

Vytautas Bacevičius in Context

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In memory of Ona Narbutienė

Rūta Stanevičiūtė

Introduction.

Vytautas Bacevičius: Several Returns of the Émigré's Music
to His Fatherland and New Contexts of Its Reception

The project of modernisation was the central idea in the course of the 20th-century Lithuanian music, which predetermined many creative discoveries by Lithuanian composers of various generations and tastes, as well as critical reflection of their works. The sources for this vision of modern Lithuanian music may be traced to the heritage of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, the first Lithuanian classic who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. After several decades, in the interwar years, a number of influential yet very different versions of Lithuanian modernism were formulated by composers Juozas Gruodis, Vladas Jakubėnas, Vytautas Bacevičius and Jeronimas Kačinskas. Their vision of modern music was less shaped by the national tradition than by their personal experiences during their study years in Leipzig, Berlin, Paris and Prague, and their direct contact with the musical innovations of the time. Each of these composers, however, was inspired by very different musical trends, ranging from neofolklorism to neoclassicism and from expressionism to microtonality. Such variety of artistic orientations was also characteristic of the postwar aspirations of modern Lithuanian music, which appeared as a local response to the challenges of both the second Western avant-garde, along with its transgressive adaptations in Eastern and Central Europe, and Soviet modernism (above all, those posed in the works by Dmitry Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev, after they had been rehabilitated during the years of ideological thaw).

In the context of these projects of modernisation in the recent history of Lithuanian music, Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970) took one of the most radical positions. One of the most prominent figures in Lithuanian music as a composer and pianist, he grew up in the famous musical family, the offspring of which became established musicians in both Lithuania and Poland. He grew up in the environment of the two nations and cultures and later always emphasised his European origin and eschewed the narrow understanding of nationalism. His commitment to the culture of Lithuania as a modern state was grounded in his search for a more universal and radical version of modernism. Vytautas Bacevičius was influenced most by his studies in Paris in 1927–30, his intense touring with concerts around Europe and contacts with foreign musicians in the 1930s. The Society of Musicians Progressists, which he established with his fellows in 1932, and which developed into the Lithuanian section of the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) in 1936, helped Vytautas Bacevičius and Jeronimas Kačinskas advocate their cherished music in Lithuania. Their vision of modern music was closer to the Western musical avant-garde than to neofolklorism popular in Lithuanian music of the time, although both composers absorbed distrust and even hostility towards Arnold Schönberg's school from their teachers in Paris and Prague. However innovative, the works by Bacevičius and his colleagues evoked same controversial response in interwar Lithuania as did dodecaphonists' works in Western Europe of the time.

Political change soon put an end to the dissemination of modern aspirations of Bacevičius's generation. The Soviet occupation not only retarded the project of modernisation of Lithuanian music for several decades, but also changed significantly the creative biographies of Vytautas Bacevičius, Jeronimas Kačinskas and many others who found themselves in emigration. Having settled in the United States, Bacevičius, as many other Eastern and Central European composers, did not manage to find an environment for implementation of his vision of new music. Both a foreign cultural milieu that did not become his new homeland and the changes in modern music during the postwar years prevented him and others from moving along the envisioned creative path. The cult of the second avant-garde established a different canon of the 20th-century music from that of Bacevičius and his fellow composers. Many interwar modernists found themselves on its margins. The Lithuanian composer reacted to the challenges of the second avant-garde only after some time. After attempting to find a compromise and adapt

to the American musical culture during the 1940s and 1950s, in the 1960s he returned to his modernist aspirations. As a source of inspiration for his later “cosmic” works Bacevičius chose not the Darmstadt mainstream, but Edgard Varèse and Olivier Messiaen adored by the second avant-garde.

Can we name Vytautas Bacevičius a cult figure of Lithuanian music who was able to shape the course for Lithuanian musical modernism? There is no single answer. It took a long way and repeated efforts for his music to return to his homeland. In postwar years, his works roused some curiosity as a mysterious fragment of the lost history, but they remained practically unknown in Lithuania. Therefore, works by Bacevičius and other interwar Lithuanian modernists made no tangible impact on the composers of the 1960s and 1970s (including Bronius Kutavičius, Osvaldas Balakauskas, Feliksas Bajoras, and others) who then continued the project of modernisation of Lithuanian music. For them Vytautas Bacevičius was more like a mysterious symbol or argument of modernism in renewing and restoring the tradition of national music that had not escaped Soviet compromises. On the other hand, episodic performances of his music since the late 1960s in Lithuania and the increase of available information about his career in emigration have not formed the more definite reception of his works. What place does Vytautas Bacevičius occupy in the history of Lithuanian music? With what phenomena of the world’s 20th-century music history and artistic trends can he be associated? Such questions were raised on the eve of Bacevičius’s centennial and in the events and publications dedicated to his anniversary in 2005.

Needless to say, the uncertain reception of Bacevičius’s works was due to their low availability in the form of incidental performances, a still lesser number of published scores available for a more in-depth study (with most of them remaining still unpublished) and a few recordings of his music released before the restoration of Lithuania’s independence (in 1990). On the other hand, the established representations of the Lithuanian music history and versions of its modernisation that became legitimated in Lithuanian musicology may be found of considerable (yet never discussed) importance for such uncertainty. Both the canons of Lithuanian national classics and modern music were formed and established at the same time, in the 1960s and 1970s—that is, during the period when the second wave of modernism

became prominent in Lithuania. These canons were constructed around the concept of the Lithuanian music history, which took nationalistic ideology as its basis and accepted only nationally driven composers who lived and worked in Lithuania from the end of the 19th century onwards. For this reason the artists opposing musical nationalism—and Vytautas Bacevičius among them—were to become naturally marginalised. What is necessary in present-day revisions of such musicological canons is not so much a complete rejection of any earlier concepts of musical nationalism, but a critical rethinking of the relationship between the 20th-century musical avant-gardes and the tendencies of neofolklorism based on nationalistic ideology. The concept of 20th-century musical nationalisms as the Other in relation to the musical avant-gardes is not productive in reinterpreting the histories of modernisation in smaller European musical cultures. In Lithuania, as in many European countries with similar cultural and political history, musical nationalism developed as a transgression of modernisation project. It can be argued that critical reconsideration of the general developments of the 20th-century music and its local version, the history of Lithuanian music, may serve as solid contexts for new interpretations of Vytautas Bacevičius's creative heritage.

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As paradoxical, or even inevitable, as it may seem, the return of Vytautas Bacevičius's music to his native country was largely contingent on the political situation in Lithuania. During the Soviet times, performances of his works were usually given during the periods of political thaw and softened censorship. The first such concert was organised shortly before the composer's death, in 1969, by the students of the Lithuanian State Conservatory. Another significant return of his music occurred on the 80th anniversary of his birth. In 1985, the Lithuanian movement for national revival was gaining ground in the context of the Soviet perestroika and stimulating liberalisation of cultural policy, which also entailed the budding interest in the long-banned music by Lithuanian emigrant composers. The other, suppressed part of Lithuanian culture now became exposed to a somewhat politicised surge of publicity, which culminated, in 1989, with the Sugrįžimas Festival (Return Festival) held in Vilnius. The festival's programme, featuring works by Lithuanian emigrant composers, included

also several postwar pieces by Bacevičius written in emigration and never performed before in his homeland.

The first fundamental steps in evaluating and summarising Bacevičius's creative output were taken at the 4th and 5th conferences of Lithuanian and Polish musicologists, which took place in Vilnius (1994) and Łódź (1995), respectively. Following these two conferences the proceedings were compiled under the title *Rodzeństwo Bacewiczów* (The Bacevičius Family) and issued in 1996.¹ In 2001, Polish musicologist Małgorzata Janicka-Slysz published a valuable study on Bacevičius's works entitled *Vytautas Bacevičius i jego idee muzyki kosmicznej* (Vytautas Bacevičius and His Ideas of Cosmic Music).² Yet another important two-volume publication appeared on the eve of the composer's centennial. Included in its first volume, *Gyvenimo partitūra* (Life Score; edited by Ona Narbutienė), are a number of articles, in which contributors discuss the composer's creative career and heritage, and his own musical writings.³ The second volume *Išsakyta žodžiais* (Put into Words; edited and translated by Edmundas Gedgaudas) is comprised of Bacevičius's ample correspondence with his family and of his literary works.⁴ This publication has significantly broadened our previous understanding of Bacevičius's works. It must be admitted, though, that the first extensive retrospective of the composer's musical works was only presented at the Vytautas Bacevičius's Festival, dedicated to his centennial in 2005. Five programmes of chamber and symphonic music then encompassed all his music for organ, a major part of his music for piano and his most significant symphonic works written during various periods of his life. This does not comprise all his most significant works, but more important is that many of the works on the festival's programme were performed for the first time after many years in Lithuania. The programme of concerts has been supplemented by important publishing projects, which included the publication of some unpublished scores and portrait CDs.⁵ All this could be an incentive to reconsider Bacevičius's

¹ *Rodzeństwo Bacewiczów. Materiały z Międzynarodowej Sesji Naukowej* (The Bacevičius Family. Proceedings of the International Musicological Conference), ed. Marta Szoka, Łódź: Akademia Muzyczna, 1996.

² Małgorzata Janicka-Slysz, *Vytautas Bacevičius i jego idee muzyki kosmicznej* (Vytautas Bacevičius and His Ideas of Cosmic Music), Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2001.

³ *Vytautas Bacevičius. I tomas. Gyvenimo partitūra* (Vytautas Bacevičius. Volume 1. Life Score), ed. Ona Narbutienė, Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005.

⁴ *Vytautas Bacevičius. II tomas. Išsakyta žodžiais* (Vytautas Bacevičius. Volume 2. Put into Words), ed. and trans. Edmundas Gedgaudas, Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005.

⁵ For more information see www.mic.lt

artistic legacy and its place in the Lithuanian musical culture. Without such new studies, enriched with new data and experiences, our understanding of the modernisation project of Lithuanian music might remain inaccurate, obscure, or even false.

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According to the Bacevičius scholar and initiator of the programme dedicated to his centennial, musicologist Ona Narbutienė, each performance and publication of his music used to encourage her and others to reconsider the established notions concerning Lithuanian music. Such perspective on interpretation and evaluation of the composer's musical legacy was derived from the idea that a part of culture had been silenced and now needs to be regained and integrated into a larger body of culture. Whereas the Polish reception of Bacevičius was mostly concerned, starting from the 1980s, with his being a sibling of the prominent Polish musicians Grażyna Bacewicz and Kiejstut Bacewicz (Kęstutis Bacevičius) and with similarities in their musical evolution. Yet such reception of Vytautas Bacevičius's heritage is not the only possible strategy of the interpretation of his works. His musical development and even his life are typical and symptomatic examples of the generation of Eastern and Central European musicians born at the beginning of the 20th century. Their budding creative careers have been nurtured in multicultural environment developed under the spell of Austro-German postromanticism and the early stages of premodernism. Their youth was marked with creative discoveries, starting from the studies in major European capitals (Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Prague), challenges posed by the utopias of new music, acquaintances with the worlds of contemporary music other than their own, and concluding with their enthusiastic engagement in the cultural renewal of the newly-formed modern states. Their mature creative lives, however, were punctuated by political and cultural transformations, repressions, emigration and subsequent marginalisation, which led to constant reassessment of their previous orientations, doubts and compromises. The upsurge of creative energies at the end of their careers leaves us puzzled with their late style. There are many typical examples of such artistic careers not only in Lithuania, but also in Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic and other countries. Despite this fact, the comparative studies in 20th-century Eastern and Central European modernism are very scarce. Most often the occurrence of

academic publications and events dedicated to this subject is related to some particular (rather than general) phenomena of similar nature, i. e. to a certain school (for instance, the School of Paris), a person (for example, a famous master and his/her pupils and followers), and to the problems of reception of their music. The least investigated topic is the emigration of European composers to the United States of America, as a widespread phenomenon in the first half of the 20th century. Similar studies, which discuss general developments in the 20th-century music, customarily disregard the role of the so-called small European musical cultures. In a paradoxical way, the processes of political liberation in the recent decades appeared not to encourage but, on the contrary, to diminish the initiatives of scholarly cooperation between Eastern and Central European musicologists in this field.

The international musicological conference “Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970) and His Contemporaries: International Links and Contexts of the First Lithuanian Musical Avant-garde,” held in Vilnius in 2005, was the first modest attempt at evaluating Vytautas Bacevičius’s heritage in a wider context of the mid-20th century generation of Eastern and Central European modernists. Papers by Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Czech, French and German musicologists focused on the two sub-themes: Eastern/Central European composers and the School of Paris; and the emigration of Eastern/Central European musicians to the United States. But the majority of papers presented at this conference, which was part of the wider programme celebrating Vytautas Bacevičius’s centennial, naturally centered on his work and personality. They offered a different context for interpretation of his works from that accepted within Lithuanian musicology, as well as many insights by foreign musicologists, which not only opened up new vistas on his music, but also posed new questions oriented towards the future research into his music. For instance: Did Vytautas Bacevičius actually belong to the School of Paris? Aren’t the established views regarding the School of Paris only partial and limiting? Reflections on the composer’s life in emigration have also presented some unexpected puzzles in this new context. Did Vytautas Bacevičius maintain, after having settled in the United States, his contacts with Polish and Russian musicians with whom he had previously collaborated very closely in Europe? If he did not, why? If he did (even to a very limited extent), why didn’t his works receive any response in the musical environment of the emigrants from these neighbouring countries? Finally, how could we reconsider the widely accepted claims about the transformations and influences that

manifested in the works by composers who studied in the European music capitals during the interwar period. Was Vytautas Bacevičius's version of musical modernism shaped exclusively by the French musical tradition of the first half of the 20th century?

These and other issues were analysed and discussed during the conference sessions and discussions. In addition to the scholarly proceedings, the centennial programme also included a concert "Bacevičius and His Contemporaries: Paris Lessons" that helped contextualise the composer's music in ways unusual for the local tradition. It offered a panorama of works that represented the 'Parisian' music of the interwar period, including Vytautas Bacevičius's *Poème électrique* (1932) and Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 1 (1929), Bohuslav Martinů's *La Baggare* (1926), Alexander Tcherepnin's Symphony No. 1 (1926), Alexandre Tansman's *Quatre danses polonaises* (1931) and Uuno Klami's *The Kalevala Suite* (1933–43). This programme demonstrated that the version of modernism found in Vytautas Bacevičius's music may not be associated solely to that cultivated by the School of Paris (to which, in a broad sense, he belonged), but also to other versions, of which he might not know, or from which he had distanced himself.

Certainly, the continually emerging new strategies of interpretation and aspects of contextualisation of Bacevičius's music are to some extent related to the changing general views on the 20th-century music. In 2004, discussing the European composers' anniversaries (from Nikos Skalkottas to Alfred Schnittke and Michael Nyman) celebrated that year in the context of Adorno's idea of the aging of new music and its relationship to the music of the past, Arnold Whittall noted that "the significance of early 20th-century 'new music,' and its relation to the post-1945 avant-garde, continues to be questioned: and that questioning forms part of contemporary music's search for firmer ground as the topic of what might constitute a mainstream at a time of persistent stylistic plurality seems increasingly salient."⁶ Such understanding of the changing perspective on utopias and dystopias of the 20th-century music is very important in interpreting composers who have been marginalised for cultural or political reasons. It is therefore only possible to integrate a creative heritage into a larger body of one or another culture if it is constantly being revived by revising the previous interpretations either in

⁶ Arnold Whittall, "Problems of Reference: Celebrating 2004", *The Musical Times*, vol. 145, no. 1888 (Autumn), 2004, pp. 26–27.

the context of national culture, or in that of the whole modernisation project of the 20th-century music.

This collection is comprised of a larger part of the texts based on papers given at the conference “Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970) and His Contemporaries: International Links and Contexts of the First Lithuanian Musical Avant-garde.” The Lithuanian composer’s career and international contexts of interpretation of his music are presented in three chapters of this collection. The first chapter presents an overview of Bacevičius’s life and creative career (Ona Narbutienė); his artistic orientations and activities as a pianist (Edmundas Gedgaudas); and inspirational sources for his late cosmic music (Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz). The second chapter focuses on Vytautas Bacevičius’s relationship with the School of Paris (Vita Gruodytė), the influence of the French musical tradition on the composer’s works (Jacques Amblard) and the review of life and works of the Eastern and Central European composers (from Russia, Poland and the Czech Republic) related to the Parisian musical scene of the interwar period (André Lischke, Małgorzata Gąsiorowska and Eva Velická). Compared in the last chapter are the lives of the two European modernists—Vytautas Bacevičius and Arthur Lourié—in emigration in the United States (Krzysztof Droba and Olesya Bobrik).

A number of Lithuanian and foreign musical institutions contributed to the organisation of the conference and preparation of this publication. Special thanks are due to the Lithuanian Music Information and Publishing Centre, the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Arts, the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, the Music Academy of Kraków, PWM Edition and Bohuslav Martinů Institute. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Lyudmila Korabelnikova (Russia), specialist in the Russian musical emigration; she could not attend the conference but supported whole-heartedly the idea of a research into regional musical emigration and enriched the conference programme with information, advice and contacts with other project partners.

During the preparation of this collection we lost one of the initiators of the conference and of the whole 2005 anniversary programme dedicated to Vytautas Bacevičius, musicologist Ona Narbutienė (1930–2007). This collection is dedicated to her memory.

Vytautas Bacevičius. Personality and Work

Ona Narbutienė

The Fate and Spread of Vytautas Bacevičius's Artistic Vision

Vytautas Bacevičius—a pianist, composer and music critic, aspiring to the title of a writer—was distinguished for his multifaceted and somewhat mysterious personality in the context of Lithuanian art. Thoroughly educated and fluent in several languages, he was an avid reader, particularly interested in literature and philosophy, which he had studied at Kaunas and Sorbonne universities. His contemporaries were fascinated by his education, erudition and complete devotion to art.

He also possessed a rather complicated and contradictory character marked with irascibility and perfectionism. These traits of his have often caused conflicts not only with his environment, but also within himself, thus affecting his actions and behaviour. On quite many occasions he changed his political views or managed to deny his own statements declared a minute ago. It is not surprising then that people saw him very differently: some considered him a jolly, communicative, witty and friendly person, while others saw him as an arrogant, over-confident recluse who believed in his own superiority. And perhaps everyone was right because Bacevičius's personality included all these traits. Some contradictions and ambiguities of his character might have been connected to his family, which consisted of the representatives of two different nationalities and social strata. His father, Vincas Bacevičius, was Lithuanian, born into a family of Suduvite farmers. While his Polish mother, Maria Modlińska, was a daughter of the Warsaw architect and an aristocratic offspring.

Perhaps it was his descent that might have determined such opposite features of his character, such as arrogance and bohemian inclinations, generosity and, at times, pedantic penny-pinching. It might have also induced an idea in him to marry a rich American woman in order to improve his difficult financial situation, or to describe in detail his everyday life and all the expenditures in his numerous letters to friends and relatives. He would also show a very rare determination and will to sacrifice everything to realise his ideas and to achieve his goals.

If he had been different, perhaps he would not have achieved so much or written so many musical works. Treading the difficult path of his life, Bacevičius's strong belief in his own truth and mission, to which he devoted his life, was a guiding and life giving force.

Vytautas Bacevičius arrived in Kaunas in 1926 where his father had lived and taught music since 1923. Thus, his family was divided in half: the Polish side resided in Łódź (his mother and three children, including a famous Polish violinist and composer Grażyna Bacewicz), while the Lithuanian side lived in Kaunas. To tell the truth, Grażyna would often come to Kaunas to perform, and the pianist Kęstutis Bacevičius (Kiejstut Bacewicz) lived and worked in Kaunas from 1932 to 1935.

Bacevičius came to Kaunas from his native Łódź where he graduated from the Conservatory of Helena Kijeńska in 1926. There he studied piano with Józef Turczynski and Antonin Dobkiewicz and composition with Kazimierz Wiłkomirski and Kazimierz Sikorski.

At the time when Bacevičius arrived in Lithuania, only eight years have passed since the declaration of the country's independence, and the temporary capital of Lithuania, Kaunas, was still shaping its musical culture. In 1919, the first Lithuanian music school was opened in Kaunas, which subsequently developed into Kaunas Conservatory in 1933. The state-funded State Theatre became a centre of musical life, which boasted not only opera, ballet and theatre productions, but also orchestral and chamber music concerts.

After spending a year in Kaunas and organising several recitals, Bacevičius left for Paris where he spent around four years, with constant returns to Kaunas where he gave concerts, published articles and participated in the local artistic life. However, Paris remained Bacevičius's dream city till the end of his life. In 1968, he wrote from the United States: "I love Paris where I always



Fig. 1. Vytautas Bacevičius in Paris (1929)

felt best. I am a Parisian in ‘my body and soul.’ If I had money today, I would move to Paris immediately.”¹

Bacevičius chose to study at the Russian Conservatory in Paris, where he honed his skills under the tutelage of the well-known pianist Santiago Riéra and composer Nikolai Tcherepnin. Having studied with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the latter was nevertheless known for his penchant for novelties. While in Russia, he participated in the activities of the “World of Art” (*Mir iskusstva*) movement; and after moving to Paris, he collaborated with the famous Sergei Diaghilev ballet company. Nikolai Tcherepnin’s music was influenced by Alexander Scriabin and the impressionists, and this also had an impact on Bacevičius, both as a composer and pianist. From the Russian music, the only composers he included into his repertoire were Scriabin, Nikolai Tcherepnin and his son Alexander.

In Paris, Bacevičius held his recitals at prestigious halls like Grand Salle Gaveau, Salle Chopin, Salle Majestic, Salle Erard and others. Judging from Bacevičius’s concert programmes and some remarks in his letters, it is evident that he was very much interested in the musical life of Paris and

¹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Vytautas Montvila, 2 October 1968, LLMA/Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas (Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art), F. 117, Inv. 2, F. 12.



Fig. 2. Vytautas Bacevičius, Gražyna Bacewicz and their father Vincas Bacevičius in Palanga (1930)

attended concerts quite frequently. At the time, Parisian musical scene was dominated by Sergei Prokofiev and Igor Stravinsky who provoked a lot of fervid discussions. Bacevičius's attitude towards Stravinsky changed with the change in his style; at times it was critical. The Lithuanian composer admired Prokofiev; he even admitted Prokofiev's influence on his music. Reviewing Prokofiev's concert in Kaunas, he concluded his article with the passionate sentence: "Sergei Prokofiev is a noble, ingenious and mysterious spirit."²

Perhaps influenced by the modern music scene in Paris, Bacevičius did not recognise Arnold Schönberg's dodecaphonic technique and became interested in neoclassicism which had a great impact on his music during different periods of his career. However, later Bacevičius would speak of neoclassicism very negatively.

The Kaunas period (1926–39) in Bacevičius's career was very productive in all spheres of his activity: he gave many concerts in major cities around Europe and wrote a number of works (including the opera *Vaidilutė* (Priestess), the ballet *Šokių sūkurys* (*Tourbillon de la Vie*), *Poème électrique* for symphony orchestra, two concertos for piano and orchestra and a great number of works for piano and organ), part of which became really well known, as his *Poème électrique* and Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 1. He also devoted some of his time to writing articles and administrative activities. After

² Vytautas Bacevičius, "Prokofjevo genijus" (The Genius of Prokofiev), *Lietuvos aidas*, 24 March 1931.

Lithuania joined the ISCM in 1936, Bacevičius was elected the chairman of its Lithuanian section.

The composer described his Kaunas period as the second stage of his creative work. The early works written during his studies in Łódź were dominated by late Romanticism. However, if we look at his *Thème et 10 variations* for piano written in Łódź, which he marked as his opus 1, we can notice the rudiments of his mature style in the harmonies saturated with chromaticisms and complicated dense textures. His close friend and colleague Jeronimas Kačinskas once remarked that it is in this work that “the composer passes through all previous stages of his development, recognises his creative features and moves on to his next works as a determined artist.”³

The first works written in Kaunas—namely *Poème contemplation*, *Poème mystique*, and *Poème astral* for piano—clearly reveal the new direction of his creative interests. Shortly thereafter, he wrote the *Cosmic Poem* for orchestra, alternately called *Poème symphonique* for 188 instruments—a work already witnessing his vision of a very abstract music dissociated from concrete programmatic images and penetrating the unknown expanses of the universe. The composer saw only one way to achieve this objective—by adopting the idiom of atonal music. He began to realise these ideas fully in the United States.

At the time it was composed, *Poème électrique* stood out among other works and created a stir among orchestral musicians. In presenting this work, the composer described his idea in the following way: “I wanted to capture those elements of life that characterise the spirit of our 20th century... Mechanism should be considered here not only as an outward phenomenon of our life but as its inner element.”⁴ This work originating Lithuanian ‘mechanism’ waited for two years until it had its premiere in 1934. It added new colours to Lithuanian music and inscribed it into the context of European modern music, throwing parallels with similar works by Arthur Honegger, Alexander Mosolov and others. The *Poème électrique* became one of the most performed Bacevičius’s works, shortly receiving first performances in Warsaw, Prague, Buenos Aires and other places.

³ Jeronimas Kačinskas, “Kompozitorius Vytautas Bacevičius ir jo kūryba” (Composer Vytautas Bacevičius and His Work), *Muzikos barai*, no. 3, 1932, p. 38.

⁴ “Naujas V. Bacevičiaus kūrinys” (V. Bacevičius’s New Work), *Muzikos barai*, no. 7–8, 1932, p. 114.

The Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 1, begun in Paris in 1929, shared similar fate. Stravinsky's "Russian" ballets might have been an inspiring example for Bacevičius to combine folk melodies with modern music. Using the melodies of Lithuanian folk songs abundantly, Bacevičius attuned them with the atonal harmony. It is interesting to note that roughly at the same time a more reserved modernist composer Juozas Gruodis wrote symphonic poem *Gyvenimo šokis* (Dance of Life) based on the same principle. For many, it was unacceptable. However, it was these attempts in Lithuanian music that were revived in the 1960s.

How was Bacevičius's music viewed in Lithuania of the time where the cult of opera prevailed and works of contemporary music were performed very rarely? It must be emphasised that despite various problems Bacevičius's music did receive performances. All his works written at that time, except his opera *Vaidilutė* and *Cosmic Poem* for orchestra, had opportunities to reach the public. However, his works for piano and organ were performed only by the composer himself, and no active Lithuanian pianist included them into his repertoire. Meanwhile Bacevičius himself, in almost each of his recitals, played a larger or smaller number of his works.

At first the reviewers evaluated his music with caution and limited themselves to ambiguous phrases, for instance: "This work bears all signs of modern music and demonstrates novelty particularly in its bold harmony."⁵ Doubtless, Bacevičius's suggestiveness as a pianist and the general ambiance of his concerts had an immense significance for reviewers and the public. But even abroad, during his recitals, his music did not remain unnoticed. For instance, the Paris press described him as a "truly original composer."⁶ A Latvian critic praised Bacevičius for his contemporary rendition of musical works and called him a composer "far surpassing his century."⁷ The French critic Joseph Baruzi wrote this about his *Poème mystique* and *Poème astral*: "Both of them are very integral, compelling, beautifully aphoristic and broad-scoped."⁸ The same *Poème astral* in the magazine *Vairas* was evaluated differently: "Bacevičius's work played on the nerves all the time."⁹

⁵ V. Ž-ka, "Koncertas Baltosios gulbės salėje" (Concert in the White Swan Hall), *Lietuva*, 6 October 1926.

⁶ See: "Kompozitorius, pianistas Vytautas Bacevičius" (Composer and Pianist Vytautas Bacevičius), *Rytas*, 7 December 1929.

⁷ Viktor Yurevich, "Segodnya vecherom" (This Evening), *Segodnya*, 27 March 1930.

⁸ Joseph Baruzi, "Recital V. Bacevicius", *Le Ménestrel*, 10 May 1929.

⁹ See: *Vairas*, no. 12 (December), 1931.



Fig. 3. Jeronimas Kačinskas, Juozas Žilevičius, Vladas Jakubėnas, Vytautas Bacevičius before the concert of Baltic symphonic music at Carnegie Hall (1952)

His symphonic works encountered more problems since their fate depended on the orchestral musicians who were usually ill-disposed towards contemporary works, even in the case when their author was also a conductor. Bacevičius's *Poème électrique* encountered a particularly strong resistance from the orchestral players. According to Kačinskas, “orchestral musicians played it sneering at it and putting the score upside down.”¹⁰ The most authoritative music critic of the time, Bacevičius's fellow-composer Vladas Jakubėnas, criticised him for atonalism, explaining that “the brightest modern composers had already moved away from the trend of atonalism.”¹¹ However, as an honest and objective musician, in another review, Jakubėnas wrote: “The *Poème électrique* was perhaps the most interesting. Despite ‘severe’ sound and a rather intense noise, it provoked, with its rhythms full of do-or-die aggressiveness, the joyful sympathy of many listeners. The concert attracted the huge audience.”¹² It seems that the public was more tolerant and open to the new music than the musicians.

The group of Lithuanian avant-gardists was small; except Bacevičius, it also included Jeronimas Kačinskas, Alois Hába's disciple and advocate of microtonal music and athematic style. The role of folklore was the main object of discussions and disagreements. ‘Moderate modernists’ considered the use of folklore indispensable; according to avant-gardists, the national character

¹⁰ See: Jeronimas Kačinskas, “Vytautą Bacevičių prisiminus” (Remembering Vytautas Bacevičius), *Muzika ir teatras*, 1972, pp. 104–108.

¹¹ “Lietuvos filharmonijos draugijos koncertas” (Concert of the Lithuanian Philharmonic Society), *Lietuvos rytas*, 9 January 1934.

¹² Vladas Jakubėnas, “IV filharmonijos koncertas” (The Fourth Philharmonic Concert), *Lietuvos aidas*, 10 January 1934.

of music was determined more by the personality of a composer and less by the use of folklore.

On many occasions Bacevičius was described as a creator of cosmopolitan music foreign to the Lithuanian spirit; the one who, along with Kačinskas, did not belong to the national school of music. However, looking at all these local disagreements in retrospect, we have to acknowledge that almost all large-scale works by Bacevičius were performed and some of them were met benevolently and positively.

The invitation to take part in the jury of the second Ysaÿe Competition in Brussels, in 1938, might be seen as a climax of Bacevičius's career during this period. It was the sign of his international recognition as a concert pianist.

His life, however, took a different turn: immediately after touring South America, Bacevičius settled in New York, in 1940. The standards of the American musical life appeared unacceptable to him; they provoked his resentment and hostility. He even wrote a complaint to the American President, accusing fraudulent managers. His eight recitals at the Carnegie Hall received good reviews but did not provide him with any financial profits; neither did they help him win fame among the American music elite. Entangled in the political intrigues (at first he greeted the establishment of the Soviet regime in Lithuania and later turned away from it), he lost the trust and support of the old and new Lithuanian émigrées. Looking for a possibility to establish himself and to find his own place, he did not write music and did not perform for a long time. When he finally resumed his creative work, he retreated from his previous path. His music became simpler and closer to neoclassicism. He summarised this period as a “period of compromised music.” He even wrote programmatic works, such as the *Sinfonia de la Guerra* (Symphony No. 2), accompanied with the detailed description of its content, and the Symphony No. 3 dedicated to the American nations and concluded with the American anthem in the finale. But this did not help him reach the attention of the American conductors and orchestras. His music was performed only at his own concerts, except perhaps some early works.

In the mid-1950s, the turning point in his music occurred: “I ended with the so-called compromised music,” —wrote Bacevičius. “And since then I am using the newest technique and the newest musical means in my symphonic works. Today I am finding the new ways.”¹³ He returned to his ideas of “cos-

¹³ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Valerija Tysliavienė, 20 February 1963, LTMKM/Lietuvos teatro, muzikos ir kino muziejus (Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum).

mic music” and attempted to embody them after realising that he did not have any chance to win fame with his works in the United States. But this did not stop him. He returned to atonalism and wrote a series of works on cosmic topics, including *Poème cosmique* for piano and *Symphonie cosmique* (Symphony No. 6). In his future plans, he had a monumental “Cosmic Cycle” which, unfortunately, he failed to compose.

Vytautas Bacevičius wrote a lot about the cosmic music and tried to explain it. He regarded Alexander Scriabin as its forefather, and Edgard Varèse, André Jolivet and himself as his successors. In his own words, “I developed fully the concept of cosmic music.”¹⁴ Seeking to realise his undertaking, he did not spare himself; he worked feverishly, immersing himself completely into an imaginary world.

During this period, he would frequently claim that he belonged to the avant-garde. Yet it is necessary to correct this description. Bacevičius associated the avant-garde, first of all, with atonalism, but in the 1960s the avant-garde means of musical expression were already different and the composer himself treated them rather sceptically. He wanted to be completely independent from any fashions and trends and to create his totally individual world.

Failing to find any resonance for his ideas and works in the United States, Bacevičius turned to Lithuania once again during the last years of his life. Here he saw the last and only chance to get his music performed. The Soviet government imposed the ideological regime in Lithuania, according to which Bacevičius was accused not only of his modernism but also as an émigré. Therefore he was a double evil. In the only music history approved at that time, the *Poème électrique* was described as a “distinct example of decadent bourgeois aesthetic views,” with an annotation “clearly revealing the vacuity of this work and the narrowness of its author’s creative outlook.”¹⁵ This was the typical Soviet phraseology used for unwanted artists.

However, the name of Vytautas Bacevičius was known among musicians; he was a rather mysterious personality, and various stories about him incited the interest in him even more. His works for piano and his quartets were first performed in postwar Lithuania in 1969. It happened very quietly, without

¹⁴ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Vytautas Montvila, 11 January 1969, LLMA.

¹⁵ Juozas Gaudrimas, *Iš lietuvių muzikinės kultūros istorijos* (From the History of Lithuanian Musical Culture), vol. 2: 1917–1940. Vilnius: Mintis, 1964, p. 285.

much advertising and the assistance of the official halls. These performances were initiated by conservatory students. In the 1980s, when the ideological regime became more relaxed, Bacevičius's music came to be performed more frequently. But it was not until 1989 that his symphonic music was performed at the Sugrįžimas Festival in Vilnius. Bacevičius's hopes and expectations came to be fulfilled. However, this was only a beginning. It appeared that the process of his return was to be far more complex. Theoretical insights are insufficient for this task: to bring forgotten and unknown music back to an active concert life is a goal requiring a lot of effort and benevolence.

Vytautas Bacevičius the Pianist

As a pianist, Vytautas Bacevičius acquired strong professional fundamentals and a broad artistic education at the private, highly respected conservatory headed by Antoni Dobkiewicz and Helena Kijeńska-Dobkiewicz in Łódź. From this school he obtained diplomas both as a composer and a pianist. Among Vytautas Bacevičius's piano teachers was Józef Turczyński, a prominent personality and disciple of Yelena Yesipova and Ferruccio Busoni. The aesthetic and technical principles inherited from both piano 'grandparents' (particularly, from Busoni) are characteristic of their 'grandchild's' piano style. In 1926, after moving from Łódź to Kaunas, Bacevičius had already been well prepared for a serious concert activity. After a year, Vytautas Bacevičius continued his study of composition and piano in Paris. He studied the latter with Santiago Riéra, a virtuoso with an illustrious concert career who was the disciple of Georges Mathias, one of the brightest pupils of Frédéric Chopin. Scant sources allow us to make the assumption that in Paris Bacevičius polished his piano skills which he had acquired in his native town, without transforming them fundamentally.

Although in Łódź he was commended, in a favourable review, for his interpretation of Mozart, there were not many classicist composers in Bacevičius's repertoire. The works of an earlier epoch, especially the sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti, enabled him to stand out for his beautiful light technique. But was it a sense of style? Or another question: Why would the pianist choose, for his concert performances of, say, J. S. Bach's music, transcriptions related more or less to Romanticism? These are the questions that we will attempt to answer later.

At his concerts in Lithuania, Bacevičius would perform his early works, along with Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis's works, Stasys Šimkus's cycle *Lietuvos siluetai* (Lithuanian Silhouettes), Juozas Gruodis's "Lietuvoje" (In Lithuania) (from his Second Sonata) and *Katarinka*, thus revealing the stylistic variety of scanty Lithuanian repertoire for piano. Bacevičius would boldly present the 20th-century works for the audiences of provincial towns and would win their acknowledgment. As a virtuoso, he performed Franz Liszt's works and was praised for his insightful and original interpretations of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. He also played the piano works by Ignacy Paderewski, Sergei Rachmaninov, Alexander Scriabin and César Franck. After his piano studies in Paris, Bacevičius added the music by Isaac Albéniz, Manuel de Falla and Enrique Granados to his repertoire. Their music conformed to his professor's perception of the sound colour, emotionality, spiritual energy and general musical effect. Bacevičius combined it with clarity and precision characteristic of the most French pianists. On 5 June 1928, after his recital at the Salle Majestic in Paris, the newspaper *Les artistes d'aujourd'hui* mentioned Vytautas Bacevičius's sensitivity, nervous expression, clear rhythm, sparkling virtuosity, his sense of form and charming personality. The pianist was recognised as a paramount interpreter.¹

In the 1930s, Vytautas Bacevičius gave concerts in quite a few musical centres of Europe. The scope of his recitals and orchestral performances was attested by the fact that he was invited, in 1938, as a jury member to the Ysaÿe Competition in Brussels (the jury of the competition dedicated to piano that year also included Arthur Rubinstein, Emil Sauer, François Casadesus, Nikolai Orlov, Walter Gieseking, Carl Zecchi and others, who are regarded today as the great piano stars of the past). After becoming the laureates of this competition, Emil Gilels and Yakov Flier launched their distinguished careers.

At that time, Bacevičius was assembling his repertoire (he continued to include his own works into his concerts) that would change only a little at his concerts in America during the war and postwar years. The relatively innovative *Petite Suite* by Alexander Tcherepnin, the son of his composition teacher Nikolai Tcherepnin, would lend originality to his programmes.

It can be argued that Vytautas Bacevičius, as a pianist, had the rudiments of the so-called 'inborn technique,' because after devoting long periods of

¹ This review was later reprinted in Lithuanian newspaper *Rytas*, see: "Kompozitorius, pianistas Vytautas Bacevičius" (Composer and Pianist Vytautas Bacevičius), *Rytas*, 7 December 1929.



Fig. 1. Vytautas Bacevičius in his New York flat

time to composing, reading and attending museums (besides piano lessons that earned him a living in the United States) he could revive his professional piano skills very easily for his new performances. However, sometimes his letters force us to think otherwise. In June 1959, he wrote to his sister Gražyna: “Since guests at Lewin’s receptions asked me why I didn’t perform Beethoven sonatas... I decided to please them and supplement my renewed repertoire with the Waldstein Sonata (Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53—E. G.), which I have been cramming for the whole week, five hours a day; and I intend to do so for two more weeks until I learn it by rote.”² Here Bacevičius’s statement about his renewed repertoire seems questionable. Living in the United States, he was not inclined to prepare other composers’ works for his concerts. Perhaps it interfered with his imagination as a composer or with some subconscious processes necessary for his creative work that he had difficulty to explain? However, he would add his own works to his repertoire, but these only included the four piano sonatas (by 1943 there was only one of his sonatas in Bacevičius’s repertoire). Even when bored, he would rather choose reading, museums and cinemas. He followed the latest news of the concert life sluggishly, more frequently knowing them only from the reviews. He was interested very little in the new pianists and different performance skills that they would introduce. He identified himself with the epoch of Rubinstein, Horowitz and Serkin. He ‘opposed’ them on various occasions and called

² Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, 29 June 1959, LLMA/Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas (Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art), F. 118, Inv. 1, F. 126.

them not particularly honourable names; at the same time he saw himself as being close to these musical giants.

Analysing and evaluating the art of other pianists in his letters, Bacevičius would often contradict himself: in his judgements a lot depended on the spur of the moment and his benevolent or critical disposition regarding a particular musician. Most frequently he insisted on the clarity of texture, transparent and logically motivated melodic lines, properly understood and executed harmonies, associating all these features largely with the professional skills of using a pedal (or, even more often, of not using it). The reviewers of Bacevičius's concerts in Europe and America most often confirmed these views of the composer. They mentioned his unforced yet energetic, 'shining' sound, powerful basses emphasising monumental sounding and an impressive palette of sound colours. The reviewers also noted his sense of respectful distance towards the musical works he interpreted, as well as the artistry and suggestiveness of his performances. We may suppose that Bacevičius used a light, swift and precise technique in the performance of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major at the Kaunas State Theatre in December 1937 (with Albert Wolff conducting) and, a year later, in Riga (with Jānis Medīņš conducting) and at the Kaunas Radio (with Jeronimas Kačinskas conducting). We cannot reject a hypothesis that Bacevičius's interpretation, with its precise clarity and elegance of the sound patterns, was inspired by other performers of the Piano Concerto in G major whom he had heard in Paris (perhaps even Marguerite Long herself, to whom this work was dedicated). I read the review by an American critic who praised Bacevičius's light playing and called him a genuine specialist of spiritualised interpretation. However, another review ended with the statement that Bacevičius performed all musical works embellishing them with particularly rich sound but their meaning remained overshadowed. The *New York Herald Tribune* reviewer brings us back to the question about the pianist's attitude towards the style of an epoch before Romanticism. In the issue of 12 March 1956, he wrote: "His Bach-Bülow's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* and two Scarlatti's sonatas demonstrated a typical 19th-century attitude towards these works: illogical dynamic nuances, a pointless rubato and an immoderate pedal use."³ Another reviewer wrote that Bacevičius played with the "steel fingers," but enveloped Chopin's lullaby with the soft breathing of spring.

³ L.T., "Bacevicius Heard at Carnegie Hall", *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 March 1956.

To what extent did his aesthetic views as a composer, sensitive art critic, cultural historian and erudite influence him as a pianist? It can be argued that while giving performances, especially when he did not perform his own works, things important to him as a composer would be transformed significantly. But did it happen always? His interpretations of Chopin, whom he included in his concerts very often, differed from the examples of performing this composer's music established by the contemporary celebrities (or piano teachers). To what degree would 'Bacevičius's versions' seem either close and innovative to us, or outdated in our eyes, like the above mentioned examples? Revealing gracefully the clear structures of Chopin's works, he also used expressive means that some called manneristic. However, his performances betrayed some features characteristic of the art of Ignacy Friedman, one of the piano giants of that epoch. An insightful writer Pulgis Andriušis, after Bacevičius's concert in Klaipėda in 1936, described it differently: "He let us hear even such authors like Chopin in his own way, devoid of any sentimentality, in such a way that an ordinary person would never imagine possible. The pianist modernises Chopin and attempts to extract from his text the world sounding differently."⁴

In his letters, Bacevičius repeatedly mentions Claude Debussy as an artist close to him as a pianist and a particularly demanding composer. Bacevičius liked to immerse in his preludes, especially those from the second volume, as one would be absorbed by the abstract paintings. These were incentives deriving not from his preparation for an approaching concert, but from his inquisitive mind and sensitive heart. We do not know whether the public could hear these, perhaps the most wonderful, moments of his art as a pianist.

⁴ Pulgis Andriušis, "Vytauto Bacevičiaus koncertas" (Vytautas Bacevičius's concert), *Vakarai*, 21 January 1936.

Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz

Vytautas Bacevičius's Cosmology of Tones and the Expression of Structure

1. Contexts

In 1965, Vytautas Bacevičius gave a lecture at the Boston College of Music on contemporary music in Europe. Among other things, he also addressed his chief interest—cosmic music. He discussed it in terms of cause-and-effect historical changes, as the sum total of ideological stances of various artists. He said: “Cosmic music suggests a great aesthetic evolution,” stressing at the same time that “the idea is not a new one: Scriabin, Jolivet, Bartók and Varèse have already composed music of this kind.” He then remarked that the avant-garde composers who used astronomical maps to generate “cosmic music,” just as those fascinated with electronic means, were only deceiving themselves, for they all concentrated on the external universe. He explained: “I use graphic diagrams (i.e. his own method of recording musical ideas in the form of plots—note by M. J.-S.); but these only serve to produce symbols helping me to compose music, which I seek in the universe that dwells within me. It is here that I see my road to ultimate perfection... towards spiritual expression.”¹ Bacevičius's understanding of cosmic music thus supports the archetypal theory of the identity of man and the world, according to which *musica mundana* finds its repetition in the human body and becomes

¹ The Vytautas Bacevičius's Archive, LLMA/Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas (Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art).

transformed into *musica humana* to represent the harmony of the human microcosm.

Cosmological tendencies made a significant entry into scholarly and artistic thinking in the first half of the 20th century. Edgard Varèse, quoted by Bacevičius in the above-mentioned lecture, postulated a return to the medieval understanding of music in scientific terms. He adopted and adapted Józef Hoene-Wroński's thesis that music is "reason embodied in sound"² and went on to use it as the basis for his philosophy of gravitational/spatial music, thus becoming one of the "mathematicians of sound."³ Varèse found analogy for musical form in the process of crystal formation and confessed that each of his works unveiled its own form. It should be noted that Bacevičius maintained very much the same: *each work must absolutely have a different⁴ form, and it is up to the artist to make his ultimate contribution, without borrowing from historical heritage.*⁵

Varèse understood music as an extensive universe of sound, of which man was an integral part. "I want to dwell in the material itself, to be... part of the acoustic vibration,"⁶ revealed the author of *Ionization*. Music was for him a projection of sounds in space, the full realisation of which was only made possible by electronic means. Significantly, their use for composition still meant for Varèse a contact with living musical matter. Vytautas Bacevičius also wanted to use electronics in his cosmic music: he planned to use electroacoustic appliances in *Cycle Cosmique*, a piece he composed towards the end of his life.

Universalist and cosmic ideas also found their resonance in the philosophical views of Karlheinz Stockhausen. At the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s, his thinking began to include elements that could be described

² C.f. Konstanty Regamey, "Filozofia muzyki Wrońskiego" and "Jeszcze o teorii muzyki Wrońskiego", *Zet* 6 and 9, 1932; and Michał Bristiger, "Teoria muzyki C. Durutte'a. Przypadek wpływu filozofii polskiej [H.-Wrońskiego] na francuską myśl muzyczną", *Muzyka*, no. 2, 1972.

³ Cf. John D. Anderson, "Varèse and the Lyricism of the New Physics", *The Musical Quarterly*, no. 1, 1991, pp. 31–49.

⁴ Throughout the text, underlined text is by Vytautas Bacevičius; increased letter spacing by author.

⁵ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Wanda Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 30 March 1965. Here and later the author quotes the unpublished letters by Vytautas Bacevičius. See: The Vytautas Bacevičius's Archive, LLMA (Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art).

⁶ Gunter Schuller, "Rozmowa z Varèsem", trans. H. Krzeczkowski, *Res facta*, no. 1, 1967, p. 13.

as cosmology of music.⁷ According to the author of *Gruppen*, “by regaining the lost energetic, telepathic and telecommunicative powers, we shall be able to achieve transcendence, communion with the Absolute, a consciousness not only global but cosmic as well.”⁸ Man, a creature lost in the modern world, would thus achieve musical and cosmic superconsciousness. This process was to be helped by intuitive music open to omnipresent musical vibrations combined with the periodic nature of the cosmos.

Yet the cosmological ideas of Stockhausen differ fundamentally from that of Bacevičius’s cosmic music. The former’s intuitive music consists in achieving a state of “non-thinking,” while composition of cosmic music as understood by the Lithuanian composer occurs in full consciousness (in his own words, “in sharpened consciousness”).

2. Cosmological Inspirations

The ideas of cosmic music matured in the work of Bacevičius under a strong influence of American occultist Claude Bragdon. It is from his book *Yoga* that the composer derived his basic cosmological *termini technici*. In a letter to Grażyna Bacewicz⁹ he wrote: *The core and the source of existence of the entire Universe (material and spiritual) is in Thought or in the Light of Wisdom*. This led to a significant conclusion: *Music as a symbol of Supreme Thought is drawn towards the core and the source of existence of the Universe*. Such understanding of cosmic music relates to the idea that art is expressed by means of symbolic forms (which, as Paul Ricoeur would have put it, *donnent à penser...*). There are, as we know, many varieties of this view. According to Susanne Langer, “music in its highest if obviously symbolic form is an unconsummated symbol.”¹⁰ Langer writes, “the logic of musical forms bears a close similarity to the forms of human feeling: they reflect certain fundamental dynamic models of our inner experience. These dynamic emotional models are presented by musical symbols as indivisible entities.”¹¹

⁷ Cf. Zbigniew Skowron, *Teoria i estetyka awangardy muzycznej II połowy XX wieku*, Warszawa: WUW, 1989, p. 167.

⁸ Andrzej Chłopecki, “Karlheinz Stockhausen. O muzyczną nadświadomość”, *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 19, 1974, p. 14.

⁹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 13 March 1960.

¹⁰ Susanne Langer, *Nowy sens filozofii*, trans. A. H. Bogucka, Warszawa: PIW, 1976, p. 354.

¹¹ Ibid.

The dream was a major and, at the same time, frequently used source of inspiration for Bacevičius's cosmic music. He recorded his oneiric experience in one of his *Trifles*, signed "Santo Diabolo," entitled *Six Weeks of Real Life in a Dream*, and written in 1963: *Focusing on the discovery of the secrets of cosmic art and trying to fathom its values of aesthetic nature, I strived for many years to find the sources of this art and I finally came to the conclusion that it dwells in us, independent of the outside world. Within the entirety of the general Universe, each human being encloses within himself a complete and rounded Universe... Basing on this assumption, I searched for new creative and aesthetic ideas in my own (Universe); in this I was much helped by my subconscious, which is an inexhaustible treasure and source of previously undiscovered ideas and creative elements of abstract and tonal music. One night I found myself in a dream in such an upper sphere of my own Universe. When I awoke, I laid for a time in a half-conscious state. I opened my eyes, returning to real life yet without losing contact with the dream... I desired to live in my dream... I wrote music and I even led my everyday life in that dream for six whole weeks, not once waking in full... I was in constant ecstasy and experienced constant spiritual bliss.*¹²

Bacevičius's experiments with consciousness had a similar objective: to enrich his creative imagination. In another letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, the composer shared his observations: *A subconscious action cannot take place in a waking state, it is only possible during sleep or in a trance. Thus this was not—as I had thought—subconscious action (which you call intuitive); this... was composing in a state... of heightened consciousness, a state achieved thanks to complete isolation from external stimuli.*¹³ Experiments with sleep and the subconscious led Bacevičius to the phenomenon of telepathy. *Thought is the fastest means of transport*, he remarked. *There will be a time when we shall be travelling by telepathy... over the entire universe.*¹⁴

In the case of these occultist issues—which are difficult to present in a clear way in a scholarly context—we come to the subtle matter of the composer's world of fantasy, understood not solely as "the power of imagination"¹⁵ but also, in accordance with the Platonian tradition, a complex of observations

¹² Vytautas Bacevičius. *Sześć tygodni życia realnego we śnie*. The Vytautas Bacevičius's Archive, LLMA, Vilnius.

¹³ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, New York, 13 October 1958.

¹⁴ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna and Wanda, Bridgeport, 13 October 1966.

¹⁵ Cf. Ernesto Grassi, *Świat fantazji*, trans. K. Strzała, *Res Facta*, no. 4, 1970.

and judgements—or, again, equivalent to its Aristotelian conception, situated somewhere between perception (*aisthesis*) and thinking (*noesis*). In the words of Ernesto Grassi, “the original world is a world of sensual rather than empirical phenomena, in which *logos*, the process of associating and unifying statements, already participates.... All that manifests itself acquires a sense, a ‘spiritual’ sense.”¹⁶ Bacevičius’s cosmic music relates, in a deep sense, to such an understanding of the *logos*, which—as we are reminded by Jacques Handschin¹⁷—is a sense-endowed structure.

3. *Poème cosmique*. An Abstract of Cosmic Music

Poème cosmique, Op. 65 for piano was the first work annotated by Bacevičius with the characteristic “cosmic” signature mark. The piece was composed in New York in 1959; it was written in full awareness of a re-evaluated musical language that followed the classicist phase in the composer’s creative evolution. The “cosmic” mark was only to be set on two other completed works, *Symphonie cosmique* (Symphony No. 6), Op. 66 (1960) and *Rayons Cosmiques*, Op. 71 for organ (1963). *Poème cosmique* commenced Bacevičius’s mature period, which was the clearest manifestation of his stylistic idiom: atonal sound order; strong form organised according to the rules of component replication and permutation; expression of structure.

Atonality. Against the system

Bacevičius usually described the tone content of his music with a single word, “atonal.” In a letter to his sister Gražyna, he made a truly prophetic statement: *There is only one way into the future: the endless and wonderful ocean of atonal music....*¹⁸ To choose atonality was tantamount to the choice of an anti-tonal and anti-systemic option—which does not mean that Bacevičius’s music had no tonal organisation. The composer’s characteristic constructivist thinking manifested itself, among other things, in the way he ordered pitch material. The author of *Poème cosmique* decided upon best-suited rules of broadly-understood “tonality” (in the sense of a very general

¹⁶ Ernesto Grassi, pp. 22–23.

¹⁷ Cf. Jacques Handschin, *Der Toncharakter. Eine Einführung in die Tonpsychologie*, Zürich: Atlantis, 1948. See also Walter Wiora, *Tonalny logos*, trans. J. Stęszewski, *Res Facta*, no. 6, 1972.

¹⁸ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 29 December 1958.

order) and defined his own style as “synthetic.”¹⁹ He explained to his sister Grażyna that “even the most atonal chords... can go very well together with classic... chords—which makes me a semi-atonalist.”²⁰ In a letter to his brother Kiejstut, he adds the following: “I am always very careful to produce good atonal successions or combinations of chords... Whenever necessary, I am not afraid to use ‘old’ chords or combinations in an atonal composition as long as I don’t succumb to eclecticism.”²¹

Bacevičius’s synthetic style is an interaction of (1) post-tonal elements, functioning in a harmony based on new centralisation principles; (2) strictly atonal elements, i.e. free use of the twelve-tone spectrum, and (3) pantonal elements, associated with transitional tonality. Pantonality itself has been presented by Rudolph Réti as “a great synthesis of musical tendencies of our [20th] century.”²² The synthesis of tonality, atonality and pantonality that took place in Bacevičius’s music was a possible alternative to the ideas of dodecaphonists or serialists; it is characteristic in its pluralism of the tonal order, as evidenced by the music of the *Cosmic Poem*.

The imperative of individual form

Bacevičius expressed his position on form in the telling declaration: “I am against music without form and each of my works has a very strong structure—but it is my own.”²³ The imperative to produce individual forms did nothing to impede his drive to unify the course of music into an architectural arch at the highest level of formal organisation. The chosen rule was that of tripartite recapitulative form with a contrasting middle part. Thus the distinctive features of Bacevičius’s works are conditioned by an internal strategy. Still, two general principles were established by the composer for the lower level of architecture: (1) component replication (in transposition, variance or abbreviation) and (2) component permutation. This is exemplified by the formal organisation of *Poème cosmique*, the formal and musical components of which are presented in the table.

¹⁹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, New York, 29 January 1952.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Kiejstut Bacewicz, New York, 3 June 1956.

²² Rudolph Réti, *Tonality, Atonality, Pantonality. A Study of Some Trends in Twentieth Century*, London: Rockliff, 1958, p. 118.

²³ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Kiejstut Bacewicz, New York, 22 August 1956.

Movement I. *Andante–Lento–Moderato*

Bars	Formal course components
1-6	a b c c ₁ d a' _{10w}
7-18	e e _I e _{II} e _{III} e _{IV} e _V e _{VI} e _{VII} e _{VIII} e _{IX} e ⁴ e _I ⁴
19-55	f g g _I g ^{3w} h i g ⁸ j j ₈ epilogue + coda

Movement II. *Moderato sostenuto*

Bars	Formal course components
1-7	a b a ^{10m} c c' ₄
7-16	a c _I ^{6w} d d ⁵ e _{3w} f g cadenza
17-34	a ⁴ h c _I ^{6w} d b _I i h _I d ⁵ b a ^{10m}

Movement III. *Allegro assai*

Bars	Formal course components
1-6	a b b ⁸ a ⁸ b' ^{10w} c a ^{10m}
7-15	d e f f _{3m} g h f' ⁸
16-30	d ⁸ i j i' _{6w} d ⁸ a ^{10m} b' ^{10m}
30-42	a b b ⁸ a ⁸ b' ^{10w} g ⁸ g ⁸
43-53	f ⁴ f _{10m} i ₈ coda

Fig. 1. Symbols and abbreviations:

- a, b, c—formal course components;
- numbers denote intervals, e.g. 4 = perfect fourth;
- superscript denotes the transposition of a component an interval upwards, subscript—an interval downwards, e.g. d⁵ = component d brought up by a perfect fifth, f_{3m} = component f a minor third down.

Abstract “words.” The Expression of structure

Bacevičius was an apologete for absolute music, associated, in his own philosophy, with the idea of absolute perfection, and thus with a denial of aleatoric freedom and pure sonorism. A letter to his other sister, Wanda Bacewicz,²⁴ goes as follows: *Obviously, avant-garde music requires a great deal*

²⁴ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Wanda Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 30 October 1963.

of new movements and mimics etc., but e.g. arrows denoting free performance²⁵ are against my ideas of absolute perfection that allows no freedom whatsoever for the performers. Exponents of absolute music, for whom music is its own content (and very rightly so) are in great danger of coming under the hegemony of tone, and generally of sound as a purely natural phenomenon. An even greater danger lurks for programme composers (concrete and electronic music).²⁶ Avante-garde composers (and, I must say, critics) who focus on tone seem to almost totally ignore the fact that sound (as understood in absolute music) must contain a spiritual element. One does not listen with the ear!

The author of *Poème cosmique* treats his works as abstract “words;” seven of his compositions have been titled this way. His correspondence contains the following explanation: *As absolute composer, I cannot use any titles... All I can use is my “WORD,” each “WORD” being in a different form!*²⁷ Thus the composer comes close to understand absolute music as a particular speech of sounds, a language above language. This meta-language employs abstract concepts and the articulated “word” acquires a sense corresponding to the Antique notion of *logos*. The work of music—as an artistic result of a process taking place inside a person—can be then interpreted as an exposition of a poetics of spirituality. As emphasised by Maria Gołaszewska: “A work of art contains, as its significant element, ‘general ideas’ (Roman Ingarden would say ‘a level of general ideas’), i.e. general notions and statements of broad content and meaning.... This ‘spiritual content’ is a significant level in that it defines the work’s structural axis, its artistic basis, its compositional plan.”²⁸ In this sense, then, *Poème cosmique* becomes “an equivalent of an inspiring idea”²⁹—the cosmic idea, and “speaks” through the expression of structure.

²⁵ A clear allusion to the sonoristic scores of Krzysztof Penderecki, where arrows denote the highest or the lowest note in a given instrument.

²⁶ For a long time, compositions representative of concrete and electronic music operated within poetics close to that of programme music. Cf. Karlheinz Stockhausen *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956).

²⁷ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Kiejstut Bacewicz, New York, 22 July 1956.

²⁸ Maria Gołaszewska, “Poetyka duchowości”, in *Oblicza nowej duchowości. Materiały XXIII Ogólnopolskiego Seminarium Estetycznego New Age*, ed. Maria Gołaszewska, Kraków: UJ, 1995, p. 211.

²⁹ Maria Gołaszewska, p. 212.

4. From a New Age Perspective

As an inhabitant of the New World, Vytautas Bacevičius witnessed the birth of the psychedelic and the hippie movements; two books by Aldous Huxley crucial for these movements, *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Heaven and Earth* (1956), were published in the U. S. in the 1950s. The composer was well-versed in occultism, which had been regaining ground since the beginning of the 20th century to make way for the New Age movement. He practiced yoga, experimented with telepathy and exteriorisation, studied literature on Extrasensory Perception. It is quite easy to point out affinities between the composer's cosmic worldview and the New Age syndrome, e.g. (1) the monist and holistic basis of the "cosmic music;" (2) the postulated need for a spiritual transformation of the world, deprived in Western culture of its mystical meaning; (3) the universalistic and syncretic tendencies; (4) the belief in reincarnation. Bacevičius confesses in a letter: "I have long believed that I come through reincarnation from the planet Pegasus... to bring high culture to Earth. I often see Pegasus in trances and dreams."³⁰ Yet two years previously he claimed to "believe only in immortal thought-soul in works of art, science, literature, philosophy, etc. Reincarnation is in fact a highly materialistic theory, based on illusions of egocentric and thus somewhat egoistic intellectuals who cannot accept their final disappearance. Obviously, nothing is lost in nature, but intelligent consciousness of existence can only manifest itself in works of art and science."³¹

5. The Invention

Three months before his death, in a letter to his sister Wanda and his niece Alina Biernacka (Grażyna Bacewicz's daughter),³² the composer mentioned titles of nine symphonic works planned as *Cycle Cosmique* under the common title *Sahasrâra Chakra*, annotated *d'après Claude Bragdon*. It was to consist of the following pieces: (1) *Graphique*, Op. 68 (*en regard de construction d'Universe*); (2) *Symphony No. 7*, Op. 77—*Rèvelation Cosmique "Diana"*³³

³⁰ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna and Wanda Bacewicz, New York, 10 October 1968.

³¹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Halszka and Kiejstut Bacewicz, New York, 20–21 July 1966.

³² Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Wanda Bacewicz and Alina Biernacka, New York, 22 November 1969.

³³ Diana was the name of Bacevičius's favourite pupil, then a little girl. The composer claimed that he is united in her in a "kinship of soul" and that he could be "reincarnated" in her.

(3) *Prana (the Breath of Life)*, Op. 78, (4) *Poème Astral*, Op. 79; (5) *L'Action de Transmutation*, Op. 80; (6) *Métamorphose*, Op. 81; (7) *Vibrations Cosmique*, Op. 82; (8) *Dimensions Supérieur de Cosmos*, Op. 83; (9) *Elysium (Nirvana)*, Op. 84. The cycle had a hierarchical design: “the Sanskrit word ‘nirvana’ (the subtitle of the final piece) denotes ‘dwindling’... a state in an absolute sphere, devoid of polarity and dualism.”³⁴

Only the first work of the series, *Graphique*³⁵ of 1964, was ever completed. Bacevičius used graphic recording, establishing a three-stage order for composing cosmic music.

1. Stage One—intensive thinking; according to the author, the composition as an intentional product must be ready “mentally.”

2. Stage Two—graphic notation of the piece as “a film of the score.”³⁶

3. Stage Three—transposition of the graphic construct into the language of score notation.

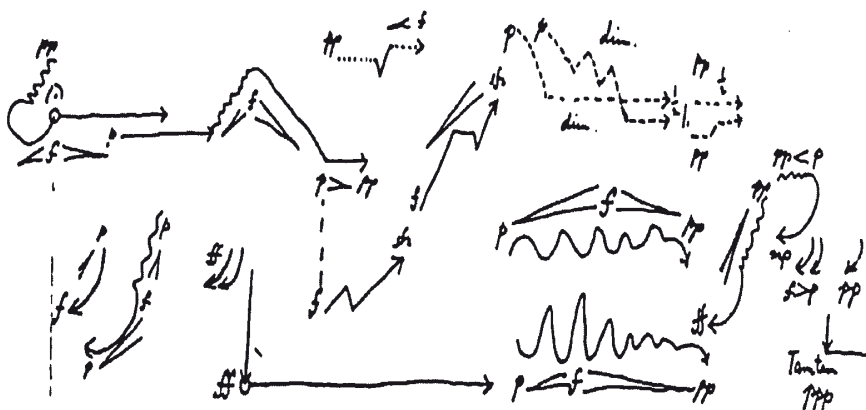


Fig. 2. Vytautas Bacevičius, *Graphique*, Op. 68. Example of “a film of the score”

The composer thus justified his new method of musical notation: *On paper, there is not even five percent of whatever you come up during a night.*³⁷ Then he described the phases of creation of a “cosmic” work: *I first outline a*

³⁴ Herbert Ellinger, *Hinduizm*, trans. G. Sowiński, Kraków: Znak, 1997, p. 15.

³⁵ While compiling a list of works by Vytautas Bacevičius, Kiejstut Bacewicz noted on existing drafts of Symphony No. 7 and *Elysium*, deposited by the composer at Bridgeport University, Connecticut. Searches for these compositions—including those by the author of his paper—yielded no results. The drafts are lost.

³⁶ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Kiejstut Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 21 January 1963.

³⁷ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, probably 1962–63.

*structural plan of a given piece..., which will reflect in its “content” at least a minute particle of my own Universe and only then do I fill this... skeleton with notes.... I avoid empty combination of tones..., by taking for my “content” an abstract vision of my musical... (cosmos), which I have found to be... as deep and as extensive as (macrocosm).*³⁸

“My art”, Bacevičius declared in his sixtieth year, “is based on the strictest logic possible,” and immediately added, significantly, “on my logic.”³⁹ He described his individual style as “uniqueness in music.”⁴⁰ “When I finally start composing,” he confessed to his sister Gražyna, “I never study other people’s scores so that I can be myself.”⁴¹ “I do not believe in creating art as part of a routine. So what if Stravinsky praises... discipline and everyday work, like in an office.... You must take a break to filter new ideas from the subconscious in the conscious,”⁴² and “the subconscious is an endless source of all ideas of cosmic music.”⁴³

Peter Michael Hamel noted in his *Through Music to the Self*: “If we studied the musical processes that have been taking place in the audience’s self-experience partly for millennia, partly for the last several years in a more intensive, compassionate and sensitive way, we could achieve ‘participation in the entirety of the world,’ in the words of Swiss philosopher of culture Jean Gebster from his essay *Über die Erfahrung*: ‘Winning this conscious participation is possibly the task of human life. It also encompasses the invisible and, at the same time, the inarticulate, the unsaid, the incommunicable mystery.’”⁴⁴ Undoubtedly, the above-mentioned participation in the entirety of the world was to be assisted by cosmic music as proposed by Vytautas Bacevičius.

³⁸ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Wanda Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 21 February 1963.

³⁹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Kiejstut Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 21 January 1963.

⁴⁰ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 12 February 1963.

⁴¹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 21 March 1963.

⁴² Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Wanda Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 5 April 1964.

⁴³ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Bridgeport, 3 November 1964.

⁴⁴ Peter Michael Hamel, *Przez muzykę do samego siebie*, trans. P. Maculewicz, Wrocław: Sartorius, 1995, pp. 20–21.

Vytautas Bacevičius and His Contemporaries. The School of Paris

Vita Gruodytė

Vytautas Bacevičius in the Context of Interwar Paris

Perhaps it would not be an overstatement to say that for Vytautas Bacevičius Paris became the main point of departure in terms of his creative work. First of all this was due to the fact that Bacevičius came to Paris as a 22-year-old graduate in composition and piano to spend here his first, the most serious and, eventually, the only traineeship period. We could rightly add that it was also his last traineeship, after which he might be considered an accomplished composer. During his short stay in Paris, which lasted a little more than three years with interruptions (1927–30), Bacevičius gained much experience in terms of his general outlook and encounters with various prevalent styles and ideas. The artistic atmosphere of interwar Paris left its unmistakable mark on Bacevičius's style both as a composer and pianist. As a testimony to this, some opinions have been voiced during his later tour in Latvia that after Bacevičius's studies in Paris his interpretation started betraying the influence of French impressionists and, consequently, he was characterised as a "representative of the French aesthetic." "He arrived with the *Parisian culture*," the critics wrote, "as an aristocrat of creative spirit"¹ (author's emphasis—V. G.). Similar descriptions followed the first performances of Bacevičius's works of the time, for instance, his First Piano Concerto, in which Jonas Bendorius emphasised "the influence of the French music after WWI."²

¹ Ona Narbutienė, "Gyvenimo kelias" (Path of Life), in *Vytautas Bacevičius*, vol. 1, ed. Ona Narbutienė, Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005, p. 79.

² Ibid., p. 80.

On the other hand, despite a rather cosmopolitan atmosphere that surrounded Bacevičius during his years of studies in Poland, it was his stay in Paris that shaped his true understanding of what is modern in music and what is truly avant-garde. This provided him with confidence in his abilities and ideas, which he, as an “ultramodern composer,” had difficulties to defend in rather conservative Lithuania that was still searching for its musical identity. The gap between the musical atmosphere of Paris and that of Lithuania at the time may be illustrated by the fact that after returning to teach at the Kaunas Music School in 1930, Bacevičius was completely misunderstood. According to Ona Narbutienė, “Romanticism was totally alien to the composer; therefore his music seemed unacceptable to the majority of listeners. They missed the coherent musical flow and the wrought out melody that guides a certain musical thought.”³ Thus, Narbutienė concludes, Bacevičius was not only criticised but also ridiculed. The situation improved only after the like-minded fellow composers had returned from abroad (after Jeronimas Kačinskas had finished his studies with Alois Hába in Prague and Vladas Jakubėnas had returned from Germany) and the group of composers thinking in modern categories could form.

It is nonetheless undeniable that in Bacevičius the Lithuanian music soon found the direction of radical avant-gardism. His presence created a conflict (we must remember that many composers of the time still worked at arranging folk songs) that could have had a positive effect on the whole creative atmosphere and further development of Lithuanian music. It could have also produced something novel in Lithuanian music, if not the Soviet occupation in 1940.

Why did Interwar Paris Become the Centre of Attraction?

The fact that interwar Paris became the centre of attraction for many Eastern and Central European composers is completely natural since the position, in which the countries like Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria found themselves in the aftermath of WWI, was rather complicated. First of all, there were very few outstanding personalities and composers in these countries. Whereas in Paris of the time one could meet Maurice Ravel,

³ Ona Narbutienė, *Muzikinis Kaunas 1920–1940* (Musical Kaunas in 1920–1940), Kaunas: Šviesa, 1992, p. 76.



Fig. 1. Viktoras Petravičius's illustration for Liūnė Janušytė's book *Korektūros klaida* (The Proofreading Error) (1938), an ironic novel, deriding the life of Lithuanian artistic bohemia in Paris between the two world wars.

Claude Debussy, Albert Roussel, Florent Schmitt, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Jacques Ibert, the composers of the *Groupe des Six*, Igor Stravinsky, and others. Their modernism was doubtless very attractive and seductive. The abundance of personalities in Paris determined the formation of different groupings and aesthetic trends. Thus, there existed a wide array of choices. Furthermore, the general cosmopolitan atmosphere, nourished by many influences including the American jazz and dance music, was also very attractive to many young newcomers. Contemporary Paris was still enveloped in the post-WWI euphoria that not only encouraged the boldest experiments but also created a lifestyle characterised by the ease and the seeming nonchalance.

On the other hand, the state apparatus and cultural institutions in Paris remained almost untouched by WWI. This was in a complete opposition to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. In Lithuania that had recently declared its independence, this apparatus and cultural institutions were in the process of formation, and artists and intellectuals were only beginning to return to the country after their studies abroad.

Meanwhile in Paris, there was a plenty of music associations and societies, including eight huge associations devoted exclusively to symphonic music that supervised a number of big concert halls and the newly opened Pleyel hall (1927), among them. Most associations aimed to stimulate and disseminate the latest developments in music. For instance, the “Triton” chamber music society (1932) that attracted many emigrants (members of the School of Paris had strong connections with this society and Tibor Harsanyi was among its founders) sought not only to guarantee masterly public performances but also to radio-broadcast its concerts throughout Europe.⁴ Therefore, the radio, by way of exchange, initiated the series of concerts programmed according to different nationalities—for instance, “Italian music concerts,” “Polish music concerts,” “French music concerts,” etc. Yet it was concerts comprised of the most recent and newest music that were the most typical product of the interwar period, with its overwhelming thirst for novelties. Such concerts were oftentimes inspired by conductors who had possibilities to compile independent concert programmes—for example, Serge Koussevitzky, Vladimir Golschmann, Pierre Monteux, Gabriel Pierné and Walter Straram. Consequently, at the time there were tens of excellent concerts in Paris, which would take place every day and still attract large audiences. This should be emphasised, because it was the public that guaranteed perfect functioning of the concert system despite some complaints found in contemporary sources about a part of concert public lost due to the improving life standards, the growing interest in sports and cinema and the new technical achievements: for instance, on weekends some people would rather go out of town by car (perhaps for this reason, the conductor Walter Straram organised his concerts on Thursdays), or would rather listen to the radio for the rest of the week.⁵ Indeed, if we were to compare concert seasons 1927–28 and 1929–30, we would discover that the general number of concerts decreased from 1543 to 1517.⁶ The number of piano recitals also decreased: there were 261 concerts held during the first season of Bacevičius’s stay in Paris, while during the second one there were only 223 concerts. While the number of symphonic music concerts, on the contrary, increased from 469 to 537.

⁴ Quoted from Claude Rostand, *L'œuvre de Pierre Octave Ferroud*, Paris: Durand, no date, p. 10.

⁵ See René Dumesnil, *La musique en France entre les deux guerres*, Genève-Paris-Montréal: Ed. du Milieu du Monde, 1946.

⁶ These numbers are presented by René Dumesnil, op. cit., p. 75.

In the context of such cultural wealth, there were little apparent obstacles for young foreign composers to organise their recitals or to coax some conductor into performance of their large-scale musical works. This was witnessed by Hungarian Tibor Harsanyi, a future representative of the School of Paris, who described a curious event shortly after his arrival in Paris in 1923: “as I was walking the streets of Paris, my eyes became fixed on a concert bill that read ‘Concerts Colonne...’ and the names of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt listed below, as well as the name of a conductor—Gabriel Pierné. I rushed back home, picked up one of my scores and brought it to the secretariat of the so-called Concerts Colonne. After a few weeks, I received Pierné’s letter, informing me that he is going to perform my *Dance* in one of his concerts. This was my first work performed in Paris. That’s how Paris adopted me, in a certain sense ...”⁷ But in most cases, chances were little that new works would receive second performances. The orchestra musicians also grew increasingly hostile to new music that consumed a lot of their energy.

Bacevičius, likewise, did not go to any serious trouble in organising his recitals: as we can see from the surviving programme notes, in quite a short time, from December 1928 to June 1929 (i. e. in seven months), he managed to give altogether four performances in different Parisian halls. This was an outstanding achievement, especially if we take into account the fact that in the meantime he was finishing his First Piano Concerto and even returned to Kaunas to conduct the overture of his new opera *Vaidilutė* (The Priestess). Later on he would slow down: in 1930 and 1931, he would give only two recitals. Bacevičius fared worse with the production of his opera *Vaidilutė* in Paris. In 1932, he wrote of his failure: “Mr. Ricou [the then director of the Opéra Comique] was interested very much in my opera but could not put it on stage for political reasons, since, as it is known, the issue of Vilnius was one of the most important in the opera.”⁸ Doubtless, it was an important reason, because during the interwar period the French, unfortunately, supported Poles in all their political issues related to Lithuania. Yet the more important reason for not staging the opera was the fact that at the time the Opéra Comique experienced a profound financial and artistic crisis. The theatre was blamed for the backward-looking repertoire policy and the lack of

⁷ José Navas, *L'Ecole de Paris*, Mémoire de D.E.A., Université Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV, 1992, p. 14.

⁸ Jolita Kiseliauskaitė, “Operos *Vaidilutė* likimo pėdsakais” (Following the Path of the Opera *Priestess*), in *Vytautas Bacevičius*, vol. 1, p. 390.

new themes, the inability of musicians to get rid of the Wagnerian influence, while everybody in the musical world of the time was involved in fervent discussions concerning the issues of atonal music. The cultural practice itself was in the process of change; and thus there was a widening gap between the public demand (or public taste) and supply that composers had to offer.⁹ Georges Ricou and Louis Masson, who had taken over the management of the Opéra Comique in 1925, hoped that their decision to include some previously successful works into the current repertoire will help to pull the theatre out of crisis. But they were not very successful. Georges Ricou resigned in 1931 and Louis Masson was replaced by a new director, Pierre-Barthélémy Ghensi, in 1932. Given the circumstances, the theatre would not venture into staging the opera by an unknown foreign composer based on a politically alarming plot.

It was not only due to the lack of competent teachers in their native countries but also due to specific financial conditions that many Eastern and Central European artists (painters and composers in particular) were forced to move to Paris. Lithuania, like many other countries of the region (for instance, the Czech Republic), had the system of state scholarships for studies and traineeships in Paris. The Art Council of Lithuania, which allotted scholarships for artists' studies abroad, was founded in 1926. After spending a year in Paris on his own means, Bacevičius received the Lithuanian state scholarship for a study year 1928–29. Bohuslav Martinů, another representative of the School of Paris, has left for Paris for similar reasons: he was disappointed with his studies at the Prague Conservatory and was granted the scholarship from the Czech government to study abroad in 1923 (let us remind ourselves that it was not until then that Hába founded his composition class at the Prague Conservatory).

We can find a similar financial motivation in the thoughts of already quoted Tibor Harsanyi: "This was in 1923. I faced an important problem: Where should I go and in what country should I start my musical career? Where to go in order to find an atmosphere and environment necessary for my musical and artistic development? The economic and social situation of contemporary Hungary was too bad for a young musician to dream of establishing himself. I did not want to go back to Holland, the atmosphere of

⁹ For more of this see Jean-Christoph Branger, "L'Opéra-Comique", in *Musique et musiciens à Paris dans les années trente* (textes réunis et présentés par Danièle Pistone), Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000, pp. 135–149.

which, although I earned enough as a pianist working odd jobs there, was not opportune for my debut as a young composer. Germany at that time went through the period of large-scale inflation. Thus, it was rather risky to find oneself penniless there.”¹⁰

The third reason for such large-scale migration of artists may be related to the idea that many Eastern and Central European countries perceived the postwar period as a completely new epoch, a *tabula rasa*, from which one should start to construct one's own musical identity. In order to accomplish that, it was necessary, first of all, to know what was happening in the main European centres of culture. This led to reflections and discussions in musical circles (which also found their way in the Lithuanian press) about the ways to arrive at a compromise between radical modernism found in the West and national insularity. This apprehension of conflict was characteristic of whole postwar Eastern and Central Europe and even beyond this region. For instance, in Mexico, the Left that had taken over the government advocated “national art created on the basis of universalism” (such politics encouraged Heitor Villa-Lobos's music). In contrast to Latin America where mixtures of different styles, including the urban ones, have become something of a standard, the Europeans searched for certain cultural purity that could only be achieved through the use of folk music. Thus, folklore became one of the main formative elements constituting national idioms of the European countries. For instance, in England, the interest in rural folklore (Gustav Holst) came along with the rebirth of interest in Renaissance music that was some kind of response to an excessive influence of German Romanticism. In the Czech Republic, which also had a strong tradition of Romanticism (primarily, in the names of Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana), Hába and Leoš Janáček emerged as a counterforce representing modernism. In Hungary, both Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály looked for their inspiration in the rural music, but only the former managed to transgress the boundaries of nationality and create genuinely modern music. In Russia, Sergei Prokofiev and Stravinsky, who worked in Paris at the time, opposed the representatives of the nationalistic St Petersburg School led by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Perhaps only contemporary Poland was considerably more cosmopolitan. Of course, there was Karol Szymanowski who became fascinated with the folk

¹⁰ José Navas, op. cit., p. 6 (quoted from Tibor Harsanyi, “Quelques souvenirs de ma vie de musicien”, 1946, inédit, p. 1).

music; but the youngest Polish composers soon went on to study in Paris and adopted Parisian neoclassicism very quickly.

To summarise the circumstances discussed above, we may conclude that interwar modernism, for which many young composers were searching abroad, not only conflicted with strengthening nationalism but also enabled the emergence of more or less successful intermediary styles. According to French musicologist Manfred Kelkel, the foreign composers absorbed modernism in Paris and created their own kind of “imaginary folklore.”¹¹ However, as Harsanyi remarked, “while preserving the musical character of their native countries, they created art that could have been created only in Paris.”¹² The rapid spread of this tendency was strongly criticised by such advocates of universal modernism as Theodor Adorno and Arnold Schoenberg. In such combination of national styles and main European tendencies, Schoenberg saw “the falsification of originality of any national music, without any contribution to the European musical trends.”¹³

The School of Paris

It is not easy, truly speaking, to summarise Bacevičius's years in Paris. His early letters are still unpublished and reminiscences of his contemporaries are rather fragmentary. It is therefore difficult to imagine the real atmosphere that surrounded him in Paris at that time. Some fundamental studies have been published, which discuss the leading composers who have been active in interwar Paris (they were numerous and all of the international stature); the conductors who advocated new music feverishly; the concert life that was particularly active; and the main aesthetic tendencies of the time. Jean Cocteau showed much insight, in describing the level of competition at the time: “In Paris, everyone aspires to be an actor; nobody wants to remain a spectator. While all hustle on the stage, the hall remains empty.”¹⁴ But the abundance of cultural events in contemporary Paris overshadowed the artistic stratum comprised of such newcomers as Bacevičius, i. e. young artists who lacked both money and connections to be noticed by the major

¹¹ Manfred Kelkel, “L'Ecole de Paris: une fiction?,” in *Alexandre Tansman* (sous la dir. de Pierre Guillot), Paris: P.U.S., 1997, p. 88.

¹² Tibor Harsanyi, *L'Ecole de Paris à travers l'histoire*, inédit, 1945, p. 2.

¹³ Arnold Schoenberg, *Le Style et l'Idée*, Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1977, p. 161.

¹⁴ Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, Paris: Stock, 1979, p. 74.

French periodicals. Despite this fact, this stratum was an inseparable part of the general musical atmosphere in Paris of the time. If we read through the reviews of contemporary concerts, we can find a great number of unknown names described as splendid pianists, interesting composers, promising musicians, who arrived from various countries. Bacevičius also had a similar ‘profile page’ published in *Les Artistes d’aujourd’hui* in 1928—the year when he arrived in Paris. It contained a comprehensive description of his yet short career, and even his picture. Hence, when we speak of Bacevičius’s Parisian years, we must understand, first of all, the real context that surrounded Bacevičius during this period.

The years Bacevičius spent in Paris (1927–30) coincided with the high-day of the so-called School of Paris. The following questions therefore seem natural: What connections Bacevičius had with this school? How did this affect his music? Can we ascribe Bacevičius to the School of Paris?

There is actually no strict definition describing the so-called School of Paris which was an obvious product of the internationalisation of interwar Paris. There is no agreement either about the number of composers who belonged to this school or about some common stylistic characteristics and chronological framework. There exists only one document presenting this school—the manuscript by Harsanyi entitled “L’Ecole de Paris et son Histoire,” written in 1945 and based on a radio programme.

In fact, two definitions of the term ‘School of Paris’ may be distinguished: ‘narrow’ and ‘broad.’¹⁵ In the narrow sense, it is a group of several composers formed around 1925 (the first of them, Alexandre Tansman and Marcel Mihalovici, arrived in Paris in 1919). The number of composers ranged from five to ten and included Swiss Konrad Beck, Hungarian Tibor Harsanyi, Czech Bohuslav Martinů, Romanian Marcel Mihalovici (considered the unofficial leader of this group), Polish Alexandre Tansman and Russian Alexander Tcherepnin. Some authors also add Austrian Hormis Spitzmüller, Italian Vittorio Rieti, Spanish Federico Mompou and Romanian Philip Lazar.¹⁶ All of them were foreigners who did not have any common doctrine and who were fascinated by the French aesthetics. Perhaps the only thing uniting them was that they would meet every day at the *Café du Dôme* in Montparnasse. Of course, the title of the group, “The School of Paris,” was not original: it is

¹⁵ André Cœuroy suggests this distinction in *Larousse de la musique* (sous la dir. de Norbert Dufourq), vol. 2, Paris, 1957, p. 162.

¹⁶ Manfred Kelkel, op. cit., pp. 85–89.

some kind of analogue of the painters' group established at the turn of the 20th century, which included Amedeo Modigliani, Marc Chagall and Chaïm Soutine (who was, as we may know, a native of Lithuania).

Almost all members of the School of Paris used their opportunity to study either at the National Conservatory (*Conservatoire national*) like Tcherepnin, or at the Schola Cantorum like Mihalovici, or with Nadia Boulanger as Conrad Beck. Martinů, Tansman and Harsanyi took private lessons from Albert Roussel who had previously worked at the Schola Cantorum but did not occupy any official position there after the war. It seems that the choice of both the National Conservatory of Paris and the Schola Cantorum was deliberate, since all sources mention these two institutions as the main study centres for the foreign composers. The Paris Conservatory was indeed a productive institution that 'bred' new composers. It was not guided by any general doctrine; however, even earlier, this institution had raised some great composers, such as Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saëns and Vincent d'Indy. The Schola Cantorum was considered a much more dogmatic but no less influential educational institution. On the other hand, the young composers who sought an advice about their craft (or, rather, an acquaintance with certain aesthetic trend) more than aspired to obtain a diploma from a prestigious school gathered around particular personalities: the main groupings concentrated around Maurice Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Charles Koechlin, Albert Roussel, Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger. Camille Saint-Saëns, a master of eclecticism, did not make any impact on the members of the School of Paris; whereas Debussy, who had never been a professor of composition, had an immense impact on the young composers.

Speaking in the 'broad sense,' according to the mentioned distinction by André Cœuroy, it is considered that the School of Paris united all foreign composers who arrived in Paris during the interwar period (largely from Eastern and Central Europe, although there were many composers from South America, Canada, Spain, etc.) and who were influenced, in one way or another, by the French musical aesthetic. The exact number of those composers is not known and it is doubtful if it will be ever known. Some authors speak of thousands, but perhaps these numbers are exaggerated.

As we can see, the 'official' paths of Bacevičius and the School of Paris did not intersect: for his studies he chose the Russian Conservatory and did not belong officially to any group clustered around the most famous composers. It is unclear why Bacevičius chose to study at the Russian Conservatory.

Perhaps because of the language, although the memories of his contemporaries allow us to conclude that he was quite fluent in French (this cannot be said, for instance, about Tibor Harsanyi, as it turned out from the only recorded radio programme). It might be so that Bacevičius's choice was determined by the fact that the Russian art was at its apex in Paris at the time (let us remember Diaghilev and Stravinsky's activities), or simply by a pragmatic possibility to pass equivalency exams and get diplomas quickly, which he could not expect to obtain either from the National Conservatory, or from the Schola Cantorum. Now we can only guess. Doubtless, if Bacevičius had managed to establish closer contacts with major musical personalities in Paris, it would have been easier for him to find his place in America to which almost the whole School of Paris and most of the famous conductors emigrated during WWII.

Stylistic Trends in the School of Paris

In terms of style, there are some obvious similarities between the tendencies characteristic of Bacevičius and the School of Paris. It is hard to tell whether it was a direct influence or merely a reflection of the then prevalent trends in Paris. First of all, they were united by a complete dissent from Schoenberg. That Bacevičius was also critical about him is known to us only from his letters of the American period. Secondly, Bacevičius and the other composers of the School of Paris shared similar interest in the folklore, which, as we have already mentioned, was a natural tendency provoked by the cultural situation in many countries at that time. Incidentally, the Parisian art of the turn of the 20th century exhibited similar influences. In 1918, Jean Cocteau wrote: "for more than ten years Chardin, Ingres, Manet, and Cézanne have dominated the European art; and foreigners now come to us to add their ethnic talents to our school."¹⁷ The most obvious example of Bacevičius's 'folklorism' is his First Piano Concerto on the "Lithuanian themes," finished in 1929. As a matter of interest, it was an instant success in Lithuania and, according to Ona Narbutienė, "was taken to represent Lithuanian music abroad on many occasions."¹⁸ Bacevičius's opera, *Vaidilutė*, must also be seen as some kind of tribute to nationalism. Its primary idea arose in Kaunas, but it was not

¹⁷ Manfred Kelkel, op. cit., pp. 65–66.

¹⁸ Ona Narbutienė, op. cit., p. 79.

finished until his years in Paris where many composers showed an interest in national and historical themes and their adaptation to large-scale stage works. Despite the appearance of national elements in Bacevičius's works of the Paris period, we would argue that he had much in common with Manuel de Falla who arrived in Paris not to reveal his own Spanishness but rather to get rid of it.

Speaking of direct influences, Bacevičius acknowledged that it was Debussy, Prokofiev and Scriabin who made the strongest impact on him in Paris. The influence of Debussy is conspicuous in Bacevičius's impressionistic *Poème No. 4*; while Prokofiev (we would also add Honegger and Satie) might well have been the influence behind that specific machine-like sound of his *Poème électrique*. The fascination with jazz, foxtrot and other kinds of American popular music, which was characteristic of the Parisian lifestyle at the time, has found its way in the stylistic idioms of the composers of the School of Paris and is likewise reflected in the cabaret atmosphere of Bacevičius's ballet *Šokių sukuryje* (Tourbillon de la Vie). Speaking further of influences, we should also mention another French composer—Edgard Varèse. He might have been among Bacevičius's direct influences—not only in terms of formal concept of musical works, but also in terms of universal ideas—withstanding the fact that Varèse left for the United States in December 1915. To confirm or to deny a claim that Bacevičius had an opportunity to acquaint himself with Varèse's ideas and works during his time in Paris, one should probably consult the French press of the interwar period.

Neoclassicism, with its characteristic returns to the old forms, was among the favourite idioms practiced by the representatives of the School of Paris; but it was not until the American years that it has found its way into Bacevičius's music. He himself described this as a way of compromise; so perhaps it should not be regarded as one of his Parisian influences.

On the other hand, to continue our argument about the possible influences of the School of Paris on Bacevičius, we should not disregard the fact that the stylistic trends formed and employed by the *Groupe des Six* did not differ much from those adopted by the composers of the School of Paris: they shared similar fascination with the old forms, simplicity and jazz. To quote the expert scholar of this period, Manfred Kelkel, "only their passports differed."¹⁹

¹⁹ Manfred Kelkel, op. cit., p. 88.

Successes and Disappointments

If we accept the mentioned dual treatment of the School of Paris, then Bacevičius could fit in a 'broad definition.' In other words, we could number him among many 'anonymous composers' of various nationalities who had spent more or less time in Paris. He was an anonymous composer, because his name remained unknown to the general public (except several reviews of his concerts, which drown in the bustle of similar weekly reviews); it is not even mentioned in a very comprehensive book by René Dumesnil, entitled *La Musique en France entre les deux guerres, 1919–1939*, which does not fail to mention, for instance, the disciple of Nikolai Tcherepnin²⁰ at the St Petersburg Conservatory of 1911—Nikolai Obukhov.²¹ For the sake of interest, we could compare how both composers fared in Paris. Like Bacevičius, Obukhov was influenced by Scriabin's mysticism, but in a more radical way. Arriving in Paris in 1919, he encountered immense financial difficulties and was saved from his grave situation by Ravel (in fact, Ravel played an important role in the biographies of many newcomers) to whom he was introduced by one of his friends. Only thanks to Ravel, Obukhov found generous benefactors and was introduced to a quite narrow circle of the *Revue Musicale*, probably the most influential French music magazine of the time, specialising in identifying influences, making broad generalisations and searching for new tendencies and new personalities (Bacevičius, apparently, did not belong to this circle). As a result of that, *Revue Musicale* published two articles about his works written by renowned musicologists, Boris de Schloezer and Marcel Orban (in 1921 and 1925); and in 1926, Serge Koussevitzky conducted his symphonic work *Predisloviye knigi zhizni* (An Introduction to the Book of the Living). Yet it remained his only performed orchestral work. In José Navas's words, "because of the financial difficulties, the concerts of Obukhov's music were comprised only of his piano works."²² His situation improved only when he married Marie Antoinette, a rich former wife of Prince de Broglie, who started to take care of his concerts and provided all connections necessary. In spite of that, time has erased Obukhov's name and music from

²⁰ Nikolai Tcherepnin was Bacevičius's professor of composition at the Russian Conservatory in Paris.

²¹ René Dumesnil, op. cit., p. 39.

²² José Navas, *Nicolas Obouhow: mythe et réalité*, Mémoire de Maitrise, Université Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV, 1989, p. 15.

our memories: in the history of music he is remembered only as a composer who suggested ways to simplify musical notation and who created a rather mystical “sound cross.”

Many have emphasised certain freedom from strict hierarchical order within the artistic circles of Paris at the time: everybody, regardless of his/her age and nationality, had equal chances to work one's way up. But on the other hand, if we study more thoroughly the biographies of each newcomer, we discover that certain connections were often very helpful in opening the doors to success that would be otherwise unachievable. In this regard, Tansman had more luck than Bacevičius. Gérald Hugon, for instance, presented the following description of Tansman's first steps in Paris (we retell his abridged description here): Tansman had a friend, a Polish architect called Stanislaw Landau, who introduced him to Georges Mouveaux, a stage designer at the Paris Opera. The latter held a dinner at his home to introduce the young composer to Ravel. In turn, Ravel introduced Tansman to his publishers, Demets and Max Eschig (who would later publish his scores), and performers. Ravel also took Tansman to meet Roland-Manuel who held the so-called Mondays of Roland-Manuel. Through him Tansman got acquainted with Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Albert Roussel, Florent Schmitt and Jacques Ibert. Furthermore, Ravel handed him a letter of recommendation to the conductor Vladimir Golschmann who organised the famous “Golschmann concerts” and who soon agreed to perform Tansman's works. Apart from that, Georges Mouveaux's relative took Tansman to Madame Paul Clemenceau's salon in which he met Albert Einstein, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan Zweig. Ravel also introduced Tansman to the above-mentioned circle of the *Revue Musicale* which helped him get to know Bartók, Hindemith, Alfredo Casella and Gian Francesco Malipiero. As an aftermath of these connections, from 1920 to 1921 he published four critical articles in *Revue Musicale* about Polish composers Mieczysław Karłowicz, Karol Szymanowski, conductor Zdzisław Birnbaum and the young Polish school of composers.²³

Meanwhile, Bacevičius experienced only one lucky strike: his three piano recitals were reviewed in the press by Joseph Baruzi. The first review (there were three of them altogether, to our knowledge) was rather eloquent. It revealed not only a contingency by which this critic found himself in this

²³ Gérald Hugon, “Présentation du compositeur et de son œuvre”, in *Alexandre Tansman*, op. cit., pp. 15–27.

concert, but also Bacevičius's yet imperfect piano skills and his modesty, or perhaps some distrust in his own music and his timidity to play both of his works scheduled in the programme. For this reason we present this short review in its entirety, with no editing:

If I chose Vytautas Bacevičius's concert²⁴ among many other possible concerts, it was because its unassuming poster attracted my attention. There was no dithyrambic announcement and no advertising overflowed with epithets. Why shouldn't I admit that I was also intrigued, a little childishly, by the sound of his name and surname, clear and dignified, so characteristic of the Lithuanian language which, as it is said, has changed the least of all European languages since the olden times and which is much closer to Sanskrit and Indo-Arian origins?

I wasn't disappointed. It doesn't mean that we can regard Bacevičius as a pianist who had completely mastered his technique: most of his interpretations of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt were marked by some kind of stiffness and weakness. Nevertheless, he played six preludes by Debussy and two poems by Scriabin (*Masque* and *Etrangeté*) with much exaltation and, in some places, energy; besides, he introduced a very expressive piece *Katarinka* by J. Gruodis. However, what I seem to recognise in him as a pianist is a really talented composer. His Prelude, Op. 3 emerged as a work of firm and candid (resolute) inspiration with a solid and spacious structure. Why didn't Mr. Bacevičius, too timid to accept a very favourable reception of the pages of his music performed a moment before, play his newest work in the programme, *Poème No. 4*, Op. 10? I must have been not the only one who regretted his decision deeply.²⁵

The last two lines of this review are quite surprising, especially if we remind ourselves of Bacevičius's trust in his powers noted by many contemporaries. In fact, we can find a similar ambiguity in one of Bacevičius's letters to his sister Gražyna from America of 1958: "Some say that I am too docile, that I don't fight for myself and my position (after many years of struggle)."²⁶ Perhaps

²⁴ Printed with the incorrect name, Vytantas Bacevicius.

²⁵ The review of this concert (held on 14 December 1928) was published in *Le Ménestrel*, no. 51, 21 December 1928, p. 545.

²⁶ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, New York, 9 September 1958, in *Vytautas Bacevičius*, vol. 2., ed. and trans. Edmundas Gedgaudas, Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005, p. 45.

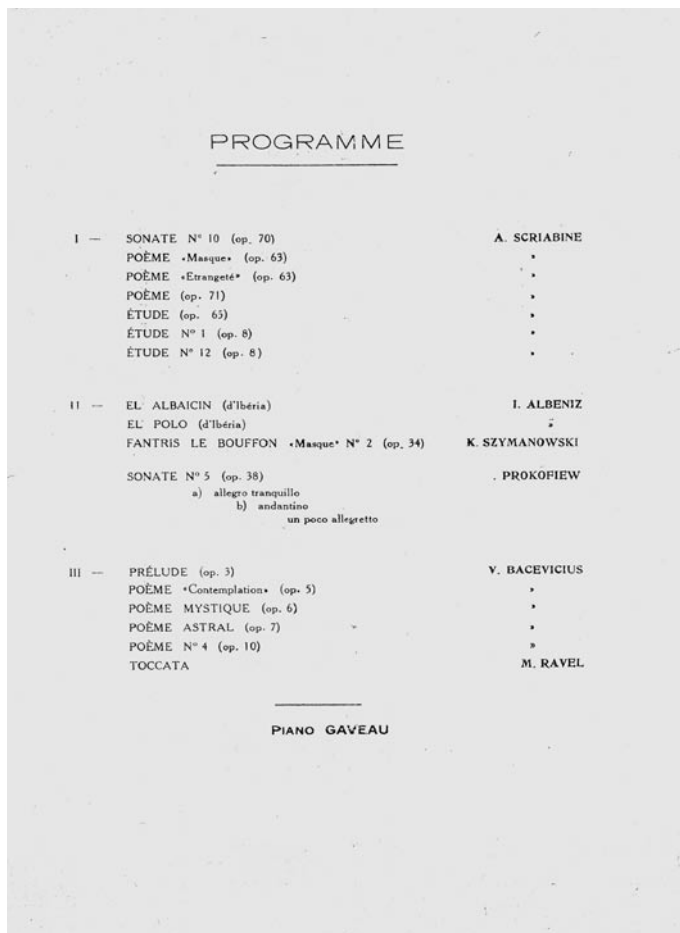


Fig. 2. Poster of Vytautas Bacevičius's recital at the Salle Gaveau in Paris (1931)

Bacevičius simply would not dare to play one of his most impressionistic works in a concert where he also performed the preludes by Debussy?

As far as we can judge from the contemporaries' memoirs, Bacevičius's life in Paris was not all roses. He was also disappointed by the weak attendance of his concerts. To quote Stasė Žemaitienė's letter about his concert held on 4 May 1929: "He gave a concert at a large hall; there were some serious French listeners but very few; and there was a small group of Lithuanians."²⁷ Antanas Gudaitis, a Lithuanian painter who lived in Paris at the time, recollected that "there were not many people at these concerts: music connoisseurs would occupy the first rows, with opened scores, and follow the performance. I remember that once Bacevičius was very anxious. What did he play? Perhaps it was Chopin... He made a mistake. Can you imagine how those music connoisseurs were stirred; they exchanged the glances! Later Bacevičius told us: 'Oh, I was so scared.'"²⁸

What were the responses from professionals is only known from two sources: from Petras Klimas, a Lithuanian minister and diplomat in Paris at the time, and from the third review by the same critic Baruzi, which witnessed Bacevičius's progress as a pianist. Klimas wrote: "Recently I consulted some musical connoisseurs who considered Mr. Bacevičius's works serious enough, although still imperfect; they expect that his talent has all chances to produce really original works."²⁹ According to Baruzi, "since his recital five months ago, Bacevičius as a pianist has made a remarkable progress. It can be noticed, above all, in his significantly more intimate manner to interpret Chopin. This manner helped him free Ravel's *Sonatina* from any mannerism and express the essence of the Spanish works, such as Abeniz's *El Polo*, Granada's *El Fandango de Candil* and Manuel de Falla's *Danse de la Frayeur*."³⁰ Moreover, if we compare the programmes of his first and third recitals, we come to notice that Bacevičius's taste as a pianist and composer has become much more subtle: instead of the classical repertory by Bach and Beethoven, with which he had started his first recital in Paris, now he introduced his Spanish contemporaries influenced by the Parisian atmosphere.

We could argue, of course, that Bacevičius was not as successful in Paris as, for example, Tansman. One of the reasons—that was, in fact, decisive for his

²⁷ Ona Narbutienė, "Gyvenimo kelias" (Path of Life), op. cit., p. 78.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁰ Joseph Baruzi, "Récital Vytautas Bacevicius (4 mai)", *Le Ménestrel*, no. 19, 10 May 1929, p. 213.

unsuccessfulness—was that he was too young and had too few scores, particularly of symphonic music. He had in store just a few piano pieces, which he performed and popularised himself because he aspired a career as a pianist as well. On the other hand, none of his scores was published in Paris. We must also remember that Bacevičius did not have a goal to establish himself in Paris; he would periodically return to Lithuania where he also popularised his works. Perhaps he was realistic about his financial situation, or he simply wanted to gain more knowledge and ideas in Paris.

And, too, there is perhaps no doubt that Bacevičius was not acquainted to important people. In one of a very few letters of this period, which he wrote from Palanga in 1928 (it is published in a new collection of essays on Bacevičius), he invited his sister Gražyna to come to study in Paris saying that “he [would] introduce her to the best musicians there.”³¹ We can draw a conclusion, from the same letter, that it was important for him to receive conservatory diplomas in Paris, since he emphasised to his sister that she “could get, in a year or two, the diplomas of a pianist, violinist and composer.”³² Hence, perhaps Bacevičius’s primary goal was to pass equivalency exams quickly and get the diplomas, the reputation of which he did not doubt.

Publicity Work of the Parisian Years

Speaking of the Bacevičius’s years in Paris, we should also mention his publications in the French press. There we can find one and the only article on Lithuanian music published twice, with some insignificant corrections, in the *Revue internationale du théâtre et des beaux-arts* of 15 March 1929, and in *Le Ménestrel* of 9 August 1929 (therefore, we can conclude that he was not introduced to the prestigious circle of the *Revue Musicale*). In his article, Bacevičius introduces contemporary Lithuanian musical culture in rather broad strokes, beginning with folk songs and hymns (using in French the Lithuanian versions of these words, *dainos* and *giesmės*) and proceeding with the importance of choral singing in Lithuania, description of the Lithuanian folk dances and instruments, the Kaunas opera, also mentioning in particular musicologists Viktoras Žadeika and Juozas Žilevičius, and the classically and romantically minded composers of Naujalis’s generation (including

³¹ Vytautas Bacevičius, letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Palanga, 28 August 1928, in *Vytautas Bacevičius*, vol. 2., ed. and trans. Edmundas Gedgaudas, Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005, p. 18.

³² Ibid.

Aleksandras Kačanauskas, Mikas Petrauskas, Juozas Žilevičius, Juozas Tallat-Kelpša and Stasys Šimkus whom he described as “more modern-minded”). He also mentioned, in one sentence, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis as the “father of Lithuanian impressionism.” Among the modern composers, he mentioned Juozas Gruodis and the Kaunas Conservatory led by him, Kazimieras Viktoras Banaitis “who wrote for piano only,” Vladas Jakubėnas and himself. He characterised himself as an “ultra-expressionist” and listed his written works: “a symphony, a symphonic poem, an overture to the opera *The Priestess*, fugues for quartets, several songs and music for piano, including a sonata, poems, preludes, etc.” He concluded his text with beautiful and emotional quote about songs from Vydūnas. It was not perhaps accidental that he rounded off his article with songs, because he added a remark that on 1 September 1928, “*La Revue de France* published around 30 songs (in fact, 26—V. G.) translated by our compatriot and French poet O. V. de Milosz.”

Not only this article but also another larger one devoted to Lithuanian music and published in 1928 in several issues of *Le Courrier Musical* and written by the professor Arcadius Presse (in this article, the newest Lithuanian music ends with Čiurlionis) demonstrated that Lithuanian modern music was at its primary stages and that there was not much to write about. Hence, Bacevičius could not present it as Tansman presented, for instance, the young generation of Polish musicians. On the other hand, at the time Bacevičius was too young to have accumulated a bulk of work that could have become a subject for a separate article. Finally, his description of himself as “ultra-expressionist” without any explanation or argument confirms that neither an environment for modern music, nor corresponding terms had yet been formed in the Lithuanian culture at the time.

How Lithuanian music was represented abroad may well be demonstrated by a very eloquent fact: in January 1929, at the Richelieu Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne University the concert of Lithuanian music was held, where most works consisted of the vocal music and folk song harmonisations. Bacevičius, along with several Čiurlionis's Preludes and Gruodis's *Katarinka*, was the main representative of the Lithuanian modern instrumental music, with his *Poème “Contemplation”*, *Poème No. 4*, Sonata Op. 4 and Prelude Op. 3. In fact, Joseph Baruzi, the reviewer of Bacevičius's first recital, described this second concert that he had attended because of the familiar name of Bacevičius, briefly expressing his joy of hearing several new works by Bacevičius, and soon digressing through Čiurlionis to various exotic instruments, such as the



Fig. 3. *Kavinėje (Paryžius) (At coffee. Paris)* by Jonas Steponavičius (after 1932)

kanklės and the goat horn. He concluded his description by mentioning an overall pagan, pantheistic and occult atmosphere of the evening created by the verbal presentation of André Jullien-Dubreuil.³³

On the other hand, differently from the young Polish composers, who had an official association of young composers (since 1927) and flocked around Nadia Boulanger, Bacevičius was completely alone as a composer. As far as we can judge from the memoirs of his contemporaries, Lithuanian artists living in Paris, particularly painters, such as Adomas Galdikas and Antanas Gudaitis, supported him whole-heartedly and enthusiastically attended his concerts. However, Bacevičius did not have any like-minded fellow musicians. The Lithuanian community in Paris was not as strong as the Polish that had the established structures serving and helping artists. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the promotion of the Lithuanian culture would have produced some results: for instance, among the concert programmes, we find Mrs. Balguerie performing a Lithuanian song along with a madrigal accompanied by M. J. Clergue in the context of the French chamber works (by Milhaud, Georges Auric, Roussel and Ravel) at the Majestic Hall on 8 May 1929. There are more similar facts, of course.

³³ Joseph Baruzi, "Concert de Musique lithuanienne (22 janvier)", *Le Ménestrel*, no. 6, 8 February 1929, pp. 65–66.

Instead of a Conclusion

Today we can only guess to what direction Bacevičius's life would have turned if he had had better circumstances, more successful connections and perhaps better financial opportunities. Despite these speculations, Paris long remained for Bacevičius the most important city. In 1968, a few years before his death, he wrote to Vytautas Montvila: "I love Paris where I always felt best. I am a Parisian in 'my body and soul.' If I had money today, I would move to Paris immediately."³⁴

Perhaps we should regret more the fact that in the 1940s, at the time when Bacevičius moved to the United States, many American artists turned towards conservatism that was totally alien to the Lithuanian composer. This conservatism further obstructed a rather weak local experimental tradition that formed in the 1920s and 1930s in the work of Charles Ives, Henry Cowell and later John Cage, which Bacevičius could have joined. These tendencies gained momentum only with the arrival of new technologies that Bacevičius did not bother to master. But this is a topic for yet another discussion.

³⁴ Ona Narbutienė, "Gyvenimo kelias" (Path of Life), op. cit., p. 63.