

Sutartinės* as a Sign of Lithuanian Identity: The Interaction Between *Ethno-* and *Contempo

Abstract. The article briefly discusses the history of the emergence of *sutartinės* as a Lithuanian symbol in contemporary musical culture. It begins with the prophetic insights of the famous folklorist, Canon Adolfas Sabaliauskas. More than 100 years ago, he identified *sutartinės* as a possible basis for Lithuanian professional music. Although there were controversial opinions about the survival of *sutartinės* in 20th-century culture, the characteristics of *sutartinės* music (sharp harmonies of seconds, syncopated rhythms, rhythmic motorism, ostinato, etc.) became the essence of the work of many 20th-century composers. In the work of several composers—Juozas Gruodis, Julius Juzeliūnas and Bronius Kutavičius—*sutartinės* emerge as a particularly important symbol. The individual style of these composers is consciously constructed from Lithuanian folklore (*sutartinės*) and modern means of musical expression.

The article discusses various manifestations of the use of *sutartinės* in music creation and their existence in contemporary culture. It draws attention to how *sutartinės* act as a “sign of Lithuanianness” in alternative music projects of the early 21st century. In some of them, a *sutartinė* is presented as a single work, preserving its characteristic structure, melody, and text, while in others, the melodic inflections of *sutartinės* are unrecognizable, their characteristic metro-rhythmic structure is destroyed, *sutartinės* are sung in a “pop” voice, etc.

This article invites us to discuss: can we still recognize or evaluate *sutartinės* as a sign of Lithuanian identity in each of these cases? Does the distorted image of *sutartinės*—as a certain musical and spiritual whole—reflect a Lithuanian mentality? Does it reveal the uniqueness of Lithuanian music and its national identity?

Keywords: *sutartinės*, binary construction, refrains, Lithuanian identity, *contempo*, ritual.

1. Introduction

The dominance of *sutartinės* in today’s living folklore tradition, their clear breakthrough in pop culture, as well as the peculiar echoes of *sutartinė*-like thinking in the work of today’s composers allowed me to describe this genre as one of the most prominent symbols of Lithuanian national identity (Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2011a, 371).¹ Incidentally, foreign ethnomusicologists and composers also tend to consider *sutartinės* a symbol of Lithuanianness. One of the best examples confirming this is *Sutartinės* for string orchestra and percussion (1991) by the internationally famous composer Alfred Schnittke, which he created in shock after the January Events.² Although the work treats *sutartinės* metaphorically (as the idea of the unity of the Lithuanian nation, overall concentration, resisting brute force), it is nevertheless based on the development of the specific *sutartinės* melodies of the Ukmergė region.

In the 21st century, the living tradition of *sutartinės* is experiencing a new wave of revival.³ Their inclusion in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has undoubtedly contributed to the new revival of *sutartinės*.⁴ I have personally been a part of the living tradition of *sutartinės* for many years, observing the renewal of this tradition “from the inside,” and have also made significant contributions to the inclusion of *sutartinės* on the honorable UNESCO list, yet I am concerned about the various ways in which *sutartinės* present in today’s culture.

In this article, I will only very briefly review the work of Lithuanian composers, one way or another related to *sutartinės* (or features of *sutartinės*). Much has already been written about this by Lithuanian musicologists (see Gaidamavičiūtė 2006, 2010; Gruodytė 2018, 2024; Apanavičienė 2002, etc.). Moreover, I will not delve into the very important issue of musical nationality in the 21st century, which becomes especially relevant in the conditions of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and homogenization. It has been observed that the aforementioned conditions seem to provoke artists to create certain self-preservation mechanisms. Nationality is becoming more prominent, revealing important value aspects, encouraging individual expression,

¹ More than 100 years ago, folklorist Canon Adolfas Sabaliauskas marked *sutartinės* as a potential foundation for the identity of Lithuanian professional music (Sabaliauskas 1904).

² The January Events took place in Lithuania between January 11 and 13, 1991 in the aftermath of the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. As a result of Soviet military actions, 14 civilians were killed and 702 were injured.

³ The first revival wave, which began after the lifting of the ban on the Lithuanian press in 1904, took place in the first decades of the 20th century; the beginning of the second wave is associated with the Folklore Theatre concert in the late 1960s (for more details, see Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2014). Vocal and instrumental *sutartinės* were performed at a concert of the Folk Music Theatre troupe (later called the Lithuanian Folklore Theatre) led by Povilas Mataitis, which took place in Vilnius on April 13, 1968.

⁴ *Sutartinės* were added to the UNESCO List on November 16, 2010.

and the search for identity (Repšienė 2010). *Sutartinės* are becoming one of the important value “pillars” in today’s music world, encouraging various forms of expression. However, the broad question of nationality in today’s professional music remains beyond the scope of this study—it would, of course, require a much more in-depth and broader perspective.

I am most interested in the current changes in the living *sutartinės* tradition and the trends of *sutartinization* of other musical genres, which have not yet been consistently studied. There are only a few works devoted to discussing the contemporary processes of development of the *sutartinės* tradition. The book *Nuo tradicinės polifonijos iki polifoninės tradicijos* (From traditional polyphony to the polyphonic tradition) by Austė Nakienė (2016), the article “Keturi pokalbiai apie sutartines” (Four conversations about sutartines) by Agota Zdanavičiūtė (2015), as well as my own articles “The Revival of Lithuanian Polyphonic *Sutartinės* Songs in the Late 20th and Early 21st Century” (Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2012) and “Sutartinių giedojimo tradicija postmodernioje visuomenėje: perėmimas, perdavimas ir raiška” (Tradition of singing sutartinės in a post-modern society: adoption, transmission, and expression) (Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2015) are worth mentioning. Therefore, in attempting to encompass the various processes of the manifestation of *sutartinės* in today’s culture and to discern the prevailing trends, I will mainly rely on my own personal experience, as well as the participant observation method.

A fanatical loyalty to tradition, for one, stops its renewal. However, novelties dismantle tradition and push it away. Philosopher Bronius Kuzmickas observes, “A certain selectivity characterizes conveyance of tradition. Each historical era establishes a specific relationship with the past. Each generation accepts what it finds most meaningful from the heritage it discovers passed down” (Kuzmickas 2011, 9). Today *sutartinės* are singled out from the entire rich heritage of Lithuanian ethnic music, haphazardly being made into one of the most prominent signs of Lithuanianity. The code word “*sutartinė*” helps local artists win funding for various innovative projects. I would like to analyze in more depth whether *sutartinės* always express Lithuanian identity.

Before discussing the phenomenon of *sutartinės* as a sign of Lithuanian identity, I will briefly describe the main features of these *giesmės* (chants). The name for ancient polyphonic chants, called *sutartinės*, derives from the verb *sutarti* “to agree/attune” with another person or “to reach an accord.” The noun *sutartinės*—“polyphonic Lithuanian folk songs”—correspondingly means “conformity/harmony/rhythmicity in doing something” or, simply, “harmony/concord.”

Summarizing the insights of other scholars and my own long-standing dual experience as a scholar and singer (Ambrasevičius 2014; Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2011b; 2024; Slaviūnas 1958–1959),⁵ I would like to highlight the following essential characteristics of today’s *sutartinės*:

- linear polyphony, imitative polyphonicity;
- the cellular creation of the whole from small, constantly recurring elements of rhythm and melody (similar compositional principles are also characteristic of traditional textiles: the creation of small, constantly recurring elements, a strictly symmetrical structure, etc.);
- cyclicity (for listeners and singers, a sense of dissolved time and space);
- an abundance of onomatopoeic words such as *tūto*, *dauno*, *tititi*, *totata*, and the like;
- bi-textuality (parallel sounding of both the meaningful text and the refrain text);
- a syllabic relationship between music and text (“chopping”, “clucking/cackling”);
- polyrhythms and rhythmic complementarity with frequent syncopation;
- active syncopated dance rhythms reminiscent of *sutartinės* syncretism;
- binary melodic structure;
- intertwining voices with regular or frequent harmonization with intervals of seconds;
- achieving maximum roughness by “beating” different voices (vocal parts);
- good “striking,” or “throbbing” of voices = *sutarimas* “harmony”;
- *sutarimas* “agreement/concord” (the creation of musical/social/world harmony) as a process (the birth of the *sutartinė* each time anew—here and now).

⁵ I have been investigating *sutartinės* since 1981 (Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2024b), as well as heading a group of *sutartinė* singers named Trys Keturiose (see Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene n.d.). The merger of these two fields has revealed nuances involved in singing these hymns by qualifying them, by grasping their essence.

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three parts: Part I, Part II, and Part III. Part I starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "1. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?". Part II starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "Ty - ti - ti ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?". Part III starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "1. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?".

Example 1. "Titytatatoj", a *trejinė* (threesome) *sutartinė* sung in canon.
Recorded by a hymn-singer group from Biržai, 1935. Melody transcribed by Jadvyga Čiurlionytė. Printed: SIS 484a

2. The interaction of *ethno-* and *contempo* in 20th-century musical culture

The musical characteristics of *sutartinės* (sharp harmonies of seconds, syncopated rhythms, rhythmic motorism, ostinato, etc.) are woven into the works of many 20th-century Lithuanian composers (Stasys Vainiūnas, Vytautas Montvila, Teisutis Makačinas, Vytautas Barkauskas, Feliksas Bajoras, Algirdas Martinaitis, and others). However, only a few composers—Juozas Gruodis, Julius Juzeliūnas, and Bronius Kutavičius—have made *sutartinės* a significant feature of their creative programs. The individual styles of these composers are consciously constructed from Lithuanian folklore (primarily *sutartinės*) and modern means of musical expression. I will talk a bit more about the work of these composers in subsection 2.1. Subsection 2.2. will discuss the new wave of *sutartinės* in the works of composers at the end of the 20th century. The latter is directly related to a new approach to *sutartinės* in the folk ensemble movement and the emergence of concerts/rituals. Subsection 2.3. draws attention to yet another interpretation of *sutartinės* in the works of composers. Some composers tend to create generalized "*sutartinės*-like" music (a certain meditative state), while others find it important to understand the archaic articulation of *sutartinės*, their untempered harmony, involving *sutartinės* singers who sing in an authentic manner in the creation/performance of their works.

2.1. Traces of *sutartinės* in the works of Juozas Gruodis, Julius Juzeliūnas, and Bronius Kutavičius

Combining elements of *sutartinės* music with modern means of musical expression, Gruodis (1884–1948) eventually developed an individual style, which, as Šarūnas Nakas notes, is quite close to the stylistics of Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček (Nakas n.d.). However, not all contemporaries accepted this conception of Gruodis' nationalism in music. Teodoras Brazys condemned Gruodis for his use of folk themes in the *Simfoninis prologas* (Symphonic prologue) (1923) in the context of the musical stylistics of the first half of the 20th century. "In the mixture of dissonance, chromaticism and 'atonality,' the pure 'diatony' of our folk songs cannot be found," wrote Brazys. "Our folk melody ... cannot have any connection with elements that are foreign and opposite to it" (Brazys, under the pseudonym Daužgiriėtis (1928), quoted from Ambrasas 1981, 145).⁶

⁶ Incidentally, according to musician and musicologist Donatas Katkus, the composer Stasys Vainiūnas was once criticised for using *sutartinės*, i.e., characteristic intervals of seconds! Katkus recalls how around 1960, among young Lithuanian composers there was talk of "fresh" harmony, which meant that "somewhere a seventh chord or a tiny second could already appear" (quoted from Stonytė 2012).

Juzeliūnas (1916–2001) also sought to explore what lay at the core of Lithuanianness in his work. Juzeliūnas shared his conception of the interaction between *ethno-* and *contempo* in his theoretical work *Akordo sandaros klausimu* (On the question of the structure of chord, 1972). The composer observed that “the national uniqueness of Lithuanian folk music is most evident in the peculiarities of the intervallic structure of the ancient Lithuanian monodic melodies and *sutartinės*” (Juzeliūnas 1972, 32). It is no coincidence that the analysis of the structure of *sutartinės* occupies a special place in this work. The phenomenon of bitonality, found in vocal *sutartinės*, helps the composer to justify the principle of binary construction, which became the central axis of his innovative theory.⁷ In his theoretical work, Juzeliūnas substantiates the principles of the juxtaposition of two closed musical systems—*sutartinės* and dodecaphony—creating, according to the composer, a new special type of structure.

Based on his theory, Juzeliūnas composed the sonata for voice and organ *Melika* in 1973. If up to that time, the characteristic sign of the *sutartinės*-like nature of the Lithuanian music of that era was the harmony of seconds, combined with active syncopated rhythms, then *Melika* marks a turn to a completely new concept of *sutartinės*. In this work, a different—spatial and multidimensional—expression of *sutartinės* is evident, combined with lyrical meditation (Landsbergytė 2008, 167).⁸ The sound of onomatopoeic words in *sutartinės* with obscure meanings became the idea and content of the work. Onomatopoeic words, phonetically expressing a certain emotional state and sound colour, feature as the titles of the movements: Movement I “*Linagauda*. Concentration”, Movement II “*Judabra*. Anxiety”, Movement III “*Sadula*. Longing”. This kind of perception of *sutartinės* is close to the state experienced by today’s practitioners of these chants: when singing a *sutartinė*, one overarching emotion tends to dominate.

Juzeliūnas’s concept of *sutartinės* and their theoretical generalization probably laid the foundation for Kutavičius’s (1932–2021) cellular minimalism, which originated from the sound of *sutartinės* (Gruodytė 2019, 192). Kutavičius himself linked minimalistic aesthetics and *sutartinės* as follows: “in ancient Lithuanian songs, there is the minimum number of sounds, reserved rhythm, small range. The form is open, without a beginning and end—a segment of time...”⁹ (Jasinskaitė-Jankauskienė 2001, 211). By combining the principles of Lithuanian folklore (asceticism, archaism), repetitiveness, and multi-layeredness in a unique way, Kutavičius created a special sense of time and space, and in many cases, the image of a ritual taking place here and now.

For example, in the oratorio *Magiškas sanskrito ratas* (Magic Circle of Sanskrit, 1990), the infinite canons of many parts (and, of course, the archaic ways of producing sound employing peculiar formations of the voice or particular musical instruments such as *skudučiai* (Lithuanian type of panpipes), metallophones, “kutaphones,” violin bows, etc.) entirely suit the aesthetics of *sutartinės*. Each part seems to be open, as though there was neither a clear beginning nor ending. Thus, Kutavičius, while striving to add universality to the musical language of this oratorio, did not escape from the concept of Lithuanian *sutartinės*. Like the *sutartinės*, the essence of this work is “a circle—as in Oriental philosophy, everything repeats itself after many centuries and millennia” (Jasinskaitė 1991, 30).

2.2. A new approach to *sutartinės* by composers and folklore practitioners after 1990

Musicologist Rūta Gaidamavičiūtė’s observation about the further development of how *sutartinės* are expressed in the works of Lithuanian composers is important:

After the restoration of Lithuanian independence, it has been more and more boldly argued that *sutartinės* are not just polyphonic Lithuanian folk songs with a peculiar structure and special sonority and rhythm, but perhaps hymns with a sacred purpose, performed by groups of well-sung women. After a long history of post-war integration, when authors highlighted the lively and playful origins of this genre, composers began to delve more freely into their true nature. (Gaidamavičiūtė 2010, 252)

The musicologist notes that at that time, *sutartinės* began to be heard in the programmes of many folklore ensembles, and composers changed how they approached them in their works (Gaidamavičiūtė 2010, 252).

At this point, it is necessary to mention the new approach to *sutartinės* in the Lithuanian folklore movement (for more details see Ramonaitė 2011). For some time (1985–1995), separate *sutartinė* concerts were

⁷ The theory of binarics (binarity) is further developed successfully by composer Rimantas Janeliauskas (2001, 2016, etc.).

⁸ Meditation as a concept is frequently associated with the contemporary practice of *sutartinės* chanting in online outlets.

⁹ These and upcoming translations are by the author.

held during the international folklore festival Skamba Skamba Kankliai (Kanklės ringing out), and *sutartinės* were played in various courtyards of the Old Town of Vilnius and in the courtyards of the Vilnius University. Eventually, I found myself growing tired of seeing the same few groups, each demonstrating varying degrees of comprehension and interpretation. I felt the need to “present” *sutartinės* in such a way that the listener would feel the full power of their sharp sound, the magical-hypnotic effect, and the suspended flow of time. This demanded an attempt to return from the *profanum* of *sutartinės* to their inherent *sacrum* by choosing a suitable and completely different space. This was the Vilnius Bernardine Church, where a concert was held in 1996 and was followed by the audience’s deep and poetic feedback (Šorys 1997, 50).¹⁰



Figure 1. Trys Keturiose, the Bernardine Church, 1996, Vilnius. Unknown photographer

Today, I think that my own idea to organize other kinds of *sutartinė* concerts—veritable musical rituals of *sutartinės*—could have emerged under the influence of the ritualized oratories of Kutavičius.¹¹

2.3. Interpretation of *sutartinės* in the work of Lithuanian composers of the post-minimalist period

When thinking about the work of today’s composers, one can notice another interpretation of *sutartinės*—on the one hand, there is a shift away from the specific musical material,¹² but, on the other hand, we are approaching the essence of *sutartinės*, coming to a deeper understanding of them, as if reproducing a distant image of *sutartinės*. It is a kind of continuation of the creative trajectories displayed by Juzeliūnas and, especially, Kutavičius.

Gaidamavičiūtė talks about similar things when discussing the work of Lithuanian composers of the post-minimalist period (Remigijaus Merkelys, Justė Janulytė, Egidija Medekšaitė, etc.) (Gaidamavičiūtė 2010). The time-space concept of *sutartinės* is also reflected in the works of Ričardas Kabelis (b. 1957). For example, the musical expression of his piece *Kalno sutartinė*¹³ (2020) is at first glance close to minimalist,

¹⁰ Recalling the first Sutartinės Evening held at the Bernardine Church in 1996 (as part of the international folklore festival Skamba Skamba kankliai), composer Algirdas Martinaitis said, “Even today, the clean and consonant sound of *sutartinės* at Bernardinai Church persists as a mystical experience to me. Such a crowd and friction of sounds, but the sound is clean and sacred” (Martinaitis 1996, 28).

¹¹ For about 10 years (1984–1996), I participated in The Vilnius New Music Ensemble, which performed Kutavičius’s oratorios *Iš jotvingių akmenų* (From the Yotvingian Stone), *Magiškas sanskrito ratas* (Magic Circle of Sanskrit) and others.

¹² Sometimes *sutartinės* become only an inspiration for expressing new conceptual ideas. One of the latest works inspired by *sutartinės* is Arturs Bumšteinas’s and Žygmantas Kudirka’s *Brave New Body* (Puikus Naujas Kūnas), a performance for voices, electronics, and video. You can listen to the project on YouTube (Operomanija 2023).

¹³ The piece for seventy-two flutes, performed by Manuel Zurria (flute), Saulius Auglys-Stanevičius (tam-tam), premiered in 2020, October.

but the usual experience of the flow of time is changed here by a strange state of lingering unity. Using the *cantus prius factus* polyphonic technique, the composer conveys the impression of the presence of a polyphonic texture, the ephemerality of which is enhanced by mysteriously “smashing” phantom melodies (which do not exist in the score). Listening to the barely perceptible changing flow of this music reveals the unity of boundless space and time—without a beginning or end.

Paying attention not only to the already known features of *sutartinės*, but also to the special articulation of these chants, the distinctive timbres of the singers, and various creative projects that combine the archaic and the modern cannot be avoided today. Composers collaborate not only with professional musicians but also with groups of *sutartinė* singers, representing the authentic *sutartinė* sound.¹⁴

However, I will leave the work of art music composers aside in order to discuss, at least briefly, the various directions of the use and existence of *sutartinės* in modern culture. As a representative of the living *sutartinės* tradition, I am particularly interested in phenomena related to various alternative forms of *sutartinė* manifestation.

3. Alternative forms of *sutartinė* manifestation in the 21st century

I will pay attention to the different ways *sutartinės* manifest as a “sign of Lithuanian identity” in the 21st century and classify them into five groups (see table 1). Of course, this division is not very strict or final—this “classification” is only preliminary and very conditional.

(1) Authentic forms of *sutartinės* in projects combining different ethnic musical cultures

In the projects assigned to this group (see table 1), *sutartinės* obviously become a sign of Lithuanian identity and Lithuanian mentality. Often, they are a place where contrasting musical traditions representing Eastern and Western cultures meet, highlighting the distinctiveness of each and possible points of contact. For example, in the project *Mugam and Sutartinės: Dialogues*, completely different traditions are united by meditateness. According to the author of the project, Teymur Nadir Kerimov, “the introversion, contemplativeness, strictness of the form, cyclicity, and natural femininity of *sutartinės* create a magical formula that can be opened by an extroverted, ecstatic, free, masculine mugam” (LMIC¹⁵ 2015). In this way, an innovative language is created with elements of modern music: fusion, free jazz, and electronic music.



Figure 2. *Mugam and Sutartinės: Dialogues* (Loftas Art Factory, Vilnius, 2015). Photo: Vytautas Daraškevičius

(2) *Sutartinės* as a marker of ethnic music in interdisciplinary projects—alternative music, visual arts, jazz

I will briefly introduce a few projects in which *sutartinės* were integrated into different interdisciplinary realms. The audiovisual performance *Wafi* (2010) was created by the electroacoustic band Fusedmarc together with the *sutartinė* ensemble Trys Keturiose. The harmonies of the *sutartinės*, their cyclicity, their multi-layeredness, their trance elements, and their perception of time seemed to the members of Fusedmarc to

¹⁴ *Bienenmesch* by Algirdas Martinaitis for a string quartet and the *sutartinės* singers' group Trys Keturiose, 2003 (for more information, see Janatjeva 2003), *Vilnius Chronicles* (Vilniaus kronikos), oratorio by Gediminas Rimkus-Rimkevičius for the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, opera soloists, state choir Vilnius and *sutartinė* singers group Ūtara, 2017 (Rimkus 2017), *Ancestors*, live performance by Abraham Brody and Trys Keturiose (Brody 2015), *Dances of Cranes* (Gervių šokiai) audiovisual project by Milda Venckutė for the *sutartinė* singers group Siulingėla and various ethnic instruments (Venckutė 2024), etc.

¹⁵ Music Information Centre of Lithuania.

have many points of contact with the music they themselves create (Bareikytė 2011). I think that this project managed to surpass time—to harmoniously merge music and mindsets from different eras into one conceptual composition. The project did not distort the essence of the *sutartinės*, but supplemented them with new emotions, and audio and visual imagery.

The project *Circle of Rasas* (2016) brought together various Lithuanian artists from across various disciplines, including a singer, actress, jazz musician, and others (see table 1). The elements of Lithuanian, Indian, and Spanish cultural traditions inspire live improvisation and facilitate a portrayal of particular human feelings or contemplative states embraced by the Indian concept of *rasa*.¹⁶ *Circle of Rasas* is thus constructed around *sutartinės* because of their structural semblance to a circle.



Figure 3. *Circle of Rasas* at Anykščiai Arts Incubator on September 24, 2016: Dominykas Vyšniauskas, Brigita Bublytė, and Trys Keturiose. Photo: Dmitrijus Matvejevas

By combining his music with *sutartinės*, Lithuanian award-winning guitarist Martynas Kuliavas sought to preserve the archaic, sacred nature of these chants in *Undiscovered Sensations* (2017). According to the musician, it is very difficult to create an accompaniment for *sutartinės* because they are beautiful in themselves as they sound alone (Nagyte 2017).¹⁷



Figure 4. *Undiscovered Sensations*. Martynas Kuliavas and Ūtara, the Bernardine Church, Vilnius, 2017. Photo: Linas Jonušas

Despite the fact that *sutartinės* are combined with music of various styles, most projects attributed to this group preserve their essence. *Sutartinės* are often sung for a long time, without being divided into parts or cut into short segments. This allows the singers to better immerse themselves in a particular emotional state and create a special atmosphere around them, which the musicians complement with new emotions and audio/visual imagery.

¹⁶ There are nine principal *rasas* arising from corresponding human feelings like love, joy, sorrow, anger, courage, fear, disgust, astonishment, and serenity.

¹⁷ Listen to the project on YouTube (priormusica 2018).

(3) Monophonic “layouts” of bitonal melodies of *sutartinės*, or just parts of melodies, in various stylistic contexts

The representatives of this group have abandoned perhaps the most important feature of *sutartinės*: their polyphonic nature.¹⁸ There are quite a few works that can be attributed to this direction of *sutartinė* manifestation (see table 1). For example, pieces by the *Electronic Sutartinės* project (2021) are widely heard not only in Lithuania, but also throughout the world. According to the performer and producer Victor Diawara, this project can boldly perform anywhere in the world and represent Lithuania and Lithuanian culture (LMIC n.d.). However, it is worth noting that a “pop style” vocal manner dominates in most of their compositions, which is far from being a typical articulation of *sutartinės*.¹⁹ In some of them (“Sidabro Lakiūtė”), the metre rhythm is completely changed, final cadences uncharacteristic of *sutartinės* appear, etc. (Elektroninės Sutartinės, 2021).²⁰

(4) “Collage” projects: sound recordings of *sutartinė* singers groups are used / groups singing live at concerts (*sutartinė* sounds in their pure form / sections of them are “played”)

The forms of *sutartinė* manifestation of this group can be referred to as a kind of musical collage—the use and fragmentation of pre-existing material. Published or made available on the internet, audio recordings of *sutartinė* singers become “draft” material that composers freely use in their compositions (usually without even consulting the *sutartinė* singers beforehand or without informing them at all about the use of their audio recordings). It is important that *sutartinė* singers themselves, actively participating in such “collage” projects, do not feel like “creators” of *sutartinės* here and now, or as project co-authors, but merely as cut—lighter or shorter—“fragments” of that collage.

For example, in the modernized folklore project titled *Sutartinė Party* (2003, see table 1), authentically singing *sutartinė* singers, such as Veronika Janatjeva, aptly observed, “[we] must obey the development of the music conceived by the composers, enter and fall silent at the right places, as if becoming another track in a multilayered electronic instrumentation” (Janatjeva 2017). Various types of modern electronic rhythms are heard in this project. According to Linas Paulauskis, “this was the idea of *Sutartinė Party*: authentic *sutartinės* are combined with house, trance, bigbeat, acid jazz, triphop, dub, etc. styles, as if checking their compatibility with the old tradition (by the way, the word ‘*sutartinės*’ itself comes from ‘agreement,’ i.e., to correspond, to agree/attune...)” (Janatjeva 2017).

Evaldas Azbukauskas (Girių Dvasios), the creator of the album *Ratu* (2015), said that he chose *sutartinės* because he wanted to learn as much as possible about ancient Lithuanian spiritual traditions. In his opinion, the function of *sutartinės* is spiritual, meditative. Therefore, both listening to and performing them should be done with an appropriate attitude. In this project, Azbukauskas used audio recordings of *sutartinės* sung by Trys Keturiose and Kūlgrinda because they helped him feel the Baltic spirit (Kunčinas 2015).

(5) Associations with *sutartinės* due to the use of onomatopoeic words

In this group, I will discuss a few songs that have become widely known (see table 1). When discussing the song “Čiūto Tūto” by Guoda Isado (2011), it is worth noting that this particular combination of two refrains—*čiūto* and *tūto* (*čiūto tūto*)—does not exist among authentic *sutartinė* texts (almost 2,000 have been recorded). For many, it may seem that there is little difference whether one hears *čiūto tūto* or *čiūto rūto* (the original)—after all, these onomatopoeic words no longer mean anything to modern Lithuanians, apart from their supposed connection to *sutartinės*.²¹ Even more interestingly, more than 10 years later, the exact same combination of onomatopoeic words—*čiūto tūto*—becomes the “*sutartinės* (Lithuanian)” code of another composition—“Stay” by Monika Linkytė (Eurovision 2023).²² Although Linkytė’s song caused a great

¹⁸ As mentioned earlier, group, rather than solo, performance is one of the most important features of *sutartinės*. Commonality is one of their essential “codes.”

¹⁹ Traditional performances of *sutartinės* feature the expression of a peculiar timbre (“as cranes”, “as chickens”, “as *skudučiai*” and such), as well as ways of articulation (“clucking”, “tooting”, glissando sounds, etc.) (Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene 2011b).

²⁰ Incidentally, the absence of final cadences in *sutartinė* music was immediately noticed by composer and musicologist Edwin Geist, who arrived in Lithuania during the 1930s from Berlin: “*Sutartinės* have no cadences!” (Geist 1940, 73). This is a feature of *sutartinės* (their distinctive, musical *perpetuum mobile*) that this musicologist noted is indeed unique, differentiating it from all other Lithuanian folk music.

²¹ For more on the possible meanings of the refrains of *sutartinės* see Rimantienė (2024).

²² Linkytė said that this phrase came naturally, apparently it was ingrained in her from earlier, listening to folk songs and folk songs in general (Griniūtė 2023).

deal of discussion, there was more praise for the singer in the media, saying that her Eurovision song is very Lithuanian, because it is based on elements taken from *sutartinės*.

How can this be explained? Is it plagiarism of a newly created refrain? Again, the question arises, is there a connection with the world of the *sutartinės* in this song? Or maybe this is just an episodic characteristic of onomatopoeic words with a typical syncopated rhythm formula? More generally, does the refrain *čiūto tūto* in the last two compositions have the same deep, mysterious meaning as in *sutartinės*? Or does it become the basis, the central axis of the composition? This does not seem to be the case. To me, it is more like an external effect, giving the impression of a certain exoticism to a foreign listener. Moreover, the artificial combination of words (*čiūto tūto*) can hardly be a symbol associated with *sutartinės*. It can only allude to *sutartinės*.²³

Table 1. Classification of manifestations of *sutartinės* in the musical practices of the 21st century

	Forms of <i>sutartinė</i> manifestation	Title of project/piece	Creators/performers	Place and year of performance
1.	Authentic forms of <i>sutartinės</i> in projects combining different ethnic musical cultures	<i>A Marriage of Sutartines and Flamenco</i> (Flamenco ir sutartinių jungtuvės) (Sutartines – Flamenco 2015)		Anykščiai Art Incubator, 2015
		<i>Mugam and Sutartinės: Dialogues</i> (Mugamas ir sutartinės: dialogai) (Kerimov 2015)	Teymur Nadir Kerimov (guitar and keyboards), Trys Keturiose, Mugam trio: Elshan Mansurov, Malik Mansurov and Ehtyram Huseynov, Evaldas Vyčinas (kanklės), string quartet “Chords”, and others	Loftas Art Factory, 2015
		<i>The Sun Plants a Garden</i> (Saula sodų sadina) (Sur Sadhana 2019)	Composer Anatoly Lomonosov. Ensemble Šalavija, Agota Zdanavičiūtė (kanklės), Jūratė Adlytė (tampura), Tomas Drunga (tabla), AnatoAli (sitar)	The festival SurSadhana, 2019
2.	<i>Sutartinės</i> as a marker of ethnic music in interdisciplinary projects—alternative music, visual arts, jazz	<i>Waft</i> ¹ (Bareikytė 2011)	Fusedmarc and Trys Keturiose	Europäisches Zentrum der Künste Dresden, 2010
		<i>Circle of Rasas</i> (Rasų ratas) (Sutartines – Flamenco 2016)	Brigita Bublytė, Dominykas Vyšniauskas, Trys Keturiose	Anykščiai Arts Incubator, 2016
		<i>Undiscovered Sensations</i> (Netikėti prisilietimai)	Martynas Kuliavas (guitar) and Ūtara, St Catherine’s Church, Vilnius, 2017	
3.	Monophonic “layouts” of bitonal melodies of <i>sutartinės</i> or just parts of melodies	<i>Sutartinė</i> ²	Veronika Povilionienė (voice) and Petras Vyšniauskas (saxophone)	2017
		<i>Saulala Sadina, Lylia</i> (Sabulytė 2021)	Agnė Sabulytė (voice and electronic music)	2021
		<i>Saulala Sadina</i> (Lilā 2017)	Agota Zdanavičiūtė (voice and traditional nine-string <i>kanklės</i>)	2017
		<i>Electronic Sutartinės</i> (Elektroninės sutartinės) ³	Sutartronica: Victor Diawara (producer, musician) and Laurita Peleniūtė (vocalist)	2021
4.	“Collage” projects: sound recordings of <i>sutartinė</i> singer groups are used / groups sing live at concerts (<i>sutartinė</i> sounds in their pure form / sections of them are “played”)	<i>Sutartinė Party</i>	Linas Rimša, Linas Paulauskis and Trys Keturiose	Contemporary music festival MaerzMusik, 2003
		<i>Ratu</i>	Girių Dvasios (Evaldas Azbukauskas), Trys Keturiose and Kūlgrinda (audio recordings)	2015
		<i>Narovsky x Ratilio</i> (feat. Elektroninės Sutartinės) (Narovski 2023)	Narovsky (Danielius Narauskas) and folklore ensemble Ratilio	2023
5.	Associations with <i>sutartinės</i> due to the use of onomatopoeic words	“Čiūto Tūto”	Guoda Isado	National Eurovision selection of Lithuania, 2011
		“Stay (Čiūto Tūto)”	Monika Linkytė	The Eurovision Song Contest, 2023

¹ Listen to the project on YouTube (Fusedmarc 2012; Žak 2014).

² Listen to the project in LMIC (Kučinskaitė n.d.).

³ Listen to the project on YouTube (*Elektroninės Sutartinės*).

²³ One *sutartinės*-singer told the 19th-century linguist Mykolas Miežinis that “Mothers knew the kind of hymns, which were kept secret and very rarely sung. The words were held in high esteem and considered irreplaceable” (Русское географическое общество [Rusijos geografijos draugija], Inv. 1, No. 31, p. 89). Keeping hymns secret along with the honor of never replacing word choices indicates special meaningfulness and sacredness as being inherent to *sutartinės*.

Having briefly discussed the various possible ways that *sutartinės* manifest in today's musical projects, I would like to emphasize that this is only a conditional classification. Moreover, today we can also talk about a completely new approach to *sutartinės*, with creators not being tied to either authentic *sutartinė* texts nor quotes from original music.

Conclusions

Without questioning the artistic value, viability, and longevity of these various projects, I would suggest considering whether in all the discussed cases of the use of *sutartinės* (or their elements) they can still be recognized as *sutartinės* and seen as a sign of Lithuanianness?

Maybe it would be worth reviewing how many of the essential features of *sutartinės* listed at the beginning of my report remain in today's alternative, electronic, and popular music projects? After all, many of these features have been (and still are) important for composers of different generations (perhaps without directly linking them to *sutartinės*)—from Juzeliūnas, Kutavičius, Kabelis, Janulytė, Medekšaitė, and Venckutė to the stylistically various projects of the 21st century.

It is clear that today's concept of *sutartinės* is shaped by a wide variety of factors:

- 1) the prevalence of club, electronic, and popular music;
- 2) the numerous audio and video recordings of various *sutartinė* singers groups (Youtube, Soundcloud, etc.) and live performances at concerts;
- 3) various forms of *sutartinė*-singing training for the general public;²⁴
- 4) new research into *sutartinės* (cognitive, psychoacoustic, etc.) and popularization of this research in lectures at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, as well as in public lectures, seminars, courses, etc.

Some artists are more influenced and attracted by the rhythms of club music, electronic music (*Sutartinė Party*; *Electronic Sutartinės*; *Narovsky x Ratilio*; *Saulala Sadina*, *Lylia*, *Ratu*), while others tend towards meditation, dissolving the boundaries of time and space in “*sutartinė*-like” music, creating cosmic harmony (Kabelis; *Girių Dvasios*), and still others lean towards ritualism, or the creation of peculiar musical rituals (*Ancestors*, *Dances of Cranes*, etc.).

In some of the creative projects I have discussed, the musical environment characteristic of *sutartinės* no longer exists at all (*Saulala sadina*); in others, the melodic inflections of *sutartinės* are changed beyond recognition (*Sutartinė*; *Saulala Sadina*, *Lylia*); their characteristic metrorhythmic structure is destroyed, and the cyclical structure becomes irrelevant (uncharacteristic cadences appear, destroying the *perpetuum mobile* of *sutartinės*) (*Electronic Sutartinės*). Moreover, very often the melody of a *sutartinė* is sung not by a group of singers but by one person, which is already inconsistent with the very name and concept of a *sutartinė* (meaning “agreement”), and violates the essence of these chants (*Sutartinė*; *Saulala Sadina*, *Lylia*; *Electronic Sutartinės*, *Saulala sadina*), or it is sung in a “pop style” voice (*Saulala Sadina*, *Lylia*; *Electronic Sutartinės*), etc.

The question arises: can this distorted image represent the uniqueness of Lithuanian music and, in general, the Lithuanian mentality? It is obvious that in the rotating eternal circle of *sutartinės*, every time period brings a different concept of *sutartinės* and a different interpretation of them in musical creation—we can observe this in the work of composers of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The *sutartinė*, as my research has shown, can be modified in various ways: by breaking up its melody into sections, by changing certain melodic and rhythmic features, harmony, the character of the singing, by repeating only a certain melodic/textual motif, and so on. Creative freedom should not be restricted. And yet, based on my long experience of singing and researching *sutartinės*, I am trying to evaluate contemporary projects from the perspective of “*sutartinės* as a symbol of Lithuanian identity” (of course, over the many years of practicing the *sutartinės*, I have developed my own “standard” image of the manifestation of *sutartinės* in contemporary culture, so I may not be entirely objective). In my opinion, it is important that *sutartinės* do not lose their essence, which is still linked to Lithuanianness. In this sense, I would agree with ethnologist Eglė Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė's statement that it is very important to consider on what levels a folk song can be decomposed before it disintegrates (Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė 2021). While acknowledging that there are various possible forms of using *sutartinės* in alternative music projects today, it is important to keep in mind the nature of these chants, and to not violate their identity.

²⁴ *Sutartinė* Circles; Women's Circles; *Sutartinė* Exercises; *Sutartinė* Meditation; *Sutartinė* practice and Yoga; *Sutartinės* and Cacao; Psychedelics in *Sutartinės*, etc.

After all, hymn-singing is not simple singing but a special means for interacting with the transcendental world, with the universe, and becoming part of it while singing. Hymn-singing, when empathizing with the tradition, is impossible without repetition. Doubts could arise as to whether the accurate performance of an old hymn's form (repeating not only the melody with words, but also its special manner of singing) leaves enough room for creativity. Without this, as we know, no tradition would be able to develop any further. And yet, the meaning of hymn-singing is gradually realized—through repeated repetition. At this point, I would like to recall the countries of East and South Asia, with which the search for spirituality and experiences is still associated in the wider world. One of them is Japan, which is characterized by respect for old traditions and their transmission through repetition. Perhaps it is for good reason that the Japanese rebuild their Shinto temples every 20 years? This is not only part of the transmission of the belief in death and regeneration, but is also a way to pass down the secrets of temple construction to future generations.

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Sutartinės kaip lietuviškumo ženklas: *ethno-* ir *contempo* sąveika

Santrauka

Jau daugiau kaip prieš 100 metų žymus tautosakininkas kanauninkas Adolfas Sabaliauskas įženklino sutartinės kaip galimą lietuvių profesionaliosios muzikos pagrindą. XIX a. pab. atradęs sutartinės, Sabaliauskas teigė: „jos gi bus lietuviui kompozitoriui neišdžiūstas šaltinis tonų veikalams, kurie lietuviui dušią lig gilumai sujudins ir lietuviui būdą nemirštančiu užlaikys“ (Sabaliauskas 1904). Sutartinių muzikai būdingi bruožai (aštrūs sekundų sąskambiai, sinkopiniai ritmai, ritmikų motoriškas, *ostinato* ir kt.) įsipina į daugelio XX a. kompozitorių (Stasio Vainiūno, Vytauto Montvilos, Teisučio Makačino, Vytauto Barkausko, Felikso Bajoro, Algirdo Martinaičio ir kt.) kūrybą. Vis dėlto tik keletas kompozitorių – Juozo Gruodžio, Juliaus Juzeliūno, Broniaus Kutavičiaus – kūryboje sutartinės iškyla kaip itin svarbus kiekvieno jų kūrybinės programos žymuo. Šių kompozitorių individualus stilius sąmoningai konstruojamas iš lietuvių folkloro (visų pirma, sutartinių) ir modernių muzikos raiškos priemonių. Juzeliūnas savąja *ethno-* ir *contempo* sąveikos samprata pasidalija teoriniame veikle *Akordo sandaros klausimu* (1972), kuriame pagrindžia dviejų uždarytų muzikinių sistemų – sutartinių ir dodekafonijos – sugretinimo principus, sukuriančius, anot kompozitoriaus, naują ypatingo tipo struktūrą.

Straipsnyje aptariamos įvairios sutartinių panaudojimo ir gyvavimo šiuolaikinėje kultūroje apraiškos. Atkreipiamas dėmesys į skirtingus sutartinių, kaip lietuviškumo ženklo, pasireiškimo būdus XXI a. pradžioje:

- į autentišką sutartinių pavidalą projektuose, jungiančiuose skirtingas etnines muzikines kultūras („Flamenco ir sutartinių jungtuvės“ (2015), „Mugamas ir sutartinės: dialogai“ (2015), „Saula sodų sadina“ festivalyje „SurSadhana 2019“ ir kt.);
- į sutartinės kaip etninę muzikos žymę tarpdalykiniuose – alternatyviosios muzikos, džiaz, vaizdo – projektuose (grupės „Fusedmarc“ ir muzikinio ansamblio „Trys keturiuose“ projektas „Waf“ (2010); Brigitos Bublytės, Dominyko Vyšniausko ir sutartinių giedotojų grupės „Trys keturiuose“ projektas „Rasų ratas“ (2016); Martyno Kuliavo (gitara) ir sutartinių giedotojų grupės „Ūtara“ projektas „Netikėti prisilietimai“ (2017) ir kt.);
- į vienbalses bitonalių sutartinės melodijų *isklotines*, melodines atkarpas, paskiras intonacijas (Veronika Povilionienė ir Petras Vyšniauskas „Apynys auga“ (1993), Agota „Saulala sadina“, Agnė Sabulytė „Saulala sadina lyliā“ ir kt.);
- į sutartinės (arba jų atkarpas), įterptas į elektroninę muziką (Linas Rimša, Linas Paulauskis „Sutartinės Party“ (2003); Girių dvasios „Ratu“ (2015), Narovski ir Ratilio projektas (feat. „Elektroninės sutartinės“));
- į garsažodinių refrenų naudojimą (Guoda Isado „Čiūto Tūto“ (2011), Monika Linkytė „Stay (Čiūto Tūto)“ (2023) ir kt.).

Sutartinių raiška šiandieniniuose alternatyviosios muzikos projektuose be galo įvairi. Vienuose jų sutartinė pateikiama kaip vientisas kūrinys, išlaikant jai būdingą struktūrą, melodiją, tekstą, kituose neatpažįstamai pakeičiamos sutartinių melodinės intonacijos, suardoma joms būdinga metroritminė struktūra, sutartinės dainuojamos vienos dainininkės, *popsimiu* balsu ir pan.

Šiuo straipsniu norima pakviesti diskutuoti: ar sutartinės vis dar galima atpažinti ir vertinti kaip lietuviškos tapatybės ženklą kiekvienu jų panaudojimo atveju? Ar visada sutartinių modifikacijos sietinos su lietuvių muzikos išskirtinumu ir lietuviškumu? Ar gali pavieniai elementai (melodija, melodijos motyvai, teksto nuotrupos, refrenai ir kt.) atstoti sutartinių, kaip archajinio mąstymo sistemos, pagrįstos visa apimančia darnos idėja, visumą? Ar pernelyg iškreiptas sutartinių vaizdas atspindi lietuviškąjį mentalitetą? Vienareikšmių atsakymų, matyt, gali ir nebūti.