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Peculiarities of Lithuanian songs 'sutartinės' and didactic possibilities of their use in classroom

Summary

Lithuanian polyphonic song *sutartinės* are a folklore genre, notable for features characteristic of archaic music (narrow range; limited number of scale steps; syllabic rhythm, emphasising the syncretism of word and movement). This article focuses on the structural peculiarities of the *sutartinės* songs and the characteristics of their musical language (characteristic scales, melodic and rhythmic patterns), and aims to reveal the didactic possibilities of their use in the music classroom. Analysis of the structural features of *sutartinės* songs reveals wide possibilities for their pedagogical use. The musical material of 'sutartinės' songs allows for linking in the teaching process various musical activities: singing by ear, solfeggio and rhythm making, playing school music instruments. It is appropriate to rely on narrow range scales in melodies of *sutartinės* songs and their elemental rhythm patterns in the initial stage of learning musical notation and the solfeggio. Simple polyphonic forms help to develop basic ensemble musicianship skills. On the basis of the *sutartinės* material, pupils can also be introduced to the elementary principles of music composition and develop their compositional skills. *Sutartinės* are important as a means of enriching musical vocabulary, allowing for the avoidance of uniformity of musical language and stereotypical clichés of musical aesthetics. The international recognition of *sutartinės* obligates the community of music teachers to pay more attention to various pedagogical and methodological aspects of the dissemination of *sutartinės*.

Keywords: sutartinė, polyphony, structure, musical language, music didactics

Introduction

Lithuanian polyphonic songs – *sutartinės* – are a unique phenomenon of archaic musical folklore. In their artistic expression they are vastly different from the sound standards and aesthetic criteria common to our culture. Several different texts, sounding at the same time, the harmonies of sharp seconds between voices, complementary and contrasting cross-rhythms, abundance of syncope – these are only a few characteristics pointing to the singularity of *sutartinės*. Elsewhere in the world there are very few analogies to such music. Among the most vivid examples are polyphonic vocal and instrumental music of the Central African Pygmies, the vocal polyphony, abundant with seconds, of the Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia), the polyphony of the Northern Japanese Ainu, the music of the pan-pipe ensembles of the Solomon Islands in Melanesia, the throat

singing of the Inuit in Canada, and Indonesia's *gamelan*. Due to the specificities of their musical language, *sutartinės* certainly end up next to the most interesting examples in world music. Their uniqueness and artistic value is evidenced by their recognition at an international scale. In 2010 *sutartinės* were included in UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List. It should be noted that *sutartinės* are becoming increasingly more popular among Lithuania's youth, their musical groups and subcultural communities.

Even though hints of *sutartinės* can be found already in written sources from the 16th century, more serious research began only at the junction of the 19th-20th centuries, when *sutartinės* began to disappear. The prevalence of *sutartinės*, the features of their genre, functional and musical language was studied by various researchers. The first collection of songs with *sutartinės* melodies was prepared and published by A. Sabaliauskas, together A. R. Niemi (1912). Z. Slaviūnas was particularly important in research on *sutartinės*. In the late 1950s prepared a three-volume collection of *sutartinės* (Slaviūnas, 1958–1959), which became one of the most comprehensive and important printed sources of *sutartinės* (SLS). Instrumental *sutartinės* performed with *skudučiai* (separate pan-pipes) and *daudytės* (long wooden trumpets) were gathered and researched by S. Paliulis (Paliulis, 1959). Lithuanian ethnomusicologists have focused on the harmonic and rhythmic qualities, form, cognitive and psychoacoustic aspects of *sutartinės* (Čiurlionyte, 1969; Antanavičius, 1969; Juzeliūnas, 1972; Žarskienė, 1993, 2003; Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2000, 2003; Nakienė, 2001; Ambrazevičius, 2003; Urbanavičienė, 2009).

In the 1960s *sutartinės* began to slowly enter into Lithuanian musical pedagogy, becoming a key part of the school repertoire (Krakauskaitė, 1960). A wide repertoire is presented in the 5th–10th grade textbooks by Eduardas Balčytis (Balčytis, 2004). *Sutartinės* are used here first as a way to enrich and diversify the singing repertoire and help school children become acquainted with polyphonic means. *Sutartinės* are widely used in the music textbooks for schools, prepared by the author of this article (Velička, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012). They are dedicated not only to teaching solfeggio and reading notes, but also to playing school flute and pan-pipes. The musical material of *sutartinės* creates new challenges for teachers. In the opinion of Z. Marcinkevičius, in these textbooks "the repertoire has, in essence, been renewed ... Lithuanian *sutartinės*, notable for their specific harmony, bring something new to this content, and they raise new issues with teaching, because they require specific abilities from the students" (Marcinkevičius, 2001: 166). In 2010–2013 a new series of textbooks *Vieversys* for primary school music classes was published, thematically integrated with the other subjects that are taught. Several songs were included here (Bertulienė, 2011: 67; 2012: 43; 2013: 13, 72). The use of *sutartinės* has become a distinctive tradition in Lithuanian music education. However, despite this growing interest in *sutartinės*, their didactic possibilities are still poorly researched.

Archaic characteristics of *sutartinės* melodies

The melodies of many *sutartinės* is characterised by features of archaic music: a narrow range, a limited number of scale steps, in many cases the rhythm of a syllabic nature (when one syllable of the text equals one note), the syncretism of the music, verbal text and movement. These features allow us to consider the archaic origin of *sutartinės*. Austė Bareikytė-Nakienė has studied the affinity and possible common origin of the melodies of *sutartinės* and other genres of archaic folklore: imitation of bird calls, sung insertions in fairy tales, children's and calendar songs (Bareikytė-Nakienė, 2001). As noticed by J. Čiurlionytė, the melodies of most *sutartinės* are made up of a limited number of scale steps – from two to five different notes (Čiurlionyte, 1969: 119). Narrow range scales with a limited number of notes are named using the terms of oligotony, oligotonic modes, oligotonic system (Sliužinskas, 2003: 16, 26, 27, 45), emphasising the main typological difference between narrow and more sophisticated diatonic scales.

In terms of scale, two-steps scales are the most elementary. The bitonal scale *sol-la* is particularly rare. There are slightly more *sutartinės* based on the bitonal scale *sol-mi*, or the “cuckoo tune” (Example 1a). We can find even more *sutartinės* based on anhemitonic three-step scales. They are characterised by the trichords such as *re-mi-sol*, *mi-sol-la* (Example 1b), or *fa-sol-la*. However, usually the separate voice is based on anhemitonic bichord or trichord scale, but not the entire *sutartine*. The other part of *sutartinės* is based on the hemitonic trichord, where the filled minor third forms the “lament” tune: *sol-fa-mi* or *fa-mi-re*. Most *sutartinės* are based on the tetrachord *fa-mi-re-do* (Example 1f), *la-sol-fa-mi* etc. Another large group of *sutartinės* is notable for its singularity – the musical material is based on fanfare intonations. They may have been taken over from the *sutartinės* music played with *daudytės* (long wooden trumpets) and are a distinctive result of the interaction of instrumental and vocal music (Bareikyte-Nakiene, 2001: 151). Sometimes all of the material of the *sutartinė* can be based on one fanfare tune, i.e. fragment of a natural harmonic series. There are much more of those based on the harmonic series of two fanfares, tuned in seconds. These are polymodal *sutartinės*, with two tonics of equal value, separated from each other by a second interval. Polymodal *sutartinės* have a distinctive sound, based on two bichords of the major thirds. Its edge tones are separated by an augmented fourth, which is why they resemble the Lydian mode. They are based on fragments of two natural harmonic series (Example 1d); thus they are considered as a separate case of fanfare *sutartinės*. There are also various mixed and intermediate versions of polymodality (the melody of one voice is fanfare, and the other anhemitonic or diatonic).

In sum, *sutartinės* are characterised by a great variety of scales (Example 1e) and offer a sufficiently broad arsenal of melodic instruments. Some *sutartinės*, in the aspect of musical didactics, are useful because of the archaic character of their

melody: a limited number of scale steps (melody comprised of three or four different tones) and scale structures (there are no half-tones among the sounds that form the scale). It is easy to notice that similar scales are characteristic to other archaic genres of folklore: laments, children's songs (lullabies, games), pastoral folklore, and song interludes in fairy tales. The basic tonal structure of *sutartinės* corresponds to the children's level of musicianship and music perception; thus they are perfect for primary school. They allow the consistent and cohesive musical education process to include different musical activities.

Example 1. Variety of scales of *sutartinės*.

The image displays five musical examples in 2/4 time, each on a single staff. Example a, 'two-step scale (SIS 166)', shows a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, marked with an asterisk. Example b, 'three-step scale (SIS 604)', shows a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, marked with an asterisk. Example c, 'four-step scale (SIS 604)', shows a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, marked with an asterisk. Example d, 'fanfares tune (SIS 484a)', shows a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, marked with an asterisk. Example e, 'typical scales of sutartinės', shows a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, marked with an asterisk.

Structural features of the rhythm of *sutartinės*

Syncretism of rhythm is a characteristic of *sutartinės* music – a connection between the rhythm of the words and ritual movements. Stable, constantly repeating rhythmic formulas often coincide with asemantic onomatopoeic words (*tatato*, *ratilio*, *sodauto*, *tūto*, *lylio*, *šalavijo* and others), which function as a refrain. Although dominated by a motor rhythm with a clear structure, the formula of the rhythm itself is not so much of a qualitative as it is of a quantitative origin – based on the change of long and short rhythmic values. One common characteristic of *sutartinės* is the simplicity of the rhythmic patterns that make it up. Elemental rhythmic patterns are easily recognisable and suitable for the musical education of children. They are particularly useful for the early stages of learning the musical notes: in leaning rhythm and solfeggio and starting to play a school instrument. The characteristic formulas of the rhythm of *sutartinės* fully correspond with C. Orff's concept of *Elementare Musik* and coincides with natural rhythmic structures, based on the rhythm of words (Keller, 1954: 28). These fundamental rhythmic arrangements are also the basis of Z. Kodaly's musical education system (Kodaly, 1966: 3–13). Despite the apparent simplicity, these rhythmic formulas

open wide opportunities for the creation of rhythm combinatorics and polyrhythmic textures. The combinatorics' range of possibilities unfolds from simple isorhythm to fairly sophisticated complementary and cross-rhythms.

In terms of rhythmic structure, one of the most basic is threesome *sutartinės*, the rhythmic patterns of which correspond on both sides of the melody (isorhythm): when performing it in canon, a "rhythmic unison" is formed between the separate voices (Example 2b). The performance of the *sutartinė* does not raise any rhythmic difficulties; it is easy to learn to play it in canon. Children in the 1st grade are already able to easily play this *sutartinė* with two pan-pipes in canon (Velička, 2007: 68). One of the most important features of the polyrhythm of *sutartinės* is complementarity. Basic rhythmic formulas between voices usually fit in such a manner that they complement one another and together create an even movement of eights. The most basic example of polyrhythmic complementarity is a simultaneous coordination of two fourths and four eights (Example 2e).

Example 2. Rhythmic structures of *sutartinės*.

a. complementary rhythmic patterns

b. isorhythm (SIS 304)

c. complementarity (SIS 1689)

d. complementarity (SIS 1693)

e. combinatorics (SIS 612)

f. cross-rhythm (SIS 1619)

g. hocket (LLIM 81)

Rhythm inversion (or retrograde) is characteristic of several foursome *sutartinės*. The crossrhythms that occurs between voices is often emphasised by the onomatopoeic words of *sutartinės*. The rhythm inversion, characteristic of four-some *sutartinės*, is reminiscent of the composing method favoured by the renaissance and baroque composers. Rhythm inversion in foursome *sutartinės* is embodied in the most basic way; it creates symmetry of rhythm, which allows the audience and the performers to feel the beauty of the structure. This constructive feature of *sutartinės* is usefull to rely on when modelling basic music composition tasks suitable for children. In traditional music of pan-pipes and horns, sometimes hocketing is used, which makes up a whole other sub-group of complementary rhythms (Example 2g). It is clear that such pieces are perfect for teaching pauses and explaining the concept of the pause (Velička, 2011: 22; 2012: 15). The rhythm of *sutartinės* reveals more varied opportunities of didactic application and pedagogic use.

Features of the polyphony of *sutartinės* in terms of music didactics

Sutartinės are distinguished by a variety of polyphonic forms. Within their texture we can find all the early and intermediate forms of polyphony, beginning with unison or alternate singing, drone and paraphony, and ending with canon and exact inverse counterpoint. Unison is not typical in *sutartinės*; it is the basis for barely a few threesome and foursome *sutartinės* which are typically performed as a simple three-voice canon. Their melodies in the first and second part coincide (only the poetic text differs); therefore, when singing them in canon, they always sound in unison (Example 1c). From the view of musical didactics, unison *sutartinės* are useful as the initial preparatory stage in learning polyphony. Antiphon, i.e. alternate singing in two groups, is a transitional singing style, allowing for an easy shift from monophonic to polyphonic singing. J. Čiurlionytė rightly calls this kind of singing the precursor of *sutartinės* (Čiurlionytė, 1969: 257). For primary school children this is perfect due to the playful manner: in singing, two groups of children seem to compete with each other. The antiphonic manner of singing also includes the performing of foursome *sutartinės*, although here alternate singing is performed not by two separate singers (or two groups of them), but two pairs of performers. Heterophony represents the early polyphonic form (Slaviūnas, 1958: 14). This is a transitional, intermediate form of polyphony, with features of both monophony and polyphony. Neither the monophonic nor the polyphonic origin is clearly expressed in them (they can be interpreted as inaccurate, imperfect unison). Therefore, in the view of musical didactics, such opportunities for using *sutartinės* are rather limited. Drone is practically uncharacteristic of *sutartinės*. The exception is *sutartinės* that have a later origin, formed under the influence of harmonic polyphony, which Slaviūnas calls "innovative *sutartinės*". In the data of research by D. Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, drone carried in one tone in

some of these *sutartinės* voices is the result of the influence of instrumental music, most likely imitating a violin or bagpipe (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2000a: 94–99). Later-origin drone *sutartinės* include the war *sutartine* “*Žvingia žirgas, dolija*”, the second voice of which is based on the variable drone (SIS 1771). This *sutartine* is part of the newly-prepared 2nd grade music textbook *Vieversys* (Bertulienė, 2011: 67). Some foursome and twosome *sutartinės* are characterised by paraphony of seconds: two parallel melodies sound at the same time, which have an interval of seconds (SIS 1248). Parallel singing in seconds raises difficulties in intonation for the performers; therefore in primary school it should be limited to solfeggio of separate voices. However, the opportunity should not be missed to play the *sutartinė* with two flutes: this practice provides children with experience that is valuable in terms of musical language and style. Practically all threesome *sutartinės* are performed as three-voice canon (or variations thereof). Singing in canon for many beginners is one of the first and easiest to perform tasks in ensemble music. Learning to sing in canon should begin with unison *sutartinės*. They are easiest to intone. In terms of rhythm, *sutartinės* of an isorhythmic structure are most practical (Example 2b): they are simple to play in canon with flutes or recorders. Counterpoint is particularly characteristic of twosome and especially foursome *sutartinės*. Counterpoint singing in seconds, in terms of vocal performance, is difficult; without special preparation it is nearly impossible to overcome. Therefore, it is recognised that these *sutartinės* are rather difficult to perform (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2009: 18). Nevertheless, several foursome *sutartinės* with a simple structure can be used even in primary school. The foursome *sutartinė* “*Sodi, sodi lopai*” relies on two bichords and complementary crossrhythm (Example 2c). Children easily learn to sing, perform in solfeggio and play with a flute the separate voices of them. Many 2nd graders, together with their classmates, can play this *sutartinė* in two voices with flutes, gaining valuable experience in playing as an ensemble. Practice shows that some of the more gifted children are able to sing this *sutartinė* in two voices, being able to hold a second interval between voices.

Use of *sutartinės* material in musical compositional tasks

The musical material of *sutartinės* is particularly useful for introducing students with principles of composition, in teaching them the basics of music composition. R. Girdzijauskiene, who studied aspects of musical creativity in children, admits that “creation is the musical activity most associated with creativity, during which a musical product that had not existed before is created...” (Girdzijauskienė, 2004: 29–31). However, it is clear that any kind of musical creation is first of all based on the musical language experience of an individual and their existing musical vocabulary. The musical material of some *sutartinės* and its structural features allow for the modelling of composition tasks, helping to establish and realise the existing knowledge of musical theory, when children together feel the joy of mu-

sical composition. One of the simplest tasks of composing is to create a second voice for a *sutartinė*, keeping a second interval between voices. Having completed the task, the children can sing in solfeggio the separate voices of the *sutartinė*, play them with an instrument (recorder, two separate pipes), or play them in a duet. More difficult tasks requiring creative efforts are also possible, i.e. composing *sutartinės* in accordance to pre-specified conditions. The tasks indicate the rhythm of every voice and the notes from which the first and second voices of the *sutartinė* can be composed. Schoolchildren have to create both voices of the *sutartinė* and write them down in two staves. The two voices of the *sutartinė* can be done in solfeggio, sung, and played. The next step is to learn to play in a duet a whole two-voice composition (Velička, 2012b: 12, 23, 28).

Different tasks can be dedicated to expanding the synesthetic experience of the schoolchildren, such as when the harmonies of threesome or foursome *sutartinės* are turned into coloured fabrics. For this purpose, the notes of one voice of the *sutartinė* are written horizontally, while the other vertically. Each tune is represented by a certain colour of the rainbow (complementary colours are set at third intervals, thus aiming to associatively emphasise the consonance; contrasting colours are juxtaposed and represent dissonance). The lines above the notes are coloured in the colours indicated in the worksheet. Overlapping, the coloured lines create new composite colours and form a drawing reminiscent of fabric (Example 3). Such a task, when music-making includes elements of synaesthesia, promotes sharper understanding of the elements and structures of *sutartinės* music through colour associations, while at the same time revealing yet another opportunity for inter-disciplinary integration.

Example 3. Examples of creative tasks.

43. Iš pateiktų natų pagal nurodytą ritmą sukurk sutartinę. Užrašyk ją natomis. Prieš ją natą nepamiršk parašyti diežo! Dūdele pagrok pirmąjį ir antrąjį sutartinės balsą. Sutartinę dūduokite dviese.

Task 43 shows a musical exercise where students create a two-voice composition based on given notes and rhythm. It includes a drawing of two children playing a game and a larger notation with lyrics: Lin - kiau, lin - kiau ro - tų, lin - kiau, lin - kiau ro - tų. ly - lio, lin - kiau ro - tų - la - lį.

44. Sukurk spalvų sutartinę. Juostelės virš natų nuspalvink tokiomis spalvomis: fis – mėlyna, d – žydra, g – geltona, e – oranžinė, c – raudona. Prieš tai nuspalvink figūrą kairėje.

Task 44 shows a musical exercise where students create a two-voice composition based on given notes and rhythm, using color-coded lines (fis – mėlyna, d – žydra, g – geltona, e – oranžinė, c – raudona). It includes a drawing of a figure and a larger notation with lyrics: Lin - kiau, lin - kiau ro - tų.

Conclusion

Lithuanian polyphonic songs – *sutartinės* – are a unique genre of folklore, notable for features characteristic of archaic music: narrow melodies with limited number of scale steps dominate, with a characteristic rhythm of a syllabic nature, empha-

sising the syncretism of word and movement. Due to the features of archaic musical language, corresponding to the possibilities of children for perception and expression, some *sutartinės* are particularly suitable for primary school, yet their application possibilities in primary musical education have not yet been sufficiently explored. Elemental melodic, rhythmic patterns and polyphonic forms of *sutartinės* are in accordance to C. Orff's ideology of *Elementare Musik* and embody it in their own way. Analysis of the structural features of *sutartinės* music reveals wide possibilities for their pedagogical use. The musical material of *sutartinės* allows for linking in the teaching process various musical activities: singing by ear, solfeggio and rhythm making, reading sheet music and note writing exercises, playing various school music instruments, the development of ensemble skills, and elementary music composition exercises. In preparing exercises and creating a repertoire suitable for primary school, *sutartinės* should be carefully selected, taking into account the complexity of their musical language (scales, rhythmic formulas, polyphonic means) and the objectives of the music education tasks.

Sutartinės are important as a means for enriching musical vocabulary, allowing for the avoidance of uniformity of musical language and stereotypical clichés of musical aesthetics. *Sutartinės* have a characteristic, "other" musical language, which can serve as a useful resource in forming a broader, more varied musical experience, helping to resist the dictates of mass music culture. It should be noted that among young people *sutartinės* are becoming increasingly more popular: young groups in Lithuania, which perform music in the genres of folk-rock, neo-folk and other alternative styles, use *sutartinės* more often in their songs. The international recognition of *sutartinės* (in 2010 it was included in UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List) obliges the community of educators and scientists to pay more attention to various pedagogical and methodological aspects of the dissemination of *sutartinės*.

Sources

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СПЕЦИФИЧНОСТИ ЛИТВАНСКИХ ПЕСАМА 'СУТАРТИНЕ' И ДИДАКТИЧКЕ МОГУЋНОСТИ ЊИХОВЕ УПОТРЕБЕ У УЧИОНИЦИ

Фокус рада је на структуралним специфичностима песама сутартине, карактеристикама њиховог музичког језика, као и дидактичким могућностима њихове употребе у учионици. Анализа структуралних карактеристика песама сутартине открива широке могућности њихове педагошке употребе. Музички материјал песама сутартине омогућава повезивање различитих музичких активности у наставном процесу. На основу њиховог музичког материјала, ученици се упознају с елементарним принципима компоновања и развијају композиционе вештине. Сутартине су важно средство за обогаћивање музичког речника, избегавање уједначености музичког језика и стереотипних клишеа музичке естетике. Међународно признање сутартина обавезује наставнике музике да посвете више пажње различитим педагошким и методолошким аспектима распрострања сутартина.

Кључне речи: сутартине, вишегласје, структура, музички језик, музичка дидактика