes” until it reaches the triumphant moment of the resurrection at which point the composer employs “wordless” painting (Figure 12: Episode 2, mm. 25–32) to reflect the savior’s rising from the tomb in glory.

In this brief discussion, it has only been possible to offer an introduction to the

amazing *oeuvre* of this talented young composer. Rather like Mozart, Ešēvalds has demonstrated an uncannily mature style at a tender age. It is truly enticing to imagine the wonderful works the choral community has to anticipate from Latvia’s *Enfant Extraordinaire!*

NOTES

¹ Gabriel Jackson (2011). In *Passion and*

Resurrection, CD notes. London: Hyperion.
² Jean-Yves Duperron (2011). In *Classical Music Sentinel* (online review).
³ Gabriel Jackson (2011). In *Passion and Resurrection*, CD notes. London: Hyperion.

