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Baltic-Balkan Postmodern Connections: The Music of Bronius Kutavičius and Veljo Tormis in Comparison with the Music of Slovene Composer Lojze Lebič

*Postmodernieji Baltijos ir Balkanų ryšiai: Broniaus Kutavičiaus ir Veljo Tormio
muzikos ryšys su slovėnų kompozitoriaus Lojze's Lebičo muzika*

Abstract

Comparing the works of the three composers of the 20th Century, which belong to the same generation – the Lithuanian Bronius Kutavičius (1932), the Slovene Lojze Lebič (1934) and the Estonian Veljo Tormis (1930) – it is impossible to overlook a great deal of similarities. In the works of all three composers one can find a pronounced inclination towards ritual, the use of folk instruments, the idea of the circulation of life, which is also evident at the level of the notation, and some sort of simulation of the folk music of unidentifiable prehistoric times. These parallels raise the questions about the causes for such similarities which are connected to the socio-political situations of the countries in which composers lived and created. Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia were positioned as part of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was on the political map of Eastern Europe. This means that Kutavičius as well as Lebič and Tormis experienced the ideas of socialist realism that brutally entered the domain of art. Therefore, it is not possible to disconnect the stylistic changes of the 1970s and 1980s from the desire for political and ideological liberation. Parallel to the rising ideas on overcoming the rigid dogma of socialist realism, thoughts about hermeticism and radical innovation drive of modernism were getting louder at the same time. All three composers responded to those trends with similar artistic solutions.

Keywords: postmodernism, Bronius Kutavičius (1932), Lojze Lebič (1934), Veljo Tormis (1930), Balkan music, Baltic music, music of 20th century.

Anotacija

Lyginant tai pačiai kartai priklausančių trijų kompozitorių – lietuvio Broniaus Kutavičiaus (g. 1932), slovėno Lojze's Lebičo (g. 1934) ir esto Veljo Tormio (g. 1930) – kūrinis, neįmanoma nematyti daugybės panašumų ir sutapimų. Šių trijų kūrėjų darbuose ryškus prielankumas ritualo specifikai, dėmesys liaudies instrumentams, nuolatinės gyvenimo kaitos idėja, kuri akivaizdi net natų užrašymo ypatybėse, taip pat ir tam tikras iš amžių užmaršties atėjusios liaudies muzikos imitavimas. Šios paralelės skatina kelti klausimus apie sutapimų kilmę, o atsakymai veda prie sociopolitinių situacijų šalyse, kuriose gyveno ir kūrė visi šie kompozitoriai. Lietuva, Estija ir Slovėnija priklausė Sovietų Sąjungai, o Jugoslavija – Rytų Europos politiniam žemėlapiui. Vadinasi, Kutavičius, kaip Lebičas ir Tormis, patyrė brutalų socialistinio realizmo idėjų veržimąsi į meno šventovę. Stilistinių 1970–1980 m. pokyčių nevalia atsieti nuo politinės ir ideologinės laisvės troškimo. Tuo metu, kai pagreitį įgijo su nelanksčiomis socialistinio realizmo dogmomis kovojančios idėjos, garsiau skambėjo ir mintys apie kultūrinį hermetiškumą ir inovatyvų modernizmą. Visi trys čia minimi kompozitoriai atsiliepė į šį šauksmą, pateikdami tokias pat menines išeitis iš susidariusios situacijos.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: postmodernizmas, Bronius Kutavičius (g. 1932), Lojze Lebič (g. 1934), Veljo Tormis (g. 1930), Balkanų muzika, Baltijos muzika, XX a. muzika.

Baltic-Balkan Parallels

In an article about Balkan and Baltic vocal polyphony, Mårten Boiko finds that surprising similarities between the early polyphonic music of Balkan and Baltic countries exist, concluding that such commonalities are not based on coincidence and cannot be explained through direct or indirect contacts between the two cultures (Boiko, 2008). It is, however, surprising to find that similar parallels also exist between contemporary Baltic and Balkan composers. In the present article, I would like to shed light on parallels

between the music of the Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavičius and of his Slovene counterpart Lojze Lebič, although similar characteristics can also be found in the music of the Estonian composer Veljo Tormis. The aim is to reveal these similarities and to organise them into a kind of typology, while in the concluding section I will attempt to discover reasons for their existence.

The composers Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis belong to the same generation: Tormis was born in 1930, Kutavičius in 1932 and Lebič in 1934. There is no reliable evidence that the Baltic composers have had any contact with the

Slovene Lebič: Kutavičius and Tormis have the scores and CDs of their music published by international publishing houses, but Lebič clearly states that he is not familiar with Kutavičius's music and knows only a few choral pieces by Tormis;¹ on the other hand, it is not very likely that Kutavičius and Tormis are acquainted with Lebič's music. The only possibility would be that they have heard his works at certain international festivals of contemporary music, but this is unlikely. Furthermore, in the 1990s, when Lebič's music was presented at several international festivals (especially regular performances at the World Music Days in 1981, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005) the characteristic personal styles of all three composers were already firmly established.

Therefore, the common points among the three composers are not the consequence of direct or indirect contacts or influences;² the reason for their peculiar existence must be sought in the similarity of contextual conditions. This notion can be further enhanced by the special position of these composers in their own national cultures: Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis are the most representative and distinguished living composers of their nations. Thus, research into their sociocultural and geopolitical context could provide some answers about parallels and similarities.

Revealing the Parallels

First of all, an attempt should be made to find and expose the parallels that can be found on different levels of the compositional technique, material used, formal solutions and aesthetic premises. The most outward-oriented and clear parallel between the three composers concerns the question of genre. It seems that in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the composers found similar solutions: Kutavičius in the cycle of oratorios (*Panteistinė oratorija* [Pantheistic Oratorio], 1970, *Paskuntinės pagonių apeigos* [Last Pagan Rites], 1978, *Iš jotvingių akmens* [From the Jatvingian Stone], 1983, *Pasaulio medis* [The World Tree], 1986); Lebič in similarly conceived vocal-instrumental works (*Hvalnica svetui* [Eulogy to the World], 1988, *Ajdna*, 1995, *Miti in apokrifi* [Myths and Apocrypha], 1999); and Tormis in choral cycles (*Eesti kalendrilaulud* [Estonian Calendar Songs], 1967, *Unustatud rahvad* [Forgotten Peoples], 1970–1989), as well as in some distinguished choral compositions, such as *Raua needmine* [Curse upon Iron], 1972 and *Pikse litaania* [Litany to Thunder], 1973. In all cases, the vocal-instrumental compositions take the middle position between oratorio, theatre composition and a kind of mystical liturgical ceremony. Kutavičius's friend Osvaldas Balakauskas establishes that *from the Pantheistic Oratorio onwards, Kutavičius has been composing some new genre peculiar to himself* (Lampsatis, 1998, p. 152). The problems of genre are complicated on various levels: on the level of content (the special connection between music

and text, which often has the character of oracle or conjuration), form (cyclical works, mosaic forms, miniatures) and instrumentation. Kutavičius and Lebič avoid traditional ensembles and are inclined towards original combination of voices and instruments, ranging from traditional orchestral and choral forces to folk or toy instruments. In the oratorio *From the Jatvingian Stone*, Kutavičius uses a *švilpa*, a *šeimelė*, a straw reed and stones of various sizes, in the cycle *From Nearby and Far Away* for recorders, Lebič uses an ocarina, a *drumlīca* (Jew's harp) and hanging flower pots, while Tormis also uses a number of folk instruments, including a *kantele* (psaltery), a Jew's harp, a buzzle, and a frame drum (shaman drum). However, more important than the mere notion of using several folk-specific instruments is the question of the function of these nonstandard instruments: it seems that they are not employed because of their specific colour, or with the aim of enriching the orchestral palette of traditional instruments, but rather because of their associative power. Urve Lippus has already pointed out that Tormis uses such instruments *mainly for particular symbolic functions* (Lippus, 1996, p. 495).

A similar function to that of non-traditional instruments can be ascribed to the use of non-professional musicians. The vocal soloist in Kutavičius's *Last Pagan Rites* is not necessarily a professional singer (Lampsatis, 1998, p. 63), and the same idea can be found in Tormis's piece *Litany to Thunder*, in which, at the beginning of the solo tenor part, the composer writes that *bel canto is not recommended*. This idea is further developed in Lebič's *Eulogy to the World*, in which the composer employs a variety of instruments (guitars, small drums, triangles, a recorder, an ocarina and a flexatone) played by the singers while singing. The instrumental parts are easy and can be played by virtually anybody; thus the composer introduces the idea of a musically active community of equals, of universality, and therefore also the concept of a musical work as a kind of ritual performed by the participants, eliminating the barrier between performers and spectators.

The choice of instruments is therefore linked more closely to the content of these pieces than to their compositional structure. Speaking of the content, it is important to recognise that these works are often conceived much like ancient rituals, stemming from national mythology or based on folk material or simulated folk quotations. They are also typified by an inclination towards mysticism and a circular comprehension of time, suggesting a pre-Christian, pagan world. Kutavičius *often reveals in his music even 'pre-folkloric' or 'pantheistic' rudiments representing the birth of folklore from something primeval, in this way as though restoring from relics the whole of a once integral, indivisible national culture, like an 'archaeologist of culture', uncovering those imaginary layers of it hidden 'under' the folklore as foreshadowed in the ancient folk myths*

(Paulauskis, 1998, p. 16). Typical is the notion of the “archaeologist,” which also frequently arises in discussions of Lebič’s music. In fact, Lebič initially studied archaeology at the University of Ljubljana, and one can discern a certain archaeological “logic” in his compositions. Lebič himself draws a comparison between archaeology and his music: *One can understand some splinters in my composition that cry like foreign bodies amid the layers of contemporary sound, similar to archaeological worlds captured in the different layers of soil* (Lebič, 2000, p. 31). However, some elements of “archaeology” are evident also in Tormis’s conviction that *self-apprehension and self-cognition is vital for maintaining balance and viability. We should know who we are and where our roots lie* (Anderson, 2000, p. 26).

One of the important layers that frequently marks the music of the three composers is that of folk music. However, the symbolic meaning of the splinters of folk music in Lebič’s pieces, or of the more elaborate work with folk melodies in Tormis’s choral compositions, is not simply tied to nationalist implications. The best description of Lebič’s special approach to folk music can be found in a seemingly unimportant remark in the score of his choral composition *Eulogy to the World*: a notable segment of the composition, which Lebič later also used in his outstanding symphonic piece *Queensland Music* (1989), is marked by the composer with the performance description: *Impression: archaic, elemental, folkloristic*. This comment establishes an interesting and very telling linkage between the folkloristic and the archaic, the folkloristic and something primordial. As Lebič openly admits, what *draws [him] to folk music is first of all prototypes – archetypes that are hidden in it – something that also reveals the specifics of contemporary music* (Gačša, 1999, p. 4). In Lebič’s work, folk music is elevated from the level of trivial adornment to the level of primordial essence, transhistorical “truth”. Something very similar can also be said about Tormis’s work with folk music. He regards old Estonian folk songs as *an ancient culture where all the components are combined in structure: the melody, the words, the performance, etc. It also became clear that it is a very old pre-Christian culture which is shamanistic in substance, and extremely close to nature in the ecological sense* (Anderson, 2000, p. 25). According to Tormis’s conception, ecology, as a seemingly typical contemporary movement, gains a clear transhistorical value.

The strata of folk or “prehistoric” musical allusions therefore acquires a mythological dimension. In order to further enhance this feeling of something primordial and mythical, the compositions are very often designated as quasi rituals, or at least have very pronounced theatrical elements. Kutavičius’s oratorios are *highly theatrical, like the reconstructions of ancient folk rituals and ceremonies* (Paulauskis, 1998, p. 16). Similarly, Tormis (in the second part of his *Curse upon Iron* one can find several instructions for stage actions), although using the very old layers of Estonian

folklore, is not interested only in the exploitation of folk material but seeks to bring about a kind of restoration of forgotten forms and rituals. The quest for that which is prehistoric and old cannot be simply regarded as a fetish for antiquity; it should be seen as a desire to open the vast potential of symbolic meanings. Metaphorically speaking, opening towards ancient rituals and theatrical gestures does not speak about the national past, but more about its roots, and therefore about the contemporary status of the Lithuanian, Slovene and Estonian nations.

Similar symbolic potential should also be ascribed to the sometimes very specific and graphic notation that is characteristic of Kutavičius. However, circular designs or graphic indications resembling something ritualistic, old and mystical can also be found in Lebič’s scores. Very specific is Lebič’s notation of folk-like quotations, which are notated in circular schemes (Example 7) that are associated with the circular motion of time and life and have no other clear musical importance. Similar mysticism is also awakened in the opening section of *Simfonija z orglami* (*Symphony with Organ*, 1993), with the quotation of the choral theme: in his handwritten score, the composer inserts the image of the original choral notation (Example 1). A close graphic relationship between music and its notation is also typical of the two pages at the climax of Lebič’s piece *Tangram* (1977) for chamber orchestra: the facing sides of the score are conceived like a mirror, with a slanting line indicating the gradual thickening/thinning of the orchestral texture (Example 2).

The piling up of various symbolic and mystical allusions is, of course, echoed in the musical substance, its development and form. It is typical of the composers – especially of Kutavičius and Lebič – that these remote “worlds” are musically depicted with a kind of blend of modernist and archetypal procedures; paradoxically, they try to establish the musical language of some prehistoric tribes (perhaps only imagined or already forgotten) by combining innovative and traditional procedures. Their works could therefore be stylistically labelled as postmodern. The most typical procedure is *parallel constructing* (McHale, 1987, 1992) or *double coding* (Jencks, 1985): the composers combine the emancipated modernist sound world with allusions to folk music, ancient models or even popular music. The typical repetitiveness of the works of Kutavičius and Tormis, which is often labelled as a Baltic stream of American minimal music, but is in fact a derivation of Baltic folk music, can also be found in some Lebič’s work; for example, in the aforementioned climax of *Tangram*, where the basic pulse is presented by the rhythm played by the flower pots (Example 2), although here the repetitiveness stems from ironising the “new age” movement and soft rock pulsation. Rather than being their weak point, the heterogeneity of these works is their central goal: it awakes the associative and therefore the semantic potential of music.

Example 1. First page of the score for the Lebič's *Symphony with Organ* (1993)

Example 2. Climax from Lebič's *Tangram* (1977)

Analysis of Selected Works by Lebič

The continuation will present an analysis of certain selected works by Lebič that can serve as the best examples of the aforementioned connections and parallels. Lojze Lebič is one of the most distinguished contemporary Slovene composers. Numerous performances in the international context (regular performances at the World Music Days, active participation in the festivals Warsaw Autumn, Musikprotokoll Graz, Musikbiennale Berlin, Biennale Zagreb, Pan Music Festival Seoul, Klangforum Wien) and international honours (selected work at the 32nd International Rostrum of Composers in Paris 1985, non-resident member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts), as well as the most prestigious Slovene prizes (the highest state prizes for the arts, the Prešeren Prize) and honours (permanent member of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts) are testimony to his elevated status. There can, therefore, be no surprise at Katarina Bedina's statement that all of these prizes, honours and acknowledgements *substantiate the composer's importance in Slovene arts ... and, already during his lifetime, ensure him the status of a classic of contemporary music* (Bedina, 2000, p. 151).

However, Lebič has not only assured himself a special status within Slovene musical culture but also within broader Slovene society, which is typical of the notion of the national artist: Lebič's music cannot be perceived as national simply because of his sporadic use of folk-like material, but rather because of his remarkable social position. As we know, the designation of national is not substantial but sociological, or even psychological. Therefore, we cannot overlook Lebič's broad social and intellectual activities. Lebič is a versatile writer about music: he is one of the rare Slovene composers who write about his own poetics and is the author of numerous music essays. Moreover, his activities surpass the musical context: he is involved in various social and political associations. He was part of the group of intellectuals gathered around the magazine *Nova revija*, who provided the spark for Slovene independence and today still actively comment on events when it seems that the process of democratisation is being slowed down.

One of the first compositions in which Lebič clearly attempted to overcome the modernist language that was already exhausted at that time was the choral composition *Eulogy to the World*, written in 1988 for the Yugoslav choral festivities in Niš, in the south of Serbia. It was based on texts by the prematurely deceased Serbian poet Branko Miljković (1934–1961) in Venko Taufer's Slovene translation. The composition is scored for two mixed choirs (one large and one small group of singers), piano four-hands, synthesizer and one percussionist playing a variety of instruments, with additional instruments being played by the singers while singing (guitars, small drums, triangles, a recorder, an

ocarina and a flexatone). Lebič chose three of Miljković's poems and one short fragment and arranged them in an unbroken sequence that builds a clear dramatic arc, with the climax at the end of the third poem. Miljković's texts could be regarded as an homage to nature and a warning against human exploitation of natural resources, beauty and its mystic intrinsic logic. However, the composer clearly states that his main attention is not focused on the text, *but on the expression of elementary syllables and words from the broad Balkan-Mediterranean world* (Lebič, 2002, p. II). Of importance are not the words and their meaning *per se*, but rather the expression they convey and the feeling of primeval rituality.

Even the first part, *Hvalnica ognju* (Praise to Fire) is organised as a mosaic of different musical ideas: opening ritualistic incantations on the tone *D* are followed by a section with vocal harmonic tones that are latter immersed in the whispering and loud inhaling and exhaling of the solo singers. The sequence of mosaic splinters is repeated and developed in the first climax on the word "sonce" (sun). The formal concept of mosaic and sequencing of basic sound materials (harmonics, whispering, concentration on one, central tone) clearly reinforces the idea of ritualistic repetitiveness and primordial adoration. The second part *Hvalnica svetu* (Eulogy to the World) brings stark harmonic contrast, beginning with a narrow cluster. At score number 7, Lebič begins a slow crescendo in the form of waves consisting of two layers (Example 3): the choral voices thicken the texture with longer melodic cells, while the solo voices introduce short melodic fragments that bring to mind the tonal (narrow range, quartet-tone slips) and expressive (lamenting fragments, guitar players position their instruments upright like cellos and play them with a bow, in a clear allusion to Serbian *gusle* players) world of the Balkans.³ It is precisely these fragments that are marked with the performance description: *Impression: archaic, elemental, folkloristic*.

After reaching this first climax with various modernist effects (rhythmical shouting, clusters, aleatoric procedures), in the third part *Kronika* (Chronicle) Lebič begins with a new gradation. This time, it is organised in the form of a consecutive upgrading of layers (A to F: from the solo piano with percussion to both choirs and all instrumental resources; Example 4). Stylistically, too, this part gives the impression of a collision of two worlds: the scheme with layers can be perceived as a classical idea of repetition with crescendo, while the clashes of different materials and the thick polyrhythms reveal modernist influences. Lebič reaches the central climax with the total fragmentation of the text, which is shouted by the whole choir, while the last, short section *Zemlja in ogenj* (Earth and Fire) has the function of closing the cycle and returning to the clearly central tone *D*.

1) Med [9] in [13] se pne zvočna in dinamična gradacija. Dogajanje med dvema oznakama [9] ali [13] etc. traja ca 25-30 sekund.

2) Da bi dosegli zvočno pestrost naj pevci ne začno hkrati in ponavljajo znamenje ne upoštevajo vsi. Glasovno se naj čimbolj razidejo. Intonacija je torej absolutna, ritem relativen.

3) Aktivnost lokovanja in artikulacija naj bo po „udarcu“ večja, potem pa do naslednjega popušča, se celo ustavi in ton prekinja.

4) Dirigent vključi Tenorje pred [10], Alte pred [11] in Soprane pred [12] potem, ko prejšnji glasovi že pajo v ponavljajlnih znamenjih. Koordinacija (4/4 takt) velja samo za vstop novega glasu. V nadaljevanju pevci individualno - na način „kanona“ - oblikujejo predloženo gradivo

* 5) ponavljati vzorce; enako na str. 14, 15, 16 in 17

Example 3. The process of layering in *Hvalnica svetu* (the middle layer consists of simulations of folk-like music)

4) Odsek med [18] in [24] je iz zaporedne nadgradnje slojev (A)+(B)+...+(F) in s tem naraščanja zvočnosti. Shema kaže vstop posameznega glasu ali instrumentov. Pozor! Nadaljne ponovitve niso pri vseh nujno mehanične. Vsem štirim kitaram naj se najnižjo struno E zniža za cel ton navzdol (na D); tako ostane do konca skladbe.

Example 4. The scheme of the entrance of particular voices or instruments in the third part of *Kronika*

Hvalnica svetu reveals Lebič's typical combining of modernist and pre-modernist, predominantly archaic, musical worlds: on the one hand, the music abounds in harmonic clusters, aleatoric procedures and various vocal in instrumental effects, while, on the other hand, Lebič constantly softens this modernist texture with the idea of repetition, simulation of folk-like fragments, and formalised gradations.

All of this can also be found in Lebič's large-scale composition *Ajdna* (1995), which is actually built from the choral cycle *V tihem šelestenju časa...* (In the Silent Rustle of Time...) based on poems by Gregor Strniša and combined with the cycle *Od blizu in daleč* (From Nearby and Far Away) for solo recorders and an assistant. The title itself reveals the world of prehistory: *Ajdna*⁴ is the name of an archaeological site from late antiquity; the seven movements of the piece for



Illustration 1. Moustertian bone flute, found in Divje Babe in Slovenia

recorders are named after folk songs, although the composer does not actually use any folk material. Crucial is the specific use of recorders, which are often treated like the prehistoric Moustertian bone flute, supposedly the oldest known musical instrument, which was discovered in Divje Babe in Slovenia.

The initial idea was that the composition could be played at the archaeological site, and would be therefore perceived as a kind of ritual. This idea was latter rejected, but the initial concept found its way into the form and content of *Ajdna*. Lebič wanted to depict the musical-mystical landscape of ancient, pre-Christian times, but his solutions go beyond historical truthfulness. The composer explains:

The music of AJDNA does not tend toward a stylistic aesthetic option. In the foreground are magic and symbolism. The music moves between vitality and aesthetic reticence, old-fashioned polyphony and the technique of clusters, between

the trivial and the emphatically artistic, the spiritual and the naturalistic. ... It is not an ode to the past, or directed toward the idyllic. It moves among the shadows of our ancestors. They are related to us in everything – joy and sadness, self-confidence and despair. They are also present at the beginning of the frustrations of our time. (Lebič, 1996)

Seven solo compositions for recorders and four choral compositions are arranged in a dramatic sequence that begins with the essential questions of our existence (*Where are we when we were, Where will we be when we no longer are?*) and, after a dance of death, ends with redemptive knowledge. This structure is musically paralleled with a path that leads from total chromaticism to modal diatonic harmony. However, Lebič bridges both “worlds” by combining them in a single scale that can be used either as a twelve-tone series or as modal stock (Example 5).



Example 5. Basic scale/series for *Ajdna* (1995, the marked tones are the main notes of the choral part)

Table 1. Formal structure of *Ajdna*

recorders (<i>From Nearby and Far Away</i>)		“Ptičica svarilka”/ “The Warning Bird”	“Kačji kraljič”/ “The Serpent Prince”		“Jemlji, jemlji zdaj slovo”/ “O Say Farewell Now”	“Otroci uklete ptice”/ “Children Changed into Birds”	“Meglice dol popadajo”/ “Mist is Falling”		“Godec pred pekлом”/ “The Fiddler at the Gates of Hell”		Se že svita, bo dan”/ “It Is Dawn, the Day Is Beginning”
choir (<i>In the Silent Rustle of Time...</i>)	“Iz veka vekov”/ “From Time Immemorial”			“Mozaiki”/ “Mosaics”				“Iz kamna v vodi”/ “From the Stone in the Water”		“Pesem o smrti”/ “Song of Death”	
content	Captivity in the magic circle of life			Withdrawal from an isolated state of captivity				Fervent appeal to nature		Redemptive knowledge	

dominated by several waves of gradation and the obsessive use of various ostinatos. Another facet is brought by the last choral piece *Song of Death*, which begins with a canon in eight voices. The continuation of the piece is marked by repetitive patterns in the marimba and vibraphone, as well as intrusions of simulations of folk songs. Lebič clearly states that, *in the piece there are no quotations, ... what gives the impression of the quotation is taken from the composer's imagination* (Lebič, 1996). In the midst of modernist textures, the isolated islands of allusions function as triggers of semantic associations connected with the images of the prehistoric, the primordial, the natural, the archetypal and the magic. Of further interest, however, is Lebič's notation of the folk-like quotations, which are notated in circular schemes that are associated with the circular motion of time and life, with no clear musical significance. The texture is further thickened by ostinato patterns, and after the climax composer builds a kind of recapitulation: the melody of the canon is repeated, this time in unison, and the texture becomes thicker, filled with simulated quotations of folk songs heard before, but this time executed simultaneously. After all of the voices have joined in, a long decrescendo follows and the singers gradually leave the stage one by one with "ritual steps". The singing dissolves behind the stage and the stage lights slowly fade out.

The choral pieces are also clearly torn between the ancient and the contemporary, a dichotomy that is achieved with musical and theatrical means. Hints of organum, choral chanting, folk song quotations, traditional polyphony and singing in canon are confronted with dense chromaticism, clusters, extended vocal techniques and aleatoric sections, as well as the echoes of almost trivial, repetitive minimal music. With the additional aid of certain stage actions and the manipulation of the sound in space, Lebič comes close to a ritual that simulates ancient, pagan times, only in order to enhance the central existential questions of our time.

Another of Lebič's choral compositions opens many parallels with the music of Kutavičius and Tormis; namely, the piece *Urok* (Curse, 1986) for children's or female choir. *Urok* is Lebič's most successful piece and has been performed by several choirs outside Slovenia. As a starting point, Lebič uses short fragmentary folk texts, which are in fact several short curses (the distinct parts of the composition are named *Curse upon an Island*, *Curse upon a Snakebite* and *Curse upon Hot Blood*). These curses have no special literary interest, but they are highly musical in their combination of phonemes and numerous word iterations. In these aspects, they come close to the poetry of Sigitas Geda or the folk-like stylisations/adaptations used by Tormis for his choral pieces. It is therefore not surprising that Lebič also makes use of similar compositional techniques and

materials. The vocal range remains very narrow throughout the composition: Lebič builds the musical language on several distinctive repetitive rhythms (these are further enhanced by the choral singers playing on stones, claves and similar percussive objects/instruments), the iterations of cells, and some vocal effects (glissandos, *Sprechgesang*, shouting). On the formal level, the piece is conceived as a succession of episodes; however, the opening idea – a rhythmic accentuated circulation around the tones of an F major chord and the word "urok" – repeats several times in the manner of a rondo. Yet again, the selected text, the material, its development and the formal solution clearly suggest the idea of ritual, magic conjuration, tied to primordial feelings – the main paradox of the music is that the most innovative parts of the composition tend, in fact, to be simulations of something very old.

Concluding remarks

The analysis of Lebič's pieces *Eulogy to the World*, *Ajdna* and *Curse* confirms a surprisingly high number of parallels between the music of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis. These could be condensed in a list of common points:

- It is difficult to ascribe works by Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis to one of the traditional genres: their pieces are often torn between several genres, mixing vocal genres with theatrical, liturgical and instrumental genres;
- They often use non-traditional instruments (folk instruments, toys, sounding objects);
- Typical is the use of non-professional musicians playing on some handheld instruments or playing basic figures on traditional instruments that can be learned by virtually anybody;
- The character of their works is often ritualistic;
- Musical actions are often developed into scenic gestures, causing their compositions to come close to theatre pieces;
- Hints of folk music, either original or simulated, are also characteristic;
- In its graphic design, the notation can be a bearer of symbolic meanings (circular structures, ancient notation types, notation in the shapes of symbolic elements);
- The idea of sound in space is important, with the musicians often moving in space and thus engulfing the audience in sound, which further enhances the idea of ritual, in which there is no division between performers and spectators;
- The three composers try to present unknown music from an imaginary ancient past;
- All of them use a very broad stylistic palette, with which they stimulate various allusions: their music is stylistically heterogeneous, which is a typical characteristic of postmodern music.

Having established and highlighted these common points, our goal must be to try to find the reasons for such a large number of parallels. Our perspective must therefore be turned from text to context. All three composers lived in multinational countries (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), in which their own nations still longed for their own, independent national states. Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia tried to establish their national identities during the time of the national spring in the 19th Century (basic national institutions – among them also musical institutions – were created, [Potocco, 2013, p. 112; Lippus, 1999, p. 52]); in the 20th Century, however, their national feelings were, after a short period of independence, again suppressed (in the Baltic states due to so-called “Russification” and in Yugoslavia through the doctrine of “brotherhood and unity”). Therefore, even in the second half of 20th century, Lithuania, Slovenia and Estonia were small countries (Lithuania, the largest of the three countries, has three million inhabitants, while the smallest, Estonia, has just over a million inhabitants) with relatively low possibilities of being presented as sovereign, “historical” nations. Furthermore, all three countries belonged to the Eastern Block, which was politically dominated by communist totalitarianism, a political arrangement that left its footprints in all forms of social life, including in culture, where the doctrine of socialist realism dictated the choices of style, artistic technique, content and material. These specific coordinates, which marked the artistic development of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis, were in stark contrast to the situation on the other side of the iron curtain. Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis belonged to nations without strong national self-confidence, and with a very weak tradition of art music; moreover, the doctrine of socialist realism was hostile to modernism, which, in the West, was breaking the last links with the remnants of the traditional musical “language”. All three composers were therefore faced with similar dilemmas: how to preserve their own personal musical identity and the musical identity of their nations amid the cultural-political claims for general intelligibility.

Bearing these contextual coordinates in mind, one can interpret the strong inclination towards the ritualisation of their pieces, the use of folk instruments as well as original or simulated folk material, and recourse to ancient, pagan times. The quest for simulating the music from some ancient past hence functions as the essence of national identity: national roots are firmly anchored in pagan prehistory. It is typical that nations such as Lithuania, Slovenia and Estonia, which had not firmly established their national identities in the 19th century, should search for their national symbols and heroes in a distant, prehistoric time. Kutavičius’s music and ideas were understood as *a manifesto or declaration of independence for the Lithuanian people* (Jankauskienė, 1996, p. 499), while Tormis’s music was *an important repository of ethnic identity* (Anderson, 2000, p. 24).⁵

However, the mystical prehistoric time, overlaid with mysterious symbols, the circular comprehension of time, the ritual actions and gestures, and the special quasi “liturgical” logic fulfils another task, which is related to the absence of religious freedom in socialist countries: Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis establish a kind of liturgy that had no association with Christianity and was therefore not suspicious for local censors. However, this process of “ritualisation” should be regarded in close connection to the vague employment of genre and a closeness to theatrical forms. The uncertainty – concerning the genre and the mixed form, which crossed the bridges between vocal and instrumental music, absolute music and theatre – covered the essence and social content of these pieces: they could be understood as a harmless, playful and even naive confrontation with the distant past, and not as potent political statements, which is what they actually were.

The mixed genres and stylistic heterogeneity, perhaps even eclecticism, gave the composers another opportunity: they offered a way out of socialist realism. The paralleling of modernist and traditional (in many cases also archetypal) techniques, forms and procedures could be understood as a “soft” opening to the radical modernism of Western Europe. The typical postmodern procedures (quotation, simulation, palimpsest, parallel constructions, stylistic diversity, semantic charge) that can be found in the works of Kutavičius, Lebič and Tormis should therefore be understood differently to similar procedures used by postmodern composers in the United States and in the rest of Europe. Whereas postmodernism in the West offered the possibility of surpassing the rigidity and hermeticism of modernism, in Eastern Europe it also provided a way to tackle some modernist techniques that, in connection with non-modernist procedures, ensured semantic comprehensibility, and were therefore not politically suspicious. Baltic and Balkan composers became familiar with contemporary musical modernism at the festival Warsaw Autumn in the 1960s (Paulauskis, 1998, p. 14), where they *actually received contemporary musical thought second hand* (Bėvc, 1992, p. 21). At that time, the first wave of radical modernism, with Boulez’s serialism and Cage’s indeterminacy, was over; it was the time of modernist synthesis. Therefore, Baltic-Balkan composers were never confined to the hermetic tendencies of modernism. This last statement suggests further research: postmodernism fulfilled different tasks in Eastern and Western Europe. The question remains: are we dealing with two postmodernisms: “Western postmodernism”, conceived as a reaction to the fetishist drive to innovation, and “Eastern postmodernism”, realised as a way out of socialist realism, and with weak connections with modernism?

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- ¹ Conversation with Lojze Lebič on 27 August 2012.
 - ² Rather than concentrating only on the question of direct contacts, we should perhaps investigate more thoroughly the possibility that all three composers were influenced by the same composer. The works of Kutavičius and Lebič, in particular, leave this option open to research, as the music of both composers shows traces of the music of American composer George Crumb (mysticism, circular structures, magical numbers).
 - ³ The fact that Lebič later rearranged this section as a portion of his symphonic piece *Queensland Music* sheds new light on this segment. The piece was commissioned by the Australian Music Centre and the Union of Yugoslavian Composers, a duality that is reflected in the title *Queensland Music* (naming the state in the north of the Commonwealth of Australia) and the subtitle “in the year of the Slovene spring”, that is, the political “spring” in the year of Slovene democratisation and the increasingly emphatic requests for an independent national Slovene state. The inner paradox of the work is clear: Lebič wrote a work in which he celebrated the democratisation of Slovenia and its struggle for independence, but at the same time he used old musical material that was especially designated for the festival in Niš, in the heart of the Balkans. It must therefore be clear that the folk-like simulations do not bring narrow local, geographical or cultural associations, but deeper connotations, connected to primordial archetypes, elevated to the plane of existential questions.
 - ⁴ The name cannot be translated, but it is derived from the root “ajd”, meaning “pagan”.
 - ⁵ Urve Lippus is even more specific: *In Estonia Tormis's music has fulfilled two related ideological functions: (a) supporting the identity of a member of the Estonian community by suggesting the feeling of participation in an ancient ritual, showing the authentic or “right” way of life (...); and (b) supporting the ideas of environmental movements by the singing of songs of pre-Christian traditional community* (Lippus, 1996, pp. 487–488).
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Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamos lietuvių kompozitoriaus Broniaus Kutavičiaus, jo kolegos iš Slovėnijos Lojze Lebičo ir estų kompozitoriaus Veljo Tormio kūrybos paralelės. Nors visi šie kūrėjai priklauso tai pačiai kartai, vis dėlto nėra jokių patikimų įrodymų, kad Baltijos kraštų kompozitoriams būtų tekę bendrauti su slovėnu Lebiču. Taigi jų kūriniių sąlyčio taškai turėtų būti nagrinėjami pasitelkiant kontekstinių sąlygų panašumo analizę.

Paralelės patvirtinamos analizuojant Lebičo kūrinius „Eulogija pasauliui“, „Ajdna“ ir „Prakeikimas“. Nėra paprasta priskirti Kutavičiaus, Lebičo ir Tormio darbus vienam kuriam nors tradiciniam žanrui: jų kūriniai dažnai turi kelių žanrų elementų, juose susipina vokaliniai, liturginiai, instrumentiniai ir teatro žanrai. Šie kompozitoriai dažnai naudoja netradicinius instrumentus, skiria partijas neprofesionaliems muzikantams, kurie groja paprastais rankiniais instrumentais ar atlieka nesudėtingus, visiems prieinamus motyvus tradiciniais instrumentais. Jų muzikoje ryškus rituališkumo pradai, o muzikiniai veiksmai dažnai išplėtojami iki sceniškų gestų, taip priartėjant prie teatro specifikos. Tarp kitų būdingų detalių – užuominos į liaudies muziką (naudojant originalius ar žinomus intarpus), garso erdvėje idėja (kai muzikantai laisvai juda erdvėje, apgaubdami garsu žiūrovus). Šie trys kompozitoriai mėgina pristatyti mums nepažįstamą senų senovės muziką, todėl drąsiai naudoja įvairias stilistines spalvas, kurias pasitelkę „nupiešia“ ir perteikia įvairias aliuzijas: stiliaus prasme jų kūrinius galima laikyti heterogeniniais, o tai yra tipiškas postmodernios muzikos bruožas.

Šių paralelių formavimosi prielaidų reikėtų ieškoti remiantis kontekstais. Kompozitoriai gyveno ir kūrė daugiataučiuose kraštuose, jų tautos troško savarankiško valstybinio statuso. Be to, visos trys tautos priklausė Rytų

blokui, kurio politinėje padangėje vyravo komunistinis totalitarizmas, o socialistinio realizmo doktrina diktavo stiliaus, meninės raiškos, turinio ir reikšmės taisykles. Taigi kūrėjai susidūrė su tokiais pat dilemomis: kaip išsaugoti asmeninį ir visos tautos muzikinį identitetą aplinkoje, reikalavusioje griežtos niveliacijos. Šiuo atveju senovės muzikos citatų pasitelkimas funkcionuoja kaip esminė tautinės tapatybės detalė: tautų šaknys giliai įaugusios į pagoniškąją priešistorę. Tipiška, kad tokios tautos kaip Lietuva, Slovėnija ir Estija, kurios XIX a. nesuformavo tvirto identiteto, ieško savo nacionalinių simbolių ir herojų tolimuose, priešistoriniuose laikuose.

Kutavičius, Lebičas ir Tormis sukūrė ypatingą liturgiją, kuri nebuvo susijusi su krikščionybe, dėl to kėlė įtarimą vietos cenzūrai. Žanrų kombinacijos ir heterogeniškumas suteikė jiems galimybę siūlyti išeitį iš socialistinio realizmo. Moderniosios ir tradicinės technikos paralelės, formos ir procedūros gali būti suvokiamos kaip kelio į Vakarų Europos radikalųjį modernizmą atvėrimas. Todėl tipiškos postmodernios priemonės (citos, simuliacijos, palimpsestai, paralelinės konstrukcijos, stilistinė įvairovė, semantinis krūvis), gausiai naudojamos Kutavičiaus, Lebičo ir Tormio darbuose, neturėtų būti lyginamos su analogiškėmis priemonėmis, kurias savo darbuose pasitelkė postmoderniojo laikotarpio kompozitoriai iš JAV ir kitų Europos šalių.