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CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIAN MUSICAL FOLKLORE RELEASES: WIDENING THE EXPERIENCES

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САВРЕМЕНА ЛИТВАНСКА МУЗИЧКОФОЛКЛОРНА ИЗДАЊА:
ШИРЕЊЕ ИСКУСТАВА

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АБСТРАКТ

The article reviews the tendencies of contemporary musical folklore releases in Lithuania, focusing on the last five years. Based on scientific and journalistic literature, music, and conversations with authors and label owners, the experiential aspect is explored through different ways of creating and releasing music. The period overlaps with the extreme experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had impact on some of the tendencies. The article discusses the musical works that best reveal the mentioned aspects and their scope, while using phenomenological-anthropological and musicological approaches.

KEYWORDS: contemporary folklore, traditional music, Covid-19 pandemic, physical and digital music releases, popular music studies.

АПСТРАКТ

У чланку се разматрају тенденције савремених музичко-фолклорних издања у Литванији с фокусом на последњих пет година. На основу научних и публицистичких написа, музике и разговора с ауторима и власницима

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издавачких кућа, искуствени аспект се истражује кроз различите начине стварања и публикавања музике. Период се преклапа с екстремним искуством пандемије ковида 19 које је утицало на неке од тенденција. У чланку се разматрају музичка дела која најбоље откривају поменуте аспекте и њихов домет, уз коришћење феноменолошко-антрополошких и музиколошких приступа.

KEYWORDS: савремени фолклор, традиционална музика, пандемија ковида 19, физичка и дигитална издања музике, студије популарне музике.

LITHUANIAN CONTEMPORARY FOLKLORE: THE CONTEXT

Lithuanian contemporary folklore appears in different forms and genres. The traditional material is combined with different music styles and creates a continuity, new ways of existing for Lithuanian folklore tradition. The tendency to revive Lithuanian folklore was clear when Lithuania was still a part of the Soviet Union, however, after the Restoration of Independence in 1990, it burst into various forms. From then until now we have witnessed the multiplicity and continuous growth of the genre that can be divided into different subgenres based on the contemporary music styles with which they are contextualised, varying from academic music to popular, to alternative, unconventional music. At first, as a conscious choice to revive a tradition, it could be perceived as a part of Modernism, but today it appears as a necessity and a way to practice one's identity while allowing the coexistence of the cultures of different nature – local, global, popular or academic, from different periods or regions – making it possible to understand it as an expression of postmodern society (or, even more, reactions to it).

In this last decade, on average, from 20 to 30 different Lithuanian tradition-oriented full-length music albums have been released per year² (not to mention the number of singles). The artistic approaches vary from reconstructing the archaic ways of singing and representing them as authentic as possible, to freely fusing them with popular or alternative music genres. Based on articles from the author's previous and ongoing research of contemporary Lithuanian musical folklore (Cf. Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė 2019a, 2019b, 2021), it is clear that these contemporary forms do not “damage” the folklore tradition itself, but are a new method with which its live existence is possible through practice. Due to the broadness of the field, in this article, the focus will be on the contemporary folklore music released in Lithuania during the last five years. It is also necessary to say that it covers the field of music

2 To better understand the context of Lithuanian contemporary musical folklore, please check these continuously updated music links: <https://www.pakartot.lt/genre/5>; <https://dangus-pro.bandcamp.com>; <https://www.mic.lt/lt/baze/folk-world-country/irasu-leidiniai/>.

that stylistically (and in the widest sense) is a synthesis of traditional and popular music, thus the releases of unconventional music and purely “authentic” folklore will not be considered this time, since they require separate attention.

It is important to say that since the quarantine, caused by COVID-19, had a huge impact on the usual live activities of musicians and music authors, various Lithuanian cultural institutions have paid much attention to relieving it by organising different funding opportunities, providing grants for individual or communal artistic projects, including physical and digital music releases, in an attempt to maintain the creative continuity.

In this article, while using a phenomenological-anthropological and musicological approach, material such as interviews with music authors and representatives of record labels, the research of scholars and the music releases themselves will be studied to try to reveal the tendencies of Lithuanian contemporary musical folklore releases during the last five years (concerning both form and content). Did the overlapping pandemic situation change the music industry and music practice? What music releasing formats were the most popular, how do they differ and how might this change the experiences of the listener? What are the main goals or messages of the artists and how are they expressed through music releases? These and related questions will be discussed through the theme of Lithuanian contemporary musical folklore releases, which has only appeared occasionally in other scholarly works (mostly as a context but not as a subject in itself), and so it is still very sparsely researched.

THE INFLUENCE OF PANDEMIC EXPERIENCES ON THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND MUSIC PRACTICE

The experience of unexpected and liminal circumstances such as a global pandemic unavoidably changes one’s self-consciousness, while inducing one to rethink the relationships with the environment, culture, and oneself. Even though sometimes we try to talk about things without reflection on the impact these challenging experiences create, the change is already made and has to be taken into consideration together with various social or cultural phenomena. Today, it is no longer possible to talk about the music of recent years without mentioning COVID-19, which changed relationships at different levels: socio-economic, cultural, personal, etc.

As the result of the pandemic, many people fundamentally rethought their creative activities – authors, unable to perform as they did before, tend now to work much more in recording studios, looking for ways to keep listeners interested, which is important both practically and psychologically. When discussing the impact of the pandemic and isolation, researchers from different organisations have identified such experiences as a “significant extrinsic shock to the normal operation of musical interaction, community-building, and collaboration that could only be surmounted by relying on the emerging technology for music production, the pandemic can be treated as a natural experiment” (Fram et al 2021). Here, also, appear some cru-

cial findings: “although most participants indicated they had felt negative emotions during the pandemic, especially high-arousal negative emotions such as *desperation*, *existential anxiety*, and *panic*, participants showed a preference for discussing positive changes or silver linings of their pandemic experience. These ranged from realisations about their preferred creative and collaborative process to excitement at embracing new techniques and technological innovations for producing and sharing musical content” (Ibid.). So how does this bilateral experience appear in the creation of music, not only in Lithuania but also worldwide?

First of all, the authors sought to release this increased amount of music in a physical and especially valued LP format. Although the tendency to choose vinyl was felt even before the pandemic, the latter strengthened the process. According to the BBC, “For the first time since the late 80s, the value of record sales in 2021 is expected to surpass that of CDs - although it still lags way behind digital streaming and downloads” (Donnison 2021). Shaks Ahmed, head of a UK record store, notes another crucial shift: “It used to only be older people who bought records, but now we also have a whole new generation of younger digital consumers who are hungry for physical copies, just not CDs” (Shehadi and Hamaoui 2021). As young people become active users of this format, its place in the market is changing from a niche to one of the most popular.

Since this is an ambiguous process, paradoxically, in the long run, such massive popularity of the LP format became an obstacle for developers and smaller labels: “Before Covid, we used to wait a few months to get our records pressed. Now, independent labels are facing six-to-eight-month lead times – and after paying large sums upfront . . .’ says Dominic Williams, label manager at UK-based record label Acid Jazz. . . . A band might not even be together by then or the scene could have moved on completely”³ (Ibid.). This is where the danger appears - it becomes difficult for independent labels, non-mainstream music authors and bands (to this field belong the artists we will further discuss) to survive. The authors also note another shortcoming caused by this intensification of production - the shortage of skills in the vinyl production area - which often results in production defects that cause further delays and additional costs, making it even harder for the artists to maintain the consistency. As there are no vinyl record printing houses in Lithuania, and CDs are also mostly printed abroad, the market of physical Lithuanian music releasing is directly dependent on the movements of the global market.

Meanwhile, Ugnius Liogė, the founder of the unconventional Lithuanian music label *Dangus*,⁴ which is mainly inspired by the Baltic culture and often releases LPs, highlights the value not only of vinyl but also of the CD format: “I think it is still a great way available for alternative music” (Jonaitis 2021). He also notes that, compared to the pre-pandemic period, the number of releases planned per year has

3 It is also important to note that there was a fire in early 2020 in California’s Apollo Masters facility, which was responsible for 70–85% of the industry’s lacquers (Shehadi and Hamaoui 2021).

4 Those who are interested in knowing this genre better might be interested in the collection *Dangus Samplers* or “Note Lithuania” albums that usually appear every couple of years.

increased significantly (Ibid.). It is relevant to say that the representatives of unconventional alternative music in Lithuania often tend to choose the even rarer cassette format, which denotes a fundamentally different type of listener and extremely close communality.⁵

Undoubtedly, the need/desire to release is directly related to the even greater need/desire to acquire a physical format during the pandemic. Why during the pandemic? Danny Ryan, managing director of music distribution company *Kudos Records*, explains this phenomenon thus: “I think buying records provided a much-needed endorphin hit to those customers who could work from home, and who saved money on commuting and socialising” (Shehadi and Hamaoui 2021). So, on the one hand, there are more financial opportunities for it, and on the other hand, people are looking for ways to improve their well-being. Bodner and Gilboa think that “during times of personal or collective crisis – such as a global pandemic – it is common for people to turn to music, due to its connective and unifying purposes” (Bodner and Gilboa 2009). So, music creators, while at the same time being listeners themselves, are equally experiencing a pandemic crisis and are looking for ways to survive it themselves and to ease the situation for the listeners, creating some added value. After assessing the related worldwide situation let us move to the actual works of the Lithuanian musical folklore.

THE ELASTICITY OF THE DIGITAL FORMAT

While it is clear that the physical format, and especially the LP format, has become a certain dimension of value, digital releasing is an undeniably significant phenomenon of our time. The volume of digital releases and the scope of their content are not finite, they are released both independently and as accompanying material of a physical release. It must be acknowledged that the digital format is much more flexible and can comprise additional works. With the immensity of the amount of the digital releases the “separation of formats is constantly deepening”, but “proponents of physical media do not shy away from the opportunities provided by digital technologies: the physical format represents the value-ideological level of the release, and the online version creates a dissemination and contact base” (Vaitkevičius 2016). Ugnius Liogė, the head of the already mentioned Baltic music label *Dangus*, thinks that “when people release only a digital album and put it on the internet, there is no tangible feeling that you really make that album. The news disappears from social networks, and if you don’t keep reminding of it, it’s like the album is as it is and doesn’t exist at all” (Jonaitis 2021). Here it can be understood the continuous pseudo-duty of unremitting marketing that the creators of this non-commercial mu-

5 Due to the volume of this article, this type of music, which, although not directly using Lithuanian or Baltic culture, uses its signs and sound atmospheres, turns to nature and archaic culture, will not be discussed here because it requires a much closer analysis. It is worth taking an interest in the works of the cultural researchers Jurijus Dobriakovas and Povilas Vaitkevičius.

sic are essentially forced to do, however, it redirects them towards some secondary activity. Most of these non-mainstream creators advertise themselves in the same informational fields as the commercial ones, so their content often disappears or is inexpediently displayed to potential listeners. And yet, this is also valid while considering the physical formats too, since they basically do not exist without the virtual spaces, so it is an acute problem in general.

Digital music releases are especially useful for observing audiences and experimenting stylistically, without committing to a long-term album. For the listeners, this is a great way to choose diverse music styles, easily accessing a wide variety of genres and concepts (e.g., different stylistic and conceptual projects of the same artists, such as Agota Zdanavičiūtė, Laurita Peleniūtė, Donatas Bielkauskas, Evaldas Azbukauskas, Modestas Kapustinskis and many others). While the physical format certainly provides an additional level of experience, music can exist in a digital format alone. Such publishing is much faster, maintaining a creative pace that lasts from the idea to its implementation and release (unlike vinyl records – see the insights of the first chapter). What also matters is the digital space itself – a constant communication with the listeners on various social media channels helps to identify more attractive styles or forms that can easily be alternated and suggested to the listeners with the digital format (not to forget the importance of digital media for the visibility of physical formats too).

The “elasticity” of the digital format is perfectly illustrated by one of the most active creators of *post-folklore* electronic music, Evaldas Azbukauskas (Girių Dvasios, meaning Spirits of the Forests). In the last three years alone, his label *Cold Tear Records* has released as many as 10 music albums, ranging from dub techno to ambient. By very smoothly merging dub and a traditional Lithuanian polyphonic song genre *Sutartinės* (that is also included in the UNESCO list), the author says that such a creative movement is important to him because “it is the consolidation of his national identity, unification with the history of his nation, self-knowledge, the desire to find some spiritual tradition that is more appropriate for Lithuanian . . . mentality. I know from the feedback from listeners that a lot of them experience a similar process while listening to those works, and that makes me happy. Currently, I use folk music only when I work with other performers who are engaged in folk music, and I also touch folk music of other nations” (Azbukauskas 2021).

A memorable album “Linai” (2021), was released by Lina Žilinskaitė in digital format alone. Here, solid atmospheric sounds are transmitted through different instruments (Kantele, Zither, Kalimba, Glass), each of which is allowed to evolve and be heard. Traditional folk (or folk-inspired) songs, performed by the author herself, are enveloped in a bright, wavy atmosphere, with the voice becoming another instrument that blends into the overall coherence rather than the main accent, as is typical of, for example, commercial culture. The author has also released several singles that have not been included in the album, allowing herself to maintain her creative flow and impulse (rather than a dependence on the time of the physical release).

The fact that it is not necessary to compile a full-length album is an important aspect of digital releasing. Singles or EPs not only maintain creative momentum but also introduce the multidisciplinary nature of this music, with both listener

and creator experiencing and verifying this diversity. The EDM works of Modestas Kapustinskas (Modestyno) illustrate this very well. In his works of contemporary musical folklore (which is not the only direction of his work) sometimes the author sings himself, sometimes he uses modern performers or old field recordings with an old person singing a Lithuanian folk song (such as “Kas man supa”). Modestas says: “I wanted to resurrect what was lesser-known, compare lesser-known songs with popular ones to make them noticeable, to prove to myself and others that they can sound equally good to lovers of different styles of music. I especially wanted to attract young people to take an interest in our roots . . .” (Kapustinskas 2022).

While creative abundance might sometimes become a reason for random accidentalities in the music pieces where the structures or content start to repeat too much (e.g., commercial electronic dance music), in the hands of conscious authors it becomes a power to create distinctive and inclusive albums that sometimes even convey certain spiritual experiences, in these cases inspired by traditional Lithuanian culture.

MATERIA IN MUSIC: EXPANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF LISTENERS

It is important to note that although today there are almost no exclusively physically released albums, it is still possible to experience both forms separately. One can listen only to the physical album, read the information in the booklet, explore the cover, *visuality per se*, to feel the properties of the paper, the weight of the vinyl record, the texture of the paper and ink, the smell of the ink. Digital media researchers Thomas Hess and Thomas M. Wagner exactly highlight the tactility of the physical format as a value indicator: “Vinyl records and CDs have a physical presence. They can be stored in a cabinet, can be seen, and touched at any time, and offer added values such as sleeve art and booklets. . . listening to physical music is a rich tactile experience compared to listening to digital music, thus resulting in physical music having a higher value” (Wagner and Hess 2013: 2).

The material format here appears as an additional measure, expanding experiential opportunities. The form of vinyl record marks another trend – to choose the most durable medium possible, not only in practical terms but also in terms of sustainability. The Dutch printing company Deep Grooves, which presses LPs, CDs, and MCs, uses only green energy, most of their materials are recycled and/or recyclable. One can choose to print vinyl from different colours of vinyl waste, the finished products are delivered in sustainable packaging using carbon-neutral shipping, etc. This appears to be a sign of awareness that is noticeable in other vinyl-pressing companies as well. Culturologist and music creator Povilas Vaitkevičius highlights the following valuable aspects of the physical format: “I would say that the most important “inner” reason would be to create a product that would be pleasant to have for yourself, especially when it takes so much time, energy, and finances to be made. At the same time, it is a pursuit of a goal and evidence of responsibility to your music . . . The other cases might be derived from DIY (do-it-yourself), when a

release is designed and presented without following the standard canons of “official releasing” (Vaitkevičius 2016). For example, the above-mentioned zither player and singer A. Zdanavičiūtė, who is co-creating with the bands Sen Svaja and Laiminguo, has just released her debut album “Kur giria užėjo” (“Where the Forest Came”, 2021, *Dangus*). The essential sources here are the tales of the famous Lithuanian herbalist, ethnographer, and scientist Eugenija Šimkūnaitė. “As trees in those tales reveal their powers – their healing properties – so do I want to encourage the listener to have a dialogue with the tree, the plant, or the whole forest” (Zdanavičiūtė 2022). The pursuit to explore and experience the environment, the naturalness, the texts, and to speak about these experiences to the others is beautifully revealed here by the fact that Agota herself recorded the sounds of nature which, as she says herself, helped her to live through the difficult quarantine times later expressed in the music. A very important part here is that to each physical copy Agota adds a different dried herb, providing the listener with additional experiential possibilities.

An unexpected approach was taken by the multi-instrumentalist Donatas Bielkauskas-DONIS with his 2 CD album “Mirštantis. Miestas. Gyvenimui” (“Dying. City. To Life”, 2021). His multifaceted project DONIS includes *post-folk* electronic music, heavily enriched with live instruments whose multi-layered power creates historical, archaic, even combatant feelings. He incorporates percussive sounds from other cultures, such as a combination of world and house music – the tribal genre. In general, his works are rich in different live instruments, experiments with folklore, tribal motifs, and field recording. Extensive knowledge of instruments, rhythms, and styles of music allows him to create enchanting and undoubtedly high-valued artistic projects, which include various other performers, while embracing both electronic music and pure ambient soundscapes. It is “a conceptual album exploring ecologic connections of an industrial seaport city and the natural environment of its inhabitants” (M.M.G. 2021) that is released on two CDs: “One is presenting recordings of Klaipėda’s industrial area, dark electronic, and other flows in brighter ethno ambient soundscapes” (Ibid.). The listener is surprised by an unexpected experiential turn - a link to a digital source is provided that allows both parts to be combined and listened to together as one piece! This highlights the current interaction between the industrial and natural environments and the potential for their coherence. In concerts the “viewers were able to walk around choosing what they wanted to hear more: whether positive calm atmospheric music or destructive industry . . . The main idea . . . was to provoke dialogue by artistic means. To talk about ecology, about the importance of the Giruliai forest, about cleaner air, about hard particles and noise in the city in general, which for some reason is not included in the ecological indicators, although sound pollution is as important as all other pollution” (Petronytė 2021). Another mention-worthy release of D. Bielkauskas is his LP “Švilpiai” (2021), representing unique instruments, the “švilpiai” which are clay whistles created by the sculptor Antanas Mončys. In this case, through one material or media the other is represented – authentic instruments through vinyl. Another interesting aspect is that the titles of the pieces are not written in words but printed as an excerpt of the sound spectrum, prompting one to “see the sound”.

A very distinctive, intelligent musical humour creator is Lukas Šidlauskas (stage

name Šventinis Bankuchenas), presenting a very fresh view of folklore material. In addition to well-managed multi-styled musical and linguistic improvisations on various social situations, he creates the only such project in the field of Lithuanian contemporary musical folklore “Nykstančios lietuvių liaudies dainos” (“Endangered Lithuanian Folk Songs”, 2021), released on digital, CD and LP formats (the latter has just been snatched). It impresses with its consistency, attention to detail, and various forms of conceptual fulfilment. While masterfully improvising with the stylistics and traditional poetics of different folk music genres, the author performs his own lyrics that satirise various aspects of contemporary life (even though thematically they do not have anything in common with the real traditional folk songs, e.g., a song about cryptocurrencies). At this point, it is very important to note that even though his work is well received by folklorists or representatives of traditional folklore, some of them overlook a very important aspect suggesting that the object of the irony is the folklore itself, while it is, in fact, completely the opposite! Folklore is used ironically but not as a target of the irony – here it appears as an extremely open form of improvisation, as a rich folk art, which is perfect for conveying the living culture - the life of modern “folk”, current events, highlighting the absurd, often unverifiable things, habits, forced hobbies, and prevailing stereotypes. When it seems that it is impossible to add anything more and that you are sufficiently fascinated by the lyrics and visuality (without an understanding of which a foreigner can easily take it as true folklore!), the author makes another extremely unexpected move and releases a “Songbook of Endangered Lithuanian Folksongs” with lyrics and notes, as an allusion to the Lithuanian folklore songbooks. Every new, experience-widening decision like this, if not overshadowed by commercial culture, can open the gates in other creators’ minds.

INTERCULTURALITY: TO KNOW YOURSELF THROUGH THE OTHER

Looking at the albums of recent years, the tendency to create together with others, exchanging styles, symbols, and cultural content, is evident, but not necessarily induced by the pandemic. Unusual, evocative, and inviting one to rethink the concept of the instrumentality is the album of the project “Honeypaw” entitled “Ninth Tree Standing”, by the Lithuanian interdisciplinary artist Jurgita Žvinklytė and the Finnish craftsman of string instruments Matti Palonen. “This album was recorded on hollow trees strung with steel and horsehair strings in the forest near Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada. It contains traditional chants from the Lithuanian *sutartinė* tradition, and *runos* from Karelia and Ingria” (Honeypaw Bandcamp). The authors themselves emphasise the reciprocal relationship between the symbolisms of two cultures: “The album name “Ninth Tree Standing” refers to the symbols found in the songs of both cultures, where land is cleared for agriculture, but one tree/branch is left standing for the cuckoo’s perch. We have investigated the connection musically by using the harmonies from the Lithuanian *sutartinė* tradition, including close seconds and sharp microtones in the Finnic songs, and the Finnic tradition of heteroph-

ony, or mutually improvised melody, in the Lithuanian songs” (Honey paw website). Not only does a new aspect of the instrument *per se* open up here, expanding the concept of the zither in general, but also the already mentioned aspiration to experience the environment and naturalness that was conveyed in the above-mentioned A. Zdanavičiūtė’s album reappears.

If in Honey paw’s album the bodily aspect of zithers is being rethought, then in another album “Klajojančios kanklės” (“Wandering Zithers”, 2021) curated by the same A. Zdanavičiūtė, attention shifts to the content that could be conveyed with traditional zithers, revealing different microcultures. The album contains 11 diverse works by various zither performers, in which their distinctive relationships with this instrument and the possibilities of its presence in today’s culture appear in a wide variety of expressions. Stylistically diverse pieces accommodate traditional Lithuanian folk songs, allowing the listener to feel the folklore sung by contemporary performers and notice the characteristics of different voices. The atmospheres created by zithers are gently overlaid not only with voices but also with other instruments and field recordings. The unequal relationship with traditional culture and its interaction with the global context can be felt from the different use of intervals and harmonies that, in some cases, are closer to modern culture and in others to traditional with clashes of seconds and darker sounds in general. “I have noticed that the vast majority associate zithers with meditation and spirituality. . . . I believe that playing this instrument deepens the connection with the ancestors. After all, in my work, I do not spiritualise this process. It is an instrument that I can play well and I am interested in experimenting, exploring, discovering new ways of playing, challenging myself, and so on. It works as therapy in personal space but in the creative field it is an instrument for creative possibilities” (Zdanavičiūtė 2022). Here emerges a significant aspect - the necessity to perceive the spiritual impact created by instruments and the playing itself, while at the same time acknowledging its material and practical aspect, e.g., it is important to know how to technically master the instrument (and those are both experiential levels too).

In this whole massif of music releases with the ability to amaze the consciousness that is blunt from the continuous abundance, shine the works of Saulius Labanauskas (Saulius Spindi). The album “Vai tu girala” (“Oh you, the Forest”, 2017) is inscribed in the memory of Lithuanian non-commercial music and includes as many as 11 authentic recordings of a well-known Lithuanian region Dzūkija folk singer, Petras Zalanskas (1900–1980). It is very significant that the author seeks to preserve and convey to the listener as intact the qualities and timbre of the older singer’s voice as possible, not changing the voice according to modern tuning, but, on the contrary, adjusting the instruments. This makes it possible to keep and communicate the way of singing that has still not been affected by global culture. The instrumental part is spacious, the darker sounds are not avoided, using the styles of synthpop, urban and sad dance that appear to go very well with P. Zalanskas’ songs, his timbre, his way of singing, neither obscuring nor in any way dissolving them. In the later album of electronic, indie, and folk music dedicated to the birthday of P. Zalanskas, released in 2020, the voices of contemporary Lithuanian performers are already heard, the uniqueness of which becomes the leading creative line, according to which the surrounding instrumentals develop. The instrumentals in this album are multi-layered.

Progressive electronic music is enriched with live instruments (from indie rock-style guitars to atmospheric wind instruments), which are modified with various sound effects. Interestingly, some folk songs are the same as on the first album, as if offering to compare the perception of the voice and singing of different generations and cultural environments, experiencing the flow of old and young human voices.

These are the different types of otherness that lets one rethink the whole creative content and process, while the constant interaction with the other is crucial: different cultures, same culture – different backgrounds, even same culture – different times. In general, the pandemic seems to have allowed this cooperative process to be assessed differently, in many cases shifting normal social relationships to the digital space, which, however, did not completely obscure the possibility of communicating and creating together, but just encouraged new creative remote connections. Here, co-creation emerges not only as a way to expand the audience, especially common in the pre-pandemic spread of creativity, but also as a way to maintain or create new active social relationships, exchanging creative networks, getting to know others, communicating tradition and rethinking one's own culture.

LITHUANIAN CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY SONG LYRICS

Another substantial part of Lithuanian contemporary music is conveyed with original, non-folklore texts, in which traditional culture is no longer expressed directly through folk songs or traditional instruments, but by drawing attention to other layers of significance. For example, last year, the band Raguvos, having already existed for seven years, released their debut album “Pulsacija”, which combines electronic music, Celtic harp, cello, trombone, Ingula Rinkevičienė's singing and lyrics by women poets. Culturologist Domantas Razauskas writes about this music enthusiastically: “It is not easy to give a name to the music of Ingula. It would be possible to label it as experimental post-industrial or shamanic electronic music, or to call it “psychedelic tribal folklore” or something similar, but these might simply be only indicative signs in the musical journey of Raguvos that is full of adventures” (Razauskas 2021). In addition to the tribal nature (“I stretch the bow and arrow”), and perhaps the desire to belong to it (“bore the stone, memory, thought”), there is the constant connection with nature (lightning, using the local word, recognisable celestial bodies, perfectly planted garden, warm mist, the holy lake where the mother of the Grass Snake floats; lyrics by Jurgita Jasponytė).

Another artist that must be mentioned here is Rokas Kašėta who reveals an even more diverse approach to traditional culture. He not only chooses the Lithuanian language, but the dialect of Dzūkija! Even in the social channels, Rokas constantly writes almost exclusively in the Dzūkija dialect, reflecting on the culture itself. The title of the album “Dzūkodelika” (CD, MC, 2022) is made from a playful combination of psychedelics and Dzūkija culture. Moreover, Rokas, together with his wife Eglė, actively participates in Dzūkija cultural events, lives in a Dzūkija village hut full of traditional household items and carries out traditional field research – this is how the pursuit to convey what is self-experienced and self-verified in both con-

sciousness and bodily aspects is repeated in the works of other creators. The creator himself expresses the importance of different cultures and experiences in general for himself, saying that during his three-year long travels in Latin America he was so fascinated by archaic culture and tribes that he started to wonder about his own roots (LRT 2020). Thus, the search for one's roots is stimulated by other cultures and leads to a coherent study of one's own culture, its layers, and oneself in it. In order to become acquainted with Rokas' work, it is worth listening to the piece "Tokį rytų", the text of which, written by the poet Romas Sadauskas, is almost a mantric coincidence with nature: "While the sun is shining / through the branches / to stand / under the apple tree / and to listen / how the apples ripen / to stand / hold your breath / because you ripen yourself / of this goodness" (Kašėta Bandcamp 2022). The compact disk and the cassette releases are complemented with tastefully colourful tradition and nature infused pictures produced by Ada Abromaitytė.

The very aspect of the performance – singing – should not be forgotten either. In the author of this article's musical work (Tamsaulė "Tavo miestas", LP, 2021), the singing is often defined as folkloric, regardless of whether a folk or contemporary song is performed. What does such singing mean and what distinguishes it from the popular way of singing? The author has worked with diverse singing techniques for many years, teaching others and learning them herself, understanding singing both as a technique and as a way to experience. Having started with a conscious refusal of the embellishments common to commercial music, deepening the voice, opening a much wider mass of vocal expression, and rethinking the pronunciation, she now does it out of intuition. When a skill is formed, the consciousness is no longer the main condition, because the author freely mixes vocal techniques and stylistic fields from both traditional and global cultures.

Thus, the glance to contemporary Lithuanian musical folklore with the original texts has highlighted more ways in which traditional culture exists and can be experienced today: networks of symbols, linguistic aspects (local words, dialect), world-view (closeness to nature), manner of singing, and qualities of voice.

CONCLUSIONS

The reviewed contemporary Lithuanian musical folklore material reveals that the tendencies of music releases respond in one way or another to the extreme experiences overlapping with the period in question. It turned out that the rethinking of creative approaches during the pandemic intensified the cooperation of developers, both locally and internationally. As the number of concerts decreased, authors devoted much more time to the creative process, increasing the need for releasing music, which eventually became a kind of obstacle due to the heavy workloads in the vinyl pressing houses. The cultural field, which has been shaken by the pandemic and has been dry for some time, seems to have grown in new forms, with some pre-pandemic trends intensifying or new ways of communicating emerging.

There is an intense incentive of the creators of contemporary Lithuanian musical folklore to find a way to expand the experiential possibilities of the listeners, no mat-

ter what format the music appears on. The digital format seems to be resilient, supporting creative movement, constant interaction with listeners (energy exchange), and allowing experimentation stylistically and thematically, to release individual pieces. The physical format has become a sign of value and an additional experiential expression with supplementary forms of tactility, visuality, smells, etc.

Authors tend to collaborate with other creators, exploring the properties of their own and other cultures' 'instruments and voice, their interactions, and rethinking common concepts of instrument or voice. Traditional culture is used in various ways: by including authentic sound recordings, by singing folk songs by contemporary authors, by using traditional instruments, especially zithers, and in the original lyrics – by using a dialect, by improvising with traditional poetics, by conveying the Baltic worldview and vocals.

Conversations with the authors highlight the importance of traditional culture in the contemporary context: exploring one's own culture, its layers, and self, searching for a close spiritual culture and practice, one's source of worldview and nature, promoting dialogue between man and nature, the interaction of nature and industry, a critique of social stereotypes, the exploration of singing and voice properties, perceiving performance as a spiritual experience and meditation. Assessing the researches of other authors and the conversations with music creators, it seems that social isolation caused by COVID-19, while being a shocking psychological experience, did not, however, have a negative impact on the creativity expressed through music releases, it rather induced it, activated rethinking and planning of new projects (that had to do both with a search for new ways of remaining an active musician without live concerts and with the increased institutional funding as assistance for the artists). It is important to say that all the above-researched tendencies could be felt in this genre before, while the pandemic seems to have strengthened and highlighted them.

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ЕГЛЕ ГЕЛАЖИУТЕ-ПРАНЕВИЧИЕНЕ

САВРЕМЕНА ЛИТВАНСКА МУЗИЧКОФОЛКЛОРНА ИЗДАЊА: ШИРЕЊЕ ИСКУСТАВА

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Користећи феноменолошко-антрополошки и музиколошки приступ, у чланку се разматрају тенденције савременог музичког фолклора у Литванији, фокусирајући се на издања у последњих пет година. На основу научне и публицистичке литературе откривају се разговори с ауторима, различити креативни правци, искуствени аспекти. Период се преклапа с пандемијом ковида 19 која је, чини се, ојачала неке од тенденција.

Осетна је мотивација стваралаца у области литванског музичког фолклора у потрази за начинима експанзије искуствених могућности слушалаца без обзира на формат музичког издања. Дигитални формат се чини еластичнијим, као да подржава темпо креативности и сталну интеракцију са слушаоцима, дозвољавајући стилистичке и тематске експерименте с додатним формама тактилности, визуалности, мириса и других чула.

Аутори сарађују с другим креаторима, истражујући одлике сопствених и туђих култура, инструмената и гласова. Традиционална култура се користи на различите начине: укључују се аутентични звучни снимци, савремени уметници певају народне песме, користе се традиционални инструменти, у погледу оригиналних текстова – користи се дијалект, импровизује се са традиционалном поетиком, дочарава се балтички поглед на свет, као и вокали.

Разговори с ауторима указују на значај традиционалне културе у савременом контексту: истражујући сопствену културу, њене слојеве и сопство, тражећи блиску спиритуалну културу и праксу, погледа на свет и природу, промовишући дијалог између човека и природе, интеракцију природе и индустрије, критику друштвених стереотипа, истраживање певања и особина гласа, извођења као спиритуалног искуства, медитације.