



Bronius KUTAVIČIUS

THE SEASONS: ORATORIO

Vilnius Municipal Choir Jauna Muzika
St Cristopher Chamber Orchestra
Darius Meškauskas, reader
Donatas Katkus, conductor

FIRST RECORDING

BRONIUS KUTAVIČIUS: 'IF THERE IS NO MYSTERY, THERE IS NO MUSIC'

by Linas Paulauskis

Bronius Kutavičius (b. 1932) studied composition with Antanas Račiūnas at the Lithuanian State Conservatory (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre) in 1959–64 and then settled into a long career as a teacher. He has been honoured with numerous local and international awards for his work, among them the Lithuanian National Arts and Culture Prize, the highest artistic distinction in Lithuania.

Kutavičius' music has a pervasive air of mystery. Like a shaman, he knows perfectly how to mesmerise his audience and involve them in his rites; and like an architect, he builds precise constructions – scores that often look like mandalas in their configuration of geometric shapes: squares, crosses, stars, circles and the like. There is nothing complicated in his musical language: he works mostly with simultaneously repeating simple melodic and rhythmic patterns of differing length, thus producing a continuously shimmering rotation in texture. These constructions are easy to analyse in terms of structure and form, but they do not reveal where the mystery lies. Neither does the theatricality of much of his music (having the performers sitting on the floor in a circle or moving around the audience would be a superficial effect if used for its own sake), or frequent references to ancient folk-culture, history, mythology and religion. The images of the distant past must somehow bridge the gap in time to speak to a modern audience, and Kutavičius makes that connection in his own special way.

Mystery and time are concepts vital to the composer himself: 'What does a magician do? Practically nothing, except wraps himself in mystery. Well, the past is the greatest mystery. I seek mystery in all my works. If it is not there, then there is no music.'¹

In Kutavičius' music, time is important not only as a bridge between the ancient and recent past and the present day. As musical time, it is experienced by the listener either as elastic – as if stretched or shrunk at the will of the composer – or completely suspended. In general, Kutavičius is considered to be the father of Lithuanian minimalist music. The way he uses many-layered repetitions

¹ Bronius Kutavičius interviewed by Rūta Gaidamavičiūtė in 'Tikiu įkvėpimu' ('I Believe in Inspiration'), *Pergalė* (Victory), 1987, No. 12, Lietuvos rašytojų sąjunga, Vilnius, p. 151.

and reduces the musical material to rather elementary archetypal patterns may resemble early European minimalism, but it sounds quite different. Kutavičius' particular kind of minimalism is his own invention, deeply rooted in the archaic forms of Lithuanian folk-music. And yet he is able to develop such an intense drama out of minimalist repetition that his the audience is sometimes left almost hypnotised at the end of a performance.

Kutavičius' work transcends the sphere of pure music to enter much wider cultural domains. It uncovers centuries-old layers of history and reaches back to prehistoric times to speak in mythical and religious archetypes. Although Kutavičius' mission of 'cultural archaeology' calls on archaic and primaeval elements, his music is nonetheless deliberately rational, even mathematically calculated. And, most important of all, his precise systems of sounds are always full of life and strong emotion.

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BRONIUS KUTAVIČIUS IN CONVERSATION

by Martin Anderson

This interview is excerpted from a longer one first published in Fanfare, Vol. 26, No. 4, March–April 2003. Although predating the composition of The Seasons, it outlines many of the musical and cultural concerns that Kutavičius addresses in the work.

MA: *You began composing in a twelve-tone style. What were your governing concerns at that time? Were there any composers you felt had an especial effect on what you were writing?*

BK: First a small correction: I didn't start with the twelve-tone style. While we were students, we followed Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and all our modernism was like that. It was later, some six years after my graduation, when I tried dodecaphony for the first time, in my Sonata for viola and piano – well, probably before that, in a *Poem* for cello, but the score was lost and this composition doesn't exist any more.

Are there some composers you could name who influenced your work in the later 1960s?

We used to go to the Warsaw Autumn festival, and the music we heard there impressed us a lot – for example, Honegger, Messiaen, Stockhausen, Kagel, Penderecki, Lutosławski. I don't recall the titles of the works now – after all, more than 30 years have passed. But there were plenty of spectacular and bizarre things like performance art, instrumental theatre and the like. There were not so many recordings, and especially scores, at our disposal, and we relied on our own intuition. We were not connoisseurs of styles like serialism, dodecaphony, pointillism, etc. – we were aware of them only by hearsay, not by theoretical studies. By the way, it was my first journey abroad, in 1971 (if we could really call Poland 'abroad').

We in the west have the impression that twelve-tone music was frowned upon in the Soviet Union. Is that a false assumption, or was the atmosphere in the Baltic countries less repressive than in Moscow?

Well, probably, but I think that those who wanted to composed twelve-tone music did so. For example, Schnittke and Denisov in Moscow employed twelve-tone style; we visited them at home in 1972 and listened to their new works. And I think that the situation was better for the composers in Moscow since they succeeded in spreading their music in the west to a certain extent. In this regard, the situation was worse in the Baltic countries; on the other hand, we were quite unafraid, and the atmosphere was relatively favourable for creative experiments. But I rejected twelve-tone technique very soon. I am still using series but differently, in my own way, more as the organisation of the whole form than as technique. For example, my *Pantheistic Oratorio*, written in 1970, was based entirely on serial organisation, but with specific scales invented by myself, and therefore it is different from other works of such character.

When Arvo Pärt wrote his Credo in 1968, it was the title, not the style, that earned him the disapproval of the Soviet authorities. The Pantheistic Oratorio invited the same reaction – were you surprised when it happened?

I anticipated the challenge, as this composition was quite adventurous for that time. For example, it was the first instance when the performers (vocalists and instrumentalists) had to speak the verses on stage. I was blamed first by the performers – the oboist Juozas Rimas told me that he learned to play the oboe, not to scream or clap hands! And in the discussion after the premiere, which attracted a big audience, I was

publicly called a fool. They said: 'Hey, are you a fool, or do you just make fools of us?' Then my professor, Antanas Račiūnas, took my part. He told me: 'Go ahead like Napoleon and don't be afraid of anything.' In the congress of the Lithuanian Composers' Union in 1971, it was claimed that the *Pantheistic Oratorio* was too avant-garde and therefore unacceptable. Twelve years later, the Vilnius New Music Ensemble directed by Šarūnas Nakas revived the work, and now it is being performed without any hitches. The performance of this ensemble was just as it should be, with weeping, whispering, tale-telling, with different modes of expression of the language. Of course, the first performance in 1970 was not as good.

More important than the political reaction, of course, is the content of the music. This work is usually accredited with being the first specifically Lithuanian piece. How did you achieve this particular quality – with what musical and cultural 'tools'? Was this something you set out deliberately to achieve and, if so, why – as a gesture of national defiance and an assertion of the Lithuanian identity under occupation? If not, what was the principal impulse in its composition?

The most important thing in *Pantheistic Oratorio* is the strongly expressive text of the poet Sigitas Geda;¹ that is what determined the modes of musical expression I chose. If we are talking about the influence of Geda on my work, this particular text is the most important. Sometimes it happens that the musical idiom doesn't correspond to the poetic text. In my opinion, an organic connection between music and words was achieved in this composition. Well, you can do anything with this text, you can go wild with it if you want... but, to tell the truth, I didn't think about any particular 'Lithuanian quality' at that time.

Of course, we – Sigitas Geda and me – wanted to shake the academicism of that time, when most of the new works were easily predictable. We wanted to break all the clichés, to turn everything upside down.

By the time of Last Pagan Rites in 1978, this 'Lithuanian-tribal' style, if I may call it that, seems to have settled as your natural mode of expression. It's obviously something you feel deeply – but what accounts for the empathy you felt for sutartinės and the other means you use to evoke ancient Lithuania?

We had better explain first that *sutartinės* is the old Lithuanian art of counterpoint singing. The surviving examples are from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries; they were transcribed into musical notation and researched by scholars. But no one sang them. Anyway, it seemed to me that all

¹ Sigitas Geda (1943–2008) was one of the foremost poets of his generation, as well as a playwright, essayist, critic and translator.

those modernist techniques, such as dodecaphony, serialism, aleatoric composition (although I like the latter very much), just made all the music sound uniform. Even the works by western composers we occasionally heard also sounded uniform and didn't correspond to some of our inner inclinations. During the time from the *Pantheistic Oratorio* to *Last Pagan Rites*, I composed many works I would like to emphasise: *The Small Spectacle* (for actress, two violins and two pianos), *Džūkija Variations* (for folk-singer, mixed choir and string orchestra), *Sonata for piano*, *Prutena/Sand-Covered Village* (for violin, organ and bells), *Clocks of the Past* (for guitar and string quartet), *Two Birds in the Shade of the Woods* (for soprano, oboe, prepared piano and tape). All these compositions led me gradually to crystallise my own style, so that *Last Pagan Rites* was the consequence of seven or eight years of my creative work. *Last Pagan Rites* makes an enormous impression on its listeners, and I'm not exaggerating here. People leave the concert halls with their heads slightly messed up, and I don't know why – I did it spontaneously, and the result was unexpected for me, too. After this oratorio I continued with the whole cycle: *From the Yotvingian Stone* – an oratorio composed in the style of *sutartinės* (sort of) – and *The Tree of The World*, which concludes the cycle.

Last Pagan Rites was the first work where you reduced your musical idiom to permanently repeating minimalist patterns. How did you come to this approach? Was it your encounter with the archaisms of Lithuanian folk-music that encouraged you to take up minimalism, or had you encountered it in western composers like Louis Andriessen or the American minimalists?

My most important encounter with Lithuanian folk-music came in 1974, when for about a year I performed in the ethnographic ensemble directed by Povilas Mataitis.² They did cultural, partly anthropological, reconstructions of the Lithuanian culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not only music, but also rituals, costumes, life-style, habits. It was one of the first ensembles and it started the whole folk-music movement in Lithuania. This activity opened my eyes – or ears. I had some knowledge of *sutartinės* before that. But no one sang them. And when I finally heard the live sound of *sutartinės*, everything changed. It was the most powerful impression – standing still like the surface of the lake, not making any form, any development, only the colour, and that's all. So if someone says I'm a follower of American minimalists, it's nonsense. I'm not one of those people who hear a lot of music and then try to recreate something. Mind you, Andriessen's *De Staat* was also something that impressed me at that time.

² Povilas Mataitis (b. 1933) is a folklorist, film-maker and choral conductor. His ensemble helped popularise Lithuanian folklore on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

I just saw that there are some composers who do everything differently, who deal with scales and modes differently, and that was also important for me.

I understand that the reaction to Last Pagan Rites, even though it couldn't be expressed openly, indicated that people realised something special had happened. Was this part of a movement in national culture and mirrored in the other arts, or was it something that only music could do?

I think it was indeed a special event, and I won't be modest here! I remember the hearing of this work at the Baroque Hall in Vilnius ('hearings of works' were a special kind of performance of new works, organised by the Composers' Union and only for the members. On one side it was announced as the possibility for the composer once again to 'test' his ideas. On the other, of course, it was also a closed environment where criticism could be made and some sort of censorship imposed. Vytautas Landsbergis³ afterwards wrote in his review that the audience felt something in the air and hurried to take their seats in this small hall. And when the hearing came to the end, all listeners stayed in their places, confused, and no one wanted to stand up and go out. Then I said: 'This is the end! That's all!' But they were still sitting, immovable.

Of course, the opinion of the 'academic' professors rejected such things completely – well, I suppose everyone has a right to express his attitudes. Later *Last Pagan Rites* were performed many times, also abroad (in Poland, France, the Czech Republic and the UK), and always with great success.

I've talked about Last Pagan Rites because western listeners can hear the work on CD.⁴ But what other works of yours would you single out as particularly important?

I've made a 'top six' of the compositions most important for myself: the symphony-oratorio *Epitaphium Temporum Pereunti*, the cycle of oratorios, the cycle *The Gates of Jerusalem*, two operas – *Thrush*, *the Green Bird*, and *The Bear* – and also one chamber composition which I rate the most, *I Speak – My Lips Turn Into Ice*, on a text by Matsuo Basho. So as you can see, I'm not always bound by Lithuanian subjects, I have been also interested in Japanese, Indian, Sami, Welsh cultures. For example, in the composition *Battle of the Trees* (which was commissioned by the composer John Metcalf for the Vales of Glamorgan festival

³ Vytautas Landsbergis (b. 1932) made his mark as a musicologist (with a particular interest in the music of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis) before taking a leading role in the Lithuanian independence movement. In March 1990 he became the first head of state of the newly independent Lithuania.

⁴ It was released on Ondine ODE 972-2 in 2001, coupled with *Epitaphium Temporum Pereunti*.

in Cardiff) I used the text of the mythical Welsh poet Taliesin. *Epitaphium* and *The Gates of Jerusalem* are already released;⁵ the other works wait for their turn.⁶

One thing all these pieces have in common is your use of ritual and the appeal to a pagan, pre-Christian religious energy. Tell me, please, something of how you go about creating these effects, how you treat rhythm, instrumental and vocal colour, etc.

Difficult to explain. A certain intuition of what is needed, what should I make out of the poetic text or the situation I'm composing the music about. There are some calculations of rhythms but I could not set them forth systematically. There are composers who have formulated precise systems of their musical language, even have written exhaustive treatises on it. This is not the case for mine. Because there are so many sketches, so much different calculations floating around... Sometimes I even draw my rhythms in different colours. For *Epitaphium Temporum Pereuntium*, I took the ancient incantation 'sator arepo tenet opera rotas'. There are eight different letters in it; accordingly, there are eight different rhythms in the final part of *Epitaphium*. So I drew the whole rhythmical schema in colours, trying to avoid the rhythms being in phase. Therefore eight different rhythms sound simultaneously.

Also the modes and scales with their characteristic expression are very important to me. For example, the 'thrush scale', first used in the opera *Thrush, the Green Bird*: B–C sharp–E–G–A–B flat. It is so springy, so energetic and potent. And so recognisable. Later it moved as if by itself into others of my compositions, such as the string quartet *Anno cum Tettigonia*, and the mentioned *Battle of the Trees*. And everyone recognised it. I cannot get rid of this scale; it haunts me all the time.

Besides, the dramatic development of the composition is as important to me as the rhythm. And it is the rhythm that moves the whole development ahead. It is a major concern of mine to put everything into right places and proportions, so I calculate the durations of different movements and sections with the stopwatch trying to avoid any drag – if it's too long, it doesn't work. It seems to me that the biggest drawback of today's composers is the lack of form – often the musical material is very interesting but the faults of form render the whole composition inconsistent.

You've drawn a line between American minimalism and Baltic minimalism, which emerges from a tradition that is very much older. And Lithuanian minimalism differs from the minimalist styles of Estonia and Latvia, too. What are the salient musical characteristics of Lithuanian minimalism?

⁵ Available on Ondine ODE 972-2 and Dreyer-Gaido CD 21003 (2001), respectively.

⁶ *Lokys* ("The Bear") was released on Ondine ODE 1021-2D in 2002.

It is closely connected with the characteristics of the old Lithuanian folk-music which are important here: the narrow ambit of the melody, the interval of third, or fourth at most; primitive, monotonous rhythm – but this monotony is very effective. And the tradition of *sutartinės* which is absolutely unique – even our closest neighbours, the Latvians, apparently don't have anything like that. Two or four different rhythms simultaneously, strange clashes of the second intervals – what an ear people must have developed at one time to sing such things!

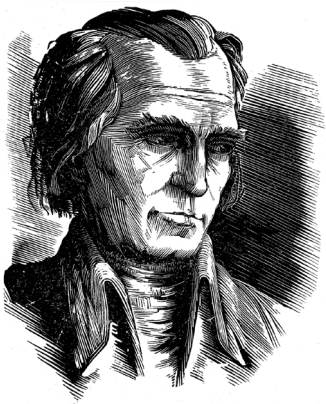
Martin Anderson founded and runs Toccata Classics and Toccata Press. He writes on music – often with an emphasis on Baltic and Nordic composers – for a variety of publications, including The Independent in the UK, Klassisk Musikmagasin in Norway, Fanfare in the USA and Finnish Music Quarterly. Editorial assistance from Linas Paulauskis was an important element in the preparation of this interview.

BRONIUS KUTAVIČIUS AND KRISTIJONAS DONELAITIS: A PARTNERSHIP ACROSS THE CENTURIES

by Austė Nakienė

In the 1970s and '80s Bronius Kutavičius sought inspiration from Lithuanian nature, poetry, folk-music, and centuries long past. In 1977 he composed *Prutena*, taking its idea and title from a book by Liudvikas Rėza (Ludwig Rhesa; 1776–1840), a professor at the University of Königsberg. This sad composition (for violin, organ and bells) recalls a fishing village that was gradually covered with sand, abandoned, and buried by the drifting dune. More recently, Kutavičius became interested in the work of the Lithuanian writer Kristijonas Donelaitis – specifically, in his long poem called *Metai* ('The Seasons'). A Lutheran priest and poet, Kristijonas Donelaitis (Christian Donalitis) was born in 1714 in Lazdynėliai (Lazdinehlen) in East Prussia,¹ and was buried in 1780, in Tolminkiemis (Tolmingkehmen, now in the Kaliningrad district of Russia). In 1740 he graduated from University of Königsberg, and wrote his famous poem over the decade from 1765. Donelaitis played organ and

¹ The village of Lazdynėliai (its German name was Lasdinehlen), Donelaitis's birthplace, formerly in Lithuania Minor, was completely destroyed during World War II and no longer exists. It was 5 km east of Gumbinė (Germ. Gumbinnen, now Gusev, in the Kaliningrad Oblast). (There is also a Lazdynėliai in the western part of Vilnius.)



A 1956 engraving of Donelaitis
by Vytautas Jurkūnas (1910–93)

other keyboards. As he himself recorded, ‘By nature I was a live temperament, I sang and played my piano.’²

Kutavičius worked on the composition of *Metai* (‘The Seasons’) from 2005 to 2008: ‘Joys of Spring’ was written in 2005, ‘Summer Toils’ in 2006, ‘Autumn Wealth’ in 2007 and ‘Winter Cares’ in 2008. *Metai* depicts the work and festivities of ordinary rural villagers and also teaches Protestant morals and ethics, urging the villagers to carry out God’s will. The poem suggests that a person lives virtuously when he follows nature’s example. Plants and animals fulfill God’s will naturally and unconsciously, but a human being must do it by working, carrying out his duties and caring for those near and dear to him. Donelaitis does not write about his parishioners praying in church; instead, he describes their work in the fields: haymaking, cutting rye, flailing peas. Nor does he depict them singing hymns in church; rather, he tells of their singing at the end of the harvest and enthusiastically belting out songs at a wedding feast. Donelaitis is not concerned with the public display of Christian behaviour but rather with the ability to live

according to Christian principles in ordinary, everyday life. His rural folk do not pray often – they even forget to say a prayer at the food-laden wedding table. Nonetheless, the poet urges his villagers to thank God for His gifts, to pray at the beginning and the end of their work, and never to forget that all their blessings come from God’s mercy.

Characteristics of Donelaitis’ Poetic Narration and Kutavičius’ Musical Expression

Kutavičius’ *The Seasons* does not set much of Donelaitis’ text. Often, indeed, there are only fragments taken from the beginning and the end of each section. The content of the poems is not recounted in words; instead, it is the music which conveys much of the scenes Donelaitis describes. The poem is multi-layered, and so Kutavičius attempts to reflect the most symbolic and significant of these layers.

² Zenonas Slaviūnas, ‘Donelaitis ir muzika’ (‘Donelaitis and Music’), *Literatūra ir kalba* (Literature and Language, Vol. VII, ed. Kostas Korsakas, Vaga, Vilnius, 1965, p. 128, reprinted in Raštai (‘Writings’), Vol. II, ed. Stasys Skrodenis, Vilniaus pedagoginio instituto leidykla, Vilnius, 2007, p. 272.

The archaic, mythic layer of the poem is very important to Kutavičius. As some scholars have noted, the composition of the poem does not correspond to the liturgical calendar.³ Time does not begin with the birth of Christ but rather – according to the villagers’ understanding – with spring, when night and day are equal in length and the warm sun melts the snow. At that time all of nature awakes: life in water, in earth, in trees, in the sky ‘arises from the dead’ and joyously praises the Lord.

According to the mythologist Norbertas Vėlius, Donelaitis’ work reflects agrarian concepts of time and space.⁴ This outlook may have been affected by the poet’s unconscious spiritual experience, and also by folk beliefs springing from ethnic cultural roots

Just as it is common in an archaic worldview, the cycle of the year correlates with other cycles of time (the beginning and the end of the world and the human life-cycle, too). In ‘Joys of Spring,’ more so than in other sections of the work, attention is given to God’s primary creation (mention is made of the creation of the animal world, and the creation of the first humans – Adam and Eve) and also to childhood (a rather long section tells of the innate similarities between the childish tendencies and pursuits of agrarian villagers and their upper-class neighbours). In the summer section allusions are to youth (‘when a moustache first starts to grow, hard tasks must be tackled’), to the dress style of young girls and to the work of hired young men. In the autumn, complaints are made about old age which ‘pleads for a warm fur jacket’. [...] In the winter, the end of the world is mentioned – God’s last judgement. Winter for Donelaitis, just as it is common in mythology, is associated not only with old age and death but also with chaos: in winter one talks about robberies, conflicts with foreigners, and about the destruction caused by fire, an element completely out of man’s control.⁵

The music of the first, pantheistic, part of the poem, ‘Joys of Spring’ , is written with much passion and is reminiscent of Stravinsky’s *Le sacre de printemps*. The changes in nature are so essential and so universal that mankind’s concerns are simply irrelevant; the music of nature is primordial, elemental and more cosmic than human in its scope. At the beginning, the first few lines of the poetic text are read by the narrator and then the orchestra presents nature’s awakening and its stirring flurry.

³ Darius Petkūnas, ‘Poema “Metai” – pamokslų rinkinys’ (‘The Poem “The Seasons” – A Collection of Sermons?’), *Tiltai* (Bridges), 1998, Nos. 2–3. Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, Klaipėda, pp. 132.

⁴ Norbertas Vėlius, ‘Profesionalusis menas ir mitologija’ (‘Professional Art and Mythology’), *Tautosakos darbai* (‘Folklore Studies’), Vol. I (VIII). Literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, Vilnius, 1992, pp. 174–80.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Jau saulelė vėl atkoptama budino svietą
Ir žiemos šaltos trūsus pargraudama juokė.
Šalčių pramonės su ledais sugaišti pagavo,
Ir putodams sniegs visur į nieką pavirto.
Tuo laukus orai drungni gaivydami glostė
Ir žoleles visokias iš numirusių šaukė.
Krūmai su šilais visais išsibudino keltis,
O laukų kalnai su kloniais pametė skrandas.

*The sun again ascending wakes the world
And laughs, as it undoes what winter's done
The quirks of frost and ice are no more seen,
Old snowdrifts froth and leave the raw earth clean
Life-giving warmer air caresses fields
Bidding all grasses rise up from the dead
Thicket and pine wood stir and straighten up
As hill and valley doff white sheepskin coats.⁶*

According to the mythology scholar Gintaras Beresnevičius, during the Middle Ages in Europe the religious experience of nature was taken for granted and so did not require special reflection – which was true also of the religious views of later rural people: ‘the sacred experience of man’s relationship to nature is native, but civilisation has drowned it out.’ This inherited sensitivity to nature remains typical of Lithuanian culture even today, and Kutavičius’ music demonstrates that the unity of man and nature is still felt in the 21st century.

In Donelaitis’ poem God is worshipped not only by man but also by birds – the stork, the crane, the nightingale, sparrows: ‘All of nature gives a sermon. The pastor of Tolminkiemis stands alongside; there is no need for him to speak’⁸ Kutavičius reiterates Donelaitis’ urging to look carefully at nature. In ‘Joys of Spring’ he also encourages people, through his music, to take an example from the birds that return in early spring: they do not find much food, but they manage with what they can find. People, too, should not long for more material things, but be satisfied with what they have – an eighteenth-century lesson on moderation which has a very contemporary ring today.

Į paukščius žiūrėk! Viens prastą kirminą kramto,
O kitsai, stokodams grūdo, gnyba žolelę.
Juk ir jie kasmets, mus atlankyt sukeliavę,
Kūdą vis ir alkstantį pavasarį randa;
O vei, todėl tikt nei viens niekados nesiskundžia.
Tav, žmogau! miels Dievs daugių daugiaus dovanojo,

*Observe the birds! One chews a shrivelled worm,
Another, lacking grain, goes pecking grass.
Do not they too, returning every year
To see us, find a bleak and hungry spring?
Yet not a single bird you’ll hear complain.
To you, man, God has granted so much more,*

⁶ Kristijonas Donelaitis. *The Seasons*, translated by Peter Tempest, Vaga, Vilnius, 1985, p. 14.

⁷ Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Ant laiko ašmenų* (‘On the Edge of Time’), Aidai, Vilnius, p. 94.

⁸ Petkūnas, *loc. cit.*, p. 131.

O tu dar nurni, kad, kartais alkaną dieną
Ar skūpus čėsus sulaukęs, šupinį gramdai?

*But still you grumble when lean days arrive
And make you scrape the pot of pea-mush clean.⁹*

Literary scholars often comment that Donelaitis' poem is a work in which something is always happening but there is no single important event, no climax – or so it might seem when evaluated by the literary standards of today and/or those fostered by the film industry. Yet *Metai* was written at a time when the melting of snow and the return of birds certainly were events, and Donelaitis writes of them with awe. Indeed, there are so many events and changes in this poem that before one is finished, another begins, so that the reader must quickly shift his attention to something new. Such polyphonic action is typical of Kutavičius' music, where one layer often covers another; a barely audible counterpoint slowly thickens and becomes a main thread of the musical fabric, overlapping the earlier one. The constant slow change and occasional unexpected events or musical sounds that break up the flow are common characteristics of both Donelaitis' poetic narration and Kutavičius' musical expression.

For example, in 'Summer Toils' [2], a farmer engages in a philosophical monologue where he compares man's life to that of field grasses, first budding, then flowering and later being cut down by the scythe. This monologue is suddenly cut short by the appearance of the overseer swearing in German. The loud curses clap like summer thunder. The Lithuanian farmers, who are used to starting the day with prayer, are frightened. The lesson is made that it is obscene to swear like that so early in the morning, since such behaviour breaks up the harmony in the world. After a while the narrative returns to the comparison of the unexpected end of human life to that of the grasses being cut while still in full bloom.

Mes silpni daiktai, kaip švents mums praneša Dovyds,
Nei žolelės ant laukų dar augdami žydime.
Kožnas viens žmogus užgimdams pumpurui lygus,
Iš kurio žiedelis jo pirmiaus išsilukština,
Iš kurio jis, peržydėjęs ir nusirėdęs,
Užaugin vaisius ir amžį savo pabaigia.

*We're feeble creatures, as St David said,
We flower but as grass does in the field,
Each man, when he is born, is like a bud,
From which at first a little bloom is hatched.
When this has faded and the petals gone,
It bears its fruit and then – to life, adieu!¹⁰*

Kutavičius selects both of these episodes. In 'Summer Toils' curses resound like thunder, and then comes the haymaking scene. But in his interpretation he gives more time to observing the verdant summer green

⁹ *The Seasons*, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

and the swaying of the haymakers in the fields; by lingering on this scene he helps the listener empathise with the people toiling in the fields.

Tuo laukai kaip skruzdėlynas kribždėti pagavo,
Ir gaspadoriai su bernais šienaudami spardės.
Rodės man, kad visas sviets, kovot susibėgęs,
Kardus ir šobles į margas nunešė pievas.
Štai tuojaus visur išsišiepusi Giltinė smaugė
Ir visoms lankelėms raudą didę padarė.

*The fields were busy as the anthill now,
The mowers treading on each other's heels.
It seemed that all the world had joined the fray,
With sword and sabre to the meadows come.
Now grinning death laid grass low everywhere
And plunged the meadows into bitter grief.¹¹*

In 'Summer Toils' Donelaitis also describes the rituals of the rye harvest: the carrying of the harvest wreath and the sprinkling of water over one another so as to ensure abundance. But Kutavičius ignores this scene and does not allude to the rye-harvest feasting. So the most impressive part of his 'Summer Toils' are the sounds of the sharpening of the scythe, and the swishing of the grass being cut (heard on a recording). These sounds of haymaking are most probably embedded in the composer's memory from his rural childhood when, in the morning and afternoon, the ringing sound of scythes being sharpened was a constant background sound.

At the beginning of every section of the poem, each season is described in detail, explaining the journey of the sun through the sky, the changes in nature, and the accompanying swings in human mood. 'Autumn Wealth' [3] begins with the autumn equinox, when the light and the warmth of the sun starts to wane just as the diversity, abundance and beauty of nature gradually begin to disappear. The music of this movement matches the cooling weather and the growing length of the shadows. The sadness of this second half of the year is best conveyed by Kutavičius' choice of a mode which suggests autumn.

Ant saulėlė vėl nu mūs atstodama ritas
Irgi palikusi mus greita vakarop nusileidžia.
Vei kasdien daugiaus ji mums savo spindulį slepia;
O šešėliai vis ilgyn kasdien išsitiesia.
Vėjai su sparnais pamaži jau pradedą mūdraut
Ir šilumos atstankas išbaidydami šlamščia.

*Now does the sun we love retreat again
And, leaving us, roll swiftly down to dusk,
Hiding its rays from us as days go by,
And longer every day the shadows lie.
The winged winds again to mischief turn
And shoo away what ever warmth remains.¹²*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Taking his lead from Donelaitis' poem, Kutavičius employs his favourite method of reconstruction. In 'Autumn Wealth' his interest is caught by the wedding description where singing and dancing are mentioned. Donelaitis does not specify what songs or what dances were performed, but from his caustic reference to 'swinish songs' it can be surmised that they were humorous taunts, making fun of the wedding party or some spontaneous erotic couplets shouted out by the musicians.

Štai visi svoteliai, su pasimėgimu valge
Ir tirštų malkelių jau dosnai prisisirbė,
Poterių, kaip krikščionims reik, skaityt užsimiršo
Ir kaip kiaulės almono (tikl gėda sakyti)
Kiauliškas dainas dainuot ir žviegt užsimanė.

*So all the guests when they had had their fill
And generously sipped the good strong beer
Forgot to say a prayer, as Christians should,
And like prize pigs (I am ashamed to say)
Chose to bawl swinish songs, to shriek and squeal.¹³*

Relying on his imagination Kutavičius gives voice to the wedding festivities. He takes two songs from a collection of folksongs published by Liudvikas Rėza (Ludwig Rhesa) in 1825. One, about the bedding-down of a young couple, is slightly erotic and the second one is a matchmaking song, describing the desired qualities of the groom. (The collection does not contain bawdy songs because Rėza, as a representative of the Romantic Age, aimed at a reader with a subtle, sophisticated taste.) In the scene of the wedding festivities, Kutavičius creates an impression of singing in an altered state of mind, and later the rough singing is transformed into a dance – an episode that reminds one of folk-fiddling. Kutavičius also interpolates – and much alters – a few lines of text from a collection of short stories *Kasdienės istorijos* ('Everyday Stories')¹⁴ by Petras Cvirka (1909–47). Finally the dance becomes a loud clamour, where one hears simultaneous arguments and also expressions of joy, laughter, etc. (It is possible that the suggestion of live, inspirational folk music-making is another echo from the composer's own memories.)

Taip besipasakojant, štai špielmonai susibėgo
Ir savo būriškus ant šokio skambino žaislus.
Plyckius cimbulus, o Kubas čirškino smuiką,
Bet Žnairuks zūbus ištempęs birbino vamzdį.
Štai tuojaus Enskys, mergas krūvon suvadinęs,
Su puikiais kaimynų klapais ragino šokti.

*When they were talking, the musicians came
To play folk instruments for dancing too.
A zither Plyckius plucked, while Kubas scarped
A fiddle, and Žnairukas piped away.
So promptly rounding up the girls, Enskys
Urged them to dance with handsome neighbour lads.¹⁵*

¹³ *The Seasons*, p. 88.

¹⁴ From 'Mirusiųjų reikalai' ('Matters concerning the Dead'), in the collection of short stories *Kasdienės istorijos* ('Everyday Stories'), Sakalas, Kaunas, 1938.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

In *Metai* episodes are often paired in the interests of contrast: some comical incident will often be followed by a tragic event, the behaviour of one villager is praised while that of another is reproached, and so on. As already mentioned, often several events take place simultaneously: Donelaitis' wedding ends abruptly and unexpectedly – the guests are frightened by the noise from a nearby barn.

Žemė su visais daiktais virpėti pagavo.
Tuos svečiai visi, dėl to didei nusigandę,
Iš svetlyčios būriškos kūliais išsirito,
[...]

O štai vis dėl niekniekių taip nusitiko;
Nės Dočys su šešiais kūliais, kuldami žirnius,
Taip nesvietiškai virkščias su spragilu daužė,
Kad ir pelės po šiaudais kribždėti nedrįso.

*The ground and all around began to quake
And, panic-stricken, all the wedding-quests
Came tumbling from the room head over heels,
[...]*

*And all this happened for a trifling cause.
Dočys with six hired men was threshing peas,
Beating each stalk so ruthlessly with fails
The mice did not dare rustle in the thatch.¹⁶*

The guests become frightened by the rhythmic beating of the six men. It does not go unnoticed by the composer – he was obviously taken by the connection of work and rhythm and decides to repeat this episode in music. But Kutavičius gives sound to the thrashing not in the autumn section of his composition, but in the part on winter.

Ant žiemos narsai jau vėl rūstaudami grįžta,
Ir šiaurys pasišiaušęs vėl mus atlekia gandyt.
Vei kaip ant ežerų visur langai pasidaro,
Lygiai kaip antai stiklorius įdeda stiklą.

*The furies of the winter now return,
A stiff north wind comes blowing chill and stern.
Thin frosty windows form on every lake
As if the glazier had cut glass to shape.¹⁷*

The cold part of the year – winter – is associated in mythical thinking with decay, old age, the end and death. In this section Donelaitis writes about the men of the village who gather at a traditional meeting to discuss a fire caused by a lack of caution. Kutavičius turns away from the horrific fire scene and the ensuing judgment. Following the example set by Donelaitis, in the introduction to this movement [4], the composer brings the listener into the beginning of the cold season, and then he presents one of the never-ending tasks of the villagers – threshing. To illustrate this work, Kutavičius again includes examples from Lithuanian folklore.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

This time the text is made up of short syllables, imitating threshing done in fours, in fives and in sixes. By focusing his attention on work, he agrees with Donelaitis who in his poem also values work above all else. According to Protestant belief, one serves God best when one lives and works according to his vocation and calling, and it follows that a villager behaves most morally when he carries out the farm tasks prescribed for him. The last part of the winter section, both in the poem and in the oratorio, ends with a prayer, thanking God for all the blessings of the past year and asking Him to watch over the people during the next year.

Questions of National Identity in the Eighteenth and 21st Centuries

Donelaitis was very much concerned with the issue of ethnic identity. He understood that the specific character of any group of people is formed by language, which helps them perceive the world. For this reason the cultural historian Vytautas Kavolis considers him to be a precursor of Johann Gottfried Herder, who was the author of such concepts as romantic nationalism and nation-building. But, according to Kavolis, Donelaitis

had not yet reached the understanding that there is a universal value for ethnic identities, possibly because Donelaitis, unlike the German Herder, had to defend an ethnic identity, which was negated by others who considered themselves superior.¹⁸

Vokiečiai lietuvninką per drimelį laiką,
O prancūzpalaičiai į jį žiūrėdami šypsos.
Šypsos rods, o tik mūsų šauną garbina duoną
Ir dešras rūkytas su pasimėgimu valgo.

*Germans think Lithuanians are fools
And Frenchmen look upon us with a smile.
They grin at us, but still admire our bread
And eat with relish our smoked sausages.*¹⁹

Donelaitis holds his Lithuanians to a higher standard; he praises them but also often criticises them. He scolds those Lithuanian villagers who are lazy, who torture animals, who do not save, do not plan for the future, who eat and drink too much, who are not careful with their tools of work, who scold and get angry, who are unclean, who imitate Germans, who do not send their children to school, who do not want to pay their teachers, who criticise pastors, and so on. And he castigates the Germans, Swiss and French for stealing, for cheating, for lying, for swearing, for drinking everyday and for spreading the Devil's teachings (perhaps having in mind the secular philosophy of the Enlightenment).²⁰

¹⁸ Vytautas Kavolis, *Epochų signatūros* ('Signatures of Epochs'), Algimanto Mackaus knygų leidimo fondas, Chicago, 1991, p. 69.

¹⁹ *The Seasons*, p. 145.

²⁰ Kavolis, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

According to Saulius Žukas, 'national or ethnic honour in *The Seasons* is not based on any historical accomplishments of the group, but rather on the morality of the people'.²¹ So the poet does not think Lithuanian people are in any way inferior to the other groups: he encourages them to maintain their language, praises them for their piety, for their traditional foods and their colourful dress. He even believes that Lithuanians could be better than the other ethnic groups living in that area, if only they would avoid godlessness and other bad habits coming in from the western world.

Are these ideas of Donelaitis about ethnic identity important to Bronius Kutavičius? Yes, because he has always paid attention to the changes in Lithuanian identity and reflected those changes in his music. Donelaitis' words about ethnic identity are heard in 'Summer Toils', which starts with a greeting of the villagers. By the greeting 'Good day, oh you motley world!' Donelaitis has in mind the Lithuanian ethnic minority which set itself apart by its very brightly patterned and bold-coloured dress. He greets them in Lithuanian, maintaining that the language is not some old relic but an important treasure, worth preserving.

Sveiks, Dieve duok! sulauk dar daug pavasario švenčių
Irgi, sulaukęs jas, vis sveiks ir drūts pasilinksmyk.
Taip Dieve duok kožnam, kurs mūsų Lietuvą garbin
Ir lietuviškai kalbėdams baudžiavą seka.

*God grant that many more spring festivals
Find you in robust health and merry mood!
God grant this too to all who love our land,
Converse in Lithuanian and work hard.*²²



Theodor Lepner, *Der Preussische Litthau, Danzig, 1744*

²¹ In Kristijonas Donelaitis, *Metai ir pasakėčios* ('The Seasons and the Fables'), Baltos lankos, Vilnius, 1994, p. 6.

²² *The Seasons*, p. 46.

Donelaitis understood that the status of Lithuanians was not something to be envied – they were peasants, whereas those in the upper classes in East Prussia were all foreigners. Speaking for Lithuanians he stated: ‘We luckless bast-shoe’²³ Lithuanians can’t hope to match the landlords and their men.’²⁴ But he did not think that being of the working class in any way demeaned them. In the poem he compares the classes as equals:

Žinom juk visi, kaip mes nuoginteli gemam,
Taip didžiausias pons, kaip mes, vyžoti nabagai.

[...]

Ponų dar nei viens su kardu negimė sviete,
O tarp būrų vėl nei viens sav n’atnešė žagrę.

*We know that all of us were naked born,
The great lord and we wretches in bast shoes.*

[...]

*There’s not one lord was yet born with a sword,
Nor yet one peasant brought along a plough.’²⁵*

All people are equal at birth and all equally can gain honour by moral behaviour. It is interesting to note that Donelaitis’ words about human rights and freedoms are very similar to those written by Thomas Jefferson in America’s Declaration of Independence: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ (The poem was written in 1765–75, and the Declaration made in 1776.)

In ‘Summer Toils’ Kutavičius draws attention to ideas of Donelaitis that have not lost their relevance. The poet was not writing about Lithuanians living under occupation – a condition calling for cultural resistance, as it did during the second half of the twentieth century. Instead, he is talking about a nation living alongside other nations as it was in the eighteenth century and is now again in the 21st. He is talking about the relationship between one’s own ethnic traditions and broader European traditions, a relationship which requires constant reflection and negotiation. Which, for example, is better – the religious experience of nature and its changes as inherent in Lithuanian ethnic culture or a western, scientific, secular understanding of seasonal phenomena.

The intertwined Polish and Lithuanian identity of the upper nobility – *gente lithuanus, natione polonus* – did not help Lithuanians to maintain their own identity. In the 21th century, when many Lithuanians have emigrated to other European countries and more distant parts of the world, this issue

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

is actual once again. Emigrants often try to adapt to their new context; they forget their mother tongue, and even change names they fear are difficult to pronounce. During the eighteenth century in the Commonwealth of the two Republics of Poland and Lithuania, the official language was Polish. Many nobles therefore rejected the Lithuanian language and identity, thinking that they thus gained a more prestigious identity and status. Now Lithuanians abroad often behave in a similar manner, following the tradition set by the nobles. Donelaitis' teachings provide an important reminder of the importance of maintaining one's cultural identity, and Kutavičius reinforces this message.

The national histories of eastern Europe contain painful memories: its peoples were much reduced and their cultural treasures plundered and destroyed. Kutavičius recalls some important moments of the history of the Lithuanian nation in his works and thus appeals to people alive today, stimulating their cultural memory through artistic suggestion. In his poem Donelaitis calls the peasants who share their personal experiences 'smart Lithuanian philosophers'.²⁶ Kutavičius, who contemplates how to reconcile cosmopolitanism and national identity, archaic traditions and modern cultural expressions, is also a Lithuanian philosopher.

*Dr Austė Nakienė is a research fellow at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. In 2003–7 she published a series of phonograph records of Lithuanian folk music (1908–42), held in the archives of the Institute. In 2009–11 she took part in a project providing audio content for the European digital library www.europeana.eu. In 2011 she participated in the publication of the very first records of Lithuanian folklore Eduard Wolter's cylinders recorded in Lithuania (1908–1909), held in the Berlin Phonogram-Archiv. She is interested in contemporary folklore and also writes about the relation between Lithuanian art music and ethnic music tradition. In 2004 she published the article 'Reconstruction of Historical Sounds from 1970 to 1990. Bronius Kutavičius' Music and Lithuanian Folklore Movement' (in *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis*, Vol. XV) and wrote an introduction to the CD Bronius Kutavičius. The Small Spectacle, released by the Music Information Centre Lithuania, in 2011.*

²⁶ *The Seasons*, p. 26.

The actor **Darius Meškauskas** is a member of five theatre troupes in Lithuania. He is a graduate of the Vilnius Conservatoire (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), and an Associate Professor there. He had created many roles in dramas, musicals, cinema and TV films.



Vilnius City Municipal Choir Jauna Muzika is considered to be one of the most professional and vigorous vocal collectives in Lithuania. Every year it arranges over 60 concerts in Lithuania and abroad. The choir was founded in 1989 by the conductor and composer Remigijus Merkelys and its long-lived managing director for many years, Algimantas Gurevičius. From 1992 the artistic director of the choir has been the conductor and composer Vaclovas Augustinas. In 1994 Jauna Muzika became the Vilnius City Municipal Choir and Salomėja Jonynaitė became its managing director.

In the years 1990–96 Jauna Muzika participated in sixteen international choral contests and won fifteen of them. The choir received the highest award – Grand Prix Europeo – at the Grand Prix Winners Contest organised by the International Federation for Choral Music in Varna (Bulgaria) in 1993. In the twenty years since then Jauna Muzika's repertoire has grown into an important and diverse collection. It sings a *cappella* music by masters of all epochs, established masterpieces and new vocal-instrumental compositions. Works of Lithuanian composers – both classical and modern – form an important part of the Jauna Muzika repertoire as well.

Vilnius City Municipal Choir Jauna Muzika has cooperated with the Tel Aviv Symphony Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, the Israel Camerata Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra Moscow Virtuosi and the St Petersburg Camerata. It has presented programmes directed by such well-known conductors as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Avner Biron, Nicholas McGegan, Noam Sheriff, Vladimir Spivakov and Pinchas Steinberg and has performed throughout Europe as well as in Japan, Israel and China.

Founded in 1994 on the initiative of Donatas Katkus, the **St Christopher Chamber Orchestra** of the Municipality of Vilnius was previously known as the Vilnius Chamber Orchestra. In 1995 it was named after St Christopher, the patron of the city of Vilnius. In 1998, it was granted the status of a municipal orchestra.

During its two decades of existence, the orchestra has gained national and international recognition, giving up to 80 concerts and preparing about fifteen new programmes a year ranging from the Baroque to the contemporary: its repertoire features works by over thirty Lithuanian composers – including almost all the music for strings by Feliksas Bajoras, Bronius Kutavičius and Osvaldas Balakauskas – but without neglecting foreign composers, among them Pēteris Vasks, Erkki-Sven Tüür, John McCabe, Sadie Harrison, Shih, Axel Ruoff and Roberto Sierra. The

orchestra is well known as a daringly innovative ensemble, eager to expand its repertoire and constantly involved in a number of original projects, including jazz performances, rock operas and pop events.

The St Christopher Chamber Orchestra has recorded over twenty CDs for Naxos, Fleur de Son Classics (USA), Ambitus (Germany), BIS (Sweden), Dutton, Metier and NMC (UK) and other labels.



Donatas Katkus, the artistic director and conductor of the St Christopher Chamber Orchestra, has been in charge since the inception of the ensemble. Conductor, violinist, teacher and musicologist, he is a graduate of the Vilnius and Moscow Conservatoires and has also participated in master classes in Budapest. In 1965 he founded the Vilnius String Quartet and for 29 years was a member, touring the world with it. Donatas Katkus is a professor at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, where he teaches chamber ensemble and string quartet. He has been running master-classes in Pommersfelden (Germany) since 1995, the year in which he also became artistic director of the St Christopher Summer Music Festival in Vilnius. In 2001 he was awarded the Lithuanian National Arts and Culture Prize, and in 2003 the prize of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). In 2012, on the occasion of his 70th birthday, he was decorated with the honorary insignia 'Carry Your Light and Faith' by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture.

[1] Pavasario Linksmybės

Reader

Jau saulelė vėl atkoptama budino svieta
 Ir žiemos šaltos trūsus pargraudama juokės.
 Šalčių pramonės su ledais sugaišti pagavo,
 Ir putodams sniegs visur į nieką pavirto.
 Tuo laukus orai drungni gaivydami glostė
 Ir žoleles visokias iš numirusių šaukė.
 Krūmai su šilais visais išsibudino keltis,
 O laukų kalnai su kloniais pametė skrandas.
 Vislab, kas rudens bjaurybėj numirė verkdamas,
 Vislab, kas ežere gyvendams peržiemavojo
 Ar po savo keru per žiemą buvo miegojęs,
 Vislab tuo pulkais išlindo vasarą sveikyt.

Choir

Jau saulelė vėl atkoptama budino svieta
 Ir žiemos šaltos trūsus pargraudama juokės.
 Šalčių pramonės su ledais sugaišti pagavo,
 Ir putodams sniegs visur į nieką pavirto.

Reader

Taip šūtkas betaisant štai žiema pasibaigia;
 Ogi pavasaris, atžengdamas su vasara miela,
 Atliktų žiemos darbų visur pasigenda.
 [...]
 Gana.

[1] Joys of Spring

The sun again ascending wakes the world
 And laughs, as it undoes what winter's done.
 The quirks of frost and ice are no more seen,
 Old snowdrifts froth and leave the raw earth clean.
 Life-giving warmer air caresses fields
 Bidding all grasses rise up from the dead.
 Ticket and pine wood stir and straighten up
 As hill and valley doff white sheepskin coats.
 All who in autumn were struck numb with grief
 Or wintered in the depth of frozen lakes
 Or slept under a stump all winter long
 Into the open to greet summer throng.

The sun again ascending wakes the world
 And laughs, as it undoes what winter's done.
 The quirks of frost and ice are no more seen,
 Old snowdrifts froth and leave the raw earth clean.

And thus with many a jest is winter gone
 And spring, bringing sweet summer in its train,
 Finds many tasks unfinished everywhere.
 [...]
 Enough.

Reader

„Sveiks, svieteli margs! šventes pavasario šventės;
Sveiks ir tu, žmogau! sulaukęs vasarą mielą;
Sveiks kvietkelėmis pasidžiaugęs, sveiks prisiuošęs;
Sveiks, Dieve duok! sulauk dar daug pavasario švenčių
Irgi, sulaukęs jas, vis sveiks ir drūts pasilinksmyk.
Taip Dieve duok kožnam, kurs mūsų Lietuvą garbin
Ir lietuviškai kalbėdams baudžiąvą seka.
Tam Dieve duok! sulaukt kasmets pavasarį sveiką,
Ogi, pabaigus tą, po tam ir vasarą linksmą.“
Taip prieš Sekmines būrus į baudžiąvą kviesdams
Ir, kas reik atlikt, pamokydams sveikino Pričkus.

Choir

Sveiks, svieteli margs! šventes pavasario šventės;
Sveiks ir tu, žmogau! sulaukęs vasarą mielą;
Sveiks kvietkelėmis pasidžiaugęs, sveiks prisiuošęs;
Sveiks, Dieve duok! sulauk dar daug pavasario švenčių.
[...]
Mes, lietuvninkai vyžoti, mes, nabagėliai,
Ponams ir tarnams jų rods prilgti negalim;
Bet ir poniškas ligas kentėt neprivalom.
[...]
„Kad perkūns, kad velnias!“ Ai, žmogau, pasimislyk!
Kam dūksti taip, kam keiki taip išsižiojęs?
Ar tave patį jau šėtons padūkino visą?
Neprieteliau! kam plėšais taip, kas tav pasidarė?
Bet jis dar labiau ir taip durnuoti pradėjo,
Kad visoki paukščiai po dangum nusigando.
Syveida kytra nulenkus uodegą bėgo;

‘Hail to the world fresh from the rites of spring,
And hail to man, now summer has come in!
Hail to you all, who relish blooms and scents!
God grant that many more spring festivals
Find you in robust health and merry mood!
God grant this too to all who love our land,
Converse in Lithuanian and work hard.
God grant spring smile upon you every ear
And summer follow, bringing you good cheer!’
Thus on the eve of Whitsun Pričkus hailed
The peasants, and their duties he detailed.

Hail to the world fresh from the rites of spring,
And hail to man, now summer has come in!
Hail to you all, who relish blooms and scents!
God grant many more spring festivals.
[...]
We luckless bast-shoe Lithuanians
Can’t hope to match the landlords and their men
Nor do we envy their infirmities.
[...]
‘May all hell’s devils...’ Pause awhile, may man!
Why fill your mouth with curses and such wrath?
Or is it Satan who has maddened you?
You reprobate, why do you foam with rage?
But now his fury rose to such a pitch
That every bird took to the air in fright,
The fox ran off, her tail between her legs,

O sturluks, ausis iškėlęs irgi drebėdams,
Į arčiausius krūmus vos nusikakino slėptis.
Bet ir rupuižės, ir varlės taip nusigando,
Kad jos umaru su vaikais į vandenį šoko.
Žiurkės po kraiku su pelėms irgi pelėdoms
Dėl tokių baisybių jau apalpti pradėjo;
O daug žvirblių pusgyvių nuo stogo nupuolė.
Taip, ar girdit, taip tas neprietelius prasieikė.

3 Rudenio Gėrybės

Reader

Ant saulėlę vėl nu mūs atstodama ritas
Irgi palikusi mus greita vakarop nusileidžia.
Vei kasdien daugiaus ji mums savo spindulį slepia;
O šešėliai vis ilgn kasdien išsitiesia.
Vėjai su sparnais pamaži jau pradeda mūdrait
Ir šilumos atstankas išbaidydami šlamščia.
Todėl ir orų drungnums atvėsti pagavo
Irgi senystę jau graudena kailinius imtis.
Bobą su diedu blogu pas kakalį siunčia,
O kitus atšilt į stubą ragina lįsti
Ir valgius drungnus bei šiltą viralą valgyt.
Žemė su visais pašaliais įmursi verkia,
Kad mūsų ratai jos išplautą nugarą drasko.
Kur pirm du kuinu lengvai mums pavežė naštą,
Jaugi dabar keturiais arkliais pavažiuoti nepigu.
Ratas ant šies braškėdams sukasi sunkiai
Irgi žemes bjaurias išplėšdams teškina šmotais.
Vei laukų sklypai visur skendėdami maudos,
O lytus žmonėms teškėdams nugarą skalbia.

The hare with long ears quivering from fear
Fled to the nearest bushes there to hide.
The toads too and the frogs were so alarmed
The leapt with all their young into the pond.
The attic rats, as well as mice and owls,
Felt their heads reel, his language was so foul,
And half-dazed sparrows tumbled from the roof,
Hearing the words with which he hurled abuse.

3 Autumn Wealth

Now does the sun we love retreat again
And, leaving us, roll swiftly down to dusk,
Hiding its rays from us as days go by,
And longer every day the shadows lie.
The winged winds again to mischief turn
And shoo away whatever warmth remains.
Here's now a nip in weather seeming fair
That tells old folk to don their sheepskin coats
And sits an ailing couple by the stove
While driving others in to warm their ribs
With oven fare and bowls of steaming stew.
Wet from the frequent rains the soft earth weeps
Because our cart-wheels rut its well-washed spine.
Where once two nags could haul a load with ease
Now four draught-horses hardly can get through,
The wheel on squealing axle barely turns
Or slips and spatters foul mud all around.
Now fields are waterlogged and seem afloat,
And heavy showers wash the people's backs.

Vižos su blogais sopagais vandenį surbia
Ir bjaurius purvus kaip tašlą mydami minko.

Choir

Ant saulelė vėl nu mūs atstodama ritas
Irgi palikusi mus greita vakarop nusileidžia.
Vei kasdien daugiaus ji mums savo spindulį slepia;
O šešėliai vis ilgn kasdien išsitiesia.
Vėjai su sparnais pamaži jau pradeda mūdrait
Ir šilumos atstankas išbaidydami šlamščia.

[...]

Žemė su visais pašaliais įmursi verkia,
Kad mūsų ratai jos išplautą nugarą drasko.
Kur pirm du kuinu lengvai mums pavežė našta,
Jaugi dabar keturiais arkliais pavažiuoti nepigu.
Ratas ant ašies braškėdams sukasi sunkiai
Irgi žemes bjaurias išplėdams teškina šmotais.

[...]

O lytus žmonėms teškėdams nugarą skalbia.

[...]

Ak, kur dingot, giedros jūs gi, pavasario dienos.

[...]

Štai kvieslys puikiai rėdyts ir raits pasirodė
Ir visus svodbon ateit pas Krizą paprašė.
Svotų kožnas viens, tuojaus kepurę nuvoždams
Ir už garbę tą didei kaip reik dėkavodams,
Krizą pagarbyt ir svodbon ateit pažadėjo.

[...]

Rėdės ir svodbon nukeliaut kuinus pažebojo.
Ypačiai iš visų Enskys savo šimelį prausė
Ir, balnodams jį, prie šonų prisegė kilpas.

Old boots and bast-shoes suck the water in
And knead the fould mud underfoot like dough.

Now does the sun we love retreat again
And, leaving us, roll swiftly down to dusk,
Hiding its rays from us as days go by,
And longer every day the shadows lie.
The winged winds again to mischief turn
And shoo away whatever warmth remains.

[...]

Wet from the frequent rains the soft earth weeps
Because our cart-wheels rut its well-washed spine.
Where once two nags could haul a load with ease
Now four draught-horses hardly can get through,
The wheel on squealing axle barely turns
Or slips and spatters foul mud all around.

[...]

And heavy showers wash the people's backs.

[...]

Where have you disappeared, fair days of spring.

[...]

A well-dressed envoy rode up to invite
All to a wedding feast at Krizas' place.
Each wedding-guest, doffing his cap at once
And voicing thanks for the great kindness shown,
Promised do honour Krizas and attend.

[...]

Harnessed their jades to ride off to the feast.
Enskys took special pains: he washed the grey,
Saddled him, fitting stirrups on each side.

Lithuanian folk text (from a folksong)

Pjausva mudu abudu, pjausva mudu abudu,
Pjausva naująsias lentužes abudu, naująsias
lentužes abudu.
Dirbsva mudu abudu, dirbsva mudu abudu,
Dirbsva naująją lovųžę abudu, naująją lovųžę
abudu.
Klosva mudu abudu, klosva mudu abudu,
Klosva naująją paklodę abudu, naująją paklodę
abudu.
Gulsva mudu abudu, gulsva mudu abudu,
Gulsva į naują lovųžę abudu, į naują lovųžę
abudu.¹

From another folksong

Pirš man iš Danskos, iš Kesteryno,
Iš Klaipėdužės, iš Karaliaučiaus.
Kad surokavau ant trijų šimtų,
Iš trijų šimtų viens tepatiko.
Laibs augumėlis, skaistus veidelis,
Į visą Preisą nēr kito tokio.
O kad jis stojis kaip parašytas,
O kad jis mynė kaip ant dakotų.²
End of Lithuanian folk-texts

¹ This folksong was written down in the first half of the nineteenth century in Lithuania Minor, i.e. the part of East Prussia inhabited by Lithuanians. After World War II the area became part of the newly formed Kaliningrad Oblast, an enclave of Russia wedged between Lithuania and Poland. Cf. Liudvikas Rėza, *Lietuvių liaudies dainos* ('Lithuanian Folksongs'), Vol. 2, Vaga, Vilnius: 1964, pp. 119–20.

² Written down at the same time and in the same place as the preceding folksong. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 31.

³ Now Gdańsk in Poland.

⁴ The Lithuanian form Kesterynas used in the song is based on the earliest known version of the place name, Cozsterine. The German form was Cüstrin and then later Küstrin. After World War II the town found itself in Poland and is now called Kostrzyn nad Odrą. The section of the town on the west bank of the Oder remained in Germany and is called Küstrin-Kietz.

⁵ The Lithuanian name for Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, the administrative centre of the Kaliningrad Oblast).

Lithuanian folk text (from a folksong)

The two of us together will cut, the two of us
together will cut,
The two of us will cut new boards, the two of us.
The two of us together will build, the two of us
together will build,
The two of us will build a new bed, the two of us.
The two of us together will put, the two of us
together will put,
The two of us will put a new sheet on, the two of us.
The two of us will lie down together, the two of us
will lie down together,
The two of us will lie down on the new bed, the
two of us.

They tried to match me with a husband from
Danzig,³ from Küstrin,⁴
From Klaipėda, from Karaliaučius.⁵
I counted three hundred of them,
Out of the three hundred I only liked one.
Handsome of figure, fine of face,
In all of Prussia there is none to compare,
And when he stood it was as if in a painting,
And when he walked it was as if on ducats.

Interpolated Text by Petras Cvirka

Pfy pfy ana man guli sau éééé
Kai jinai ten guli sau
Sakyk kai ana lūpom šiušin
Ten pabučiuok man anuočės
Nė iš kur nė kaip
Sviets didžiai įbaugints
Ein zwei drei
Kas su anuo sakyk
Ak tu šėtono sėkla
Šalt dantelis ant dantelo nesueina
Tas yr gerai dūšele
Tave velnias kusin eretiko šmots
[End of Cvirka text]

Taip laukai pasiliko mums visur gedulingi,
Irgi grožybės jų nei kapas sens pasirodo.

[4] Žiemos Rūpesčiai

Reader

Ant žiemos narsai jau vėl rūstaudami grįžta,
Ir šiaurys pasišiaušęs vėl mus atlekia gandint.
Vei kaip ant ežerų visur langai pasidaro,
Lygei kaip antai stiklorius įdeda stiklą.
Taipgi namai žuvių, kur varlės vasarą šventė,
Dėl barnių žiemos nei su šarvais užsidengia
Ir tamsoj miegot kiekvieną gyvuolį siunčia.
Ant laukus žiemys jau taip nugandino bardams,
Kad ir balos, ir klampynės pradeda rauktis,
Ir purvynai jų teškėt ir šliurpt pasiliauja.

Hm, hm, she's lying there, oh, oh, oh, oh.
When she's lying there.
Tell me when she's moving her lips.
You can kiss me there another time
Out of nowhere.
The world, all afright.
Ein zwei drei
Tell me who was with him.
Oh, you seed of the devil.
She's getting all cold, her teeth are chattering.
That's good, my dear heart.
The devil is tempting you, you heretic.

The fields left in mourning all around,
Thorn of their charms, more like a burial ground.

[4] Winter Cares

The furies of the winter now return,
Stiff north wind comes blowing chill and stern,
Thin frosty windows form on every lake
As if a glazier had cut glass to shape.
The haunts of fish, where frogs in summer joyed,
Are armour-plated by the wintry blast
And off to sleep all creatures they despatch.
The scathing wind so scares the fields around
Puddle and marsh begin to wrinkle up,
No longer quelch and spatter mud about.

Kelias, kad jį mėgina trenkt šokinėdami ratai,
Nei koks būnas įtemptas dėl pašalo trinka,
Taip kad garsas jo toli galvoj atsiliepia.
Taipgi dabar jau vėl sviets sveikyt pradeda žiemą.
Ak, jau ben ir reik; Kalėdų didelė šventė
Artinas, ir Atpentai nor poryt pasibaigti.

Choir

Ant žiemos narsai jau vėl rūstaudami grįžta,
Ir šiaurys pasišiaušęs vėl mus atlekia gandint.
Vei kaip ant ežerų visur langai pasidaro,
Lygei kaip antai stiklorius įdėda stiklą.

[Interpolated Lithuanian folk text]

Ašei, tujei, bernai dujei.
Du su pačia, du su pačia.
Lenta nutašyta, kampan pastatyta.
[End of Lithuanian folk text]

Ak, kur dingot, ak, jūs, jaunos mūsų dieneles!
Rudenis ir žiema grožybės jūsų sudarkė,
O mums, diedams, jau vainiką žilą nupynė.
[...]
Ką mums naujas mets ir vėl atkopdama saulė,
Kad mus sviete Dievs laikys, toliaus sudavadys,
Dar iksiol nenumanom ir žinoti negalim.

Reader

Vei, vasarėlė jau pamaži prisiartina miela
Ir, kas mūsų zopostams reiks, vėl žada parūpyt.
Bet be tavęs, tu, dangiškasis mūsų tėtuti,
Nieks negal mums tekt, ką miela vasara žada.

The frozen road, where leaping wheels rebound,
Now loudly thunders like a kettledrum.
As frosty echoes in our ears resound
The world again greets winter coming round.
A high time too: the Christmas festival
Approaches, Advent ends two days from now.

The furies of the winter now return,
Stiff north wind comes blowing chill and stern,
Thin frosty windows form on every lake
As if a glazier had cut glass to shape.

I, you, young men two.
Two with the same one, two with the same one.
The plank's been cut, it's standing in the corner.

O where have gone the fine days of our youth!
Autumn and winter have destroyed your charm,
Woven a grey wreath for us dodderers.
[...]

What the new year and the ascending sun
Shall bring us, if God keeps us here below,
No one has yet divined, nor can we know.

Slowly but surely summer's drawing nigh,
Promising what our stores need, to supply.
But without you, our heavenly Father, we'll
Have nothing that the summer promises.

[...]

Vislab bus niekai, ką veiksime argi pradėsim,
Kad žegnojanti rankelė tavo negelbės.
Tu mus išlaikei per visą prašokusį metą,
Tu dar ir toliau mus išlaikyti galėsi.

[...]

Mes, glūpi daiktai, n'išmanom tavo davą;
Ir tavo mislys neigi bedugniai mums pasirodo,
Kad mes kartais per giliai pasidrąsinę žiūrim.
Taigi, tėtuti, toliau už kožną reikalą mūsų
Rūpyk tėviškai, kad vėl jau vasara rasis
Ir mes vėlei ant laukų trūsindami vargsim.

[...]

All what we do or undertake is vain
Unaided by the blessing of your hand.
You did preserve us in the seasons passed
And shall preserve us in the days to come.
[...]
We foolish beings cannot grasp your ways.
Your thought seems an abyss we cannot plumb
When sometimes we make bold to look so deep.
So, Father, ever show in our affairs
Your fatherly concern when summer's back
And field labours once more our body rack.

*Donelaitis' The Seasons
translated by Peter Tempest;*

*Lithuanian folk-texts and Petras Cvirka excerpt
translated by Romas Kinka*



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