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Sacral Rituality and Mysticism in the Service of the Awakening of National Identity. Baltic-Balkan Parallels in the Works of B. Kutavičius, L. Lebič and V. Tormis

Sakralna ritualnost in misticizem v službi prebujanja nacionalne identitete. Baltiško-balkanske vzporednice v delih B. Kutavičia, L. Lebiča in V. Tormisa

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IZVLEČEK

V delih B. Kutavičia, L. Lebiča in V. Tormisa lahko odkrijemo izrazito naklonjenost do ritualnosti, uporabe ljudskih instrumentov, ideje kroženja življenja in nekakšne simulacije ljudske glasbe iz historično neopredeljivega časa. Takšne paralele vzbujajo vprašanja o vzrokih podobnosti, ki so povezani s socialno-politično situacijo držav, v katerih so skladatelji živeli in ustvarjali. Zato stilističnih sprememb v sedemdesetih in osemdesetih letih ni mogoče ločiti od želje po politični in ideološki osvoboditvi. Vsi trije skladatelji so na takšne trende odgovorili s podobnimi umetniškimi rešitvami: iskali so mistično in sakralno glasbo predzgodovinskih ljudstev, ki služi kot sprožilec močnih nacionalnih čustev.

ABSTRACT

In the works of all B. Kutavičius, L. Lebič and V. Tormis, one can find a pronounced inclination towards the ritual, the use of folk instruments, the idea of the circulation of life, and some sort of simulation of folk music of unidentifiable prehistoric times. These parallels raise the questions about the causes for such similarities which are connected to the socio-political situations of countries in which the composers lived and created. Therefore, it is not possible to disconnect the stylistic changes of the seventies and eighties from the desire for political and ideological liberation. All three composers responded to those trends with similar artistic solutions: they searched for mystical and sacral music of prehistoric tribes which functioned as trigger for the awakening of strong national feelings.

Baltic-Balkan Parallels

In an article about Balkan and Baltic vocal polyphony, Mārtiņš Boiko finds that surprising similarities exist between the early polyphonic music of Balkan and Baltic countries, concluding that such commonalities are not based on coincidence and cannot be explained through direct or indirect contacts between the two cultures.¹ It is, however, surprising to find that similar parallels also exist between contemporary Baltic and Balkan composers. In the present article, I would like to shed light on parallels between the music of Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavičius and that of Slovene composer Lojze Lebič, although similar characteristics can also be found in the music of Estonian composer Veljo Tormis. The aim is to reveal these similarities and to organise them into a kind of typology, while in the concluding section I will attempt to seek reasons for their existence.

Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavičius, Slovene composer Lojze Lebič and Estonian composer Veljo Tormis belong to the same generation: Tormis was born in 1930, Kutavičius in 1932 and Lebič in 1934. There is no reliable evidence that the Baltic composers have had any contact with the Slovene Lebič: Kutavičius and Tormis have the scores and CDs of their music published by international publishing houses, but Lebič clearly states that he is not familiar with Kutavičius's music and knows only a few choral pieces by Tormis;² on the other hand, it is not very likely that Kutavičius and Tormis are acquainted with Lebič's music. The only possibility would be that they have heard his works at certain international festivals of contemporary music, but this is unlikely. Furthermore, in the 1990s, when Lebič's music was presented at several international festivals (especially regular performances at the World Music Days in 1981, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005) the characteristic personal styles of all three composers were already firmly developed.

Therefore, the common points among all three composers are not the consequence of direct or indirect contacts or influences;³ the reason for their peculiar existence must be sought in the similarity of contextual conditions. This notion can be further enhanced by the special position of all three composers in their own national cultures: Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis are the most representative and distinguished living composers of their nations. Thus an investigation of their sociocultural and geopolitical context could provide some answers about parallels and similarities.

Revealing the Parallels

First of all, an attempt should be made to find and expose the parallels that can be found on different levels of compositional technique, material used, formal solutions

1 Mārtiņš Boiko, "Balkan and Baltic Vocal Polyphonies: Comparative Aspects", in *Singing the Nations: Herder's Legacy*, ed. D. Bula, S. Rieuwerts and S. Bērziņa-Reinsone, 281–285 (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2008).

2 In a conversation with Lojze Lebič on 27th of August 2012.

3 Rather than concentrating only on the question of direct contacts, we should perhaps investigate more thoroughly the possibility that all three composers were influenced by the same composer. The works of Kutavičius and Lebič, in particular, leave this option open to research, as the music of both composers shows traces of the music of American composer George Crumb (mysticism, circular structures, magical numbers).

and aesthetic premises. The most outward-oriented and clear parallel between the three composers concerns the question of genre. It seems that in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s all three composers found similar solutions: Kutavičius in the cycle of oratorios (*Panteistinė oratorija* [*Pantheistic Oratorio*], 1970, *Paskuntinės pagonių apeigos* [*Last Pagan Rites*], 1978, *Iš jotvingių akmens* [*From the Jatvingian Stone*], 1983, *Pasaulio medis* [*The World Tree*], 1986); Lebič in similarly conceived vocal-instrumental works (*Hvalnica svetu* [*Eulogy to the World*], 1988, *Ajdna*, 1995, *Miti in apokrifi* [*Myths and Apocrypha*], 1999); and Tormis in choral cycles (*Eesti kalendrilaulud* [*Estonian Calendar Songs*], 1967, *Unustatud rahvad* [*Forgotten Peoples*], 1970–1989), as well as in some distinguished choral compositions, such as *Raua needmine* [*Curse upon Iron*], 1972 and *Pikse litaania* [*Litany to Thunder*], 1973. In all cases, the vocal-instrumental compositions take the middle position between oratorio, theatre composition and a kind of mystical liturgical ceremony. Kutavičius's friend Osvaldas Balakauskas establishes that “from the *Pantheistic Oratorio* onwards, Kutavičius has been composing some new genre peculiar to himself”.⁴ The problems of genre are complicated on various levels: on the level of content (the special connection between music and text, which often has the character of oracle or conjuration), form (cyclical works, mosaic forms, miniatures) and instrumentation. Kutavičius and Lebič avoid traditional ensembles and are inclined towards original combination of voices and instruments, ranging from traditional orchestral and choral forces to folk or toy instruments. In the oratorio *From the Jatvingian Stone*, Kutavičius uses a *švilpa*, a *šeimelė*, a straw reed and stones of various sizes, in the cycle *From Nearby and Far Away* for recorders, Lebič uses an ocarina, a *drumlica* (Jew's harp) and hanging flower pots, while Tormis also uses a number of folk instruments, including a *kantele* (psaltery), a Jew's harp, a buzzle, and a frame drum (shaman drum). However, more important than the mere notion of using several folk-specific instruments is the question of the function of these nonstandard instruments: it seems that they are not employed because of their specific colour, or with the aim of enriching the orchestral palette of traditional instruments, but rather because of their associative power. Urve Lippus has already pointed out that Tormis uses such instruments “mainly for particular symbolic functions”.⁵

A similar function to that of non-traditional instruments can be ascribed to the use of non-professional musicians. The vocal soloist in Kutavičius's *Last Pagan Rites* is not necessarily a professional singer,⁶ and the same idea can be found in Tormis's piece *Litany to Thunder*, in which, at the beginning of the solo tenor part, the composer writes that “*bel canto* is not recommended”. This idea is further developed in Lebič's *Eulogy to the World*, in which the composer employs a variety of instruments (guitars, small drums, triangles, a recorder, an ocarina and a flexatone) played by the singers while singing. The instrumental parts are easy and can be played by virtually anybody; thus the composer introduces the idea of a musically active community of equals, of universality, and therefore also the concept of a musical work as a kind of ritual performed by the participants, eliminating the barrier between performers and spectators.

⁴ Raminta Lampsatis, *Bronius Kutavičius. A Music of Signs and Changes* (Vilnius: VAGA Publishers, 1998), 152.

⁵ Urve Lippus, “Structures and Symbols in Tormis's Music: An introduction to the Estonian Ballads”, in *Musical Semiotics in Growth*, ed. E. Tarasti (Imatra: Indiana University Press, 1996), 495.

⁶ Raminta Lampsatis, *Bronius Kutavičius: A Music of Signs and Changes* (Vilnius: VAGA Publishers, 1998), 63.

The choice of instruments is therefore linked more closely to the content of these pieces than to their compositional structure. Speaking of content, it is important to recognise that these works are often conceived much like ancient rituals, stemming from national mythology or based on folk material or simulated folk quotations. They are also typified by an inclination towards mysticism and a circular comprehension of time, suggesting a pre-Christian, pagan world. Kutavičius "often reveals in his music even 'pre-folkloric' or 'pantheistic' rudiments representing the birth of folklore from something primeval, in this way as though restoring from relics the whole of a once integral, indivisible national culture, like an 'archaeologist of culture', uncovering those imaginary layers of it hidden 'under' the folklore as foreshadowed in the ancient folk myths".⁷ Typical is the notion of the "archaeologist," which also frequently arises in discussions of Lebič's music. In fact, Lebič initially studied archaeology at the University of Ljubljana, and one can discern a certain archaeological "logic" in his compositions. Lebič himself draws a comparison between archaeology and his music: "One can understand some splinters in my composition that cry like foreign bodies amid the layers of contemporary sound, similar to archaeological worlds captured in the different layers of soil."⁸ However, some elements of "archaeology" are evident also in Tormis's conviction that "self-apprehension and self-cognition is vital for maintaining balance and viability. We should know who we are and where our roots lie."⁹

One of the important layers that frequently mark the music of all three composers is that of folk music. However, the symbolic meaning of the splinters of folk music in Lebič's pieces, or of the more elaborate work with folk melodies in Tormis's choral compositions, is not simply tied to nationalist implications. The best description of Lebič's special approach to folk music can be found in a seemingly unimportant remark in the score of his choral composition *Eulogy to the World*: a notable segment of the composition, which Lebič later also used in his outstanding symphonic piece *Queensland Music* (1989), is marked by the composer with the performance description: *Impression: archaic, elemental, folkloristic*. This comment establishes an interesting and very telling linkage between the folkloristic and the archaic, the folkloristic and something primordial. As Lebič openly admits, what "draws [him] to folk music is first of all prototypes – archetypes that are hidden in it – something that also reveals the specifics of contemporary music".¹⁰ In Lebič's work, folk music is elevated from the level of trivial adornment to the level of primordial essence, transhistorical "truth". Something very similar can also be said about Tormis's work with folk music. He regards old Estonian folk songs as "an ancient culture where all the components are combined in structure: the melody, the words, the performance, etc. It also became clear that it is a very old pre-Christian culture which is shamanistic in substance, and extremely close to nature in the ecological sense".¹¹ According to Tormis's conception, ecology, as a seemingly typical contemporary movement, gains a clear transhistorical value.

7 Linas Paulauskis, "Modern Lithuanian Music: An Attempted Survey", *New Sound* 11 (1998): 16.

8 Lojze Lebič, *Od blizu in daleč* (Prevalje: Kulturno društvo Mohorjan, 2000), 31.

9 Martin Anderson, "We Should Know Who We Are: Veljo Tormis in Conversation", *Tempo* 211 (2000), 26.

10 Marjeta Gačša, "Skladatelj išče človeški glas", in *Naši zbori*, 49.1 (1999), 4.

11 Anderson, "We Should Know Who We Are ...", 25.

The strata of folk or “prehistoric” musical allusions therefore acquire a mythological dimension. In order to further enhance this feeling of something primordial and mythical, the compositions are very often designated as quasi rituals, or at least have very pronounced theatrical elements. Kutavičius’s oratorios “are highly theatrical, like reconstructions of ancient folk rituals and ceremonies”.¹² Similarly, Tormis (in the second part of his *Curse upon Iron* one can find several instructions for stage actions), although using the very old layers of Estonian folklore, is not interested only in the exploitation of folk material but seeks to bring about a kind of restoration of forgotten forms and rituals. The quest for that which is prehistoric and old cannot, of course, simply be regarded as a fetish for antiquity; it should be seen as a desire to open the vast potential of symbolic meanings. Metaphorically speaking, opening towards ancient rituals and theatrical gestures does not speak about the national past, but more about its roots, and therefore about the contemporary status of the Lithuanian, Slovene and Estonian nations.

Similar symbolic potential should also be ascribed to the sometimes very specific and graphic notation that is characteristic of Kutavičius. However, circular designs or graphic indications resembling something ritualistic, old and mystical can also be

Sinfonietta 4 5 4
♩ = ca 66

2 Violins
2 Violas
2 Cellos
2 Double Basses

Intr. *R.* O-rá-te * cad- li dé-su- per, et nú-bes plú- ant
jé- stum : ape-ri- á-tur tér- ra, et gé-rminet Salva-
to- rem.

con arco

Example 1: Symphony with Organ, *first page of the score*.

12 Paulauskis, “Modern Lithuanian Music ...”, 16.

Example 2: Climax from Lebič's piece *Tangram*.

found in Lebič's scores. Very specific is Lebič's notation of folk-like quotations, which are notated in circular schemes (Example 6) that are associated with the circular motion of time and life and have no other clear musical importance. Similar mysticism is also awakened in the opening section of *Simfonija z orglami* (*Symphony with Organ*), with the quotation of the choral theme: in his handwritten score, the composer inserts the image of the original choral notation (Example 1). A close graphic relationship between the music and its notation is also typical of the two pages at the climax of Lebič's piece *Tangram* (1977) for chamber orchestra: facing sides of the score are conceived like a mirror, with a slanting line indicating the gradual thickening/thinning of the orchestral texture (Example 2).

The piling up of various symbolic and mystical allusions is, of course, echoed in the musical substance, its development and form. It is typical of all three composers that these remote "worlds" are musically depicted with a kind of blend of modernist and archetypal procedures; paradoxically, all three composers try to establish the musical language of some prehistoric tribes (perhaps only imagined or already forgotten) by combining innovative and traditional procedures. Their works could therefore be stylistically labelled as postmodern. The most typical procedure is "parallel constructing"¹³ or "double coding"¹⁴: the composers combine the emancipated mod-

13 Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987). Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

14 Charles Jencks, *Jezik postmoderne arhitekture* (Beograd: Vuk Karadžić, 1985).

ernist sound world with allusions to folk music, ancient models or even popular music. The typical repetitiveness of the works of Kutavičius and Tormis – which is often labelled as a Baltic stream of American minimal music, but is in fact a derivation of Baltic folk music – can also be found in some Lebič's work; for example, in the aforementioned climax of *Tangram*, where the basic pulse is presented by the rhythm played by the flower pots (Example 2), although here the repetitiveness stems from ironising the “new age” movement and soft rock pulsation. Rather than being their weak point, the heterogeneity of these works is their central goal: it awakes the associative and therefore the semantic potential of music.

Analysis of Selected Works

The continuation will present an analysis of selected works by Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis that can serve as the best examples of the aforementioned connections and parallels.

Last Pagan Rites (1978) is the piece by Bronius Kutavičius that gained a lot of international acclaim although it is paradoxically very firmly rooted in the context of Lithuanian history. The work is conceived as an oratorio for a women's choir, children's choir, a vocal soloist whose voice does not have to be trained in classical singing, an organ and Lithuanian folk horns *ragai* (in consecutive performances they were often replaced by regular French or Alpine horns). The content of the oratorio is connected with the transition from paganism to Christianity which took in Lithuania place from 12th to 14th Century. This context defines also the instrumentation: horns or *ragai* as symbol of Lithuanian primordiality play in the first of four movements and organ as metaphor for Christianity only in the last movement. Of course the repression of organ, Christianity can be understood also metaphorically as repression of Soviet regime. The ritualistic character of the piece is further enhanced in the positioning of the performers which sit around the audience what creates the sense of circular motion of the sound, moving around the audience which is immersed into the music/sound.

Kutavičius compositional technique employed in *Last Pagan Rites* is fairly simple and was often characterised as a kind of Baltic minimalism but in fact Kutavičius used folkloristic procedure of *sutartine* – Lithuanian singing in canon in intervals of seconds. The composition therefore combines very heterogeneous elements: folkloristic procedures, combined with minimalistic pulse, traditional folk instruments, modernistic idea of moving the sound in space, of interest is also special notation with a lot symbolic undertones.

Typical combining of modernist and pre-modernist, predominantly archaic, musical worlds with harmonic clusters, aleatoric procedures and various vocal in instrumental effects on the one hand and repetition, simulation of folk-like fragments, and formalised gradations on the other hand can be found in Lebič's large-scale composition *Ajdna* (1995), which is actually built from the choral cycle *V tihem šelestenju časa...* (*In the Silent Rustle of Time...*) based on poems by Gregor Strniša and combined with the cycle *Od blizu in daleč* (*From Nearby and Far Away*) for solo recorders and

The musical score is for a piece titled "Incantation of the Serpent" from "The Last Pagan Rites". It is written for a large ensemble of recorders, with parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in a minor key and features a complex, rhythmic pattern. The lyrics are in Slovenian and are repeated throughout the piece. The score is divided into sections for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, with each part having its own staff and lyrics. The music is written in a modern notation style, with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 4/4. The score is titled "Incantation of the Serpent" and is from "The Last Pagan Rites".

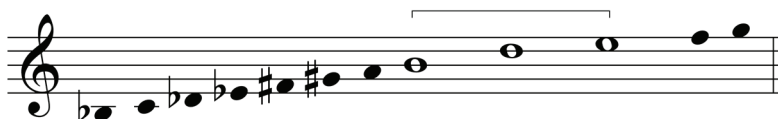
Example 3: Score for the "Incantation of the Serpent" from the Last Pagan Rites.

an assistant. The title itself reveals the world of prehistory – *Ajdna*¹⁵ is the name of an archaeological site from late antiquity – and the seven movements of the piece for recorders are named after folk songs, although the composer does not actually use any folk material; crucial is the specific use of the recorders, which are often treated like the prehistoric Mousterian bone flute, supposedly the oldest known musical instrument, which was discovered in Divje babe in Slovenia.

The initial idea was that the composition could be played at the archaeological site, and would be therefore perceived as a kind of ritual. This idea was latter rejected, but the initial concept found its way into the form and content of *Ajdna*. Lebič wanted to depict the musical-mystical landscape of ancient, pre-Christian times, but his solutions go beyond historical truthfulness.

15 The name cannot be translated, but it is derived from the root "ajd", meaning "pagan".

Seven solo compositions for recorders and four choral compositions are arranged in a dramatic sequence that begins with the essential questions of our existence (*Where are we when we were,/ Where will we be when we no longer are?*) and, after a dance of death, ends with redemptive knowledge. This structure is musically paralleled with a path that leads from total chromaticism to modal diatonic harmony. However, Lebič bridges both “worlds” by combining them in a single scale that can be used either as a twelve-tone series or as modal stock (Example 4):



Example 4: Basic scale/series for Ajdna (the marked tones are the main notes of the choral part).

The title of the seven recorder pieces *From Nearby and Far Away* can be understood literally or metaphorically: the composer often plays with a dialogue between nearby and distant sounds (this can be achieved with the aid of an assistant, or by playing in different registers or with different instrumental techniques), as well as between ancient musical models and modernist procedures. From the formal point of view, the recorder pieces are modelled by the logic of a mosaic. However, the overall impression is that of homogenous uniformity, which is achieved by repeating the basic material ideas. The pieces move between different worlds: the distant, “pagan” world and the world of new music. The former is suggested by the use of parallel fifths (in “The Serpent Prince” the musician simultaneously sings and plays, thereby producing organum fifths), by the assistant playing on folk instruments, and by basic formal models (symmetry in “The Serpent Prince”, two-part form in “Children Changed into Birds”, rondo in “Mist is Falling”); meanwhile, the world of new music is represented by the extended instrumental techniques (whistling, singing, multiphonics, aleatoric intrusions, playing on the mouthpiece, glissandos, etc.) and by the occasional dense chromaticism. However, these two worlds are never wholly separated, with the best example of connections between the ancient and the new being represented by the pitch material for “Mist is Falling”, a tone row consisting of eleven chromatic pitches, which are used segmentally, thus producing a more modal impression:

The same interplay between ancient and new is denoted by the four choral compositions, which also bring additional ritual and theatrical elements. The first piece, “From Time Immemorial” begins fragmentarily with quiet whisperings, jerky inhalations, murmurs and some harmonics built around the central tone *E*. Later, the texture becomes more chromatic and the distributions of tones can be connected to the basic tone row. After this chaotic, all-encompassing chromatic world has been established, Lebič introduces the idea of ritual in the next piece, “Mosaics”. The whole piece consists of three layers. With the production of harmonics on the tone *E*, the four soloists

Table 1: Formal structure of Ajdna

recorders <i>(From Nearby and Far Away)</i>		"Pučica svarilka"/ "The Warning Bird"	"Kači kraljič"/ "The Serpent Prince"		"Jemlj, jemlji zdaj slovo"/ "O Say Farewell Now"	"Oroci uk- lece pice"/ "Children Changed into Birds"	"Meg- lice dol popadajo" /"Mist is Falling"		"Iz kamna v vodi"/ "From the Stone in the Water"		"Godec pred pekliom"/ "The Fiddler at the Gates of Hell"		Se že svita, bo dan"/ "It Is Dawn, the Day Is Beginning"
choir <i>(In the Silent Rusle of Time..)</i>	"Iz veka vekov"/ "From Time Immemorial"			"Mozaiki"/ "Mosaics"									
<i>content</i>	captivity in the magic circle of life			withdrawal from an isolated state of captivity					fervent appeal to nature			redemptive knowledge	



Bas ♩ = 132
 ① Vbe-li hi - ši iz ka - sti re - brast re - br - nik se - di.

Bariton ♩ = 56
 ② O - krag hi - še vrt strupen tr - nov plot in hra - slov les.

Tenor ♩ = 63
 ③ Smrt je majhen pi - san plitč sre - di go - zda, ki ga ni.

Alt ♩ = 76
 ④ Tr - ka, tr - ka, noč in dan, po ve - ji, ki je ni več tam.

101 Vstop basov I (4 3 2 1)
 in perc. II vf.
 (glej spodaj)

11)
 Dirigent da znak 4 (glej na naslednji strani) potem ko solist 5 (alt) zaključi krožnico 1.

Example 6: Simulated quotations of folk songs.

Almost the same characteristics can be ascribed also to Tormis' famous choral piece *Curse upon Iron* written for women's or men's choir, two solo voices and shaman drum. It is the first piece in which the composer used verses of *regilaul* from Finnish national epic *Kalevala*.¹⁷ The story about the birth of iron is derived from the ninth canto of *Kalevala* and the form of the piece is based on the logic of *regilaul*. The composition is built out of two melodic ideas – the verses of cursing or addressing the iron in a recitative-like manner alternate with the verses of telling its origin in more melodic developed line comprising a narrow span of minor third (the first one is derived from the second). The whole piece is pervaded with incantations and ritualistic atmosphere, the form consist of carefully proportioning of larger blocks differing in texture, dynamics and tension which lead to a central climax where the predominant archaic, repetitive patterns dissolve in an “avant-garde” section with glissandos, clusters, talking and screaming. This climax is reserved also for some theatrical gestures that should be performed by chorists: in the score we read that all chorists should “bend suddenly at the knees”, show “gesture of fright”, cower the faces and turn the heads to the right or left. It is clear that Tormis is also mixing different stylistic and compositional elements – *Curse upon Iron* can be understood as allusion to the prehistoric time, as restoration of some ancient ritual but on the other hand the repetitiveness of the structure and simple melodic cells come close to minimalism meanwhile the central climax resembles the modernistic speech compositions. Yet again the simulated historic, ancient style is employed “as a means of discussing allegorically the present time (life and people in general)”.¹⁸

17 Urve Lippus, “Magnum Opus: Veljo Tormis, ‘Curse Upon Iron’ – Analytical Study”, in *Ancient Song Recovered: The Life and Music of Veljo Tormis*, ed. Mimi S. Daitz (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2004).

18 Ibid., 154.



Example 7: Two “melodic” lines in Curse upon Iron.

Concluding Remarks

The analysis of selected pieces confirms a surprisingly high number of parallels between the music of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis. These could be condensed in a list of common points:

- it is difficult to ascribe works by Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis to one of the traditional genres: their pieces are often torn between several genres, mixing vocal genres with theatrical, liturgical and instrumental genres;
- they often use non-traditional instruments (folk instruments, toys, sounding objects);
- typical is the use of non-professional musicians playing on some handheld instruments or playing basic figures on traditional instruments that can be learned by virtually anybody;
- the character of their works is often ritualistic;
- musical actions are often developed into scenic gestures, causing their compositions to come close to theatre pieces;
- hints of folk music, either original or simulated, are also characteristic;
- in its graphic design, the notation can be a bearer of symbolic meanings (circular structures, ancient notation types, notation in the shapes of symbolic elements);
- the idea of sound in space is important, with the musicians often moving in space and thus engulfing the audience in sound, which further enhances the idea of ritual, in which there is no division between performers and spectators;
- all three composers try to present unknown music from an imaginary ancient past;
- all of them use a very broad stylistic palette, with which they stimulate various allusions: their music is stylistically heterogeneous, which is a typical characteristic of postmodern music.

Having established and highlighted these common points, our goal must be to try to find the reasons for such a large number of parallels. Our perspective must therefore be turned from text to context. All three composers lived in multinational countries (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), in which their own nations still longed for their own, independent national states. Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia tried to establish their national identities during the time of the national spring in the 19th Century (basic national institutions – among them also musical institutions – were created¹⁹); in

19 Marcello Potocco, *Nacionalni imaginariji, literarni imaginariji* (Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut, <http://193.2.222.157/Sifranti/StaticPage.aspx?id=123> (21. 2. 2013)), 112, Urve Lippus, “Baltic Music History Writing: Problems and Perspectives”, in *Acta Musicologica* 71, št. 1 (1999), vol. 71/1, 52.

the 20th Century, however, their national feelings were, after a short period of independence, again suppressed (in the Baltic states due to so-called “Russification” and in Yugoslavia through the doctrine of “brotherhood and unity”). Therefore, even in the second half of 20th century, Lithuania, Slovenia and Estonia were small countries (Lithuania, the largest of the three countries, has 3 million inhabitants, while the smallest, Estonia, has just over 1 million inhabitants) with relatively low possibilities of being presented as sovereign, “historical” nations. Furthermore, all three countries belonged to the Eastern Block, which was politically dominated by communist totalitarianism, a political arrangement that left its footprints in all forms of social life, including in culture, where the doctrine of socialist realism dictated the choices of style, artistic technique, content and material. These specific coordinates, which marked the artistic development of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis were in stark contrast to the situation on the other side of the iron curtain. Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis belonged to nations without strong national self-confidence, and with a very weak tradition of art music; moreover, the doctrine of socialist realism was hostile to modernism, which, in the West, was breaking the last links with the remnants of the traditional musical “language”. All three composers were therefore faced with similar dilemmas: how to preserve their own personal musical identity and the musical identity of their nations amid the cultural-political claims for general intelligibility.

Bearing these contextual coordinates in mind, one can interpret the strong inclination towards the ritualization of their pieces, the use of folk instruments as well as original or simulated folk material, and recourse to ancient, pagan times. The quest for simulating the music from some ancient past hence functions as the essence of national identity: national roots are firmly anchored in pagan prehistory. It is typical that nations such as Lithuania, Slovenia and Estonia, which had not firmly established their national identities in the 19th century, should search for their national symbols and heroes in a distant, prehistoric time. Kutavičius’s music and ideas were understood as “a manifesto or declaration of independence for the Lithuanian people”,²⁰ while Tormis’s music “was an important repository of ethnic identity”.²¹

However, the mystical prehistoric time, overlaid with mysterious symbols, the circular comprehension of time, the ritual actions and gestures, and the special quasi “liturgical” logic fulfils another task, which is related to the absence of religious freedom in socialist countries: Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis establish a kind of liturgy that had no association with Christianity and was therefore not suspicious for local censors. However, this process of “ritualization” should be regarded in close connection to the vague employment of genre and a closeness to theatrical forms. The uncertainty – concerning the genre and the mixed form, which crossed the bridges between vocal and instrumental music, absolute music and theatre – covered the essence and social content of these pieces: they could be understood as a harmless, playful and even na-

20 Inga Jankauskiene, “The Role of Text in Meaning Formation”, in *Musical Semiotics in Growth*, ed. E. Tarasti (Imatra: Indiana University Press, 1996), 499.

21 Anderson, “We Should Know Who We Are ...”, 24. Urve Lippus is even more specific: “In Estonia Tormis’s music has fulfilled two related ideological functions: (a) supporting the identity of a member of the Estonian community by suggesting the feeling of participation in an ancient ritual, showing the authentic or ‘right’ way of life [...]; and (b) supporting the ideas of environmental movements by the singing of songs of pre-Christian traditional community (“Structures and Symbols”, 487–488).

ive confrontation with the distant past, and not as potent political statements, which is what they actually were.

The mixed genres and stylistic heterogeneity, perhaps even eclecticism, gave the composers another opportunity: they offered a way out of socialist realism. The paralleling of modernist and traditional (in many cases also archetypal) techniques, forms and procedures could be understood as a "soft" opening to the radical modernism of Western Europe. The typical postmodern procedures (quotation, simulation, palimpsest, parallel constructions, stylistic diversity, semantic charge) that can be found in the works of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis should therefore be understood differently to similar procedures used by postmodern composers in the United States and in the rest of Europe. Whereas postmodernism in the West offered the possibility of surpassing the rigidity and hermeticism of modernism, in Eastern Europe it also provided a way to tackle some modernist techniques that, in connection with non-modernist procedures, ensured semantic comprehensibility, and were therefore not politically suspicious.

The central characteristic of these pieces could be therefore labelled as *masking* – on the surface harmless symbols carried also politically meaningful connotations. This is true also of sacral content of aforementioned pieces by Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis: they reveal sacral gestures but these are in fact profaned – they are employed for the awakening of national feelings and identity.

POVZETEK

Primerjava skladateljskih opusov in poetik treh skladateljev 20. stoletja, ki pripadajo isti generaciji – litovski skladatelj Bronisu Kutavičius (1932), slovenski skladatelj Lojze Lebič (1934) in estonski skladatelj Veljo Tormis (1930) – izdaja nenavadno veliko podobnosti. V delih vseh treh skladateljev ni mogoče spregledati izrazite nagnjenosti h glasbeno ritualnemu, pogoste uporabe ljudskih glasbil, ideje krožnega časa, ki je razvidna tudi iz notacijskega nivoja, ter neke vrste simulacije ljudske glasbe nekakšnega umišljenega predzgodovinskega časa. Takšne paralele vzbujajo vprašanja o njihovih razlogih, ki so povezani s socialno-politično situacijo v državah, v katerih so vsi trije skladatelji živeli in ustvarjali. Litva, Estonija

in Slovenija so sodile kot del Sovjetske zveze oz. Jugoslavije na političnem zemljevidu v Vzhodni blok. Kar pomeni, da so vsi trije skladatelji prišli v stik s socialističnim realizmom, ki je brutalno vstopil tudi v domeno umetnosti. Zato je nemogoče razločevati slogovne spremembe v sedemdesetih in osemdesetih letih 20. stoletja od želje po politični in ideološki osvoboditvi. Hkrati z vedno bolj močnimi ideja o prestopanju rigidnih dogem socialističnega realizma pa so postajale vedno glasnejše tudi misli o smiselnosti hermetizma in želje po radikalni in konstantni inovaciji, ki je bila značilna za modernizem. Vsi trije skladatelji so v podobni situaciji reagirali na podoben način – iskali so mistično in sakralno glasbo predzgodovinskih ljudstev, ki je lahko služila kot sprožilka močnih nacionalnih čustev.