

Rhythm systems in the Baltic area

The diversity of ethnic groups, languages and cultures around the Baltic is well reflected in the musical folklore of the area. My intention is now to take a broader look at the rhythmic properties to draw up a general picture of it. I shall start off with the issue of musical rhythm which will help to better understand the subject.

Musical rhythm is a complex phenomenon and with a variety of theories surrounding it, it can be defined in many ways. Such different theories come from one-sided views and various points of departure, sometimes based on a given rhythmic system functioning in a given culture. My studies of the zonality of human time were aimed at surmounting these obstacles and providing a natural basis for musical rhythms (Bielawski 1975, 1981, in press I). I have recently noticed (1989) that the concept of time zones is much complementary to Julius Fraser's theory of levels of temporality (Fraser 1978, 1982), especially its original interpretation by John Michon (1983, 1985). Fraser enumerated levels of temporality and their temporal judgments which evolved and have been imprinted upon the mind. They are the following (after Michon 1983: 7): atemporality (simultaneity), prototemporality (order, partial or complete), eotemporality (duration, distance), biotemporality (now, timing), nootemporality ((personal) history, beginnings and endings). Michon showed convergence of Fraser's levels of temporality and levels of measurement or scale types (nominal scale, ordinal scale, interval scale — distance defined, ratio scale — zero point defined, absolute scale — unit defined) as well as basic metaphors indentified by Pepper (1942) as root metaphors (animism or mysticism, formism, mecanism, contextualism, organicism) and by De Mey (1982) as world models (Such as: monadism, structuralism, contextualism, cognitivism). All that allows to put behind many

difficulties and misunderstandings, and also to reveal natural levels of rhythm.

The following five levels should be dealt with separately: 1. Nominal level (atemporality) with time judgements, contains only simultaneity and omits, first of all, the time sequence order which enables the structuralisation of rhythm. At this level, a musical rhythm can be named, attached to a category, including metaphorical presentations and symbolic meanings, be considered as spiritual force etc.

2. Ordinal level (prototemporality) has a successive order providing for rhythmic impulses to occur in sequence, but not for time intervals between the rhythmic impulses. Segmentation and rhythmic groupings are feasible from this level. Rhythmic impulses can be differentiated (i. e. *arsis thesis*). The essence of rhythm is sometimes regarded as coming from the alteration of tension and relaxation. Every musical shape can be reduced to this level. The level is also the base for linguistic rhythm and versification.

3. Interval level (eotemporality) contains, of course, differentiation of time intervals between rhythmic impulses and higher grade units. It splits into three characteristic elements or spheres:

a. Musical rhythm as understood narrowly and marked by the sequence of rhythmic values. Rhythmic intervals here are mutually linked (1:2, 1:3, 2:3, etc.) but are devoid of absolute values of durations.

b. Musical metre based on the recurrence of metric units (beats). Speaking about rhythm as an element of the language of music, one usually understands the shape and the metre so perceived.

c. Tempo dependent on absolute time values and interpretations of rhythm as performed. Ingmar Bengtsson and Alf Gabrielsson (1980, 1983) focus their attention of this level and its relations to the previous two. This is the last level and structural range of the rhythm.

A common feature of all those levels is that they show the rhythm as man-independent object. The following two, at the same time, the last two levels, provide a totally different look — they are quite unlike the previous ones.

4. Psychological level (biotemporality) is connected with man as a living organism. It is distinct thanks to the human psychological present, this constant »now« providing for timing. This »now« as a permanent point of reference and time bearing, is equivalent to the defined zero in the ratio scale. As seen at this angle, the rhythm is now an expression of human activity — it can be performed and perceived — it can arouse emotions.

5. Cultural and cognitive level (nootemporality) — connected with the existence of human mind and its functioning as a social individual. This level displays fully the meaning of the rhythm for the human being. It can also be internally divided and subclassified by references to: a. musical pieces, and situations, b. musical environment (*Umwelt*), c. individual and social life, d. tradition and history, diversity of cultures etc. (I shall refrain here from reviewing such aspects of rhythm as those of the physical, somatic, auditive, visual and symbolic space).

Let's revert to the structural levels of rhythm. It can be said generally that the musical rhythm of the European folklore was shaped in a close relation with the rhythm of language, hence its regularities which can be traced in songs. The process of transformation of a spoken language into a musical rhythm of a song features a series of successive subtransformations, to reach the ultimate effect. The zero point is, of course, the spoken language. The first transformation is one of poetry. The language of a song is different from that of ordinary speech, sometimes it differs a lot.

The second transformation is one of verse or versification. The result are: stichic forms, distichs, stanzatic forms created according to the rules of various versification systems. Here the language becomes rhythmicised at the ordinal level. The third transformation is a formal one. It consists in an extension of the basic verse structure by repeating verses or their parts, as well as in interjections and refrains. The fourth transformation is rhythmic in the very musical sense of the word. It puts a well-ordered syllabic structure into rhythmic values (rhythmic intervals). This is often so by subordinating the textual rhythm of a given metre (dance can also be a source of such metre).

The fifth transformation is ornamental. It breaks up the course of syllabic impulses with melismatic sounds, usually, of lesser rhythmic importance. It is peculiar with the Eastern Slavs, for instance, to syllabize certain consonants when singing. The apocope there is one of the features. It consists in omitting an unstressed final syllable. It found its way to the Baltic from the south-east.

The sixth transformation is the interpretational one, giving the rhythmic intervals an absolute shape, a defined tempo and also, introducing performance peculiarities such as rubato.

Not all of those transformations are realized or used to equal degrees. It is also worth noting that this general model of transformations, when looked at from the opposite end, could be a model of gradual reduction of rhythmic properties, stepping down to an ever lower level of arrangement.

The general model shows how important it would be, for the sake learning more about folklore rhythmic systems, to carry out a comparative study of the rhythmic properties of languages and versification systems in songs (Bielawski 1970, 1973). Part of such detailed issues are the kind and the role of verbal stress. German and Russian, for instance, have distinct stressed and unstressed syllables, while the Polish language and, probably, most Baltic languages attach less importance to such a division. The strong stressing of syllables invites the tonic system to versification (where the number of stressed syllables determines the selection of a verse). Such small differences between stressed and unstressed syllables suggest the introduction of the syllabic system (where it is the number of syllables, generally, which determines the selection of a verse) or the syllabotonic system (which combines elements of the other two). One has to remember, however, that the systems of versification are products of culture which, to a good extent, are independent from the construction of a language. Hence, there is a possibility of various versification systems functioning within one language. Generally, tonism is most prominent in songs sung in the Germanic languages while music in the remaining areas is dominated by syllabism or syllabotonicism. This has various effects on musical rhythm. Tonism, for instance, invites conformity of verbal stress with the stressed parts of the bar. Syllabism and syllabotonicism is not so consequent in this respect and sometimes makes verbal stresses fall on the weak parts of the bar as well. It would also be necessary to examine the place of stress in words and syllable segments. There are no languages within the Baltic in which, like in French, the stress is put on the final syllable. The family of the Ugro-Finish languages of the Baltic has quite an opposite system where the stress is put, usually, on the opening syllables and syllabic segments (Hungarian, Slovak and Czech, are another such group). The other Baltic languages take the middle way as regards the stress. Some of them are closer to one of the extremities, some other, to the other, according to their geographic proximity. German here is closer to French and Swedish is similar to Finish. The Polish language is

where the stress, as a rule, is put on the last but one syllable but this is a relatively fresh feature. Before this, there was the initial stress which preserved the characteristic features of the versification and the rhythmic system of Polish folklore. One of them is the compliance of the versification segmentation with the musical segmentation, or beginning syllabic particles with upbeat and avoiding ofbeat. Ofbeat motives are easy and typical where the verbal stress occupies a secondary position, counting from the beginning of a word, or they simply vanish at the end. Ofbeat motives around the Baltic have been shaped under the influence of the prosodic features of the Germanic languages, especially German. In other areas, they developed due to the stylistic expansion of the West.

There are many verses and stanzatic forms of various dimensions, they being result of more recent stratifications upon the older stichic and distichic forms, with a limited number of basic dimensions allowing for many rhythmic, formal (refrains) and ornamental transformations. Limitation of basic verses can be seen in the Scandinavian so-called meadieval ballads, the kalevalla, old Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian songs, as well as those of north-eastern Poland. There is no such monoculture of the verse around the Baltic as is for instance, in Rumania where a trocheic eight syllabic metre can provide many possibilities of transformation on higher levels of the rhythmic ladder. This same verse, however, is very popular in the North.

The Baltic musical metre is not very complex. Duple time is quite common world-wide. The popularity of the triple time is cultural peculiarity. In the more recent folklore layers of this area it is the result of the stylistic influence of the West. The triple time gives numerous possibilities of various rhythmic shapes. Unconventional rhythms were created in the transformation of even language rhythms (ordinal level) into triple musical rhythms (interval level), with the characteristic longer rhythmic values on the weak parts of bars. This was the way in which a whole family of Polish dances developed and has been known, since the 16th century, as »Polska«, »Polskor« in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden. Irregular type rhythms, $2 + 3$ $3 + 2 + 3$, north-east Poland are linked with the Lithuanian and the Latvian folklores. Traces of the so-called Bulgarian rhythmus can be found in the instrumental dance music of Norway. But there is no knowledge whether they are the remnants of extinct styles or local transformations of current rhythms.

There are fewer melismatic sounds in the west than there are in the south-east with the Russians, Byelo-Russians, Latvians, Lithuanians or even in north-eastern Poland but there are also exceptions to the rule. Firstly, the shepherds' calls in Sweden and Finland may carry fairly developed melismatic elements. Secondly, older styles of religious music in the West have also preserved melismatic sounds.

The contrasting of slow pace, ametric and highly ornamental singing, so very characteristic for the Orient, with highly rhythmicised rapid-pace singing is sometimes carried to extremes as it is in Mongolia. It is also typical, in a less contrastive form, for the vast areas of eastern and southern Europe. It then, comes from the south-east to the Baltic and reaches Poland's southern and eastern limits. What is sung in the North, has a dance rhythm and is performed at a slower pace than in the South. Nowhere in the areas of direct proximity to the Baltic coast, except for mid-western Poland, is singing so fast that it nears the rate of speech. There, the average singing tempo is probably the highest in Europe.

With a more distant perspective of the Baltic we can notice the most important cultural division line in Europe which separates the Lapps from other ethnic groups. The Lapps have one single kind of music — the yoik. There, differences between the Lapponian and the European rhythms are already at the lowest level of arrangement. The yoiks have no versification at all! There are no repeated rhythmic patterns with varied verbal contents. The singing is actually an endless repetition of one and the same phrase put, synthetically, into a uniform, melodic rhythmic and coloured shape (colours are much enhanced there), based on few words and asemantic syllables. The yoiks show some similarity to the musical forms of shepherds' calls, now relics around the Baltic, especially well preserved in central Sweden and Finland. These are, however, peripheral forms in the repertoire. The Lapps have no dance melody because they don't know about dancing in the European sense of the word or as it is in the eastern parts of Lappland their dance is an evident influence from foreign ethnic groups.

The laments are well-known in Karelia, Russia, the Soviet Baltic republics and the north-eastern and eastern borderland of Poland. In the 19th century they were common even in central Poland. The laments in Poland have no musical forms, they are tearful recitations where texts are not rhymed.

Childrens's songs, so popular in many European countries, with their primitive but original rhythmicity, regular metric measure, short phrases of varying number of syllables in regular duple time are poorly represented in Sweden and may be in all Scandinavia. Those often rhymed ditties with a metric hierarchy, enhancing melody even with vowel tones, seem to be of western (French) origin. There is much doubt whether they are, indeed, such primitive, common and supercultural forms as, sometimes, presumed. The least differentiated, regionally, are the new styles of stanzatic singing which dominate around the Baltic.

Now, is there much singing around the Baltic? Well, Karelia, Russia, the Soviet Baltic republics and north-eastern Poland are the much singing regions. The general notion in the South that »Frisia non cantat« and »Pomerania non cantat« is not only overestimated, is false, but on the other hand we can say that folksinging in the North of Europe has been dwarfed by instrumental music.

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Povzetek

RITMIČNI SISTEMI V PRIBALTIKU

Avtor poskuša s svojim prispevkom prodreti globlje v ritmične zakonitosti glasbene folklore različnih etničnih skupin, jezikov in kultur ob Baltiku in s tovrstno analizo zgraditi ritmični sistem tega področja.

Glasbeni ritem pojmuje kot kompleksni pojav. Njegovih pet naravnih nivojev (atemporalnost, prototemporalnost, eotemporalnost, biotemporalnost in nootemporalnost) postavi nasproti strukturalnim in poudari odvisnost glasbenega ritma od jezikovnega ritma v evropski folklori. Proces preoblikovanja govornega jezika v petje poteka po njegovem skozi vrsto soodvisnih subtransformacij:

- preko poezije,
- verzificiranja (stih, distih, kitica),
- razširjanja osnovne verzne strukture ali njenih delov, do
- ritmičnih transformacij (v čisto muzikalnem smislu) ter
- ornamentiranja in interpretiranja.

Vsi postopi niso vedno zastopani v enakih deležih.

Uporabljeni model kaže na pomembnost temeljitega poznavanja ritmičnih sistemov za izpeljavo primerjalne študije o ritmičnih zakonitostih in verzifikacijskih sistemih v ljudski pesmi. Analiza razporeditve in pogostnosti poudarjenih in nepoudarjenih zlogov, oblikovanja verzov ali muzikalnega metra v različnih jezikih v Pribaltiku — kar avtor v nadaljevanju izpelje — ne kaže večje monokulturne enotnosti na tem področju. Bolj ali manj opazni so namreč vplivi sosednjih kultur. Še najbolj očitna je velika kulturna razpoka med Laponci in sosednjimi etničnimi skupinami. Yoik, edina glasbena oblika Laponcev, je na primer ritmično, verzifikacijsko in strukturalno popolnoma drugačna od drugih muzikalnih oblik v Pribaltiku. Še največ skupnih točk najdemo v arhaičnih pastirskih klicih, ki so se do danes ohranili v osrednji Švedski in na Finskem, plesne melodije na laponskem vzhodu pa so očitno vplivane od drugod. Prvotno Laponci namreč niso poznali plesa v evropskem smislu.

In še zanimiva misel za konec: splošno veljavno prepričanje »Frisia (et) Pomerania non cantat«, bi po avtorjevem mnenju veljalo vsaj omiliti. Ljudskega petja (na nekaterih področjih) na severu Evrope je manj predvsem zaradi prevlade instrumentalne glasbe.