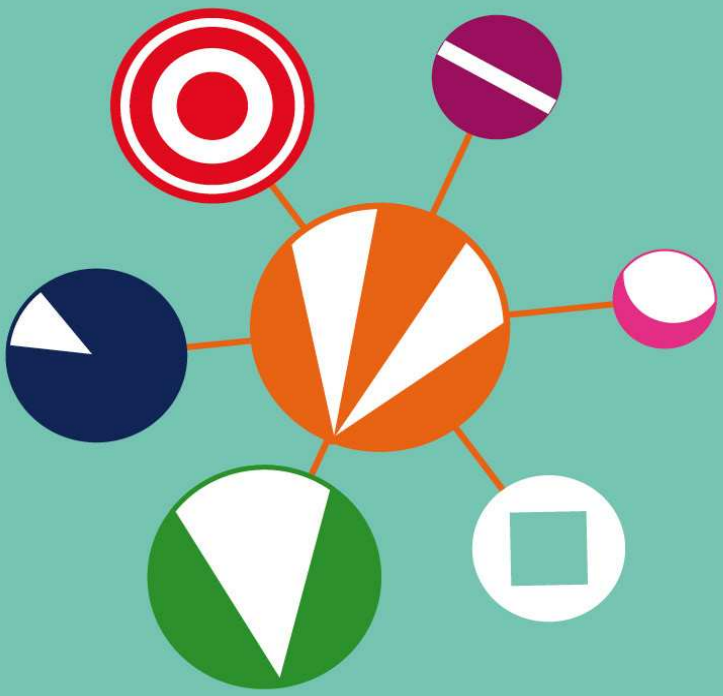
2013

Tenso Europe Chamber Choir

for young professional singers



Kaspars Putniņš - *conductor*

THU	8 August	*Ev. Lut. baznīca, Sigulda* (LV)
FRI	9 August	*Sv. Jāņa baznīca, Rīga* (LV)
SAT	10 August	*Oleviste kirik, Tallinn* (EE)

Welcome to the first concerts of Tenso Europe Chamber Choir !

Four years ago, when we started talking about creating a European choir for young singers, it seemed like a beautiful but perhaps overly ambitious dream. Now, this dream has come true, and after eight days of intensive work, the choir will give its very first concerts.

In designing this project, we looked closely at inspiring examples organized by members of Tenso Network Europe, such as Le Jeune Choeur de Paris (FR) and Meesters & Gezellen (NL); how to bring out the best of the individual singers in a relatively short time, leading up to a varied and challenging concert programme that can be performed for audiences in Latvia and abroad. By combining forces, we hope to achieve that. Latvijas Radio Koris offers its vast experience in bringing concert performances at the highest level, and Tenso offers its large network to give the project a European scope and the young singers a head start in their international careers.

More than sixty singers from all over Europe applied to participate in the choir. After a difficult selection process, 24 singers from 11 countries, aged 26 on average, were selected to join the summerschool. We hope to see a great number of them back next year.

Our thanks to the European Culture programme, for their generous support in the past and coming years; to the city of Rīga, for their support but even more for taking the challenge and adopting us as one of their key events in 2014; for the city council of Sigulda and its School of Arts Baltais Flīģelis, for hosting our summerschool and making us feel very welcome; and to all other organizations and individuals that have contributed to the realization of our dream. We could not have done it without you, and we cannot thank you enough.

Kaspars Putniņš
Babette Greiner - Tenso Network Europe
Egils Štāls - Latvijas Radio Koris

Tenso Europe Chamber Choir

for young professional singers

Tenso Europe Chamber Choir is an initiative of conductor Kaspars Putninš of Latvijas Radio Koris and Tenso Network Europe. It aims to bring together Europe's most talented young professional singers for a summer project of coaching and performances. After the pilot project in 2013, the choir will be officially launched in 2014 in Rīga (Cultural Capital City 2014).

Young singers (age 18-30) can apply by sending in an application form and recordings. From these, 24 singers are selected for the choir and invited to come to the summer school in Latvia. At least sixteen singers will be asked to stay on the following year, in order to establish continuity in the ensemble while at the same time making room for new faces and voices.

The summer school offers eight days of intensive training in ensemble singing, respecting the individual qualities and skills of the young singers and offering vocal coaching on the spot. The emphasis of the training is geared towards the specific skills required for choral music - ensemble awareness, blending, articulation, pronunciation, stage presence and more. The choir will work on a challenging and varied programme, resulting in a series of concerts in Latvia and abroad.

For the participants, working in Tenso Europe Chamber Choir will give an international dimension to their career perspectives, and a potential stepping stone to an career in one of Europe's professional chamber choirs. Tenso Europe Chamber Choir will encourage mobility of young artists, stimulate multidisciplinary experiments and bring unique concerts with choral music to large audiences.

The next call for singers will be published in January 2014.

PROGRAMME

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)	*O sing unto the Lord a new song*
Max Reger (1873-1916)	from *Acht geistliche Gesänge,* Op.138: - Der Mensch lebt und bestehet nur eine kleine Zeit (nr.1)
Arvo Pärt (1925)	*Magnificat*
Max Reger	from *Acht geistliche Gesänge*, Op.138: - Nachtlied (nr.3)
Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)	*Plainsongs for peace and light*
György Ligeti (1923-2006)	*Lux aeterna*
Pauls Dambis (1936)	*Songs of the sea* (Jūras Dziesmas) - Pūti, pūti, vēja māte - Šodien saule tumša tek - Zvan' Rīgā, Jelgavā
Kristaps Petersons (1982)	*Emotions of the day* (world premiere) I - Shiny morning's boredom … II - Boredom of a cloudless noon … III - Warm happiness of a pleasant … IV - Unbearable ennui of a sunset ….
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)	*Soupir*, from *Trois poèmes de Mallarmé* (arr. Clytus Gottwald)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	I*ch lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn* BWV Anh. 159

PROGRAMME NOTES

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

O sing unto the Lord a new song

The music of Thomas Tomkins epitomizes the Elizabethan era, although most of it was written after the Queen's death, during the reign of James I and Charles I. Psalm 149 was written in the polyphonic French-Italian style, which English composers had adopted and perfected since the reign of Henry VIII. The imitations in the voices, the rich harmonies, and the light counter accents give the music a shining aura of religious introspection and happiness. In the second half of the psalm, Tomkins realizes an amazing effect with the continuous repetition of short motifs on the one hand and conflicting harmonies on the other.

Max Reger (1873-1916)

from *Acht geistliche Gesänge*, Op.138:

- Der Mensch lebt und bestehet nur eine kleine Zeit (nr.1)

- Nachtlied (nr.3)

During his lifetime Max Reger was considered the son of Brahms and the grandson of Bach; Brahms for his rich melodies and harmonies, and Bach for his formal mastery and technical variety. Each of Reger's *Acht geistliche Gesänge* shows their influence. The first song can be directly connected to Bach's motet "Ich lasse dich nicht", as one can hear in the homophonic layout over two separate choirs. The atmosphere is different, however. Reger's music is typical of the overripe romanticism of the late 19th century, looking back to the days of Bach. The harmonies are slightly clouded, the shining sopranos sound as if coming from behind a veil. In the *Nachtlied*, Reger used a 16th century hymn by Petrus Herbert. It resembles a chorale by Bach, but also the many introspective hymns written in Germany during the 19th century.

Arvo Pärt (1925)

Magnificat

Quite opposite to Ligeti's non-tonal linear and harmonic density, Arvo Pärt has always searched for a music that speaks to the contemporary worshipper yet relates also to faraway worlds, not so much in distance as in time. Pärt reaches out to the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance, but his music never sounds as it were from the past. It merely hints towards a dreamt past, when composers were quite often monks or employed in monasteries. The language of Pärt is mostly modal, but seasoned with passing dissonant harmonies. Thus Pärt has developed a bell-like sound, which he calls his tintinnabulation technique. The *Magnificat* is one of the most accomplished examples of this technique. Another remarkable aspect of this score is the alternation from phrase to phrase between different vocal groups while slowly enlarging the ensemble towards the end of the piece.

Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)

Plainsongs for peace and light

Plainsongs for peace and light, commissioned by Tenso Network Europe, is the last piece that British composer Jonathan Harvey, who died last October, was able to finish,. Typical of Harvey's choral style is a fascinating mix of plainchant-like melodies, free polyphony – a kind of floating of the voices in different tempo notations – and multi-layered chorale fragments. Together these give his music space and breadth. Here we are also reminded both of the shimmering twilight of Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna* and of Pärt's introspectiveness in his *Magnificat*.

György Ligeti (1923-2006)

Lux aeterna

Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna,* a splendid evocation of the eternal light, is probably the most groundbreaking choral work written in the 1960s. In this piece Ligeti uses such techniques as micro-polyphony and dense clusters which demand the utmost vocal control from the singers. The music has to be performed as if from afar, the light should be shimmering, more hinted than sung. After fifty years, this music still has a fascinating and stellar quality.

Pauls Dambis (1936)

Songs of the Sea

The *Songs of the Sea* by Latvian composer Pauls Dambis consists of three movements, of which the last one, *Bells are ringing in Riga and Jelgava*, offers a fine opportunity for comparison with Pärt's tintinnabulation technique. Pärt tries to evoke church bells as symbols of a monastic world. Dambis' bells on the other hand are rather symbols of death, of the final road to eternity. The first song, *Puti, puti*, deals with the blowing wind and those ashore who are afraid that something might happen to the brothers at sea. Dambis uses a quite effective parallelism technique: he does not imitate the wind, but rather the rhythm of its blowing. The second song is about immense grief, which Dambis illuminates with immense chords.

Kristaps Pētersons (1982)

Emotions of the Day

I Shiny morning's boredom with two voices in foreground
II Boredom of a cloudless noon with absent voices in foreground
III Warm happiness of a pleasant afternoon's boredom with four voices in foreground and something else
IV Unbearable ennui of a sunset of an extreme beauty with seven distant voices

As a composer, Kristaps Pētersons has become less and less concerned about the autonomy of the composition. He often trespasses the borders of compositions introducing a certain mood, an important element of which is ostinato or the principle of repeating figures. Kristaps shows what he thinks of the world's structure and is not afraid to exploit images that occur in the music through our day-to-day life. If the composition demands it, bowls will break and books will be ripped apart - yielding precise lines, dense conceptuality, theatrical gestures.

Emotions of the Day was written especially for the Tenso Europe Chamber Choir. It forms part of a larger composition that will be performed by the choir during Tenso Days Rīga 2014.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Soupir, from ***Trois poèmes de Mallarmé*** (arr. Clytus Gottwald)

Ravel wrote *Soupir* in 1913, originally for soprano, two flutes, two clarinets, string quartet and piano. Ravel's settings of Mallarmé are among his most advanced scores, and they eminently display the differences to the music of Debussy. Ravel was ever a supporter of musical classicism; his music is clear cut, irradiated by sunshine.

Debussy preferred a more constructivist, anti-classical technique based on motifs instead of melodies, on modal instead of tonal harmonies. The musical language of *Soupir* is always strictly tonal, despite its harmonic expansion. In 1976 the famous choir conductor Clytus Gottwald made an arrangement for 16 voices that emphasizes the harmonic density of Ravel's music as well as the fairylike atmosphere surrounding the sighing lover in the poem.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn (BWV Anh. 159)

Bach's motets are examples of the most elevated compositional techniques: the construction of music with supreme mathematical insight and consummate knowledge of how to translate language into speaking music. The first part of this motet is mainly homophonic. The words "Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnet mich denn" (I won't let you before you have blessed me) find their natural transformation in the meter and rhythms that Bach wrote down - as if he was no more than an intermediary between words and confession, between the music and the congregation. The second half of the motet displays his mastery even more in its exquisite three part polyphony, topped in the soprano part by the choral melody "Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz?" (Why, my heart, are you in distress?").

Tenso Europe Chamber Choir 2013

Sopranos	**Tenors**
Krista Audere (LV)	Daniel Bali (HU)
Leonor Barbosa de Melo (PT)	Jonathan Becker (DE)
Bepke Keersmaekers (BE)	David Geier (DE)
Inês Lopes (PT)	Simo Häkli (FI)
Madeline Ménager-Lefebvre (FR)	Alexander Humala (Belarus)
Julia Reckendrees (DE)	David van Lith (NL)

Altos	**Basses**
Susanna Beerheide (DE)	Peter-Paul van Beekum (NL)
Laia Cortés Calafell (ES)	Pedro Lopes (PT)
Mirabela Castillo (RO)	Antonio di Martino (IT)
Nélia Gonçalves (PT)	Nuno Mendes (PT)
Marisa Oliveira (PT)	Joan Miquel Muñoz (ES)
Jenni Reineke (DE)	Wouter Verhage (NL)

Biographies of the singers can be found on
www.tensoeuropechamberchoir.eu

Kaspars Putniņš has been conductor of the Latvijas Radio Koris (Latvian Radio Choir) since 1992. In 1994, he formed the Latvian Radio Chamber Singers, an ensemble of soloists formed from the members of Latvian Radio Choir. He regularly appears as a guest conductor with leading European choirs such as the BBC Singers, RIAS Kammerchor, Netherlands Chamber Choir, Swedish Radio Choir, Netherlands Radio Choir, Flamish Radio Choir and others. Starting the 2014/2015 season, he will be chief conductor of the Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor.

His work encompasses a wide range of choral repertoire, from Renaissance polyphony to works of the Romantic period; but Putniņš' foremost goal has always been to promote new choral music, which challenges and develops the abilities of his performers and takes their vocal sound into entirely uncharted territories.

He has forged close relationships with many composers in the Baltic States and elsewhere, including Andris Dzenītis, Maija Einfelde, Mārtiņš Viļums, Gundega Šmite, Toivo Tulev, Lasse Thoresen and Gavin Bryars. Putniņš has also initiated several theatrical projects which involve the participation of his choir in collaboration with visual artists and stage directors.

He has conducted at the Lincoln Centre in New York, Berliner Philharmonie and Konzerthaus, Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ in Amsterdam, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Berwaldhallen in Stockholm, Dresdner Frauenkirche etc. He often lectures and gives master classes internationally. Kaspars Putniņš is the recipient of the Latvian Music Grand Prix and the Latvian Council of Ministers Award for Achievements in Culture and Science.

In recent years, Putniņš has worked extensively with young (amateur and professional) singers and conductors in various projects and masterclasses, such as the *Eurochoir*, *Meesters & Gezellen* and *Vocaal Talent.*

Geert Berghs is singer, pedagogue, doctor in medicine and researcher at the University of Leuven (BE) (department of logopedy and audiology), where he has done extensive research into the aging singing voice and other subjects related to professional singing careers.

His extensive career as a singer, combined with the physiological knowledge of the vocal apparatus, brings a wealth of experience to this project, focussing on the challenges of the repertoire and the well-being of the singers.

Geert Berghs initiated *Meesters & Gezellen* (Masters and Fellows), a project for young singers in the Netherlands, with the cooperation of Tenso member choirs Nederlands Kamerkoor and Cappella Amsterdam.

Stage director **Zane Kreicberga** has studied and now works at Latvijas Kultūras Akadēmija. In 2014, she will direct the staged performances of Tenso Europe Chamber Choir in the new work of Kristaps Pētersons. This year, she worked with the singers on their non-vocal performance and stage presence.

In **Tenso Network Europe**, the joint efforts and achievements of the most prominent European chamber choirs are combined and disseminated within the context of a growing European network. As of 2014 the network counts 15 members from 11 European countries.

The network was founded in 2003 by choeur de chambre accentus (FR), Latvijas Radio Koris (LV), Nederlands Kamerkoor (NL) and RIAS Kammerchor (DE). Since then, members have collaborated in developing the choral repertoire, coaching young performers and composers, and presenting new choral music to large audiences in the Tenso Days festivals. By involving amateur and youth choirs in their projects, the spin-off is extended to the large community of choral singers and audiences for choral music all over Europe.

www.tensonetwork.eu

Tenso Europe Chamber Choir

for young professional singers

artistic director & conductor - **Kaspars Putniņš**

vocal coach - **Geert Berghs**

staging coach - **Zane Kreicberga**

general manager - **Babette Greiner**

project manager - **Sandra Zandberga**

communication - **Juanjo Morales**

programme notes - **Leo Samama, Latvijas Koncerti** (Pētersons)

Special thanks to :
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Tenso Europe Chamber Choir is an initiative of

TENSO

The European network for professional chamber choirs

LATVIJAS RADIO KORIS

LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR

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RĪGA 2014

EIROPAS KULTŪRAS GALVASPILSĒTAS NOTIKUMS
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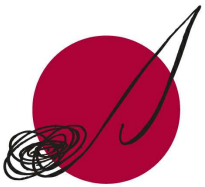

LATVIJAS KONCERTI