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Hommage à Mieczysław Tomaszewski: Some Remarks on his Lithuanian Reception

The Lithuanian–Polish musical links have a rich history. In different historical periods their intensity was determined by various factors – a common statehood or, conversely, similar forms of political oppression, geographical proximity, and cultural exchange. There were also periods of cultural alienation and a lack of mutual understanding, further intensified by geopolitical circumstances. However, these general factors are a mere background to the history of cultural collaboration of the musicians of both nations, as the real events always occurred on the level of micro-history, where creative personalities and musical communities collide. Paradoxically, many particularly productive collaborative initiatives took shape during one of the most complicated historical periods of Lithuania and Poland – the years of Communism. The images of the Lithuanian music development over the Cold War period have up to the present times been revived by a heroic narrative of the creative partnership between the milieus of nonconformist-orientation musicians in the
neighbouring countries which was closely linked with the processes of the cultural rebirth and political changes. One of the first Lithuanian musicians to have forged a relationship with the nonconformist milieu of Polish music was Vytautas Landsbergis. Since the 1960s, he has regularly visited Poland, due to his interest in archives containing the legacy of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, in cultural workers who used to know this great Lithuanian composer and artist, and in the perpetuation of his memory in Poland. Private invitations were provided by Lithuanians who had emigrated to Poland, and occasional visits that took place through official channels were related to the matters of science or participation in contemporary music events. However, those visits did not lead to any closer relationships with the musical elite: the majority of prominent figures in the Polish music world ignored the cultural exchange with the Soviet Union. Vytautas Landsbergis’ accidental acquaintance with Polish musicologists encouraged informal relationships which had a decisive influence on the cooperation of Lithuanian and Polish musicians and simultaneously promoted the dissemination of Polish musicology in Lithuania.

In 1977, Vytautas Landsbergis attended an independent festival MMMM (Młodzi Muzycy Młodemu Miastu / Young Musicians to a Young City) in Stalowa Wola and the “Musical Meetings” in Baranów. He presented the works of Lithuanian composer Čiurlionis to the Polish audience. Landsbergis was immediately attracted by the intellectual intensity of the Baranów festivals and symposia; several years later, he wrote:

Participation in such a symposium is an intellectual feast, and it is impossible to convey or to talk about its menu or its setting (the wit, improvisations, memories, friendly, however, differently nuanced clashes, and the uniting joy of music). The techniques of photography fail to capture the features of spirits, and what I mean is the spirit of friendship and humanism soaring in Baranów.

An article on “Musical meetings” in Baranów was written in 1979, however, due to the political conjuncture associated with the movements of political resistance in the Polish People’s Republic, especially after the introduction of the Martial Law in 1981, either the early or a later

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supplemented version of the article were not published for a long time. Lithuanian readers could read about the events in Baranów only as late as in 1989, at the time of political renewal and the movement of national liberation.

In the 1980s, the information about cultural events in Poland was particularly restricted in Lithuania both due to the above mentioned political events, and also due to the stern stance of Pope John Paul II on the USSR. Despite that, over the decade in question from the first visit of Vytautas Landsbergis to independent music events in Poland, the cooperation of Lithuanian and Polish musicians kept intensifying and soon developed into a mutual cultural dialogue. It covered not merely an interest in the contemporary music of the neighbouring countries but also a deeper understanding of the musicological thought. Lithuanian musicologists were especially intrigued by the concept of music in the cultural context of Polish musicologist Mieczysław Tomaszewski, the spiritus movens of the Baranów festivals and symposia. The conception of understanding and interpretation of musical culture promoted by Tomaszewski undoubtedly helped Lithuanian musicologists to recover the European dimension of musical identity. It was attractive as a productive alternative to the Soviet music doctrine in the period of renewal important for Lithuanian musicologists, when both theoretical works and articles of music criticism started to analyse the issues of the cultural content of music more conceptually. As early as in 1979, Vytautas Landsbergis extolled Polish musicology as “an attractive road to develop qualitatively unique and conceptual musicology, rising above academicity and academism”.

Such a musicological approach became particularly important in the years of political and cultural changes: it was specifically in 1989 that joint conferences of Lithuanian and Polish musicologists were launched. The topic chosen for the first conference in Vilnius (organised by the musicologist divisions of the Lithuanian and Polish Composers’ Unions) – Music of the Late 20th Century Through the Eyes of Lithuanians and Poles – brought together active participants of festivals and meetings in Stalowa Wola, Baranów, and Sandomierz and provided the milieu of musicians, united by informal relationships, with an impulse for the

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renewal of transnational cultural exchange and for a qualitative shift. The thematic guidelines of the conferences, held every year in a new country, were matured in the meetings and conferences of independent festivals: common cultural memory and heritage and the new Lithuanian and Polish music in cultural and political contexts. A wider interest in contemporary Polish musicology was accompanied not merely by enthusiastic reviews in the Lithuanian press and joint publications, but also by the translations of Polish musicologists’ texts into Lithuanian.

The first translations of Mieczysław Tomaszewski’s musicological works into Lithuanian were published after the restoration of the independent Republic of Lithuania. Although only several works were published, they resulted in a deeper interest in Tomaszewski’s works. In Lithuanian musicology, Tomaszewski’s concept of “music in music” received special attention and served as inspiration and an analytical tool for several doctoral dissertations, bachelor’s and master’s final theses, studies, and articles. It was very helpful in the analysis of Lithuanian music phenomena – from Juozas Gruodis and Vidmantas Bartulis’ paraphrases on Fryderyk Chopin’s motifs to the opuses of Onutė Narbutaitė, inspired by works of composers of different eras. Tomaszewski’s works attracted musicologists of several generations: I would like to emphasise the works of Gražina Daunoravičienė, Audronė Žiūraitytė, Audra Versekėnaitė, Rūta Stanevičiūtė, Beata Baublinskienė, Laura Kaščiukaitė, Laimutė Ligeikaitė and other musicologists which were directly based on Tomaszewski’s books and articles. However, the insights of Tomaszewski had undoubtedly had a much broader reception: Lithuanian musicologists were inspired by his strong concept of the cultural and philosophical explanation of music which formed a unique understanding of the ratio of aesthetic attitudes, ethical values, and artistic expression. This enables us to talk about the active participation of Mieczysław Tomaszewski’s musicological thought in the processes of renewal of Lithuanian musicology during the late 20th and the early 21st century.

5 Over 1989-2010, 10 conferences of Lithuanian and Polish musicologists were held in Vilnius, Kraków, and Łódź.
Translations of Mieczysław Tomaszewski’s articles and chapters into Lithuanian language:


Selected list of publications by Lithuanian musicologists related to the work by Mieczysław Tomaszewski:


Hommage à Mieczysław Tomaszewski: kilka uwag o recepcji jego myśli na Litwie

Streszczenie

W artykule omówiona jest recepcja dorobku polskiego muzykologa, Mieczysława Tomaszewskiego, na Litwie. Autorka stwierdza, że przełom w rozprawowaniu polskiej myśli muzykologicznej na Litwie nastąpił dzięki nawiązaniu nieformalnych relacji pomiędzy nieoficjalną polską sceną muzyki współczesnej i niezależnymi od instytucji działaniami litewskich kompozytorów i muzykologów – od lat siedemdziesiątych do dziewięćdziesiątych dwudziestego wieku. To właśnie stało się przyczyną intensywnej recepcji wybitnego dorobku Mieczysława Tomaszewskiego w kontekście kultury Litwy i zaowocowało intensywną refleksją dotyczącą filozoficznych interpretacji muzyki w litewskim piśmiennictwie i muzykologii.

Słowa kluczowe: Mieczysław Tomaszewski, polsko-litewskie relacje muzyczne, muzykologia polska, recepcja

Keywords: Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Polish-Lithuanian musical relationships, Polish musicology, reception