

Danutė PETRAUSKAITĖ

Vytautas Laurušas's Worldview as Reflected in His Activity and Letters to Jeronimas Kačinskas

Vytauto Laurušo pasaulėžiūros atspindžiai jo veikloje ir laiškuose Jeronimui Kačinskui

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Abstract

Vytautas Laurušas (1930–2019) was a composer, pedagogue, administrator, Communist Party activist, supporter of the restoration of Lithuania's independence, and winner of the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts. He lived and worked in two different epochs: in the Soviet era, that is, under totalitarian rule, and in independent Lithuania. The topic of this paper is Laurušas's memoirs and epistolary legacy, and the aim is to explore his worldview, which allowed him to perform successfully in different times. The research is based on several methods: analysis of primary sources, the history of music, musicological literature, and periodicals, given the ideological context, as well as comparison and generalization of facts and interpretations. The paper does not claim to reveal the development of Laurušas's mindset comprehensively and consistently, as it is based on only a minor part of his memoirs and letters; however, it is expected to be of use to those who want to study Laurušas's artistic and social activities in depth.

Keywords: Vytautas Laurušas, Jeronimas Kačinskas, Lithuania, the USA, music, Soviet era, Communist Party, national revival, diaspora, independence.

Anotacija

Vytautas Laurušas (1930–2019) – kompozitorius, pedagogas, administratorius, komunistų partijos veikėjas, Lietuvos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo šalininkas, Lietuvos nacionalinės kultūros ir meno premijos laureatas. Jis gyveno ir kūrė dviejose skirtingose epochose – sovietmečiu, t. y. totalitarinio režimo sąlygomis, ir laisvoje Lietuvoje. Šio straipsnio objektas – Laurušo memuarai ir epistolinis palikimas, o tikslas – susipažinti su jo pasaulėžiūra, leidusia jam sėkmingai dirbuoti skirtingais laikotarpiais. Tyrimas pagrįstas keliais metodais – pirminių šaltinių, muzikos istorijos, muzikologinės literatūros, periodinės spaudos analize, atsižvelgiant į ideologinį kontekstą, taip pat faktų bei interpretacijų lyginimu ir apibendrinimu. Straipsnis nepretenduoja išsamiai ir tolygiai atskleisti Laurušo mąstymo raidos, nes remiamasi tik nedidele jo atsiminimų ir laiškų dalimi, tačiau norisi tikėti, kad šis darbas padės tiems, kurie ateityje nutars labiau pasidomėti šio kompozitoriaus menine ir visuomenine veikla.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Vytautas Laurušas, Jeronimas Kačinskas, Lietuva, JAV, muzika, sovietmetis, komunistų partija, tautinis atgimimas, išeivija, nepriklausomybė.

Introduction

The spring of 2020 marked the 90th birth anniversary and one-year death anniversary of Vytautas Laurušas. He still seems to be with us, and therefore it may be too early to talk about his life path and beliefs; however, given the fact that, in 2020, the independent state of Lithuania celebrated its 30th anniversary, and Laurušas, who was a member of the Lithuanian Communist Party (hereinafter: the LCP) and held high administrative posts, also contributed to its restoration, it seemed interesting to try to understand his worldview and values. The biggest impetus for the implementation of this idea was a bundle of Laurušas's letters written to Lithuanian American composer Jeronimas Kačinskas in the years of national revival. Kačinskas corresponded with a number of people and stored a big part of his correspondence with them until his death. Laurušas's

first letter was dated 26 April 1988 and the last one 8 December 1995. We can only wonder how many letters were exchanged because when Kačinskas was ill and moved to a nursing home and later after his death when unauthorized persons were handling the composer's epistolary legacy, the documents were moved from one place to another. About 20 letters from Laurušas (some of them with a missing beginning or end) found their way to Lithuania. As it turned out, more than one had been lost on the way to America. This is to be regretted, since letters as a genre help to reveal the social, political, and cultural atmosphere of the time as well as provide information about the relationship between the recipient and the sender and the individuality of the latter. However, even from the surviving correspondence it is possible to form a picture of how Laurušas lived and what he felt during the historical turning point, the collapse of the USSR, and the restoration of independent Lithuania.

Not many written sources can be found about Laurušas's life and work, and that is mostly information about one of his compositions or another, published in popular Lithuanian newspapers and journals. The most impressive source is the book *Vytautas Laurušas. Gyvenimo realybės ir kūrybos interpretacijos (Vytautas Laurušas: Interpretations of Life Realities and Creative Work)* (2009) by Rita Aleknaitė-Bieliauskienė. Based merely on the narratives of the protagonist and his contemporaries, it is not of a scientific nature and does not contain any in-depth analysis or generalizations. Still, the book is valuable as a source of information coming directly from Laurušas. Regretfully, his friendship with Kačinskas has been only mentioned in passing. Therefore, the scientific novelty of the present paper lies in the revelation of those long-lasting relationships and in the emphasis on Laurušas's worldview as highlighted in his letters. It may be relevant to those who are interested in the relationship between music and politics and are less familiar with the life of Lithuanian composers in the years of historical turning points.

Vytautas Laurušas: personality formation and activity before 1988

Laurušas grew up in Šiauliai in a family of hardworking craftspeople, excellent tailors, and loving and attentive parents. They instilled Christian values, diligence, honesty, and a sense of responsibility in their children. The years of the Bolshevik occupation indirectly affected the Laurušas family, too; thus, Vytautas must have heard about the deportations, the prison in Pravieniškės, and Siberia. But sad thoughts were overshadowed by school life, the daily duties of the pupil, and music activity. Music was heard in the boys' gymnasium, at church, and the music school that moved from Klaipėda to Šiauliai in 1939. Vytautas began his studies in it in 1944. At first, he attended piano and flute classes but quickly realized that it was much more fun to extract sounds from and produce melodies on the keyboard (Aleknaitė-Bieliauskienė 2009: 86). He was especially fond of composer Julius Gaidelis, a teacher with long and lush hair, who looked like a "genuine artist" to young Laurušas. True, the pleasure of seeing him did not last long: in the autumn of 1944, Gaidelis moved to the West. Thus, Laurušas saw how many Lithuanian intellectuals had fled from their homeland; however, at the time, he was hardly able to understand the reasons for their flight.

The Laurušas family sympathized with the ideas of socialism. Antanas Laurušas, Vytautas's father, who bought a *Europe Guide* with the flags of European countries, used to point to the flag of the Soviet Union and explain that more justice could be found in that country. Maybe that's why in 1940 he agreed to sew red ties for Šiauliai workers so that they could meet Russian soldiers all dressed up, yet

when he saw those soldiers, shabby and wearing tarpaulin boots, he was very disappointed.

In 1949, Vytautas left the gymnasium. On the occasion of its centenary, the pupils staged the play *Tadas Blinda* by Gabrielius Landsbergis-Žemkalis, in which Vytautas was entrusted with the role of a revolutionary student. This choice was apparently determined not so much by the young man's worldview as by his artistic abilities. After all, in the last years at school, Vytautas was already being called a composer. He proved it in the final concert at the gymnasium by playing his 15-minute *Fantasy* on the piano.

Beyond family, school, and friends, others influenced the maturing personality. During his childhood and adolescence, Vytautas kept close contacts with the Jesuits, who had settled in Šiauliai in 1930, of about whom he later said:

The Jesuit brothers particularly valued justice. My "spiritual father" was priest Pranciškus Masionis. In his church, I daily served at Mass. Influenced by the hymns of Julius Juzeliūnas, I decided to write a hymn, too. My first composition was the hymn *To Jesus Christ the King*, where both the music and lyrics were mine. Pranciškus Masionis, my spiritual father, highly praised that piece of mine and said that, if I became a Jesuit, I would be able to worship God with my new compositions. [...] it was a time of self-knowledge, of spiritual maturation. More than one sentiment had been instilled into my heart: to forgive everyone, not to blame anyone, and to suffer wrong as trials sent by God. I learned tolerance, learned to get on with people and help them in good faith, and not to suspect anyone because it was humiliating. (Aleknaitė-Bieliauskienė 2009: 86, 88)

The Jesuits were preparing Vytautas for a religion-related future; they promised to send him to study in Innsbruck¹ and explained that he would be able to simultaneously study composition because the laws of the Order did not forbid it. The romantically minded young Vytautas wrote poems, dreamed, and seemed not to have anything against a clergyman's career. It is difficult to say what would have happened with him if, in 1949, the Soviet government had not closed the Jesuit residence and, even earlier, their church. It was like an omen encouraging Vytautas to choose the path of music and to enroll at the Lithuanian State Conservatory.

Laurušas did not immediately get into the Department of Composition due to his poor knowledge of theoretical subjects; he accepted the proposal to study at the Department of Folk Music and transferred to the Class of Composition two years later. In it, he was given a strong foundation in composition and tested his artistic powers in writing both instrumental and vocal works, such as Sonata for cello and piano as well as the ballad *Mother* for soloist (tenor), male choir, and symphony orchestra, written to the lyrics by Justinas Marcinkevičius under the supervision of Professor Julius Juzeliūnas as his diploma work. The years of studies were not easy either financially or spiritually: it was a period

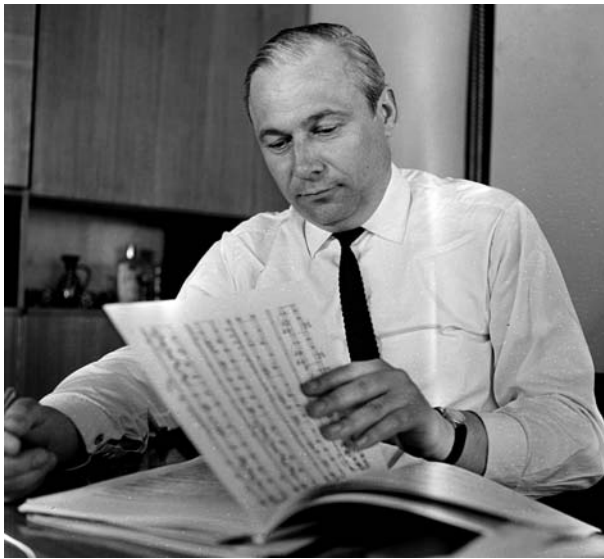


Figure 1. Vytautas Laurušas, 1952 (The Lithuanian Central State Archives)

of Stalinist rule, when the LCP, acting in accordance with the Kremlin's directives, sought to transform Lithuanian national identity and implemented the Soviet interpretation of history and the class struggle theory. Deportations and repressions took place in Lithuania; students could be accused of spreading hostile ideology and expelled from the conservatory for a single imprudent word.² Young composer Laurušas graduated from the conservatoire in 1956. In the same year, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union³ took place, which condemned the cult of personality of Joseph Stalin and raised the principle of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries. After that congress, the destruction of Soviet concentration camps began, and trains stopped transporting political prisoners in cattle wagons from Lithuania to the east. However, fear had plagued people for a long time, and the method of socialist realism, imposed on Lithuanian artists by the occupational authorities in 1940, had not been revoked. Socialist realism was based on the principles of a folk character of art works, loyalty to the Party, and socialist humanism, and its aim was to exalt the proletariat, the revolution, the Communist Party, and its leaders. Composers, fearing to be called formalists, as had happened to Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, and Aram Khachaturian in Moscow and to Balys Dvarionas, Juozas Karosas, and Stasys Vainiūnas in Vilnius (see *Muzika...* 1992: 95–96), began to quote folk melodies in their works and to write mass songs, cantatas, or oratorios, neglecting instrumental music. Laurušas also paid tribute to the idols of communism: in the late 1960s and in 1970s, he wrote choral songs *Lenin's Flags*, *With Lenin's Name*, *The Party is our Leader*, *In the Land of Oriol*, *The Nemunas*, and *Lithuania Sings to Lenin*. Nevertheless, he did not waste his energy writing large-scale ideological

works and tried to maintain a balance between the obligatory clichés and his artistic individuality. Still, there was a lot of fear. Even then, Laurušas learned to hide his beliefs and dreams as if constantly wearing a protective mask that soon adhered to his face and was difficult to discover for other people.

Upon graduating from the conservatoire, Laurušas worked for several years as an editor for the Radio Committee of the Lithuanian SSR and as a consultant for the Composers' Union. Those were highly ideologized institutions, constantly monitored and censored by the state security structures. In 1961, he was invited to teach theoretical subjects at his alma mater, the Lithuanian State Conservatoire. He did well everywhere because he fulfilled the ideological requirements of the time. In 1963, Laurušas was offered the position of director of the Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Lithuanian SSR. Of course, the position could only be occupied by a member of the LCP, thus Laurušas joined the Party in the same year. It was a period of political "thaw" which gave people some hope. However, in 1964, with Leonid Brezhnev, who replaced Nikita Khrushchev, the era of stagnation in the state began meaning the avoidance of any change, and it covered all areas of life. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU became the most influential institution in the country. Most artists, including Laurušas, quickly realized that they could only succeed in life and career as members of the Communist Party, and once they became Communists, they would quickly climb the career ladder. The ambitions came true.

Laurušas headed the Opera and Ballet Theatre for 12 years, from 1963 to 1975; he was chairman of the Composers' Union from 1971 to 1983; a candidate for membership to the Central Committee of the LCP from 1971 to 1986; since 1986 a member of the Central Committee of the LCP; in 1975, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR; since 1980, the vice-chairman of the Supreme Council; and from 1983 to 1994, the rector of the Lithuanian State Conservatoire (since 1992, the Lithuanian Academy of Music). Thus, a romantic young man gradually turned into a party functionary, an official, and a nomenclaturist; otherwise, he did not change—he did not become arrogant and he loved people and respected his subordinates, found common ground with people regardless of the level of their education, always lent a helping hand to those who needed it, had a sense of humor, and was eloquent. People loved him, too. Only he found less and less time for writing music, and occasionally had to take breaks from composing for several years. Still, he sometimes succeeded in writing memorable compositions. Thus, for example, his poem *Voices of the Night*, written in 1969 and performed in a competition in Italy by the *Varpas* male choir (conductor Adolfas Krogertas) in the same year, won first place and made the composer famous throughout

Europe. Thanks to that poem and other compositions, including Sonata for violin solo, the romance cycle *Waves* for tenor and piano, String Quartet No. 1, and the cantata *Flaming Night*, Laurušas had his name inscribed in the history of Lithuanian music as a composer who sought new harmonies and colors and who dared to use modern means of musical expression—suspended chords, dodecaphony, and aleatorics—that had nothing to do with the doctrine of socialist realism. However, it was much more difficult to be a modern creator and to choose topics that were sensitive to the Lithuanian nation. Even if some composers (such as Feliksas Bajoras and Bronius Kutavičius) turned to the past of the Lithuanian nation, its suffering, and the history of the State of Lithuania, Laurušas did not dare to do so. While holding responsible administrative positions, he could not be free in his artistic decisions. Therefore, when he came up with the idea of writing an opera, he chose one of the issues raised by the propaganda war between the USSR and the West—the theme of emigration.

The government of the Lithuanian SSR took the mass emigration of Lithuanians to the West in the last years of the Second World War as a great defeat: it was well understood that people were fleeing from the new regime. They were called bourgeois nationalists and lackeys of the Hitlerites, while the leaders of the public diaspora organizations that raised the issue of the occupation of Lithuania were humiliated and mockingly called “liberators” or “reactionary elements.” That was not enough, and more serious measures had to be taken to silence hostile voices. Contacts with emigrants were forged and efforts made to lure them back, as that was the only way to reduce the number of potential opponents. In the newspaper for emigrants *Tėvynės balsas* (*Voice of the Homeland*), government representatives tried to explain to its readers why it was worth returning home (Paleckis, Gedvilas 1947). However, only a small proportion of the refugees wanted to re-emigrate. Therefore, it was necessary to call on the professional help of the KGB structures, which were instructed to limit the emigrants' contacts with people living in Lithuania, to monitor the activities of emigrant organizations and individuals, and to influence the emigrants' political views in various ways. Therefore, works of art depicting Lithuanians' life in emigration in dark colors or compromising emigrants were highly desirable, and artists who produced such work were encouraged. One of such artists was Laurušas, who in 1967 wrote the opera *Stray Birds* to the libretto of poet Eugenijus Matuzevičius and conductor Algimantas Kalinauskas. The main characters—Tadas, his fiancée Rūta, and his friend Marius—fled to the West and tragically ended their lives there. The creators of the opera, who compared emigrants with stray birds, tried to emphasize two important ideas: 1) people could not be happy living far from their homeland; and 2) the capitalist system was disastrous for them.

The conclusion followed that happiness could only be found when living in Soviet Lithuania.

However, the opera, written and staged in the anniversary year of the October Revolution, did not directly glorify the Communist regime: it only revealed the lives of emigrants who had not found happiness abroad. Today, in the era of global migration, some of the storylines may seem even more relevant, yet at the time, everyone understood what the composers of the work wanted to say. As a result, no one dared to criticize the libretto, and the music was rated well enough. It was decided to submit the work to an All-Union Opera Competition. The jury members, who came to Vilnius from Moscow, analyzed the score, participated in rehearsals, listened, and watched. The results of the competition delighted everyone—the opera was awarded second prize. In 1970, it was also taken to the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. After the performance, *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the CPSU, immediately drew readers' attention to the most important thing—the ideological significance of the opera:

Stray Birds is a story about the difficult fates of people who had lost their political orientation in the horrors of war storms and occupations. (Шехонина 1970)

Thus, Laurušas persuaded the highest strata of the state power of his ideological loyalty and earned political dividends but could only enjoy them temporarily—his greatest opus became irrelevant in the reborn Lithuania. Laurušas visited Moscow on various occasions. Some of the trips were related to the performance of his works, while others to the activities of the administered institutions. He met with high-ranking ministry officials, famous artists, and politicians. In the Soviet Russian capital, he observed changes in the conjunctural environment and the behavior of party actors and learned how to maneuver under the party dictatorship in an effort to preserve the national character in his compositions and national interests in other activities. In particular, the 1963 tour of the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre in Moscow was worth mentioning. At that time, the highest officials of the LCP and government representatives also accompanied the performers. After all, the tour of the theater was a very important event of both artistic as well as political significance, after which one could expect either praise, positive solution to the problems raised, high awards, even cash prizes, or penalties and the loss of current position. Nikita Khrushchev, secretary general of the CPSU, also visited the performances. After the final concert, the Muscovites hosted a feast for the guests. The table was loaded with food and drinks, and toasts were raised to the friendship of nations. In such informal meetings, it was possible to resolve some issues that could not be discussed in governmental offices. During the feast, Laurušas memorized a conversation between Khrushchev

and Antanas Sniečkus he overheard which caused him unpleasant feelings. Laurušas said:

In the last minutes of saying goodbye, Khrushchev uttered the words that were probably very welcome to Sniečkus: “So you remain the first Secretary.” Sniečkus rushed to kiss Khrushchev’s hand. (Lapinskas 2015)

After that incident, a joke was born that, just like geese saved Rome, the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre saved Sniečkus.⁴ Laurušas contributed to the salvation with his song *Lenin’s Flags*,⁵ which ended the Lithuanian concert at the Kremlin Congress Palace and clearly demonstrated obedience to the Soviet regime. It also meant sycophancy to power, only in a more refined form. The composer was thanked for the successful tour—on returning from Moscow, continued as the director and moreover became artistic director of the theater but was also allowed to build a new contemporary palace for it.

A meeting with a “stray bird” in Boston

During his administrative career, Laurušas did not get rich, but he became acquainted with influential people and the stars of the art world of Soviet Russia; he had the opportunity to visit foreign countries and participate in high-level international events and music festivals that could be attended only by Party members or high-ranking composers. Moreover, he could both participate and hear his compositions performed. He had an extraordinary opportunity in 1988, after *perestroika* accelerated. In Boston that year, under the renewed treaty between the United States and the USSR, on March 11 through April 2, the festival of the Soviet nations, called Making Music Together, took place. A group of musicians going to Boston was formed in Moscow, led by composer Rodion Shchedrin. It consisted of 285 individuals, including 12 composers. Laurušas was among them. Irena Argustienė-Laurušienė, who performed his vocal compositions, accompanied him; however, he was not allowed to take along the Vilnius String Quartet, which had played Laurušas’s music more than once.⁶ The Americans were represented by Sarah Caldwell,⁷ who took care of the running of the events and their funding.

The reception of the festival by Lithuanians in Boston was ambiguous. On the one hand, Lithuanian Americans were very much looking forward to the performance of Laurušas’s works and regularly called Shchedrin about it. On the other hand, they used this event as an opportunity to protest against the occupation of Lithuania. Even before the opening concert of the festival, a crowd of protesters greeted the performers and listeners with shouts “Nyet, nyet, Soviet!” Other picketers held posters with inscriptions, such as “The Results of Glasnost Are Easy to See in Boston

Theaters, not in Lithuania,” or “Democracy Yes, Marxism No” (McLellan 1988).

Three compositions by Laurušas—the String Quartet, the cantata *Flaming Night*, and the Concerto for voice and string quartet—were performed on March 23 in the lobby of the Boston Opera House. It was a festival space intended for the performance of all chamber compositions brought from the USSR. The concerts were moderated by Moscow musicologist Leo Ginzburg, who invited the composers onto the stage and asked them questions. Laurušas also had to answer them. A numerous audience assembled in the lobby, most of them from the Lithuanian diaspora, which Laurušas did not maintain close ties with. At the beginning, he spoke Russian, but when he heard a voice say, “Vytautas, speak Lithuanian!” he continued his answers in his native language, thus causing confusion among the Muscovites who could not speak either Lithuanian or English. Gintaras Čepas, chairman of the Lithuanian community in the area, offered his services as an interpreter and managed excellently. That was Laurušas’s first bold step aside from the rules of communication abroad established for the citizens of the USSR. Due to that, both Laurušas and the performers of his cantata received a storm of applause. Soon favorable reviews on his music were published by the main city newspapers, *The Boston Globe* and *The Boston Herald*. The Lithuanian press was also happy with their compatriot’s successful performance even though it placed greater emphasis on politics. Prior to the concert, the Lithuanian diaspora newspaper *Draugas (Friend)* picked up on the fact that, next to Laurušas’s name in the bill, his nationality was not indicated:

The official information did not even indicate that Vytautas Laurušas was Lithuanian or which string quartet would perform his works, or which soloist would participate in the performance of his compositions. Thus, the Soviet Union once again boasted about the works of a Lithuanian that were attributed not to the Lithuanian nation to which they legally belonged, but to the Soviet Union, which enslaved Lithuania. (*Lietuvio kūriniai* 1988)

Elena Vasyliūnienė,⁸ who attended the concert, asked Laurušas how, while living among other nations, he managed to maintain his Lithuanianess. He was a little perplexed but replied that he wrote as he felt (Vasyliūnienė 1988). The audience appreciated his words because they meant that Laurušas had preserved his national identity under the Soviet occupation.

The biggest surprise and joy for Laurušas was the presence of Jeronimas Kačinskas (1907–2005), a conductor and composer of Lithuanian modern music, who was spotted among the audience during the concert. In 1944, as the Red Army approached, Kačinskas left Lithuania. He had lived in Boston since 1949. Laurušas had heard about him from



Figure 2. Jeronimas Kačinskas with his wife Elena (Danutė Petrauskaitė's personal archive)

Antanas Račiūnas and Balys Dvarionas during his studies. Although Laurušas did not have the opportunity to hear Kačinskas's music at that time, he created the images of the first Lithuanian Modernists in his imagination, which attracted him "like distant stars and helped to form a real image of the former musical culture of independent Lithuania" (Mikšytė 1991).

During the festival, Kačinskas was almost 81, and Laurušas hardly expected to see him, all the more so because he did not know him personally and had heard about Kačinskas's unfavorable attitude towards any Soviet initiatives, even in the field of culture. And yet Kačinskas came to the concert of Laurušas's compositions. At that time, Kačinskas was still an active composer, but he no longer led any musical ensembles, no longer taught at the Berkeley College of Music, and played the organ at the Lithuanian St. Peter's Church in Boston only on holidays. He was curious to hear the works of the Lithuanian composer and simultaneously to show him due respect as the initiator and chairman of the Composers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR, since on 9 December 1987, the first concert of Kačinskas's works was held in Vilnius. Laurušas responded publicly to the presence of an unexpected guest—he warmly emphasized Kačinskas's contribution to the popularization of modern music in interwar Lithuania.

After the concert, Laurušas hoped to see Kačinskas in the audience again, but Kačinskas made the first step and visited Laurušas at the hotel. A friendly conversation immediately ensued. It looked like a meeting of good friends who had not seen each other for a long time. Kačinskas invited Laurušas to his home for a longer meeting, and Laurušas immediately accepted. The conversation lasted

several hours. Laurušas took a closer look at the environment in which the expatriate composer lived and worked for many years and discussed a wide range of topics with him, from history and politics to the latest musical trends. When Laurušas returned to Lithuania, he admitted without hesitation that the strongest impression he had from the Boston Festival was the meeting with Kačinskas, a kind of a prelude to a time of great change. The image of "stray birds" also changed. Laurušas saw that, although nostalgia pervaded emigrants' lives, they were active in promoting Lithuanianness, had faith in the rebirth of Lithuania, and enjoyed material well-being.

The friendship between the two composers

Both musicians, having run out of time for conversation in Boston, felt the need to continue their discussion and began to correspond. Although letters are monologues by nature, their content and linguistic expression are close to a dialogue; therefore, they cannot be considered a form of self-talk (Čepaitienė 2010: 10). This statement is also testified to by Laurušas's letters to his new friend. When we analyze their content, the first thing that catches the eye is the address. Other pen friends addressed Kačinskas (in literal translation) as "Highly Revered Composer," "Honorable Maestro," "Honorable Professor," or "Honorable Sir," while Laurušas's letters started with "Dear Jeronimas," "Dear Elenute and Jeronimas," or "My dear and kind Jeronimas." In the Lithuanian letter-writing tradition, "dear" is used to address particularly close people, which applied in that case. Readers of Laurušas's letters may be surprised by the unceremonious address of Kačinskas as *Tu* ("thou"; singular for the pronoun *you*): after all, Kačinskas was more than twenty years older than Laurušas. It would seem that out of respect for Kačinskas's age alone, he should have written *Jūs* (plural for the pronoun *you*), as was the norm in Lithuania.⁹ But such an address was used at the request of Kačinskas himself. Laurušas later said that, when he met the expatriate musician at a Boston hotel and addressed him as *Jūs*, the latter immediately interrupted him: "Not 'Jūs!' Thy name is Vytautas, and my name is Jeronimas" (Mikšytė 1991). This is how they communicated for many years, calling each other by their first names, and revealing to each other the troubles and joys of their lives.

Nostalgic memories of Boston ran throughout all Laurušas's letters. Kačinskas offered nice feedback about his friend's concert during the festival, while Laurušas was impressed by the warm welcome at Kačinskas's home:

As much as I have traveled abroad, from nowhere have I brought the kind of impressions I experienced in Boston. It seems to me that I have left a part of my heart in this city. Undoubtedly,

the successful concert of my works and pleasant meetings with Lithuanians living in Boston contributed to that.

The warmth, hospitality, and sincerity of your home made an unforgettable impression on me. And who else could create that wonderful warmth of home, if not the lovely Mrs. Elenutė? Please pass on my thanks again and bow to her on my behalf. Dear Jeronimas, I keep your letters as a precious relic. I am proud to be able to correspond with you so openly and sincerely.¹⁰

I often remember you both. Any time we met, we had a lot to talk about and to share thoughts on [various topics], starting with creativity, life and ending with politics. For me, both of you have been very dear and close to my heart since our first meeting in Boston. I cannot talk to anyone as openly and sincerely as I do to you. Therefore, I wish you both the best health and high spirits. If we stay healthy, we will be meeting again, and more than once.¹¹

Kačinskas also cherished that friendship; he and his wife often remembered the time spent with Laurušas in Boston. He wrote that “it was a bright moment in the lives of both of us” (Mikšytė 1991).

Laurušas’s letters revealed that he had no true and sincere friends. For a number of years, he had held high administrative positions and consequently the instruments of power and influence in his hands, and he was surrounded by colleagues and students as well as a flock of sham friends who kept making requests or even demands or who were secretly envious of him. Laurušas could not trust most of these people and later admitted:

Sometimes it seems that bursting predatory instincts also lead to a best friend becoming an enemy. I have never tried to build an exceptional team of my own. I didn’t have a “circle of friends,” although I happened to see them and experience their behavior. How many people are eager to take advantage of the proximity to power. And then they betray you [...]. It hurts. Some people seemed to be closer, but when faced with insincerity, I used to see everyone as if from outside. (Aleknaitė-Bieliauskienė 2009:19)

Time revealed who were true friends and who were fake ones.

Laurušas did not feel the age difference between Kačinskas and himself. Therefore, when Kačinskas would fall ill, Laurušas worried a lot. It was hard for him to imagine that their correspondence would end or, even worse, he would lose a dear friend. For the first three years, in almost every letter, Laurušas invited his friend to visit Lithuania. He hardly knew that Kačinskas, who had escaped from the Soviet regime, had promised never to set foot in occupied Lithuania. And he fulfilled his promise: he first came to his homeland in the autumn of 1991, when the USA had already recognized Lithuania as an independent state, and then twice more, in February 1992 and in May 1993.



Figure 3. Vytautas Laurušas, Jeronimas and Elena Kačinskas in Vilnius, autumn 1991 (Danutė Petrauskaitė’s personal archive)

The period of 1988 through 1991, before Kačinskas’s visit to Lithuania, was full of political and cultural events. It coincided with a sharp increase in the demand for works by expatriate composers, the revival of religious music, and the organization of new festivals. Choirs, orchestras, and individual performers also became intensely interested in Kačinskas’s music, and it was increasingly often heard in concert halls. Laurušas was one of the first to inform his friend about one or another premiere of his compositions and was incredibly happy about it. Actually, he was doubly happy—first, that he could hear music he had never heard, and second, that he knew its composer personally:

Your name was constantly remembered by young composers of my generation. We told each other when we learned something new from Boston. You were then the embodiment of modern Lithuanian music for us. Although we were separated from the free world by the Iron Curtain, we tried in every way to get as much information as possible about you and other Lithuanian composers who lived in America. For me, ever seeing you alive in Boston and talking to you was an almost unrealizable dream.¹²

In Lithuania, Kačinskas was remembered by his surviving students and colleagues. They would ask Laurušas about him, speculating whether he had changed much since he lived in his homeland. Laurušas felt as if he had a privileged friendship with Kačinskas and claimed that he had seen and known a relatively young and sprightly man, a famous Lithuanian artist, a professional musician, and a great companion.¹³

Laurušas told Kačinskas that his works were gradually being integrated into Lithuanian musical life and were becoming part of it, that Lithuanian composers often talked about him, and wanted to be the first to inform him about the decision of the Lithuanian Composers' Union:

You, Jeronimas, were unanimously elected Honorary Member of the Composers' Union during our congress, attended by more than a hundred composers and musicologists. We value you as a Lithuanian composer who has laid a solid foundation for Lithuanian modern music.¹⁴

Connecting Kačinskas and Laurušas, in addition to music, was Lithuania, which Laurušas called "our homeland." In the letters, cultural news was always followed (or preceded) by information about ongoing political processes. Laurušas's presentation of them was emotional and accompanied by abundant comments. Therefore, his letters can be viewed both as a personal diary and as a yearbook of the history of Lithuania, in which the changes that took place in the country as well as more important events in the lives of both composers were revealed (see Table 1):

Table 1. The most important events reported by Laurušas in his letters to Kačinskas

No.	Year	Events
1.	1988	A week of Lithuanian music in Vilnius. The works by Kačinskas and Kazimieras Viktoras Banaitis were played. Kačinskas's Fantasy for organ was performed by Vytenis Vasyliūnas.
2.	1988	Sąjūdis (the Reform Movement of Lithuania) was established.
3.	1988	The Archcathedral of Vilnius was returned to church goers.
4.	1988	On September 1, the flag of independent Lithuania was hoisted at the Lithuanian State Conservatoire.
5.	1988	The flag of independent Lithuania was hoisted over Gediminas Castle Tower in Vilnius on October 7 and over the War Museum Tower in Kaunas on October 9. Vincas Kudirka's <i>National Anthem</i> was performed.
6.	1988	The Lithuanian SSR Composers' Union discussed the issue of the Lithuanian anthem.
7.	1988	On 22-23 October, the Constituent Assembly of the Lithuanian Reform Movement took place.
8.	1988	Laurušas wrote a letter to Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius asking for permission to hold organ music concerts in Lithuanian churches.
9.	1988	The Lithuanian Composers' Union distributed apartments in a newly built house.
10.	1988	On October 23, the Holy Mass was celebrated at the Archcathedral in Vilnius and broadcast on Lithuanian television (LTV).
11.	1988	For the first time, November 1 (All Saints' Day) was declared a day off. Laurušas visited the graves of Jonas Basanavičius, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, and Kipras Petrauskas.
12.	1989	Laurušas, Vytautas Landsbergis, and Julius Juzeliūnas were elected Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to represent Lithuania in Moscow.
13.	1989	The Composers' Union of the Lithuanian SSR split from the USSR Composers' Union and became an independent organization.
14.	1989	The Lithuanian Composers' Union elected Kačinskas its Honorary Member.
15.	1989	Laurušas as the Rector of the Lithuanian State Conservatory was re-elected for the second term
16.	1989	Laurušas composed <i>Liaupsės saulei</i> [Eulogy to the Sun] for mixed choir.
17.	1989	In April, the mixed choir of the Lithuanian State Conservatory participated in the polyphonic music competition in Italy and won the first place; it also held a concert in the Vatican and received the exclusive attention of Pope John Paul II.
18.	1989	In May, the first World Congress of Lithuanian Culture took place in Vilnius
19.	1989	For the first time, the Returns music festival was held in Vilnius, featuring six works by Kačinskas.
20.	1989	During the festival, poet Bernardas Brazdžionis and a men's vocal quartet from Los Angeles visited Lithuania.
21.	1989	On August 22, a speech by the former Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys was broadcast from a tape recorder at a multi-thousand rally in Vingis Park in Vilnius.
22.	1989	On August 23, the Baltic Way took place.
23.	1989	At the end of August, the mixed choir of the Lithuanian State Conservatory participated in the choral music festival in Italy and again visited the Vatican, where it performed concerts for worshipers in the Paul VI Audience Hall and sang Lithuanian songs. John Paul II gave the choristers a papal blessing and called the Lithuanian State Conservatory one of the most famous music schools in Europe.
24.	1989	At the beginning of September, two representatives of the Lithuanian State Conservatory, Eglė Janulevičiūtė and Jurgis Karnavičius, participated in an international pianist competition in Italy. Janulevičiūtė was one of the prizewinners.

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25. 1989 The Supreme Council of Lithuania adopted important laws on citizenship and the holding of a referendum. The Church of Lithuania was legalized. Examples of Lithuanian passports were prepared.
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26. 1989 On October 20, Jackus Sondeckis, the father of musician Saulius Sondeckis, a former mayor of Šiauliai, died on his way from Boston to Lithuania. Laurušas attended the funeral and made a speech.
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27. 1989 A discussion took place with Cardinal Sladkevičius on how to improve the qualifications of organists working in churches. The Organ Department was restored at the Lithuanian State Conservator.
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28. 1989 The journal *Kultūros barai* (Fields of Culture) continued publishing *A History of Lithuania*, edited by Adolfas Šapoka.
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29. 1990 Laurušas left the Lithuanian Communist Party.
-
30. 1990 Chamber Orchestra *Ave musica* performed *Five Etudes* by Kačinskas.
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31. 1990 Nine choral works by Kačinskas were performed in the Muzikos Ruduo (Musical Autumn) festival.
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32. 1990 During *November Sinoikia 90* in Vilnius and Marijampolė, a Mass in Honor of King Mindaugas of Lithuania by Kačinskas was performed.
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33. 1990 Preparation of a new statute for the Lithuanian State Conservatory began. Marxist-Leninist sciences were given up.
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34. 1993 On the proposal of the Heraldry Commission, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Law on the Flag of the President.
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35. 1993 In February, the first post-war presidential elections of the Republic of Lithuania took place. Stasys Lozoraitis and Algirdas Brazauskas competed in them. Laurušas voted for Lozoraitis who lost.
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36. 1993 Inauguration of the President of the Republic of Lithuania Brazauskas.
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37. 1993 The left wing gained a huge advantage in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. People began to worry about the loss of the state independence. The parliamentarians pledged to protect it.
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38. 1993 On December 28, the second term of Laurušas as the Rector of the Lithuanian State Conservatory ended.
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39. 1994 On January 14, Prof. Juozas Antanavičius was elected the new rector of the Lithuanian State Conservatory, already renamed the Lithuanian Music Academy.
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40. 1994 Laurušas finished writing a cycle of preludes and fugues for piano *Spalvų polifonija* (Polyphony of Colors) and began collecting material for the opera *Karalius Mindaugas* (King Mindaugas).
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41. 1994 The World Lithuanian Song Festival took place in Lithuania.
-
42. 1994 Darius Lapinskas's opera *King Mindaugas* was staged in Jurbarkas.
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43. 1994 The 90th birth anniversary of composer Vladas Jakubėnas was commemorated. A concert of his compositions was held in the Lithuanian Philharmonic Hall. A two-volume collection of Jakubėnas's articles and reviews was published by musicologist Loreta Venclauskienė. A society was established to promote Jakubėnas's works.
-
44. 1995 Laurušas forged contacts with the German Ambassador to Lithuania Reinhart Krauss and arranged Joseph Haydn's *Kaiser Quartet* for the chamber ensemble of his home. On October 3, on the anniversary of German unification, it was performed in Vilnius.
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45. 1995 Laurušas composed *Concento di corde*, a piece for two violas dedicated to Kraus.
-
46. 1995 English pianist Richard Meyrick performed a prelude and fugue from Laurušas's cycle *Polyphony of Colors* in London.
-
47. 1995 On October 27, Laurušas was attacked and beaten up by hooligans. He attributed this event to the inactivity of the existing government of the Democratic Labor Party of Lithuania. Laurušas was convinced that the said political force would lose in next year's elections.
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As can be seen, the letters covered a variety of topics. They can be organized into several groups. The first and largest group consisted of descriptions of political events. That was due to two reasons. The first was Laurušas's own great attention to the ongoing changes and his own participation in the political processes. He took part in them, obedient to his inner voice and led by the vision of his childhood—-independent Lithuania, for which, starting with 1988, the time came to become a reality. The second reason was the desire to indirectly involve Kačinskas in that process so that he could feel the miracle of the nation's rebirth with all his soul, and therefore Laurušas was very persuasive when describing

the events. One of the examples he gave was the hoisting of the Lithuanian flag over Gediminas Castle Tower:

You, Jeronimas, can hardly understand what great joy has flooded the hearts of all of us. Everyone cried, and tears rolled down the faces of both old and young. Tears of joy and pain were rolling—of joy, for we all believe that finally all the misfortunes that have been plaguing our small nation have finally gone to the past and we are rising to a new life and of pain that thousands of thousands of innocent Lithuanians do not see this happy hour, having gone down to their eternal rest in the distant areas of Siberia after having faced unimaginable human suffering. Now, as we walk through the narrow streets

of old Vilnius, we will be accompanied by a tricolor, flying in the wind over Gediminas Hill. How beautiful and spectacular it is either when the bright sun is shining or the autumn drizzle is coming down.¹⁵

Some events were narrated in detail using artistic means of expression. An example is the description of the Baltic Way:

You wrote about the Baltic Way in your letter. I can tell you about that unprecedented campaign as its participant. It was the idea of our Sąjūdis and the Estonian and Latvian People's Fronts, which was impressively implemented. The organizers did not really expect so many participants. You can imagine thousands of cars on the Vilnius-Riga highway in the afternoon. In advance, each city and district were allocated a certain section of the road to be filled by people holding hands. At 10 a.m., it was reported on Vilnius Radio that the part of the road intended for Lithuania was already full of people. In some places, not one, but three rows of people holding hands were standing, and Kaunas formed a living chain of its people up to Ukmergė. A light breeze fluttered numerous tricolors tied with black ribbons. About two million people took part in the entire Baltic Way from Vilnius Gediminas Hill via Riga to Tallinn's Old Thomas belfry, a total of 790 km. You, Jeronimas, cannot imagine what a magnificent view it was. Everybody was concentrated and very attentive to each other. Candles burned in the hands of most people. Bunches of live flowers were poured on the road from the plane, intended for those Lithuanians who had died in the forests and camps of Siberia before the rebirth of the Homeland. On the evening of August 23, God gave us wonderful weather: the bright sun was slowly sliding through the vault of the sky towards the west, and there were no clouds in the sky and no wind. It seemed that the nature of Lithuania was concentrated on those sad festivities. It seems to me that with this peaceful action we have once again shown the whole world how patiently and sincerely we have been striving for Lithuania's independence.¹⁶

In his comments on the most important moments of political life, Laurušas never emphasized his own personality. Even though he was involved in many events and even initiated some of them, he always wrote "we," thus emphasizing the contribution of all the people who worked with him, for example, "we raised," "we considered," "we prepared," or "we restored." However, in one letter on political issues, he spoke in the first person. The letter contained particularly important information. He wanted Kačinskis to know this information as well and simultaneously was afraid to send a letter from Lithuania because it might get lost or fall into the hands of the Soviet security service. He handed it to one of his colleagues going to Spain, and the letter successfully reached Boston. In it, Laurušas confessed to his friend that he had left the LCP and explained why he had been a member for so many years:

[...] An important event in my personal life as well: I left the ranks of the Communist Party a few months ago. I am now a nonparty man. The wave of liberalism, which briefly breathed during Khrushchev's reign, brought a large part of the creative intelligentsia to the Communist Party. 99% of all those who joined the party at that time did so not because they went along with its ideas or admired the prospects of establishing a communist regime, but [wishing] at any cost to preserve the deep traditions of Lithuanian culture and to strive for conditions preventing complete deviation from the achievements of Western European culture. The most important and largely achieved goal was to protect Lithuania from complete Sovietization and oppression. Today, 80% of the Lithuanian population are Lithuanians. This is an extremely high figure, as there are only 50% of Latvians in the population of Latvia and under 50% of Estonians in Estonia. Such a surviving Lithuania was able to start the struggle for the restoration of independence with such great courage. While I was in the United States, some Lithuanians told me they were wondering how to meet that great Bolshevik Laurušas in Boston. I have never been like this, Jeronimas, and you had a chance to see it for yourself. I came to the party not because of its ideas, and now I left its ranks completely without hesitation.¹⁷

It was a sincere confession based on the naive belief of some people in the early 1960s that Lithuanians could preserve the national spirit through joining the ranks of the LCP. Historian and politician Arvydas Anušauskas did not believe such explanations. Based on the 1989 survey conducted by the Vilnius Committee of the LCP, he argued:

[...] in the atheist party, every second person was a believer, which means that people joined the Communist Party for a career or other expectations. (Dykvienė 2015)

Historian Saulius Karalius also supported this idea, explaining that, in the postwar years, the population, intimidated by repressive measures, tried to survive. Therefore, most people took the path of conformity. A Party membership card at the time was like a ration card. Without it, a person was prevented from going abroad, even to the countries of the Socialist camp (Ibid.). However, Laurušas did not mention that in the letters. No one forced him to join the party, which meant that there was both an element of conformity and fear in his choice. After all, he left the party only when Lithuania's independence had already been declared. Laurušas was ambiguous on the issue of the LCP. He emphasized its positive side when telling Kačinskis about the determination of its members to preserve the national spirit and ties with European culture. On the other hand, he also saw the dark side of communism, due to which "a small Lithuanian nation of three-million experienced humiliation, mockery, deception, and suffering for so many years!"¹⁸ When discussing Lithuanian youth, Laurušas admitted that, at school, he was "deceived by falsely arranged and distorted

historical facts. Only now does he know the whole truth about the path of suffering and pain his nation has taken.”¹⁹ When writing that, Laurušas must have experienced inner drama. After all, at that time he still belonged to the LCP; he felt he was ready to go his own way. However, neither in 1988 nor in 1989 had he yet dared to give up his Party membership card.

In the first postwar presidential elections in Lithuania, held in 1993, Laurušas refused to support the candidacy of Algirdas Brazauskas, chairman of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (hereinafter LDDP) formed from the former Communists, and therefore did not hesitate to vote for the neutral candidate Stasys Lozoraitis. He was greatly upset when Lozoraitis received only 38.9 percent of the votes. Laurušas also took a negative view of the elections to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, when the LDDP candidates won the majority of votes. He tried to find comfort in a program seen on LTV, in which the former interwar Lithuanian President Antanas Smetona’s maid asked the audience not to resent Brazauskas, because his election was the will of the Lithuanian people, but said it was better to pray “that God would enlighten his mind and make him a really good and faithful president for the sake of Independence of Lithuania.”²⁰ Laurušas hardly found solace in such advice. He saw Lithuania’s slump during the LDDP rule and wrote to Kačinskas about the passive president, rural communities ruined by excessive drinking, and growing crime he experienced personally: on 27 October 1995, in the middle of the day, he was attacked by several hooligans on one of the central streets of Vilnius. The composer was not robbed, but he was hit on the head and had his front teeth knocked out. He was most affected by the fact that no one came to the rescue. Laurušas blamed the LDDP for such a situation and the moral decline of people:

The behavior of the Neo-Communist government is strange. So many facts are reported in the press about corruption or about the relationship between the organized crime and the government, and the public does not receive any fact-based denial from the government. In the Seimas, the DDP has a majority, nothing prevents them from passing strict laws to return the country to normal living conditions, but they do not do that. Now there is no doubt that the LDDP will lose in next year’s parliamentary elections.²¹

Still, after a while, when the wounds inflicted by the attackers had healed, Laurušas viewed the situation from a philosophical perspective:

[...] I am well now and just having to go through the dental implant procedure. I have done some thinking and come to the conclusion that this is God’s rebuke for all sins.”²²

It is difficult to say what Laurušas meant when he wrote about sins, but he may have felt guilty about his long-term



Figure 4. Vytautas Laurušas, Jeronimas and Elena Kačinskas in Vilnius, October 1991 (Danutė Petrauskaitė’s personal archive)

affiliation with the LCP and the execution of its instructions.

In his letters, Laurušas very often mentioned the name of God, sometimes several times in one letter. He called the meeting with Kačinskas in Boston a gift from God. He prayed to God and asked him to give health to his best friend and to allow them to meet many more times; for himself, he asked for time to implement all his creative ideas and believed that Lithuania needed dedicated missionaries who would teach people to “open their hearts to God’s grace and bring them back under the care of Mary, Patroness of Lithuania”;²³ he was upset about the Word of God having been eliminated from the life of Lithuanian people through most cruel means yet realized that it would take several more decades to return spiritually oppressed people to the house of God.

During the Soviet years, Laurušas, like most Lithuanians, secretly celebrated Catholic holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, remembered the 16th of February, and deep in his heart believed that someday freedom would come to Lithuania, yet he did not think that it would happen so soon. After meeting Kačinskas, on the occasion of those holidays he would receive from Boston congratulations as well as small gifts—various delicacies, such as coffee, which could not be found in Lithuanian shops at that time. Laurušas reciprocated by sending him Lithuanian souvenirs. Once walking past an art shop in Vilnius, he stepped in and saw an image of Jesus woven in linen. The painting was so mesmerizing, spiritual, and devotional that it immediately became engraved in his memory. Laurušas could not forget that image either day or night, and he decided to buy the piece of art and send it to Boston. Kačinskas was very happy with it, and Laurušas was happy to have given joy to his friends.²⁴

Laurušas did not write much about music. The topic became more relevant in 1994, when his second term as rector ended. For a while, the composer felt confused—after more than three decades of responsible positions at the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Composers' Union, and the Lithuanian State Conservatory, he felt as if he was no longer necessary:

You know, Jeronimas, I often think that it is detrimental for a composer to do administrative work. You can put a lot of effort into this work, but you won't get any thanks. Meanwhile, creation is a certain value that no one can destroy or erase. What you have done accumulates into some kind of capital that everyone must reckon with, whether they like it or not. Such thoughts visit me now after I have devoted half of my 64 years of age to administrative activities. When I think about it, a lot has been done in this area. An opera house has been built. I laid the first brick, smashed a bottle of champagne, and led the ceremony of opening the new theatre building. In the Composers' Union, on my initiative and under my leadership, a composers' house in Vilnius and a residential house in Druskininkai have been built. However, I am not looking forward to any thanks and I received them from no one. Everyone accepts it as if everything has been done without special effort and energy. These are the thoughts after leaving the administrative work.²⁵

However, soon his life returned to normal. Laurušas enjoyed his pedagogical work, devoting the rest of his time to music—he finished writing *Polyphony of Colors*, a cycle of preludes and fugues for piano, began collecting material for his second opera *Mindaugas*,²⁶ befriended German Ambassador to Lithuania Reinhart Kraus and wrote *Concerto di corde* for two violas for him as well as arranged Joseph Haydn's *Kaiser Quartet* for his home chamber ensemble. If before 1994 Laurušas wrote to Kačinskas that he did not have time to compose, then later the compositions followed one after another. Over the last 25 years of his life, he wrote more works of music than during the period of 1955 to 1994 (Laurušas). In the last decades of the composer's life, his old dreams of living and working in independent Lithuania seem to have come true.

Conclusions

Laurušas's life path can be chronologically divided into several periods: 1) childhood (before 1941); 2) adolescence and the beginning of youth, which coincided with the years of occupation, the war, and postwar years (1941–1949); 3) the period of studies (1949–1956); 4) the first years of work (1956–1962); 5) a period of active administrative activity as a member of the elite of the Communist Party (1963–1988); 6) the era of historical turning points (1988–1990); and 7) resignation from the

Communist Party and work in independent Lithuania (1990–2019).

Laurušas's personality was formed in the interwar and postwar years based on Christian values. His love for God, his neighbor, and his homeland was instilled in him by his parents, teachers, and the Jesuit priests, with whom he had maintained close contacts. He did not forsake those values all his life. Only in the conditions of the Soviet regime did he take over the rhetoric of Communist ideology for fear of repression: he was not ready to become a hermit or a dissident. Moreover, his creative instinct was so strong that he dared to transgress some of his moral principles and join the LCP, hoping to secure the opportunity to create and help others. Laurušas proved this as the head of the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Composers' Union, and the State Conservatory. He paid tribute to the occupation authorities by writing several songs praising the leaders of the Socialist revolution and the Communist Party; moreover, in his opera *Stray Birds*, a contribution to the then escalated propaganda campaign seeking to get the emigrants back, he sympathized with the Lithuanian emigrants to the West who had lost their political orientation and tragically ended their lives.

Laurušas had heard about the expatriate musicians based in America during his studies and secretly admired them but never thought he would be able to meet any of them. However, thanks to *perestroika* in the 1980s and personal connections, he was able to participate in the USSR Music Festival in Boston in 1988. During the festival, he met Jeronimas Kačinskas, one of the pioneers of modern music in Lithuania. Their sincere friendship lasted for many years. Laurušas wrote candid letters to his friend (about 20 of them have survived), in which he shared his thoughts on music and commented on the political changes that encouraged him to renounce the Communist past and support Lithuania's independence. The letters featured the values formed during his childhood and adolescence, this time underpinned with the belief in the strong necessity for freedom in the life of the individual, the nation, and the state as well as with faith in God. The return to the fundamental phenomena of being seemed to have framed Laurušas's worldview. It could be compared to the ABA three-part reprise form, which revealed inner drama and the marks left by historical eras that could be felt in the composer's mindset as well as in his music.

Laurušas's letters are valuable as a personal diary and as a yearbook of Lithuania's revival. When summarizing his life path, he realized that he had spent too much time on administrative work and political activities and acknowledged that the artist's mission was to create art because the greatest capital of artists was their works.

Endnotes

- ¹ Since the seventeenth century, the University of Innsbruck had a Faculty of Theology and a Jesuit college and church at it.
- ² Order No. 47, 11 March 1957, of Jurgis Karnavičius, director of the State Conservatory of the Lithuanian SSR. Vilnius Petrauskas' Personal Archive.
- ³ Hereinafter: CPSU.
- ⁴ In 1964, Khrushchev was removed from his post, and Sniečkus served as the First Secretary of the LCP for another decade.
- ⁵ In Rita Aleknaitė's book about Vytautas Laurušas, the word *Lenin* was omitted, and the song was called *Flags*.
- ⁶ Upon arrival to Boston, the string quartet was formed of two Muscovites and two students from Boston who were not able to convey the composer's idea well enough.
- ⁷ Sarah Caldwell (1924–2006) was an American conductor, impresario, and stage director. She was handed the scores of the compositions performed at the festival, including several copies of Laurušas's cantata *Flaming Night* in Lithuanian and Russian (later they went to the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center of Boston University and are presently stored in Sarah Caldwell's Collection #1733).
- ⁸ Elena Vasyliūnienė (1913–2001) was a pedagogue, journalist, and active figure in the Lithuanian community in Boston as well as the wife of violinist Izidorius Vasyliūnas.
- ⁹ The Lithuanian Sg. pronoun *tu* (Pl. *jūs*) is used when talking to family members, friends, or young children, whereas *jūs* is used to politely address an elder person or a person that one does not know.
- ¹⁰ Vytautas Laurušas's letter to Jeronimas Kačinskas. Vilnius, 2 October 1988. Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (hereinafter: LALA).
- ¹¹ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 17 April 1994. LALA.
- ¹² Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 22 June 1995. LALA.
- ¹³ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 5 July 1988. LALA.
- ¹⁴ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, January 1989. LALA.
- ¹⁵ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 14 October 1988. LALA.
- ¹⁶ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 27 August 1989. LALA.
- ¹⁷ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 18 November 1990. LALA.
- ¹⁸ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 6 November 1988. LALA.
- ¹⁹ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 7 November 1989. LALA.
- ²⁰ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 7 March 1993. LALA.
- ²¹ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 15 November 1995. LALA.
- ²² Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 8 December 1995. LALA.
- ²³ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 18 November 1990. LALA.
- ²⁴ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 7 March 1993. LALA.
- ²⁵ Laurušas's letter to Kačinskas, 8 December 1995. LALA.
- ²⁶ The opera has not been written.

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Santrauka

Laurušo gyvenimo kelią chronologiškai galima suskirstyti į kelias atkarpas: 1) vaikystę (iki 1941); 2) paauglystę ir jaunystės pradžią, kuri sutapo su okupacijų, karo ir pokario metais (1941–1949); 3) studijų laikotarpį (1949–1956); 4) pirmuosius savarankiško darbo metus (1956–1962); 5) aktyvų administracinės veiklos periodą, priklausant komunistų partijos elitui (1963–1988); 6) istorinių lūžių laikotarpį (1988–1990); 7) išsivadavimą iš partinės priklausomybės ir darbą nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje (1990–2019).

Laurušo asmenybė formavosi tarpukario ir pokario metais krikščioniškų vertybių pagrindu. Meilę Dievui, artimui ir tėvynei jam skiepijo tėvai, mokytojai, jėzuitų kunigai, su kuriais palaikė glaudų ryšį. Tų vertybių jis neatsisakė visą gyvenimą, tik sovietinio režimo sąlygomis dėl represijų baimės perėmė komunistinės ideologijos retoriką. Tai kompozitorius darė nenorėdamas pasirinkti atsiskyrelio ar disidentų dalios. Be to, jo kūrybinio instinkto būta tokio stipraus, kad išdrįsta nusižengti kai kuriems savo moraliniams principams ir įstoti į Lietuvos komunistų partiją, tikintis taip garantuoti sau galimybę kurti ir padėti kitiems. Tai Laurušas įrodė vadovaudamas Lietuvos operos ir baleto teatrui, Kompozitorių sąjungai, Valstybinei konservatorijai.

Duoklę okupacinei valdžiai jis atidavė parašęs keletą socialistinės revoliucijos vadus bei komunistų partiją šlovinančių dainų ir operą „Paklydę paukščiai“, kurioje užjautė politinę orientaciją praradusius lietuvių emigrantus ir prisidėjo prie tuo metu eskaluojamos propagandinės akcijos siekiant prisivilioti juos iš Vakarų atgalios.

Apie išėvijęs muzikus, įsikūrusius Amerikoje, Laurušas buvo girdėjęs dar studijų metais ir slapčia jais žavėjosi, bet niekada nemanė, jog pavyks su kuriuo nors iš jų susitikti. Tačiau dėl devintajame dešimtmetyje prasidėjusios *perestroikos* ir asmeninių ryšių jam pavyko 1988 m. nuvykti į SSRS muzikos festivalį, surengtą Bostone. Jo metu jis susitiko su vienu iš moderniosios muzikos pradininkų Lietuvoje Kačinsku. Tarp jų užsimezgusi nuoširdi draugystė truko ne vienus metus. Laurušas rašė savo draugui nuoširdžius laiškus (jų išliko apie 20), kuriuose dalijosi mintimis apie muziką, pasakojo apie politines permainas,

pastūmėjusias jį atsižadėti komunistinės praeities ir remti Lietuvos nepriklausomybės šalininkus. Juose vėl iškilo vaikystės ir paauglystės metais susiformavusios vertybės, tik šį kartą su itin stipriai išreikšta laisvės būtinybe žmogaus, tautos ir valstybės gyvenime, taip pat Dievo tikėjimu. Šis grįžimas prie pamatinių būties reiškinių tarsi įrėmino kompozitoriaus pasaulėžiūrą. Ją būtų galima palyginti su trijų dalių reprizine forma – ABA, bylojančia apie išgyventas vidines dramas bei istorinių laikotarpių paliktas žymes, kurias galima apčiuopti ne tik kompozitoriaus mąstysenoje, bet ir jo muzikoje.

Laurušo laišakai yra vertingi kaip asmeninis dienoraštis ir Lietuvos atgimimo metraštis. Apibendrinamas savo nueitą gyvenimo kelią, jis suprato, kad per daug laiko skyrė administraciniam darbui ir politinei veiklai, ir pripažino, kad menininko misija yra kurti meną, nes didžiausias menininko kapitalas yra jo kūriniai.

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