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Latvian Music in the Forums of the Composers Union from the Late 1970s until the Late 1980s: Main Manifestations of Sociocultural Change*

Latvių muzika Kompozitorių sąjungos forumuose nuo XX a. aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigos iki devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos: sociokultūrinių pokyčių raiška

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Abstract

An eventful period in the history of the Latvian Composers Union was the era of *perestroika* and several years before it, that is, from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. Was the work of the union and its members influenced by the changing political background of this period, and if so, how? The paper will search for an answer to the question.

The influence of Soviet ideology was the reason for the “double life” of the Latvian Composers Union and its members. It was expressed both in discussions of the plenary sessions and congresses, as well as in the repertoire of the concerts organized by the union, because the Ministry of Culture paid greater royalties for purchasing works with ideologically desirable titles. However, at the same time, many works containing Aesopian language reflected a hidden opposition to the ideas of socialist realism, and this paper defines the main thematic lines in this respect (e.g., ecological or pagan themes; bird motifs by Pēteris Vasks; the theme of the Livs as a disappearing nation). The rebirth of sacred music was possible only in the late 1980s. The paper also discusses the reasons why Latvian music was less prone to radical stylistic experiments than music in the neighboring republics.

Research into the history of the Latvian Composers Union in this significant decade (the late 1970s to the late 1980s) could be continued as a comparative study in the future and could take into account both Latvia and other regions of the former USSR and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: Latvian music culture, double life, Aesopian language, stylistic.

Anotacija

Pertvarkos (*perestroika*) laikotarpis ir keleri metai prieš ją (nuo aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigos iki devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos) Latvijos kompozitorių sąjungai buvo kupini įvykių. Ar ir kaip sąjungos ir jos narių darbą veikė pokyčiai šio laikotarpio politiniame fone? Straipsnyje ieškoma atsakymo į šiuos klausimus.

Sovietų ideologijos įtaka buvo Latvijos kompozitorių sąjungos ir jos narių „dvigubo gyvenimo“ priežastis. Įtaka pasireiškė tiek plenarinių posėdžių ir suvažiavimų diskusijose, tiek sąjungos organizuojamų koncertų repertuare, nes Kultūros ministerija mokėjo didesnius honorarus už kūrinius ideologiškai pageidautiniais pavadinimais. Tuo pačiu metu daugelyje kūrinių Ezopo kalba reikštas slaptas priešinimasis socialistinio realizmo idėjoms: straipsnyje apibrėžtos pagrindinės teminės linijos šiuo požiūriu (ekologinė, pagoniškoji tematika; Pėterio Vasko paukščių motyvai; nykstančios lyvių tautos tematika ir kt.). Sakralinės muzikos atgimimas tapo įmanomas tik devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje. Straipsnyje taip pat aptariamos priežastys, kodėl latvių muzika buvo mažiau linkusi į radikalius stilistinius eksperimentus nei kaimyninėse respublikose.

Pateikta reikšmingo dešimtmečio (aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigos–devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos) Latvijos kompozitorių sąjungos istorijoje studija ateiptyje galėtų išaugti į Latvijos ir kitų buvusios SSRS ir Rytų Europos regionų muzikos lyginamuosius tyrimus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Latvijos muzikos kultūra, dvigubas gyvenimas, Ezopo kalba, stilius.

Introduction

In Latvia, similar to the other republics of the former USSR and socialist states, the development of contemporary art music was strongly influenced by the Composers

Union—an institution that oversaw the performances and publications of musical works by its members. Similar to other countries, this institution was created not on the initiative of the composers themselves but rather formed “from above.” Therefore, the composers’ unions, on one

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hand, were subject to strict ideological control. On the other hand, the views of their ordinary members were quite diverse, and they typically reflected concepts other than socialist realism. This also applies to the Latvian Composers Union. This paper deals with a significant period in its history that includes the era of *perestroika* and several years before it, that is, from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. The local music life at this time was intense and eventful, and the Composers Union contributed to it by holding congresses and plenary sessions in which the first performances of the most important new works were concentrated. Creative meetings were also held regularly. Was the work of the Latvian Composers Union and its members influenced by the changing political background of this period—the path from stagnation through *perestroika* to national awakening and the subsequent founding of an independent country—and if so, how? The paper will search for an answer to the question, considering the most important developments and the general atmosphere of this time in two respects: first, the written sources—the research, press, and archival testimonies; and, second, interviews with several contemporaries.

The influence of Soviet ideology as a ground for the “double life” in the activities of the Latvian Composers Union and its members

The late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s is commonly known as the time when Leonid Brezhnev (until 1982), Yuri Andropov (until 1984), and Konstantin Chernenko (until March of 1985) replaced each other as the general secretary of the Party, and the era of Mikhail Gorbachev only began in the last months of this half-decade. Nevertheless, the general atmosphere, characteristic of the music life of this period, cannot be unambiguously described as stagnant. The music critics that have reviewed the activities of the Latvian Composers Union as well as the ordinary members of the union participating in the discussions of plenary sessions and other creative meetings manifested a real pluralism in their articles and speeches. In my interviews, several of the respondents admitted that they had not noticed any efforts by the authorities to restrict their freedom of expression (however, of course, within certain and well-known boundaries of what was allowed). This perception was indicated, for example, by composer and music critic Imants Zemzaris,¹ and a similar opinion was expressed by Ingrīda Zemzare, who stated:

Some kind of “red line” was perhaps only in the heads of the colleagues of the older generation. Therefore, when I and my co-author Guntars Pupa prepared our book *Jauno mūzika* (The Music of the Young [Composers], [1979])

for publication, it was difficult to find internal reviewers, which was a mandatory requirement for publishing the book. But finally, it succeeded, and with reviews by Arnolds Klotiņš and Arvids Darkevics, the book was published in an undistorted way. Do not exaggerate these ideological interventions.²

In his study on Latvian musicology, Mārtiņš Boiko takes the following view on the freedom of expression in the 1970s and 1980s:

[...] rational arguments and fact-based, logical judgments intermixed, in a grotesque muddle, with ideological interpretation. [...] During those decades, the demand for ideological interpretation became something of a formality [...]. So long as they focused their attention upon ideologically acceptable themes, scholars felt relatively free to carry out their work as they saw fit. (Boiko 2009: 104–105)

It could be concluded that the freedom of expression existed, figuratively speaking, in a cage, although a much broader one than during the time of Stalin. A very apt characterization of this era, comparing it with the previous decades, is given by the musicologist Jānis Torgāns in his interview:

The general golden rule of the Communist Party in the cultural policy of the 1970s and 1980s was the following: never leave written evidence! Censorship manifested itself in the default. In the 1950s and 1960s, the composers (artists, writers) who were ideologically undesirable were deleted through furious writings that marked them as a remnant of the bourgeoisie. In the 1970s and 1980s, they were simply destroyed through ignorance and silence.³

Torgāns also mentions an illustration of this tendency. At the plenary session of the Latvian Composers Union in 1982, the choral song by Pēteris Plakidis “Zvana vārdi” (Words of the Bell) was performed. However, it had already been discussed, alongside other works, by the Presidium of the Board of the Union regarding its possible inclusion in the repertoire of the All-Latvian Song Festival (1977). As Torgāns remembers, the participants of the discussion were unpleasantly surprised about the following words laconically and quietly said by the present representative of the Central Committee: “It will not happen.” In Torgāns’s memory, these words caused protests: “Why so? Plakidis is a young and promising composer, and his song is a favorite composition for choirs and conductors!” The lady did not say anything else and sat in silence. Nevertheless, the song “Zvana vārdi,” despite positive recommendations from the union, did not appear in the program of the festival. The most likely reason could be the choice of the textual source—it was created by the open-minded poet Vizma Belševica, who was disliked by the Soviet authorities.⁴

An important testimony about the freedom of expression in Soviet times is given by the musicologist Ligita Ašme, an active music critic in the 1980s. Her conclusion is the following: in this time, considering estrada music's significant audience, the ideological supervisors paid much more attention to the censorship of this genre, compared to the art music which was dominant in the work of the Latvian Composers Union. As an example, the attitude of the state authorities to the poem by Vītauts Lūdēns "Vairogi" (Shields) can be mentioned. This poem includes the words *Ir latviešu tauta—akmens, māli un smilts* ("It is the Latvian nation—the stone, the clay, and the sand"). There are three art songs created on the basis of this text, namely the works by Jānis Ķepītis, Imants Zemzaris, and Georgs Dovgjallo, and at least the choral song by Zemzaris was also repeatedly performed in public concerts during Soviet times. The same text was used in a song by the rock band Līvi. In its performance, lyrics about the Latvian nation had attracted the great enthusiasm of the young audience. As a result, after several concerts, the song was forbidden on the order of the Minister of Culture, and Juris Pavītols, the leader of Līvi, was forced to leave the band in 1982.⁵ A story told by Ašme confirms the same tendency as the aforementioned example of "Zvana vārdi" by Plakidis: a song with lyrics which were undesirable to the Soviet authorities (although they did not involve any direct threat and therefore could not be completely forbidden) was allowed to be performed in a smaller forum (in this case, the plenary session of the Composers Union); however, a larger audience (in this case, the listeners of the All-Latvian Song Festival) was barred from hearing it.

The abovementioned examples allow us to better understand why in Latvian music and, consequently, in the repertoires of the congresses and plenary sessions, a certain double life or double morality was strongly expressed in the late 1970s and 1980s. On one hand, dues were paid to ideology. A great part of the plenary sessions was dedicated to various Soviet anniversaries or historical events (for example, 1980—to Lenin's 110th birthday; 1981—to the 26th Congress of the USSR Communist Party; 1982—to the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the USSR; 1985—to the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War).

And, of course, this was also the reason why the concert repertoire of the plenary sessions included references to these events and anniversaries. As Pēteris Vasks remembers in his interview, the Ministry of Culture paid much greater royalties for works with ideologically desirable titles or lyrics than for other compositions.⁶ Therefore, even the most honest members of the Composers Union paid dues to ideology in cases of a sudden lack of money. Other respondents confirm that this took place. So, Maija Einfeldē, in her interview for the magazine *Rīgas Laiks*, dryly retells a story about her Piano Trio, which in 1985 was

performed at the plenary session of the Latvian Composers Union and still plays a significant role in Latvian chamber music repertoire:

I decided: so, in order to receive some dividends, I will write a trio for piano, violin, and cello dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of Riga [she means the entry of the Soviet Army in Riga to 1944 which resulted not only in the expulsion of the Nazi German army but also in the following Soviet occupation of Latvia until 1991—*B. J.*]. The musicians laughed that I had created the purest funeral march—terrible and grave. The musicologists tried to explain—hmm, yes, she probably thought about the victims. And so, it always goes—the text tells one story, meanwhile, the music reveals the situation's true stripes. (Einfeldē 2003: 48–49)

Indeed, this trio is full of sad and dramatic feelings, and nothing here recalls the joy of victory. Only at the very end, a relatively light and gentle melody is heard, but it is ethereal and soon fades out. "My composer's conscience was purer than my citizen's conscience," Einfeldē remarks in her interview.⁷

Regarding the treatment of the plenary sessions and congresses in the press and discussions stored in the Latvian Composers Union archive, we see the same manifestations of double life or double morality. The speeches of the leaders of the union (mainly Communist Party members) included all the necessary regards and praises for the Comparty and the government, and only then followed a summary of the composers' achievements in the reference period.⁸ Sometimes, maybe in response to the demands of higher authorities, the leaders of the union criticized several tendencies in the work of composers. However, they typically used common phrases in such cases and did not mention one or another guilty party by the name. Nevertheless, there were also exceptions. For example, the beginning of Pēteris Vasks's composing career was difficult, and the reasons were both his undesirability due to his social origin (his father was a pastor) as well as his quietly stubborn attitude towards the authorities because he did not want to deny his beliefs or ideals or to choose a topic relevant to Soviet conjuncture for his compositions (see more in Jaunslaviete 2006: 1351). These career difficulties mainly concern Vasks's youth, the late 1960s, and the first half of the 1970s. In the late 1970s and 1980s, his music was already heard in Latvian concert halls, including plenary sessions of the Composers Union, quite frequently. However, echoes of the former exclusionary attitude sometimes still appeared. They were also manifested in the evaluation of the music by Vasks in a review report read by the leader of the Latvian Composers Union at the plenary session of 1984. This section of the report faced criticism by Arnolds Klotiņš, one of the members of the board of the Composers Union. His objection to the reproaches to Vasks was the following:

The atmosphere in the Composers Union, in my opinion, is sometimes such that intuitively searching, spontaneously creative, though not immediately successful composers are seen as unreasonable, impractical thinkers rather than artists. This normatively cautious attitude towards the novelties is manifested, among other things, in the phraseology with which the review report [of the congress] presents Vask's choral music—namely, as “not convincing in all components.” This epithet has not been applied to any other choir composer.⁹

Research about the “double life” of the Latvian Composers Union raises an issue: to what extent was this “double life” characteristic for similar institutions elsewhere in the former USSR and other socialist countries? No comprehensive comparative studies have been conducted on this topic; however, a review of the composers' unions in individual countries suggests that the situation was diverse in this respect. Cindy Bylander, researching the Polish Composers Union in the 1970s and 1980s, concludes:

One important ramification of these endeavours was the political autonomy of the union's presidents, who were never Party members. This situation differed markedly from the Composers Union in the Soviet Union, whose long-time president Tikhon Khrennikov was also a member of that country's Central Committee. (Bylander 2012: 463)

It follows from the same article that the leaders of the Polish Composers Union at least in the 1970s and 1980s were not guided by double standards: in the 1970s, their attitude toward the Communist authorities was neutral, although it also did not include active protests (“Preservation through neutrality [...] neither supporting nor denouncing the country's cultural policies”; Bylander 2012: 464). In the first half of the 1980s, when the political life of the country was marked with the activities of *Solidarność*, the Composers Union even sharply demonstrated its ideological opposition to several decisions by Communist Party leaders, for example:

In April 1982, the executive board approved one resolution that expressed alarm at the loss of national culture caused by the continued suspension of other creative and academic unions. (Bylander 2012: 477)

Completely opposite characteristics could be given to the Composers Union of the USSR. In its work, like in other nationwide creative unions of the state, a real spirit of stagnation still prevailed even in the *perestroika* era; apparently the previous “selection” of leaders according to their ideological views had been successful there. The researcher Vera Tolz notes:

As early as March 1987, a meeting of the secretariat of the board of the RSFSR Writers' Union turned into the first prominent public manifestation of opposition to *perestroika*.

[...] After that, this group of writers, as well as a number of leading members of the Unions of Soviet Artists and Composers—including sculptor Viacheslav Klykov, singer Liudmila Zykina, and composer Tikhon Khrennikov—made public speeches and published letters in the press sharply condemning *perestroika*. (Tolz 2002: 89)

This position of the All-Union (umbrella) institution was quite different from the atmosphere that was dominant in the creative unions of a lower level, that is, those present in the national republics, which, on the contrary, were enthusiastic about *perestroika*. For example, Irina Guzelbaeva's research *The Authorities and the Creative Intelligentsia in 1985–1991 (in Materials of the Republic of Tatarstan)* shows that the efforts to use liberalization primarily to address sore national problems were characteristic for the Baltic or the Caucasus regions as well as for autonomous republics:

The end result of the public and political discussions on issues of national culture initiated by intellectuals was the inclusion of the article on the status of state languages in the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan [...]. At the same time, cultural life in the republic is characterized by peculiarities caused by the influence of national cultures and the problems of their translation by the artistic intelligentsia. (Guzelbaeva 2017: 15)

It could be concluded that the Latvian Composers Union with its double life and balancing on the border of conjuncture/free self-expression was somewhere in the middle between the two positions (of the Polish and USSR Composers Unions) noted here. What were the factors that determined the degree of radicalism, courage, or conservatism of the composers' unions in particular regions? This is an issue that needs to be explored in the future, but it can be assumed that the differences in the political situation of each state or republic, and not so much specific personalities, played the primary role in this respect.

Out of conjuncture: from Aesopian language to free expression

Most works created by Latvian composers in the late 1970s and 1980s did not pay any dues to Soviet ideology. Several pre-*perestroika* thematic fields might be highlighted as predicting the events of late 1980s—namely, the age of the Third National Awakening.¹⁰ It allows us to conclude that the Latvian intelligentsia already perceived these themes as sore problems in the era of stagnation, although their reflection in the art did not yet contain any hints of protest against the government or the Communist Party.

First, the ecological theme should be mentioned here. It was represented, for example, by one of the most significant symphonies of this time period, the Seventh by Ādolfs Skulte with the title “Saudzējiet dabu” (Preserve Nature), which was premiered at the plenary session of 1982. The same session included the first performance of “Meža poēma” (Forest Poem) by Vilnis Šmīdbergs. In the discussion of this plenary session, the musicologist Guntars Pupa expressed the opinion that the ecological theme is too frequently employed in Latvian music.¹¹ This thesis was opposed by Lithuanian composer Jurgis Juozopaitis, a guest of the session. He invited the previous speaker to visit Klaipėda, where 16 tons of oil had spilled into the sea, in order to underline that in the current situation it is not possible to stay silent regarding nature and ecology.¹² It should be added that, at the same time, ecological motifs were also frequently used in Lithuanian music—for example, Danutė Petrauskaitė mentions them in her research about one of most famous works from this time period, “Cantus ad futurum” (1982) by Algirdas Martinaitis:

In the first and the third part of the composition, he used Latin words from *The Red Book*, and in the second part, Lithuanian bird names from folklore songs. [...] The parallelism between the dead language and the birds on the verge of extinction resulted in a great emotional impact and the elevation of the issue to the ecological and existential levels. (Petrauskaitė 2017: 40)

In the age of the Third Latvian National Awakening (since 1987), the ecological theme grew into serious accusations against the previously excessive industrialization that was closely related to Russification. In Latvia, it was manifested, for example, in the campaign against the building of a metro in Riga and a hydropower plant on the Daugava River.

Another characteristic feature of Latvian music draws parallels with the theme popular in other Baltic republics during the 1970s and 1980s. It includes references to archaic pagan rites, the significance of which has already been noted by several researchers. Joachim Braun considers this tendency as a continuation of what is known as the New Folklore Wave from the mid-1960s and concludes:

[...] the symbiosis of what's officially required (folklore), and what's undesired (avant-garde techniques) conveys dissidence; the frequent use of pagan folklore patterns and authentic folk texts stresses the ambivalent idea of national self-determination in the Soviet Union. (Braun 2002: 226)

The musicologist names Pauls Dambis as the initiator of this tendency in the Latvian music with his “Jūras dziesmas” (Sea Songs, 1971) (Braun 2002: 217), and in the context of Estonian music, he pays special attention

to “Raua needmine” (Incantation of Iron, or Curse Upon Iron, 1972) by Veljo Tormis, which is based on the Estonian *Kalevipoeg*:

This composition brought into Soviet concert halls the intemperate, untamed, ecstatic elemental force of pagan folk-rites fused with modern Estonian poetry, which projected the entire work into the reality of the present. (Braun 2009: 8)

Meanwhile, Vita Gruodytė highlights the works by Bronius Kutavičius and their impact on the stylistics of Lithuanian music in this respect:

Having turned to the past for musical inspiration (to themes evoking the pagan period of Lithuania's history [...]), he was considered a herald of the Lithuanian musical revival and of national consciousness more generally – a decade before the founding of the *Sajūdis* national revival movement. (Gruodytė 2009: 48)

In Latvian music, this conditionally “pagan” or archaic folklore-rooted thematic line was manifested in works by many composers, both in miniatures and in large, cyclic compositions. However, it could be perceived as Aesopian language only if it included reflections on the fate of the nation expressed through symbols and hints. An outstanding example of such a concept is the choral symphony “Nolemtība” (Destiny) by Pēteris Plakidis. This work is based on the text by Ojārs Vācietis and is dated with 1985. In the plenary session of the Latvian Composers Union, it was premiered two years later. The first movement of the work, “Piesaukšana” (Invocation), begins with an imitation of the incantations—*Kur ies, slīpā lietū, mana uguns, kur ies* (“Burn in slant rain, my fire, burn”). These words are repeated several times, either as ostinato or in various polyphonic combinations, until this imitation of an archaic rite grows into a mighty conclusion of the movement. The text by Vācietis is also transformed using wordplay:

Kur ies, slīpā lietū, mana uguns, kur ies (mm. 1–32)

↓

Kur ies mana tauta, mana dūša tur ies. (mm. 43–51)

So, the words *Kur ies mana tauta, mana dūša tur ies* (“Where my nation goes, there my soul goes”) are sung in a strong choral unison, as a credo. The music critic Ingrida Zemzare has aptly characterized this work as a mass for the epoch or maybe a requiem (Zemzare 1987: 36). It is interesting to note that the textual source, the poem by Vācietis called “Piesaukšana” has attracted the attention of other Latvian composers too. In the 1980s, the same poem became the basis for songs by Ilze Arne (1986), Uldis Stabulnieks (1983), and Ādolfs Skulte (1984). It confirms that this poem, with its imitation of incantations and richness

with symbols and hints, indeed reflected the spirit of the epoch. Later, in the age of the National Awakening, such compositions, inspired by the archaic rites of native folklore, continue to be characteristic forms of expression for Latvian composers.

Besides ecological motifs and inspiration from pagan rites, there were other manifestations of Aesopian language in the works of Latvian composers from the late 1970s and 1980s. It is well known that Pēteris Vasks's music often creates an associative link with birds. Of course, motifs of birds are frequently used in music and can evoke ambiguous associations. However, Vasks himself noted in an interview:

The birds were like a symbol of freedom to me because Europe was divided in two; but the birds could fly where they wanted, and no one could take that away from them.¹³

A story characteristic for the epoch, related to Vasks and birds, was told by Jānis Torgāns—a musicologist and a functionary of the Composers Union at the turn of the 1980s. He had edited a collection of Latvian compositions for brass quintet that was published in 1982 in Leningrad by *Sovetskij Kompozitor*; alongside other works, Torgāns had planned to include in the edition “Mūzika aizlidojušajiem putniem” (Music for Fleeting Birds) by Vasks (1977). However, both the musicologist and the composers themselves were unpleasantly surprised to discover that, of the three works that were edited for the collection—compositions by Artūrs Grīnups, Pēteris Plakidis, and Pēteris Vasks—only the first two were published. There were various assumptions about the reasons why the work by Vasks was removed. The truth was accidentally revealed. During an informal meeting a few years later, a *Sovetskij Kompozitor* representative told Ģederts Ramans, the leader of the Latvian Composers Union, that the removal of the work by Vasks was not the publisher's fault but was required by higher authorities: an unnamed functionary inferred an unpleasant reference in the title words about fleeting birds:

We now have so many departures anyway, why should it be exacerbated?

(У нас сейчас и так много уезжающих, зачем это еще нагнетать?)¹⁴

It should be added that the 1970s and 1980s were indeed a time of intensive emigration for Soviet Jews. Of course, Vasks had not meant the analogy with birds to be so direct. However, his words about birds as a symbol of freedom in a divided Europe show that there was some basis for the ideological supervisors' suspicion.

Meanwhile, in an interview, the composer Selga Mence mentioned the use of Liv folklore as an example of Aesopian language in her own works. An early example is her graduation composition for the Latvian State Conservatory, “Kolkasraga pavasara dziesma” (Spring Song of Kolkasrags) that was premiered at the 1979 plenary session of the Latvian Composers Union. This thematic line was continued with a work for cello and piano, “Improvisation on a Liv Folk Song Theme,” composed in 1986 and performed at the plenary session two years later. It should be noted that the Livs represent a Finno-Ugric ethnic group that has lived in Latvia for centuries, mainly in the coastal regions, but their language and culture have never been systematically supported at the state level, and in the 1980s, the Liv language was spoken only by the older generation.¹⁵ Mence admits that, using the Liv motifs, she expressed the sadness that she felt about this disappearance of culture as well as hidden despair, considering Soviet immigration policy, that, “God forbid, the same will happen to the Latvian nation.”¹⁶ In the 1970s and 1980s, Liv motifs, presumably with similar connotations, also appeared in works by other Latvian composers, such as Pēteris Plakidis's (“Zvana vārdi” / Words of the Bell for mixed choir) and Imants Zemzaris's (“Lībiešu dziesmas” / Songs of the Livs for violin and piano). In the cycle by Zemzaris (1975) a particular compositional approach is used: none of the quoted Liv folk melodies are cited until its ending, and all of them are suddenly interrupted. Such a solution quite symbolically reflects the fragility of the ancient melodies, their balancing on the border of *to be or not to be* (see Fig. 1).

The ideological double life characteristic of the previous decades disappeared in the late 1980s. The movement of the National Awakening encouraged some changes in the themes of program works and vocal compositions. Initially, they were not very radical. It was critically noted by Arnolds Klotiņš in his speech at the closing discussion of the 1988 plenary session:

The spirit of the era is not sufficiently felt in the works of composers. Compared with literature, in many of our musical compositions from 1987 and 1988 a similar Aesopian language is used as could be found in the literature of the age of the stagnation when there was no possibility to use another way of expression. (Auguste 1988: 9)

From the past thematic lines, the ecological motifs maintained their importance, and they were interpreted much more sharply and dramatically than in the early 1980s. One of the examples is the cycle *Skumjās serenādes* (Sad Serenades) with the subtitle *Trīs dziedājumi mirstošai jūrai* (Three Songs for the Dying Sea) by Maija Einfelde (1988). This work for the clarinet and string quartet is aptly characterized by its current performer Egils Šēfers in his

The musical score consists of four systems of music for violin and piano. The first system is in 4/4 time, marked "senza sord., veloce" and "mf". The second system is in 6/4 time, marked "poco rit.". The third and fourth systems are in 12/8 time, marked "a tempo". The piano part features complex textures with chords and arpeggios, including a 15-measure section marked "15ma".

Figure 1. Imants Zemzaris, “Lībiešu dziesmas” (Songs of the Livs) for violin and piano: an excerpt from the movement 2.

CD *Ziemeļsaule* (Northern Sun, 2010) annotation where he reveals his own perception of the subtext of the work:

[...] the clarinets gurgle and swoosh like polluted water, squawk like birds coated in oil, and sing a dirge for the dying sea, the composer invokes the ecological catastrophe to which this forced industrialization contributed.¹⁷

Indeed, the work is very expressive and innovative through the use of the extreme possibilities of the clarinet.

As another new tendency, the rebirth of sacred music can be highlighted. Until the mid-1980s, sacred compositions rooted in the Christian tradition (contrary to the “pagan thematic” works) were never performed in concerts organized by the Latvian Composers Union, and this field of the composers’ works was also never discussed in the musicological literature. The musicologist Laima Mūrniece remembers that in her monograph on Jāzeps Mediņš published in 1977, all sacred works were removed from

the list of his compositions at the request of the editor.¹⁸ Despite the self-evident influence of atheistic ideology on concert life, such strictly negative attitude towards sacred music was not characteristic for all socialist countries. For example, in Poland, it was much more liberal. One example was taken note of by researcher Cindy Bylander on Krzysztof Penderecki:

As a composer, he completed several works on sacred themes during this time [1970s—B. J.], including *Utrenja*, *Magnificat*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Te Deum*. These were met with only limited interference from the government, a situation that was not unusual for Polish sacred compositions following the international acclaim given to Penderecki’s *St. Luke’s Passion* in 1966. (Bylander 2012: 468)

In his interview, Pēteris Vasks also confirms that editions of sacred works by Penderecki were freely available in Soviet Latvia, and he enthusiastically used the opportunity to study them.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the situation in neighboring

Lithuania, in this respect, was more similar to Latvia than to Poland. Notes by several researchers reveal this reality. For example, Vita Gruodytė says:

Such topics as the [...] liturgical music [...] found their place in Lithuanian musicology only after the restoration of independence. (Gruodytė 2009: 47–48)

So, the previously mentioned pagan theme both in Latvian and Lithuanian art music of the pre-*perestroika* age remained the only officially accepted form of appearance of religious motifs in works by contemporary composers because its potential for Aesopian language was obviously underestimated by ideological supervisors. According to the researcher Li Bennich-Björkman:

[paganism was] being seen as the more genuine Lithuanian “religion” since Lithuania was among the last countries in Europe to become Christianized. It pushed against the limits of what could be allowed by the authorities. (Bennich-Björkman 2007: 63)

Still, going back to Latvian music, it shouldn't be ignored that even before *perestroika*, sacred symbols sometimes appeared in works by members of the Composers Union as an element of Aesopian language. This topic was already discussed in the paper by Joachim Braun “Zur Hermeneutik der sowjetisch-baltischen Musik,” where he analyzes one of the first hidden messages in Soviet Latvian music, Alfrēds Kalniņš's “Variations on the Theme by Jāzeps Vītols” (1948; the chosen theme is a chorale, also a genre whose use could be perceived as an opposition to the atheistic worldview) (Braun 2002: 206–207). Later the Nocturne “Ir tikai nakts” (It is Only the Night) for choir and organ by Romualds Jermaks (1968) functioned as the unofficial anthem of the Riga Dome Cathedral, and the State Academic Choir traditionally began its concert programs at the Dome with this song. However, only educated musicians, not ideological overseers, knew that Jermaks, the son of a church organist, had introduced the Lutheran hymn “Wer nur den Lieben Gott lasst walten” (What Makes God the Only Lord in Heaven) in this work (see more, for example, in Grāvītis 1994: 3). Jermaks was one of the first members of the Latvian Composers Union who initiated the rebirth of sacred music during the National Awakening. In 1989, he noted in an interview for the newspaper *Literatūra un Māksla*:

We have to seriously think about renewing our Composers Union, giving up the old forms of work and introducing new ones. The work of standard commissions should be reviewed. Maybe now would be the time to replace the patriotic music commission with a sacred music commission (such as the one that has already been formed in the Lithuanian Composers Union). (Zemzaris 1989: 14)

So, Latvian sacred music rooted in Christianity entered public concert life and, consequently, a repertoire of events organized by the Composers Union only in the late 1980s. The first works of this kind were, for instance, Maija Einfelde's “Crucifixus” performed at the Congress of the Composers Union (1989), “Svētā mesa” (Holy Mass) by Romualds Jermaks (1989), and “Mass in F-Sharp Minor” and “Ave Maria” by Rihards Dubra (1989).

Latvian Music Stylistics and Its Reception

One of the questions I asked various contemporaries of music life of the 1980s (composers Selga Mence, Pēteris Vasks, and Imants Zemzaris as well as musicologists Boris Avramec and Ingrīda Zemzare) was the following: Did anything surprise them in the field of music after the fall of the Iron Curtain?

All respondents answered that they experienced no particular surprises—the latest tendencies of contemporary music were well-known thanks to the Warsaw Autumn festival, and there were various opportunities to buy the latest scores or recordings for those who wanted them. For example, Boris Avramec remembers how enthusiastically he ran to the Composers Union in the 1970s when it organized a sale of discs from the Czech record company Supraphon.²⁰ Pēteris Vasks recalls that in the 1980s, he also regularly listened to contemporary music programs on Vienna Radio—they caused both revelations and frustration:

I really liked the Polish music of the 1960s and 1970s because it was vivid and emotional. But these Vienna programs were dominated by the rational, the intellectual, and I missed the living person and the emotions... I theorize that they have not had the suffering we have experienced, so their music is also emotionally poorer...²¹

Despite the previously noted awareness of the latest foreign trends, the Latvian music environment in the late 1970s and 1980s was considered quite conservative by many authors. Such an opinion is expressed by Avramec. He believes that, in contrast to visual art, which was more liberal and tended to experiments due to the lesser influence of ideology, in Latvian music the situation was quite bad:

For many, contemporary music was still that of fifty years ago. For example, when I was still a conservatory student in the early 1970s, a professor at the contemporary music seminar began to talk about Arnold Schoenberg's works as something special with great courage. It was a real swamp—neither musicians nor listeners knew almost anything about current music. The only ones allowed were compositions by Soviet musicians. Of course, not all of them were allowed. (Avramec 2006: 21–22)

It is possible that, in this case, Avramec slightly exaggerates the ignorance of his colleagues in the field of contemporary music. However, the attitude of many Latvian musicians towards the most modern composition techniques was highly reserved, and this situation was probably influenced not only by the demands of Soviet ideologues, but also by Latvian music traditions from before World War II. As musicologist Arnolds Klotiņš notes, modern music was not highly respected in the Latvian Conservatory at that time, and it was largely determined by the views of Jāzeps Vītols, the founder of the Conservatory:

He manifested an opposition to the new trends of twentieth-century music and took the position of a defender of tonality and traditional music forms. (Klotiņš 2013: 103)

Avramec himself was an enthusiast who tried to rectify the situation in the second half of the 1970s: with Hardijs Lediņš and Moscow pianist Alexei Lubimov, he organized two informal festivals of contemporary music in Riga (1976 and 1977) and introduced the audience to such names as Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, and Edison Denisov. The second of the festivals took place in cooperation with the Latvian Composers Union and was actively supported by its more modern-minded members—chairman Pauls Dambis and young musicologists Ingrīda Zemzare and Guntars Pupa; in accordance with the principles of “double morality,” this event was named as “the Music Days of the USSR dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution” (Avramecs 2006: 28). Alongside other works, the program included music by Arvo Pärt, the young Latvian composer Juris Ābols, and Vladimir Martinov; one of Martinov’s works became the reason for a cancellation and ban of the festivals. As it is noted by the researchers Daiga Mazvērsīte and Māra Trautmane,

The fatal storm broke out after the performance of Martynov’s “Lieldienu kantātes” (Easter Cantata), during which leaflets with the words *Der am Kreuz ist meine Leib!* were scattered from the balcony. The secret services adroitly interpreted it as the worst violation of the time—religious propaganda. The directors of the Students’ Club lost their jobs.²² (Mazvērsīte, Trautmane n.d.)

Boris Avramec adds:

The Minister of Culture Vladimirs Kaupužs recalled Alexei Lubimov and said very rudely that, while he is a minister, Lubimov will not step foot on Latvian soil. Unfortunately, that indeed happened, and Lubimov did not play here for many years. (Avramecs 2002: 30)

There was also an informal continuation of the ideas presented at the festivals. In the 1980s, the so-called Nebijušu sajūtu restaurācijas darbnīca (Workshop for the Restoration of Unfelt Sensations, led by Hardijs Lediņš and Juris Boiko)

realized various projects in the fields of underground art, music, and literature, however, without any cooperation from the Composers Union as an officially recognized institution.

This introduction was necessary to understand the overall picture of contemporary music in Latvia. On one hand, it was in line with the postmodern tendency of this time and was manifested in different forms of playing with the past (primarily Neoromanticism), subtexts, and allusions. On the other hand, more radical experiments with a sound or staging (happenings which gained an important place in the previously mentioned informal festivals) were relatively rare. Evidence of this experimentation can be found in reviews of the plenary sessions and congresses of the Composers Union, in which Latvian music was also discussed by guests from other republics of the former USSR, as well as from the Socialist German Democratic Republic. Of course, there were many compliments, but critical viewpoints also appeared. One such criticism was expressed by Onutė Narbutaitė, a young Lithuanian composer and musicologist and a guest of the congress in 1984. She considered Latvian contemporary music to be much less focused on stylistic novelties than the works of Lithuanian composers:

Most of the time—two and a half concerts—were dedicated to choral music. We heard five wonderful choirs. It seems that everyone in Latvia writes choral works, but if there are such strong performing forces, we could expect bolder steps from the composers. Only Pēteris Vasks stirs the water in the calm flow of choral music, trying a more modern choir technique, more flexible and expressive operations with voices (and maybe text?). (Narbutaitė 1984: 5)

The stylistic novelty, or rather its absence, was just one of the topics reflected in the music reviews and discussions of the plenary sessions and congresses, and it was not the main one. Latvian musicologists themselves have more willingly and consistently criticized the tendency of local composers to give preference for a meditative, contemplative mood of expression, as Ilma Grauzdiņa aptly said when discussing a choral music concert in one of the plenary sessions—again this Latvian style of being “large and slow” (*un atkal tas lielais latviešu lēnais*).²³ For example, “Baltā ainava” (White Scenery) for piano by Pēteris Vasks, after its first performance at the concert *Kameramūzikas jaunumi* (Novelties of Chamber Music) of 1980, was sharply criticized by musicologists due to its impersonality, lack of bright melodies, contrasts (Brigita Briede), and “zemzarisation” of Vasks (Inese Leite, now Bite)²⁴—Imants Zemzaris, who was the first performer of *Baltā ainava* by Vasks, tends to use a similar meditative way of expression in his own music. There were also defenders of Vasks, including the previously mentioned Arnolds Klotiņš. Discussing Latvian choral music, he opposed the

opinion of many of his colleagues that the creation of a more dynamic and contrasting music at all costs should be the primary task for Latvian composers:

In this plenary session, I became convinced that a very simple, even slow and quiet song, if it is truly and organically connected with the text, has a stronger artistic effect than deliberately bright songs. For example, in Saturday's symphony concert, three such songs by Pēteris Vasks were performed in a row, and even in this case, I did not hear any need for contrasts.²⁵

Some criticisms by Iosif Ryzhkin (a musicologist from Moscow) can be described as an anachronism, although expressed in a rather tactical form. Ryzhkin addressed these to Agris Engelmanis and Juris Karlsons for, in Ryzhkin's opinion, too much negativity in their works performed at the plenary session of 1983:

In twentieth-century art, the thematic line of the onslaught of evil is represented very broadly. This side of life has determined the creative discovery by composer [Agris] Engelmanis in his symphony. Here the means are chosen quite precisely—a culmination similar to thunder, alarm signals of trumpets, provocative explosions, cruel sudden turns, and others [...]. And too many works by twentieth-century composers reflect a “sinking into the abyss” without a positive resolution, and is it necessary to continue the series of such works in music history even if they are, in a way, very respectable? Maybe it's worth considering? And this is not only for the composer Engelmanis but also for others, perhaps to some extent for the composer Karlsons with his piano concerto because I also felt that he was fascinated by this “abyss.”²⁶

It could be added that, in the previous decades, Ryzhkin became known in Soviet musicology as a harsh, even militant opponent of expressionism; by 1949 he had published an article entitled *Арнольд Шенберг—ликвидатор музыки* (“Arnold Schoenberg, Liquidator of Music”) (Ryzhkin 1949), and he criticized exaggerated negativity as a harmful influence of expressionism, even in the music by Prokofiev, for example, in the opera *War and Peace*. Evidence of this can be found in the article by Leon Danilevich “Expressionism in Music—Real and Imagined” (Danilevich 1961). However, it is interesting to note that, despite his generally conservative views rooted in the theory of the socialist realism, Ryzhkin highly appreciated “Vēstījums” (Message) by Pēteris Vasks, which was performed at the mentioned plenary session of 1983 because in this work, in contrast to the Symphony by Engelmanis, he, in his own words, found a positive program.

One of the earliest manifestations of the *perestroika* age in local concert life was the Festival of Soviet Latvian music that was organized by the Composers Union in 1986 and presented the music created within the last eight years. The guests of the festival, contrary to all previous sessions and

congresses, represented not only other Soviet republics and socialistic states but also several respectable Western European publishing houses such as Leduce, Ricordi, and Hans Sikorski. It was the first chance for Latvian composers to develop contact with these publishing houses. The guests listened to both concerts and recordings of the newest Latvian music and gave interviews to the press about their impressions. In the following, a brief selection of the most characteristic answers that reflect the perception of Latvian music is given. First, representatives from Ricordi from Milan as well as the composer and musicologist Armando Gentilucci:

1) We had an impression that all composers are professionally educated very well. However, they typically write with rather traditional stylistics. In contrast, there are a few young composers searching for fresh expression.

2) It seems to us that a connection between folk tradition and contemporary art is rather characteristic. We must say that this aspect is no longer so essential in Western European music. (Vanka, Jakubone et al. 1986: 6)

As it follows from the words of Gentilucci, he believed that Latvian composers' passion for folklore overshadowed their individual handwriting:

There must be a greater difference between a style and a style, there must be a border between the genres of the symphonic music and the music with folklore elements. (Vanka, Jakubone et al. 1986: 6)

Meanwhile, some other guests were not as critical, and they saw the same features of Latvian music, that is, traditionalism and a folklore-based expression, in a more positive light. Hans Ulrich Duffek from the publishing house Hans Sikorski highlights four composers as the most interesting to him—Pēteris Plakidis, Maija Einfelde, Pēteris Vasks, and Egīls Straume—and after characterizing them each separately, Duffek concludes:

These composers meet the current interests of listeners as they are today observed in the German Federative Republic. It can also be explained with the fact that the audience is now quite reserved regarding avant-garde music [...]. The new simplicity is most appreciated by us. (Vanka, Jakubone et al. 1986: 6)

At the same time, he draws a clearly justified conclusion: “There is a great role for folklore and national motifs in contemporary Latvian music. There are probably also political reasons for it. In the German Federative Republic, it is different. Folklore is not so deeply intertwined with art music” (Vanka, Jakubone et al. 1986: 6).

Concluding the discussion on stylistics, it can be noted that Latvian music in the late 1980s generally remained Neoromantic with very few exceptions (of course, this does not mean that high-quality compositions weren't created

in this style). Apparently, the individual handwriting of a composer, which has already formed in their youth, is not so easily changed even after the acquaintance with new composition techniques. Another decade passed, until the second half of the 1990s saw a new generation of musicians who had been educated after the fall of the Iron Curtain and presented a radically different aesthetic in Latvian music. Among them, names such as Andris Dzenītis, Gundega Šmite, Mārtiņš Viļums, and Santa Ratniece should be mentioned.

It is also noteworthy that guest concerts of the more radical representatives of the new Western music only became possible in Riga in the late 1980s. For example, the concert by Maurizio Cagel in 1990 should be mentioned as an outstanding event. Cagel conducted his own works as well as compositions by Stockhausen and other less-known composers, and the newspaper *Latvijas Jaunatne* wrote about this concert:

Once upon a time, this music was banned in our country. Later, it was “scientifically” criticized as a crisis product of capitalist society. As a special treasure, we have entrusted to each other tape recordings, re-photographed scores, small croaks of the music material... Now we have the opportunity to get to know it first-hand. (Vanaga 1990: 1)

Undoubtedly, such events also influenced the further development of Latvian music, although this impression did not yet appear in the late 1980s.

Conclusions

Latvian music was impacted by the political developments of the late 1970s and 1980s, and this influence was quite multifaceted. The double life that was characteristic both for the Latvian Composers Union as an institution as well as for its members during a significant part of the selected time period was determined by a survival strategy, and thanks to this strategy, many significant artefacts have been preserved. However, their message could be understood only by reading between the lines of both the music and musicological works from this time. With regards to themes, parallels with phenomena present in the neighboring Baltic republics of the USSR can be seen (for example, using ecological motifs or the elements of the pagan period from native history symbolically linked with the current reality). At the same time, several differences with the tendencies in other socialist states should be mentioned, such as the attitude towards sacred music compared to, for example, Poland, or a less liberal social atmosphere in general.

Latvian composers interested in contemporary foreign music have had opportunities to discover it both officially (for example, by attending the Warsaw Autumn festival

or studying Polish music) and partially legally or illegally (by attending the informal festivals of the late 1970s or listening to foreign radio stations). Although such activities took place, on average, the Latvian composers of this period were less prone to radical stylistic experiments than their colleagues in the neighboring republics and countries. The era of the Third National Awakening generally introduced new thematic, rather than stylistic, turns in Latvian music. However, the fall of the Iron Curtain was a reason for significant changes in music life: representations of the avant-garde composers in the public concert repertoire became much more frequent than before and probably influenced the stylistic development of the next generation of composers that entered the Latvian music life in the 1990s.

Research into the history of the Latvian Composers Union in a significant decade (the late 1970s to the late 1980s) could be continued as a comparative study in the future, regarding both Latvia and other regions of the former USSR and Eastern Europe. Such a study would be valuable because it would expand our knowledge about the institution of the composers' union as a significant, although sometimes controversial, driving force for the contemporary music life in the former socialist countries.

Endnotes

- ¹ Zemzaris Imants, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ² Zemzare Ingrida, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ³ Torgāns Jānis, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ašme Ligita, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ⁶ Vaskis Pēteris, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020. As is shown in the study on creative unions in the USSR by Vera Tolz, a system of differentiation in the remuneration of union members had already developed in the late 1940s in music and beyond. For example, at the request of then leaders of the Union of Soviet Artists, the Council of Ministers on 22 April 1949 signed a resolution accepting that “outstanding works of art, especially portraits and statues of Party leaders, should be ‘rewarded at a higher level’” (Tolz 2002: 98).
- ⁷ Einfelde Maija, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2016.
- ⁸ One of many examples is the following retelling of the speech by Ģederts Ramans (leader of the Board of the Composers Union 1968–84) on the Congress of 1978:

The referent [...] Ģ. Ramans recalled the significant events in the life of the republic and the state which have also influenced the artistic work. The most important among them were the 25th Congress of the CPSU, the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the 30th anniversary since the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War, and the adoption of the new constitution of the USSR.

The self-sufficient work of the Soviet people, their rich spiritual world, and the pursuit of humanism is reflected in symphonic and vocal instrumental works, in compositions of all genres. During the reference period, The Fifth Symphony by Ādolfs Skulte and the music by Imants Kalniņš for the film *Lake Sonata* acquired the Republics State premium. The national choirs Ave Sol, Dzintars, and Dziedonis earned international awards with choral songs by Pauls Dambis, Aldonis Kalniņš, Pēteris Plakidis, and other composers. Works by Latvian composers are more and more frequently performed in Moscow and Leningrad, in the fraternal republics of our state [...]. (Latinform 1978: 3)

- ⁹ Debates [Discussion], in: *1984. gada kongress* [Congress 1984]. Uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 24a.
- ¹⁰ The First Awakening was marked by the national revival led by the New Latvians (1850s–1880s), the Second by the proclamation of Latvian independence in 1918, and the Third by the restoration of Latvia's independence (1987–1991).
- ¹¹ *Latvijas PSR Komponistu savienības plēnumis Rīgā, 1982. gada 5. aprīlī. /Debates/. Stenogramma* [The Plenary Session of the Latvian SSR Composers Union in Riga, April 5, 1982. /Discussion/. Transcript]. Uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 86.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- ¹³ Vasks Pēteris, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ¹⁴ Zemzare Ingrīda, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ¹⁵ In his monograph *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution*, Guntis Šmidchens reveals a nasty turn in the situation with the Livs directly in the late 1970s: Whereas in the early years Livs could register their nationality on their passports, a 1977 change in Soviet ethnic policy removed them from the list of Soviet nations. [...] Two members of the Līvlist Liv choir led an effort to renew their nations' official status. Dainis and Helmī Stalte circulated a petition and presented it to the Soviet government. Political repression followed, but they also achieved a small, political victory: Livs were eventually allowed to write "Livonian" in their passports. (Šmidchens 2014: 275)
- ¹⁶ Mence Selga, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ¹⁷ Skani. *Northern Sun*. <https://www.lmic.lv/en/skani/catalogue?id=151> [accessed October 10, 2020].
- ¹⁸ Mūrniece Laima, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ¹⁹ Vasks Pēteris, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ²⁰ Avramec Boris, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ²¹ Vasks Pēteris, Interview with Baiba Jaunslaviete, Riga, 2020.
- ²² The festivals were organized on the premises of the Riga Polytechnic Institute's Student Club (historically and now, the St. Saviour's Anglican Church in Riga).
- ²³ *Latvijas PSR Komponistu savienības plēnumis Rīgā, 1981. gada 4. aprīlī. Stenogramma* [The Plenary Session of the Latvian SSR Composers Union. Riga, April 4, 1981. Transcript]. Uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 34.
- ²⁴ *Latvijas PSR Komponistu savienības jaunrades sanāksme 1980. gada 9. decembrī* [The Creative Meeting of the Latvian SSR

Composers Union in December 9, 1980]. Protocol No. 10, p. 2, 3. From an uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 13.

- ²⁵ *Latvijas PSR Komponistu savienības plēnumis Rīgā, 1982. gada 5. aprīlī. /Debates/. Stenogramma* [The Plenary Session of the Latvian SSR Composers Union in Riga, April 5, 1982. /Discussion/. Transcript]. Uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 13.
- ²⁶ *Latvijas PSR Komponistu savienības plēnumis Rīgā, 1983. gada 11. aprīlī. Stenogramma* [The Plenary Session of the Latvian SSR Composers Union in Riga, April 11, 1983. /Discussion/. Transcript]. Uncatalogued volume, stored in the archive of the Latvian Composers Union, p. 52, 54.

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Santrauka

Latvijoje, kaip ir kitose buvusiose SSRS šalyse bei socialistinėse respublikose, šiuolaikinės akademinės muzikos raidai didelę įtaką darė Kompozitorių sąjunga – institucija, prižiūrinti savo narių viešuosius pasirodymus ir muzikinių kūrinių spausdinimą. Įvykių kupinas laikotarpis jos istorijoje buvo *perestroikos* era ir keleri metai prieš ją, kitaip tariant, nuo aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigos iki devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos. Ar ir kaip Sąjungos ir jos narių darba veikė pokyčiai šio laikotarpio politiniame fone? Straipsnyje ieškoma atsakymo į šiuos klausimus.

Sovietinės ideologijos įtaka buvo Latvijos kompozitorių sąjungos ir jos narių „dvigubo gyvenimo“ priežastis. Įtaka pasireiškė tiek plenarinių posėdžių ir suvažiavimų diskusijose, tiek sąjungos organizuojamų koncertų repertuare, nes, kaip ir kitose respublikose, Kultūros ministerija mokėjo gerokai didesnius honorarus už kūrinius ideologiškai pageidautinai pavadinimais ar tekstais. Todėl net patys doriau si Kompozitorių sąjungos nariai kartkartėmis atiduodavo duoklę ideologijai. Tačiau tuo pačiu metu daugelyje kūrinių Ezopo kalba buvo šifruojamas slaptas priešinimasis sovietinei tikrovei: straipsnyje bandoma nubrėžti pagrindines temines linijas šiuo požiūriu. Kai kurios temos (ekologinė, pagoniškoji tematika) atskleidžia paraleles su panašiomis tendencijomis kaimyninėse respublikose (pavyzdžiui, ekologinė tematika Ādolfo Skultės, Vilnio Šmidbergo, Maijos Einfeldės darbuose; „pagoniškos“ temos Paulo Dambio, Pēterio Plakidžio ir kitų kūriniuose). Kitos teminės linijos atspindi individualesnes koncepcijas (pavyzdžiui, Pēterio Vasko paukščiai kaip laisvės simbolis suskaldytoje Europoje). Praėjusiems dešimtmečiams būdingas dvigubas ideologinis gyvenimas išnyko devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje. Nacionalinio pabudimo judėjimas paskatino tam tikrus programinių kūrinių ir vokalinių kompozicijų tematikos pokyčius ir pirmiausia sakralinės muzikos atgimimą (Maijos Einfeldės „Crucifixus“ vargonams; Romualdo Jermakso, Rihardo Dubros ir kitų kūriniai).

Straipsnyje aptariama, kaip kritikai ir užsienio svečiai priėmė šiuolaikinę latvių muziką, skambėjusią Kompozitorių sąjungos organizuojamuose plenariniuose posėdžiuose ir suvažiavimuose. Daroma išvada, kad ši muzika pripažinta kaip mažiau linkusi į radikalius eksperimentus ar stilistines naujoves nei kaimyninėse šalyse (plg. Onutės Narbutaitės, 1984 m. suvažiavimo viešnios, nuomonę). Kartu latvių muzika lygiavosi į postmodernistines to laikotarpio tendencijas

(nors Sovietu Latvijojē šis termins dar nebūvo vartojams), ir tai reišķēsi įvairiomis žaismo su praecitimi (pirmiausia neoromantizmu) formomis, potekstēmis ir užuominomis. Net devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigojē latvių muzika apskritai išliķo neoromantišķa, iššķyruš kelias išimtis (žinoma, tai nereišķia, kad nebūvo aukšķos kokybēš kompozicijų, sukurtų šiuo stiliumi). Praējo dar vienas dešimtmetis, kol dešimtojo dešimtmečio antrojojē pusējē atsirado nauja muzikų karta, įgijusi išsilavinimą griuvuš geležinei uždangai ir pristačiusi

radikaliai skirtingą latvišķos muzikos estetiką. Tarp tokių minētini Andris Dzenītis, Gundega Šmite, Mārtiņš Viļums, Santa Ratniece.

Pateikiama Latvijos kompozitorių sąjungos istorijai reikšmingo dešimtmečio (nuo aštuntojo dešimtmečio pabaigos–iki devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigos) studija ateityjē galētų išaugti į Latvijos ir kitų buvusios SSRS ir Rytų Europos regionų muzikos lyginamuosius tyrimus.

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