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What did Lithuanian Composers Receive the Stalin Prize for? The Year 1948 and Lithuanian Music

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In his overview of stylistic turning points and the ways of composers' adaptation in Soviet Lithuania from the perspective of emigration, Vladas Jakubėnas (1904–1976) befittingly mentioned an unexpected leap of several composers “into the first ranks”.¹ In particular, Balys Dvarionas (1904–1972) stood out among other highly successful composers of the older generation: an active pianist and conductor in the interwar period, in the first decade of the second Soviet occupation he became a prolific composer and was the only Lithuanian to win the Stalin Prize for his compositions twice (in 1949 and 1952). The self-possessed Jakubėnas never belittled his friend Dvarionas, with whom he re-established close contacts and kept up correspondence since the mid-1950s, or his other colleagues who were awarded prizes during the Stalin era, although in emigration those awards were directly associated with the Soviet occupation and, after 1953, people avoided referring to them even in Soviet Lithuania.²

Jakubėnas, an émigré musician who experienced the Soviet art control system during the first Soviet occupation and had a clear understanding of the principles of its operation, was more concerned about highlighting the forced stylistic transformation of Lithuanian music

¹ Vladas Jakubėnas: Istorinė lietuvių muzikos apžvalga [A Historical Overview of Lithuanian Music], *Lietuvių enciklopedija*, vol. 15. Boston: Lietuvių enciklopedijos leidykla, 1968, 699.

² From 1954, the name of the State Prize was used instead of the Stalin Prize in the documents of the Composers' Union of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

and the consequences of its imposed rapprochement with Russian and Soviet music traditions. It is worth remembering that, after World War II, the most famous Lithuanian composers – Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970), Jeronimas Kačinskas (1907–2005), Vladas Jakubėnas, Julius Gaidelis (1909–1983), and others – emigrated, while Juozas Gruodis (1884–1948), a representative of a more moderate style of national modernism and the founder of the Lithuanian school of composers, died early, unable to withstand ideologized criticism and moral pressure. In this environment, the post-war music of both the older composers who became unexpectedly successful (Dvarionas, Konradas Kaveckas, Stasys Vainiūnas) or who made a choice to adapt to the system (Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, Jonas Švedas), and creative representatives of the younger generation (Julius Juzeliūnas, Eduardas Balsys, Jonas Bielionis, Antanas Belazaras and others) evolved as an eclectic mutant, formed by the interbreeding of the budding national style that had just begun to develop in the interwar period, and the great Soviet Stalinist style.

The professional level of some examples of that new “controlled art” (Jakubėnas) impressed *émigré* musicians; however, the ideological trail that accompanied even the most prominent works made them completely unfit to be disseminated in the diaspora or to be recognized as a phenomenon of the common cultural experience. The influential US organizer of musical life Valerija Tysliavienė, who visited Soviet Lithuania on numerous occasions and had many conversations with local musicians, wrote in a letter to Jeronimas Kačinskas: “You will doubtlessly be interested to see the pieces for orchestra I have recently found in a publishing house in New York – Violin Concerto by Dvarionas, Piano Concerto by Vainiūnas, and other extraordinarily good compositions. It is unfortunate that all those compositions were awarded the Stalin Prize and therefore cannot be used.”³

³ Valerija Tysliavienė’s letter to Jeronimas Kačinskas, 01.09.1952, Library of Klaipėda University, Rare Books and Collections, Jeronimas Kačinskas collection (copies from the Juozas Žilevičius–Juozas Kreivėnas Archives of Lithuanian Music, Chicago) (further LKURBC). Not all the compositions named by Tysliavienė were awarded the Stalin Prize: e.g., Vainiūnas received the prize not for the *Piano Concerto*, but for the *Rhapsody on Lithuanian Themes for Violin and Orchestra* (1950).

Even the composers whose works were nominated for the Stalin Prize but did not win it were tainted by that nomination.⁴

The mention of the Stalin Prize as a shameful relic of the recent past has long since been erased from the works on the history of Lithuanian music,⁵ without even trying to recognize the artistic advantages of the compositions, the personal achievements of the prize-winning composers, or their impact on the changes in the Lithuanian music scene after the Second World War. In that regard, it does not suffice to reveal who, when, and for what reasons submitted certain works by Lithuanian composers to the Stalin Prize Committee for consideration, as well as how and why they were evaluated in the intricate process of award distribution, even though a thorough analysis of the facts and processes would be merely informative. The issue of the Stalin prizes is inevitably linked to the Sovietisation of the entire Lithuanian music culture, which – at least that of the Stalin era – has so far remained largely unexplored or has been addressed in a fragmentary analysis of the more general cultural processes in Soviet Lithuania.⁶ The issues of the development of the Soviet Lithuanian musical culture appear in international studies of the Stalin era very rarely: although the research on the musical cultures of national minorities of that period has been

⁴ In 1956, in a letter to Vladas Jakubėnas, Antanas Račiūnas stood on the defensive for being called a Stalin Prize winner. Cf. Antanas Račiūnas letter to Vladas Jakubėnas, 30.II.1956, Lithuanian Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinema, Vladas Jakubėnas Collection (further LMTMC).

⁵ Thus, in the article *Lithuania* in *New Grove Dictionary*, the period from 1940 to 1950 was discussed very briefly: “With the Soviet annexation of Lithuania (1940) came the cultural dictatorship of Soviet Realism, the breaking of contact with modern Western music, and strict ideological censorship. Many placatory works of programme music were written. In 1948, as in all other Soviet republics, a union of composers and musicologists was founded” (Juozas Antanavičius, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė: Lithuania, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 14, edited by Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 2001, 887–892). Incidentally, in the last sentence, the founding date of the Lithuanian SSR Composers’ Union was indicated incorrectly: it should be 1940.

⁶ One of the latest works is the monograph by Nerija Putinaitė: *Skambantis molis. Dainų šventės ir Justino Marcinkevičiaus trilogija kaip sovietinio lietuviškumo ramsčiai* [The Ringing Clay. Song Festivals and the Trilogy by Justinas Marcinkevičius as the Pillars of Soviet Lithuanianism]. Vilnius: Lietuvos katalikų mokslų akademija, Naujasis židyns-Aidai, 2019.

increasing, it mainly focuses on the music scene in the Caucasus republics, Central Asia, and Ukraine.⁷ It is no coincidence that Lithuanian music of the period in question has been included in the discussion of the Baltic region in the recent years: the composers' situation in the newly occupied region was significantly different from that in other national republics. Marina Frolova-Walker argues that national politics of late Stalinism and its special focus on individual regions also had a profound effect on the selection of the Stalin Prize winners.⁸ The present article discusses the cases of awarding the Stalin Prize to Lithuanian composers through highlighting two aspects: firstly, the activities of the Soviet Lithuanian Composers' Union with the aim to adapt to Soviet cultural politics and, secondly, the efforts of the central authorities to integrate the musicians of the newly occupied countries into the Soviet art system.

Lithuanian nominees for the Stalin Prize

The way to Olympus of the Stalin Prize winners was long and had many stages. The works were first submitted to the Stalin Prize Committee by local creative organizations and then reviewed by the national branch of the Communist Party and higher institutions of culture administration. Later, after the Stalin Prize Committee had considered and selected the candidates, the final list was further revised by a large number of authorities – the relevant central ministries, the Agitprop Department of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo Commission, the Politburo – and eventually approved or rejected by Stalin personally.⁹ In Lithuania, an

⁷ For several characteristic examples, see Neil Edmunds (ed.): *Soviet Music and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: The Baton and the Sickle*. London: Routledge, 2004; Marina Frolova-Walker: 'National in Form, Socialist in Content': Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51/2 (1998), 331–371; Tanya Merchant: *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan: From Courtyard to Conservatory*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015; Boram Shin: National Form and Socialist Content: Soviet Modernization and Making of Uzbek National Opera Between the 1920s and 1930s, *Interventions* 19/3 (2017), 416–433.

⁸ Marina Frolova-Walker: *Stalin's Music Prize. Soviet Culture and Politics*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2016, 173–179.

⁹ Frolova-Walker: *Stalin's Music Prize...*, 19–20.

initial list of nominees was drawn up by the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union, selected from among scarce works of its non-numerous members. Between three and six compositions claiming to meet ideological requirements were submitted each year; the efforts were not always successful due to constant changes in the regulations in the field of art, as the cultural policy was not really consistent even in the years of Stalinism.

The Composers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR, founded in 1940 and re-established after the war, for several years had only 21 members: 19 composers and two musicologists.¹⁰ However, it was not easy to control even such a small group and to engage it in ideological creative activity, as the community was scattered over several cities: nine members lived in Vilnius, eleven in Kaunas, and one in Klaipėda. It was really difficult to get the Union's members to attend meetings; therefore, it was not surprising that creative plans, based on the Soviet planning principles, often failed to be implemented on time, and some obligations were fulfilled offhand. Abelis Klenickis, Executive Secretary of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union, most frequently criticized his colleagues for creative inactivity and the failure to respond to the goals set by the Communist Party; the composers were also urged to be more active by the Union's chair Juozas Tallat-Kelpša and, later, Jonas Švedas, as well as musicologist Zinaida Kumpienė. Accusations of negligence came also from the central institutions, including the Stalin Prize Committee. In 1951, the Committee's letter to the USSR Composers' Union and the national unions laid out the most common shortcomings in submitting nominations for the prize: the submitted compositions had not always been discussed publicly; works of poor artistic value were presented; representatives of administration, unrelated to creative work, were included in the list of nominees for the prize; incomplete or erroneous material about the composition, authors,

¹⁰ In the period from 1946 to 1947, members of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union were: Jonas Bendorius, Jonas Bielionis, Antanas Budriūnas, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, Balys Dvarionas, Jonas Dambrauskas, Konstantinas Galkauskas, Juozas Gruodis, Konradas Kaveckas, Aleksandras Kačanauskas, Juozas Karosas, Abelis Klenickis, Zinaida Feoktissova-Kumpienė, Viktoras Kuprevičius, Elena Laumenskienė, Jonas Nabažas, Juozas Pakalnis, Antanas Račiūnas, Jonas Švedas, Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, and Stasys Vainiūnas.



A group of Lithuanian musicians, at the piano – Stasys Vainiūnas. From the left in the first row: Aleksandras Kačanauskas, Kazys Matiukas, Juozas Gruodis, Jonas Dambrauskas, Zinaida Kumpienė, Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, Juozas Karosas, Antanas Račiūnas, Viktoras Kuprevičius. From the left in the second row: Balys Fedaravičius, Jurgis Karnavičius (son, 1912–2001), Balys Dvarionas, Juozas Pakalnis, Jonas Bielionis. Vilnius, 1946. Lithuanian Central State Archives

or groups of authors was submitted; the material was sent late, leaving no time for the Committee to study it in more detail, etc.¹¹

However, ideological and artistic issues were a greater challenge to local creative organizations than a proper presentation of nominees. The “wandering in the dark” of the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers’ Union, according to Abelis Klenickis, Executive Secretary of the Union and a fierce defender of the Stalinist line, became particularly evident in 1948. The Board undertook an initiative of organising a public hearing of the works to be submitted to the Stalin Prize Committee on

¹¹ Letter of Aleksandr Fadeyev, Chair of the Stalin Prize Committee under the USSR Council of Ministers, to the LSSR Composers’ Union, 01.06.1951, Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (further LALA), f. 21, ap. 1, b. 51, l. 2.

February 21, 1948, i.e., eleven days after the historic Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR on Vano Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship*. The planned public hearing included works nominated by the Board for the 1948 Stalin Prize: Juozas Gruodis's *Symphonic Variations* (1945), Stasys Vainiūnas's *Rhapsody for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (1947), and Juozas Tallat-Kelpša's *Cantata on Stalin* (1947).¹² Nevertheless, on March 1 of the same year, in the meeting of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union devoted to discuss the said Resolution, the above-mentioned works by Gruodis and Vainiūnas were cited as examples of reprehensible formalism, while all of Gruodis's instrumental compositions were described as "hysterical insanity"¹³

In the same year, Tallat-Kelpša's *Cantata on Stalin*, the first striking opus extolling Stalin in Lithuanian music, became the first work by a Lithuanian composer to receive the Stalin Prize. After the 1948 Resolution, the number of Lithuanian composers' works dedicated to Stalin or otherwise related to the personality of the "great leader" increased, which may have been partly encouraged by Tallat-Kelpša's award. In the atmosphere of post-war repressions and fear, works on that subject were eventually composed even by those composers who for a long time ignored the Soviet authorities' reproaches for their "creative block".¹⁴ After the above Resolution, the activity of the Lithuanian composers became more actively controlled, and plans were made to increase Stalin's glorification, although not all of these plans, either imposed on the composers or proposed by themselves, were implemented.

The evaluation of the *Cantata on Stalin* may have misled the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union to think that a dedication to Stalin could be a desirable advantage to submit a composition for the

¹² Meeting of the Board of the LSSR Composers' Union, 19.02.1948, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 16, l. 181.

¹³ Zinaida Kumpienė's speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers' Union, 01.03.1948, Laima Kiauleikytė, Violeta Tumasonienė (eds.): *Muzika, 1940–1960*. Dokumentų rinkinys (Lietuvos kultūros istorijos šaltiniai). [*Music, 1940–1960*. A collection of documents (Sources of the history of Lithuanian culture)]. Vilnius: Alka, 1992, 99.

¹⁴ Thus, Kačanauskas, accused by the officials of the Composers' Union of "composer's block" and indifference to politics, eventually composed several pieces of that nature.

award. However, none of the later compositions on the list of Lithuanian submissions with a dedication to the Generalissimo won the award. The comparison of the works selected by the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union and approved by the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in different years, and the decisions of the Stalin Prize Committee hardly allow to establish uniform criteria based on ideological or artistic arguments, which might have been applied with the intention to form the Stalinist artistic elite. Nominations proposed by the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union show attempts to manoeuvre and please the centre whose attitudes were not clear to the periphery, despite the abundance of received resolutions and explanatory notes, as well as the visits of controllers and advisers from the centre. In different years, very different works were selected for the Stalin Prize, such as Antanas Račiūnas's Cantata *Soviet Lithuania* (1948), Juozas Karosas's Sonata for Violin and Piano (1948), Konstantinas Galkauskas's Symphony (1948), Abelis Klenickis's String Quartet in D major (1948), song-cantata *Thank You, Stalin* (1947), and vocal cycle *The Great Patriotic War* (1949), Jonas Švedas's Soviet songs, Balys Dvarionas's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1948) and *Salute to Comrade Stalin* (1952), Stasys Vainiūnas's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 (1952) and the *Rhapsody on Lithuanian Themes for Violin and Orchestra* (1952) and others. The local administration of the Composers' Union hoped to receive helpful comments from the composers from the major centres of the USSR who used to come to special public hearings of Lithuanian compositions or other events, yet the criticism and advice of the guests were not reliable either. Thus, Aram Khachaturian, one of the leaders of the USSR Composers' Union who visited Vilnius in 1947, urged Lithuanian composers to modernize harmony and to stop using "obsolete" heptachords, which outraged local musicians of conservative attitudes;¹⁵ however, a year later, he himself was labelled as a formalist.

¹⁵ Klenickis's speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers' Union, dedicated to the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR on Vano Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship*, 01.03.1948, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 19, l. 18.

The year 1948 and awards to composers from the Baltic republics

It may seem unexpected that Tallat-Kelpša's *Cantata* was the first piece of music dedicated to Stalin to receive the Stalin Prize. Moreover, Tallat-Kelpša was awarded the first-class Prize, and such high awards were rarely given to creators belonging to national minorities. Marina Frolova-Walker, who studied the history of the Stalin Prize for Music more comprehensively, argued that Tallat-Kelpša's award was determined by the situation of cultural politics rather than the dedication of the composition. The confusion that arose after the 1948 Resolution on Muradeli's opera over how to correctly evaluate Soviet music also disrupted the work of the Stalin Prize Committee. The list of musicians denounced as formalists in the Resolution included multiple prize-winning composers who by no means received those awards for works on ideologized themes. Thus, before



Stalin prize winner composer Juozas Tallat-Kelpša. 1940s. Lithuanian Central State Archives

1948, Sergei Prokofiev was awarded four times (1943, 1946, 1947) for Piano Sonata No. 7 (1942) and No. 8 (1944), Symphony No. 5 (1944), and the ballet *Cinderella* (1940–1944), while Dmitri Shostakovich won three awards (1941, 1942, 1946) for Piano Quintet (1940), Symphony No. 7 (1941), and Piano Trio No. 2 (1944). It is worth remembering that the first Stalin Prizes were awarded in 1941 for the works of the period from 1934 to 1940, among which the *Cantata Zdravitsa*¹⁶ (1939), composed by Prokofiev on commission from the Radio Committee on the occasion

¹⁶ Literally, "A toast!", translated also as "Hail to Stalin".



After Dmitri Shostakovich's concert at the LSSR Philharmonics. At the piano – Dmitri Shostakovich. From the right: director of the LSSR Philharmonics Balys Federavičius, composer Balys Dvarionas, head of the Board of the Art Affairs at the LSSR Council of Ministers Juozas Banaitis, and others.

Vilnius, 1951. Lithuanian Central State Archives

of Stalin's 60th birth anniversary, stood out as an effective model of a Soviet-type paean, which, however, did not gain official recognition.

In such an environment, bringing national minorities to the fore seemed a more neutral option. While awards to composers from the periphery were extremely rare in the previous years, after 1948, they became a noticeable trend. Moreover, the post-war USSR nationality policy encouraged greater attention to representatives of the Soviet republics. According to some researchers, the Baltic States, as a newly occupied territory, received special attention, including personally from

Stalin.¹⁷ Among 112 Soviet composers – Stalin Prize winners – were ten representatives of the Baltic States: five Estonians (Eugen Kapp, Artur Kapp, Gustav Ernesaks, Boris Kõrver, Villem Reimann), three Lithuanians (Tallat-Kelpša, Dvarionas, Vainiūnas)¹⁸ and two Latvians (Mārgēris Zariņš, Ādolfs Skulte). Although not all of the awarded compositions had ideological implications, the artistic merits of the work alone would not have sufficed to win the prize: as the analysis of the prize winners' creative biographies showed, closeness to the Russian musical tradition, musical education acquired in Russia, and the familiarity of Moscow's musical elite with the compositions were important criteria. In some cases, they tended to overshadow the artistic factors: Masha Knipper recalled Nikolai Myaskovsky's complaint on his sick-bed about having hallucinations about Soviet songs by Eugen Kapp, a many-time winner of the Stalin Prize, which he found simply repulsive.¹⁹

The way to the Soviet Olympus of art: opportunities and obstacles

The post-war era and, particularly, the period of ideological uncertainty after the 1948 Resolution created good opportunities for young composers of national minorities to make a career. Talent did not suffice there, although it was also important: as Leah Goldman illustrated by examples, composition studies at the Moscow Conservatoire worked best, because it was impossible to gain recognition without being known in the capital of the USSR.²⁰ In the post-war era, composers Julius Juzeliūnas and

¹⁷ Frolova-Walker: *Stalin's Music Prize...*, 173. A similar view was shared by Ekaterina Vlasova, author of a fundamental monograph on the impact of the 1948 Resolution on Soviet music. See Екатерина Власова: *1948 год в советской музыке. Документированное исследование*. Москва: Классика–XXI, 2010.

¹⁸ Stasys Vainiūnas won the Stalin Prize for the *Rhapsody on Lithuanian Themes for Violin and Orchestra* (1950) in 1951.

¹⁹ Masha Knipper's letter to Mira Mendelson-Prokofieva, 03.08.1950. Quoted in Мира Мендельсон-Прокофьева: *Воспоминания о Сергее Прокофьеве. Фрагмент: 1946–1950 годы, Сергей Прокофьев. Воспоминания, письма, статьи*. Москва: Дека-ВС, 2004, 213.

²⁰ Leah Goldman: *Nationally Informed. The Politics of National Minority Music during Late Stalinism*, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3 (2019), 385–391.

Eduardas Balsys made the grade in the Lithuanian SSR; however, they both began composition studies rather late and did their internship at the Leningrad Conservatoire in the final years of the Stalinist regime, which prevented them from taking advantage of such an opportunity.

Older composers were able to distinguish themselves during ten-day national art festivals (*dekadas*, as they were called) of the USSR republics in Moscow, or at official events of the USSR Composers' Union. However, e.g., in 1947, the compositions presented in Moscow during the ten-day festival of Lithuanian art did not receive any attention of famous composers and musicians.²¹ After 1948, circumstances became more favourable for composers from the USSR periphery: in the context of the Soviet folk art campaign, a special department for relations with the Soviet republics was established in the USSR Composers' Union, which gave regular consultations on creative issues. Business trips to Moscow for consultations became a generously state-sponsored practice.

Performances and recognition in the capital of the USSR did not necessarily coincide with the local situation. In this regard, the Stalin Prize awarded to Dvarionas for his Violin Concerto and surrounded by various rumours and stories deserves a comment. Just over a month after the discussion of the 1948 Resolution in Vilnius, where Dvarionas was also criticized by some supporters of the Stalinist line (although he was not the main target of the party functionaries' criticism), a message came from Moscow that the Violin Concerto was included in the concert programme of the First Congress of the USSR Composers' Union. The leadership in Vilnius had to change the list of Lithuanian delegates, which did not include Dvarionas, even though his candidacy had been proposed.²² The successful presentation of the composition

²¹ Klenickis's speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers' Union, dedicated to the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR on Vano Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship*, 01.03.1948, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 19, l. 16–7.

²² Meetings of the LSSR Composers' Union, 11.04.1948; 13.04.1948, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 16, l. 195–6.



Stalin prize winner, composer and conductor Balyš Dvarionas, LSSR Philharmonics. Late 1940s. Lithuanian Central State Archives

in Moscow significantly contributed to its dissemination and further acclaim. Verbal testimony survived that the Stalin Prize awarded to Dvarionas provoked strong jealousy of his colleagues.²³ It was indirectly confirmed not only by the above-mentioned reluctance of his colleagues to include Dvarionas in the delegation, but also by the fact that in later years, especially between 1949 and 1951, he was constantly criticized at various events of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union for his creative inactivity and the lack of political engagement. Although Dvarionas was not an obedient type, apparently, like many others, he tried to protect

²³ As claimed by Saulius Sondeckis who witnessed the events. See Frolova-Walker: *Stalin's Music Prize...*, 345.

himself from frequent criticism and exonerate himself by composing a piece dedicated to Stalin in 1952. However, it was not Dvarionas's *Salute to Comrade Stalin*, but rather the Stalin Prize that he won for the second time in 1952 for his music for the documentary *Soviet Lithuania* (defined by his Vilnius colleagues as “compilatory and lacking catchiness”²⁴) and the end of the Stalinist era that finally established his authority in the Soviet musical elite.

The new musical elite and the paradoxes of Soviet Lithuanian identity

After a public hearing of Soviet Lithuanian music in Vilnius in 1949, conductor Sergey Prokhorov, who came from Tallinn together with a delegation of the USSR Composers' Union, had no doubts that Tallat-Kelpša's *Cantata* belonged to the classics.²⁵ The *Cantata on Stalin* did not become a classic, while the prize-winner of 1949, Dvarionas's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, did attain the status of classic in the performers' repertoire. Until the mid-1970s, this work by a Lithuanian composer was most frequently performed on international stages;²⁶ the Stalin Prize did not have a significant impact on the situation to either effect.

The success of Dvarionas's Violin Concerto was often attributed to the close creative cooperation of the composer and the first performer of the composition, violinist Aleksandras Livontas. The artistry of the latter contributed to the fact that the composition remained in the musical repertoire of the post-Stalinist period, but it was not enough for the work to win the Stalin Prize. More important was the symbiosis of the musical style and the official ideology: Dvarionas's Violin Concerto, like no other early post-war Lithuanian composition, offered a flexible

²⁴ Meeting of the Board of the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union, 20.10.1950, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 16, l. 141.

²⁵ Prokhorov's speech at the conference after a hearing of Soviet Lithuanian music, 14.09.1949, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 29, l. 23.

²⁶ Adeodatas Tauragis: Lietuva skambės tautų brolijoje... [Lithuania Will Sound in the Brotherhood of Nations], *Pergalė* 12 (1972), 158.

synthesis of Russian classics, a new style of Soviet music, and imaginary Soviet Lithuanian identity, which as an expression of Soviet-type folk character became obligatory for any national minority composer aspiring to receive the highest USSR art award. Some Soviet republics even managed to calculate the percentage of folk character in a composition: in Georgia, it was “80, 90 percent, and so on, and the value of the new composition [was] judged on that basis.”²⁷ Paradoxically, the eclectic style of Dvarionas’s music (as defined by Jakubėnas), both in the post-war period and in later years, created contrasting associations in terms of its affiliation to one tradition or another. In the year of its completion, Dvarionas’s Violin Concerto was called an original and effective example of the new – Soviet, not antiquated or, as it was written in the minutes, “museal” – Lithuanian identity, because at that time the value of the work was defined as much as it could be called “good, national, Soviet.”²⁸ In the meetings of the Lithuanian SSR Composers’ Union, Stasys Vainiūnas spoke with great emotion about Dvarionas’s Concerto as an example of Lithuanian character:

Unless I am very much mistaken, and with some envy, I shall argue that Dvarionas is the most Lithuanian composer. Not because we find a Lithuanian melody in his works, which is so close to us, so convincing and recognizable, but because it is not contrived and is well integrated with the form, with folklore, and very natural.²⁹

Meanwhile, in the debates on the folk character of art that were ongoing at the time, Dvarionas himself argued that it was impossible to define the folk character precisely or to provide a correct example.³⁰ In the endless discussions on the subject that took place at

²⁷ Anton Tsulukidze’s speech at the 4th Musicological Plenary Session in Riga, 09.12.1954, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 67, l. 34.

²⁸ Kumpienė’s speech after a public hearing of the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 2 by Vainiūnas at the LSSR Composers’ Union, 09.04.1952, LALA, f. 21, ap., 1, b. 56, l. 181.

²⁹ Vainiūnas’s speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers’ Union, 26–28.03.1949, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 30, l. 24.

³⁰ Dvarionas’s speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers’ Union, 03.01.1952, LALA, f. 21, ap., 1, b. 56, l. 17.

the Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union after 1948, he had the courage to argue with his colleagues ironically:

Recently we heard a Concerto by Vainiūnas, and I have to admit [...] that it was too Lithuanian, [...] too much of *skudučiai* (pan pipes) in it, too much of Švedas's ensemble,³¹ no offence, but we call it Švedism. And then I thought that we need to raise a question: what exactly is Lithuanian identity, what is the folk character, and why did Belazaras travel three hundred kilometres to find that out? I tremble as can't wait until we finally hear what Lithuanian identity is.³²

Still, Frolova-Walker marvelled at how quickly, in just several post-war years, Dvarionas was able to adopt and master the Russian classics, the style of the Mighty Handful.³³ The Violin Concerto by Dvarionas was the first representational composition of a Lithuanian composer to blend into the "grand style" of Soviet music. Without going into extensive discussions, Alexander Ivashkin called it the style of Socialist Realism and aptly described it as a mixture of traditionalism and populism.³⁴ Looking from a historical perspective, the concurrence of Socialist Realism and Western "middlebrow" music (such as the work of Leonard Bernstein) can be noticed, but in the Soviet Union, ideological commitment was closely intertwined with the determination of the authorities to sovietize classical music and to adapt it to the mass user.

In the recent years, researchers of Soviet music turned from selective identification of Socialist Realism with inferior works towards a more profound description of the Stalinist era music. Therefore, expanding the insights of Richard Taruskin and Evgeny Dobrenko, Pauline Fairclough proposed to define the main trend of the 1930s through 1950s as the

³¹ Jonas Švedas (1908–1971) founded the State Academic Song and Dance Ensemble *Lietuva* in 1940.

³² Dvarionas's speech at the meeting of the LSSR Composers' Union, 30.01.1952, LALA, f. 21, ap. 1, b. 56, l. 134.

³³ Frolova-Walker: *Stalin's Music Prize...*, 179.

³⁴ Alexander Ivashkin: Who's Afraid of Socialist Realism, *Slavonic and East European Review* 92/3 (2014), 430–448.

Soviet popular music style.³⁵ From her viewpoint, the Soviet and the Western popular styles in music differed greatly. The Soviet phenomenon was preconditioned historically and culturally: the factor of commercial success was not so much important; the “ideological model [...] insisted on equality of opportunity, experience, and education”, which was supposed to ensure the accessibility of art to the masses, and at the same time rested on “a deep-seated tradition, going back to long before 1917, of regarding the function of art as social transformation for the collective good”.³⁶ The concept of the Soviet popular music style is useful in trying to find the formula of success of Balys Dvarionas’s Violin Concerto and to explain its firm place in the concert repertoire. What he was criticized for by his colleagues at the beginning of his career – a mix of art music and applied music – became a desirable aesthetic and ethical landmark in Soviet music of the post-war period.

The Stalin Prize institution was an important tool in mapping out the guidelines of the new Soviet style of music for the masses and simultaneously defining the new Soviet musical elite. Recent studies on the Stalinist era music show the importance of linking the institutional and artistic analyses of the production and dissemination of that stylistic trend,³⁷ which was also confirmed by the cases of awarding the Stalin Prize to Lithuanian composers.

³⁵ Pauline Fairclough: Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s, *The Journal of Musicology* 35/3 (2018), 336–367.

³⁶ Fairclough: Was Soviet Music Middlebrow?..., 366.

³⁷ Евгений Добренко, Сталинская культура: моменты musicaux, *НАО*, 3 (2015). <https://magazines.gorky.media/nlo/2015/3/stalinskaya-kultura-moments-musicaux.html>

Rūta Stanevičiūtė

Už ką Lietuvos kompozitoriai gavo Stalino premiją? 1948-ieji metai ir Lietuvos muzika

Straipsnyje, pasitelkus kelias atvejo studijas, siekiama pagrįsti pastaraisiais metais stalininio laikotarpio muzikinės kultūros tyrinėjimuose iškeltą argumentą, teigiantį, kad 1948 m. rezoliucija dėl formalizmo muzikoje turėjo svarbią įtaką Sovietų Sąjungos meninio elito ir konkrečiai Stalino premijos komiteto požiūriui į tautinių mažumų muzikinę kultūrą. Po Antrojo pasaulinio karo sovietinė muzikos meno doktrina Lietuvoje buvo diegiama kartu su reikalavimu atsakingai perimti rusų klasikinę tradiciją ir naujojo sovietinio stiliaus priemones. Atidžiai stebėta, kaip kompozitoriai prisitaiko prie pakitusių sąlygų, o Stalino premijos teikimas už muzikos kūrinius, atitinkančius ideologinius reikalavimus, tapo kontrolės svertu ir atitinkamai – šio proceso dalimi. Siekiant suprasti, ar okupuotos Baltijos respublikos tikrai gaudavo didesnę centro dėmesį ir palankumą, pagrįstą ideologiniais motyvais, aptariamos Stalino premijos įteikimo Juozo Tallat-Kelpšos *Kantatai apie Staliną* ir Balio Dvariono *Koncertui smuikui ir orkestrui* aplinkybės. Iš keturių Stalino premiją laimėjusių lietuvių kompozitorių kūrinių tik Dvariono *Koncertas smuikui ir orkestrui* liko tarptautiniuose repertuaruose, tačiau ne dėl šio apdovanojimo, bet nepaisant jo.