Valts Pūce – Biography

Valts Pūce (b. 1962) is one of the most prominent Latvian composers, musicians, and educators. His artistic voice is distinguished by a masterful and organic fusion of classical forms with theatrical dramaturgy, rich choral traditions, and ethnic roots.

Education and Early Artistic Journey

Valts Pūce began his musical education at the Emīls Dārziņš Special Music School (1969–1980) and continued his studies at the Latvian State Conservatory (1980–1987), deeply specializing in choral conducting and composition.

During and after his conservatory years, he was highly active as a choral conductor, directing prominent choirs in Aloja and Ulbroka, leading the vocal ensemble "Liesma", and serving as a vocal genre methodologist. Since 2000, he has been a board member of the Latvian Authors Association (LAA) and a member of the Latvian Composers Union since 2006. He has also passed his knowledge down to the next generation, working as a teacher at the Riga 6th Secondary School and the Jāzeps Mediņš Riga Music High School.

The "MARANA" Ensemble and Discography

The year 1986 marked a major milestone in the composer's career when he founded the legendary ensemble "MARANA". The group became a premier platform for his most daring musical explorations. He composed several extensive programs for the ensemble, including "Seasonal Folk Ritual Songs", the miniature cycle "Someone is Calling Me", and the chamber opera "Chess".

Valts Pūce's creative legacy is extensively documented in a rich discography, featuring his musicals ("All Sorts of Rubbish"), theater scores ("Šveiks", "Ronja – the Robber's Daughter"), and world music projects in collaboration with international artists, such as the ensemble *The Shin*.

Music for Theater, Cinema, and Animation

The composer’s innate ability to create visually evocative and dramatically compelling music made him one of the most sought-after theater and film composers in Latvia. He has written scores for dozens of productions at the Latvian National, Dailes, Valmiera, and Liepāja theaters, as well as for productions in Sweden. His music for iconic plays like "Šveiks", "The Moss-Village Boys", and "Ronja – the Robber's Daughter" has become a foundational part of the Latvian cultural canon.

In addition, Valts Pūce has composed music for numerous documentaries and feature films (including legendary director Rolands Kalniņš's film "Bitter Wine"), popular television series, and animated films. He enjoyed a long-lasting collaboration with animation director Roze Stiebra, scoring beloved titles such as "The Unusual Rigans" and "The Adventures of a Sausage".

Choral and Symphonic Works

The Choral Celebration tradition and the acoustic texture of the human voice hold a sacred place in the composer's heart. His choral cycles, based on the texts of Latvia's greatest poets (Jānis Peters, Inese Zandere, Amanda Aizpuriete, Broņislava Martuževa), are regularly performed by the Latvian Radio Choir, the State Academic Choir "Latvija", and the youth choir "Kamēr...". He has also written large-scale symphonic works, including the "Choral Celebration Overture" for wind orchestra and "Fireworks Music for Orchestra, Soloists, and 7 Ships".

One of his most ambitious and globally resonant recent choral achievements is the 2019 cycle **"The Psalm Notebooks" (Psalmu burtnīca)**. Written for Mixed Choir (SATB), 2 Cellos, Organ or Piano, and 3 Percussionists, this work was created in a magnificent collaboration with the State Academic Choir "Latvija" and the internationally acclaimed cello-rock group *DaGamba*.

As the composer himself beautifully noted: *"In my opinion, music and art should be life-affirming – not destroying."* It is this innate light, reverence for the spoken text, and natural flow that perfectly defines his enduring musical legacy.