**The LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**The Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSo, artistic director and principal conductor Modestas Pitrėnas) is one of the most refined and well-known Lithuanian orchestras. Giving concerts in Lithuania and abroad for several decades, the orchestra has become an irreplaceable part of the country’s musical life, and a herald of the national culture. The LNSO is perhaps the most prominent ambassador and promoter of Lithuanian and Baltic culture, blending perfectly the Baltic and European performing tradition in its work. This skilled and reliable collective, consisting of almost 100 people, annually gives around 50 concerts in the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall and on other stages in Lithuania, and extensively tours abroad.

The orchestra was founded in 1940 by the composer, conductor and pianist Balys Dvarionas. Its first concert was held on 21 January 1940, at the Vilnius City Theatre (the programme included Beethoven’s *Egmont* overture, M.K. Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem *In the Forest*, Dvořak’s *New World* Symphony No 9, and Haydn’s Concerto for piano and orchestra in D major, with the pianist prof. Stanisław Szpinalski, conducted by B. Dvarionas). Reference books, however, indicate a different date for the first concert of the LNSO: 26 December 1940, in the Philharmonic Hall, when the orchestra was taken under the institution’s wing (the programme included J.S. Bach’s *Toccata*, Beethoven’s Symphony No 7, and J. Gruodis’ *Symphonic Prologue*). After that performance, concerts were presented regularly every Thursday and Sunday, and the pages of the orchestra’s history began to fill up with achievements.

The summer of 1941 was supposed to mark the beginning of a tour around the country: there were to be 45 concerts, played in various towns in Aukštaitija, but the tour was interrupted by the war. The war forced many Jewish and Polish musicians to leave. Therefore, on 1 November 1941, the orchestra joined with the Vilnius Radiofonas Orchestra, with the composer Jeronimas Kačinskas as its leader. From 1944 to 1958, the orchestra was led by Abelis Klenickis, from 1958 to 1961 by B. Dvarionas, and from 1961 to 1963 by Margarita Dvarionaitė.

In 1964, Juozas Domarkas, at the time completing his studies in Leningrad (now St Petersburg), was offered the position of the conductor of the orchestra. As the conductor’s professionalism developed, the skill of the musicians also continued to improve, and Lithuanian concertgoers heard masterpieces that had never been performed before in the country, such as Beethoven’s Symphony No 9 and *Missa Solemnis*, symphonies by Mahler and works by Stravinsky. J. Domarkas led the orchestra from 1964 to 2015.

Since the autumn of 2015, the artistic director and principal conductor of the LNSO has been Modestas Pitrėnas, previously (since 2004) the assistant to the principal conductor. Robertas Šervenikas is the orchestra’s second conductor, while Juozas Domarkas is the honorary conductor. Since 2024, Victorien Vanoosten has become the principal guest conductor.

The geographical coverage of the LNSO’s performances is vast, and encompasses various concert stages in Lithuania and abroad. It has visited many European countries, Japan, South America and South Korea, and has given concerts in some of the most prominent concert venues of the world, such as Musikverein in Vienna, the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Berlin, the Barbican Centre in London, Alte Oper in Frankfurt, the Berwaldhallen and Town Hall in Stockholm, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Metropolitan and Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Festival Hall in Osaka, the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai, the Cultural Centre of Thailand, and many others. The LNSO has also performed at prestigious festivals, such as the Schleswig-Holstein festival, Musica Romantica in Switzerland, the Moscow Stars, the Russian Winter, the Warsaw Autumn, the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in Warsaw, the Prague Spring, and festivals in Stresa, Merano, Rheingau, Ludwigsburg, Riga, Gstaad, and elsewhere.

Over the years, the orchestra has been conducted by important historical personalities and famous masters of the baton, such as B. Dvarionas, S. Sondeckis, J. Aleksa, V. Fedoseyev, M. Rostropovich, K. Penderecki, K. Masur, J. Frantz, C. Diederich, N. Järvi, Ch. Spering, R. Hickox, Ch. Eschenbach, O. Grangean and M. Gražinytė-Tyla. The LNSO has collaborated with many famous performers, accomplished instrumentalists and vocalists of all generations and nationalities, including the singers M. Caballé, J. Norman, S. Larin, V. Urmana and V. Noreika, the pianists E. Gilels, D. Bashkirov, D. Pollack, S. Tiempo, F. Kempf, M. Rubackytė and P. Geniušas, the violinists G. Kremer, L. Kogan, V. Spivakov, J. Rachlin, S. Krylov, Ph. Graffin, A. Steinbacher and V. Čepinskis, the cellists M. Maisky, I. Monighetti, D. Geringas, D. Ishizaka and M. Rostropovich, and the viola player Y. Bashmet.

When a summer stage was built in Palanga in 1972, the LNSO performed summer concerts there until 1990. It first went on international tour to Poland in 1969, and from the 1970s it was often invited to perform in prestigious concert halls of conservatories in Moscow and Leningrad. In the next decade, it played two concert programmes at international contemporary music festivals in Leningrad, which met with great acclaim. In 1973, the LNSO went on its first tour to Germany (the former GDR), and in 1983 to Finland. In 1986, it gave 14 concerts in France, and in 1987 it performed at the final concert of the Prague Spring festival.

After Lithuania regained its independence, the range of the LNSO’s tours expanded further. In 1992, the orchestra went on a tour to prestigious concert halls in Madrid, Berlin, Bern, Amsterdam, Granada, Stockholm, and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany. In 1994, it travelled for the first time to the Far East, to Japan. In 1995, it went on its first concert tour to the United Kingdom (with the conductor Juozas Domarkas); and in 2007, IMG, one of the biggest agencies in Europe, invited the orchestra and the conductor Robertas Šervenikas to give a concert in the United Kingdom again. In recent years, the LNSO has been on several concert tours, of which the most notable were appearances in Thailand and India in 2017. In 2018, the orchestra embarked on its *Tour of the Centenary*, performing at the Great Guild Hall in Riga, concert halls in Poland, the Janáček Festival in the Czech Republic, the Musica Romantica festival in Switzerland, the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm, and the Konzerthaus in Berlin. In 2019, the LNSO has also been regularly invited to perform in concert halls in Cēsis and Daugavpils in Latvia. The orchestra opened 2020 with the performances at the Wrocław and Szczecin concert halls in Poland.

The basis of the LNSO’s repertoire consists of Classical and Romantic music, enriched with prominent scores from the 20th century and premières of almost all symphonic works by Lithuanian composers. The orchestra participates actively in the performance and promotion of Lithuanian music, and has performed many important opuses, from the symphonic poems by M.K. Čiurlionis to works by B. Dvarionas, E. Balsys, J. Juzeliūnas, A. Rekašius, F. Bajoras, V. Barkauskas, O. Balakauskas, V. Bartulis, O. Narbutaitė, R. Šerkšnytė, A. Malcys, A. Šenderovas and V. Germanavičius, as well as the first symphonies by many young composers. Some of these works were inspired by a friendship with conductor Juozas Domarkas, and are dedicated to him. Since 1991, the orchestra has regularly participated in Gaida contemporary music festival, where it annually presents the latest symphonic scores by Lithuanian composers. On 16 January 1995, the LNSO took part in the first Euroradio broadcast, which introduced Lithuanian musicians and composers to a vast audience of European listeners (the first broadcast included V. Barkauskas’ *Konzertstück für Orchester* No 2 and M.K. Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem *In the Forest*, with the participation of the conductor Juozas Domarkas and the pianist Petras Geniušas). In 2006, Euroradio presented the Symphony No 2 by O. Narbutaitė. In 2008, it offered E. Balsys’ triptych *Portraits*. The following year, the LNSO performed three concerts on Euroradio, presenting Lithuanian works (the première of Ž. Martinaitytė’s *Thousand Doors into the World*, O. Narbutaitė’s oratorio *Centones meae urbi*, and E. Balsys’ Symphony-Concerto for Organ, etc.).

A very important part of the LNSO’s work is its educational activities. In 1975, it began giving concerts with young Lithuanian performers, and the tradition grew into the *Atžalynas* festival. As a collaboration with the International M. K. Čiurlionis Piano Competition and the International J. Heifetz Competition for Violinists, the orchestra accompanies the performers who made it to the finals of these competitions.

The LNSO’s recordings have been released in Lithuania and abroad (Melodiya, Marco Polo, Col legno, Ella Records, Naxos, Avie Records). In 2020, marking the 80th anniversary concert season of the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society, a number of works by E. Balsys, J. Karnavičius and A. Šenderovas were recorded in cooperation with foreign record publishers. A. Ponchielli’s opera *I Lituani* (The Lithuanians), performed and recorded by the LNSO, conductor M. Pitrėnas, Kaunas State Choir and famous Lithuanian opera soloists, turned to be an exceptional event. The list of the latest audio recordings includes a CD of works by Ukrainian composer Valentyn Silvestrov, released by Naxos in August 2020 and featuring the LNSO, conductor Christopher Lyndon-Gee, singer Inna Galatenko and pianist Oleg Bezborodko. In the autumn of 2020, Arvo Pärt’s CD *Lamentate* with pianist Onutė Gražinytė, cellist Edward King, the LNSO and conductor M. Pitrėnas was recorded at the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall and Vilnius Record Studio and released by the German record label Accentus Music. Critics of the famous German music magazine *Fono Forum* gave this sound recording the highest 5-star rating. At the beginning of the 2021, the prestigious Finnish record company Ondine released Ž. Martinaitytė’s CD *Saudade* with the LNSO, the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra (LCO), conductor Giedrė Šlekytė and pianist Gabrielius Alekna.

Artistic director and principal conductor – **Modestas Pitrėnas**

Honorary conductor – **Juozas Domarkas**

Guest conductor – **Victorien Vanoosten**

Conductor – **Robertas Šervenikas**

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**The LNSO’s short biography**

**The Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSO), one of Lithuania’s most important and advanced musical collectives,has been a part of Lithuania’s cultural life and has significantly enriched it since its inception. The LNSO was founded in 1940 by Balys Dvarionas, a composer, pianist and conductor whose name is inseparable from the Lithuanian identity. From 1964 to 2015 the Orchestra was led by Juozas Domarkas, one of the most important promoters of Lithuanian culture, and since 2015, Modestas Pitrėnas has served as its artistic director and principal conductor. Robertas Šervenikas is the Orchestra’s second conductor, Juozas Domarkas is the honorary conductor and Victorien Vanoosten– the principal guest conductor.

The Orchestra’s 84th season is marked by significant musical events. One of them is the release (record label Accentus Music) of a historic CD album for our country, Amilcare Ponchielli’s opera *I Lituani* (The Lithuanians). The recording was an international success, with the classical music magazine *Pizzicato* remarking that “Pitrėnas overcomes dramaturgical shortcomings and the sometimes poor orchestration with a conducting style based on tension and melodic unfolding”, and the Dutch music magazine *Music Emotion* describing the recording of the opera *I Lituani* as a ‘must-have’ musical novelty.

In the 2024-2025 season, the LNSO gave concerts with the renowned pianist Rafał Blechacz, participated in a concert performance of Giacomo Puccini’s *Tosca* with soprano Vida Miknevičiūtė, tenor Jonathan Tetelman, and bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel, and recorded Grażyna Bacewicz’s Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 7 with Polish violin virtuoso Janusz Wawrowski, conducted by Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. The LNSO’s upcoming engagements include collaboration with one of today’s most sought-after violinists Christian Tetzlaff and the renowned tenor Joseph Calleja at the 29th Vilnius Festival, as well as tours in Poland and Latvia.

Having been an active participant in Lithuania’s cultural life for 85 years, the LNSO performs around 50 concerts in Lithuania and abroad every year. It has visited many European countries, Japan, South America and South Korea, and has given concerts in some of the most prominent concert venues of the world, such as Musikverein in Vienna, the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Berlin, and many others. The LNSO has also performed at prestigious music festivals, such as the Schleswig-Holstein, Musica Romantica in Switzerland, the Warsaw Autumn, the Prague Spring, and elsewhere. The Orchestra has been conducted by important historical personalities including Jonas Aleksa, Mstislav Rostropovich, Krzysztof Penderecki, Christoph Eschenbach; has collaborated with Monserrat Caballé, Jessye Norman, Emil Gilels, Mūza Rubackytė, Mischa Maisky, and other illustrious soloists.

Alongside the most famous classical repertoire, the ambassador of Lithuanian music actively promotes the Lithuanian composers: the LNSO is a regular participant in the international festival of contemporary music *Gaida*, it premieres the works by Lithuanian composers, participates in recordings, and presents Lithuanian music in Euroradio live broadcasts.

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