

A REPORT: THE 1995 GAIDA FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

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"Gaida" is the Lithuanian word for a note of music, but it is also the name of a festival of contemporary music held annually at the end of November in the city of Vilnius. The 1995 festival which occurred between November 24 and December 2 was the fifth such festival and was marked by an increasing participation of foreign composers and chamber ensembles. In 1991 I visited the "Gaida" festival and wrote a report on its activities at that time. It was interesting for me to see and hear the changes between that festival and the present one. In general terms, the major difference was the increased inclusion of music and performers from outside the Baltic circle. Composers, performers, and chamber groups were present from the United States, various parts of Europe, and even Australia. This meant that the 1995 festival offered an opportunity to hear not only very contemporary Lithuanian composers but also music by advanced and imaginative composers from elsewhere. What this means is that the "Gaida" festival can now rival its counterparts in other parts of Europe and the United States.

The program for the festival, written in both English and Lithuanian, included the repertory for the concerts, brief biographies of the composers as well as short lists of work and brief analytic comments by the composers themselves. This means that the program represents not only a listing of the festival contents but also a document with historical implications for further study.

It is difficult in a succinct article to detail all the musical events of eight concerts held in the space of nine days. What I plan to do, however, is try to capture the highlights and draw the readers attention to what were, in my opinion, outstanding works and moments. In anticipation of this, I should note that the level of contemporary Lithuanian composition is very sophisticated and that the many very gifted Lithuanian composers employ the same arsenal of advanced compositional techniques that do their counterparts in Europe, Asia, and the United States. This puts them on equal footing with their contemporaries, but also allows this festival to become a means of comparison between their compositions and those by other composers. Recent trends include folk-inspired post-minimalism, often combined with striking textures and colors, and works which combine performance and drama in a number of experimental ways.

For ease of reference I give the complete program of the festival as an appendix to the article. It should be noted that the concerts were held in the recently remodeled Philharmonic Hall which seats about 1000 and has ideal acoustics. This beautiful hall complimented the many ambitious musical activities.

The first night's concert represented an impressive inauguration of the festival through the use of a full orchestra. The orchestra was of a high quality and equal to the demands of the evening's repertory. Of special interest was the piano concerto by Vytautas V. Barkauskas, the son of the composer Vytautas Barkauskas. This attractive work combined elements of minimalism and texturalism into an interesting design highlighted by dialogues between the principal piano and one in the orchestra.

The concert for the second evening was presented by the Vienna Saxophone Quartet, an important chamber group specializing in contemporary music which frequently commissions chamber works for its own use. Many of the compositions on the program were commissioned by this ensemble, including C.P. First's *Mosaics* (1993).

The third concert of the festival was divided into two parts: the first was made up of solo piano works by Australian composers, the second by Lithuanian compositions involving a string quartet. Several works on the second part of the program used minimalistic gestures and folk-inspired melodic ideas. An example of this was The *Resignation* for string

quartet and voice by Mindaugas Urbaitis. The other works on this portion of the program featured the voice in quasi-instrumental and virtuoso role.

The fourth program featured two large-scale choral works by one of Lithuania's leading composers, Bronius Kutavičius. This concert was presented in St. Casimir's church, a lovely Baroque edifice. The participation of the chorus and the St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra gave the *Stabat Mater* (1995) special impact. Kutavičius used Lithuanian folk music and pre-Christian mythology as source materials for *The Last Rites of Heathens* (1978), creating a work that has the aura of a ritual.

The fifth program of the series was presented by an American duo named Basso Bongo. This duo consisted of a double bass player and a percussionist aided by electronic amplification. This duo reflects a common interest in the United States in what is called "fusion" or the amalgamation of elements from post-rock music and more cultivated elements. I found the most successful scores on this program to be the two based on the music of Machaut by the American composer Eve Beglarian. Again many of the compositions on the program were commissioned by the duo.

The sixth concert of the series was given by a trio from the Netherlands called HET, an ensemble consisting of a bass clarinet, flute, and piano. As in the case of the Basso Bongo concert, electronic amplification played an essential role. A particularly striking piece was *Pastiche* (1991-92) by the Netherlandish composer Simon Burgers. This work combined the bass clarinet with throbbing rhythms in the electronic amplification. The compositions on this program were extraordinarily demanding and required high ensemble as well as performing skills.

The next concert of the series was to be given by a Lithuanian ensemble named *Ex Tempore*. Unfortunately, this concert was canceled.

I was not able to hear the two final concerts which were devoted to music for strings or smaller ensembles. Included on these programs were compositions by two composers who have Chicago roots: Craig First and Robert Lombardo. Featured on this program were experimental pieces for the mandolin written for the Greek-American mandolin virtuoso Dimitrios Marinos. The C.P. First and Robert Lombardo works explore new coloristic and playing techniques on the mandolin and demonstrate the mandolin's potential as a solo and ensemble instrument.

Naturally, in a festival which presented over fifty works, there will be variations of the quality of the works. Some concerts communicated real excitement, while others were more mundane. In general, however, the "Gaida" festival represents a tremendous accomplishment for a small country with limited economic resources. It is my hope that this festival will continue and attract even greater international attention.

**5TH BALTIC MUSIC FESTIVAL "GAIDA"
24 November - 2 December 1995
VILNIUS**

**November 24, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC
NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Conductors Martynas Staškus and Mindaugas Piečaitis
Birutė Vainiūnaitė (piano)**

Julius GAIDELIS	"Jūratė and Kastytis" <i>(Lithuanian premiere)</i>
Vytautas BARKAUSKAS	"The Sun" <i>(revised edition, world premiere)</i>
Vytautas V.BARKAUSKAS	Concerto for piano and orchestra No.2 <i>(1992, world premiere)</i>
INTERMISSION	
Antanas REKAŠIUS	"Traditus in mortem" (Autocollage No.3) <i>(1995, world premiere)</i>

**November 25, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC
VIENNA SAXOPHONE QUARTET (Vienna, Austria)**

Craig P. FIRST	Mosaics
Mark ENGEBRETSON	Tell No More of Enchanted Days
Iannis XENAKIS	XAS
INTERMISSION	
Gavin BRAYARS	Alaric I or II
Lucas LIGETI	Frozen State of Song

November 26, 6.00 p.m
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC
Raminta Lampsatyte (piano, introduction)
Eva Ben-Zvi (soprano, Israel)
Andrius Vasiliauskas (piano)
Kaunas Quartet

Ian SHANAHAN

Arc of light (1993)

Raminta Lampsatyte (piano)

Michael SMETANIN

Something's missing here...

(ik mis hier iets) „a postcard from Holland Nr.4
(1985)

LONSDALE

"Lung-gom-pa" (1993)

Michael WHITICKER

The hands, the dream" (1987)

LONSDALE

"Mouna" (1986)

Andrius Vasiliauskas (piano)

INTERMISSION

Vytautas LAURUŠAS

Concerto For Voice And String Quartet
(1982-83)

Vidmantas BARTULIS

String Quartet "Oh Darling"

Mindaugas URBAITIS

Resignatio (1992-93)

for soprano and string quartet (words by
Czeslaw Milosz)

Anatolijus ŠENDEROVAS

"Der tiefe Brunnen..."

for soprano, violin, violoncello, piano and
percussion (words by Franz Kafka)

November 27, 9.00 p.m.
ST.CASIMIR'S CHURCH
WORKS BY BRONIUS KUTAVIČIUS

The Last Rites of the Heathen

The Western Gates (Stabat Mater)

Gintarė Skėrytė (soprano),

chamber choir "Aidija" (cond. Romas Gražinis),

St. Christopher's Chamber Orchestra (cond. Donatas Katkus),

Leopoldas Digrys (organ)

November 28, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC

BASSO BONGO (USA)

Robert Black (double-bass),

Amy Knoles (percussion)

Drew LESSO

Slow Down (1995)

Eve BEGLARIAN

Machaut in the Machine Age I (1990)

Machaut in the Machine Age II (1993)

James SELLARS

Bass and Drums (1985-1995)

INTERMISSION

Basso Bongo

norl mapS (1995)

Erkki Sven TÛÜR

Glamour of the Game (1995) *excerpt*

Jay CLOIDT

Karoshi (1995)

November 29, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC

HET TRIO (The Netherlands)

Paolo PEREZZANI

Il volto della notte (*world premiere*)

Theo LOEVENDIE

Strides

Jurgis JUOZAPAITIS

Kaleidophonium No.1 (*world premiere*)

Simon BURGERS

Pastische!

INTERMISSION

Xu SHUYA

Taiyi II

Jonathan HARVEY

The Riot (*world premiere*)

Roderick de MAN (Olandija)

Gramvousa

November 29, 7.00 p.m.
LITHUANIAN OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE
Eduardas BALSYS "Eglė - the Queen of the Snakes"
Ballet

November 30, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC
EX TEMPORE (Lithuania)

Feliksas Romualdas BAJORAS **Words and MAgic** (1995, *Lithuanian premiere*)
Ričardas BIVEINIS **The Shadows** (1995, *world premiere*)
Onutė NARBUTAITĖ **String of Pearls**
for soprano, piano, double-bass and percussion

INTERMISSION

Vidmantas BARTULIS **Enfance** (1994, *world premiere*)
for soprano, two actors, piano, double-bass and
percussion

December 1, 7.00 p.m.
NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC

St. Christopher's Chamber Orchestra (cond. Donatas Katkus),
String Group of the Orchestra of the Lithuanian Radio and TV (cond.
J.Cechanovičius), **Dimitris Marinos** (mandolin, USA)

Vytautas JUOZAPAITIS **Concerto for Strings** (*world premiere*)
Jurgis JUOZAPAITIS **Kaleidophonium No.3**
Jonas TAMULIONIS **Tocatta Diavolesca**
Rimvydas RACEVIČIUS **Concertino brillante** (1988)
Teisutis MAKACINAS **Simfonietta** (1995, *world premiere*)

INTERMISSION

Rasa BARTKEVIČIŪTĖ **In Remembrance of Herdsboys** (*world premiere*)
Robert LOMBARDO **Orpheus and Menaeds** (Concerto for mandolin and
orchestra, *Lithuanian premiere*)
Osvaldas BALAKAUSKAS **Ostrobothnian Symphony**

December 2, 3.00 p.m.
ACADEMY OF MUSIC
MUSIC FOR STRINGS
Dimitris Marinos (mandolin, USA),
Raimundas Katilius (violin),
Audronė Pšibilskienė (viola),
Petras Kunca (violin),
Raminta Lampsatyte (piano),
Živilė Karkauskaitė (piano),
Vilnius Quartet

Niels Rosing SCHOW **E Rigidis**
Ričardas BIVEINIS **Spiritus aštri** (1993)
Petras Kunca (violin) and
Raminta Lampsatyte (piano)
Niels Viggo BENTZON **Sonata for Viola and Piano op.422**
(1978, *Lithuanian premiere*)
Audronė Pšibilskienė (viola) and
Živilė Karkauskaitė (piano)
Giedrius KUPREVIČIUS **Little Conversations for Violin and Viola**
(1994, *world premiere*)
Raimundas Katilius (violin) and
Audronė Pšibilskienė (viola)
Craig P. FIRST **Epiphany** for mandolin and violin
(*Lithuanian premiere*)
Dimitris Marinos (mandolin) and
Raimundas Katilius (violin)
Remigijus ŠILEIKA **Musica ricordanza**
(1993) for violin, violoncclo and piano
Ingrida Armonaitė (violin),

Rimantas Armonas (violoncello),
Irena Uss (piano)

INTERMISSION

Vytautas JUOZAPAITIS

Niels Viggo BENTZON

Osvaldas BALAKAUSKAS

String Quartet No.6

(1992, *world premiere*)

String Quartet No.16 op.595

(1995, *world premiere*, dedicated to the Vilnius Quartet)

Betsafta

(1995) for piano, violoncello and string quartet

December 2, 6.00 p.m.

NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC

CIKADA DUO (Norway)

(*Lithuanian premieres*)

Arne NORDHEIM

Kevin VOLLANS

INTERMISSION

Luigi NONO

Arne NORDHEIM

Colorazione

"she who sleeps under a blanket"

...sofferte onde serene

Link