

At the Edge of the Earth

(Pie zemes tālās)

The extended choral work *At the Edge of the Earth* was composed in 1996, and first performed by the Latvian Radio Choir conducted by Kaspars Putnins at the Festival of New Latvian Choral Music. In 1997 it won First Prize at the International Competition organized by the Barlow Foundation, USA, bringing her name to international prominence. A recording by the Latvian group was issued in 1999 (Latvijas Radio CD 033).

At the Edge of the Earth is in four sections, based on two short passages from the play *Prometheus Bound* by the 5th-century Greek dramatist Aeschylus. Prometheus, one of the gods but also a son of Earth, felt sympathy for mankind, and so he stole fire from heaven and gave it to mankind as a gift. This made Zeus, the god of gods, (who had been planning to do away with mankind and replace it with a superior race) very angry and jealous. So he has ordered Hephaestus – the god of Fire – to take Prometheus to the top of a mountain and chain him to a rock. Thunder and lightning will split the rock and bury Prometheus underground – where by day an eagle will rip his flesh and eat his liver, and by night the liver will grow back again, so that the torture can be renewed. The first two sections are based on the opening of the play as two servants of Zeus – Strength and Violence – drag Prometheus to the rock and remind Hephaestus of his orders. The third section follows *attacca*, but we are now right at the end of the play: Prometheus addresses a prayer to his mother, the Earth. The fourth section follows, as thunder and lightning are about to begin.

Vocal Text

From *Prometheus Bound* (based on the translation by Philip Vellacott, published by Penguin Classics, 1961):
(*A rocky mountain-top, within sight of the sea. Enter Strength and Violence, dragging in Prometheus. Hephaestus follows.*)

I. Strength

Here we have reached the remotest region of the earth,
The haunt of Scythians, a wilderness without a footprint.

I. daļa

Pie zemes tālās malas esam nākuši,
Uz skitu novadu caur drūmo tuksnesi.

II. Strength

Hephaestus, do your duty. Remember what command
The Father laid on you. Here is Prometheus, the rebel:
Nail him to the rock; secure him on this towering summit
Fast in the unyielding grip of adamantine chains.
It was your treasure that he stole, the flowery splendour
Of all-fashioning fire, and gave to men.

II. daļa

Tev tagad, Hēfaist, pienākums to izpildīt, ko tēvs tev liek!
Šo noziedznieku pārdrošo kal cieši klintij klāt tur kraujas
virsoņē
un sien ar važu saitēm neatraisāmām!
Viņš tavu ziedu, uguns liesmu spēcīgo ir nozadzis
un cilvēkiem to dāvājis.

III. Prometheus

O divinity of sky, and swift-winged winds, and leaping
streams,
O countless laughter of the sea's waves, O Earth, mother
of all life.
On you and on the all-seeing circle of the sun, I call:
See what is done by gods to me, a god!

III. daļa

Ai, Debess dievišķā, ai, vēji spārnotie, ai, straumju
avotī,
Ai koras viņu cilts, bez mitas smaidošā Zemes
māmuļa,
Ai, saule visu redzīgā, Jūs piesaucu:
Jel skatieties, ko cieš no Dieva rokas Dievs.

IV. Prometheus

Now it is happening: threat gives place to performance...
The earth rocks; thunder, echoing from the deep roars in
answer...

Blasts of the four winds skirmish together,
Set themselves in array for battle...

The cataclysm advances visibly upon me,
Sent by Zeus to make me afraid.

*(The rock collapses and disappears, as the Chorus scatter in
all directions.)*

IV. daļa

Jau patiešām te piepildās sacītais vārds,
Visa zeme līdz pamatu pamatiem dreb.
Dobji pērkona grāvienu draudīgi dārd,
Vēji kaukdami pretī cits citam jau trauc,
Cīņā ar naidīgiem viesuļiem iet.
Drausmās negaisa likstas man uzlaidis Zevs,
Lai man izbailēs drebētu satrauktā sirds.
Mana māmuļa svētā, tu mirdzošais gaiss, kas virs
zemes gaišumu lej,
Skaties ciešu bez vainas es!