

The representation of the sea in piano works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis

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ABSTRACT. The aim of the present article is to point out several features of selected piano works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis intended to portray the sea. The author identifies recurring motifs in the composer's style of writing as most frequently employed to convey a variety of characteristics of water imagery. As an example of performance analysis, the researcher focuses on the interpretation of the *Sea Etudes* VL 309–313 presented by the Lithuanian pianist Jurgis Karnavičius, meaningful for the purposes of the present investigation due to its remarkable pictorial and colouristic tendencies.

KEYWORDS:
Mikalojus Konstantinas
Čiurlionis, piano music,
pictorialism, sea, Jurgis
Karnavičius.

Introduction

The piano music by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) is a conspicuous and assorted repertoire ranging over the composer's lifespan and therefore integral to his overall artistic parabola. The heterogeneity of his pianistic style certainly intrigues and inspires performers through a remarkably various palette of demeanors and undertones.

Generally speaking, Čiurlionis' whole artistic output is characterised by a profound holistic approach, equally drawing from his own life experiences, creative flair, and spiritual dimension all at once. His piano music is no exception in this realm, reflecting a broad array of stimuli from the most diverse sources. Gabrielė Kondrotaitė, having investigated Čiurlionis' piano music in recent times, has conceived the following summary after browsing through remarks and commentaries made in works by other scholars (Algirdas Ambrazas, Vytautas Landsbergis, Darius Kučinskas, etc.) into three main categories: Lithuanian folk songs and the natural environment, instrumental improvisation, and musical works by other composers.

Lithuanian folk songs and the natural environment. Čiurlionis was naturally exposed to the traditional chanting of Lithuania, as can be found within several short composi-

tions for piano, deliberately modelled on folk songs, including “Vienam kiemely” (“In A Small Yard”) VL 274, “Bėkit, bareliai” (“Stretch Away, Harvested Fields”) VL 279, and “Motule mano” (“Oh Dear Mother”) VL 340 (Kondrotaitė 2014: 83).

In addition, the composer genuinely considers Lithuanian country life in all its aspects as a part of his inspirational background, including the natural environment (forests, lakes, green fields) surrounding him, and gathers all such stimuli into his music vocabulary through exquisite pictorial devices, as will be shown in the following paragraphs.

Instrumental improvisation. Čiurlionis’ compositional output owes much to improvisation, which is to be considered a significant factor throughout his creative process. The composer reveals these leanings in the lines: “At nights, I improvise and so I think and yearn a lot”¹ (Čiurlionis in Kondrotaitė 2014: 57), thus disclosing a recurring bond between extemporaneousness and commitment to paper. As a matter of fact, the majority of his musical sketches must have come to light from such practice, as their fragmentation and incompleteness also corroborates. Stylistic features of instrumental improvisation (reiteration, transposition, variation, etc.) are certainly recognisable in the majority of his piano works.

Musical works by other composers. Along with his own life events and cultural background, Čiurlionis’ musicality is also indebted to music by his illustrious predecessors. As Ambrazas observes, it is safe to recall “the early academic fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach”, “the style of writing for string quartet by the masters of the First Viennese School”, and “the ballroom music by Frédéric Chopin and even of the whole 19th century”² among Čiurlionis’ first musical discoveries (Ambrazas 2000: 5, quoted in Kondrotaitė 2014: 58).

These initial sources progressively merged with the music of his contemporaries, such as Gabriel Fauré, César Franck, Richard Strauss, and Richard Wagner, accounting for the increasing complexity of his harmonic language. The influence of Robert Schumann is equally ascertained in respect to the tortuosity of his pianistic style as it appears within his most challenging pages, characterised by such elements as fast passages, leaps, octaves, dotted rhythms, intricate voicing, and polyrhythms.

Other fields of human creativity (visual arts, poetry, etc.). Čiurlionis’ artistic personality encompasses and proficiently integrates both the field of visual representation and

- 1 „Vakarais improvizuoju ir daug galvoju bei ilgiausiu“. Letter from Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis to Bronislava Volmanienė. Druskininkai, 1907.
- 2 „Studijų Varšuvoje ir Leipzige metais – reveransai Vienos klasikams (Styginių kvarteto Menuetas) ir J. S. Bachui (ankstyvosios akademinės fugos), akivaizdi F. Chopin’o (ir net XIX a. saloninės lenkų muzikos) įtaka“.

music composition, and also occasionally manifests in the field of literature, as witnessed by his many letters, daily records, and poetic impressions. This syncretism remarkably contributes to the oneness of his artistic language, comprising facets from different ways of expression all together, thus bestowing powerful eloquence upon his semantic world.

The main focus in the present article is on selected piano works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis seen as deliberately attempting to represent the sea, by means of specific parameters typical of the portrayal of water in music, recast through the particularities of the composer's musical language.

1. The sea in Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' creative work

The representation of natural phenomena, including the sea, is a feature of Čiurlionis' multifaceted artistry. The composer's profound fascination with this matter can be traced back to different backgrounds, having coexisted and intersected with each other over his lifetime and creative path. The author of the present article distinguishes three main stages leading from Čiurlionis' perception of the sea to its rendering as an object of artistic representation: direct observation, using spirituality as a filter, and artistic reworking.

Direct observation. Čiurlionis directly witnessed the sight of the Baltic Sea on multiple occasions, as can be seen from his private correspondence. For instance, in one letter to his wife-to-be Sofija, the composer writes: "Do you remember the sea and the somber twilight? And can you hear the waves blustering? And playing and singing? Do you remember? And do you recall the tallest of those waves?"³ (Čiurlionis in Landsbergis 1994: 114). In this excerpt, the author focuses on the aural dimension related to the experience of the sea ("The waves blustering", "[...] playing and singing"), while also touching upon its grandness and unfathomableness ("The tallest of those waves").

Using spirituality as a filter. Čiurlionis' artistry was imbued with a profound spirituality, which was often interwoven with the arcane, mythological past of Lithuania. The sea, therefore, he also associated it with otherworldly and cosmogonic forces and entities. In this regard, Stasys Goštautas ascribes Čiurlionis' visual art to the macro-category of "fantastic art", which can also include the work of personalities such as William Blake, James Ensor, and Giorgio de Chirico, alluding to a way of depicting things relying on "fantastic elements easily recognisable by anyone", in order to convey "a reality that has become meaningless and can no longer sufficiently express the artist's inner thoughts" (Goštautas 1983: 1).

3 „O Tu jūrą prisimeni? Ir juodąjį saulėlydį? Tai jau gerai. O girdi, kaip užia bangos? Ir groja – ir dainuoja? Atsimeni? O didžiausias bangas atsimeni?“ St. Petersburg: 1908.

In this sense, the reference to the element of the supernatural helps Čiurlionis to express feelings and sensations descending from the observation of the sea. For instance, this penchant can be spotted within his written poem “Jūra” (“The Sea”), whose incipit begins:

Mighty sea. Magnificent, infinite, boundless. The sky wholly envelops your waves with its blue, whilst you, full of grandeur, breathe calmly and peacefully, well aware that there are no limits to your power, your greatness, and that your existence is eternal. The great, mighty, wonderful sea!⁴ (Čiurlionis in Landsbergis 1997: 53).

Personifications of natural phenomena are scattered throughout the poem, thus conferring on the narration an indisputable mythological guise. For instance, the sea is described as “sad and indignant”, the wind is called a “homeless vagabond”, and the trees “bow down”.⁵ Most probably, as Jonas Bruveris observes, Čiurlionis elaborated all such images after reading the first volume of Teodoras Narbutas’ *History of the Lithuanian Nation* (1835–41), which contained a description of Lithuanian pagan deities such as Patrimpas (god of rivers and springs) and Gardaitis (god of wind and storms), among other things. This work is known to have been part of the composer’s library (Bruveris 2011: 14).

Artistic reworking. Čiurlionis’ kaleidoscopic imagination is the common thread of his entire artistic work, as a result of the synthesis between his direct observation of the phenomena and their being filtered through his own psychology, spirituality, and creativity. The representation of the sea is no exception in this sense: the composer-painter conveys the quintessence of his perception of the sea (immensity, mightiness, indomitability) by recurring, distinctive motifs and patterns within both his pictorial and musical works.

Čiurlionis’ paintings quite manifestly give evidence of this tendency, as it appears in the very famous triptych *Sonata V. Jūros sonata* (*Sonata of The Sea*, 1908), proficiently enhancing such characteristics through vivid symbolism. For instance, the first painting (*Allegro*, Figure 1a) exhibits gigantic waves juxtaposed against majestic summits in the background. The surface of water is portrayed as lambasted and rippled by a stormy wind, as well as being sprinkled with odd golden spheres (most probably bubbles or the reflection of stars) while a dimly coloured, candid seagull or albatross hovers above (perhaps a cross-reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”).

4 „Galinga jūra. Didi, beribė, neišmatuota. Visas dangus apgaubia savo mėlyne tavo bangas, o tu, didybės pilna, alsuoji tyliai ir ramiai, nes žinai, kad nėra ribų tavo galiai, tavo didybei, tavo būtis begalinė. Didi, galinga, puiki jūra!“

5 „O tu [jūra] raukais ir rūstinies“, „Vėjas benamys valkata“, „Lenkiasi jam [vėjui] liauni gluosniai“.

Diversely, the second painting (*Andante*, Figure 1b) is imbued with serenity, warmth, and hope. The sea itself barely catches the observer's attention because it is surrounded by a large variety of other visual stimuli: the outlines of a submerged town at the bottom; the two burning torches along the horizon's line on top; the firm, safe hand holding a sailboat that towers above all. Here, Čiurlionis points out other aspects of the sea: its boundlessness, infiniteness, and its state of being governed by superior forces.

The third painting (*Finale*, Figure 1c) generally recalls the atmosphere of the first. The scenery is dominated by the scene of an impetuous storm, one huge wave devouring the tiny boats in the foreground. The colors are sharper at times, the crest of the waves being highlighted with an electric blue, albeit a somber and mournful one.

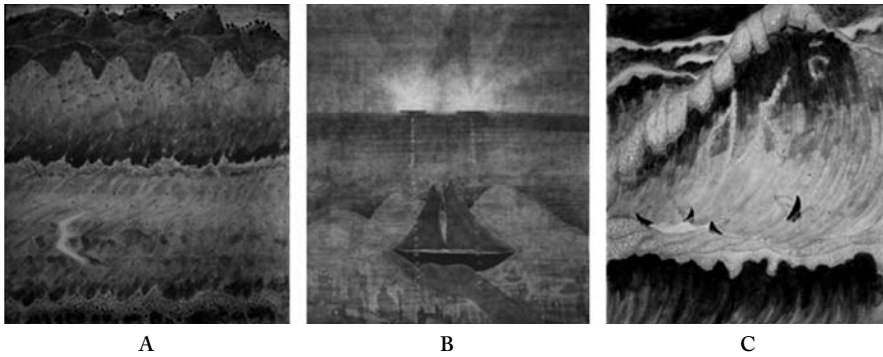


Figure 1. M. K. Čiurlionis, Sonata V. Jūros sonata. Tempera on paper. 1908
(<http://www.ciurlionis.eu>)

The symphonic poem “Jūra” (“The Sea”, 1903–06), scored for a full orchestra, also conveys all such impressions. In this regard, Enrique Alberto Arias observes:

The vastness of the sea is depicted not only in the general dimensions of the work but in many of the *ostinato* motives and wave-like thematic ideas. Čiurlionis often creates large climaxes, which elide into the next section, to convey the sense of immense power. [...] The general image of the sea is musically captured by numerous features of the score. Some of these are: the slow *ostinato* of the fifth and fourth, the wave-like scale passages in the central section, the overlapping lines in the various parts of the orchestra, the leisurely pacing of the general structure and the oscillating tempi. (Arias 2001: 10)

Analogous features can be found within Čiurlionis' piano works, some of them being directly inspired by the sea, by means of very specific characteristics of his style of writing for piano, as will be discussed in the following section.

2. Characteristics of Čiurlionis' pianistic style functional to the representation of the sea

The sea and, more generally, water have been recurring themes in musical descriptiveness over the centuries, composers such as Claude Debussy (*La mer*, 1903–05; *Reflets dans l'eau*, 1905) and Maurice Ravel (*Jeux d'eau*, 1901; *Une barque sur l'océan*, 1904–05) being among the most representative of this tendency.

Two of Čiurlionis' piano works reflect this tradition: the set of preludes known as *Jūros etiudai* ("Sea Etudes", hereafter *S.E.*) VL 309–313 and the suite *Jūra. Mažų peizažų ciklas* ("The Sea. Cycle of Small Landscapes", hereafter *The Sea*) VL 317. These compositions give clear evidence of a pianistic style intended to evoke the distinctive qualities of the sea, such as fluidity, expansiveness, and depth, each of them recurrently associated with specific musical techniques.

A colouristic intention is also evident, as the pianistic writing is often enriched by figures aiming at evoking specific optical effects related to water, such as the darkness of the abyss or the sparkles over the surface, as will be illustrated in the following paragraphs.

Waves and rolling. Waves can be most evidently appreciated in Čiurlionis' musical representation of the sea, as also previously observed with regard to his pictorial works. Pianistically speaking, they are best conveyed through periodically swaying figures. For instance, in the incipit of *S.E.* VL 311 (Example 1, left) they result in alternatively rising and falling *arpeggi* built on the descending chromatic row B – B_b – A, sustained by rumbling chords at the bottom. This configuration confers an overall ominous and frightful character onto the episode. An analogous solution can be observed in the above-mentioned *Une barque sur l'océan* by Ravel (Example 1, right).



Example 1. Comparative view between the two incipits of *S.E.* VL 311 by Čiurlionis (bar 1, left) and *Une barque sur l'océan* by Ravel (bar 1, right). The similarly swaying *arpeggi* describe the movement of waves.

Somewhat ampler waves may be recognised in the middle section of *S.E. VL 313*, in which the regularly ascending and descending motifs of the major second draw the trajectory of a semicircle (Example 2). As a consequence of the greater spaciousness and the effective dilution of thematic developmental procedures, a true climax is hardly discernible: the music proceeds by long lines, seemingly accounting for the magnitude of the open water. The shape of a wave might be recognised along larger constructions as well, as happens in the third movement of *The Sea* (Example 3).

Musical score for Example 2, showing piano and bass staves. The tempo is marked "Meno mosso. Liberamente e fantastico". The score includes annotations such as "lunga" (long) and dynamic markings "ff" (fortissimo) and "p" (piano). The music features long, flowing lines with a semicircular trajectory in the melodic motifs.

Example 2. Excerpt from *S.E. VL 313* (bb. 13–16). The figures at the left hand appearing from bar 14 describe the shape of waves.

Musical score for Example 3, showing piano and bass staves. The tempo is marked "Allegro impetuoso". The score includes annotations such as "mf" (mezzo-forte), "cresc." (crescendo), and "dim." (diminuendo). The music features a more rhythmic and energetic character with arrows indicating the shape of waves along the larger construction.

Example 3. Excerpt from *The Sea* (III, bb. 1–5). The arrows help to identify the shape of a wave along the bigger construction.

A phenomenon most frequently associated with waves is the one of bodies, especially boats, rolling above the surface of the water, so dear to composers of the *barcarole* or *gondoliera*. Čiurlionis also treasures this tradition. For instance, in the first movement of *The Sea*, the recurring dotted *ostinato*, built on alternatively ascending and descending intervallic leaps, imitate the oscillations of a craft driven by the movement of waves from one side to the other (Example 4).

A similar effect is achieved within other musical works not bearing any direct connection with the sea, as a result of the composer's general predilection for such *ostinato* types. For example, in the Prelude in D minor VL 256, Čiurlionis reiterates the same, swaying triplets pattern at the left hand from the beginning to the end, showing an analogy with the incipit of Franz Liszt's *Gondoliera* from *Venezia e Napoli* (Example 5).



Example 4. Incipit of *The Sea* (bar 1). The type of *ostinato* employed by Čiurlionis recalls the rolling of the surface of water.



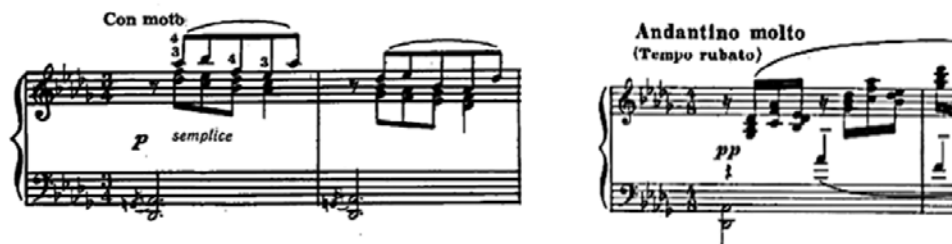
Example 5. Comparative view between the two *ostinati* employed in Čiurlionis's Prelude in D minor VL 256 (bar 1, left) and Liszt's *Gondoliera* from *Venezia e Napoli* (bar 1, right).

Floating and flowing. The mere buoyancy on the surface of water, not being eventually at the mercy of waves, is also envisioned in Čiurlionis' musical representation of the sea, accounting for the particular "fluidity" or "liquidity" of certain figures. For instance, *S.E.* VL 309 exhibits a recurring texture of variously consonant and dissonant chords flowing one into another without impediment. The effect is bolstered by a long-range phrasing and a generous pedaling (Example 6). Stillness and tranquility of pace predominate, although the widespread employment of diminished and augmented intervals also instills a certain disquietedness.

A similar outcome is acknowledgeable within various other works by Čiurlionis. For example, in the incipit of Prelude in D_b Major VL 187, the luminous chords at the right hand, being soaked in pedal, so picturesquely float above the steady empty-fifth *ostinato* at the left hand at the very bottom, as if they were transported by a pacific watercourse (Example 7, left). In this case, the source of reference ought not to be the sea, but rather the water ponds of the Lithuanian countryside and hinterland, such as the ones the composer could enjoy around Varėna and Druskininkai. The analogy with Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau* (Example 7, right) is incontrovertible.



Example 6. Incipit of S.E. VL 309 (bb. 1–2). The chords, imbued with pedal, smoothly flow into each other as if floating on water.



Example 7. Comparative view between the incipits of Prelude in D_b Major VL 187 by M. K. Čiurlionis (bb. 1–2, left) and *Reflets dans l'eau* by C. Debussy (bar 1, right), both imitative of buoyancy on a watercourse.

Depth. The marine abyss certainly must have fascinated Čiurlionis. In the previous Example 1, this kind of characteristic is equally featured in the uproarious bottom chords, the last of which overlap the intervals of semitone and octave, so efficaciously embodying a sense of untamable grandness as well as of dreary impenetrability. Indeed, the passage puts into the foreground both the turbulent surface (the waves) and the underlying obscurity (the abyss) of the sea.

In general, the association between the depth of the sea and the low register of the piano is always operational, as in the conclusion of *S.E. VL 309*: the composer gives emphasis to the bottom A and B \flat notes, both allowed to resonate on the pedal, recalling a dark seafloor (Example 8). In this regard, even more frightful demeanors are achieved in *The Sea*. For instance, in the first movement, frequent fast-trembling figures at the left hand in the bottom register emphasise the obscurity and darkness of colors (Example 9).



Example 8. Conclusion from *S.E. VL 309* (bb. 17–19), with emphasis on the low register in order to recall a seafloor.



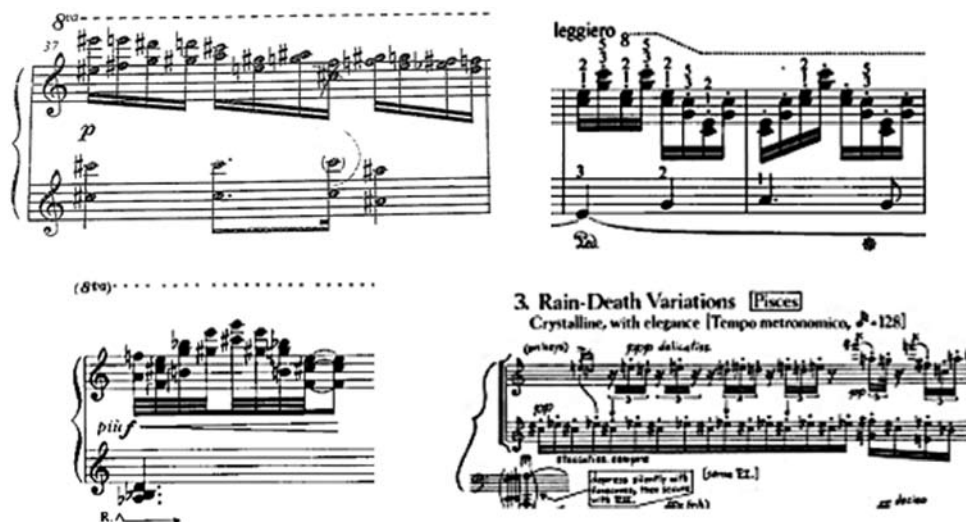
Example 9. Excerpt from the first movement of *The Sea* (bar 7), the trembling figures at the left hand evoking the tumultuousness and obscurity within the abyss of the sea.

Micro-properties of water. Several other features of Čiurlionis' pianistic writing may account for a variety of characteristics gathered from the observation of the behaviour of water. For instance, the first movement of *The Sea* is sprinkled with rapidly quivering motifs in the upper register, evocative of splashes and gushes produced by the banging of waves into each other (Example 10, top). Once again, the comparison with Ravel's *Une barque sur l'océan* comes out spontaneously (Example 10, bottom).

This colouristic penchant is remarkable in the employment of a crystal-clear successions of double-notes and also accounts for sparkles and glares. Čiurlionis most significantly features this property of water at the end of *S.E. VL 313*, as shown in Example 11 (top left). This very characteristic finds application in works by several other composers, such as Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* (Example 11, top right), Tōru Takemitsu's *Rain Tree Sketch* (bottom left), and George Crumb's *Rain Death Variations* (bottom right).



Example 10. Comparative view between two excerpts from the first movement of *The Sea* by M. K. Čiurlionis (top; bb. 1–2, 9–10) and *Une barque sur l'océan* by M. Ravel (bottom, bar 122), the boxes drawing the attention to figures imitative of water splashes and gushes.



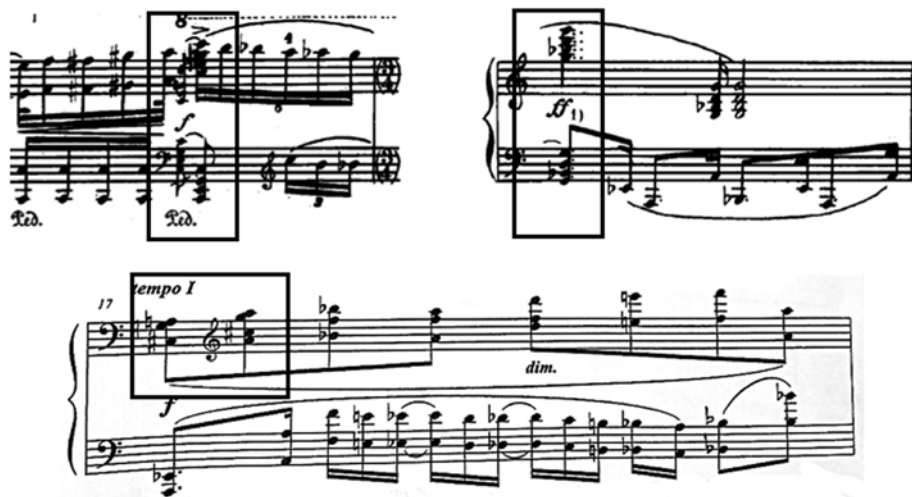
Example 11. Excerpts from Čiurlionis' *S.E. VL 313* (bar 37, top left), Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* (bb. 55–56, top right), Takemitsu's *Rain Three Sketch* (bar 61, bottom left), and Crumb's *Rain-Death Variations* (bar 1, bottom right), exhibiting figures imitative of sparkles and glares.

Other atmospheric agents: wind and thunder. The sea is often associated with storms and the related atmospheric agents in Čiurlionis' artistry. Wind is one of them: Čiurlionis evokes it by means of fast, twisting chromatic passages such as the one protracting itself throughout *S.E.* VL 312, imitative of howling airstreams (Example 12).

In the third movement of *The Sea*, the composer maximises such effect with loud, thunder-like figures as the violent, flickering, and unexpected grace notes at both hands embrace full chords along the range of four octaves (Example 13, top left). These sorts of bangs through such dense chords are frequently employed within the examined works, for example, in the first movement of *The Sea* at bar 17 (Example 13, top right) and in *S.E.* VL 310 at bar 17 (Example 13, bottom).



Example 12. Incipit of *S.E.* VL 312 (bb. 1–2), the fast, twisting chromatic passages at the right hand evoking the blowing of wind.



Example 13. Excerpts from *The Sea* (III, bar 4, top left; I, bar 17, top right) and *S.E.* VL 310 (bar 17, bottom). The boxes show analogous figures, made of dense, loud chords, imitative of thunder. The wind element is also observable, by means of the flickering chromatic scale, in the upper-left fragment.

Adventurousness and heroism. The sea is also often portrayed as scenario of bold and life-threatening ventures for human beings. For example, the middle section of *S.E.* VL 311 presents a martial, mazurka-like theme, seemingly reminiscent of the atmosphere of braveness and audacity in Rimsky Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (Example 14). This kind of martial character is equally featured within *S.E.* VL 312, entrusted to the left hand throughout the piece, as observed in the previous Example 12.

References to battlefield motifs can be also found in different guises. For instance, in the same VL 312, the use of empty intervals of fifth in the middle register recalls the sound of war trumpets and cornets (Example 15, top), as well as the repeated, incomplete chords in the second movement of *The Sea* (Example 15, bottom).



Example 14. Excerpt from *S.E.* VL 311 (bar 21), showing a martial, mazurka-like theme.



Example 15. Two excerpts from *S.E.* VL 311 (bar 19, left) and *The Sea* (II, bar 5; right).
The boxes draw attention to patterns imitative of war trumpets.

3. Performance analysis:

Jurgis Karnavičius' interpretation of the *Sea Etudes* VL 309–313

The piano music by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis has featured considerably in the repertoire of Lithuanian pianists across the generations. The case-study chosen for this article, Jurgis Karnavičius' approach towards the interpretation and performance of the compositions by Čiurlionis examined above, is perhaps the most suitable for the purposes of the present research, as the pianist largely focuses on the colouristic aspects of sound that befit the overall pictorial intent by the composer in the selected works.

In general, the research of colours and nuances is a prerogative of Karnavičius' pianistic outcome as a whole, and is handed down to his pupils as well (the author of the present article being among them). Such leanings are revealed by his thorough interest in the music of 20th-century French composers such as Debussy, Ravel, and Messiaen. At the same time, a meticulous commitment to a deep understanding of music drives the pianist to constantly perform in-depth analysis of the pianistic pages belonging to his repertoire, such as those by Čiurlionis. In this sense, he has embraced the studies by Rimantas Janeliauskas and Darius Kučinskas of Čiurlionis' music, reorganising the composer's piano works into sets of subsequent preludes (so-called *Neatpažinti ciklai*, "Unrecognised cycles"), and continuing to promote this asset during his public performances.

The recital *Čiurlionis kitaip* (Čiurlionis in a Different Way), played by Karnavičius on November 13, 2018, at the Great Hall of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in Vilnius and broadcast live by Lithuanian National Radio and Television, featured several such cycles, including a revised setting of *Sea Etudes* (*Neatpažintas ciklas X: VL 309, 312, 310, 311, 313, 309 bis*). The performance under discussion clearly exhibited the characteristics of Karnavičius' pianism, first and foremost the close attention to the variety of colours, most significantly enhancing the present study on Čiurlionis' musical representativeness.

The following paragraphs highlight several aspects of Karnavičius' interpretation of each of the *S.E.* seen as best conveying the characteristics of the pianistic style by Čiurlionis functional to the portrayal of water, as they have been listed above.

VL 309. In this work, Karnavičius opts for a slightly moving *andante* pace, privileging directionality as implicit in Čiurlionis' avoidance of any distinct climax throughout the composition. For this purpose, the pianist's hands literally flutter along the surface of the keyboard, conscientiously preventing any act of overdone emphasis which would potentially interfere with the general sense of calm fluency. Furthermore, the insertion of carefully balanced *rubati* in compliance with the phrasing very picturesquely recalls the flood tide along the foreshore.

Karnavičius's colouristic intentions are widely scattered across his performance. For example:

- ◆ The upper-middle voice at the right hand at bar 4 is allowed to more prominently murmur, thus soberly broadening the sonorous spectrum without jeopardising the overall serenity and composure.
- ◆ The bass line is given additional importance from bar 5 to 8, in correspondence with the upper voices reaching the highest pitches, clearly shaping the boundaries of the sound flux and, most importantly, underlining both qualities of depth

and the sparkle of the sea due to the increased distance between the registers at stake, although the very far ends are not reached.

- ◆ Diversely, the coexistence of both the middle and very low register from bar 11 to the end leaves room for a more robust sound, which Karnavičius achieves by relying on the empty fourths and fifths and the bell-like octaves scattered here and there.

VL 312. Karnavičius draws equal attention to both the sinuous, winding nature of the passages at the right hand and the fierce, rumbling quick march entrusted to the left hand. The character of *allegro risoluto* is preserved by an incessant, relentless pace.

Regarding the widespread chromaticism, the pianist purposefully emphasises the moments in which such flowing intervallic contiguity is broken, for instance, in correspondence with the sudden incipit of the chromatic descending scales at bars 4 and 11 and all along the bizarre convolutions at bar 6 (equally modelled on a chromatic row), accounting for the boisterousness and unpredictability of the sea wind. The left hand, instead, is given particular vigor and incisiveness in correspondence with the dactyl motifs (i.e., one quaver followed by two semi-quavers), whereas it benefits from more agility and dynamism while performing leaps, conferring both strength and vitality to the martial character.

VL 310. The pianist conceives the middle work of the series (if not counting VL 309 bis) as an actual languid, eventually dramatic *intermezzo*, in preparation for the all-consuming tempestuousness of the episodes to come. As observed in regard with VL 309, a general sense of fluidity prevails, although the listener here undergoes several more direct auditory inputs in correspondence with chosen dissonances, harmonic changes, and dynamic contrasts. In addition, both the recurring, hieratic *ostinato* at the left hand and the descending, syncopated chromatic scales at the right hand, despite affably floating, are given greater expressiveness and concreteness overall.

The major episodes from bar 10 to 13 and 18 to 23 sublimely, almost ecstatically, glide from the sounding board all around the hall. Here, Karnavičius chooses slightly faster tempi, gazing, along with the crystal-clearness of the highest-pitched passages, upon a more oneiric atmosphere. On the contrary, the brief culmination at bar 17, achieved through obscure harmonic progressions within the previous bar 16, brings the listener back to the real world of threats and dangers by way of the uproarious, stormy octaves at the left hand ruthlessly falling down.

VL 311. Karnavičius' "waves" are indisputably terrific, given a steady, looming pace, endorsed by abysmal, dreadful chords and topped by merciless, trumpet-like octaves. In this work, the pianist more remarkably indulges the swaying of music through ampler, more aerial hand gestures as well.

In the march section starting from bar 21, Karnavičius powerfully conveys the relentless implacability of the overwhelming nature, a fight in which humanity is unavoidably doomed to failure. Dynamics range from *mezzo forte* to *fortissimo* towards the radiant, blistering climax from bar 25 to the end, featuring ascending, repeated dotted chords tirelessly piling up on each other, the pianist's body strenuously battling against the keyboard until the capitulation to the following prelude.

VL 313. Karnavičius makes an actual battle rage in the last composition of the series, the different figures such as octaves, trills, and *arpeggi* ceaselessly overlapping each other in a sort of organised chaos. This happens to be, according to the performer's rendition, the very climax of the whole cycle.

In the section from bar 14 to the end, the pianist makes the listener aware of the same musical material being employed in a more mournful, almost funereal guise. The general feeling of long "waves" is occasionally shattered in order to send chosen frightful demeanors into the foreground, such as mordant trills and maddeningly repeated chords. Last but not least, the culmination from bar 37 to 40 featuring a double-notes texture is rendered as shrill, piercing, almost violent, alluding to nearly dazzling sparkles.

VL 309 bis. The conclusive work of the cycle, featuring the exact repetition of VL 309 at the end of the series, is presented by Karnavičius not as a mere reiteration, but rather as a shadier and more colourless version of it, with slightly less attention to all the details that were previously given the uppermost importance.

The pianist deliberately portrays fatigue and exhaustion, with a dash of wistfulness, reflecting reaching the end of a wearying journey. The last chord is meaningfully preceded by a remarkably longer pause than the first time, the pianist's hand slowly touching down with a loose, tired last gesture.

Conclusions

Čiurlionis' representation of the sea within selected pianistic works embodies a successful endeavour in line with the piano music tradition, equally enlivened by this intent, thanks to the composer's ability to shape influences from the most diverse sensorial solicitations into a variety of recurring figures in his style of writing for piano.

More broadly, Čiurlionis' reciprocal familiarity with other composers who have attempted to represent the sea or, in wider terms, water within their pianistic works is also unquestionable, demonstrated by the presence of common features in representing the aquatic and fluid element. As shown in this article, the following works may be mentioned among them: Franz Liszt (*St. Francis of Paula Walking on The Waves*, 1863;

Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este, 1877), Claude Debussy (*Jardins sous la pluie*, 1903; *Reflets dans l'eau*, 1905; *Poissons d'or*, 1907; *La cathédral engloutie*, 1910), Maurice Ravel (*Jeux d'eau*, 1901; *Une barque sur l'océan*, 1904–05; *Ondine*, 1908), Frank Bridge (*A Sea Idyll*, 1906), Ernst Bloch (*Poems of The Sea*, 1922), Witold Lutosławski (*A River Flows From Sieradz*, 1945), Luciano Berio (*Wasserklavier*, 1965), George Crumb (*Rain-Death Variations*, 1973), Salvatore Sciarrino (*Anamorfoosi*, 1980; *Perduto in una città d'acqua*, 1993), and Tōru Takemitsu (*Rain Tree Sketch*, 1982).

A performer willing to undertake an analogous path ought to fully plunge into the sophistication and heterogeneity of this kind of music, taking into account the multiplicity of variables at stake, first and foremost extra-musical inspirations (visual, auditory, artistic-literary, etc.), resulting in concrete stylistic features. These correspond, in turn, to multiple pianistic approaches, from technical to colouristic, to be expertly implemented from time to time, striving for the highest standard of creative expression.

The innate creative potential of this kind of repertoire is ultimately conveyed by the performative outcome of a pianist such as Jurgis Karnavičius, placing the focus on the most colouristic and pictorial aspects of music in order to bestow unique vividness and meaningfulness upon musical representation. His vision enriches the tradition of the performance of Čiurlionis' music along with other illustrious interpreters such as Vytautas Landsbergis, Rokas Zubovas, and Mūza Rubackytė.

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Jūros vaizdavimas Mikalojaus Konstantino Čiurlionio kūrinuose fortepijonui

SANTRAUKA. Straipsnio tikslas – įvardyti ir išanalizuoti tapybiškų Mikalojaus Konstantino Čiurlionio pastangų atvaizduoti jūrą požymius kūrinuose fortepijonui: „Jūros etiudai“ (VL 309–313) ir „Jūra. Mažų peizažų ciklas“ (VL 317). Autorius aptaria pasikartojančias ir dažniausias kompozitoriaus naudojamas figūras, kuriomis siekiama perteikti įvairius vandens įvaizdžius būdingus bruožus. Atvejo analizei pasirinkta „Jūros etiudų“ (VL 309–313), atliekamų pianisto Jurgio Karnavičiaus, interpretacija yra ypač reikšminga ir paranki šio tyrimo tikslams dėl išskirtinių tapybos ir koloristikos elementų. Ši, kaip ir kitų žinomų atlikėjų – Vytauto Landsbergio, Roko Zubovo ir Mūzos Rubackytės, vizija praturtina Čiurlionio muzikos atlikimo tradiciją. Atlikėjas, norintis eiti analogišku keliu, turėtų visiškai pasinerti į tokios muzikos rafinuotumą ir nevienalytiškumą bei atsižvelgti į daugybę kintamųjų, visų pirma į kitą, ne muzikinę, įkvėpimą (vaizdinį, garsinį, meninės literatūros ir kt.), pasižymintį tam tikrais stilistiniais bruožais. Tai atitinka daugialypius pianizmo metodus, pradedant techniniais, baigiant spalvingaisiais, kurie, siekiant aukščiausio kūrybinės raiškos standarto, kartkartėmis turėtų būti įgyvendinami.

REIKŠMINIAI

ŽODŽIAI:

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, fortepijono muzika, tapybiškumas, jūra, Jurgis Karnavičius.