# Sonic Utopias: Trajectories and Contexts in Lithuanian Music Modernization

## Summary

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, Lithuanian music underwent radical shifts in composition, performance practices, and self-awareness, developed as a specific response to the impulses of the international avant-garde. Such trends manifested themselves in a dynamic way in the 1930s (Jeronimas Kačinskas and Vytautas Bacevičius), in the 1960s (Osvaldas Balakauskas, George Maciunas/Jurgis Mačiūnas, Vytautas Barkauskas, Darius Lapinskas, etc.), and on the eve of the Independence restoration and during its early period (Rytis Mažulis, Šarūnas Nakas, Gintaras Sodeika, etc.). In our monograph, those turning points that enabled the national musical imagination in different historical periods are interpreted as a (trans)avant-garde trend of Lithuanian music shaped through conceptual relationships, however, not named. Avant-garde gestures and practices invaded the modernization of Lithuanian music as unpredictable events, accompanied by declarative rhetoric. Like in a number of countries from the Baltic to the Balkans, beyond the major art metropolises, they hardly got established in the institutionalized music reproduction, although they undoubtedly encouraged change. Perhaps for this reason, the concept of avant-garde and its sequels – neo-, post-, and trans-avant-garde – was, and still is, seldom and timidly used in Lithuanian music criticism. The transformation of the international concept of the avant-garde and the regularly resumed discussion about the divides between modernism and the avant-garde did not resonate in the Lithuanian music modernization discourse. The discourse established in Lithuania

is connected with the international avant-garde music rather through the techno-essentialist approach: focusing on the strategies of renewal of technological music resources and adoption and re-creation of new compositional techniques. Lithuanian music culture and Lithuanian emigration milieus tend to reflect the avant-garde-inspired artistic revolutions, i.e. stylistic and technological innovations that opened up new representations of reality. Meanwhile, the aesthetic revolutions associated with the avant-garde, according to the commentators on Jacques Rancière's concept of the "aesthetic art regime," directed artist aspirations toward influencing and transforming the ways in which we experience and live the reality and the world around us. In this way, diverse areas of avant-garde artistic, social, and cultural influence are emerging that encourage the formulation of new questions and still untapped sub-themes for research.

The monograph does not seek to provide a new "great narrative" about the impacts of the international avant-garde on Lithuanian music. On the contrary, several complementary conceptual sub-themes are highlighted heterophonically through selective discussions of the cases of artistic and aesthetic revolutions in Lithuanian music and their possible links. The interpretive strategies of the authors are close to the provisions that Piotr Piotrowski aptly called horizontal art historiography: it deconstructs the analytical and geographical categories of international art histories and localizes the centers. For such an approach, not only the artistic and ideological resources of national milieus are important, but also the material and institutional conditions able to ensure the entrenchment and dissemination of artistic ideologies or, conversely, to prevent them.

The book presents a panorama of Lithuanian music covering almost a century, from the interwar period in the twentieth century to the first decades of the twenty-first century. Although it does not aim to reveal historical processes in detail, events and phenomena are examined chronologically. In the analysis of the early avant-garde of Lithuanian music, in the chapter ***Early Avant-garde Movement in Lithuanian Music: Cultural Impulses and International Context***, Rūta Stanevičiūtė highlights the theoretical contexts relevant to

contemporary music research: selective aspects of the historiography of music modernization, the interaction between artistic ideologies and creative strategies, and the geography and sociology of avant-garde and modernism. She revises the self-image of the 20th century music and the teleological narrative of history that had the strongest influence on research, or the "techno-essentialist" paradigm of new music as opposed to the comparative model of cultural parataxis. The twentieth century self-awareness of music culture and its theoretical and historical interpretations were characterized by the search for the initial event as a radical turning point. The dominating idea of the simultaneous overcoming and actualization of the tradition typical of the 20th century art was predetermined by the premise about the arbitrary relationship between art and its epoch and the desire to clearly draw the boundaries of the artistic present and past. The techno-essentialist approach was based on a more general notion of the previous century music as specific technological resources (music languages and styles), considering them to be prior to their cultural consumption. Therefore, the discourse of modernization here is reduced to the considerations of artistic trends, stylistic tendencies, compositional techniques, or historical periods with clear chronological boundaries.

Quite a few of contemporary scholars tend to undertake a fundamental revision of modernism and the avant-garde (as well as other artistic ideologies defined in relation to them) and their legacies through moving away from the faded-out debates of the past on these issues and the concepts canonized in them. Productive approaches in addressing the conceptualization of modernism and the avant-garde have been in a specific way promoted by the notion that artistic ideologies were long-standing historical and conventional cultural systems encompassing the production and legitimacy of creation. Such an understanding of the avant-garde, modernism, and post-modernism makes it possible to avoid the above-discussed "techno-essentialism" prevailing in the discourse of the change in the twentieth century music. On the other hand, such a conception of artistic ideology rejects its identification with the aesthetic plane and thus marginalizes the

socio-cultural analysis of art, i.e. excludes the cultural and performative contexts from the study of artistic ideologies.

For the development of a critical analysis of the discourse of modernization, Rūta Stanevičiūtė refers to Susan Friedman's strategy of cultural comparativism (Friedman 2007). It is based on the description of modernity as a historical state that reinforces hybridity and transcultural migrations and abandons the hierarchical confrontation of the so-called centers and peripheries, the images of isolated creators and cultures, and the mosaic of modernisms and avant-gardes separated by clear geopolitical and cultural boundaries. In the process of identification of the boundaries and divides of the twentieth century artistic ideologies, it is important to take into account the cultural and social contexts that ensure the reproduction of artistic practices. In the reconsideration of the avant-garde, and simultaneously of other artistic ideologies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—modernism, post-modernism, or even anti-modernism—as configurations of the art system, new aspects of the relationship between art concepts, institutional structures, and discursive practices emerge. During recent decades, relational musicology has intensified research into music as an institutionalized world of art and musical networking.

In the interwar years, two of the earliest projections of radical modernization in Lithuanian music were born: the microtonal music of Jeronimas Kačinskas, inspired by his studies at the Prague Conservatory with Alois Hába, one of the pioneers of the field, and the vision of cosmic music of Vytautas Bacevičius, a representative of the Paris School, which he fully realized only in the late period of his work upon emigration to the United States.

Lithuanian music criticism of the time labeled both Kačinskas and Bacevičius (the latter as a representative of the Paris School) as 'ultramodernists,' and their music was classified as 'expressionistic atonalism'. The early reception of Kačinskas' music was certainly influenced by activity as an advocate of Hába school and promoter of other modernist trends in Lithuania. The athematic and microtonal compositions of Jeronimas Kačinskas enabled the adjustment of the established narratives of Lithuanian music modernization through

the conceptualization of the manifestations of the first musical avant-garde in Lithuania. Kačinskas's compositions written before the Second World War due to their poor dissemination were considered in the context of national modernism rather than against the background of international musical avant-garde and modernist movements. However, the cultural history of the Hábist movement demonstrates that the relations and interactions between Hába and his disciples visually reveal the complex and multifaceted exchanges between the centers and peripheries of contemporary music. The so-called peripheries contributed a lot to the dissemination of ideas and the formation of modernization stories developed by the centers, yet that was not a one-way process. The development of microtonality in the musical milieus of Kaunas and Klaipėda and the echo of Kačinskas's activities in Hába's environment merged into the European musical avant-garde movement as local recreations of the quarter-tone utopia, supplementing the universalist perspective with an ethnic note.

Vytautas Bacevičius is an especially convenient figure for the discussion and verification of a typical range of questions applied to emigration, based on a popular model of assimilation and resistance. Like many other European emigrant composers, being brought up in the cult of elitist art, he perceived egalitarianism of the American art as a personal menace. Since late 1950s, Bacevičius abandoned the strategies of adapting to American cultural environment and turned towards a unique conception of cosmic music, thus rethinking his early experiences of atonal music during the era of the second avant-garde inspirations. The *opus magnum* of his late creative period—*Graphique* for symphony orchestra (1964) —is an emblematic composition devised as the first opus of the never-completed series of nine symphonic compositions named *Sahasrara Chakra*.

Rima Povilionienė in the chapter ***Visions of Microdimensional Harmonies: Precursors and Strategies of Microtonality in the Work of Lithuanian Composers*** reveals that the contextualization of Kačinskas' music presupposes the discussion of the dissemination of microtonality as one of the most influential new utopias of the sonic world in Lithuanian composer works during later decades (from the ornamental

quarter-tone manner in the music of Vytautas Barkauskas, Jurgis Juozapaitis, and Antanas Rekašius to the integration of microtonal constructivism and original systems in the opuses of Šarūnas Nakas, Rytis Mažulis, Vytautas Germanavičius, Justina Repečkaitė, etc.). Creative adaptation of contemporary music trends (*musique concrète*, sonorism, spectralism, etc.) that continued the trend of microtonal searches in Lithuanian music made it possible to cover a wider circle of Lithuanian music phenomena and to expand the understanding of transhistorical, avant-garde-inspired links.

"Why the interest in new tunings?" Thus Douglas Keislar introduced the Microtonality Today forum in 1991 (a special chapter "Forum: Microtonality Today (Part One)" of *Perspectives of New Music* journal). Yet the same question may be applied to the beginning of the twentieth century when intense changes in the cultural panorama—as well as in music—were occurring. The first decades of the twentieth century were marked with an aspiration for recommencement in the arts. That was influenced, in particular, by a burst of technological innovation. Changes to the external world, especially the glorification of technology, fostered a rebellious and even negative reaction against remnants of romanticism and sharpened the gap between the circulating modern outlook and rooted cultural values. A revolt against the past revealed itself in an admiration for reality and objectivity that renounced and replaced the exaltation of the inner world and emotions. The vivid juxtaposition of two centenaries caused the settlement of new artefacts, which had an influence in the creation of music as well. We can mention the rise of the futurist wave, which addressed the desire to reorganize nature, sought to discard the art of the past, and even glorified violence (e.g. encouragement destroy museums). It seems that microtonal experiments appeared to consciously control and functionalize natural phenomena (cf. attempts by futurists and machinists). In the beginning of the twentieth century, microtonality started to manifest simultaneously to the prevailing employment of the artificial chromatic scale, a row of 12 semitones in the octave. Actually, the consensus of equal temperament was a result of the sequential process in music that had taken place since the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries. However, the established 12-TET quickly began to reflect "exhaustion" and "tiredness", because such flourishing outcomes of 12-TET, like serial thinking and Schoenberg's technique of dodecaphony, encountered the limitations encoded in their inner structure.

The increased attempts in microtonal music contributed to the transformation and even rejection of the 12-tone temperament as well, signifying the rediscovery of just intonation. Composers started to look for the expansion of an equal temperament to create new sonorities, a diversity in tone relationships, and realizable chords. Among the first attempts to compose music, we might identify Richard Stein's *Zwei Konzertstücke* with quarter-tones for cello and piano, Op. 26 (1906), which are reputed to be the first published quarter-tone music; the quarter-tone opera *La Rosiera* by Vittorio Gnecchi in 1910; and the chrestomatic case by Charles Ives, *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces* (1904–1924). From the 1920s, increasing interest was shown in microtonal composition. At this time, various forms of critical writing around musical modernism appeared as well. As early as in 1892 Georg August Behrens-Senegalden published a text describing his designed and patented quarter-tone piano. Almost at the same time, in 1895 Julián Carrillo started to explore microtonal intervals on the violin and elaborate the 13$^{th}$ sound theory (yet, only in 1922, in *Preludio a Colón* for ensemble, were Carrillo's experimental intentions carried out for the first time).

In the last decades of the twentieth century, although it did not represent the most popular trend, microtonality re-experienced a growing interest from composers, which was encouraged, to a large extent, by rapid progress in information technologies. As Keislar pointed out, "computers and microprocessor-controlled instruments have alleviated the problem of performance difficulty". Aesthetic flexibility was another factor in the revival of microtonality because "nonstandard tunings offer a means to breathe new life into minimalism". In addition, I want to mention David Lewin's transformational theory, presented in the early 1980s, about the conceptual space of music. In Lewin's theory, intervals could be measured with a mathematical group system and musical space occupied three dimensions – pitch, rhythm, and timbre. For microtonality's revival, no less influential was the emerging

fascination in timbre and the search for new timbral qualities that resulted in an especially refined trend for contemporary music – the phenomenon of spectralism.

In Lithuania, in few decades of interwar, we may face a single, but bright and consistent case of quarter-tone experiments in the creative work by Jeronimas Kačinskas, Alois Haba's pupil at Prague Conservatoire. His experiments were interrupted by the WWII and not followed in the country, while in the 1970s we may see a new outset that basically resounded to the manifestation of avant-garde in general: the attempts to employ microtonal elements and the use of certain pitch notation in the regular score can be noted. Later on, starting from the 1990s, the use of microtones developed into two directions of microtonal manifestation that could be described as decorative and structural approach. The non-systematic, or decorative/coloristic approach covers an accidental/random appearance of microtones, seeking for the variety of timbral effects. While the second, systematic, or structural/constructive approach – may be represented as a particular type of logic and a system that is applied to the whole musical work. In this way microinterval technique determines the whole form of the composition, microtonal architecture serves as initial idea for the overall concept. Lithuanian music examples from 1970s and 1980s mostly correspond to the first group of non-systematic or decorative integration of microtones. Few Lithuanian composers may be attributed to the systematic type: a special case is the sublimation of canon technique by Rytis Mažulis, the totality of glissando is typical in the works by Justė Janulytė, or manipulation with microtones as derivaitives from spectral scales in Justina Repečkaitė's music.

After 1945, the modernization of Lithuanian music in Soviet Lithuania and in exile was strongly influenced by the ideological and aesthetic contradictions of the Cold War. In the chapter ***Darmstadt Images in the Discourse of Lithuanian Music Modernization***, Rūta Stanevičiūtė examines the politicization of music language and compositional techniques through the early reception of the main trends of the Second Viennese School avant-garde (dodecaphony and serialism) as well as the

institution that symbolized its power, Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music.

In the Cold War years, the avant-garde movements of music were heavily politicized on both sides of the ideological and political confrontation, which led to an ideologized treatment of individual compositional techniques and musical trends. Therefore, the opposition of tonality vs. atonality, or dodecaphony, formed in the so-called Western bloc in the early postwar years, which was equated with conformism vs. dissidentism (or, by the definition of that time, opposition to the totalitarian regime), influenced the 20th century understanding and interpretation of musical phenomena on both sides of the Iron Curtain. After the Second World War, the development of dodecaphony—and simultaneously of the musical avant-garde—was for several decades identified with the environment of Darmstadt's Summer Courses for New Music. The specificity of the assimilation of dodecaphony as a *lingua franca* at the time was predetermined by the fact that the national tradition did not have close direct contacts with the heirs of the Second Viennese School. Therefore, the controversies in the identification with the symbolic worlds of the Schönberg and Darmstadt Schools and intricate narratives of the main trend assimilation are supplemented by paradoxical connections with other configurations of modern music, which is more specifically revealed through the cases of Darius Lapinskas and Osvaldas Balakauskas.

The efforts to institutionalize modern Lithuanian music, first undertaken by Jeronimas Kačinskas, outlined another subtopic important for the book: the relationships of the national contemporary music scene with international institutions (Czech Society for Contemporary Music, International Society for Contemporary Music, the environment of Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, New York avant-garde scene, etc.) and the culture of contemporary music interpretation encouraged by them. It should be noted that a significant number of (trans)avant-garde composers were active performers (Kačinskas, Bacevičius, Lapinskas, Nakas) or closely collaborated with performers who promoted specialization in the field (Balakauskas, Mažulis and others).

During his studies in Stuttgart, Lithuanian emigrant composer Darius Lapinskas participated in Darmstadt Summer Music Courses. In the concerts of young composers, Lapinskas's vocal cycle *Haiku* (1960) was performed by soprano Carla Henius, accompanied by the author. After several years of studies at West Germany music institutions, in 1965, Lapinskas returned to the USA and soon gave concerts in New York and Chicago to present compositions written at the Old Continent. Lapinskas's musical style of the time wandered in a neo-orthodox way between neo-expressionist atonalism and post-Weberian aphorism, dodecaphonic inclusions, and folklore inspirations. However, dodecaphony and serialism did not attract the interest of Lithuanian emigrant composers, although they did not face any political obstacles in the case—the situation was more influenced by the lack of an institutional structure favoring new music in USA, which formed a paradoxical bipolar configuration of the university modernism and the *downtown* experimentalism, surrounded by more or less closed musical worlds of diasporas.

Soviet Lithuanian composers had no direct contact with Darmstadt. In the modelling of the projections of renewal, the divide between the two versions of modernization, the Soviet and the Western, formed by the ideological tension of the Cold War, affected the national self-awareness, which was frequently represented in the then music culture through the contraposition of the symbolic worlds of Arnold Schönberg and Dmitri Shostakovich. The correlation with both antagonistic worlds of music marked the early cases of the application of dodecaphony in Lithuanian music at that time.

Osvaldas Balakauskas, who studied and lived in Kiev in the period between 1964 and 1972, occupied a unique position in the environment of the post-war modernization of Lithuanian music. In Ukraine, Balakauskas became close to a network of nonconformists who opposed the Soviet doctrine of music and informally connected composers and musicians from several republics. The network brought together young composers and performers from Moscow, Tallinn, Leningrad, Kiev and other cities, from Edison Denisov and Arvo Pärt to Alexei Liubimov and Gidon Kremer. In Ukraine, the core of the network was the Kiev

avant-garde group: Valentin Silvestrov, Leonid Hrabovsky, Vitaly Godziacki, Igor Blazhkov, Vladimir Zagortsev, and Vladimir Guba, joined by slightly younger Yevgeny Stankovich, Ivan Karabic, and others as well as Osvaldas Balakauskas.

In his early work, Balakauskas precisely correlated the application of compositional techniques with the stylistic idioms and aesthetic ideas of the first and second avant-garde and modernist music. In retrospect, however, in the 1980s, Balakauskas, when rethinking the path of modernization and not rejecting the polystylism representing the overcoming of the avant-garde, tended to see the intersections and even continuity of traditions considered as antagonistic. Balakauskas, composer of the 20th century who most consistently developed ideological provisions of the postwar avant-garde, remained loyal to them even in the times of the entrenchment of postmodernism through unconditional association of the progressist conception of art development with the paradigm of abstract music, based on the priorities of extreme originality, novelty, rational material management, and the unity of style.

In the Soviet Union, like in many Eastern European countries, the phenomena associated with the Darmstadt ideology did not develop into an influential dominant trend, however, led to networking based on informal connections and the formation of a world of modern music beyond the facade of official culture. Meanwhile, in the Lithuanian diaspora, the impulses of the avant-garde quickly faded out and influenced only the artists who were moving away from national diasporas toward cosmopolitan milieus. In the chapter ***Can One Run away from Romanticism? Music Performance and Music Making by Lithuanian Performers***, Donatas Katkus considers paradoxical controversies in the coexistence of music performance and new music in Soviet-era Lithuania. The political events of the mid-twentieth century led to huge losses in Lithuanian performance art. However, in the Soviet era, the tensions between new music creators and performers were largely predetermined by the fundamental dogmas and values of the contemporary performance art as well as centuries-old principles of interpretation, especially deep-rooted in Romanticism, and therefore, the rules

and norms predominating in the culture of performance art are difficult to reconcile with the imperatives of modernization.

The Soviet era is a long period in Lithuanian musical culture, full of shocks, tragedies, and losses. It meant the destruction of a whole musical epoch and the creation of another one. Lithuanian performance art actually experienced several genocides during the Second World War. The first was the extermination of Jews, a very large stratum of Lithuanian Jewish musicians and intellectuals, mostly killed during the Holocaust. Before the war, Jewish performers played a special role in the performance of Lithuanian music; in fact, they formed the core of performers and teachers as well as the basis of orchestral musicians. Their loss dealt a very painful blow to all musical culture. Cultural genocide also includes the wave of Lithuanian emigrants having fled from the terror of the communists to the west. These were the most talented young prewar people, the first real professionals who had started manifesting themselves in concert life. It took a lot of time and effort for Lithuanian music to recover after the heavy loss. One more wave of genocide was the postwar deportations of both famous musicians and of a lot of musically talented young people, who found themselves in Siberian schools and returned to Lithuania only at least a decade later.

Thus, when looking at the Soviet period of the beginning of our music, Katkus very conditionally tries to describe the musical situation of the time by at least three periods.

The first period—post-war years, approximately until 1960—was characterized by the development of music and pedagogical institutions and concert life. I would also call it the time of performer aspirations for mastery that had developed into institutional forms. Before that, in Lithuania, like in other western countries, mastery was more a matter of individual self-determination, regulated by somewhat commercial conditions, while the centralized pedagogical system set it as an objective goal of the schools' activities at the national level.

Thus, the second period that lasted until 1970 was the time of formation of pedagogical institutes and their staff as well as the development of assessment criteria and teaching goals. It was marked by the

formation of regular concert life and the principles of activity as well as the establishment of permanent art groups. The newly emerging original stylistics of composers had a great impact on the performance art.

The third period from about 1970 until the restoration of Independence meant the thriving of the Soviet period of music, the formation and rise of bright individualities in the field of performance, and the emergence of interpretive ideas and spontaneous testimonies.

After Lithuanian music had become part of the Soviet Union, it entered a strange space that was not very well understood in the West. In the Western, non-communist world, there were no cultural restrictions or stylistic dictatorships: both classical music and entertainment genres developed in parallel. Their world was full of innovation and artistic discoveries. Meanwhile, the Soviet postwar culture developed as dictated by Stalin's personal tastes. Thus, paradoxically, musical culture was understood solely as the heritage of classical music. Moreover, in music, those stylistic boundaries were limited to Romanticism. Soviet Lithuanian music written in a Romantic style did not meet any opposition in terms of aesthetics. How did that new cultural structure of music and artistic relationships develop? To what extent did they relate to the heritage of the independent past, and to what extent did that heritage relate to the new Soviet world? The first difference between those two epochs of Lithuanian music was the postwar nationalization of the whole Soviet reality. Without the permission of the authorities, nothing could take place, art groups could not be formed or concerts could not be organized; compositions were controlled. Thus, musicians, educators, and composers naturally got together at the usual music institutions which had been taken over by the new power, yet they did not try to revive what had collapsed.

What did music performance art look like during the first postwar decade? Prewar fragments, a number of mediocre performers, and quite a few talented young people. Therefore, it is worth looking at what predetermined the foundations of performance art: it was music pedagogy. It should be noted here that performers came under much less ideological pressure than composers or musicologists, evaluators of art. Pedagogical mastery and its criteria began to be assessed: the

level of performance training in Moscow and Leningrad in the centralized Soviet society became a mandatory example for the whole empire and simultaneously a powerful driving force to follow its norms and adhere to the established stylistic principles. Thus, in Lithuania, performance art became increasingly related to the influences of the common Soviet musical culture and its examples and represented a visible part of it. It is understandable why Lithuanian music performance art did not differ from the whole Soviet aesthetic taste and the criteria of music embodiment - in fact, it was the same as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, it was related to the repertoire, the predominant Russian Romantic music and classical and Romantic western music. Through this music, it was also related to the global, fundamental tradition of music performance. I believe that the main internal motivation criterion and trait during the period was the pursuit of mastery in performance. It indicated the major trends in both teaching and concert practice. In terms of music pedagogy, two centers were formed: in Kaunas and in Vilnius.

Thus, the art of music performance in Lithuania meant the same recurring concert repertoire as elsewhere in the world, predetermined by the same principles of performance taught at conservatories and the same mentality and performance values. Could there have been any Lithuanianness in it or any original interpretations in the performance of Lithuanian music, formed by original works of our composers? We can only argue that the changing stylistics of composers and new discoveries manifested themselves through the performance of a new style, they were performed in a similar manner, and new means were sought. That was first noted by our singers. At the beginning of his career, Vaclovas Daunoras said that Lithuanian folk songs had to be performed in a different way, in a different voice than operatic arias. They needed as if to be cleansed of operatic romanticization, and "folk" voice ought to be formed. Later, Giedrė Kaukaitė demonstrated it very clearly in her performance of compositions by Bronius Kutavičius, starting with *Last Pagan Rites* or even *Two Birds in the Shade of the Woods*, although its lyrics was of Rabindranath Tagore and the music featured an interest in classical Indian music. Later on, Kaukaitė

distinguished herself by the new stylistics in the performance of Feliksas Bajoras' compositions, starting with *Grow, Grow, Green Birch*. Bajoras' style of music was born from the pronunciation in folk songs and from the way of performing live.

In the chapter ***Musical Discourse in the Period of Restoration of Independence***, Vita Gruodytė explores the connections of Lithuanian music with the processes of political change in the period of 1985 to 1995. Creation developed in the rhythm of political change: changes primarily took place in the concepts of a creative act and the artist's position in society rather than in styles or genres. Improvisation, spontaneity, collectivity, anonymity, and hybridization of genres and materials became new creative tools. With the focus on independent festivals initiated by young composers and musicologists and the actualization of the Fluxus trend, Gruodytė discusses the forms of happenings, performances, actions, and spontaneous realizations that helped to implement the newly born need for renewal. The art of festivals was adjusted to the specificity of the transitional political period through the acquisition of the forms of change, uncertainty, fluctuation, and processuality. The search for the boundaries and divides between "art" and "non-art" in Lithuanian music finally ended together with the wave of the first independent festivals in the late 20th century.

The decade of 1985–1995, which covered the period of Lithuania's liberation from Soviet occupation and the restoration of an independent state, was a period of radical, amorphous changes in society. It was paradoxically closed and autonomous. It featured layers of and conflicts between the dysfunctional totalitarian cultural policy and a model of ideologically unrestrained and uncensored culture yet to take shape. We can consider this period both the coda to the hegemony of Soviet cultural policy in Lithuania and an introduction to the structural reorganization of the field of music based on democratic principles.

Creative expression was developing according to the rhythm of political change. It tended to change the concept of the creative act and the artist's position in society rather than styles or genres. Improvisation, spontaneity, collectivity, anonymity, and hybridization of genres and materials became new creative tools. The feeling of being in everyday

life and being in the act of creation—euphoria—was born from the analogous feeling of instability, anxiety, and anticipation associated with new social hopes. The former political system was disintegrating even while a new one was forming, and music participated in that space and time of change by recording, enabling, and visualizing them as well as conveying their emotional and constructive manifestations.

Since Lithuanian music, in the stylistic sense, had not developed blindly at the end of the Soviet era, during the restoration of independence, the Lithuanian composition school did not need a stylistic turning point: it needed certain sufficiently strong and obvious artistic signs that would clearly mark political change. A wave of independent festivals became such a sign. Why festivals? Probably because they were the most flexible and a low-cost form of artistic creation at the time, the least dependent on the political censorship, which still formally existed, and the most accurate reflection of the spirit of the time.

The organizers of the festivals were young composers and musicologists, either recent graduates or students; however, paradoxically, the middle and older generations were not absent from the festivals. No intergenerational conflict took place for the simple reason that, for a number of years, the most famous composers of the older generation—Bronius Kutavičius, Feliksas Bajoras, and Osvaldas Balakauskas—had been involved in the desovietization of Lithuanian music.

In the 1990s, a revolution in music did not take place, but music took part in the revolution. The young creators of that time did not change their creative style: they changed their roles. Upon having gotten together around *the event* of political liberation and having reorganized the means of expression in this direction, they became, according to Frank Popper, "mediators rather than creators," in other words, observers, commentators, and interpreters. The political "explosion" and "liberation" in the field of music was manifested through the rethinking of the academic tradition and its musical forms, genres, and syntax. The art of festivals adapted to the specificity of the transitional political period and acquiring the shapes of change, uncertainty, fluctuation, and processuality. The collapsing Soviet system provoked the splitting of a work of art as a single and complete object recorded

in a score. Fragmentation, collage, unexpected connections, and spontaneous expression turned into new compositional tools.

The priority of action and process, but not of creation, involved the young people of the time in social activities: participation in rallies, joining emerging groups that supported the liberation movement, participation in discussions, production of political attributes (flags and posters), and activity in the ever-changing present suddenly mattered more than a personal career. Therefore, naturally, most of the actions were inspired by everyday events.

Alternative festivals, as opposed to institutional events of a similar nature, offered new forms of contemporary music creation and configurations of its presentation to audiences. Each festival had its own specificity, yet they functioned not as competing structures, but as a set of artistic activities typical of the period and reflecting the multifaceted palette of creative initiatives. They had primarily an interdisciplinary character and a type of artistic expression that meant involving and questioning the artists and participants as well as the audience.

Due to the scarcity of the means used, the creative activity of this period could be described by German Celant's term *arte povera*, which reflects a "fundamentally anti-commercial, banal, and anti-formal" artistic approach, "concerned exclusively with the physical properties of the means of expression and the variability of materials." The works of Lithuanian composers of this period could be identified with the *arte povera* philosophy due to the minimalist (sometimes extremely "poor sound") aesthetics typical of all Lithuanian music as well as the noncommercial content of festivals specific to this period; the randomness of the performance components, focusing on the main idea; and the birth of the work of art from borrowed connections between everyday life elements. This music was born from scarcity as well as aesthetic feeling and aesthetic refinement, in which whatever was artificial (ideologized) was rejected and everything was limited to the essential a minimalist and repetitive way inherent in Lithuanian culture.

Improvisation-based creative expression, which had taken the forms of happenings, performances, actions, and spontaneous realizations, was the ideal means for the realization of the newly born

presentiment of the need for renewal. Happening, action, and performance were the genres that provided opportunities to test different degrees of bisocations (Arthur Koestler's term) or multisociations (a derived term), combining elements belonging to different contexts and creating new rules of the game, new habits, and new frames of reference.

One of the most important features of the music festivals in the independence restoration period was collective expression. The emergence of composer tandems was an introduction to collective work. The joint activity provided an opportunity to try out the genre of anonymous creation, which was not only a symbolic spiritual cleansing, a *tabula rasa*, but also a kind of symbolic return to the state of primitive art and primitive creator.

The "novelty," "originality" and "suitability for the festival" of the work of art were associated with its degree of hybridity. The stranger and more incompatible elements it consisted of, the weaker their degree of associativity, the more perfectly it corresponded to an era filled with political and artistic freedom.

The greater the variety, contrast, opposition, and dissonance of the components of a festival, concert, or an individual work, the more "freedom" was believed to be legitimized. Not the freedom to create, but the freedom to connect anything. The synectical nature of the works allowed for the rethinking of sonic constructions or borrowing concepts and ideas from other types of artistic expression.

Independent festivals were seemingly a parallel reality in which creative expression took place "live." Not music "live," but the process of creation "live"—in a spontaneous, social, and anonymous way, through combining incompatible elements, creating imperfectly, performing imperfectly, and evaluating uncritically.

The period of emergence of independent festivals marked a transitional stage, a kind of "gray zone" (albeit very colorful), in which the state gradually ceased to be the sole customer and buyer of art and creators had to gradually adapt to free economic circumstances. That is why this period was more of an *experience* of time and space for Lithuanian artists, when all the manipulated material was treated as a phenomenon of experience rather than of form or content.

In the final chapter of the monograph, ***From Musical Theater to Opera without Theater***, Vita Gruodytė argues that engagement and socially active participation of the artist in the present, with the aim of both involving the audience in the creative process and inspiring them, provoking their responses, and granting them with the status and value of autonomously thinking participants of the said process, has been increasingly important to the creators of the early twenty-first century. Paradoxically, the avant-garde inspirations of the period of political change were extended by the New Opera Action (NOA) movement born in 2008. Through the expansion of the boundaries of the twentieth century avant-garde directions, NOA turned out to be an authentic product of its own era, a reflection of the strengthening urban culture, the speed of life, digital technology, and adaptation of art to the environment.

The musical theater of the second half of the twentieth century, which combined the language of contemporary music with the spatial movement and instrumental gesture of the performing arts, found itself in a central and, in a sense, "strategic" position of musical expression innovation: drawing inspiration from both stage and non-stage contemporary practices, it, in turn, influenced the internal evolution of genres. Through synthesizing ideas borrowed from different fields and transforming them in its own specific milieu, musical theater established itself as one of the most original forms of contemporary thinking and one of the most important platforms for experimentation. Therefore, it is in it, and not in the opera tradition, that we should look for the origins of the new Lithuanian opera.

Twentieth-century opera is inseparable from the general evolution of the language of contemporary music and from its achievements and decline. Depending on their fluctuation, either the death of opera was announced or it was expected to be saved through a renewal of the forms of the genre, freeing it from a rigid institutional framework, or offering new spaces and new organizational models. The change in the genre and the architectural structures in which opera evolved have always been interdependent. Under the influence of the configurations of this relationship, it soon split into two independent directions—the

traditional opera vs. performances dedicated to certain occasions—the differences of which were determined both by the specificity of music language and style and also of architecture, inseparable from the institutional dogma.

The short opera festival NOA (New Opera Action) was initiated in 2008 by young Lithuanian composers (at that time, mainly students): composers, scenographers, singers, directors, poets, writers, conductors, choreographers, and video and sound artists. The direction of the festival was formed by the production house Operomanija, whose activities confirmed the viability of the production culture model used in Lithuanian cinema since as early as 1989. It is not for nothing that the beginnings of NOA were short films that migrated to short operas. The model pays off simply because artistic utopias no longer scare contemporary music lovers, while ambitious projects that are the result of the entire context of contemporary music and its scope attract an increasing number of interdisciplinary audiences.

NOA, even by its name, emphasizes the connection between opera and action, and especially between opera and its time. Through expanding the boundaries of the avant-garde directions of the twentieth century, it invites the artists to respond to contemporary everyday life and not to turn it into a museum exhibit. NOA is an authentic product of its era, a reflection of the strengthening urban culture, the speed of life, digital technology, and adaptation of art to the environment. In this sense, NOA is an urban genre, a product influenced by the specifics of the city, which is concerned with the stories of the townspeople, the rhythm of their lives, the cultural practices specific to the city, and the social aspects of urban society.

NOA's works ought to be categorized as the post-opera genre, even if the genre terminology, as in many contemporary opuses of Western music of the second half of the twentieth century, became simply an object of agreement. We could consider the term *opera* here as an expression of nostalgia, or perhaps simply as a utilitarian concept that provides opportunities to participate in the aura-preserving cultural milieu as well as in cultural policy and funding projects and to declare legitimacy to a certain historical continuity, even if the

majority of long-standing traditions are radically transformed and/or denied.

Short or even very short operas made it possible to update the genre and spatial components more easily and quickly and to rely on yet untested and original ideas without having the (financial) fear that accompanies larger productions. The individualization of the role of the performer is noticeable here (as in musical theater). However, simultaneously, the equivalence of different components is sought: music, vocals, dance, technology, and spatial configurations. A creator who can cover different fields—to act as a composer, performer, director, set designer, and choreographer at the same time—has the opportunity to more authentically reveal their ideas and creative temperament. After gaining weight and confidence through more than a decade of creative work, Operomanija was able to generate new ideas: nano-opera concerts/festivals launched by it in 2012, the aesthetics of which were very pragmatically influenced by budgetary constraints, had taken place in a similar format in the USA (since 2014), Latvia (2016), and Russia (since 2016).

The search for boundaries and divides between "art/non-art" in Lithuanian music finally ended with the wave of the first independent festivals, born at the end of the last century. At that time, it was important to find unexpected, original, multisocial links that enabled artists to rethink the status of the creator and the definitions of the work of art, artistic spaces, and the functions of audiences. The creators of the early twenty-first century started to increasingly pay attention to the added value of their work. One such value is engagement, the socially active participation of the artist in the present, with the aim of both involving members of the audience in creation and of inspiring them, provoking their reactions, and providing them with the status and value of autonomously thinking participants in the creative process. The contemporary way of artistic expression, featuring the ambition to reflect the current era, is already inevitably related to an individualized and personalized social and political position. An example of that are works by Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė, Vaiva Grainytė, and Lina Lapelytė (the operas *Have a Good Day!* [2013], and *Sun and Sea. Marina* [2017, winner

of Contemporary Art Golden Lion at the 58th Venice Biennale], the latest GeoOpera *The Vitruvian Man* or *FI* [2019] by Snieguolė Dikčiūtė, and other productions of Operomanija, for example, the sonic experience *The Filler* (also known as *Glaistas*, 2019).

If we were to briefly describe the progression of contemporary Lithuanian music related to action, we would argue that, upon starting as a "disorganized" artistic activity (the late twentieth-century musical theater and performance period), disrupting conventional/stereotypical thinking and seeking to ignore or shock the listener, it gradually acquired forms of artistic expression that sought new meanings and new tools for influencing audiences. Thus, we should view NOA not as a short-term or experimental manifestation, but as a result of the consistent progression of contemporary Lithuanian music. Upon having already taken a strong position next to "traditional opera" and "occasions-dedicated performances," it claims another category in this field, that is, the concept of "opera without theater."

Operomanija has been able to both initiate new perspectives and establish itself as one of the most serious actors in the field. Such a level of professionalism was by no means guaranteed at the beginning, as the first NOA still reflected the specific model of creative work of its initiator, composer and singer Jonas Sakalauskas, which we can equate to a start-up, transferred and adapted to the art sphere. The start-up model allows any activity to be started as if from nothing, from an idea, and to continue developing it as a "living organism" specifically in the direction that best suits it, which dictates the forms and ways and which helps it expand or, in the case of failure, disappear. The start-up does not need its own walls, it can be created in "rented premises" or even in a "family garage"; the idea is developed with minimal resources and little space. If the idea works, it can become institutionalized or become part of a more serious structure. That is what is happening with NOA thanks to the expanding production activities of Operomanija.

Opera-without-theater is probably the form of contemporary expression most pervaded by the spirit of Fluxus, and not only because it features multisocial expression, synectic hybrids, the aesthetics of

performance, and the tools of musical theater. It is localized and socially engaged; has a specific philosophy; participates in the time and flow of everyday life; involves society in the rethinking of its established rituals; and is ephemeral, situational, and not attached to place, traditions, or stereotypes. The Lithuanian Fluxus seems not to have lost its Mačiūnas-inspired content. Fluxus was, and still is, a collective phenomenon based on pragmatic incentives and has enjoyed favorable circumstances: in the 1990s, during a political turning point, it was able to unite a group of slightly boisterous artists, while presently, it is able to inspire the intentions and trends of performative and socially engaged art, and it undoubtedly influences global artistic trends. "Fluxus is finally free to be itself," said Ben Patterson several decades ago. Contemporary Lithuanian opera, having renounced theater that used to restrain it, is also "finally free to be itself."

Although the methodological approaches of the monograph authors vary, they are united by the desire to bridge the gap between the analyses of creation, performance, and critical discourse. From the authors' point of view, such long-established fragmentation limits the possibilities of interpreting the practice of new music, which from the very beginning was forming as a radical and at the same time integral change in creation, performance, perception, and conceptualization—the most influential version of the musical avant-garde. The main source of the monograph consists of original material: documents of institutional activities, periodicals, egotexts (letters, diaries, memoirs, etc.), and published and unpublished works of music and musicology. Valuable information and materials were provided by the participants and witnesses of the processes discussed in the monograph: musicologists Rima Mikėnaitė, Vytautas Landsbergis and organizers of independent festivals Gintaras Sodeika, Ričardas Kabelis, Snieguolė Dikčiūtė, Tomas Žiburkus, Liutauras Stančikas, and Ana Ablamonova. Archivists and librarians provided invaluable practical assistance in accumulating the research material; the authors extend their thanks to the Paul Sacher Foundation, the International Music Institute Darmstadt, the Czech Museum of Music, the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art, the Lithuanian Central State Archives, the Rare Prints Division of

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