

NON-PROMISED LAND: VYTAUTAS BACEVIČIUS IN NEW YORK

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Abstract: *In the Lithuanian music of the twentieth century, one can clearly notice a caesura drawn by sociopolitical events which split the national culture in two parts both in terms of time and space. In the 1940s, most of the pre-war modernist composers appeared in exile. Graduates of the Paris, Berlin, and Prague Schools and founders of the ISCM Lithuanian Section who mainly settled down in the USA tried to adapt to the different musical and sociocultural reality which strongly affected the change in their creative orientations. Due to the broken relations with European centres of modern music, the conservative cultural environment of Lithuanian emigrants and subsequent unsuccessful attempts to participate in the influential American music scene resulted in cultural isolation that significantly influenced the post-war music development, among others, that of composer and pianist Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970), the most prominent figure in Lithuanian emigration. An offspring of a mixed Lithuanian–Polish family and a representative of the Paris School moved to New York in 1940 and lived there as a refugee almost till the end of his life (he was granted citizenship as late as in 1967). Like many other European emigrant composers, being brought up in the cult of elitist art, he perceived egalitarianism of the American art as a personal menace. Since late 1950s, Bacevičius abandoned the strategies to adapt to American cultural environment and turned towards a unique conception of cosmic music, thus rethinking his early experiences of atonal music during the era of second avant-garde inspirations. The opus magnum of his late creative period – *Graphique for symphony orchestra* (1964) – is an emblematic composition devised as the first opus of the never-completed series of nine symphonic compositions entitled *Sahasrara Chakra*. The article focuses on the discovery of the conceptual and sonic analogies of the late cosmic music developed by Bacevičius in the pursuits of the twentieth-century *musica mundana*, obviously associated with Olivier Messiaen and Edgard Varèse, the figures venerated by the Lithuanian composer. In addition, Bacevičius' late cosmic music is discussed as a cultural strategy of escapism symptomatic of European emigrant composers of the same generation settled in USA.*

Emigration of Lithuanian musicians to the USA is a phenomenon of broad historical coverage: the first cultural workers-emigrants from Lithuania moved to North America as early as in the seventeenth century, and another two waves of mass emigration were recorded in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries and in the 1940s. Those waves of emigration were predetermined by different reasons, economic in the first, and political in the second case. In the early twentieth century, around 7,000 to 25,000 Lithuanians arrived in the USA each year; thus, before World War I, about one quarter of the Lithuanian population had immigrated to the said country. In the 1940s the first and the second Soviet occupations of Lithuania and World War II led to a politically motivated flow of emigration. Although different historical sources provide different data, historians believe that over the period in question Lithuania lost around a quarter of its population (which in 1940 amounted to about 3 million).

After World War II, the majority of the new wave of Lithuanian political refugees gathered in the USA: in accordance with the official data, around 30,000, with quite a few artists among them.¹ In the afterwar period, famous prewar modernist composers, outstanding representatives of the opera, conductors, and performers settled down in the USA. A large part of them belonged to the middle age and the young generations who during the interwar years had acquired musical education in prestigious centres of music in Western Europe. Among them, three composers stood out: Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970), Jeronimas Kačinskas (1907–2005), and Vladas Jakubėnas (1904–1976), the most prominent figures of Lithuanian music of the 1930s. Educated in Berlin, Prague, and Paris, in 1936, they set up an ISCM Lithuanian Section and integrated into the international movement of modern music. The creative destinies of the three composers in the USA were very different and simultaneously symptomatic, if we consider the cases of Lithuanian musicians in a more general context of European musician emigration. As Brigid Cohen has written, “many of the practices of modernism have been the work of the exiles, émigrés, and refugees. [...] Yet despite the clear centrality of displacement to modernist narratives, questions of migration are notably not addressed in prevailing in theories of musical modernism, and they are only marginally in many histories of the musical avant-garde”.²

1 Cf. Danutė Petrauskaitė: *Lietuvių muzikinės kultūra Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose 1870–1990: tautinės tapatybės kontūrai* [Lithuanian Music Culture in the United States of America 1870–1990: The Contours of National Identity] (Vilnius: VDA, 2015), 34.

2 Brigid Cohen: “Musical Modernism beyond the Nation: The Case of Stefan Wolpe”, in: *Crosscurrents. American and European Music in Interaction, 1900–2000*, eds. Felix Meyer, Carol J. Oja, Wolfgang Rathert, Anne C. Shreffler (Woodbrige, Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2014), 197.



Figure 1. Vytautas Bacevičius in Chicago, 1940 (Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art)

From this perspective, I chose Vytautas Bacevičius, the most controversial figure among Lithuanian immigrants, for a more detailed analysis. His musical career in emigration was particularly strongly affected by the political tensions of the Cold War, even though the composer was not a political refugee. In 1938,

he went on a tour to South America. Caught up by political changes and World War II, he moved to New York and lived there until his death in 1970. Vytautas Bacevičius is an especially convenient figure for the discussion and verification of a typical range of questions applied to emigration, based on a popular model of assimilation and resistance. I shall discuss the appropriateness and the limitations of the model from three perspectives: political, cultural, and musical. Those perspectives can be formulated as reconfiguration of diverse identities to analyse the artist's choices in a new political and sociocultural reality based on the interplay of political, cultural, and artistic positioning (political engagement vs. political indifference; cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism; artistic strategies of innovation vs. conformism). However, particularly during the Cold War period, the cultural and musical stance of composers was greatly affected by political processes. Therefore, the political, cultural, and artistic identities of musicians who found themselves on the different sides of the ideological confrontation were not some detached fields of creative agency, but rather hybrid, constantly recreated identification complexes. By several convincing examples, Daniel Fosler Lussier illustrated the interaction of political fears and artistic choices, typical of the musical expression of the young generation of composers (and especially those related to Darmstadt mainstream) after World War II.³ Not only the choice of compositional techniques, but also the relation to the pre-war musical tradition acquired a political connotation. In that context, Vytautas Bacevičius, just like other inter-war modernists, had to critically revise his artistic and stylistic stance. Simultaneously, an opposite trend cannot be ignored: the composer's cultural and artistic attitude undoubtedly affected his position with respect to the confrontation of political powers. Therefore, I shall discuss the interaction of the political, cultural, and artistic identities of the Lithuanian composer as the aspects of changing hybrid identifications.

VYTAUTAS BACEVIČIUS AND LITHUANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE USA: POLITICAL DIVIDES

Like other ethnic groups that emigrated from Eastern Europe to the USA, Lithuanian immigrants were severely fragmented by political affiliation. The most numerous segment of the new wave of immigrants were refugees who escaped from the Soviet occupation, who demanded non-recognition of Lithuania's annexation, and who took a tough stance against the USSR. For a long time, they avoided any

3 Daniel Fosler-Lussier: *Music Divided. Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007), 38–46.

contact with Soviet Lithuania.⁴ The said right-wing community that predominated in exile was opposed by liberal intellectuals who started visiting Soviet Lithuania in the years of political liberalisation in the USSR. The left-wing group that formed from the supporters of socialist ideas in the first waves of immigrants was particularly scanty; as early as before World War II, they became “advocates” of the political line of the USSR.

Unlike the majority of the right-wing musicians, Bacevičius was politically neutral and could even be called a political opportunist. He saw different political powers as a tool to develop his artistic career. For that reason, as early as in 1938 in Argentina he established contacts with the left-wing representatives, and, after moving to the USA in 1940, he took advantage of the help of both Lithuanian communists and the Embassy of the USSR to organise concerts at Carnegie Hall and to get established in American musical life. Likewise, without any significant political engagement, in later years he took part in anti-Soviet events and concerts to support the newly created state of Israel or wrote musical compositions to glorify American nations. Although in the middle of World War II he renounced his relationships with the Soviet Union or the left-wing activists, due to the previous short-term flirtation he was rejected by Lithuanian immigrants, mistrusted by the USA government, suffered during the McCarthyism period, and lived in constant tension and fear of imaginary KGB repressions. For political reasons, he received a permanent US resident status as late as in 1960, and the US citizenship in 1967. In the interwar period, Bacevičius made great efforts to get established in European musical scenes as a pianist, however, the impossibility to leave the USA nullified his previous professional experience and severely restricted his artistic career.

Despite the fact that the political context negatively affected his artistic career, after World War II, Bacevičius consistently failed to comply with political divides. He simultaneously attacked both the conductors of the US symphony orchestras and the musical institutions and conductors of the USSR to promote the opportunities of the performance of his compositions. The hopes of the emigrée composer to be included in the repertoires of the USSR performers might seem a bit naive: the composer’s imagination even matured a plan that, should his music start to be played in Europe, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, then in the USA “they would be also made to play my music, and I would earn several million dollars by my records, and should I become famous, I would donate the millions to the cultural institutions of Lithuania”.⁵ Again, the composer was slightly na-

4 See for example Petrauskaitė: (*Lietuvių muzikinės kultūra*), 854–868.

5 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Vytautas Montvila, New York, 3 October 1968. Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas / LLMA (Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art), f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12, l. 25.



Figure 2. Poster of Vytautas Bacevičius' Concert, Carnegie Hall, 26 April 1953 (Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art)

ive when he imagined that “Russians are extremely musical and their opinion is highly appreciated by Americans, and I shall be immensely pleased if the Russians influence the conductors of the most famous American orchestras so that they would start playing my large symphonic pieces (symphonies, etc.), just as they play Shostakovich.”⁶ Bacevičius also took similar steps in the USA: at the end of the 1960s, he wrote that, for the first time after ten years, he sent out ten letters to ten major USA symphony conductors “to ask them whether they would like me to send them some score”.⁷ He did not expect a quick response, neither was he surprised by silence: his experience as a performer made him believe that merely a personal contact with interpreters could be effective: “As long as America exists, it has never happened that some conductor would borrow the score from the library and perform it in a concert. Only those scores are performed, both here and in the Soviet Union, that are personally handed to the conductor (provided, of course, he likes the score).”⁸

All those efforts were completely unsuccessful. In the period between 1940 and 1970, the composer wrote eleven large-scale symphonic works and concerti, however, most of them were never included in the repertoires of top US or European orchestras, and there are no data to witness that any famous conductor was ever interested in them. The only exception is the case of *Sinfonia de la Guerra*, written in Buenos Aires in 1940: in 1943, conductor Leopold Stokowski got interested in the symphony, having selected it out of numerous compositions sent to him, and intended to include it in the concert programme. However, due to a number of subjective and objective factors, as, e.g., the composer being short of money to have the parts rewritten, and the conductor busy with a number of things, including his wedding, the symphony never got in the repertoire of American symphonic concerts.⁹ After the composer’s death, emigrée composer and music critic Jakubėnas regretted the futile efforts of Bacevičius to get his symphonic pieces performed in the USA as a fallacy typical of more than one composer: “sending scores to ‘Major Symphonies’ conductors has two aspects; both are pessimistic. In the best-case

6 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Vytautas Montvila, New York, 11 January 1969. LLMA, f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12, l. 43.

7 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Vytautas Montvila, New York, 16 October 1968. LLMA, f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12, l. 30.

8 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Vytautas Montvila, New York, 10 April 1969. LLMA, f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12, l. 53.

9 Rūta Stanevičiūtė: “World War II Memory and Narratives in the Music of the Lithuanian Diaspora and Soviet Lithuania”, in: *The Art of Identity and Memory: Toward a Cultural History of the Two World Wars in Lithuania*, eds. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Rasutė Andriūšytė-Žukienė (Brighton, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 257–285.



Figure 3. Poster of Dušan Pandula concert, Prague, 30 March 1952 (Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art)

scenario, one can get a photocopy of the score in an unopened envelope, and in the worst-case scenario, it shall perish altogether. Vytautas Bacevičius who passed away several years ago had known it well and had gone through the mill”.¹⁰

Paradoxically, during the Cold War, socialist countries served as a channel for Bacevičius’ music to spread outside the USA. After the war, he re-established his relationship with Czech composer Alois Hába, a left-wing musician and opponent of Stalinism. Thanks to Hába’s recommendation, he made contact with Dušan Pandula, violinist of Hába’s String Quartet. In 1947 to 1952, Bacevičius’ compositions written with Pandula’s encouragement were performed in Czechoslovakia: those were String Quartets No. 2 (1947) and No. 3 (1950) and Concerto for violin and orchestra (1951). In socialist Czechoslovakia, Bacevičius was introduced as a Lithuanian, i.e. potentially Soviet, composer: it was only under cover of ambiguity that the compositions of an emigrant residing in the US could get into the

¹⁰ Vladas Jakubėnas: “Keli lietuviškos muzikos bruožai” [Several Features of Lithuanian Music], *Muzikos žinios*, 1976/3–4, see: Vladas Jakubėnas. *Straipsniai ir recenzijos*. Vol. 2 (Vilnius: Lietuvos muzikos akademija, 1994), 1127.

then severely restricted musical life of Czechoslovakia.¹¹ In Poland, the family of Vytautas Bacevičius that lived there kept silent about him until 1984. They feared that the information could harm the career of Grażyna Bacewicz, and rightly so, as, e.g., in New York in 1940 Bacevičius publicly burnt a newly acquired passport of the USSR.

The political standpoint of Bacevičius could be regarded as exceptional merely in the milieu of Lithuanian immigrants: political disengagement among the representatives of other nations was encountered much more frequently. However, his efforts to take advantage of different sides of the political confrontation in the years of the Cold War have been causing researcher debates over the composer's motivation up to the present time. Was it a political naivety or consistent cynicism? The answer should be looked for not in the composer's character or the context of the events, but by examining his artistic ideology and his standpoint with respect to the new cultural reality.

NATIONALISM VERSUS COSMOPOLITANISM: ALTERNATIVES OR UTOPIAS?

To quote American musicologist Brigid Cohen, the studies of European musical emigration to the USA were frequently based on issues related to the preservation of the national identity or transformation: "To what extent did the *émigré* maintain the customs and identifications of an original nation, and to what extent did he or she adapt to those of a new homeland?"¹² The musicologist set off the cases that could be considered in the contexts of transformation of national identity against the attitudes of open cosmopolitanism. However, in terms of cultural transformations in emigration, the alternatives of nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not just analogous to the model of resistance and assimilation. In other words, not every choice of the position of cosmopolitanism meant attachment to the new reality, just as not every expression of *émigré* nationalism was to be considered a case of cultural isolation.

That more complex image of emigration is convenient for the discussion of the relationship of Vytautas Bacevičius with the cultural reality and the strategies of his artistic career in the USA, as they can hardly be covered by the opposition of choices between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Bacevičius was an artist of a

11 See Rūta Stanevičiūtė: *Modernumo lygtys. Tarptautinė šiuolaikinės muzikos draugija ir muzikinio modernizmo sklaida Lietuvoje* [Figures of Modernity. International Society for Contemporary Music and the Modern Music Movement in Lithuania] (Vilnius: VDA, 2015), 350–352.

12 Cohen: "Musical Modernism beyond the Nation", 208.

dual cultural identity: born into a mixed Lithuanian-Polish family and educated in Poland, he arrived in Kaunas in 1926, determined to create for the sake of the culture of his second motherland, i.e. Lithuania. However, the representation of Lithuanian identity in his compositions became relevant to him only after he had gone to study in Paris, under the influence of French modernism, Igor Stravinsky, and the Paris School. By contrast, nationalism became completely irrelevant to him in emigration; his attitude was reflected by a quotation from his letter to his sister Grażyna Bacewicz: “What is my nationality? It’s simple. I am of musical nationality. What is my race? The atonal race. And that is all”.¹³ Delimited from a national milieu, the supranational position of Bacevičius combined persistent efforts to integrate into American musical life and fierce criticism of the USA musical institutions and musical tastes. One of the examples of the efforts to integrate was a private club of music established by Bacevičius in 1946 which operated for 13 years. As stated by the composer, in the *Bacevicius’ Music Club*, concerts and other artistic events initially took place every Friday and attracted several hundred people, but later they became less frequent. Concerts were given by performers of the Lithuanian and other nations, exhibitions and concerts of modern dance were held; however, the initiative stayed on the margins of the modern American culture. I would think that was predetermined by several reasons that reflected not just individual attitudes of Bacevičius’ artistic standpoint, but, more broadly, the relationship of most European composers of his generation with the new cultural reality.

The first reason was the self-identification with the European tradition of modern music as a universal artistic ideology and categorical rejection of Americanisation. Critical evaluations of the USA musical culture were best reflected in the numerous letters of Bacevičius to his family in Poland (over 2,000 of his letters survived). Thus, e.g., with reference to the competition of symphonic music in 1952, the composer described the attitudes of American music critics in its jury in fact those of mass culture, representing the interests of the paying classes (“so now people know what they’ve paid for when they buy the tickets”)¹⁴. The composer’s approach did not change after his life in New York for over 20 years. In February 1963, he went to a concert sponsored by the National Association for American Composers and Conductors, a society he entered as early as in 1941 on Sergei

13 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, New York, 09 September 1958. Cited from Edmundas Gedgaudas (ed. and trans.): *Vytautas Bacevičius. II tomas. Išsakyta žodžiais* [Vytautas Bacevičius. Volume 2. Put into Words], ed. and trans (Vilnius: Petro Ofetas, 2005), 45.

14 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Grażyna Bacewicz, New York, 29 February 1952, cited from Krzysztof Droba: “Vytautas Bacevičius in America or an Artist in a Cage”, in: *Vytautas Bacevičius in Context*, eds. Rūta Stanevičiūtė, Veronika Janatjeva (Vilnius: LCU, 2009), 121.

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Figure 4. Announcement of Vytautas Bacevičius Club, New York, 1950 (Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art)

Rachmaninov's recommendation: "I could not believe I was in New York. The entire audience seemed such a bunch of hicks to me as if I were in deep provinces instead of the very center of New York [...] I tried not to react with my facial muscles so that the audience would not complain of my ill-will; as a result, blood boiled in me throughout the concert and had the worst possible effect on my nerves. In the program, the composers herald themselves as professors of universities of Los Angeles, New York etc., as students of Nadia Boulanger, Hindemith, Walter Piston and others. As if one needed to be a student of Boulanger and Hindemith to write shit! When Frenchmen, Poles, Italians and others study with Boulanger, they become decent composers, when it's an American, he is still a shit."¹⁵

The second reason for the marginalisation of the *Bacevicius' Music Club* and his similar efforts is to be related to the generation gap in the adaptation to the US and the transformation of musical ideologies. As argued by Brigid Cohen, in the Cold War, New York crystallized as an archetypal global city in which different cosmopolitanisms counterpointed and contested. When comparing the musical careers made by different composers of the Bacevičius' generation – émigrés from

15 Vytautas Bacevičius' letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, New York, 12 February 1963. Cited from Gedgaudas: *Vytautas Bacevičius*, 115.

Eastern Europe in the USA, one can notice that the national factor, however, had a significant impact on the institutional context of their activity. I have in mind such cases as active efforts of Russian émigré conductors or performers to perform the music of Russian composers and the like. Therefore the transformation of the multicultural New York musical scene into a cosmopolitan one was more pronounced in the artistic activities of the second avant-garde generation. Thus, e.g., Jurgis (George) Mačiūnas (1931–1978) of Lithuanian descent, one of the founders of the Fluxus movement, did not experience any national restrictions, neglected national identifications, and had no need to identify himself with European heritage to be able to develop new art.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE FIRST MODERNISM IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE SECOND AVANT-GARDE

I would believe that belonging to the interwar modernist generation made a no less significant impact on the adaptation of Bacevičius and his peers-composers in emigration than political, economic, and sociocultural changes. In the US, the Lithuanian composer tried out both strategies, i.e. adaptation and resistance, in his activities. As he admitted, on arriving to New York, he yielded to the temptation to adapt to the imaginary American musical milieu and the public taste. Since late 1950s, Bacevičius had abandoned the strategies to adapt to the American cultural environment and turned towards a unique conception of cosmic music, thus rethinking his early experiences of atonal music during the era of the second avant-garde inspirations. In his articles of the 1950s to 1960s and in his letters to Lithuanian artists, to his sister composer Grażyna Bacewicz and his brother pianist Kęstutis Bacevičius who lived in Poland, the composer offered an exhaustive analysis of the opportunities provided to modern composition by serial, sonoristic, aleatoric, electronic music, and *musique concrète*, and simultaneously he discussed a broader picture of the 20th century new music development. In the progressivist vision of music modernisation, Bacevičius ranked Béla Bartók, Alexander Scriabin, Igor Stravinsky, Olivier Messiaen, Edgar Varèse, and André Jolivet, and he also closely analysed the works of the post-war avant-garde representatives Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Nono, Iannis Xenakis, Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna, Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and others. Just like in his early creative period, Bacevičius took a sceptical view of the direction advocated by the Second Viennese School and the alternatives offered by the associated serialism and other composing techniques that relied on strict rules: “composers [...] have to particularly beware of getting caught in mathematical puzzles and to

remember that music is not just dry mathematics”.¹⁶ He also had reservations about electronic music and *musique concrète*: “The fantastic instruments and unheard effects of electronic music, as well as admirable timbres and excellent sound vibration and dynamics, reveal for us a source of valuable opportunities for the music of the future, however, before new instruments are invented and produced that could make use of that source, electronic music does not have any future, as a corpse shall not be inspired by any spirit. And a machine is just a corpse”.¹⁷ “[S]peaking of *musique concrète*, it is very interesting [...] It is magical music (with vibrations and glissando), however, it is still in the cradle.”¹⁸

Encouraged by his friend visual artist Adomas Galdikas to take an interest in New York experimental music composers, and primarily in the works of John Cage, Bacevičius failed to find a counterweight to the “terror” of serialism in the world of aleatoric, and in the freedoms of indeterminacy he saw a threat to “a creator’s *principle of perfection*”.¹⁹ In his lecture on the contemporary European music, given in Boston College of Music in 1965, the Lithuanian composer presented the late conception of “cosmic music” in a more exhaustive way, by positioning his version of avant-garde composing in the environment of the classics of the twentieth century modern music and the new phenomena. As a source of inspiration for his later “cosmic” works, Bacevičius chose not the Darmstadt mainstream, but Edgard Varèse and Olivier Messiaen, as well as abstract art: “Cosmic music suggests a great aesthetic evolution [...] the idea is not a new one: Skriabin, Jolivet, Bartók and Varèse have already composed music of this kind.”²⁰ One of the origins of Bacevičius’ idea of cosmic music derived from ESP (Extra Sensory Perception) states, i.e. from

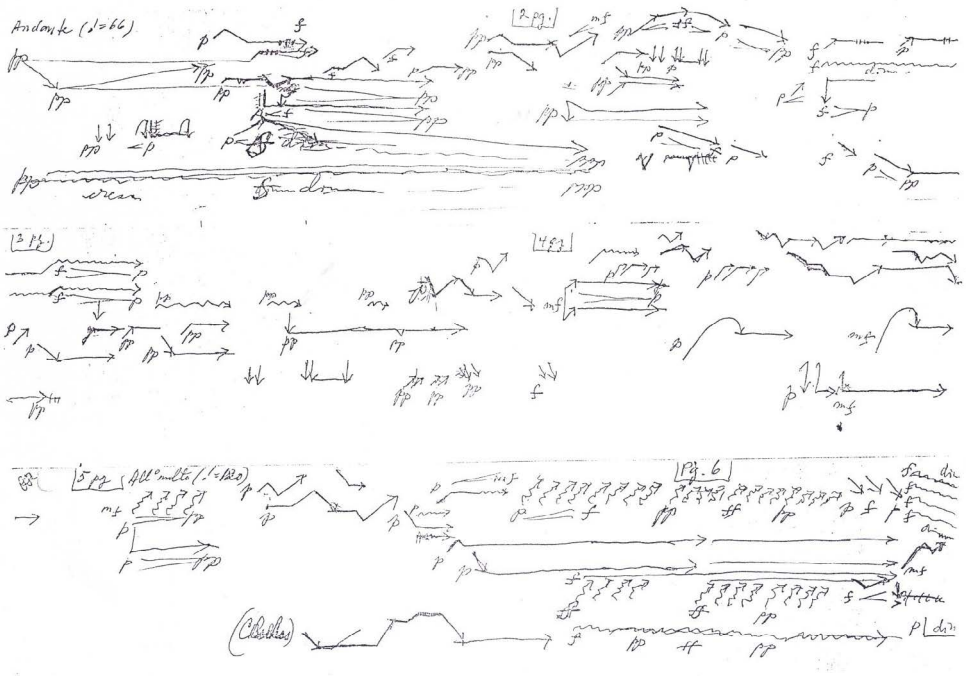
16 Vytautas Bacevičius: “Laikas neina atgal [Time Does Not Tun Backwards]”, *Draugas*, 19 October 1963. As early as during his studies in Paris, Bacevičius adopted the distrust of, or even hostility towards, the Second Viennese School typical of the French musical milieu. The Lithuanian composer never provided any broader comment; however, one could assume that, having started to identify himself with atonal music since the end of the 1920s, he could have meant the theoretical conception of the correlation of polytonality and atonality, advocated by Darius Milhaud in the 20s. As he stated having got acquainted with Arnold Schoenberg’s system many years ago, Bacevičius more openly presented his negative view on the Second Viennese creative style in his letter to sister Gražyna in 1958: “As for the dead, I consider the creators of dodecaphonic music to be absolute spiritual corpses. To combine notes in a certain fixed order means exclusively brain work, detached from an absolute music composer’s emotional world, spiritual experiences, and subtlest feelings”. See Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, New York, 29 October 1958. Quoted after Gedgaudas: *Vytautas Bacevičius*, 54.

17 Bacevičius: “Laikas neina atgal”.

18 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, Paris, 05 September 1961. Cited from Gedgaudas: *Vytautas Bacevičius*, 90.

19 Vytautas Bacevičius’ letter to Vytautas Montvila, New York, 15 November 1968. LLMA, f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12, l. 37.

20 Vytautas Bacevičius: lecture *Contemporary Music in Europe*, Boston College of Music, 1965. LLMA, f. 117, Inv. 2, No. 12.



Example 1. Vytautas Bacevičius, *Graphique*, Op. 68 (1964). Fragment of graphical notation – “a film of the score”. Music Information Centre Lithuania

going beyond the three-dimensional reality and into one’s own spiritual universe, equivalent to that of the cosmos. In 1963, he wrote in his letter to sister Gražyna:

From now on I’m going to write *pure and atonal* music. I am going to draw all ideas from my own Universe and filter them through my own mentality guided by my own logic. Since I hate mathematical puzzles, systems and techniques, I reject and have no intention of borrowing from others; my logic will be naturally based on the strictest discipline, which will take into account all conditions necessary to create purely atonal music - not serial, however, since my music will be *virtually unrepeatable*, yet with much stress on *structures rythmiques*. I am going to draw on the entire wisdom of my Universe and put it to paper to be ordered by logic. I spit on Schaeffer and Goléa, who claim that those composers are the most significant who write according to established systems, especially the serial one, while those who don’t adopt the serial technique are nothing but dilettantes. I hope you believe me, [Gražyna], that I need no intuition to enter my extra-material Universe, its purely abstract spheres, higher and higher into the light, the apex of perfection.

Although I am myself imprisoned in a bodily prison, my own Universe it contains is infinitely great.²¹

The *opus magnum* of his late creative period – *Graphique* for symphony orchestra (1964) – is an emblematic composition that reveals a kind of atonality revision at the time of the second avant-garde practices. Intended to become the first opus of a never completed cycle of nine symphonic compositions *Sahasrara Chakra*, the composition was set out in two forms: the graphical notation and the traditional score.

By relating that and other late compositions to the new atonality, the composer undoubtedly used the concept of atonality very freely, as a characteristic of abstract music based on avant-garde art principles. The late works of Bacevičius can be partly related to the historical practices of atonal music merely due to the polycentric modelling of macro- and micro-structures, with simultaneous heavily enforcing a refined heteronymic vertical of the musical texture. By particularly frequently referring to the vibration category to define the philosophical conception of the cosmic music, the composer convincingly developed the latter in the score of the *Graphique* also by use of micro-timbral thinking, differentiation of orchestral sections and individual instruments, and treating them quite emphatically. It has to be noted that the architectonics of the composition was greatly affected by the attention paid to the richness of the orchestral colour, especially to the wind instruments and four percussion groups. In Danutė Palionytė's opinion, the *Graphique* by Bacevičius is to be considered a kind of a sonorism,²² merely in it, contrary to the conventional compositions of that trend, sonoric clusters were given up and sonic consonances were sought to be maximally differentiated. That enables one to find the conceptual and sonic analogies in the cosmic music developed by Bacevičius and the searches in the twentieth century *musica mundana*, undoubtedly attributable to Messiaen and Varèse, admired by the Lithuanian composer, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, moderately appreciated by him. Simultaneously, in the scores of the *Graphique* by Bacevičius, as well as in other scores of the late “cosmic” period, one can find structural analogies with other theoretical conceptions and practices of the composers of the 1950s to 1960s. As an example, the conception of sound types of new music (*Klangtypen der Neuen Musik*)²³ by Helmut Lachenmann can be named: the invariants of a number of those types are found in the above-mentioned compositions by Bacevičius.

21 Vytautas Bacevičius' letter to Gražyna Bacewicz, New York, 18 March 1963. Cited from Droba: “Vytautas Bacevičius in America”, 132–133.

22 Danutė Palionytė: “Vytauto Bacevičiaus simfoninės muzikos vizija [Vision of Symphonic Music in Vytautas Bacevičius's Work]”, in: *Vytautas Bacevičius. I tomas. Gyvenimo partitūra* [Vytautas Bacevičius. Volume 1. Life Score], ed. Ona Narbutienė (Vilnius: Petro Ofsetas, 2005), 333.

23 Cf. Helmut Lachenmann: “Klangtypen der Neuen Musik“, in: *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966–1995*, ed. Josef Häusler (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf, 1996), 1–20.

30.

(15)

Picc. Fl.
 G[♯] Fl.
 H^{ts}
 C. A.
 Clar.
 Bsns
 Cors
 II
 III
 B.
 Trb.
 C. B.
 Vols
 Altos
 Violas
 C. B.
 1) Timb.
 2) [Tragl.
 Cy. Ch.
 Vrs.
 Gr. d.
 T. T.
 3) [C. R.
 B. M.
 Bng.
 Cla.
 4) [T. B.
 Cbs.
 Bgs.
 B. Ch.

Example 2. Vytautas Bacevičius, *Graphique*, Op. 68 (1964). Sound type of texture sound (*Texturklang*).
 Music Information Centre Lithuania

38. (19)

pta Fl.
Gda Fl.
Htbs
C. A.
Clar.
Bons
C. Bon
Piano
Dir. p2/sons
Dir. grads/sons
Dir. Vlls
C. B.
1. Timb
2. [Tup, Cr., B., Org., T. T.]
3. [C. R., B. M., Cong., Clo.]
4. [T. B., Cbs., Cong., B. Ch.]

Example 3. Vytautas Bacevičius, *Graphique*, Op. 68 (1964). Sound type of fluctuation sound (*Fluktuationklang*). Music Information Centre Lithuania

LATE CREATION AND ARTISTIC ESCAPISM IN EXILE

Compared to other less seldom analysed works of the interwar modernism late period, the composition of Bacevičius can be assigned to the strategy of escapism. As a similar example of cultural strategy, one can name Arthur Lourié's (1892–1966) late creative period in the USA. Lourié was equally critical of American cultural reality: in his drawings the composer depicted himself as Hamlet with a skull in his hands, locked in an American prison titled “The League of Composers”. Quotation from his reflections on death from the American period:

I was thinking tonight that it is still possible to live in America [...] It is very hard, but possible. However, the thought about death here is totally unbearable. One has to leave from here to die, to go anywhere, away from here. It is difficult to get rid of the impression that no sooner you die than you are made into [...] tooth paste, a bar of shaving soap, Coca-Cola or something similar. There is no way from here either to heavens or the underworld; all the roads instead lead to a factory of sorts where even souls are transformed into commercial products.²⁴

In this context, it is useful to remember Lydia Goehr's proposal to discuss emigration not merely from the historical, but also from the theoretical perspective, by recording not only the geographical and cultural changes of artist's living environment, but also the existential and psychological conditions.²⁵ How should we interpret the double – physical and creative – exile in which the first modernism composers, who had been committed to the innovation ideology during the interwar period, appeared in the environment of the second avant-garde? In that respect, I find a multiphase stage model of the composer's creative way proposed by Polish musicologist Mieczysław Tomaszewski very handy. In that model, the composer identified six situations of creative options:

1. Appropriation of traditions (taking root in the cultural environment);
2. The first fascination (crystallisation of ideals);
3. Resistance and rebellion;
4. A significant meeting (existential communication);
5. Existential threat;
6. Loneliness and liberation.²⁶

24 Cited from Olesya Bobrik: “Farewell to St Petersburg. From Arthur Lourié's Memoirs on Russia”, in: *Vytautas Bacevičius in Context*, 139–140.

25 Lydia Goehr: “Music and Musicians in Exile: The Romantic Legacy of a Double Life”, in: *Driven Into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, eds. Reinhold Brinkmann, Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 69.

26 Mieczysław Tomaszewski: “Życia twórcy punkty węzłowe. Rekonesans”, *Res facta* 11 (2010), 79–90. Italics mine.

Differently from T. W. Adorno, Tomaszewski considers phase five to be that of late creation, and stage six, the last one, and describes it in the following way: “that is a complex of existential experiences. A moment of farewells and separations, looking back at the past and running towards the future, when memories come back to life and almost irrational plans are born. However, first of all, it is a sense of solitude and the liberation of imagination leading towards ‘new shores’”. To make the musicologist’s reasoning clear, I shall present an extended characteristic of the two last phases of creation.

The phase of *late creation* shall be most frequently predetermined by the moment of existential threat. The forming “shadow line” and the cathartic moment bring an emotional breakdown and cleansing. That allows one to take a fresh look at one’s work, to free oneself from internal and external constraints, to reduce optional means and to seek new ones. The phase is marked by an inclination towards autobiographical observations, spirituality, and the preference for pantheistic, philosophical, and sacred themes.

[The *last works*] are particularly affected by a strong sense of solitude which is paradoxically accompanied by a sense of liberation. That is followed by self-immersion, detachment from the immediate reality, the flight of imagination and disintegration, the return to the beginning and the striving towards hardly articulated fields of opportunities. [...] Mystical and metaphysical accents are frequent. The fragmentation of works is compensated for by unity and harmony based on supersonic parameters.²⁷

Tomaszewski’s model, in its own specific way related to Lydia Goehr’s exile interpretation, may serve as a tool to avoid the marginalisation of the late compositions of Bacevičius that would unavoidably result from a narrow technological analysis of his symphonic work *Graphique* and others. It was only in the years of the restored Independence that Bacevičius’ music became more frequently performed in Lithuania and, after his centenary, also abroad. However, the composer’s inclusion in the national music modernisation narratives shows that the conceptual and technological parallels are insufficient to contextualise Bacevičius’ music in the twentieth-century musical modernism. Based on a still viable model of cosmopolitan centres and national peripheries, the case of Bacevičius is to be interpreted as a solitary creative path, hardly related to the mainstreams. In such a context, Brigid Cohen’s productive insight should be taken into account: in the analysis of the twentieth-century musical processes, it is necessary to more closely examine the emigrants’ hybrid identifications and the political and cultural contexts of

²⁷ Idem, italics mine.

their recreation. However, I would think that the conception supported by philosophical and psychological arguments expands the usual interpretation of creative strategies of émigré composers. Such an interpretation is of special importance for the analysis of the cases of the twentieth century mass emigration, with numerous experiences of those defined by Homi Bhabha as “victims of modernity, [...] bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging” being considered as a more general trend.²⁸

28 See Homi Bhabha: “Cosmopolitanisms”, in: *Cosmopolitanism*. eds. Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.