

The Idea of United Europe in Music: Polonaise and Chorale

The sub-theme of the conference *The Authentic National Romantic Music Composing in Geographical and Time Dimensions. The Invariant Constants* is applicable in analyzing musical works of different genres such as polonaise and chorale that could embody, as Czeslaw Milosz put it, the idea of united Europe.

Music of certain genres is partly treatable as a heritage of European music (fugues, preludes, polkas, polonaises, mazurkas, etc.). For instance, we can refer to preludes and polonaises and music that were composed by numerous European composers including the Lithuanian ones.

Polonaise, a dance of Polish origin, is often related with national romanticism. It is expedient to point out the path of its genesis in time and space that bears links with the Lithuanian examples of the dance embodied in the music by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (22 September (O. S. 10 September) 1875 – 10 April (O. S. 28 March) 1911 and in the opera by Bronius Kutavičius *Lokys* (*The Bear*, 1999 / 2000) and CDs (2003) by ONDINE. The perception of polonaise, just like of any other musical formation, is determined by the context of its presentation.

Chorale, just like polonaise, used to serve as one of the common means by composers in mastering musical forms. The works of this genre composed by Čiurlionis during the years of his studies are worth mentioning.

During his studies at Leipzig Conservatorium of Music in 1901-1902 (C. Reinecke's composition and Jadasohn's counterpoint classes) M. K. Čiurlionis composed his prominent piece *The Fugue-Chorale A minor* for the organ. This composition contains references to the Protestant chorale by Luther *Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir* (example 1, VL 227, 1902).

Following the chorale, the composer, as musicologist Vytautas Landsbergis put it, *creates dramaturgy of the entire masterly fugue*¹. The fugue, whose tune is formed on the base of chorale's sound system, is composed following the mentioned material² of the chorale (for the fugue tune see example 2).

Example 1. The choral tune *From the Depths of Disaster* (*Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir*) from the Fugue-choral A-minor (VL 227, Leipzig).

¹ Landsbergis, Vytautas. *Music by Čiurlionis*. Vilnius: Vaga, 1986, p. 101.

² Čiurlionis, Mikalojus Konstantinas. *Fugues for the organ. Notes*. Vilnius: Lithuania Writers Union, p. 13-16.

Example 2. M. K. Čiurlionis. The fugue tune from the *Fugue-choral a-minor* (VL 227, Leipzig).

FUGA-CHORALAS a-moll FUGUE-CHORAL in A minor

VL 227 (1902 06 20-24)

Andante

Gedackt 8' pp

Solo 4' tremolo

*Choralas Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir
The choral Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir

The Fugue-Chorale A minor evidences Čiurlionis' interest in structural formation of composition (the later compositions by the composer substantiate that too). And noteworthy mention A Aeolian choral and A minor in the triplefugue of the amount of abovementioned composition.

Reflections over *The Polonaise* (VL 190) created by Čiurlionis in Druskininkai in 1901 bring to mind the whole way went by Čiurlionis, the musician, up to the time of his work in orchestra of the nobleman and prominent author of polonaises Mykolas Oginskis (1892–93) and Čiurlionis' studies of the grand piano and composition in the motherland of the polonaise, Poland, in the Warsaw Institute of Music (1894–99). *The Polonaise* by Čiurlionis was created during his vacation from studies in Leipzig's Conservatorium. This dance is distinguished by stratification of its characteristic (syncopated and Lombardic) rhythm elements (example 3).

Example 3. M. K. Čiurlionis. An excerpt of *The Polonaise* (VL 190, Druskininkai).

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "POLONEZAS" and "POLONAISE" by M. K. Čiurlionis. The score is in 3/4 time, B-flat major, and features a piano accompaniment. It includes dynamic markings such as "Allegro maestoso", "f", "mp", "cresc. poco a poco", and "ff". The score is divided into two systems, each with four staves of music. The first system starts with "Allegro maestoso" and "VL. 190". The second system includes a "ff" marking and a "cresc. poco a poco" marking. The score is written for piano and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The Polonaise expresses celebratory, bright, festive and solemn mood (Allegro Moderto). It is characterized by a large range and continuous slightly hurried movement forwards (a concerto version of the dance). The piece is distinguished for its intensive, unified and solemn dramaturgic development that is achieved by the composer through repetition of the details specific of *polonaise*. For instance, its rhythmic formulas are freely used by Čiurlionis (it is characteristic for a polonaise to repeat a rhythmic formula every measure) and sometimes the so-called Lombardic and syncopated rhythms, rhythmic groups of the sixteenth note length, etc.

It is worth mentioning that Russian composers identified polonaise as a distinguishing feature of the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth (The Republic of the two Nations). Historical moments could be mentioned in the works of Russian composers as well: in M. Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar* (Ivan Susanin) or M. Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. The Polish showed great preference for polonaise and used to dance it at the start of balls, celebrations and other events since the 16th century³. Among the Lithuanian nobility, polonaise became popular a bit later and, and, like in Poland, used to be danced during formal celebrations.

The themes of historical dances (e. g. polonaise) and church music (e. g. chorale) are treated as a material necessary for work and are used by modern composers for compositions as well as education about musical composition and implementation of other artistic initiatives. Newly-integrated themes are exploited in multiple ways: they are stratified and their different (e.g. rhythmic) elements, characteristic intonations, harmony, etc. are singled out. This applies (usually) to individual (in a genre's sense) works and pieces.

Pay attention to the different functioning of music to what is stated by the semiotician Eero Tarasti.⁴ A context of a bigger composition defines the treatment of the mentioned 'implants' in a work. In some cases, the so-called implants, i.e. certain chosen dances and church themes, are treatable as products of the social level (the so-called SOI – in Jacques Fontanille's terms).

However, composers used to present their chosen historical objects-citations (influenced by personal treatments) in a subjective light (MOI – in Jacques Fontanille's terms). The compositions by the authors (Čiurlionis, Kutavičius and others) are regarded as giving new meaning to compositional heritage.

Tarasti is indicated in each of those levels – social and corporeal – the possibility of existence and transformations (Moi → Soi and Soi → Moi). The larger context of the compositions – choral and polonaise is used as a quote-implant in abovementioned opera by Kutavičius – gives to them a different sense of time and authenticity.

The implants-quotations used in bigger compositions provide them with new colours and meanings. Tarasti has in mind correct solutions which might be treated in the different ways (according the point of view to it)⁵. The same we could say about the characters of opera and the spectators. There are different rules of society and historical situations on the stage and outside it. The same could be said about the polonaise and chorale. To the characters of opera it is a part of the rituals of real wedding. For us, the contemporary people, abovementioned parts of opera could be mentioned as a symbolic signs of the historical times.

In Kutavičius' opera *The Bear*, the polonaise *Alla Polaca* (example 4) serves as a meaningful feature of the history of Lithuania evidencing the time when

- a) The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a member of the Republic of Two Nations, *Žečpospolita*, (in this case – until its division in the 18th century) and
- b) It maintained close ties with Western Europe.

The viewpoint is strengthened in this opera by the means associated with the depicted time – the choral used in the Wedding scene *Let Our Hearts Sing* (*Širdim susigiedokim*, example 5; this is a characteristic symbolic sign of the Protestant Europe). In this case, subtleties of the transitory period in Lithuania are revealed through the music of the opera. In the work, the dances are used to define and specify the wedding situation in the opera. They are presented in the overall context of the wedding scene.

One more thing that should be pointed out is the rather freely treated time in the opera *The Bear* by its composer and the libretto author from the perspective of the time depicted in the Prosper Mérimée's work.

The events in the plot line – the wedding in Samogitia – remind us of the close ties that existed between Samogitians and inhabitants of Königsberg (*Lith.* Karaliaučius) region, the wedding traditions of the time, popular music, etc.

³ Klimas, Jonas. The Polonaise. *The Encyclopedia of Music*, O-Ž, supplements to Volume III. Vilnius: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Institute of Science and Encyclopedia Publishing, 2007, p. 124-125.

⁴ From the forthcoming work: Eero Tarasti. *How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk To Us*. Semiotic explorations in the history of music. According to Tarasti, *Existential analysis of the work consists in distinguishing aspects of Moi/Soi. The structures of signification and of communication are discovered in this phase* (Tarasti 1994: 16).

⁵ Tarasti, Eero. *Existential Semiotics*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 2000, p. 8.

A crucial change occurred in the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in the end of the 18th century. At that time, against its free will, the country was incorporated in the Russian Empire (and since then was referred to as its North Western Region) following the decision of the rulers of the neighbouring states of Austria, Prussia and Russia (the huge European state of the Two Nations was subjected to divisions in 1772, 1793 and 1795) and the country experienced a total overwhelming recession. It was humiliatingly called a land of savages. Such point of view is obviously evident in the above mentioned short story by Mérimée. The Samogitian events and situation are evaluated by comparison with the situation of 18th century Russia as described by Jurij Lotman in his works⁶.

The cultural space in the opera is characterized through the wedding traditions of the time – the music, rituals and other specific features.

The *polonaise* is incorporated in the action texture of the opera's Act II as one of the elements of the wedding celebration (it is performed by a strings quintet on stage) to ensure a uniform and continuous development of the scene (example 4).

Example 4. B. Kutavičius. The polonaise from the opera *The Bear* (1999 / 2000). The beginning of Act II.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each containing five staves for the string quintet. The first system is marked *Con molto espressione* and includes dynamic markings *mf* and *f*. The second and third systems continue the piece with various dynamics. The fourth system is marked *tempo I* and includes the instruction *(Kvintetas, atliekantis polonazą suviena į valgą plang)*. The score concludes with a *f* dynamic marking.

⁶ Žr.: Лотман, Юрий М. *Избранные статьи*, том 1. Статьи по семиотике и типологии культуры. Таллинн: Александра, 1992.

The *polonaise* is introduced as a wedding dance accepted by the society of the time that symbolizes the beginning of the wedding rituals; the composer uses the *polonaise* as a linking device that unites the entire action of the opera and the conversations of the wedding participants into one whole.

The *polonaise* is firstly heard in the opera after a brief and silent introduction by the orchestra in the beginning of Act II – it is performed by a strings quintet (commonly, the dance is characterized by an accentuated second eighth note of the 3/4 measure). Later the *polonaise* is included in the overall whirlpool of the opera's events and it is combined with other episodes written in the aleatoric technique. In the background of the *polonaise* and the orchestra part, voices of individual wedding participants and choir congratulations are heard. The conversations are dominated by exchange of recitative remarks. The solo parts are dominated by recitatives. It also applies to the remarks and stories of the wedding guests that are included in the act (following Carolyn Abbate)⁷.

The wedding ceremony, in line with the composer's instruction, maintains the manner of the 18th century behaviour and stance. The main participants of the wedding scene are Marshal; Professor from Königsberg; and Count Šemeta with his bride Julija. The ceremony is held following traditions and the Latin language, a common language in the church and European universities of the time, prevails. The wedding rituals fall into two parts – the first is led by Marshal, and the second by Professor. The scene is concentrated and based on repetitions of vows. A Protestant chorale *Let Our Hearts Sing* (*Širdim susigiedokim*) performed by choir in the end of the ceremony denotes the final part of rituals (example 5).

Example 5. B. Kutavičius. Chorale *Let Our Hearts Sing* (*Širdim susigiedokim*) from the opera *The Bear* Act II

*) Orkestrui darant crescendo, choras 182 -
dainuoja pastoviai mf, i pokaiig.
netgi diminuendo, švel orkestras choras galutinai uigrotty.

⁷ Abbate, Carolyn. *Unsung Voices. Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

The score of the choral indicates that the song *Let Our Hearts Sing* about neighbourly love is performed by the guests reading from an old Book of Songs published in Königsberg⁸.

The chorale is performed by a mixed choir (SABT) and is dominated by classical harmony. The orchestra that joins the choir at the end of the chorale gradually overshadows the choir and solemnly finishes the scene.

When the wedding scene climax at some point turns into uncontrollable raving (prevailed by aleatorics), a Lithuanian folk song *Smooth Meadows, Fast Rivers* (Lygios lankos, sraunios upės, example 6) is performed (using the technique of the mixed choir canon) by the wedding participants.

Example 6. B. Kutavičius. Lithuanian folk song *Smooth Meadows, Fast Rivers* (Lygios lankos, sraunios upės) from the opera *The Bear* Act II

(Visi sručiai įjaučiantys iki visiško chaoso. Solistai sūkauja. Choroistai asimetriškai skanduoja tekstą, dainuoja aritmškai improvizuodami.)

8"

ff *) trumpa pauzė - 236-

⁸ Kutavičius, Bronius. The score of a two-part opera *The Bear*. Libretto by Aušra Marija Sluckaitė on the base of Prosper Mérimée short story *The Bear*. - Vilnius, 2000, p. 181.

It can be viewed as one of the acoustic illustrations analogous with the use of music in a uniform development of events in films and drama plays (Kutavičius is the author of the music in nearly 40 films and drama plays). In composing the raving scene of the wedding the composer as if acoustically paraphrased the view seen on stage. The use of this song is a symbolic choice evidencing one more social group of the wedding participants, the Lithuanians taking part in the celebration.

The above mentioned exclusive melodies used in the opera – polonaise, chorale and a Lithuanian folk song – can all be regarded as consciously chosen signs for the composition evidencing significant references of the depicted time:

- a) The sign of the Republic of Two Nations in it (polonaise);
- b) The sign of Western Europe (choral *Let Our Hearts Sing*);
- c) The level of the national Lithuanian identity (the Lithuanian folk song *Smooth Meadows, Fast Rivers*).

The chorale, polonaise, and Lithuanian folk song (in the above mentioned works by Čiurlionis and Kutavičius) should be viewed as symbolic signs, i. e. objects of social culture representing and reflecting the social behaviour people who lived in the conditions of the 18th–20th century European culture (in general) and The Republic of the Two Nations and The Lithuanian Grand Duchy (specifically). They became symbolic signs under the influence of social and historical needs (in Raymond Monelle's⁹ terms). It applies to the above mentioned symbols.

References

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Santrauka

Vieningos Europos idėja muzikoje: polonezas ir choralas

Konferencijos potėmė „Tautinės romantinės muzikos komponavimo autentika laikmečio ir geografijos dimensijose“ taikoma analizuojant įvairių žanrų muzikos kūrinius, tokius kaip polonezas ar choralas, kurie galėtų įkūnyti, Č. Milošo žodžiais tariant, vieningos Europos idėją.

Su tautiniu romantizmu sietinas lenkiškas šaknis turintis šokis polonezas. Pažymėtinas jo genezės laike ir erdvėje takas, siejamas su lietuviškais M. K. Čiurlionio muzikoje (XIX–XX a. virsmo laikotarpiu) ir B. Kutavičiaus operoje „Lokys“ (XXI a. pr.) įkūnytais šio šokio pavyzdžiais. Polonezo, kaip ir kito muzikos darinio, percepciją lemia jo pateikimo kontekstas.

⁹ Monelle, Raymond. *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*. Contemporary Music Studies. Vol. 5. Edinburg: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1992, 199.

Minėtoje operoje polonezas tarnauja kaip reikšminis ženklas, bylojantis apie laikotarpį, kada Lietuva buvo Abiejų Tautų Respublikos narė ir kartu palaikė glaudžius ryšius su Vakarų Europa. Minima traktuotė operoje sustiprinama tam laikotarpiui būdinga priemone – Vestuvių scenoje panaudotu choralu (tai būdingas muzikinis protestantiškos Europos požymis).

Choralas, kaip ir polonezas, buvo viena iš būdingų priemonių, naudojamų kompozitorių mokantis įvaldyti muzikos formas. Paminėtini M. K. Čiurlionio studijų metu sukurti šio žanro kūriniai.

Operoje „Lokys“ šie šokiai naudojami vestuvių situacijai nusakyti ir konkretizuoti. Jie pateikiami bendrame vestuvių scenos kontekste.

Per operos muziką atskleidžiamos pereinamojo laikotarpio Lietuvoje (XVIII a.) subtilybės.

Kultūros erdvė operoje išreiškiama per tuometes vestuvių tradicijas – muziką, apeigas ir kitokius būdingus bruožus. Atkreiptinas dėmesys į gana laisvai B. Kutavičiaus traktuojamą P. Méricée kūrinio laiką. Siužeto įvykiai – vestuvės Žemaitijoje – primena glaudžius žemaičių ir Karaliaučiaus žemių žmonių ryšius (XVIII a., kai Lietuva buvo Abiejų Tautų Respublikos narė), to meto vestuvių papročius, populiarią muziką ir pan.

XVIII a. pabaigoje Lietuva buvo inkorporuota į Rusijos imperijos sudėtį. Tuo metu Žemaitijos, kaip ir Lietuvos, ryšiai su Vakarais, taip pat ir Karaliaučiumi, buvo nutraukti. Lietuva, kuri tapo vadinamuoju „Šiaurės vakarų kraštu“, vis labiau ėme atsilikti. Įvykiai ir situacija Žemaitijoje vertinami juos lyginant su J. Lotmano darbuose aprašoma situacija Rusijoje XVIII a.

Pažymėtinas polonezo ir choralo genezės erdvėje ir laike takas, kurį galima lyginti su M. K. Čiurlionio (XIX a. pab.–XX a. pr.) virsmo ir B. Kutavičiaus operos „Lokys“ (2005) vestuvių scenos muzika. Polonezas ir choralas operoje „Lokys“ naudojami minimai situacijai apibrėžti ir konkretizuoti. Jie pateikiami bendrame vestuvių kontekste. Pati ceremonija atliekama pagal XVIII a. manieras – jai vadovauja tipiškas LDK laikų asmuo – vestuvių Maršalka. Oficialioji jos dalis skamba tam metui būdinga lotynų kalba (čia vyrauja klasikinė harmonija), o scenos finale choras gieda liuteronišką motetą „Širdim susigiedokim“.

Į operą polonezas įkomponuojamas kaip vienas iš vestuvių puotos elementų (jį atlieka scenoje griežiantis styginių kvintetas), garantuojantis vientisą ir ištisinę scenos plėtrą. Jo ir orkestro partijos fone skamba pavienių vestuvininkų ir sveikinimo choro balsai. Solistų partijose vyrauja rečitatyvai.

Kūrinyje atspindėtas pereinamasis laikotarpis (iš klasicizmo į romantizmą), kuriame funkcionuoja abiejų epochų ženklai – polonezas ir choralas. Su tautiniu romantizmu sietinas lenkiškos kilmės šokis polonezas, skambantis svečių ir vestuvininkų sutikimo scenoje.

Antro veiksmo audinį jungia muzika – kaip operos komponentus vienijantis faktorius. Tai pirmiausia pasakytina apie į veiksma įterptus numerius. Pirmose II v. scenose polonezą atliekantys muzikantai traktuojami kaip vestuvių dalyviai, įsipynę tarp kitų svečių. Pats polonezas pateikiamas kaip įprastas buitinis minimo laikotarpio vestuvių šokis. Jis tarsi rišamasis audinys, jungiantis vestuvininkų pokalbius į visumą. Pastaruosiuose vyrauja pasikeitimas rečitatyvinėmis replikomis.

Vestuvių ceremonijos metu, kompozitoriaus nurodymu, išlaikoma XVIII a. elgesio ir laikysenos maniera. Pagrindiniai tuoktuvių scenos dalyviai – Maršalka, Profesorius iš Karaliaučiaus ir jaunieji – grafas Šemeta ir Julija. Ceremonija atliekama laikantis to meto tradicijų, vyrauja tuo metu bažnyčiose ir Europos universitetuose priimta lotynų kalba. Vestuvių apeigos suskilę į dvi dalis – pirmai vadovauja vestuvių Maršalka, antrai – Profesorius. Scena yra koncentruota, grindžiama priesaikos žodžių pakartojimais. Ceremonijos pabaigoje skambantis choro giedamas protestantiškas choralas *Širdim susigiedokim* žymi kulminacinę jos dalį. Vestuvių scenos kulminacijoje, kai vestuvių šventimas tampa nevaldomu lėbavimu, kurio metu suskamba vestuvininkų traukiama lietuvių liaudies daina *Lygios lankos, sraunios upės*, minėtas operoje naudojamas išskirtines melodijas – polonezą, choralą ir lietuvių liaudies dainą – galima laikyti sąmoningai kompozicijoje naudojamais ženklais, bylojančiais svarbias to meto nuorodas: LDK ir Žemaitiją, choralas ir Vakarų Europa, mokslo lygis Europoje; tautinis lietuvių lygis.

Minėto žanro muzikos formų panaudojimas kompozicijose gali turėti skirtingus tikslus ir traktuotę. Tai priklauso nuo susidariusios situacijos ir konteksto.