

Two Vytautas Barkauskas' Trilogies – Two Different Principles of Cycle Structuring

Creation of V. Barkauskas is characterised by a great variety of cycle forms: from allusion to baroque suite for solo instrument up to large instrumental cycles – trilogies¹. The aim of article is to attract your attention to the phenomenon of two large cycles created by the composer Vytautas Barkauskas: why they are interesting and peculiar and how they differ from others.

One of V. Barkauskas' trilogies is "**Three Legends about Čiurlionis**", works for piano. Another trilogy consists of works of different genres and instrumental cast: **Concert for Viola** and Chamber Orchestra, **Sextet** for two violins, viola, cello, doublebass and piano, the **Fifth Symphony** for big Orchestra. These both cycles are peculiar as they were not planned beforehand and they have never been announced as cycles. The titles of the works and their appearance is the evidence of the fact that beforehand the author had no idea to develop the same idea and to create a cycle.

When we look at the list of V. Barkauskas works we do not find the work with the title "Three Legends about Čiurlionis". There are: "The Legend about Čiurlionis"² op. 30, 1972, "The Second Legend about Čiurlionis" op. 87, 1988 and "The Third Legend about Čiurlionis" op. 102, 1993. Though the author himself does not indicate the presence of the cycle, the cycle is easily recognized even according to the outward traditional features of the cycle – common title, common genre (legend) and common instrumental cast (for piano solo).

All these works have been written specially for international Čiurlionis pianists and organists competitions. V. Barkauskas remembers: "In 1971, the order to create a piece for the piano competition was received. I called it "The Legend about Čiurlionis", as for me Čiurlionis had been some kind of a legend and a very nice personality of our past. I find his artistic world to be real and at the same time unreal, fairylike, not revealed to the end, fabulous". Further the composer explains: "When many years later (16 years later) a new order was received for the competition – I understood there was a need to continue the old idea. I did not want any borrowings from Čiurlionis works and the title "the legend" was a very good reflection of the essence of Čiurlionis. Therefore the next piece for the competition was called "The Second Legend about Čiurlionis". If the First Legend spoke more of the inner world of Čiurlionis pictures, so the second revealed the tragedy of Čiurlionis personality. When I received one more offer to create for the competition (it was 5 years later), I knew at once – it would be the Third Legend, which would continue and would combine the First and the Second. I also knew that I would not write the Fourth Legend. I had hopes to hear all the three legends in one concert performed one after another, and I heard them all in 2004"³.

Under such circumstances creative process (and its result) differs from the process when cycles are planned beforehand and there is a creative plan (of parts, instrumental cast, measures, duration etc.) and perspectives. V. Barkauskas did not intend to write the next legend. Besides, he was writing for the pianists' competition and he had to give the possibility for performers to express themselves to the full. Therefore the author remained true to the idea realization of each legend. The result was a greater self-sufficiency of each cycle part as the legends had been written in large intervals embracing the period of 20 years. It is natural that evolution of V. Barkauskas musical thinking, composition technique and style is clearly felt in the cycle.

However, all three legends comprise a united complete cycle! The composer himself noted the reason: "Of course, when I started writing the Second Legend I had to remember the First, and when writing the Third – both of them, the First and the Second. Then I understood that they could sound as a cycle "Three Legends about Čiurlionis".

One can understand the difference: when the cycle is planned beforehand, so one looks forward, and when it is not – you turn back. The differences in thinking are obvious when planning a cycle beforehand or not. Do they change the cycle? It is difficult to say, because in both cases the main feature of the cycle – relations between the two dimensions (that is self-sufficiency and community) remain.

What unites all the legends? What is common among them?

Firstly, the very title unites. Secondly, – the idea of Čiurlionis, i. e. – revealing main features of Čiurlionis, those of the human being and those of the artist, showing the duality and tragedy of his romantic hopes. Therefore in every legend we find: a) contrasting and conflicting dramaturgy; b) similar movement dynamics with a tragic aspect – falls are longer than rises or energetic (*impetuoso*) rising ends in a static desperate repetition as if failing to achieve the aim desirable; c) a wide polyphonic space of many layers where vocal distances are wide, and we hear the bell ringing, the echo, the sound coming nearer and again further and finally its disappearance (*al niente*); d) similar semantic codes-symbols (instead of thematic repetitions) – i. e. symbols of fate, resignation, hope, pain, ideals illusion, melancholy, energy, menace and other.

All the legends are united by the narration character that might be called “fabulous”. First of all, the tempo and rhythm of the performance should be noted. E. g. in the First and in the Third Legend the author indicates *tempo rubato* or *poco rubato*, uses various tempo precipitations and slowups, does not indicate a metre and there are no bar lines. But the changes in tempo are indicated by the metronome. In the Second Legend the tempo is indicated as there are complex metre-rhythmical relations of both hands the right and the left, and the metre is often changing. Tempo changes are frequent, and a free rhythmical grouping is being used.

Intonation links give unity for the work. The most typical intervals of all three legends are minor second, minor third and fifth.

Besides inward uniting relations resulting in the common idea there exist very distinct uniting relations when going from one legend to another, in other words, the beginnings and ends of all the legends have got very interesting connections. Especially it is felt listening to the whole cycle, i. e. three legends in a turn, one after another.

The First Legend starts with melodic-harmonic intonation of minor second “H-C” (Example 1).

Example 1



At the end of the work the composer introduces melodic quint “G #–D #”, sounding with the ten sound cluster (i. e. the full 12-tone series). Barkauskas uses a surprising effect (in all the work there was no melodic fifth) and this interval gains a symbolic significance, the illusion of achieving the ideal (Example 2). *Smorzando* leading the upper fifth sound into infinity turns the very fifth into mirage – it has appeared and vanished. Later it appears it has not vanished. 16 years later fifth becomes the main interval of the Second Legend.

Example 2

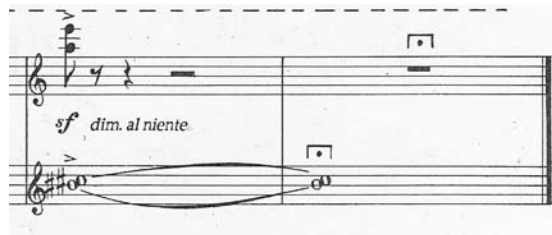
The **Second Legend** starts with a semitone higher and with contrapuntal contraposition of two elements: chromatic movement of semitones in the lowest register and the melodic fifth (A–E) interval in the high register flashing as a lightning (Example 3). The resolution of this contrast and conflict is tragic.

Example 3



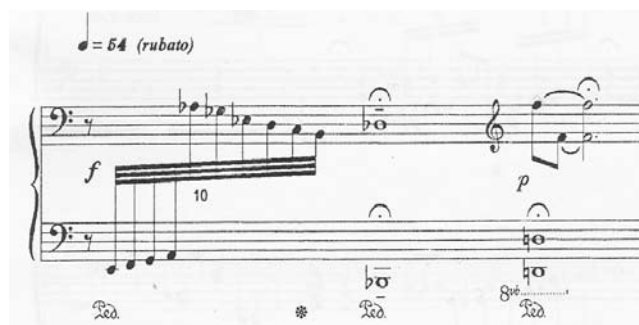
At the end of the legend fifth is sounding like a broken string and there remains a sharp, painful minor second "H#–C#" (Example 4). It (second) reminds us as of the beginning of the First Legend. But its origin and character are different. In the First Legend the minor second – the first sounds of twelve-tone series and the impulse for further inrun. At the end of the Second Legend the minor second – simultaneously sounding both quintachord thirds form a tragic end. It seems the cycle has been closed.

Example 4



However, the **Third Legend** has combined the First and the Second Legends: twelve different sounds are ringing (they remind of the First Legend based on the twelve tone technique), and minor second "H#–C#" of the Second Legend takes resolution into minor third "B–Db" (Example 5).

Example 5



The finale of the Third Legend – D minor fifth diatonically filled – is the resolution of the earlier intensive chromatism. The last sounding melodic interval – the second "F–E" appears to be as if the response to the very beginning, i. e. to the first interval of the First Legend, as its resigned resolution (Example 6). Besides, the tonal relations of the Second Legend may be treated as the resolution of the dominant into tonic. Thus, the Third Legend has not only united the first two, but also has obviously completed the cycle.

Example 6

Beginnings and finales of all the three legends – interval and high-rise-tonal – have not only united all the three legends, but also have given dynamics and intensity for all the cycle.

The duration of the cycle "Three Legends about Čiurlionis" is 17–18 minutes, what is not typical of the traditional trilogy, but when listening to the works they do not seem to be small, because in a short time a lot has been told and a large range of sounding and psychological variety has been revealed.

The second trilogy by V. Barkauskas (Concert for Viola and Chamber Orchestra, 1981, op. 63, Sextet for two violins, viola, cello, doublebass and piano, 1985, op. 78, the Fifth Symphony for big Orchestra, 1986, op. 81) is like a hidden cycle, i. e. it has no outward features of a traditional cycle – no uniting title, no genre community, no similar instrumental cast.

These three works were written in the ninth decade of the 20th century, and in all of them the author's reflection of the last soviet decade is clearly felt. It is noted in the author's works annotations:

"The idea of the Concert for Viola would reflect both our (Barkauskas' and the soloist's Yuri Bashmet's) thinking and our intention: a person, an artist, with spiritual values on the one side, and an oppressive environment and daily routine on the other"⁴.

"Music of the Sextet is imbued with expression, contrasts, reflection of collisions of human life in its full tragedy and beauty"⁵.

The Fifth Symphony is the author's reaction to one of the greatest human tragedies of the 20th century – Chernobyl atomic catastrophe. "At the time Soviet demagoguery was especially obvious. Tragedy and feast in time of the plague", – it wrote the composer in 2005⁶.

Thus, one can feel the idea dynamism – from subjective chamber to objective symphonic expression. Sextet is in an intermediate position: it is subjective and chamber from the point of view of the idea and cast, but its inner intensity is more close to the Symphony.

All parts of the second trilogy have the same concept that could have been called "*Per Aspera ad Astra*". But "*astra*" – is not a traditional celebratory end, but only allusion to brightening, only a hint of light with resignation shade. It is reflected in analogical finales having the function of a coda. Intensive events full of conflict are followed (*attacca*) by a catharsis coda. Its compositional structure is similar: organ-choral layout of string instruments that increases cathartic nobleness; in a change of homonymous major-minor there is an ostinato repetition of not finished thematic phrase and at the ends of all works there is "*al niente*".

These three finales express the same catharsis in a different way, e. g. in the finale of the Concerto for Alto there dominates the atmosphere of statics and stagnation. The soloist is as if far from the orchestra, indifferent and communicates only with the harpsichord. A typical major-minor third is sounding from time to time according indifference and some kind temporality of the atmosphere. The finale of the Sextet is more intimate, warm and painful. Synchronous sounding of the major and minor tertias dominates in different voices and different registers. On the one hand, it is a dissonance, painful and hidden, on the other hand, the minor part of the piano set in Albertic texture is as if calming and comforting.

The Fifth Symphony finale is the brightest in the trilogy, e. g. in the Concerto for Alto, the last sounds of the theme phrase ostinato repeated have got a minor tone (Example 7), and in the Fifth Symphony – a major tone (Example 8). In the Fifth Symphony, coda ostinato themes are taken by two soloists: the alto – in its lowest register and the violin – in its highest one. From the point of view of harmony the repeated violin phrase is subdominant and of Lydian mode, giving more light (Example 8). And the most important – there is no swinging between two thirds, and the minor colour disappears. The C-major chord of the widest diapason is sounding *pianissimo*, and the "D" sound repeated by the harpsichord is gradually disappearing (Example 9).

Example 7



Example 8



Example 9



All the works of the trilogy are united by intonation, thematic, timbre, tune-harmonic relations. The fifth interval is the most important in all three opuses (as an independent interval – intonation and also as the diapason of the thematic material), e. g. resemblance is felt in ostinato themes of the finales of the Concerto for Alto and in the Fifth Symphony: both themes consist of seven sounds and in both themes one feels major-minor swinging (Example 7 and Example 8). Secondary themes of the finales of the Sextet and of the Fifth Symphony are made up of the same sounds – fifth from "F" to "C" gradually filled, but in different registers and in different rhythm (Example 8 and Example 10).

Example 10

The image displays two pages of a musical score, labeled 65 and 67. Each page contains five staves. The top four staves represent string instruments (Violins I, Violins II, Violas, and Cellos/Double Basses), and the bottom staff represents the piano and harpsichord. The music is written in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The score features a prominent fifth interval and a major-minor swinging theme. The score includes performance instructions such as 'Vla. cresc. e più vibrato', 'f molto vibr.', and 'dim.'.

It is obvious that writing the Symphony (especially its finale) the composer remembered also the Alto Concerto and the Sextet, because in the finale of the Symphony the material of both the works had been united.

The main harmonic base points in the Alto Concerto and in the Sextet are "A" and "C". In the finale of the Symphony the distinctive "C" is dominating and at the end – C major. All the three works are united by homonymous major-minor used in many-sided ways.

In the trilogy one can feel the composer's love for alto and its timbre. A rather important part is played by piano and harpsichord.

Though there are no formal outward features of the cycle, the Concerto for Alto, Sextet and the Fifth Symphony are united by the common concept reflected in the finales of all the works. This is the most important argument for the presence of the cycle phenomenon.

Why did the author create three analogical finales? It is obvious that reflection of the past period seeking for the light, though seeking for illusory light, had overwhelmed the composer's thinking and it was not enough for the author to have one work with such finale concept. Thus, creative impulses "defeat" one work framework and inspire the formation of a hidden cycle.

Two Vytautas Barkauskas' trilogies – two different principles of cycle structuring. In the first V. Barkauskas' trilogy the idea realization reminds of the variation principle – every legend is a variation of the same theme (about Čiurlionis). Dynamics of the cycle is expressed by various high tonal relations. In the second trilogy one can feel the idea dynamism – from subjective chamber to objective symphonic expression. The finals of both the trilogies are different: one can feel the impression of generalization and completeness of the "Third Legend" and catharsis, hope and at the same time the impression of incompleteness in the fifth symphony final. Thematic, tonic, harmonious relations in legends are so called "chainy", in the second cycle – rondo and of reminiscence ("arch") manner.

Though both the cycles have been created without preconceived decision to develop the same idea, in the first case the author in his creative work was consciously moving towards the cycle. In the second case only after he had written the finale of the Symphony he understood that the Concerto for Alto, Sextet and the Fifth Symphony had been connected.

The author himself is not very keen how to name such cycles – a trilogy or not. The most important thing is that these cycles consist of independent and at the same time of very closely related work.

References

- ¹ Some V. Barkauskas' cycles are mentioned in an analysis textbook: "Muzikos kūrinų analizės pagrindai". Vilnius: Vaga, 1977, pp. 437–438. The cycle "Three Concert Etudes" for the piano, op. 62 and the poliphonic cycle "Zodiacus" for organ, op. 59 were analysed in diploma work: A. Bajarūnaitė. "Vytauto Barkausko kūrybinio proceso ypatumai". Vilnius: Lietuvos valstybinė konservatorija, 1982, pp. 32–55, 73–83.
- ² Under the title "Legend about Čiurlionis" but not "The First Legend..." this opus was published in: "Concert Pieces by Soviet Composers for Piano". Leipzig: Edition Peters, Nr. 5738, pp. 75–80 or "V. Barkauskas. Legenda apie Čiurlionį". Vilnius: Vaga, 1973.
- ³ From a talk with the composer on 26 March in 2004.
- ⁴ Viola Music Week. Vilnius: National Philharmonic, 2001, p. 8.
- ⁵ 9th Contemporary Music Festival "Gaida". Vilnius: Lithuanian Composers' Union, 1999, p. 19.
- ⁶ National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania. Vilnius: NPh, January–May 2006, p. 55.

Santrauka

Dvi Vytauto Barkausko trilogijos – du skirtingi ciklo sudarymo principai

V. Barkausko kūryba pasižymi didele ciklinės formos įvairove: nuo aliuzijos į barokinę siuitą soliniam instrumentui iki stambių instrumentinių ciklų – trilogijų. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami du ciklai, kurie susiformavo be išankstinio autoriaus nusiteikimo plėtoti tą pačią idėją. Viena V. Barkausko trilogija yra žinoma kaip „Trys legendos apie Čiurlionį“ fortepijonui. Gyvenimo cikliškumas ir ypač tarptautiniai M. K. Čiurlionio pianistų ir vargonininkų konkursai natūraliai sąlygojo šio ciklo atsiradimą. To paties žanro ir tos pačios instrumentinės sudėties kūriniai buvo parašyti dideliais laiko tarpais ir pažymėti kaip atskiri opusai: I legenda – 1972, op. 30, po 16 metų (1988) – II legenda, op. 87, dar po 5 metų (1993) – III legenda, op. 102.

V. Barkausko muzikinio mąstymo, jo kompozicinės technikos ir stiliaus evoliucija per 20 metų (1972–1993) atsispindėjo ir šio ciklo dalyse. Todėl nuostabą dar labiau kelia tai, kad, nepaisant stilistinių, muzikinės kalbos skirtumų ir dramaturginio kiekvienos dalies savarankiškumo, pavyko išlaikyti visų trijų legendų apie Čiurlionį idėjos bendrumą. Be dalis jungiančių ryšių, tokių kaip kontrastinė dramaturgija, judėjimo dinamika, daugiasluoksnė polifoninė erdvė, semantiniai-simboliniai ir intonaciniai-intervaliniai bendrumai, egzistuoja labai ryškios jungtys pereinant iš vienos legendos į kitą. Pastarųjų analizė ir kai kurios „Trijų legendų apie Čiurlionį“ kūrybinio proceso detalės leidžia teigti „grandinio“ pobūdžio ryšio buvimą analizuojamame cikle.

Faktoriai, leidžiantys traktuoti ciklą „Trys legendos apie Čiurlionį“ kaip trilogiją: kiekvienos legendos savarankiškumas, koncentruotas minties talpumas, didelis erdvės ir laiko intensyvumas. Lyginant šį ciklą su „Trimis koncertiniais etiudais“ fortepijonui (1981, op. 62), ciklą skirtumas akivaizdus.

Kitą V. Barkausko trilogiją sudaro skirtingų žanrų ir skirtingos instrumentinės sudėties kūriniai: Koncertas altui ir kameriniam orkestrui (1981, op. 63), Sekstetas (1985, op. 78), V simfonija (1986, op. 81). Juos jungia bendra idėja, bendra dramaturgijos plėtojimo logika, kai kurie formos struktūros ypatumai, analogiškai visų trijų kūrinių finalai, intonaciniai-harmoniniai, tembriniai-instrumentiniai ryšiai.

Pirmoje V. Barkausko trilogijoje idėjos realizacija sąlygiškai primena variacijų principą: kiekviena legenda – tai savotiška tos pačios temos (apie Čiurlionį) variacija. Jungiamieji tonalūs aukščio santykiai suteikia viso ciklo eigai dinamikos. Antroje trilogijoje juntamas dinamiškumas – nuo subjektyvios kamerinės iki objektyvesnės simfoninės išraiškos. Skirtingi abiejų trilogijų finalai: apibendrinimas ir kartu ciklo uždarumas/užbaigtumas (III legenda) bei katarsio, prašviesėjimo, vilties ir kartu neužbaigtumo išpūdis (V simfonijos finalas). Teminiai, intonaciniai, harmoniniai ryšiai legendose „grandiniai“, antrame cikle – rondiniai ir arkos pobūdžio.

Pagrindiniai trilogijų žanro ir ciklo bruožai išliko. Tačiau ryški XX a. antrosios pusės kameriškumo tendencija ir trauka prie glaustos minties išraiškos palietė ir V. Barkausko kūrybą, savitai pasireiškė jo trilogijose.