

Traditional Lithuanian Culture in Today's Musical Scene: Cultural Correspondence and Experiential Matrix

Abstract. There are many diverse ways for traditional local cultures to appear in contemporary¹ music, from various popular to alternative genres worldwide. However, while doing research, it is impossible to reduce this process to the sources of clearly separate cultural origins since it is always a question of individual experience and correspondence—an active coexistence. The experiential field of every artist here appears as an active matrix of approach, interaction with the folklore itself, the totality of expressive means, etc. Even though the article will mainly reflect on the cultural environment and music of Lithuania that is native to the author herself, such an approach can be applied while researching various other ethnic traditions. In what ways is traditional folklore used in various globally-spread music genres? What are the reasons why folklore is still a very active significant source of today's music? How do the diverse-origin cultures correspond and appear through unique experiential matrices of each creator that are inseparable from their life-worlds? Finally, what might these questions reveal and how can it be useful to the field of related research? These and related matters will be discussed using the approach of phenomenological anthropology while considering both music and interviews with music artists.

Keywords: phenomenological anthropology, contemporary music research, Lithuanian folk songs, traditional folklore, popular music, alternative music.

I. Introduction

The theme of this article was induced by the conference² organized by Lithuanian Composers' Union and Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre entitled "Principles of Music Composing: National *versus* Global" that, at first glance, polarizes the process itself, covering up the complexity of cultural processes and its correspondent, interactive nature. And yet in this context *versus*, which today usually denotes opposition, separateness, and bipolarity, an entirely different semantics is revealed in the very description itself: "The organizers of the conference are particularly interested in discovering a set of conditions that may help preserve the elemental nature of ethnic music and carry its potentials into the 21st century as well as discover the possible equivalents of 'the national' in the music of the post-national era" (LKS 2023). The article will focus on the elementality, or vitality, of traditional local culture and its manifestation through today's multicultural environment. Thus, the other connotation of *versus* as *towards* appears as more relevant here. Derived from Proto-Indo-European root words meaning to turn or bend (among them the Lithuanian *versti*), it refers to the interaction and the question of how one acts towards the other, turning to something other than it was before, and creating a new meaning.

Even though the article will mainly reflect on the cultural environment of Lithuania, such an approach can be applied while researching various other ethnic traditions—especially those (not necessarily geographically close), the flow of which has also been purposefully violated by aggressive occupational forces. Nations that have experienced various coercive, especially long-term geopolitical changes are usually characterized by an extremely sensitive ability of some kind of national *self-understanding*, consciously protecting that common knowledge over generations, recognizing traditional signs, feeling their vitality in today's environments, as well as their importance and potential.³ This paper is not intended to refute the existing research approaches but rather to activate them by questioning and providing more ways of thinking about the functioning and relevance of traditional cultures today. The main research method is phenomenological-anthropological while also taking into account some principles of narratology and musicology where needed.

¹ Contemporary music here appears not as an academic term denoting solely an academic music genre but as a concept of present-created music of various genres, stylistic attributes, and the complexity of their interactions. Phenomenology allows us to notice that the meaning of the present itself is constantly shifting, being always dependent on the perceiver.

² Each conference provides an opportunity to get a fresh perspective on one's usual field of research while trying new tools and methods, practicing diverse ways of observing, allowing certain playfulness to appear (even in the scientific field).

³ It is noticeable that, for example, the nations that had formerly been occupied by the Soviet Union are very often identified as post-Soviet not only by foreign but also by native researchers. This not only testifies to the geopolitical fact but also denotes a huge obstacle to notice other processes that have been active during that period. The Soviet policy instilled changes fracturing the natural cultural flow and it requires enormous conscious attempts to find ways of grasping these submerged aspects.

II. Structural Review of the Phenomenon: Terms and Methods

Folklorist Daiva Vaitkevičienė notes that “especially the young generation, which was not suppressed during the Soviet era, is brave, young people no longer think that what is brought from tradition ... is somehow worse than contemporary things. And this allows it to be reborn in modern forms in art, literature, and music. In this way, through modern artistic forms, we restore the social value of traditional culture”⁴ (Vaitkevičienė 2023). This observation also marks the vitality of the phenomenon, which appears in the stylistic and genre diversity, as well as the creativity itself, in a certain inner unity. Many examples of this kind of musical creativity in Lithuania allow themselves to be connected in various aspects revealing tendencies, inner relations and the natural need for such examples. Certain ways of the presence of traditional local culture in modern culture appear most clearly through:

- inclusion of a solid folk song (re-sung by contemporary artists or archival sound recording);
- selection of a motif of a folk song as a musical theme—an instrumental layer;
- usage of specific Lithuanian/Baltic/Indo-European symbols or references in music lyrics or poetry;
- inclusion of a narrative folklore (e.g., incantations);
- incorporation of various written sources (e.g., passages from scriptures);
- recreation/imagination of a past soundscape (playing with natural objects, including the sounds of nature or the environment, etc.);
- through a worldview expressed not only audio-visually but also as a way of living (mindfulness, attitude towards nature, environment, various traditional practices).

The structuring itself can remain finite and uncommunicative if we consider the identification of specific trends (musical or creative) as the primary goal of our search. On the other hand, structuring—as one of the tools—can help revealing the differences that are essential in order to detect the environment for **a new meaning** to appear that also marks the moment of transformation. A particular vision of commonalities, a constant practice of such observation, and certain exercises of astute vision provide an opportunity to restructure, discover, and verify on another basis. As phenomenologist Tim Ingold notices, “An articulated structure, since it remembers nothing, has nothing to forget. But **the knot** remembers everything, and has everything to forget” (Ingold 2015, 26). This new meaning that will later appear as a unique outcome emerged from diverse environments and experiences of each creator, is exactly what can be perceived as an *indissoluble knot*, posing us a question of possibility of this common dualistic division.

In the cultural press, radio, album presentations, social networks, and scholarly research, the terms overlap in many aspects: *post-folk*, *postmodern*, *modernized*, *new*, *improvized*, *alternative*, *urbanized*, *modern*, *contemporary folklore*, and other concepts refer to a primary compositional approach, certain implicit stylistic features and sometimes a particular worldview. In many of these contemporary musical pieces, traditional Lithuanian folk songs are clearly recognizable, the song’s structure is sustained, the text is clearly audible. In other words, the traditional form and content of the folk genre are kept. Still, they are provided with a different harmonical environment (or are provided with that environment in general, since many songs in the traditional local culture were vocal only and independent of instruments), the song is transferred from one sonic context to another and begins to act in another **life-world**.⁵ Vaitkevičienė calls it a creative power, which is “our strength When I see old traditions newly reborn in modern creativity, I consider it a strength of culture” (Vaitkevičienė 2023).

In addition, there is an infinite number of musical pieces (from the alternative-experimental scene to diverse genres of academic compositions) originating from traditional local culture, in which those conventional folk forms are barely recognizable or are expressed in entirely different ways—with layers of meaning, symbols, timbre, or intonations. The culturologist Jurij Dobriakov talks about it as such forms “which use folklore elements only as certain intuitions, sources of inspiration, general ‘archaic’ spirit, which at the same time is maximally modern. I have already written that, for example, the music of Vilkduja, Romania, Skeldos, Sala, or Daina Dieva has many such qualities that allow it to be called modern folklore *par excellence*, although, at the same time, it contains many other stylistic influences” (Dobriakov 2015).

⁴ All Lithuanian authors’ quotes in this research have been translated by the author of this article.

⁵ **Life-world**, in Phenomenology, the world as immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Such creative action inspired or induced by the folkloric tradition is determined by many things—experiences, attitudes, abilities, and instincts, which, even more, are constantly interacting and changing. The term, which I have refined myself for a long time, *contemporized folklore*, although convenient from a compositional and structural point of view, expresses the unidirectionality of the process itself, indicating that the impact is basically only experienced by folklore, meaning that only the traditional field is being affected—“modernized, contemporized,” etc. Meanwhile, the “folklorization” of modern culture, e.g., “folklorized” electronic music is somehow very rarely noticed—perhaps because the artificiality of such an action would be extremely obvious? Inevitably, we return to the fact that a dualistic and, in a sense, *vectorized* vision has taken over our ways of knowing, often overlooking the interaction itself and the environment/situation/setting in which it takes place. The environment, the *in-betweenness* itself, contains not only the experiencing and the acting (and *vice versa*) but also what appears, is created, and is *born* from it. Here, the concept of birth appears not by chance but rather by itself, leading to the essential idea of the article, another way of thinking about the interaction between traditional local and contemporary cultures, and even more so about the environment of that interaction, which here will be referred to as the **experiential matrix**.

III. Experiential Matrix: Formation of the Creative Environment

As the phenomenon of folklore-based contemporary music continues to spread in different forms and genres, the variety of articles about such music is also increasing—album presentations, concert descriptions, reviews in cultural publications, scholarly research, artists’ thoughts on social networks, etc. It is easy to notice that it is still the language itself—and not the environment—that marks a separation, a gap; folklore is usually *connected/combined* with various global genres (one of the reasons might be that most of these communication formats often fail to accept a more expansive overview of the phenomenon). However, the creators themselves reflect more and more on the phenomenon itself, marking it with the following forms of activity: tradition and innovation *intertwine*, creating a *connection* between traditions and modernity, the *synthesis* of Lithuanian musical heritage and contemporary culture and the like that indicates continuous interaction, correspondence, and movement.

The creative processes appear here as individual, personal experiences, each of which reveal a never-before-seen, non-separating, but rather shared layer of functioning of our local cultures, allowing us to perceive the connection as interaction. This makes us observe it not only in a closed linear, (uni)directional way, but also taking into account the environment in which it takes place, and the environments from which they emerge. Phenomenologist Giedrė Šmitienė highlights that the “actions do not limit themselves, do not begin and end with themselves, ... the environment is permeable to them and *vice versa*. Phenomenology raises the question of the environment in several ways, observing that when we pay full attention to things, we forget their environments, which are the conditions of their existence” (Šmitienė 2017, 72). After all, the musical narrative itself that covers genres, stylistics, instrumentation and other things, strongly depends not only on various levels of abilities—compositional, narrative, performative—but also on the life-world of each creator, emerging from the interaction with the environment, its objects, sounds, and, of course, people. Therefore, what is often defined as very similar or *the same* process (traditional + contemporary, local + global) reveals itself as a constellation of different approaches, expressions, and experiences. It is fascinating to discover how “the same” source of tradition and “the same” cultural environment works through different life-worlds. How does the totality of diverse experiences, inclinations, intuitions, guided by some creative idea and a worldview, influenced by the author’s abilities and aspects of the life-world (things, people, sounds) constitute a *new meaning*, that *indissoluble knot* (which will then linger again, waiting for possible activation and connection with other experiential constellations)?

After some years of trying to sense the right language that would be able to express the complexity of the phenomenon (that uncovered the above-mentioned tendency of predomination of a dualistic and vectorized view), the term *matrix* (from the Latin *mātrix* (genitive *mātricis*), “pregnant animal,” in Late Latin “womb,” also “source, origin,” from *māter* (genitive *mātris*) “mother”) appeared and so far it is proving to be very convenient and eloquent both from an etymological point of view, as well as in today’s usage in various fields of science. The Cambridge Dictionary provides such meanings as the set of conditions that provides a system in which something grows or develops; a set of related things that affect the way something develops or changes. It is always handy to exercise the methods or approaches of other disciplines. For example, **in programming**,

a 3D model is used to define the possibilities of values and their multiplication (and the multiplication of the new meanings that appeared of the previous multiplication, *note by the author*); the three-dimensional matrix is also used **in medicine** as an extracellular network, revealing the connection between what is in the micro-environment (in this case, in the matrix itself) and the network itself to which it belongs, it is an environment with a “subnetwork connected by such fast-dissociating crosslinks is also required for ultra-rapid *stellate* spreading” (Yang, B., Wei, K., Loebel, C. et al., 2021). This web of meanings allows revealing that this creative matrix is a certain environment where there are suitable conditions for something to appear, grow, and develop; it is active or can be activated by a set of interconnected experiences that can interact not only with “the inwardness” of the matrix but also with the environment to which it belongs, in which it exists and operates.

Thus, the process reveals itself with its abundance of ways of becoming enacted—it not only connects but also *appears, grows, develops, interacts, acts, spreads, radiates*, etc. In addition, such an approach makes it possible to perceive this process not as a composition of two theoretically sterile cultures or their derivatives but as an interaction of the cultures of different origins, with their characteristic field of symbols and meanings by which they can be recognized while operating in *different* life-worlds and being experienced/expressed *differently* by *different* people. Although this kind of research reveals specific trends and marks certain cultural frequencies, it is aimed here to pay attention to the attention itself—through the observation of each creator, infinite possibilities and powers of traditional local cultures may be revealed.⁶

Phenomenologist Agnieška Juzefovič, conveying Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept that the artist “only needs to paint visible objects sincerely and if he can convey their essence, the crowning will come by itself”, reveals that “in the world, as well as in his own body, potentially everything is already there. However, purposefully trying to extract the deep layers of reality is pointless. To grasp the unseen layers of the world, a work of art or one’s own body, one must stop rational efforts and rely on direct intuition” (Juzefovič 2007, 20). When it comes to music and other sonic experiences, those invisible/inaudible layers are already in a specific waiting state, they need to be activated. In that significant environment, when one meaning or experience connects with others, a new meaning appears. Still, at the same time, that intermediate field, the field of presence, the waiting, could be what Lithuanian philosopher Kristupas Sabolius calls *furious sleep*⁷ (in a way of effort or strength)—a certain active passivity or passive activity that can be activated is what we previously referred to here as *the field of waiting*.

Some aspects are relatively easy to notice, especially when an integral (non-split or only slightly modified) folk song is included into the globally-spread, usually popular music genres, essentially keeping the structure but allowing the song to freely interact with the musical styles a creator/band usually cultivates. Let’s look at some examples.

Theoretically, it is the easiest to perceive when the music project is created and led by a single person—then the folk song appears primarily in their experiential environment; it interacts with that person’s experiences and life-world and is influenced primarily by his feelings and ideas. Even though this experiential matrix cannot be defined, and its outcomes are infinite, it is still easier to understand. For example, in the music of Girių Dvasios and Vėjopatis, folk songs that are sung by singers who practice folklore (e.g., using the already-made recordings by Kūlgrinda, Trys Keturiose or others) often appear in the style of deep dub techno, deep chill and other genres usually cultivated by these artists in their non-folkloric works. The folk songs are conveyed consistently, through relatively free rhythms, slow, steady harmonies, spacious atmospheres. This

⁶ EXERCISE I. The author of this article would suggest to the reader to try the following exercise: try remembering (while writing it down) what music, perhaps even specific songs, were heard and were most memorable during your childhood; what kind of music was listened to (or perhaps performed by oneself) while growing up, what kind of music connected you with your friends, what kind of music marked your most profound transformations in adolescence and later. Any memorable musical experience is always also an environmental, atmospheric experience, which in one way or another settles into the multi-layered, multi-directional, and multi-depth totality of our experiences, which we call here the environment or the experiential matrix—this is precisely where musical and non-musical experiences constellate, thankfully being unable to get uncovered or fully explained, forming into new meanings. It is wonderful and absolutely normal that one might already forget it, but if they ever listened to Metallica, Foje, or Sigur Rós as a teenager, it will unconsciously mark the music that is being created in a completely different direction, whether it is based on folklore or not.

⁷ The philosopher rephrases Noam Chomsky’s famous illogical but grammatically correct sentence “green, colorless ideas that sleep furiously” while researching the field of imagination: “A closer look at the experience of consciousness—primarily from a phenomenological perspective—suggests that the experience of ‘green, colorless ideas that sleep furiously’ is possible in imaginative consciousness” (Sabolius 2012, 16).

particular psychoacoustic spatiality gives the possibility for the folk song to freely interact with the contemporary music while remaining recognizable in its original form—being conveyed to the listener as a whole.

It is possible to understand that music is a multifaceted phenomenon acting in different directions—acoustic, social, and communicative—only by constantly experiencing that multiplicity. Donatas Bielkauskas (DONIS) is a multi-instrumentalist and a prolific music artist working in various genres and fields. His extensive knowledge of instruments, rhythms, and musical styles and openness to cooperation with other artists allow him to create unique sound projects that include both electronic and pure ambient soundscapes, in which ethnic motifs interweave with industrial sound structures and natural sounds of nature or even the city (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė MIC). Many of his collaborations are with the singer Rasa Serra—here, the composer still remains the deciding figure, who is undoubtedly led by the singer’s voice, however the stylistic, spatial, and narrative nuances are initiated primarily by him.

In the music of the ritualistic, atmospheric, dark Baltic folklore by creator Julius Mitė (Vėlių Namai—Home of the Spirits), traditional cultures of different origins interact, appearing here not by chance (which gives them an indissoluble bond!), but through various personal experiences—relationships with close people living abroad, travels, and perhaps also through a certain intuition of some common, pure, archetypal world culture.⁸ In his latest album, *Alkai*, the sound environment is created (and changed) by such instruments as guitar, Lithuanian *kanklės*, Turkish *baglama*, Latvian two-stringed *ģīga*, one-stringed *manihorka*, Arabic *oud*, and electronic rhythms.

This album has indeed been influenced by various cultures, not only Baltic. The song Miklagard is about Constantinople and the connections between different cultures ... In the song “Saulės Kalvis” you can hear various instruments from the Ivory Coast, which appeared in the works through personal acquaintances and connections with different cultures.

Mitė 2023 (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė 2023a)

Multiple levels of local culture and its belonging to wider conglomerations are expressed through themes of historical events initiated/selected by the creator, visual cues, titles of works involving ritualism during performances, and the worldview itself—in the darkness, to look for life. “Enticing anxiety, uncertainty, darkness and crossing the threshold of the “Home of the Spirits” is exactly what life is experienced—it is sought for by singing to *alkai*,⁹ it is experienced in these atmospheres, through encompassing trembling, waiting, through uncontrollable but unifying dance, through the memory of one’s own culture, through sometimes unheard but close signs of other cultures” (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė 2023a). When asked about the theme of the album, Julius says:

I think *alkai* can give a sense of holiness often lacking in today’s man. Whatever it means to a particular person, they are places of concentration, of meditation. They can help a person in a difficult period, for example, during a pandemic or in times of personal loss.

Mitė 2023 (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė 2023a)

Another way of interaction or correspondence is within bands with a few or even many members. Let’s look, for example, at the band Atalyja, whose performances highlight various recognizable intercultural music styles—folklore, rock, jazz-rock, Indian, world music; violin, *kanklės*, bagpipes, the Indian *bansuri* (bamboo flute), *tabla* (paired drum), and other instruments create a certain unity interacting in some kind of common creative environment. It is exactly the most difficult to articulate what remains unspoken, unnamed—the environment of these continuous movements towards one another: correspondence, interaction, bonding¹⁰. As Sabolius says, “In the proto-energetic generative structures of consciousness, there is no articulation at all—neither an image, nor a concept. There, the debate of consciousness bursts forth from its origins. From the

⁸ Rethinking the correspondence of the music of different ethnic traditions, manifested in diverse styles, Dobriakovas highlights this sense of some kind of common origin (naming as examples groups such as Saulės Broliai, Marga muzika, Kamanių šilėlis, Miglaukas, Sen Svaja, Undan and Spanxti): “It is easy to see that here, too, an appeal is made to the belief that there is a certain mystical primordial commonality between seemingly very distant musical (and cultural) traditions, namely a certain rhythmic, meditative, eclectic folkloric syncretism can help restore this commonality” (Dobriakovas 2015).

⁹ The Lithuanian *alka*, *alkas* is “a sacred grove; a site where offerings were burnt” (Vaitkevičius 2003, 259).

¹⁰ EXERCISE II. The reader is invited to choose a song or other musical piece and try to describe it without mentioning the instruments. The in-betweenness might appear more clearly than ever.

darkness of the soul, the many constituting the difference are crystallized, later broken down by the intellect into systematic ones” (Sabolius 2012, 22).

These are only a few examples of the immersive possibilities, but what if more and more often, the attention of researchers (and listeners) is directed towards this, disclosing the possibility of perceiving the musical-creative process as arising from a certain infinite environment, internal and transcending interactions between its meanings?

IV. To Induce and Stellate: Towards the Transformation

The content of the experiential matrix itself, the activation of its meanings, and their correspondence are affected and determined by what is consciously aimed at, and what works by itself imperceptibly. **Narrative consciousness** is particularly characteristic of the creators of such music—a certain self-awareness of what they want to convey to the listeners, and how. This is the paraphrased concept of the Finnish narratologist Hanna Meretoja, the *narrative unconsciousness*, denoting some cultural narrative models that we belong to and act in accordance. “Our narrative self-understanding has direct ethical consequences: it shapes how we act in the world. As we act, we always already interpret (mostly automatically, without being aware of it) cultural narrative models that are ingrained in our narrative unconscious and that shape how we make sense of our lives” (Meretoja 2018, 99). The ability of narrative self-understanding and narrative consciousness that acts as a basis of various ethical and moral decisions develops through the practice of observing, rethinking, verifying the usual narrative context that operates in your life-world from the day you are born. On the other hand, it is highly related to some kind of unarticulated knowledge: bodily, collective, traditional, and other. This traditional knowledge, in a sense, allows you to act verified by others and, being a part of that culture, to rely on intuition, recognizing not only what is your own but also coherent. This narrative consciousness is strongly related to the idea itself—it moves, activates, and streams through the experiential matrix.

After the flow of the Lithuanian tradition and natural timely cross-cultural confluences were aggressively bent by various external forces (such as long-term occupation of the Soviet Union), today it is necessary to learn (or relearn) the traditional knowledge often not from direct sources, practicing the ability to recognize and identify its fractured existence in contemporary places, items, people, their language and worldview. Here, music with a conscious approach to folklore becomes a way of telling and choosing what and how the creator wants or seeks to convey to the listeners. The combination of different systems of cultural signs, which, again, usually depends on the life-world of each creator and are significant for him, acts as a search for one’s own identity and practice that manifests itself on different levels: personal, communal, and spiritual.

Based on the interviews by other researchers and the author’s conversations with the musicians, the following aspirations emerge:

1. To establish one’s national identity.
2. To connect with the history of your nation.
3. To know yourself.
4. To find a closer spiritual tradition.
5. To feel a connection with the other world.
6. To find “something more”.
7. To detect the outline of the rite.
8. To invite to change, to rethink.
9. To invite to listen, to hear.
10. To look for wonder, meaning, and a sense of unity.
11. To strive for community.
12. To search for experiences that bring you closer to the environment.
13. To present Lithuanian heritage to young people and abroad.
14. To create a closer, more recognizable medium for folklore to exist today.
15. To identify at different levels: Lithuanian, Baltic, Indo-European culture.

How do creators capture this process? A Lithuanian artist Jausmė, who “uses traditional *kanklės* in non-traditional ways”, “builds beguiling ambient songs meshing intimations of contemporary influences with organically rooted resonance, creating a new genre of urban-etherealism” (WOMEX 2023). Various experiences that influence her music are profusely described in her own words:

I am usually inspired by nature, people's stories, but the current war stories that I see in the news have a strong effect. Sitting down at the *kanklės*, I feel like a medium between another, incomprehensible, and this world. Sometimes, I simply howl my pain and heaviness.

Jausmė 2023

The importance of commonality and truthfulness appear in the thoughts of Virginija Skeirienė (band Pievos):

Gradually, the understanding came that all this is not done only for oneself and not for oneself, but for communion with the world, with everyone who hears us, and hears and feels in the way that we feel what is true.

Skeirienė 2016

The constant search for truthfulness is also repeated in the work of Saulius Labanauskas (Saulius Spindi), in which authentic recordings by Lithuanian folk singer Petras Zalanskas are settled in a contemporary slow atmospheric electronic music sound:

Well, folk music in general, what I understood before and what happened when I heard Petras Zalanskas, became very messed up and changed for me. And this is how I saw the truth ...

Labanauskas 2020

The first time ... when I heard Petras Zalanskas, it seemed to me that it was not even folklore (laughs). He appeared to me to be very peculiar, defying any rules. And when he sings, it seems that he is broadcasting something more—as if the rite is happening with him, there is a connection with something more, somewhere from beyond.

Labanauskas 2018

Daiva Vyčinienė (Trys Keturiose), folklorist and singer of the traditional Lithuanian polyphonic *sutartinės* that were recently included on the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage, says:

Such a calm, minimalistic choreography, traditional way of singing for me is primarily associated with the search for inner depth, self-awareness and an attempt to dive into the world of *sutartinės* as a kind of meditation.

Vyčinienė 2011

Sutartinės can also be heard in the music of already-mentioned Girių Dvasios, a techno dub project of the electronic dance music genre, which is very popular at various music and mindfulness festivals not only in Lithuania but also abroad. Although the old folklore was not practiced at his home environment while he was growing up, the author Evaldas Azbukauskas turns to folklore not only as a source of identity but also of a certain spiritual feeling:

... it is the consolidation of my national identity, unification with the history of my nation, self-knowledge, the desire to find some spiritual tradition that is more appropriate for Lithuanian... mentality. I know from the feedback from listeners that a lot of them experience a similar process while listening to those works, and that makes me happy. Currently, I use folk music only when I work with other performers who are engaged in folk music, and I also touch folk music of other nations.

Azbukauskas 2021

It is important to notice that *sutartinės* are used not only for musical genres but also for interdisciplinary works as a way of coherence or progress. For example, a “corporate dystopia for voices” by Arturas Bumšteinas and Žygimantas Kudirka entitled *A great new body* (the premiere took place in 2022), in which the *sutartinė* acts as the essential inspiration, but new lyrics are created, in other words, it essentially becomes a narrative form and a possible structure.

The lyrics and music themselves create an environment that is not very typical for conventional *sutartinės*. Here, in this work, they are like collective farewell songs before moving to new bodies.

Kudirka 2022

In addition to the ideas and some articulated creative intentions marking the narrative consciousness, other catalysts act here too—the **life-world** and the **environment**: the instruments at hand, the technical base, the recording space itself. Culturologist and a publisher of such music Ugnius Liogė (Dangus label) wonderfully describes the creative process of the recordings of Petras Vyšniauskas, Gvidas Kovėra, and

Todaras Kaškurevičius, which took place in Vilkija, in the chimney of the homestead-museum of Jonas and Antanas Juška:

The primitive rough-textured space affected the music, its sound and mood, gave it a unique color. The change of states can also be seen in the works that make up the album *Tylos Labanoro: About the Witness. About the equinox. About the dragon. About the stone. About the grass. About the wound. About the woman. About the track. About not having. About the right hand.*

Liogė, Dangus

It is essential to note that the environment that is relied upon and allowed to be guided by, with the help of its objects, acoustics, is not only changeable but also allows itself to be changed. For example, the language of already-mentioned Saulius Spindi¹¹ reveals how strongly he was affected by working with folkloric material—it crucially changed the experience of his environment. This is what he says after he was “locked in the studio” for half a year: “it became such a journey, *such a church* in that studio, even though there are no windows...” (Labanauskas 2021).

Sometimes the environment, the experience of the environment or atmosphere (and of course the imagination of that experience) through music returns, is re-lived or imagined:

For me, it is a way to remember and feel my grandmother and her friends together. At the same time, I absolutely enjoy the way they sing, talk, laugh, and try to recreate the atmosphere as if we were sitting with them in the garden sometime in the 20th century. I imagine them young in their life-worlds, their usual environment, in some of their most alive, truest being.

Tamsaulė 2022

Here, the event itself, the moment of transformation is crucial, it is then a new meaning. This indissoluble knot, emerges from an uncertain environment, which sometimes appears as a conscious aspiration, and sometimes (or maybe at the same time)—as a natural result of interaction, multiplication. It is very beautifully captured in the words of Povilas Vaitkevičius (ethno-industrial band Lauxna Lauksna) while being interviewed by Liogė:

You know, I have lost titles several times already—I do not attach either *ethno* or technology to what I do. In the end, what do you call the moment when the Marks appear on the surface of a rusty piece of iron? Anyway, it is probably a good thing that it is hard to explain. I would even say that it is not explainable at all. In silence comes knowing. Everything happens when you do not think about it. Nevertheless, if someone needs words, amber = electron.

Vaitkevičius, Lauxna

Another highly significant creative factor, which is easier to discuss in the context of visual arts, is the **imagination**, which exists in the experiential medium both passively and by stimulating that creative environment, that experiential matrix, leading beyond its boundaries, transcending it. As Sabolius says, imagination offers “a *logos* that tolerates the coexistence of opposites, which brings a unique order of action” (Sabolius 2012, 16). Imagination, intuition, and a certain collective, shared knowledge can open what is already in the matrix as betweenness, but simultaneously, it transcends itself. Composer Darius Gerulaitis, talking about how one of the first dark ambient projects in Lithuania, Wejdas, also classified as amberfolk, says: In the beginning, before the materialization of the project ..., there were books (Lithuanian history and religion, world cultures, religious studies, fiction, philosophy). Although there is some immanent, collective subconscious layer before them?...

Gerulaitis 2014

The inability to grasp, predict, control, and name what happens in us and through us during creation does not take away but grounds the coherence of everything. During the creative process an utterly unexpected constellation of experience, imagination, intuition forms a new meaning—that indissoluble knot.

¹¹ If one tried to define which contemporary music styles in the assumed infinite experiential matrix of Saulius Spindi have the greatest valence, the strongest attraction, or perhaps the most powerful gust in the creation, then in Saulius's case, it started with the blues, which appeared as an incentive to learn to play the guitar, then Gothic metal in the band Saprophytes, in the new wave music style band Fashion Games, and even later more alternative electronic music. However, it highlights only the things that he himself talked about, those that became articulated.

Summary Insights

The research on the field of Lithuanian traditional culture in multi-genred contemporary music revealed that the work of music creators-performers is essentially an interaction between articulated and unarticulated knowledge and a particular narrative awareness, which constantly guides and reviews the process. Various levels of this knowledge (corporeal, collective, traditional, etc.) coexist and interact with each other in a multi-directional way. Its meanings and the nature of their action manifests abundantly: it *appears, grows, develops, interacts, acts, spreads, radiates*, and others.

New music emerges from and through constant interaction and correspondence of experiences, symbols, and meanings, taking shape through an activated experiential matrix forming a new meaning. This new meaning that appears as a unique outcome emerged from diverse environments and experiences of each creator, is exactly what can be perceived as an indissoluble knot. Specific catalysts of the experiential matrix emerged in the article, defining the possible environment for the creative process itself: *idea, intuition, imagination, life-world environment, technical abilities, skills*, etc.

Interviews with artists revealed the importance of traditional local cultures today, highlighting that this kind of creative approach acts as a search for one's own identity and practice that manifests itself on different levels: the personal, communal, and spiritual.

This paper does not intend to refute the existing research approaches but rather to activate them by questioning and providing more ways to think about the functioning and relevance of traditional cultures today. It relied on the correspondence of diverse methods that are all important and actively studied by the author herself—musicology, narratology and phenomenological anthropology, that naturally support each other.

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Tradicinė lietuvių kultūra šiandienos muzikoje: kultūriniai ryšiai ir patirtinė matrica

Santrauka

Kliaujantis fenomenologinės antropologijos ir naratologijos kriterijais, straipsnyje apmąstoma, kaip šiuolaikinė muzika tampa terpe tradicinės lietuvių kultūros raiškai ir raidai. Reikšminga, kad tokia tyrimo prieiga nesunkiai gali būti pritaikoma kitų tautų vietos tradicijų gaivališkumo tyrimams – ypač tokių, kurių tėkmė taip pat per prievartą buvo kreipiama ir žeidžiama agresyvių okupacinių jėgų. Straipsniu siekiama ne paneigti ligšiolines minėto lauko tyrimų prieigas, o veikiau jas suaktyvinti klausiant ir pateikiant daugiau būdų, kaip būtų galima mąstyti apie tradicinių kultūrų veikimą ir svarbą šiandien.

Straipsnyje suponuojama mintis, kad įvairius prievartinius, ypač ilgalaikius geopolitinius pokyčius patyrusioms tautoms būdinga itin jautri tautinės savivokos geba; dėl jos per kartas sąmoningai ir intuityviai išsaugomas tam tikras bendras žinojimas, gebėjimas atpažinti savųjų vietų ženklus, justų jų *stichiškumą* leidžiant jiems egzistuoti ir šiandien. Šiuo požiūriu muzikos kūrėjų ir atlikėjų darbas iš esmės yra artikuliuoto bei neartikuliuoto žinojimo ir tam tikro naratyvinio sąmoningumo, nuolat vedančio ir tikrinančio, ką ir kaip noriu *pasakoti*, sąveika, kuri aptariamuoju atveju įvairiapusė atsiskleidžia per šiuolaikinę folkloro raišką. Nauja muzika atsiranda kaip savaiminio ar inicijuoto (bet vėliau tapusio savaiminiu) tęstinumo rezultatas, savo formą įgaunantis per suaktyvintą patirtinę matricą. Darbe išryškinami tam tikri *patirtinės matricos* katalizatoriai, sukuriantys terpę pačiam kūrybiniam vyksmui, t. y. kūrinio atsiradimo procesui: tai idėja, nuojauta, vaizduotė.

Tokio pobūdžio tyrimui būtinas asmeniškasis žvilgsnis ir kokybinis, iš esmės neskubrus tyrimas, kuriame remiamasi tiek pačia muzika, tiek pokalbiais su autoriais, gana drąsiai kliaujantis *matricos* termino tarpdiscipliniškumu, praplečiančiu tyrimo būdų spektrą. Taip išryškėja, kad per aptariamą muzikinę kūrybą reiškiasi įvairūs žinojimo lygmenys: kūniškas, kolektyvinis, tradicinis, kurie koegzistuoja ir sąveikauja vienas su kitu daugiakryptiškai. Jo reikšmės ir jis pats gali *daugintis, daugėti, spiestis, sklįsti, jungtis* (tyrimo eigoje vartoti terminai) ir taip toliau. Jų galimybės – nebaigtinės, ir galbūt egzistuoja tam tikros jų jungimosi sąlygos – kitaip tariant, jungiamasi ir sąveikaujama tik su tuo, kas priima.