

The Human and the World in the Seventh Symphony of Vytautas Barkauskas

A special trait of Barkauskas' world outlook is the desire for the harmony of human existence and the world as a necessary part of that existence. This trait runs through all of his creation. In interviews and articles the composer outlines the importance of this desire — the idealistic nature of an artist and romantic expression of his soul — while promoting ideals of good, beauty, love, truth and spirituality: “An artist should be an idealist,” says Barkauskas. “And at least a tiny bit a romantic, because the craving for beauty, good, and the ideal is an expression of his soul... I'll never agree that beauty in the modern world is an anachronism... I believe that the purpose and the sense of creativity must be grounded on the sacred idea of Johann Sebastian Bach: music shall purify our soul. And Bach wasn't a romantic, not even a representative of idealistic philosophy...”¹ As one of the first avant-garde Lithuanian composer, Barkauskas has achieved the reputation of one of the greatest contemporary romantics which is naturally combined and reflected in his works.

The correlation between the human and the world is a theme that surfaces in Barkauskas' works in many different forms. This theme gives birth to the eternal topics that inspire the creative mind and stay in the focus of the composer and include ego and the environment, the personality of an artist and the society, the human and the destiny, the finiteness of the human life and the infiniteness of the world. The way of the composer goes from sharp collisions (*pro et contra*) through antinomy and dualism to the harmonious whole whose base is the infiniteness of the human thought and perfection of the human spirit. In that collision an active position is a dominating one. This means that the human in Barkauskas' works is always active, fighting and driven. In the shadow of the active position we can often find a resignation, which is typical for the composer. He calls it “a light sorrow”. We can observe the dynamicity of the author's idea and goal in amazingly tender episodes of lyric and contemplation.

The Seventh Symphony (op. 132, 2010) is written for a large symphonic orchestra and organ in seven parts. It has more than 30 minutes length and it has been maturing over quite a long period of time. The work represents in itself the grand and rich experience of the author and projects it on the sense of human existence. He carries the listener through the way of human life, while thinking about where are you going, who you are and what you leave behind you. The composer tells us about this very sensitively, gently, in a simple manner and with a deep expression. They've pointed out in the Seventh symphony's review: “In the Sixth symphony, which was written 10 years ago, one can already notice the changes in composer's musical thinking. With the Seventh symphony, his voice has gained more transparency and warmth, more clearance and peculiar beauty.”² The composer goes deeply in the inner world of the person, but without the personification of the Fourth Symphony. In addition we will not find thinning collisions, which are typical for the Second and the Fifth symphonies. One may say that the Seventh symphony is a continuation of the Sixth, in a way that it changes the focus from the permanent idea of the outer world's natural space to the infinite deepness of the human inner world. The distinguishing feature from the other symphonies is the absence of the illusionary vision and the presence of true life feeling.

“The motto of my Seventh symphony is: “Human, World, Steps,” the composer notes in the piece's annotation during the first night, and later in his paper.³ “The human and his destiny, his main steps in this world; not on this round terrestrial geographical space, but through the infinite spiritual (inner) world of the human being... I felt that I can and want to speak about that in my Seventh Symphony”.

The human in the infinite world and the infinite world of the human – this is the range of the Seventh symphony, which is portrayed with steps – a symbol for the eternal motion.

¹ Barkauskas V., Katinaitė J. An artist should be an idealist (in Lithuanian)// Kultūros barai. 1996. Nr.4. P.30.

² Ramoškaitė Ž. To the Jubilee – The 7-th Symphony (in Lithuanian) // 7meno dienos 2011m. kovo 25 d. Nr.12(934).

³ Barkauskas V. About my Symphony (in Lithuanian)// Šiaurės Atėnai. 2011m. balandžio 15 d. Nr.15 (1033). P. 2.

An initial impetus to the Symphony was a typical winter scenery – footsteps in the snow. At the beginning of the 20th century this very same sight once inspired Claude Debussy to write the 6th piano prelude (“Des pas sur la neige”); a century later Barkauskas was in turn inspired to create a symphony. The composer’s poetical essay describes the moment: “...The beginning was quite simple and ordinary: winter 2008, Druskininkai, the House of Composers. A shiny beautiful day, light and a bit of melting snow. I’m walking through the sparse pine forest, step by step; looking around I see footsteps left in the snow. Of course, they can melt, they can be washed away; but at that time they were seen so clearly.”⁴

The step can be considered both as an elementary form of human moving, and as an intellectual abstraction. The combination of those two kinds of steps forms the starting point of the symphony. This combination unites the overall music flow with a special leitmotif. Musical incarnation of a step is simple yet as perfect as the step itself, which divides space and time by equal parts. “This simple step – is a second interval (sol-la). A step up and forward ” – explains Barkauskas⁵:



Figure 1

And so, in the tempo Andante (♩ = 60) the major second by quarter durations corresponds to the second as a time measurement unit; and the sustaining “la” sound is “the ground under the feet”⁶.

During the whole symphony the qualities of the step are changing: its rhythm, tone colour, harmonic expression, and register. The dynamic reflecting the extents of the step’s reality changes as well. Position together with semantic and constructive functions of the step in the cycle also vary. The meaning of a step can vastly differ, yet the composer manages to express that amplitude of meanings, embodied through that shortest leitmotif: moving (walking, pacing) as symbols of constant perfection. Being a process at the same time, the step leitmotif fixes and states a decision, an achievement, and, the most important, it justifies the existence of the human in the world.

But the symphony has also a mental movement: a mind striving to reach a dream, an ideal. The ascent to unlimited mental space has a fairly defined musical expression, which is already at the composer’s hand for a long time. It is a line of ascending direction that embraces a wide range. It represents a chain of intervals of the same length that are joined according to the zigzag principle. See Figure 2 for the graphical representation of this scheme.



Figure 2

And here are some examples of its musical reflection in the symphony:

Example 1. 2nd movement “Andante”, mm.92 – 93



⁴ Same source

⁵ Same source

⁶ Same source

Example 2. 3rd movement “Allegretto”, mm.36 – 40

Fl. picc. (♩ = 96) m.37
 Cl. in B I p mf
 Cl. in B II mf
 V-le p
 V-c p

In the synthetic dramaturgy, which combines activity and contemplation, the steps are a special leitmotif and the base for deep reflection. Three parts of a cycle II, IV, VI, which have the same title “Andante”, reflect the dynamic of steps understanding: from the first step in the human life (“Andante”) through the path (the steps) into his house (“Andante 2”) to the feeling of satisfaction of the own steps’ sense (“Andante 3”). These parts make a kind of refrain. The other (III, V, VII) reflect the course of the human life: from playing scherzo character “Allegretto” through active bravura “Allegro” to amazingly impetuous “Presto”:

	♩ = 60	♩ = 60	♩ = 48	
	II.Andante	IV.Andante -2	VI.Andante -3	
I.Praeludium				
♩ = 48	III.Allegretto	V.Allegro	VII.Presto. Postludium	
	♩ = 96-108	♩ = 120	♩ = 144 ♩ = 60	

Even in titles one can see the *accelerando principle*, which reproduces the *accelerando* of our life in a special way. Despite the large contrasts between the parts, one can feel the continuous development of the thought. Having rejected the conflict dramaturgy, the author develops the musical material relying on the principle which author has generalized as new, but not alien. This made it possible to catch the attention of the listeners, whilst showing them the diversity of the world, and achieve the unity of the big form. The author intensifies the symphonic action also by joining some parts *attacca*, which accentuates the continuity of the process:

I.Praeludium	II.Andante	III.Allegretto	IV.Andante (2)	V.Allegro	VI.Andante(3)	VII.Presto.Postludium
┌──────────┐		┌──────────┐		┌──────────┐		┌──────────┐

„Andante” (part II) – is an exposition of the main leitmotifs. “Presto” (part VII) – contains a directed expression in it, which is typical for classical finales, although it doesn’t become a finale. “Presto” interrupts at its apogee, as if it reflects the limitedness of the human existence. Thus the steps receive a tragic shade, as the desired perfection is impossible to achieve:

Example 4. 7th movement “Presto”, mm. 35–38

But the symphony doesn’t stop. “*Postludium*” continues the flow of the symphony and sounds now like in another space-time dimension. The composer broadens its transcendency by introducing the motif of love from his opera “The Love Legend”⁷:

⁷ “The Love Legend” opera in 3 acts (libretto by Vlada Mikštaitė after Nâzım Hikmet), op. 39, 1975 The first night took place on 29th of March 1975, at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theater, conducted by Jonas Aleksa.

Example 5. 7th movement “*Postludium*”, mm. 39–43

And so, exactly in “*Postludium*” the author expresses his vision of the sense of human existence as a harmony of human’s love and the world.

And similarly to “*Presto*”, which doesn’t become a finale, “*Postludium*” doesn’t become an ending. The idea of the symphony, being associated with the infinite process of understanding the ideal, the harmony (a typical expression of a romantic soul), has moved the main meaning center aside, to the last part of the cycle. The transfinite conception of the human and the world has also left the whole cycle unclosed. In the last bars of the symphony the slightly discordant tonic set (*a – g – h – cis – fis*) disappears and remains unresolved... leading forward:

Example 6. 7th Movement “*Postludium*”, the end of the Symphony

The author doesn’t make an end. Human’s steps are an infinite movement ahead: from *de profundis* (“*Praeludium*”) to *in exelcis* (“*Postludium*”).

The première of the symphony took place on the 19th of March 2011 in Lithuanian National Philharmonic and was dedicated to the 70-th anniversary of Lithuanian National Symphonic Orchestra. The performance was conducted by Robertas Šervenikas. The *motto* of the symphony is: “Human, World, Steps”.

Santrauka

Žmogus ir pasaulis Vytauto Barkausko Septintojoje simfonijoje

Kiekvieną V. Barkausko kūrinį ir visą jo kūrybą žymi vienas ryškiai išskirtinis pasaulėjautos bei pasaulėžiūros bruožas – žmogaus būties ir pasaulio harmonijos siekimas kaip egzistencijos duotybė ir būtinybė. Savo interviu, straipsniuose kompozitorius taip pat pabrėžia šio siekio svarbą, menininko idealistinę prigimtį ir jo romantinės sielos raišką, išpažįstant grožį, gėrį, dvasingumą, meilę (V. Barkauskas, J. Katinaitė. Menininkas turėtų būti idealistas). Būdamas vienas pirmųjų avangardinės muzikos kūrėjų Lietuvoje, Barkauskas yra tuo pačiu ir vienas didžiausių dabarties romantikų, turintis savo vizijas, daugelis kurių jau išsipildė.

Žmogaus ir pasaulio santykio suvokimas Barkausko kūryboje nuolat kinta, kaip ir gyvenimas, turi įvairius socialinius ir filosofinius aspektus, dramaturginius sprendimus, išraiškos formas. Aš ir aplinka, asmenybė (menininkas) ir sociumas, žmogus ir likimas, žmogus ir gamta, žmogaus baigtinė egzistencija ir begalybė – štai tos amžinos temos, kurios inspiruoja kūrybinę mintį ir yra kompozitoriaus dėmesio centre. Nueitas kelias – nuo aštrios santykių kolizijos (*pro et contra*), per antinomiją ir dualizmą į harmoningą visumą, kurios pagrindas žmogaus minties begalybė ir dvasios tobulinimas. Šioje kolizijoje dominuoja aktyvi pozicija, t. y. Barkausko žmogus aktyvus, kovojantis, veržlus, siekiantis savo tikslo. Aktyvios pozicijos šešėlyje dažnai slypi ir rezignacija – Barkauskui būdingas, kaip jis pats sako, – šviesus liūdesys, turintis labai platų spektrą. Tačiau jo nuostabiai švelnios lyrikos epizodai bei kontempliacija turi minties ir tikslo dinamiką. Tai ne tik romantiškas, krikščioniškas, bet ir labai vyriškas bruožas.

Septintoji simfonija, op. 132 (2010 m.) dideliame simfoniniame orkestre su vargonais, septynių dalių, virš pusės valandos trukmės – ilgai brandintas kūrinys. Tai didelės turtingos autoriaus patirties ir problematikos išraiška, projektuojant ne tiek į žmogaus buvimą, kiek į žmogaus esimą, jo esmę šiame pasaulyje. Autorius kalba apie tai paprastai ir aiškiai, kartu ekspresyviai, jautriai, subtiliai, intymiai. Jis veda klausytoją žmogaus gyvenimo keliu, mąstant, kur eini, kas esi, ką palieki. Kompozitorius liečia žmogaus vidinį pasaulį, bet be personifikacijos, kaip Ketvirtoje simfonijoje. Taip pat nerasime ir Antrajai bei Penktajai simfonijoms būdingų aštrių kolizijų. Septintoji, galima sakyti, yra Šeštosios tąsa pereinant nuo gamtos erdvės išorinio pasaulio permanentiškumo ir jo supratimo į žmogaus vidinio pasaulio erdvę. Skirtingai nuo kitų šio žanro kūrinių, čia nėra vizijos iliuzijos, bet yra vizijos pojūtis ir suvokimas.

Žmogus begaliniame pasaulyje ir begalinis žmogaus pasaulis – štai Septintos amplitudė, kurią autorius užpildo žingsniais – amžino ėjimo simboliu ir mąstymo dimensija. Veiksmo ir mąstymo sintezės dramaturgijoje žingsniai yra ir savotiškas leitmotyvas, ir atskirų dalių apmąstymo pagrindas. Trys ciklo dalys (II, IV, VI) tuo pačiu pavadinimu „Andante“, tiesiogiai perteikia žingsnių apmąstymo dinamiką: nuo pirmojo žingsnio žmogaus gyvenime (Andante) per žingsnį į savo namus (Andante-2) iki savo žingsnių satisfakcijos (Andante-3). Jos turi, galima sakyti, ir refreno funkciją. Kitos dalys (III, V, VII) atspindi žmogaus gyvenimo vyksmą: nuo žaidybinės skercinės „Allegretto“ per aktyviai bravūrišką „Allegro“ ir pašėlusiai veržlią „Presto“. Jų pavadinimai akivaizdžiai nurodo ciklo eigos *accelerando* principą. Netradicinis ir ciklo įrėminimas, t. y. „Preludium“ ir „Postludium“. Kūrinio idėja, siejama su begaliniu procesu, siekiant idealo, harmonijos, tobulumo (tipiška romantinės sielos išraiška), savaiame atitolina pagrindinę kulminaciją – prasminę simfonijos centrą į paskutiniąją ciklo dalį. Taip pat neuždaro ir formos. Idealo siekimas tapo ir varomoji simfonijos jėga, suteikiant nekonfliktinei dramaturgijai aktyvu kryptingumą, naudojant įvairiausiais priemonėmis. Tai ir *accelerando* principas „Allegretto“ – „Allegro“ – „Presto“ dalių eigoje. O „Andante“ dalių sekoje, išlaikant santūrų tempą, kryptingumas pasiekiamas registrinėmis, tembrinėmis, derminėmis priemonėmis, einant šviesyn ir aukštyn, vedant į transcendentinę dimensiją.

Žmogaus ir pasaulio begalybės koncepcija atsispindi visuose simfonijos lygmenyse. „Postliudo“ transcendentijos dėka simfonija paliekama neužbaigta su tolimesnės eigos potencialia.

Tematinė medžiaga taip pat yra procesuali, atvira, kaip ir neišrišama, su daugtaškiu. Kiekvienos dalies vaizdai yra daugialypiai – ryškiai nauji, bet kartu ir ne svetimi ankstesnėms, skirtingi ir giminingi. Jos vienija nesulaikomo ėjimo paradigma. Nepaprastai dinamiški ir atviri abu simfonijos leitmotyvai – amžino ėjimo ir begalinio minties polėkio simboliai, praeinantys per visas simfonijos dalis. Simfonijos vyksmo intensyvumą autorius sustiprina ir sujungdamas kai kurias dalis, pabrėžiant proceso betarpiškumą.

Septintos simfonijos (dedikuota Lietuvos Nacionalinio simfoninio orkestro 70-mečiui) premjera įvyko 2011 m. kovo 19 d. Lietuvos Nacionalinėje filharmonijoje Vytauto Barkausko autorinio koncerto metu. Dirigavo Robertas Šervenikas. Simfonijos *moto* – žmogus, pasaulis, žingsniai.