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Symphony-Concerto by Eduardas Balsys: An Exclusive Opus for Winds

Eduardo Balsio Simfonija-koncertas: išskirtinis opusas pučiamiesiems

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Abstract

Lithuanian composer Eduardas Balsys (1919–1984) lived and composed under the restrictive Soviet regime. Nevertheless, he strived to master and apply the styles and compositional means of Western music. The versatility of Balsys's talent revealed itself in various styles and genres: serious art music, popular songs, and movie soundtracks. His works composed or arranged for wind band are few, yet some gained popularity. *Symphony-Concerto* for organ and instrumental group of winds and percussion is an exclusive work in the composer's oeuvre. The instrumentation and treatment of the musical material of *Symphony-Concerto* imply that this composition could be attributed to the literature for the contemporary wind band or, more likely, symphonic wind ensemble. The characteristics of musical expression and correspondence of this composition to the Western concept of wind band/ensemble are in the focus of this article.

Keywords: Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto*, instrumentation, wind band, symphonic wind ensemble.

Anotacija

Kompozitorius Eduardas Balsys (1919–1984), nors ir gyvendamas sovietinio režimo cenzūros ir ribojimų sąlygomis, siekė pažinti ir savo kūryboje pritaikyti Vakarų muzikos stilius ir komponavimo priemones. Talento universalumas leido jam kurti įvairių stilių ir žanrų muziką: akademinę, populiarias dainas, kino filmų garso takelius. Balsio kūrybinių, sukurtų ar aranžuotų pučiamųjų orkestrui, nėra daug, tačiau kai kurie jų tapo vertinga šių orkestrų repertuaro dalimi. Simfonija-koncertas vargonams ir pučiamųjų bei mušamųjų instrumentų grupei užima ypatingą vietą kompozitoriaus kūrybiniame palikime: kūrinių instrumentinė sudėtis ir muzikinės medžiagos traktavimas leidžia jį priskirti prie kūrinių, skirtų šiuolaikiniams, akademinę muziką atliekantiems pučiamųjų orkestrams. Šio straipsnio objektas – Simfonijos-koncerto instrumentinės sudėties ir muzikos kalbos ypatumai bei jo sąsajos su vakarietiškąja pučiamųjų orkestro / ansamblio samprata.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Eduardas Balsys, Simfonija-koncertas, orkestro sudėtis, pučiamųjų orkestras, simfoninis pučiamųjų ansamblis.

Introduction

The career of Lithuanian composer Eduardas Balsys (1919–1984) developed during the time of the Soviet regime. Therefore, he should be considered a part of the generation that grew up in Lithuania during the First Independence (1918–1940) but experienced all the difficulties of World War II and Soviet occupation. Because of complicated historical circumstances and the frequently dramatic fate of individual personalities, this generation could be regarded as a kind of “lost generation” of the Lithuanian intelligentsia.

Balsys made every attempt to work at the forefront of the new trends in music of his time despite unfavorable circumstances. His creations are masterfully composed and performed up to this day. The versatility of Balsys's talent allowed him to express his musical ideas in various styles and genres. Apart from serious art music, Balsys composed popular songs of a considerable artistic value that were popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of his soundtracks for movies also became popular. Balsys created

several compositions for winds, which will be surveyed in this article.

Research works on Balsys's music are rare, even in Lithuanian. It seems strange considering the composer's significance for Lithuanian musical culture. The most significant publication is a monograph by Ona Narbutienė (1999). General features of Balsys's music in the current article are based mostly on the data presented in this monograph.

The general traits of Eduardas Balsys's music

During the Soviet period, composers encountered considerable impediments to their creative work. The Baltic States were occupied by the Soviets in 1940. Therefore, Lithuanian artists did not experience the atrocities of Stalin's regime during the 1930s. However, severe pressure happened during the decade after World War II. Marxist-Leninist ideology condemned nearly every novelty of musical expression. Almost all music by Western modernists was treated as representative of “decayed bourgeois

culture.” Those composers who lived in the USSR and ventured to create in a modernistic manner were denounced as “formalists.” It was almost impossible to access scores by contemporary Western composers. Therefore, there were few opportunities to find out what kind of music Western composers created at that time. And, of course, it was difficult to travel beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. The situation became softer during the Khrushchev Thaw (1956–1964), and the composers of that time – Balsys among them – made every attempt to get acquainted with the musical styles and works of Western modernists. These attempts are reflected in Balsys’s creative legacy, which shows the evolution of his style from Romantic quasi-folkloristic works (which conformed to the requirements of the official ideology of the time) of the early creative period to modern compositional techniques, including dodecaphony. Balsys was one of the first Lithuanian composers to apply the twelve-tone technique as well as sonorism and aleatoric (Ambrazas 2018: 116). In general, music by Balsys is often treated as “moderately modernistic.” Approximately in the ’70s, Balsys’s style was characterized as “normative Soviet modernism” (Stanevičiūtė 2013: 30).

Balsys is considered one of the best orchestrators among Lithuanian composers. Presumably, most of Balsys’s skills of orchestration he obtained on his own account.¹ His deep absorption into the works of the most significant composers and a profound study of musical instruments became the basis of his mastery in orchestration. In his outgivings on his creative biography, Balsys emphasized the importance of learning the technical possibilities of musical instruments for his conservatoire students because “merely listening to the recordings they [possibilities of instruments – R.U.] might be either overestimated or underestimated” (Narbutienė 1999: 83). The composer’s daughter, Dalia Balsytė,² remembered that “among numerous volumes of the sheet music which Balsys brought from his journeys abroad there were many textbooks and treatises on orchestration. These books usually were in German – the language which Balsys knew very well. Balsys used orchestration guides as handbooks until the end of his life and never considered that he knew everything. He was a real perfectionist and made every attempt to embody the musical ideas in orchestral sounds as ideally as it was possible. He used to edit his scores by rewriting them because while writing he hears better by the inner hearing and thus can better correct the sounding.”³

There are statements that during his studies in the conservatoire, when the shortage of scores was especially significant, Balsys copied many orchestral scores by Ravel, Strauss, Shostakovich, and Schoenberg by hand. Balsys himself confirmed this fact in 1983 (Narbutienė 1999: 329). There are also witnesses (not fully reliable) that

he copied all nine symphonies by Beethoven. However, Dalia Balsytė affirms that the stories of rewriting scores by other composers are fictitious or at least exaggerated. In any case, these stories appear convincing as a trait of the composer’s portrait revealing an important side of his diligent, laborious, and even perfectionistic personality.⁴

Other sources of knowledge about instruments were also important to Balsys. He learned to play the mandolin during his school years. Later he noted that his thorough knowledge of the fingering of mandolin appeared helpful while studying the technical possibilities of the violin (Narbutienė 1999: 21). And of course, playing brass instruments in the school band gave him a basis for writing for winds: Balsys was familiar with the wind band from his school years, while he played althorn and tuba (Balsys, Eduardas. *Music Information Centre Lithuania*), although Narbutienė (1999: 21) indicates trumpet, in Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium in Klaipėda.

Balsys began to learn to play the piano only when he was 25. Later he wrote that perhaps he could create some of his works much faster if he had learned to play the piano earlier. However, he notes that “maybe it is my fortune: I am not under the reign of the instrument and thus need to feel more intensely inside. I sometimes notice that many music creators compose music mechanically – they write what is under their fingers” (Narbutienė 2000: 59).

Eduardas Balsys’s works for the wind band

The first compositions for wind band appeared shortly after Balsys graduated from the conservatoire (1950). He wrote a few pieces for wind band, yet some of these compositions became important for the development of Lithuanian music for winds. These works can be roughly sorted into three categories.

1. Entertaining-utilitarian music that was either composed directly or arranged for the wind band. This category comprises:

- *Suktinis* [in folk dance style], 1957;
- Rumba, 1959;
- Polka [arranged excerpt from the movie soundtrack], 1961;
- Waltz [arranged excerpt from the movie soundtrack], 1961;
- Concert March, 1972;
- Sailors’ March, 1984.

Most of these pieces were written for amateur bands and were not exceptional in the context of numerous dance

music pieces for wind bands of that time.⁵ Works written from 1957 to 1961 were created after Balsys had received the suggestion to participate in the program of enriching the amateur wind bands' repertoire. These early attempts were not especially successful; only *Suktinis* became a piece eagerly and widely performed by wind bands. Algimantas Kalinauskas noted that *Suktinis* was orchestrated especially masterfully because "the composer, who was a good orchestrator, was able to conceive the specificity of the wind band." (Kalinauskas 2010: 344).

2. More significant compositions he arranged himself for the wind band. This category comprises:

- Habanera [arranged excerpt from the movie soundtrack], 1959;
- The second movement of Concerto for violin No. 1 transcribed for wind band and Lithuanian folk instrument *birbynė* (a piece named as *Andante cantabile*);
- Excerpt from the ballet *Eglė Queen of Grass-snakes*, 1974;
- Gallop from the opera *Voyage to Tilsit*, 1981.

The compositions of this category are more sophisticated and intended for professional or advanced amateur bands. Dynamic and colorful orchestration of the ballet excerpt is especially effective. Although *Habanera* should be rather treated as a piece of entertaining music, it became one of the most popular works by Balsys in general and was widely performed by different media (the wind band version probably became even more popular than the orchestral version).⁶

Balsys also orchestrated *Festive March* by Lithuanian composer Balys Dvarionas for wind band (1974).

3. The third category contains only one composition:

- *Symphony-Concerto for Organ, Winds and Percussions* (1977).

This composition is exceptional not only in the context of Balsys's works but also in the general musical landscape of locale and period. Therefore, it deserves attention as a significant work of musical art as well as a distinctive composition for winds in the context of Balsys's creation (including his works for wind band) and the characteristics of the time. The analysis of *Symphony-Concerto* presented further in the current article is mainly based on a viewpoint that puts the type of the medium – namely wind ensemble in one of its possible versions – in the foreground and emphasizes the treatment of the performing group. The part of the organ is not in the scope of the research, yet it is considered an important element when it interacts with the wind group.

***Symphony-Concerto* as a specific case of composition for winds**

In the closing concert of the Fourth Organ Music Festival (1974) the *Introduction and Passacaglia* for organ and instrumental ensemble by Balsys was performed in Vilnius. This piece later became the first part of a large-scale work composed three years later (1977) and named *Symphony-Concerto for Organ, Winds and Percussions*. The score was issued in 1982 by the publisher Music (Russ. Музыка) in Leningrad (now Saint-Petersburg).

Programmatic features are characteristic to many of Balsys's creations. He apparently needed specific visual impetus to compose at least some of them. The importance of the visual element for Balsys's personality and in his creative output is emphasized by musicologists as well as visual art researchers.⁷ However, the composer always carefully deliberated the overall scheme of the compositions and embodied it into a strict and logical structure. There is no program added to *Symphony-Concerto*, yet the composer has spoken about the images that inspired the creative process: the architecture of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius served as a general idea of the work. The concept of the *Symphony-Concerto*, its structure, dramaturgy, and even instrumentation reflected the variety of Vilnius architectural styles: Gothic, Baroque, and modern. Dalia Balsytė remembered:

In his young years, Eduardas Balsys planned his future in the fields of either music composing or architecture. He was a skilful drawer, had a keen sensation of forms. This sensation is manifested in his musical compositions. Balsys 'built' his creations according to the architectural canons. Since he had opportunities to travel to foreign countries, he used to take photos of his favourite buildings. He loved Vilnius for its architectural variety and architectural 'cleanness', and wanted to monumentalize it by the sounds of music.⁸

In the *Symphony-Concerto* different characters of its five movements are based on the transformation of the one main theme. The molding of different styles in one composition in Soviet musicology was called *polystylistics*. In earlier years, this term was used by Lithuanian musicologists as well. This principle is common in contemporary post-modern music, yet it was a fairly new phenomenon in Lithuanian music in the 1970s. Balsys did not use collages or quotations (Narbutienė 1999: 133–134) but molded different stylistic features in a coherent wholeness, thus reaching homogeneous entirety despite different and sometimes very contrastive means of expression.

Ona Narbutienė considers that:

[...] all elements of the composition are subjected to the idea of synthesis: the very conception (different architectural styles in one town), the junction of different genres – symphony and

concerto, the juxtaposition of different means of expression and the unusual instrumentation. (Narbutienė 1999: 134)

The instrumentation is especially noteworthy: it is fairly brave and innovative in the context of musical works created in the Soviet Union at that time. The composition is scored for solo organ, woodwind instruments (saxophones and clarinets),⁹ brass instruments (four trumpets and four trombones), bass guitar, and percussion instruments (Example 1). According to Narbutienė (ibid.), even the selection of instruments reflects the spirit of different epochs: organ represents Gothics and Baroque, brass instruments were particular to early church music, percussion instruments and bass guitar are symbols of the twentieth century. In general, such distribution of instruments-symbols seems convincing. However, Balsys treats woodwind and brass instruments more diversely: these instruments, although unevenly, are used in all movements thus they are more or less involved in the characterization of all epochs.

ESECUTORI

Saxofono alto in Es (= Clarinetto I in B)
Saxofono tenore in B (= Clarinetto II in B)
Saxofono baritono in Es (= Clarinetto III in B)

4 Trombe in B
4 Tromboni

Chitarra bassa

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Batteristi | Timpani |
| | 2 Bonghi |
| | 3 Tom-toms |
| | 3 Piatti sospesi |
| | Gran cassa |
| | Tam-tam |
| | Campane |
| Vibrafono | |

Organo

Example 1. The instrumentation of the *Symphony-Concerto* by Eduardas Balsys published on the second page of the published score.¹⁰

Symphony-Concerto consists of five movements: *Prelude*, *Passacaglia*, *Interlude*, *Toccata*, and *Postlude*. These movements are connected *attacca*. The composition could be (conditionally) viewed as a free sonata form. In this case, its structure is as follows: *Prelude* – introduction, *Passacaglia* – exposition, *Interlude* – development *Toccata* – recapitulation, *Postlude* – coda (Narbutienė 1999: 134). However, this attempt to thrust such contrastive and multifaceted work into a sonata (even if free type) pattern seems a little made-up. Five large blocks of the “musical work about architecture” remind us of a large and complex architectural building itself, consisting of massive floors built at different times.

The majestic main theme, which Narbutienė considers as “a leitmotif of the town,” presented at the beginning of the *Prelude* is a nucleus of the whole composition (ibid.). The frame of the theme consists of four ascending full tones (i.e. major seconds) which could be conditionally treated as a succession in Lydian mode. This leitmotif later appears in other movements; sometimes it is exposed as a retrograde – a succession of full tones in descending order. Consequently, a tritone interval that frames this four-tone motive also becomes especially important in the dramaturgy of the composition alongside the interval of a major second.

Throughout the composition, brass instruments are mostly used as a single unit. The polyphonic juxtapositions of winds and organ parts are predominantly contrastive: sometimes it seems as if two different compositions are merged together into one. For example, in *Prelude* brass and organ come into concordance only in the last three bars. The brass scale is restricted with rhythmically developed unison formulas and the sounds of the full tone scale. Meanwhile, the lush harmonies of organ sometimes employ nearly all twelve chromatic sounds within one measure (Example 3).

Percussion instruments in *Prelude* are used moderately but weightily. Chimes here are the most important. Occasional but impressive interferences of the kettledrums and tam-tam contribute to the overall solemn character of the movement. Saxophones are saved up to the end of the wind section episode and join the general *tutti*, playing merely a few notes before the solo cadenza of an organ.

The thematic material of the second movement, *Passacaglia* is close to *Prelude* and at the beginning seems like its prolongation in a different mood (Example 4). Yet further development reveals a much more variable picture by elaborating the main theme. In *Passacaglia* the main theme is repeated ten times. Every time, the harmony, rhythm, texture, and instrumentation vary; thus its structure is based on passacaglia genre traditions descending from the Baroque era. Noticeably the first introduction of the theme is in a bass guitar part: an exposition of the ground bass typical of the Baroque genre. Generally, the instrumentation of the theme is as follows: bass guitar (the first and the second presentation of the theme), organ (the third presentation), bass guitar and trombones (the fourth and the fifth presentations), trombones, bass guitar and saxophone (the sixth presentation), bass guitar, vibraphone, glockenspiel (the seventh presentation), organ (the eighth and the ninth presentations), and trumpets and trombones (the tenth presentation).

Bass guitar becomes an important voice in the score as well as unpitched percussion, yet the latter are still used reservedly. Bass guitar participates in six out of ten

Maestoso $\text{♩} = 84$

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

Trumpet in B \flat 1

Trumpet in B \flat 2

Trumpet in B \flat 3

Trumpet in B \flat 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Trombone 4

Bass Guitar

Maestoso $\text{♩} = 84$

Timpani

Bongos

3 Tom-toms

3 Suspended Cymbals

Bass Drum

Tam-tam

Chimes

Vibraphone

Tutti

Mix. zg, 16'

Organ

Man.

Ped.

Example 2. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto, Preludio*, bars 1–3.

[Maestoso $\text{♩}=84$]

The image displays a musical score for Example 3, consisting of nine staves. The top four staves are for Trumpets in B♭ (1, 2, 3, and 4), the next four for Trombones (1, 2, 3, and 4), and the bottom three for Bass Guitar, Organ, and Pedals. The score is in 6/4 time and marked [Maestoso] with a tempo of quarter note = 84. It features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, with dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, and *mp*. The organ part is particularly intricate, with many beamed notes and accidentals.

Example 3. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto, Preludio*, bars 7–9.

presentations of the theme. Saxophones and clarinets are used interchangeably, however, scarcely; they feature several bars performing independent lines but the better part of their material doubles brass instrument parts. Trumpets enter with the theme only in the last, tenth exposition together with trombones. It can be stated that the timbre of trombones is the most important among all winds and creates a special stately character of the composition in most episodes. Interestingly, the 3rd and the 4th trombones have to play notes below E2¹¹ (also pedal B-flat note in *Passacaglia*): obviously, the composer demands a bass trombone or a tenor trombone with an F-attachment.¹²

Later, the Baroque-style mood is enhanced by a two-subject fugue that embellishes the *Passacaglia*. Both

subjects of the fugue are contrastive to the character of the first theme; Narbutienė considers this juxtaposition of different themes a presentation of two different styles of the epoch: one monumental and another lightsome, in the manner of Rococo (Narbutienė 1999: 135). The organ is the main implementer of the fugue; only at the end of the movement do the elements of the fugue subject appear in the winds parts.

Passacaglia ends with the climax based on the first bars of *Prelude* and directly (*attaca*) transits to the third movement, *Interlude*. This movement is a conjunctive episode of a different mood between two more elaborated movements. The character of this movement is austere and archaic; it contains chorale and polyphonic episodes which imply

Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 96$

The score consists of several staves: Trombone 1, 2, 3, and 4; Bass Guitar; Organ; and Pedals. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato' with a quarter note equal to 96 beats. The time signature is 5/4. The key signature has one flat. The organ part includes a section marked '8', 4', 2''.

Example 4. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto, Passacaglia*, bars 1–7. Empty staves are omitted.

that this movement represents a Gothic style in architecture. The main theme is based on a succession of full tones downwards: actually, it is a retrograde of the initial theme of the composition (Example 5).

Most of the material is performed by the organ, the part of which is fairly virtuosic. The role of the instrumental ensemble is comparatively modest: bass guitar and solo clarinet in a high register interfere as members of a short

polylogue in which the organ is a predominant participant and later acts as a soloist in long episodes. Winds enter close to the end of the movement, exposing the retrograde of the main leitmotif twice. It is interesting that in these two expositions trombones have to leap from D2 (apparently, all four trombones must have F-attachments) to much higher sounds: the first trombone has to play A4; thus it has to make a leap of two octaves and a perfect fifth. Apparently,

Largo $\text{♩} = 82$

Trumpet in B \flat 1
 Trumpet in B \flat 2
 Trumpet in B \flat 3
 Trumpet in B \flat 4
 Trombone 1
 Trombone 2
 Trombone 3
 Trombone 4
 Bass Guitar
 Timpani
 3 Suspended Cymbals
 Chimes
 Vibraphone
 Organ
 Pedals

Example 5. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto, Interlude*, bars 1–5. Empty staves are omitted.

the composer did not hesitate to write inconvenient and risky parts in order to implement the necessary musical ideas (Example 6).

The succession of the movements is not chronologically consequent: the “Gothic” episode comes after the “Baroque” episode. However, the basis of the conception is the architecture of Vilnius but not its history. Thus, different layers of architectural epochs are distributed not in time but in the space of a certain town.

In *Toccata* the leitmotif of the composition is performed by trombones against the background of the active percussion rhythm based on whimsical syncopation and changing meters. It seems that Balsys’s work as a popular music composer are reflected in this movement. Some reminiscences of the fugue subject from *Passacaglia* appear in the organ part from time to time. The organ part remains *tacet* for many bars, then performs a solo episode, then again disappears for many bars. Similarly, as in earlier movements, the

Largo $\text{♩} = 82$

The musical score is arranged in a system with ten staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Trumpet in B♭ 1, Trumpet in B♭ 2, Trumpet in B♭ 3, Trumpet in B♭ 4, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Trombone 3, Trombone 4, Tam-tam, and Organ. The Alto, Tenor, and Baritone saxophones play a melodic line starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The trumpets and trombones play a harmonic accompaniment, with some parts featuring wide intervals and dynamic markings like *f* and *mf*. The organ part consists of a series of chords, primarily triads and dyads, in the right hand, with a similar accompaniment in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Largo' with a quarter note equal to 82 beats per minute.

Example 6. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto*, *Interlude*, bars 38–42¹³. Empty staves are omitted.

texture of the organ part is mostly contrastive to the material of other instruments as if exhibiting miscellaneous aspects of modern architecture. The theme here is thrusting and even aggressive, and intervals of seconds and tritone help to increase the sense of dynamism and instability. Apparently, it conveys the urbanistic landscape of the second half of the twentieth century (Example 7).

The role of percussion in this movement is more significant than in all other movements: the first six bars are played only by percussion and a bass guitar. Full tone formations appear not only horizontally as successions (more diverse rhythmically in comparison with earlier movements) but also vertically as full tone clusters in brass. Muted brass instruments sound for a long time and become a characteristic timbre of the movement. Trumpets have to play up to C6 in concert pitch. Brass parts are challenging because of wide leaps and the necessity of playing high notes immediately after the breaks.

In *Postlude* the solemn introduction theme sounds “as an anthem to the old town” (Narbutienė 1999: 137).

In the final version, Balsys rejected programmatic indications and entitled the work *Symphony-Concert*. But his earlier comments about the connection of individual movements with the styles of Vilnius architecture disclose the content of the composition. Undoubtedly, this work is one of the most conspicuous musical creations devoted to Vilnius.

Discussion

In Balsys’s time and even later, the instrumentation of *Symphony-Concerto* looked “unusual” (Narbutienė 1999: 134). That is, it did not correspond to the standard instrumentations of a symphony orchestra. Nevertheless, the composition was regarded as a work for a solo instrument (organ) with an orchestra. Thus it is natural that in the list of works by Balsys presented in the monograph by Ona Narbutienė, *Symphony-Concerto* is included in the chapter *Works for Orchestra* beside the composer’s

[Allegro moderato ♩=96]

con sord.
mf

Trumpet in B \flat 1

con sord.
mf

Trumpet in B \flat 2

con sord.
mf

Trumpet in B \flat 3

con sord.
mf

Trumpet in B \flat 4

con sord.
mf

Trombone 1

con sord.
mf

Trombone 2

con sord.
mf

Trombone 3

con sord.
mf

Trombone 4

Bass Guitar
[mp]

[Allegro moderato ♩=96]

Timpani
[p]

3 Tom-toms
[p]

3 Suspended Cymbals
[p]

Bass Drum
[p]

Example 7. Eduardas Balsys, *Symphony-Concerto, Toccate*, bars 7–12. Empty staves are omitted.

symphonic creations. A separate section *Works for the Wind Band* is also included in the list (Narbutienė 1999: 409–410; 416). The vinyl recording of the composition was performed by the Symphony Orchestra of the Lithuanian Philharmonic (conductor Juozas Domarkas) and issued in 1981. However, from a different point of view, the instrumentation and treatment of instruments in *Symphony-Concerto* evoke an association with a phenomenon known in Western countries as the *symphonic wind ensemble*.

The wind ensemble concept emerged at the beginning of the 1950s in the USA. One of the main aims of the new

endeavor was the constitution of the original repertoire for wind instruments groups. This became possible due to the principle of flexible instrumentation. A wind ensemble should be compounded strictly according to the indications of the composer without any interference of the bandmaster, as was common in earlier periods.

According to the symphonic wind ensemble concept, the instruments to be used and the number of players to a part should be determined by the creator of the music, rather than being left solely in the hands of the recreators. (Bly 1994: 196)

One of the most important outcomes of this initiative was an emergence of original (not arranged or transcribed)

literature for the different wind groups from chamber ensembles to the full wind band.

Frederick Fennell (1914–2004), the founder of the Eastman Wind Ensemble at the University of Rochester (and the generator of the idea of the wind ensemble concept in general), stated that “concert and military band directors failed to encourage and develop their own original repertoire, rather preferring to exist on a borrowed literature” (Hunsberger 1994: 10). The wind ensemble literature became a qualitative leap in comparison with most of the earlier wind band literature performed by bands up to the middle of the twentieth century. In his letter to approximately 400 composers all over the world, Fennell described the main principles of the wind ensemble concept:

My letter stated in part that it was our hope that composers would look upon this instrumental establishment as the basic instrumentation from which they could deviate should a particular score require more or less instruments than were listed. It was further stated that they might consider this in the same manner as one does the tutti orchestra, the full organ, or the complete seven-plus octave range of the piano keyboard – a sonority to be utilized only when desired. (Hunsberger 1994: 7)

Subsequently:

[...] work of many conductors and composers during the second half of the century has produced amazing results in the development of original literature for all forms of the wind band. (Hunsberger 1994: 13–14)

Although the symphonic wind ensemble was primarily oriented towards the original repertoire newly created by contemporary composers, it also claimed the right to play any work for winds from any historical period. Thus, their repertoire included compositions by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century composers such as Di Lasso, Willaert, or Giovanni Gabrieli as well as works for various wind instruments ensembles created by twentieth-century composers. For example, such works by Igor Stravinsky as *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, *Octet for Wind Instruments*, and *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, and even such earlier indisputably symphonic creation as *Symphony of Psalms* were appropriated by the most advanced and highly qualified symphonic wind ensembles (Battisti 1995: 99–10).

Proceeding from the concept indicated by Fennell and others, it can be concluded that there is no reason to regard the instrumentation of *Symphony-Concerto* as a deficient or modified symphony orchestra. Rather, it should be considered as one of the possible versions of symphonic wind ensemble. It can be presumed that if Balsys had lived on the other side of the Iron Curtain, *Symphony-Concerto* would be assessed by performers and likely accepted as a part of the symphonic wind ensemble literature on a global

scale. Moderately modern means of expression and vivid images of the composition could attract the attention of conductors who are fond of wind band/ensemble music of high artistic standards. It is a notable coincidence that one of the most prominent, landmark works for the wind band in the second half of the twentieth century, ...*and the mountains rising nowhere* by Joseph Schwantner, was created in the same year, 1977. Thus, it can be stated that *Symphony-Concerto* was composed as a progressive opus that corresponded to contemporary trends of the development of wind bands' practices; however, it appeared in an unfavorable environment that prevented the work from earning wide-ranging dissemination.

However, this type of medium was unknown in Lithuania at that time. Balsys probably did not know the trends that descended from Fennell's concept. This would mean that he created *Symphony-Concerto* independently from all Western influences, conceiving this composition as a work for organ with a modified wind section of a symphony orchestra. The scoring principles there are close to his style of scoring for symphony orchestra but not to his earlier works for wind band. Yet there is a possibility that Balsys possessed some information about the characteristics of wind music in the West due to his visits to many foreign countries, including Canada (1967) and the USA (1969). Of course, more detail examination of Balsys's correspondence and other documents may reveal some sources of information which have not been disclosed so far. Also, a comparison of *Symphony-Concerto* with the scores of the Western composers for wind ensemble may raise some observations.¹⁴ Yet in the meantime, the author of this article does not have any confirmation of Western wind music's influences upon Balsys's work.

However, the recent performance of *Symphony-Concerto* appears as a particular case in Lithuanian wind band activities that probably indicates the changing attitude towards wind band function, possibilities, and literature. In 1999 during Balsys's eightieth-anniversary celebration events, this composition was performed in one of Vilnius's churches by the Honor Guard Band of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The idea to perform the composition came from the composer and conductor Laurynas Vakariss Lopas, who conducted this and all subsequent performances of *Symphony-Concerto*. Balsys Vaitkus played the organ part, and Dalia Balsytė played the bass guitar part (on a keyboard synthesizer). The piece was recorded and included in the band's CD released in 2001. In later years, performances of the composition took place in the Latvian town of Liepāja (2002) and the Lithuanian town of Klaipėda (2004) within the framework of organ festivals. And finally, the same band (now called the Lithuanian Armed Forces Headquarters Band, chief conductor Maj. Egidijus Ališauskas) performed

Symphony-Concerto during the composer's centenary celebration events in the autumn and winter of 2019. The concerts took place in the Christ King Church of Klaipėda and the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall in Vilnius. The Lithuanian Armed Forces Headquarters Band has not once proved its capability to perform serious music. It seems that this Lithuanian band claimed its right to perform art music compositions for winds not initially composed or arranged for the traditional wind band.¹⁵ Thus, the history of performing the *Symphony-Concerto* probably indicates a (slowly) changing attitude towards wind band function, possibilities, and literature in Lithuania.

Endnotes

- ¹ Balsys's teacher at the conservatoire gave him a textbook in French (a language which Balsys had not learned) and told him to examine it by himself (Narbutienė 1999: 83).
- ² Dalia Balsytė is a professor at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, the Department of Chamber Ensemble.
- ³ All quotations of Dalia Balsytė's impressions are acquired from the personal conversation with the author of this article.
- ⁴ Dalia Balsytė told a surprising story about Balsys's art of orchestration. In 1977, the same year Balsys's *Symphony-Concerto* was written (this work is analyzed hereafter in this article), composer Alfred Schnittke created his first *Concerto Grosso*. Balsys was very fond of music by this composer and had been looking for the score for a long time. Unfortunately, he succeeded to obtain only the piano score after approximately six months of searching. The *Symphony-Concerto* had already been accomplished. Meanwhile, the composer was not used to sitting without occupation and was eager to start some work. Therefore, Balsys decided to orchestrate the piano score of Schnittke's composition, intending to compare his own and original scores when the latter would be available. He was curious about whether he felt and thought the same way as Schnittke. In 1978 the piano score of *Concerto Grosso* had been orchestrated. Balsys experienced great joy when after he obtained the original score, he found only a few minor differences and his suspicion was ascertained that his orchestral thinking aligned with that of Schnittke.
- ⁵ Some of the enlisted compositions exist in more than one version. Therefore, it is difficult to identify which version appeared first, i.e., it is questionable if the compositions from the first section should be considered as originally composed for the wind band.
- ⁶ March, Waltz, Polka, Habanera, Sailors' March and excerpt from the ballet *Eglė Queen of Grass-snakes* were recorded in a CD by Palanga Wind Band and published as a supplement to the book *Palanga Band. Dialogues* (2019).
- ⁷ In the year 2019, the centenary anniversary of Balsys, an exhibition devoted to the composer's archival legacy and visual aspects of his music was arranged in the Lithuanian National Art Gallery (Tarpdisciplininis Balsys 2019).
- ⁸ Although his impressions of the Lithuanian capital were the most important sources of his inspiration, it should be taken into consideration that Balsys had visited numerous Western towns. As a prominent composer and a chairman of the Lithuanian Composers' Union, Balsys was allowed to go abroad fairly frequently, different from the majority of the Soviet population for which going abroad (even to the "socialist" countries of the Warsaw Pact) often was an unrealizable dream. From 1959 Balsys visited Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the USA, Canada, and other countries. The architecture of the foreign towns surely could not have escaped his attention.
- ⁹ The list of instruments in a published issue of the composition contains a strange spelling of the name of the saxophone – *saxofono*, which is neither Italian (*sassofono*) nor English, although the names of other instruments are unequivocally Italian. The symbol = in the indication *Saxofono alto in Es* (= *Clarinetto I in B*) and indications to change instruments, e.g., *Sax. T (B) muta in Cl. II (B)*, recalls Soviet wind bands practice of the time when saxophones were rare (at least it was common in the '70s). Therefore, most often some of the clarinet players placed saxophones beside them and changed instruments when the score demanded saxophones. In this score, woodwind players also have to play two instruments, but their parts are different: Balsys regarded the specificity of clarinets and saxophones carefully. Yet it can be assumed that when the composition was performed in 1999 and later by the Lithuanian Armed Forces Headquarters Band (see Discussion) clarinet and saxophone players were different musicians.
- ¹⁰ All examples are extracted from the publication of *Symphony-Concerto* edition: Э. Басис. Симфония-концерт. Партитура. Музыка. Ленинград. 1982.
- ¹¹ The scientific (international) pitch notation indications are used in this article.
- ¹² One measure in *Passacaglia* features doubtful use of trombones – all four instruments have to play *glissando* tritone up from D3 to G-sharp, which is possible to perform neither on tenor nor on tenor-bass trombone. It implies that the composer was not fully aware of the possibilities of the instrument and understood verbatim the rule found in instrumentation textbooks, which says that at the maximum, the span of the trombone *glissando* is a tritone. On the other hand, it is believable that Balsys was fully aware of the situation and merely wanted to achieve a sliding passage from lower to higher note inside a frame between D and G-sharp. According to Laurynas Vakarīs Lopas, the conductor of the performances with the Lithuanian Armed Forces Headquarters Band (see Discussion section), while performing trombones played *glissando* in a possible range in one position and then jumped to the G-sharp in a higher position.
- ¹³ The solo cadenza of organ right before the presented example is not included in bar numbers because its division into measures is conditional: the cadenza is divided into bars of unequal length by dotted barlines.
- ¹⁴ In any case, Dalia Balsytė confirms that Balsys was very fond of the wind instruments' sound. His symphonic music, as well as his ballet and opera scores, prove this assumption. Balsytė considers that "the sound of wind instruments most adequately expressed the composer's inner drama which is so obviously disclosed in his creations and which he was accustomed to hiding from his environment."
- ¹⁵ More detailed description and comments on the performances of *Symphony-Concerto* can be found in the newsletter (December 2020) of IGEB – the International Society for Research and Promotion of Wind Music (Urnėžius 2020: 84–87).

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Santrauka

Įvairiapusis talentas leido Eduardui Balsiui (1919–1984) kurti įvairių stilių ir žanrų muziką: akademinę, populiarias dainas, kino filmų garso takelius. Balsys gerai pažinojo ir pučiamųjų orkestro galimybes: su šia instrumentine sudėtimi susipažino dar mokydamasis Klaipėdos Vytauto Didžiojo gimnazijoje. Pirmuosius kūrinius pučiamųjų orkestrui kompozitorius parašė netrukus po to, kai baigė studijas Lietuvos konservatorijoje (1950). Balsio sukurtų ar aranžuotų kūrinių pučiamųjų orkestrui nedaug, tačiau kai kurie jų išpopuliarėjo ir įsitvirtino orkestrų repertuare. Šiuos kūrinius galima skirstyti į tris kategorijas:

1) pramoginio pobūdžio kūriniai, sukurti ar aranžuoti pučiamųjų orkestrui;

2) akademinio pobūdžio kūriniai, parašyti kitoms sudėtims ir paties kompozitoriaus aranžuoti pučiamųjų orkestrui;

3) Simfonija-koncertas vargonams, pučiamiesiems ir mušamiesiems instrumentams – unikalus akademinis kūrinys, išskirtinis ne tik Balsio kūrybos, bet ir bendrajame muzikiniame laikotarpio fone.

Nors kompozitorius nesuteikė kūriniui programos, yra žinoma, kad sukurti jį įkvėpė istorinė Vilniaus architektūra. Simfonijos-koncerto koncepcija, struktūra, dramaturgija ir net instrumentuotė atspindėjo Vilniaus architektūros stilių – gotikos, baroko, moderno – įvairovę. Simfoninį koncertą sudaro penkios be pertraukos atliekamos dalys: Preljudas, Pasakalija, Interliudas, Tokata ir Postliudas. Į bendrą ir įvairių visumą sujungtų „architektūrinio muzikos kūrinio“ fragmentų konstrukcija panėsi į sudėtingą architektūrinį statinį, suformuotą iš skirtingais laikais pastatytų blokų.

Simfonija-koncertas – pats savaime meniškai vertingas muzikos kūrinys, tačiau Balsio kūrybos (neišskiriant ir kūrinių pučiamųjų orkestrui) ir laikotarpio kontekste jis įdomus kaip išskirtinė kompozicija pučiamiesiems instrumentams. Kūrinys parašytas solo vargonams, mediniams pučiamiesiems (saksofonai ir klarnetai), variniams pučiamiesiems (trimitai ir trombonai), bosinei gitarai ir mušamiesiems. Ir Balsio laikais, ir vėliau tokia atlikėjų sudėtis buvo laikoma neįprasta, netipine, neatitinkančia standartinių simfoninio orkestro sudėčių: Simfonija-koncertas būdavo charakterizuojamas kaip kūrinys solo instrumentui su savitai redukuotu simfoniniu orkestru. Tačiau aktualu būtų pažvelgti į Simfonijos-koncerto instrumentinę sudėtį ir instrumentų traktavimą iš kitokio požiūrio taško: šis kūrinys turi daug bendrumų su sudėties tipu (ir su juo susijusia specifine muzikine estetine koncepcija), Vakarų šalyse vadinamu simfoniniu pučiamųjų ansambliu (angl. *symphonic wind ensemble*).

Simfoninio pučiamųjų ansamblio koncepciją jos autorius Frederickas Fennellis (1914–2004) suformavo Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose XX a. 6 deš. pradžioje. Vienas pagrindinių šio sumanymo tikslų – sudaryti meniškai vertingą originalų (ne aranžuotą) repertuarą įvairaus dydžio pučiamųjų instrumentų grupėms. Tai tapo įmanoma dėl vadinamojo lanksčios instrumentinės sudėties principo. Ansamblių sudėtis sudaroma griežtai laikantis kūrinio autoriaus nurodymų, pučiamųjų orkestro dirigentui nesikišant į instrumentuotę – kaip kad buvo įprasta iki tol. Nemažai kompozitorių susidomėjo siūlomomis naujojo instrumentinės sudėties tipo galimybėmis. Vienas svarbiausių šios iniciatyvos rezultatų buvo spartus originalių akademinio pobūdžio kūrinių, skirtų įvairioms pučiamųjų grupėms – nuo kamerinių ansamblių iki didelės sudėties pučiamųjų orkestrų, gausėjimas. Po XX a. vidurio įvyko kokybinis

pučiamųjų ansamblių / orkestrų repertuaro šuolis: ilgai niui originalūs (ir dažnai aukštos meninės vertės) kūriniai orkestrų repertuare ėmė dominuoti. Nors pirmiausia buvo orientuotas į originalų, šiuolaikinių kompozitorių naujai sukurtą repertuarą, simfoninis pučiamųjų ansamblis pretendavo atlikti apskritai bet kurį kūrinių pučiamiesiems iš bet kurio istorinio laikotarpio. Taigi į jų repertuarą buvo įtraukiami ir XVI–XVII a., ir XX a. kompozitorių kūriniai, sukurti įvairioms pučiamųjų instrumentų sudėtims.

Remiantis minėtos koncepcijos propaguotojų deklaruojama estetinė platforma galima teigti, kad Balsio Simfonijos-koncerto atlikėjų sudėtį reikėtų vertinti ne tik kaip sumažintą ar modifikuotą simfoninį orkestrą, bet ir kaip vieną iš galimų simfoninio pučiamųjų ansamblio variantų. Galima daryti prielaidą, kad jei Balsys būtų gyvenęs kitoje geležinės uždangos pusėje, Simfonija-koncertas greičiausiai būtų beveik iškart įvertintas ir priimtas kaip pasaulinio simfoninių pučiamųjų ansamblių repertuaro dalis. Saikingai modernios išraiškos priemonės ir ryškūs meniniai kūrinio vaizdai būtų galėję patraukti dėmesį tų dirigentų, kurie vertina aukšto meninių standartų pučiamųjų orkestrų /

ansamblių muziką. Todėl galima manyti, kad Simfonija-koncertas – tai pažangus muzikos pučiamiesiems opusas, atitinkantis pasaulines muzikos pučiamųjų orkestrams raidos tendencijas, peržengiantis tradicinių to meto kūrinių pučiamųjų orkestrui rėmus, tačiau atsiradęs nepalankioje terpėje, sukliudžiusioje jį plačiau paskleisti ir tapti tarptautinio pučiamųjų orkestrų repertuaro dalimi.

1999 m., per Balsio 80-mečio minėjimo renginius, Vilniaus Šv. Kazimiero bažnyčioje Simfoniją-koncertą atliko Lietuvos kariuomenės pučiamųjų orkestras. Vėlesniais metais tas pats orkestras kūrinių atliko Liepojoje, vėliau Klaipėdoje, galiausiai 2019 m. per kompozitoriaus šimtmečio minėjimo renginius. Akivaizdu, kad Lietuvos kariuomenės orkestras ir jo vadovas majoras Egidijus Ališauskas laikosi pažangaus Vakarų šalių muzikų požiūrio į pučiamųjų ansamblių / orkestrų galimybes ir paskirtį. Galima tikėtis, kad Simfonijos-koncerto atlikimo istorija atskleidžia ir bendresnio pobūdžio tendencijas: kintantį požiūrį į pučiamųjų orkestrų funkciją, galimybes ir repertuarą Lietuvoje.

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