

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

## Ex Tenebris Lux (2021)

for string orchestra

Commissioned by the Vilnius Festival 2021

The Latin title of this piece translates as "from darkness comes light." For me this saying seems to symbolize some hopeful thought in the face of the current pandemic and the uncertainty arising from it. To have and to hold onto that ray of light emitted by your inner compass without losing sight of it even in the darkest moments... My wish was that this music would guide the listener through a prolonged zone of darkness, ultimately bringing them to light and allowing them to experience it.

At the same time, this piece testifies that darkness, similar to light, is a part of the ever-recurring rhythm of our human existence. This can also be observed in the cycle of changing seasons, where the darkest time coincides with the beginning of the return of light. Paradoxically, we need darkness on both metaphysical and astronomical levels in order to perceive a dim light - whether it is the radiance of distant stars or the metaphorical rays of light giving us hope.

As the pandemic started sweeping the world, I came across this resonating quote in a New York Times article about the darkness of winter and with it of the current era: "I've stopped trying to handle the darkness. I let the darkness handle me instead [...] Most of the time all it wants to do is hold me for a while — slow me down, keep me from running, cover me up long enough to remember that being in the dark doesn't mean there's something wrong with me. It means I'm alive, and this is part of the deal." (Ms. Taylor, the author)

The multiple gradations of darkness in the piece are explored through the density of musical textures - individual instruments are often submerged in massive interlayered gestures, creating a monolithic sound. It is only when the state of light is reached that the individualized lines are somewhat differentiated and can be heard on their own.

Premiered on June 9th, 2021 at the Vilnius Festival. Performers: The Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra conducted by Karolis Variakojis.