

Music During the Years of Independence

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WITH the resurrection of Lithuania as a free nation, in 1918, there was engendered in the freed people an impulse toward artistic expression, and music assumed an important place in the development of Lithuanian culture. Before World War I, music had been chiefly utilized as a means of encouraging Lithuanian nationalism. Freedom brought a desire and will to develop not only music in general but also performing and creative talents. For the first time a Lithuanian composer could receive encouragement and, in some cases, financial aid toward his studies from the government and could have his compositions performed and published without too much difficulty. These favorable conditions not only stimulated the work of the already established Lithuanian composers but also contributed greatly to the growth of new generations that were taught in their own Lithuanian music institutions.

National Renaissance

The years after 1918 witnessed the repatriation of many Lithuanian composers who had left their homeland during the war: Stasys Šimkus returned from the United States and organized the Klaipeda (Memel) Conservatory; Juozas Gruodis, Juozas Žilevičius, J. Tallat-Kelpša and others returned from Russia and established themselves in the musical life of Lithuania; Juozas Naujalis returned from Vilnius and founded the Naujalis Music School in Kaunas, which later became the Kaunas State Conservatory; the Rev. Teodoras Brazys, Julius Starka, Aleksandras Kačanauskas and other professional and student musicians returned to their native land to establish themselves in various fields of music. The creative talent of all Lithuanian composers received fresh inspiration in this period of national renaissance, in spite of material hardships.

Most of the composers who returned to Lithuania had been in Russia, and they brought with them the influence of Russian musical trends. During the first few years of independence such trends revealed themselves in the compositions of these musicians, and it was not until Lithuania's political differences with Russia and Poland arose that the influence of Western European musical trends was felt.

Tallat-Kelpša, Žilevičius, Brazys, Starka, Vanagaitis, Kačanauskas and Naujalis were the most prominent composers of the early period during which musical composition in general was not affected by Western influences. Certain of these composers, including Naujalis and Brazys, had already been quite active in musical circles before World War I.

J. Tallat-Kelpša (1888—1949) graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1916. As his name indicates, he was of distant Tatar ancestry. On his graduation from the conservatory he continued his studies in composition at the Berlin Academy. When, in 1919, Juozas Naujalis established his new music school, Tallat-Kelpša became its director. In 1920 he was asked to become conductor of the newly formed State Opera in Kaunas, and he staged excellent operatic productions with young and inexperienced talent. In the years that followed the Lithuanian State Opera gained the love and interest of the public until it overshadowed every other form of musical art. The popularity of the State Opera was in part responsible for the slow development of the other branches of Lithuanian music.

In Tallat-Kelpša's compositions the influence of the Russian school can be found intermixed with Lithuanian elements. His works are interesting and original and often make use of Lithuanian motifs. The Samogitian motifs in the songs "žalioje girelėj" ("In the Green Woods") and "Koks ten lengvas poilsis" ("How Soothingly Restful It Is There") are noteworthy. The songs "Mano sieloj šiandien šventa" ("There Is Holiday in My Soul Today"), "Nemargi sakalėliai" ("Colorful Birds"), "Rūpinosi motinėlé" ("A Mother's Cares") and "Liepė Tėvelis" ("My Father Told Me") are unusually beautiful and are often

programed by Lithuanian singers. Tallat-Kelpša's compositions include works for the piano, an opera, many vocal compositions for chorus and solo voice and a number of miscellaneous works in manuscript. His many duties at the State Opera brought an end to his composing career.

Juozas Žilevičius, born in 1891, studied at the Warsaw Musical Institute and graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1919. He returned to Lithuania in 1920 and played a major role in Lithuanian musical life. He was partly responsible for the organization of the Lithuanian State Opera, and in 1922 he was put in charge of the Department of Music of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education. He organized the first symphony concerts, and he also played a prominent part in the establishment on a mass scale of the great Lithuanian Song Festivals. The first music periodical in independent Lithuania, "Muzikos Menas" (Music Art"), was prepared by Juozas Žilevičius.

His compositions include the Symphony in P Minor. This was the first native symphony to be performed in Lithuania (1923). Among his other compositions are a string quartet, miscellaneous instrumental music, a cantata, vespers, religious music and many works for chorus and solo voice. The choral works are sonorous and very effective in performance. All of his compositions are well written and are marked by excellent polyphony, of which he is a master.

Žilevičius is an outstanding authority on Lithuanian music and its history. He is one of the few native Lithuanians who have contributed to the development of a literature of Lithuanian music. Žilevičius is at present in the United States, where he is devoting his time to enriching this neglected phase of Lithuanian cultural life. As director of the Klaipeda (Memeli Music School, before he came to the United States, he collected more than 300 items pertaining to Lithuanian folk instruments. He was a pioneer in this fertile field of music study among his people.

The Rev. Teodoras Brazys (1870—1930) was a highly trained musician and organist before he began studying for the priesthood at the age of 26. One of his first music teachers was Juozas Kalvaitis. As a clergyman, Brazys strove to instill in Lithuanian parish choirs a love for true church music, as prescribed by Pope Pius I in his Motu Propio. He continued his musical studies at Ratis-bone, and on his return to Lithuania he was given the post of instructor in music at the seminary in Vilnius. When his students were ordained, they took his influence with them to the parishes to which they were assigned. The result was that Lithuanian parish choirs gradually adopted liturgical standards in their church music, abandoning the operatic style that was prevalent in European churches before World War I.

Brazys was talented and prolific composer of church music and a lover and collector of Lithuanian folk songs. He harmonized many folk melodies, of which he collected several thousand, and made them better known among Lithuanian people His church music includes many masses, vespers and cantatas, which are written in a predominantly polyphonic style. His majestic and prayerful church music reveals an individual style of composition.

The first textbook of Lithuanian music is credited to Brazys. He wrote many articles, studies and books on Lithuanian music and general musical topics. He endeavored to trace a parallel between Lithuanian and ancient Greek melodies and modes, and he claimed that Lithuanian folk music had its own distinctive harmonic patterns just as it had its own distinctive melodies; his own harmonizations differ greatly from those of his contemporaries. His work in the field of Lithuanian music enabled Lithuanian composers who followed him to orient themselves to the Lithuanian folk-song genre and to find more characteristic harmonizations for these songs.

Julius Starka, born in 1884, underwent his early musical training at the Naujalis Music School in Kaunas; he later graduated from the Moscow Conservatory. In 1919 he organized an excellent chorus, which was incorporated into the newly organized Lithuanian State Opera. Starka continued as director of the Opera chorus until he was compelled to leave Lithuania during World War II. The Opera chorus was widely renowned for its high artistry, and Starka became known as an outstanding director of and authority on choral music.

His many duties prevented him from extensive development of his talent for composition. However, the works that he did compose were exceedingly well written and were frequently sung by choral groups. His largest work, the "Missa pro Defunctis," was published in Warsaw. Choral compositions by him appear in the "Dainų šventės Repertuaras" ("Song Festival Repertoire") series that the Lithuanian government published in 1938. He was not a prolific composer, and he will probably be better remembered for his accomplishments as a choral director.

Antanas Vanagaitis (1890—1949) composed music in which Lithuanian and Italian elements were intermixed. Many of his works enjoy great popularity among Lithuanians, notably the songs "Dul-dul-dudele" and "Stasys" and the choral work "Ei pasauli, mes be Vilniaus nenurimsim" ("Oh World, Without Vilnius We Shall Not Rest"). Most of Vanagaitis' music is in a ilght vein, and although his serious music is well written, only a small part of it has become widely known.

Aleksandras Kačanauskas was born in 1882; he graduated from the Riga Conservatory in Latvia. From 1916 to 1919 he studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and later he continued his training in Vienna and Rome. Before World War I he was active in Latvia as an organizer of Lithuanian choral groups. Kačanauskas is credited with initiating the organization of the Lithuanian Opera.

Many compositions by Kačanauskas have been published in Lithuania; they include compositions for solo voice and chorus and for piano and orchestra, as well as the operetta "Jaunoji našelė" ("The Young Widow"). Among his best-known

songs are "Mano gimtinė" ("My Homeland") and "Mano rožė" ("My Rose").

Gruodis and His Contemporaries

In the years after 1922 a group of Lithuanians trained in musical centers of Western Europe returned to Lithuania. Certain elements that had appeared only in the works of Čiurlionis during his Leipzig period now began to reappear in Lithuanian music. The foremost Lithuanian composers during this period of blending of Western and Eastern elements were Juozas Gruodis, Stasys Šimkus, Kazimieras V. Banaitis and Vladas Jakubėnas. They all strove to create music that would be characteristically Lithuanian.

Juozas Gruodis (1884—1948) studied composition in Moscow; upon his return to Lithuania in 1920, he received a Lithuanian government scholarship to continue his musical studies in Leipzig. When he came back from Leipzig, in 1924, he assumed a position as the most important musician in Lithuania. He differed from many of his contemporaries in that his music was decidedly new, alive and progressive. His original style became a stimulus to Lithuanian music, and he was the first composer of independent Lithuania to reflect in his works the blending of Eastern and Western elements.

Gruodis became the conductor of the Lithuanian State Opera in 1924. In 1927 he resigned from this post in order to accept a new position as director of the Lithuanian State Music School in Kaunas. In 1937, under his directorship, this school became a conservatory. He resigned as director of the conservatory in 1938, but remained on the staff as an instructor in composition.

Gruodis was one of Lithuania's most prolific composers. His compositions include works for orchestra, chorus, piano and various instrumental combinations. Harsh harmonies, radically modernistic in spirit, are especially evident in the music of his Leipzig and post-Leipzig periods. Lyrical moments are few, but when they do appear they are notable for their depth. Sentimentality is almost totally absent from his works. Although Gruodis' music on the whole is rather too difficult for the general musical public, a number of his compositions have attained popularity. The songs "Ko čia taip ilgu" ("Why Is It Lonely Here?") and "Rudens tylumoje" ("In the Silence of Autumn") are widely known, as are several of his choral and symphonic works.

Gruodis' larger works for orchestra include "Simfoninis prologas" ("Symphonic Prologue"), "Rudenelis" ("Autumn"), two symphonic suites and a ballet, "Kastytis ir Jūrate." Other instrumental compositions include two piano sonatas, many other works for the piano, a string quartet and a violin sonata that remains among the finest of his contributions. This sonata is highly endowed with a native Lithuanian originality.

From the time of his return from Leipzig in 1924 until his resignation as director of the Kaunas Conservatory in 1938, Gruodis was necessarily burdened with a great many musical and administrative duties. After 1938 he received a pension from the Lithuanian government that enabled to devote himself freely and productively to composition.

The classes in composition that Gruodis gave at the Kaunas Conservatory were for many years the only such classes in all Lithuania. The youngest generation of Lithuanian composers — Antanas Račiūnas, Jonas Nabažas, K. Griauzde, J. Gaidelis and others — received their basic training, and in some cases all their training, in composition from Gruodis, and his influence is strongly apparent in the works of all composers who graduated from the the Kaunas Conservatory.

Juozas Gruodis will be especially remembered for his contribution to the period of blending of Eastern and Western elements and influences. Such a blending had been seen earlier in the compositions of M. K. Čiurlionis (1875—1911), but it had not been fully understood by his contemporaries. What revealed itself in Gruodis' music and what had been peculiar to Čiurlionis' works more than a decade earlier was now to become a characteristic phenomenon of all Lithuanian culture.

The composer and conductor Stasys Šimkus (1887—1942) received his musical education at the Warsaw Music Institute and at the St. Petersburg and Leipzig Conservatories. During the years preceding World War I he was highly successful in organizing choral groups and concerts in various parts of Lithuania. His harmonizations of Lithuanian folk melodies, written in this period in the style of Naujalis and Sasnauskas, are widely known for their beauty. The solo composition "Kur bakūžė samanota" ("The Moss-Covered Home"), also written in this period, still appears on Lithuanian concert programs.

At the outbreak of World War I, Šimkus toured the United States soliciting funds for Lithuania's independence program. His organizational capacities were disclosed when he organized and directed choral groups in several Lithuanian-American colonies. Šimkus edited and published **Muzika**, a Lithuanian music magazine, and he also published many of his own compositions, including several major works. He returned to Europe in 1919 and studied composition with Karl Elert at the Leipzig Conservatory. When Šimkus returned to Lithuania, he organized the Klaipėda Music Conservatory, which played a prominent role in training Lithuanian orchestral musicians. Later he was appointed conductor of the Lithuanian State Opera, and he also promoted the development of symphonic music in Lithuania.

Šimkus' compositions after his Leipzig study with Elert reveal a tendency toward modernism and the use of many new harmonic techniques. "Lithuanian Silhouettes," a set of piano variations employing folk melodies, is impressionistic and lyrical and is imbued with a Lithuanian nationalistic spirit. "Nugrimzdęs dvaras" ("The Sunken Palace"), a ballad for

baritone solo, women's chorus and orchestra, and the tone poem "Nemunas" ("The Nieman River") display an individual style.

In his later years Šimkus received a pension from the government and devoted his time to composing. The choral works of his last period bear the hallmarks of his individual style. "Vėjo dukra" ("Daughter of the Wind") and "Pasakyk man mergužele" ("Tell Me, Little Girl") are notable examples of his last choral works that have found their way into the repertoires of most Lithuanian choral groups. Šimkus was more fortunate than other Lithuanian composers in that almost all of his compositions were published. Even if he had composed nothing after Lithuania regained her independence in 1918, Šimkus would still have been remembered as a prolific Lithuanian composer.

Kazimieras V. Banaitis was born in 1896; he completed his musical training at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1922. In 1928 he became an instructor at the Kaunas Conservatory, and later he became director of the conservatory. Of all the composers who make up this period in the history of Lithuanian music, Banaitis has been most successful in combining Eastern and Western elements in his music. Lyricism and a rich flow of melody are very evident, as are traces of Impressionism. His harmonization tends to be quite modern and at the same time appealing to the ear. His ideas, worked out in rhapsodic form, are expressed with clarity.

Banaitis' compositions include a set of variations for piano, "Sutemos giesmes ir vizijos" ("Twilight Hymns and Visions"), a sonata for piano and cello and one for piano alone, variations for harp, violin and clarinet ("Lithuanian Idyll"), chamber music, a cantata, choral works and songs and many folk-song harmonizations. The piano accompaniments of Banaitis' songs are interesting, and are marked by boldness and color and by varied dynamics. His folk-song harmonizations are noteworthy in that he has utilized new and interesting harmonies without violating the simplicity and the tonalities of the folk melodies.

Through Banaitis' efforts, the Lithuanian government published a number of the compositions of M.K. Čiurlionis in 1924. A significant result of this was the government's later undertaking to publish compositions by other Lithuanian composers.

Vladas Jakubėnas (born in 1904) studied music in Riga and Berlin. He returned to Lithuania in 1932 and accepted a teaching position at the Kaunas Conservatory. His music is somewhat similar in character to the works of K. V. Banaitis, and also reveals traces of impressionistic influences. His later compositions tend to realism, with national elements that became stronger in his work during his years in Kaunas. Before World War II a return to the use of more common harmonizations, with a clearer perception of national traits, is evident.

Jakubėnas' compositions were often heard at Lithuanian concerts; they include a prelude and fugue for string orchestra, a string quartet, three symphonies, a rhapsody for piano, a serenade for cello and piano, choral works and songs. All three of the symphonies are monumental works, with the second symphony being especially noteworthy for its epic character and dramatic development.

Modern Lithuanian Composers

Two composers who lived and composed in Lithuania and who contributed to the musical culture of Lithuania even though their music was generally devoid of Lithuanian characteristics were Vytautas Bacevičius and Jurgis Kamavičius. Together with Jeronimas Kačinskas, they mark the beginning of the modern era in Lithuanian music.

Vytautas Bacevičius (born in 1905) graduated from the Paris Conservatory in 1928. He studied composition with Kazimier Sikorski and Nicolas Tcherepnin, and for nine years he taught at the Kaunas Conservatory. Bacevičius' early works are reminiscent of Scriabin, Symanowski, Debussy and Prokofieff, but his later compositions disclose the evolution of his own personal style.

Bacevičius is a very prolific composer, especially of piano works. His major works include three symphonies, two piano concertos, a symphonic suite, ballets, a symphonic poem (Poeme Electrique), the opera "Vaidilutė" ("The Vestal") and several piano sonatas. Although his works make use of Lithuanian themes, their character is more international than strictly Lithuanian. Bacevičius is an atonal expressionist, and national elements are foreign to this technique.

Jurgis Karnavičius (born in 1884), a Russian who was born in Lithuania and lived there after World War I, is closely associated with the development of Lithuanian music. Kamavičius has made extensive use of Lithuanian folk melodies in a manner that reflects the influence of the Russian school and that is reminiscent of Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky. Kamavičius' major contributions have been the two operas "Gražina" and "Radvila Perkūnas," both of them successfully produced by the Lithuanian State Opera in Kaunas, and the "Lithuanian Rhapsody" for orchestra. Prior to World War II, Kamavičius taught at the Kaunas Conservatory.

Jeronimas Kačinskas (born in 1907) is the most modern of the Lithuanian composers. He was a student of Alois Haba, and he adheres very firmly to the quarter-tone and twelve-tone systems. Notable examples of his quarter-tone compositions are the second string quartet and a trio for organ, trumpet and viola. Kačinskas, like Bacevičius, is an atonal expressionist. Several of his compositions that are written in the commonly accepted tonal systems display Lithuanian characteristics. His symphonic works include a trumpet concerto, a fantasy, a group of seven symphonic pictures and the

symphonic poem "Giesmė į šviesą" ("Hymn to Light"). Kačinskas' better-known choral works are "Plovėjas" ("The Reaper"), "Beržas" ("The Birch Tree") and "Per girias" ("Through the Woods"), as well as a mass recently published in the United States.

Kačinskas organized the Klaipėda Symphony Orchestra and is an outstanding orchestra and chorus conductor. Before World War II he taught at the Klaipėda Music School; he now lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

The graduates of the Kaunas Conservatory have achieved significant accomplishments in the field of composition. The composers Antanas Račiūnas (born in 1905), Jonas Nabažas (born in 1907), the brothers Antanas and Bronius Budriūnas, K. Griauzdė and J. Gaidelis came under the influence of teacher-composers who themselves were seeking for or had found a national Lithuanian style.

Antanas Račiūnas is a lyricist with a gift for a well-marked melodic line. Among his works are two symphonies, a string quartet and the opera "Trys talismanai" ("The Three Talismans"). His compositions for the piano and for voice are remarkable for their melodiousness.

The compositions of Jonas Nabažas are marked by a more intellectual bent. The musical thoughts embodied in his works are concentrated and original. Nabažas has written a symphony, a string quartet and works for piano and for voice; all of them utilize modernistic harmonizations. Both Nabažas and Račiūnas studied at the Paris Conservatory.

The Budriūnas brothers, K. Griauzdė and J. Gaidelis make up, along with Račiūnas, Nabažas and few others, the body of Lithuanian composers belonging to the latest period in the development of Lithuanian music.

It is possible to differentiate various factors that have contributed to the development of Lithuanian music. Compositions created before and during World War I bear traces of Russian and Polish musical traditions. Since the first Lithuanian composers were the most part trained in Russian and Polish institutions, these were the influences they brought with them when they returned to their homeland. After World War I, diplomatic relations with Russia and Poland were such that Lithuanian musicians and composers were forced to attend Western European conservatories. Significantly, when these musicians returned to Lithuania, traditions and elements of both the Western and Eastern musical cultures were mingled in their works. The first example of this mingling disclosed itself in the compositions of M. K. Čiurlionis, but relatively few of his contemporaries understood it. The phenomenon developed during the period of Lithuania's independence, and gradually evolved into a characteristic Lithuanian style with a tendency to simplicity, in which the Lithuanian elements in time separated themselves from the foreign elements. The coming of World War II interrupted the further development of this trend. Many Lithuanian composers were compelled to leave their homeland, and they are now creating music imbued with characteristics that were developed in independent Lithuania intermixed with influences of their temporary new homelands.