

# SUMMARY

The State Music School, which had operated in Kaunas since 1919 as a private music school founded by Juozas Naujalis, was nationalised in 1920. The entire thirteen-year history of the school in Kaunas was permeated with one purposeful ambition: to have a conservatoire in Lithuania. From the first attempts to establish it in 1918 until 7 February 1933 (the establishment of Kaunas Conservatoire), the expectation that it would soon happen was constantly nurtured. While waiting and preparing for this transformation, the cultural context of interwar Lithuania was characterised by the notion that the school was already a *de facto* conservatoire. Around 1929, and especially at the time of the school's tenth anniversary in the 1930s, the process of the formation of a higher school of music was complete. The school already had the structure typical of conservatoires, a variety of syllabi and specialisations as well as properly qualified teachers. Teachers, students, and alumni of the school took an active part in the cultural activities of the provisional capital, while the institution itself became an integral part of Kaunas' musical life. In fact, this was the first stage of the existence of the two presently operating institutions: the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and Kaunas Juozas Gruodis Conservatoire. The establishment of the State Music School in 1920 ought to be regarded as the beginning of institutionalisation of the process of education of professional musicians at state level in Lithuania.

This book is a collective scientific monograph that adds to the Lithuanian historiography the results of the research on the establishment of a higher school of music in our country. The school itself has never been neglected and has always received attention in various historical discourses, but until now it has been dealt with in a rather superficial and merely fragmentary way. The aim of the research was to fundamentally investigate the preconditions for the emergence of this institution through highlighting the attention of the restored state of Lithuania to culture and education, to identify the principles of curriculum formation and the links with European traditions of musical education, and to analyse the scope and development of its activities in the broader sociocultural context of Lithuania.

At the time when conservatoires and other higher education institutions of music were being established one after another in Europe, no such conditions existed in Lithuania. As part of Russia (1795–1914), the country was transformed into a western province of the empire, where the possibilities for cultural expression and dissemination were very limited. After the 1830 Insurrection, Vilnius University, the main national institution of academic expression, was closed down, and after the 1863 Insurrection, the use of the Latin alphabet for writing Lithuanian texts was banned as well as any gatherings for larger events without special permission. However, this did not stop the national revival movement: the banned press was secretly published and distributed, and among the gatherings that operated covertly was the secret *Daina* choir founded by Naujalis in 1899. The national revival movement in Lithuania in 1883 raised issues of the concept of national identity and encouraged the widespread dissemination of Lithuanianness in the cultural field. In the area of music, Juozas Naujalis, Vincas Kudirka, Česlovas Sasnauskas, Mikas Petrauskas, Stasys Šimkus, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, and others made significant contributions. It was in Čiurlionis' letters at the beginning of the twentieth century that we find the first reflections on the necessity and possibilities of establishing a conservatoire in Lithuania.

The beginning of music education in Lithuania is related to the activities of Vilnius Cathedral and Vilnius University, nineteenth-century private music schools in estates and towns, and the training of church organists and choir singers. However, this only partially met the need of those who wanted to make music and had very limited educational possibilities.

After the First World War, conservatoires in neighbouring countries were being opened one after another. In 1919, under the successful leadership of composer Jāzeps Vītols, a conservatoire was founded in Riga. So-called “people’s conservatoires” were established in Belarus: in Vitebsk (1918), Gomel (1919), and Minsk (1920). The Tallinn School of Music, founded in 1919, was renamed Tallinn Conservatoire in 1923 (but only nationalised in 1935).

After Lithuania had declared its independence on February 16, 1918, there was also an immediate concern about the opportunities of educating professional musicians. On June 15, 1918, Juozas Naujalis, Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, and priest Teodoras Brazys petitioned the State Council of Lithuania for permission to establish a state-sponsored conservatoire in the capital Vilnius. The plan was to have specialisations in organ, voice, piano, violin, theory of composition, cello, and brass and woodwind instruments. However, the request was rejected for lack of funds.

When Poland annexed Vilnius Region, Lithuanian government institutions moved to Kaunas, the transitional capital, in early 1919. At that time, not only was permission to establish a music school granted, but also a substantial state subsidy (20,000 *auksinas* (old Lithuanian coins)) was received. The founder of the school, Juozas Naujalis, was already experienced in pedagogical work and the organisation of the teaching process at that time. He had organised organists' courses (1894), founded the St. Gregory Organists' Society (active since 1907, formally established in 1911), and the Organists' School (active since 1913, formally established in 1914) that contributed significantly to the growth and dissemination of Lithuanian music culture. The knowledge and skills of the director and the programme of the Organists' School provided a solid basis for the establishment of the school, and simultaneously the future conservatoire.

On February 28, 1919, one of the main newspapers of the time, *Lietuva*, carried an advertisement about a music school opening in Kaunas. The aim was not only to teach singing or playing musical instruments, but also to provide knowledge of the theory and history of music, solfeggio, and harmony. Initially, the school had three teachers: Juozas Naujalis (theory of music), Julius Štarka (piano), and Petras Oleka (voice). The number of pupils was indicated differently in the various surviving sources: from 40 to 27. In the autumn of 1919, the main documents of the school's activity were approved: the Statute and Curriculum of Juozas Naujalis Music School in Kaunas. The Statute laid down the aim of the school: "to provide talented young people with suitable education, and to raise and spread the taste for musical art in society". The number of teachers was increased to five, and the organ and violin were additionally taught. Gradually, the music school gained recognition and public trust, and hopes for the development of the art of music were associated with it.

When the school lost its premises, in the spring of 1920, Naujalis handed it over to the care of the Lithuanian Society of Art Creators. The school continued to operate in the premises provided by the Society, and on October 1, 1920, it was nationalised: transferred to the care of the state. This partially solved the financing issue, however, the lack of premises remained the biggest problem (when the capital was moved to Kaunas, all governmental institutions were initially confronted with it). During the first two years of its existence, Kaunas Music School changed its head twice: Juozas Tallat-Kelpša briefly took over from Juozas Naujalis in September–November 1920. The school moved three times and changed its premises and address: 1) 55 Laisvės Avenue, 2) 2 D. Vilniaus Street. and 3) 3 Maironio Street. The name and status of the school changed three times:

- 1) J. Naujalis Private Music School (March 1919 – May 1920),
- 2) The Lithuanian Society of Art Creators Music School (May–September 1920),
- 3) State Music School (from October 1, 1920).

During the period under review, there was a threat that the school would be closed, and the possibility of merging it with the Drama School was considered. Despite all the vicissitudes, the school soon gained public recognition and became one of the most important centres of musical culture in Kaunas. Thanks to Naujalis and Tallat-Kelpša as well as to other musicians who actively supported the idea (Juozas Žilevičius, Stasys Šimkus, etc.), the ambition of the Lithuanian Conservatoire was consistently fostered. The State Music School became the origin and foundation of the Lithuanian higher school of music.

What made the goal set in the first years of the restoration of Lithuania's independence a success? Or, in other words, what prevented the conservatoire from being established earlier? In order to substantiate the above statements and to objectify them as much as possible, the assessments are made through the context of the links and relationships that were established, taking into account the conditions and context of the time period.

At first glance, the timing of the conservatoire's establishment was very unfavourable. The tense political situation after 1918 (hostilities, the loss of Vilnius, and the transfer of the capital to Kaunas) meant a lack of stability and resources for the development of the country. The difficult socio-economic situation limited the potential for the development of the state's activities. In the 1920s, Kaunas particularly lacked premises suitable for both the needs of the governmental institutions and the population, while the emerging state of Lithuania lacked funds for institutionalisation and secured financing. On the other hand, culture was perceived from the very beginning as the foundation of the nation state, and attempts were made to establish essential institutions representing it through the efforts of the state and society. The State Theatre and the M. K. Čiurlionis Picture Gallery received the most attention and funding from the government. The fact that Naujalis received a subsidy for the music school founded by him as early as 1919, and that in 1920 the nascent state took the institution under its aegis, can be called a success story. By comparison, the music school in Tallinn, founded in 1918, was renamed the conservatoire in 1923, but was only nationalised in 1935. The need for a conservatoire was welcomed by the government, cultural representatives, and the general public, who entrusted it with the role of one of the main representatives of culture in the country. However, the lack of funds and premises became a major obstacle to the rapid implementation of this idea.

The school was increasingly integrated into the Lithuanian educational and cultural contexts. Assigned to post-secondary specialised schools (as later Kaunas Art School and Klaipėda Music School), it quickly found its place in the education system. The legal basis was provided by the *Law on Music School* adopted in autumn 1921. The methodological provisions of teaching and activities were based on the documents and experience of higher music schools abroad. The examples of St Petersburg, Leipzig, and the Latvian (Riga) Conservatoires were followed in the drafting of the curricula and activity documentation. A review of the education received by the teachers of the State Music School suggested that the Lithuanian school was mainly influenced by St Petersburg Conservatoire, Warsaw Music Institute, and Leipzig Conservatoire. Unlike in Latvia and Estonia, where the methodology adopted directly from Russia dominated the teaching in the period under discussion, Kaunas was the centre of music education which had summed up the traditions of the East and the West, and which from 1924 onwards was increasingly imbued with the aspiration of modernisation.

It is extremely difficult to evaluate the school's activities in the cultural context of Lithuania, as it was linked to all institutions of the art of music and artistic education of the time through its institutional links and the activities of its teachers, students, and alumni. In particular, the links between the State Theatre and the State Music School in Kaunas were intertwined. Quite a few of the school's teachers played or sang in the theatre, thus securing a sufficient remuneration. Their experience and skills served the school in educating future music professionals and integrating them into the cultural context of the country.

After the establishment of the music school in Klaipėda in 1923, competition between the two schools arose that can be viewed in a mixed light. At national level, the opportunities to study music and to pursue a respective career increased, which encouraged the two schools, which had been competing for the status of the Lithuanian Conservatoire for some time, to grow and become stronger. However, disputes between the schools' representatives, which were widely reported in the press, and the high costs of maintaining the two schools may have delayed the emergence of a higher music school in Lithuania by several years. The schools competed for funds, teachers, division of teaching areas, and even status. The idea was floated that Klaipėda School should become a conservatoire; however, Klaipėda School lost state funding and support in 1930, while Kaunas School became a conservatoire in 1933.

In the research, the school's growth should be measured by both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The growing recognition of the school was reflected in the periodical press. The main dailies in Lithuania regularly wrote about the school's activities. The image of the school as the forerunner of the conservatoire, which was consolidated in the press, paved the way for the reorganisation of the institution in 1933. In official documents and correspondence, the word 'conservatoire' was used only as a goal and aspiration, as a synonym. In the press, the word 'conservatoire' was used to refer to the school's activities virtually since the establishment of the State Music School. In 1922-1924, the term was used in public only tentatively, as a parenthetical addition to the name, and from 1925 it was already used in the headlines of press reports and reviews. From 1928 onwards, the concept of the conservatoire as an alternative name for the school became fully accepted in the press.

The objective growth of the school is testified to by statistical data. Between 1920 and 1933, the number of teachers at the State Music School grew from 8 to 33, the number of pupils from 27 to 267, the number of teaching specialisations (specialities) from 3 to 14, and the number of rooms from 4 to a hall and 24 rooms. All these figures were closely linked: the lack of premises prevented an increase in the number of classes and specialisations, while the lack of teachers prevented a rapid increase in specialisations and classes, and therefore in the number of pupils. It was only in 1925, when the entire building (3 Maironio Street) in Kaunas was allocated to the school, that the conditions were created for the further expansion of Kaunas Music School – for the establishment of the missing classes at the Conservatoire. At that time, in addition to piano, violin, voice, organ, and cello classes, wind instrument and double bass classes were established, and in 1927, a composition class was added. Around 1929, with the introduction of the courses of pedagogy and psychology, the curriculum corresponding to the requirements of the conservatoire was finalised, and the documents for the curriculum were drawn up and submitted to the Ministry for approval. The growth of the school predetermined the then and future possibilities and scope of activities.

In terms of the school's concert activities and their scope, the research identified two periods: before the hall was acquired (early 1925) and after. Initially, there were about four student concerts a year at the State Theatre Hall, Kaunas Town Hall, and other venues. The school's performance was marked by the final concerts at the end of the school year. Gradually, the State Music School became a part of Kaunas concert life, and the school hall became a popular chamber music venue for visitors. The concerts were so popular that for some period of time each of them was held twice: on Saturday for the pupils, and on Sunday for the public of Kaunas. In addition, the hall was rented out and hosted concerts by Lithuanian and foreign performers. In 1930, the students' concerts began to be broadcast on the radio. "No one would argue that Kaunas population now has two centres of art, the State Theatre and the Conservatoire." (*Lietuvos žinios* [News of Lithuania], December 10, 1930).

The present research made extensive use of various empirical sources (memoirs, letters, and interviews), which both provided factual material and also helped to understand the values, aspirations, and moods of those involved in the activities of the school as well as the motivations behind their decisions. By putting together the surviving memories from various sources piece by piece, the aim was to recreate the portraits of the school's leaders and teachers as fully and vividly as possible, and to convey the pupils' attitudes and evaluations. Although the research is concerned with the history of the institution, it would not exist without the specific personalities who initiated the founding and operation of the school. It was the people who acted as visionaries and negotiators in the process of the school's creation and transformation into a conservatoire. Thanks to them, the school earned the trust of its pupils and the state as well as public recognition. The school's directors – Juozas Naujalis (1920–1927) and Juozas Gruodis (1927–1933) – consistently, throughout the school's entire period of operation, together with the entire teaching staff, strived to achieve the status of conservatoire for the institution they led: they drafted the regulations, statutes (1925, 1930), and curricula (1923, 1929), and constantly communicated the school's ambition to the authorities and the public at large. The directors differed in their manner and style of leadership – acting through either “considering every word” or “openly” – and in their approach to some things, as they were musicians of different generations and had formed under different conditions. Still, they had in common the desire to establish a conservatoire in Lithuania, and it took a lot of effort.

Portraits of teachers come to life in the pages of the book through the evaluations of colleagues and the memories of students. For example, Balys Dvarionas “used a lot of emotional interjections, even during very serious events he could not stand still – he walked when he spoke, and illustrated his speech by conducting, singing, or playing the instrument” (Rimas Geniušas), or “Bendorius's tall figure and slow manner gave off an air of calmness, and his explanations were very understandable” (B. Pranckevičienė). The pupils were particularly impressed by the high professional competence and erudition of the teachers.



Since the school had been founded, a great deal of attention was paid to the search for and selection of teachers. Initially, there were only a few musicians who had graduated from higher music schools abroad and were willing to share their knowledge and work as teachers. The shortage of teachers was one of the reasons that hampered the development of the school in the first years of its operation. However, from the very beginning, when the school was established as a pioneer conservatoire, the aim was to bring together the most highly qualified teachers of the time. The teaching staff of the State Music School meeting the requirements for teachers at higher education institutions was in principle formed around 1926, most of them alumni of conservatoires abroad, artists of renown (Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, Vladislava Grigaitienė, Elena Laumenskienė, Balys Dvarionas, Vytautas Bacevičius, Vladas Motiekaitis, Jonas Bendorius, Aleksandras Kačanauskas, Viktoras Žadeika, Jurgis Karnavičius, etc.). The vacant positions of the teachers of subjects necessary for the school were filled by foreigners (Oreste Marini, Vladimir Ruzhicki, Paul Schubert, etc.).

There was an age limit for admission (from 10 years old), but in reality the age range of students at the State Music School was from 7 to 49 years. The majority of pupils were Lithuanians, and up to 25% of them were Jewish children. A large number of pupils were concurrently enrolled in gymnasiums and other general education schools (39% in 1925), and some of the pupils were already working (20%). A significant number of pupils learnt only at the music school (26%). As the school expanded, the number of pupils increased steadily until 1927 (254), when it reached the optimum level for the school, which was in line with the financial and spatial possibilities. The largest number of pupils studied piano (97 in 1930), violin (54), and voice (55). Rarely did they choose to specialise in double bass and wind instruments. The list of pupils at the school made during the research contained 686 entries, but there were undoubtedly slightly more.

What was taught and how it was taught can be judged from the curricula and the teachers' preparation as well as the pupils' memories. An analysis of the evaluations written by the teachers shows that diligent, studious, and dutiful pupils were highly valued. The pupils themselves felt the teachers' goodwill and support. From the various recollections, it can be seen that the atmosphere at the State Music School was very friendly, and the mood during lessons was creative and inspiring. Some of the pupils were actively involved in the artistic activities of the school, and in 1930 three pupil corporations – *Harmonija*, *Dainava*, and *Halevy* – were active there.

By the time it was reorganised as a conservatoire in 1933, the school had 34 graduates, as the curriculum was not completed until 1927–1929, and only then could the graduates emerge. Some pupils entered with only minimal musical training, their music education took a long time, and therefore many of them graduated after 1933. Some pupils dropped out due to lack of funds or changes in living conditions. The graduates successfully integrated into the Lithuanian musical life and became the continuators of the artistic and pedagogical traditions acquired at the school. Undoubtedly, they were part of the activities of the State Music School and, more broadly, part and result of a complex network of mediation. The result was predetermined by the individuals involved, the learning conditions, the historical, cultural, and educational contexts, the involvement of other institutions, the traditions, methodologies, and experiences adopted from music schools abroad, as well as the expectations of the Lithuanian public. On the other hand, students and graduates of the State Music School soon became more or less integrated into the activities of the Kaunas Conservatoire or into the related cultural or music education processes.

The Conservatoire, founded in 1933, comprised essentially two branches of education: the post-secondary and the higher levels. It was therefore not unambiguously designated as a higher education institution in the Statute. The Conservatoire was granted the right to provide higher education, however, it retained the possibility of organising lower-level education. Depending on the level of education received, its students could obtain either a ‘diploma and the rights of higher education’ or a ‘certificate and the rights of post-secondary special education’<sup>1</sup>. Thus, a paradoxical situation arose: after the conservatoire status had been legalised, the State Music School continued (until 1945) to operate *de facto* as part of Kaunas Conservatoire.

1. „Konservatorijos statutas“. – *Vyriausybės žinios* [The Statute of the Conservatoire – *The State Gazette*], 23 01 1933, No. 404, p. 3.