



# Organ and French composers' compositions to be performed in the Concert Hall Latvija

On 25 March at 18:00, Francis Poulenc's Concerto for organ, strings, and timpani and Gabriel Fauré's Requiem will be performed by the Ventspils Chamber Orchestra, mixed choir Ventspils, soloists Laura Grecka (mezzo-soprano), Rihards Mačanovskis (baritone), and Aigars Reinis (organ) in the Concert Hall Latvija. Choral conductor – Aigars Meri.

Gabriel Fauré's Requiem has three versions written by the author in 1888, 1893, and 1900. The first version – for soloists, mixed choir, string instrument orchestra, harp, timpani, and organ – will be performed in Ventspils. Gabriel Fauré said the following about his Requiem: '[...] It has been said that my Requiem does not express the fear of death and someone has called it a 'lullaby of death'. But it is thus that I see death: as a happy deliverance, an aspiration towards happiness above, rather than as a painful experience...'

Francis Poulenc's piece was commissioned in 1934 by Princesse Edmond de Polignac and premiered in 1938 as the Concerto for organ, strings, and timpani. The organ part was performed by Maurice Duruflé, while the performance was conducted by Nadia Boulanger.

During the composition of the piece, the composer suffered a personal tragedy – his close friend, the composer and music critic Pierre-Octave Ferroud, died in a car accident. Overwhelmed by the tragedy, the composer went on a pilgrimage to the south-west of France, where he experienced a religious revelation at the statue of Virgin Mary – the Black Madonna of Rocamadour. This influenced the musical language of the new work. The composer explained the choice of the sound of this piece: 'The Concerto is a boundary between secular and religious music. It is not a liturgical concert, but by limiting the orchestra to only a string orchestra and timpani, I did everything so that it could be performed in a church.'

In the process of his work, Poulenc wrote about his new piece as follows: 'The Concerto is almost finished. It took me a lot of trouble to write it, but I do hope that you will like it the way it is. It is not a frivolous Concerto for two pianos. It is rather may path to the monastery ...'

Since 2010, Laura Grecka has been a soloist at the National Opera. She graduated with a master's degree in vocal art not only from the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music but also from the Maastricht Conservatory of Music in the Netherlands. Grecka has performed with various Latvian ensembles and has given concerts in Norway, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere.

Rihards Mačanovskis has been a soloist at the Latvian National Opera since 2003. The singer has received recognition for his work several times. In 2012 and 2014, he was awarded the Latvijas Gāze Prize in the category 'Best Opera Soloist', and in 2013, he received the Pauls Sakss Recognition Award. Mačanovskis was nominated for the Great Music Award 2013 for his outstanding interpretation. The artist has given concerts not only in Latvia but also abroad.

Aigars Reinis is an organist, professional choir and early music ensemble singer, the music director and chief organist of the Riga Cathedral. He has given concerts in many European countries and regularly performs at the Riga Cathedral in Latvia. Aigars Reinis is a two-time winner of the Latvian Music Award in the categories 'For Outstanding Work in an Ensemble' (Latvian Music Award 2019) and 'For Outstanding Performance of the Year' (Latvian Music Award 2021).

The concert will be hosted by Latvian Radio 3 Klasika programme host and musicologist Liene Jakovļeva. The concert is organised by SIA "Kurzemes filharmonija". The event is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the municipality of the Ventspils State City.

Tickets for the concerts are available at "Biješu Paradīze" outlets and online.

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