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**Today's Singing Tradition of Lithuanian Polyphonic Songs Sutartinės:  
Relations of Western and Eastern Cultures**

The dichotomy “East-West” is a philosophical concept of ancient origin. Despite the fact that East and West can be interpreted and understood as a cultural hemisphere, it is necessary to talk about their commonalities and points of contact. In an article author notes, drawing on her many years of singing practice and scientific research, that the music of *sutartinės* is understood not as a mix of different vocal parties, but as a sounding pulsating space. In this sense, *sutartinės* are close to minimalistic—music and visual art—works which are characterised by the multiple repetition of elements, their severity and precision. In performing *sutartinės*, just like Eastern traditional music, one characteristic is to, through controlled emotion, “enter” one certain state and remain in it for a long time. Speaking about *sutartinės*, the author discusses old Lithuanian relations with the East, which are not so much a geographical, but more mental. It is known that the West in general is characterized by the propensity to search for manifestations of spirituality in the East. Therefore, the links of *sutartinės* with the East may be the result of this search. The author raises the question of whether the modern tendency of young people to sing the *sutartinės* may be the result of the search for spirituality in Eastern culture, or the spirit of the East rather than the West lies in the very nature of *sutartinės*. Modern music projects, bringing together Western and Eastern cultures, helps to understand the original features of the *sutartinės* and possibilities of “western” meditation.

*Keywords:* sutartinės, Lithuanian minimalism, spirituality, Orient in Lithuania, the West-East, dialogue of cultures

The subject of my papers – Lithuanian multipart songs *sutartinės* inscribed in 2010 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Features most characteristic of vocal and instrumental polyphony, second accords, complementary rhythms and syncopation, indicate a powerful, unique musical system of thought per *sutartinės*\* (Ex. 1. *Du Dobilėli Trys Ratilėli.wawe*).

*Sutartinės* were part of the old belief system and its rituals, and undoubtedly represent the sacred part of the *sacrum/profanum* duality. According to the old sources, *sutartinės* were sung by none other than sprites and witches. This lets us surmise that the singers of *sutartinės* were important participants or organizers of rituals. The sacredness of *sutartinės* as well as the extraordinary status of the singers is revealed by several factors. Nineteenth century linguist Mykolas Miežinis wrote down the testimony of one singer who claimed that “their mothers knew such songs, which they kept secret and sang very rarely;

the words were held in high esteem, and were considered unalterable”<sup>1\*</sup>. Keeping them in secret, and the honor bestowed on those unalterable words indicated their special significance and the sacredness of the *sutartinės*. This peculiar fear is also mentioned by researcher Mykolas Biržiška who wrote down these comments: “For people of our times *sutartinės* sometimes appear mysterious and it is said that they come to us through sprites and fairies, (*initially the Goddess of Birth and Earth in Eastern Baltic mythology*) Afterwards, when people had become Christians, they only referred to *them* as witches” (Biržiška, 1921, 31).

We have several documented tales about sprites who were the singers of *sutartinės*. In one of them (written down in 1968 from informant Ksaveras Ilgevičius at the age of 75) three sprites who lived several kilometers one from the other would sing a *sutartinė* (Dovydaitis, 1987, 474). The fact that *laumės* or sprites sing the *sutartinės* is important evidence of just how exceptional these songs were.

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\* *Sutartinės, Lithuanian multipart songs* <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/sutartines-lithuanian-multipart-songs-00433>

<sup>1\*</sup> *Русское географическое общество* (Archives of the Russian Geography Association in St. Petersburg), 1, nr. 31, p. 89.

According to folklorist Norbertas Vėliaus, the word *ragana* or witch is quite old, related to the words for oracle or sorcerer. The word *ragana* has its origins in the word *regėti* – to see. She can see into the future, she is clairvoyant; the expert on things unseen (Vėlius, 1977, 128). Of course, we might question whether tales and testimonies can be firm proof of the social and religious status of *sutartinė* singers of the past. In this case we might rely on the opinion of semiotician Algirdas Julius Greimas, who has said that, “even the seemingly most stupid idea or tale has its grounds and can be explained. The object of mythology is not the world and its things, but that which a person thinks about the world, about things, and about himself” (Greimas, 1990: 29). On the one hand we might surmise that those specializing in the singing of *sutartinės* were witches, sorceresses or oracles according to the conception of that day. On the other hand, these women might have been labeled witches as the *sutartinė* tradition was beginning to wane (as keepers of the old traditional hymns, which were now incomprehensible to others; the experts on mysterious matters). Folklorist Bronė Kerbelytė holds a similar view of witchery. “First there came a change in the conception of magic. It diminished in the everyday lives of most people and more conservative people were made fun of or they were considered dangerous witches and warlocks” (Kerbelytė, 1999: 246). However, as time went on, *sutartinės* lost their connection to ritual. We can note changes in both the worldview and the aesthetics as regards *sutartinės* (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2002; 2005; 2010; 2012a, etc).

In the middle of the 20th Century, the natural transmission of *sutartinės* from one generation to the next has ceased for all practical purposes in the rural areas of Lithuania. Before the group performance tradition finally died in the rural areas, the *sutartinės* were widely misunderstood by the beginning of the 20th century; its practitioners were viewed negatively and were mocked. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a marked change in musical aesthetics – a general tendency towards romanticism, the rapid spread of so-called literary songs and ballads known as “romances,” folk song arrangements for chorus, polished vocal performances – the antithesis of the open-throat, chesty manner of singing. All of this altered the common folks’ perception of *sutartinės*. The singing of these archaic songs provided less and less aesthetic satisfaction, and the *sutartinės* themselves were mocked. Elzbieta Janavičienė, born in 1841 stated, “When they would make fun of us, saying that that we cackle like hens, then we would sing them in one voice” (in other words – not polyphonically). Another singer of *sutartinės*, Elzbieta Bratėnaitė, born in 1852 sang a *sutartinė* parody for Stasys Paliulis, an expert on *sutartinės*. According to

the informant, this parody of cackling hens was sung by young men who would make fun of the female singers (Paliulis, 1959, 413):

*Čia tavo  
Čia mano,  
Sudėsim abiejų,  
Bus tik mūsų dviejų.*<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult to trace the origins of the *sutartinė* “Vištela karkė” (SIS 621), which contains a refrain imitating the “language” of hens: *kudi kudi, kudi-ka-ka* (instead of traditional vocables such as *tatato, lingo rita*, which are found in other versions of this *sutartinė*):

*Vištela karkė,  
Žirnelius tarpė.  
Kudi, kudi, kudi kaka,  
Kudi, kudi, kudi kaka...*

*The hen crackled,  
taking care of the peas,  
Kudi, kudi, kudi kaka,  
Kudi, kudi, kudi kaka...*

Is this the work of those who were not fans of *sutartinės*? A parody of the singing style? Or was this a case of autoirony in which the singers themselves made fun of the strange cackling that their singing emitted?<sup>2</sup>

We see a similar transformation of a traditional vocable into a hen imitation in another case, further demonstrating the derisive attitude towards the singing of *sutartinės*. Singer M. Juknys (from the region of Utena) recalled how the “old women would cackle as they harvested rye. One old woman or girl would repeat only one phrase: Who sowed the rye? The other would answer: Sister sowed the rye. The third one would say: *Ku dė ka ka ka!*” (2 times.) <...>. Sometime a fourth one would join in but with no words, just a drone: *Ū-ū-ū-ū-ū...* That kind of singing would make us laugh a lot. Then we would say “The old women have started to cackle like hens” (LTR 1948(195)). Therefore, in the beginning of the twentieth century the comparison of *sutartinės* to the cackling of hens is no longer a melodic or articulation characteristic, but a reflection of the attitudes of listeners, who considered this type of singing to be unattractive, incomprehensible, a chaotic clamour.

<sup>1</sup> Translation: *These are your eggs, these are mine. We'll put them together, and they will be ours.*

<sup>2</sup> The “cackling like hens” description regarding *sutartinės* may have several meanings: 1) a reflection of key *sutartinė* performance practices: the rapid “hopping” from one pitch to another, the accentuation of selected pitches, the simultaneous sounding of different texts and melodies – the general clamour; 2) an indication of changes in twentieth century music aesthetics, a different view of *sutartinės* among the rural population.

So many folklorists of the first half of the twentieth century spoke of the complete disappearance of *sutartinės*. However, in the 1960s they were being performed in the larger cities of Lithuania, attaining a different and new meaning (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2012b).

Today *sutartinės* are as exotic to young people as the musics of other cultures. They have numerous characteristics that are atypical of the remaining repertoire of Lithuanian folklore – bitonality, bitextualism (when meaningful texts as well as vocables are simultaneously performed), the dominance of the interval of a second, complementary rhythm, syllabic articulation, and a rich vocabulary of vocables<sup>3</sup> [Fig. 1].

Figure 1. *Kas ta ve, sesiule*. Wedding *sutartinė* sung by Ona Smilgienė, age 74, Papilys district, Biržai region (Slaviūnas 1958 II, 408, nr. 842)

Yet this exotic and barely understood vocal form is the place where they go to find spirituality. How can this be explained? Is this the trend of the day? What draws young people to *sutartinės*? When I perform in other European countries with my group of *sutartinės* singers Trys Keturiose I see that they leave an impression on non-Lithuanians as well. One possible premise is that this corresponds with the general tendency in the West to search for spirituality in the East (Deschênes, 2005; Keister, 2005; Genzelis, 2005; Beinorius, 2011, and others).

As is widely known, the Western world turned towards the East in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Europe became spiritually vulnerable. For several centuries a stereotyped distinction has endured, stating that the West is dominated by the active, rational, material side of the human psyche, while the East represents its passive, contemplative, spiritual side. It is still generally thought that the source of true values may be solely found in the East, which is defined by

its oral culture and belief in the magical power of words.

As maintained by French philosopher René Guénon (1886–1951), some common features have been preserved in the Eastern civilizations, which might be subsumed under the term ‘traditional civilization’ and which have been lost in the Western civilization. There was no reason for opposition between East and West as long as there were traditional civilizations in the West as well as in the East. This opposition, in the philosopher’s opinion, has meaning only as far as the modern West is concerned, for “it is far more an opposition between two mentalities than between two more or less clearly defined geographical entities.” The lost tradition, according to Guénon, “can be restored and brought to life again only by contact with the living traditional spirit, and, as we have already said, it is only in the East that this spirit is still fully alive” (Guénon 2002).

However, the real cultural and geopolitical East, as pointed out by literary scholar Regimantas Tamošaitis, displays such great diversity that may not necessarily correspond to the stereotyped vision of the East. The latter appears to be merely a figure of speech, an ideological construct of language. Then the East may be regarded as a transcendental ideal, wealth of spiritual life that lies beyond the bounds of our world (Tamošaitis, 2012, 8–9). Carl Gustav Jung was of similar opinion, claiming that it is not a geographical category but rather a spiritual or psychological idea, a repressed and frustrated part of our consciousness [Jung 1970]. Therefore the Eastern world is not only located in a different realm, but is also essentially different in terms of quality and time, which might be described as archetypal, mythical. Such vision of the Orient was adopted by the romantics, which became successfully revived in the context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century non-traditional cults and cultures.

Speaking of the Lithuanian culture in particular and its ties with the East, one may conclude that these ties are not entirely superficial or influenced by the general tendency to look for spiritual values in the East, which is prevalent in the West. Many Lithuanian culturologists point to the fact that the issues of interaction between Eastern and Western mentalities have never lost their significance in the context of Lithuanian culture. It is generally accepted that the ancestors of Lithuanian nation moved to Europe from Asia and for this particular reason the archetypal forms of Lithuanian traditional culture preserved many bonds with the eastern world (Andrijauskas, 1991, 255). For example, Lithuanian philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis (1886–1941) argued in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Lithuania cannot restrict its relations to maintaining contacts only with the Western culture, simply because Lithuanian people have ‘Eastern blood’ in their origins

<sup>3</sup> *Sutartinės* texts contain an abundant number of archaic refrains: *linagō, taduvō, čičto rūto, tatātō, siuli siulingēla, siudijō, dūno, rittatātōj, minagaučio, dautuvō, ritingō, tūto be tūto, judabrō* and others; the meanings of these words, these days, are indecipherable. These refrains, devoid of any semantic meaning, generally consist of interjected onomatopoeic sounds that are especially important to the rhythm of the *sutartinės*.

(Šalkauskis, 1991, 153–154). Comparative culturology has shown that there are many vestiges of eastern origin in the constituent elements of Lithuanian culture, such as language, folklore, mythology and indigenous religion – in other words, everything that had shaped a distinct type of Lithuanian ethnicity. The large portion of the linguistic substrate of Lithuanians as a nation has the Indo-European foundation, which holds something that we now refer to as the *eastern spirit* and whose semantic content remains extant mostly in the language that is akin to the Indo-European protolanguage (Neimantas, 2002). It has been argued that Lithuanian and its dialects have an important role in the investigation of the prehistory of Indo-European languages and reconstruction of their protolanguages. Modern Lithuanian presents a peculiar phenomenon for comparative linguistics. It is related to Sanskrit (a classical language of India), Latin and Ancient Greek (Schmalstieg, 1982; Markevičienė, 2002; Baldi and Dini, 2004, and others). According to the Žaneta's Markevičienė's research, Hindi has unbelievably numerous loan words from Sanskrit, therefore, numerous common items among Sanskrit, Lithuanian and Hindi exist presently, e.g., Lith. *smakras* – Hind., Skr. *śmaśru* 'chin'; Lith. *medus* – Hind. *madhu* – Skr. *mādhu* 'honey', etc. Another portion of the common lexicon embraces native Hindi words. It includes common items absent in Sanskrit, e.g. Lith. *kulšis* - Hind. *kūlhā* 'hip'; Lith. *kupra* - Hind. *kūbar* 'hump'; Lith. *bėgti* 'to run' – Hind. *bhānā* 'to run away'; Lith. *kukurbezdalis*, *kukurvelkis* 'puffball' – Hind. *kukurmuttā* 'mushroom', etc. (Markevičienė, 2002, 113).

Musicologist Jūratė Landsbergytė noted that Lithuania, like no other country in the geopolitical space of Europe, is related to the East through very deep ties that lead to the subconscious level of the nation's mentality (Landsbergytė, 2011). It is no coincidence that orientalism has been conceived by many Lithuanian composers as a search for one's own cultural identity – a philosophical projection, enabling to understand one's place in the world. In her words, it is "an all-embracing sacred space, a prerequisite of transcendence in music." For this particular reason orientalism in Lithuanian music is not so much a matter of stylistic choice, but rather a "general trend that runs through the whole field of new music." The orientalist trend acquires its most elaborate form in Lithuanian minimalism that takes its source in the individual styles of Bronius Kutavičius, Mindaugas Urbaitis and Giedrius Kuprevičius. It is in their music that orientalism "matures as a structure and programmatically 'wins over', that is, becomes established in the form of Meditation genre" (Landsbergytė, 2011, 536).

Moreover, the orientalist notions of eternity, cosmos and universality enabled the Lithuanian composers to reach for a universal level. This even gave

rise to the new category in Lithuanian music, *non-Lithuanian ethnicity* (a term coined by Inga Jankauskienė and applied in reference to certain works by Kutavičius (Jankauskienė, 2001, 227)), which defined the unfolding of one's spiritual freedom, one's openness to the world.<sup>4</sup> In Landsbergytė's opinion, it also defined the ultimate goal of new Lithuanian music: "to expand, to obliterate the limits of the system, to make the structures absolute, extending towards infinity of the universe." In her words, "it was the great nostalgia of Lithuania – to join the ranks of world's oldest nations in the cosmic rhythm of creation" (Landsbergytė, 2011, 538).

The above-mentioned examples clearly illustrate that the notion of the East in Lithuania is far from being solely geographical. To quote once more philosopher Šalkauskis, in search for the Eastern world it would be a misleading path to follow purely geographical guidelines: "the most important thing here is the distinctiveness of cultural and spiritual structure" (Šalkauskis, 1991, 153–154).

However, let us return to the *sutartinės*. It should be borne in mind that in folk vernacular these *sutartinės* are not called songs, but *giesmė* 'hymns'<sup>5</sup>. They were also referred to as hymns by the early collectors, in deference to the classification used by the rural singers, but also with the intent of stressing their distinction from more modern, through-composed songs (*įstisinės dainos*). Early 20<sup>th</sup> century collectors included Father Adolfas Sabaliauskas, and Finnish folklorist, Professor Aukusti Robert Niemi. As noted by Father Sabaliauskas, "There is a type of Lithuanian songs that are called hymns. These are not, as some may think, spiritual (or religious) hymns, but secular hymns. And as the old singers say, they are not sung, but chanted. And they never confuse the two: they will never call a song a hymn or a hymn a song. That's how marked the difference is" (Sabaliauskas, 1912, 7). The polyphony of *sutartinės*, an archaic cultural auditory phenomenon, is based on a cyclical conception of time [Fig. 2]. Their sounding is endless, like a closed circle or a wheel.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Such works by Kutavičius include his String Quartet No. 3 *Anno cum tettigonia* (A Year with the Grasshopper) (1980), oratorio *The Magic Circle of Sanskrit* (1990), based on the poetry of Sigita Geda and imbued with the spirit of orientalism and 'Lithuania as part of the world,' and some other pieces that had a truly seminal and seismic effect in the Lithuanian music of the time.

<sup>5</sup> In the Lithuanian language, the word for hymn (*giesmė*) is used to describe birdsong, the singing of *sutartinės*, and sacred music performed in church; in a sense - paying respect to all three of these expressions.

<sup>6</sup> *Trejinė(s)* ' threesome(s)' is the most popular form of a singing style. Three singers (sometimes three groups) perform the singing in strict canon. Each enters into the song in stages, while another singer proceeds with the second part of the melody. In other words, the second singer enters, while the first is still singing; the third, while the second one is singing and the first again, while

The fact that the people have referred to the *sutartinės* as *apskritos* ‘round ones’ is no mere random occurrence. The ringing of the music itself seems to run in an endless circle. This has also probably had influence on the way the performers arrange the unfolding of the song in a circular fashion (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2002, 86) [Fig. 3].

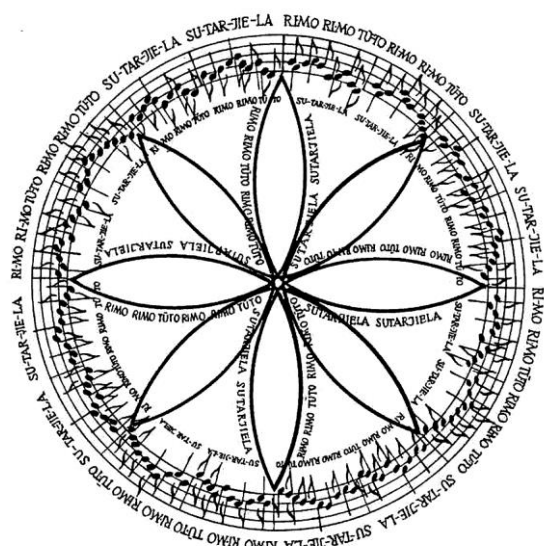


Figure 2. Graphic view of the *sutartinė* “Rimo Rimo Tūto” created by the author, drawn by Algirdas Kuzma



Figure 3. *Sutartinės*' singers group Trys Keturiose (Jurgita Treinytė, photographer, 2006)

There are no major pauses for breath, no culminations, introductions or final cadences. This allows both the singers and the listeners to immerse themselves into a uniform state of mind and to experience the hypnotic effect.<sup>7</sup>

the third is singing. This way the entire *sutartinės* hymn is sung going around in a circle. Only two voices sound at any one time, except at the first stanza, when the voice of the lead text collector starts the song alone.

<sup>7</sup> The cyclical form of the instrumental *sutartinės* was noted in the second half of the 20th century by Russian musicologist Abram Yusfin (Юсфин, 1968; 1986). By making comparisons with similar musical examples from other cultures, he attested to the archaic origins and the ritual beginnings of *sutartinės*.

Nowadays many singers and listeners perceive *sutartinės* not only as polyphonic singing in groups, which requires a special concord, an “accord”, but also as a certain collective meditation. The question is what determines such conception of *sutartinės*. On the one hand, the singers' predilection for a meditative mood can be attributed to the structure of *sutartinės* - a constant recurrence of short musical and textual motifs [Ex. 2. *Trys keturiose linelius sėjam.avi*]. The music of *sutartinės* in general is not seen as the combination of individual voice parts but as a certain pulsatile sounding space of infinite time (Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, 2010) [Ex. 3. *Saduto tūto.avi*]

In this sense, *sutartinės* are very close to minimal music whose first developers (Steve Reich and Philip Glass) were greatly influenced by their acquaintance with the laws of composition of ancient Eastern traditional music as well as with religious-philosophical teachings. Some composers and musicologists (Edwin Geist and others) of the middle of the twentieth century had already observed the relationship of the music of *sutartinės* with the East.

*Sutartinės*, according to Geist, typically contain short, primitive musical segments that are repeated and have strong common characteristics with the music of Africa (especially Arabic music) and Asian song types. The same kind of rotating structures can be found in the Balkans and in Asia Minor. In the opinion of Geist, this is related to ritual and magic in archaic cultures; the stereotypical repetition of rhythmic and monadic structures provided hypnotic powers (Geist, 1940, 57). The performance of *sutartinės* is similar to that of Asian music in which emotions are restrained and you “enter” into a certain state and remain in it for a prolonged time [Fig. 4]. In Western musical culture the individual artist, the brilliant musician, interpreter or virtuoso is highly esteemed. In Eastern culture there is an emphasis on being in a community. The individual must forget the self and to put forth effort for the good of the collective or the nation.<sup>8</sup> Much as in *sutartinės* - the individual singer means almost nothing in the here and now. A *sutartinė* is born only when all of the singers are in agreement.

<sup>8</sup> It is widely known that in Japan, for example, social rapports are more important than individual autonomy (Deschênes, 2005, 14).



Figure 4. Trys Keturiose during the *sutartinės* performance in Tokyo, Japan (Gabija Žukauskienė, photographer, 2010)

Eastern traditional pedagogical practices also apply. One of the main principles is oral transmission of the tradition. Of course, some modern Lithuanians find this to be an impossible task - they often ask for written notation and texts. However, my firm belief, based on my own teaching practice, is that this “Eastern” oral teaching method can help today’s young people unearth the treasures of *sutartinės*. The teacher in contemporary *sutartinė* singing schools, camps and seminars must become a *guru* – not merely the formal transmitter of disconnected melodies and texts. He must become a spiritual teacher, one who reveals the inner power of the *sutartinė* spirit. In Eastern traditions (like Japan or India), the teacher attains a godly status in the life of his students<sup>9</sup>. Interestingly, in several *sutartinė*-learning camps I have heard students say, “How lucky we are - it’s like God himself has arrived!” Of course, this evoked a smile and the glorification seemed unnecessary. However, this may be nothing exceptional if we employ the same type of oral transmission that is encountered in the East. The reception of, the accurate imitation of the sung melody is naturally related to the main principle of the *sutartinės* - canon. As in Eastern culture, the teaching is more intuitive rather than verbalized or theorized.

On the other hand, the present-day conception of *sutartinės* may be influenced by the change in mentality of contemporary Lithuanian people, by the newly acquired knowledge about Eastern spiritual practices and so forth<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> In India the teacher is perceived as a type of intermediary, a channel for the transmission of sacred knowledge between the gods and the pupils. In Japan it is possible to perform ritual music only by identifying with the god or through the virtual personification of God (Keister 2005, 46).

<sup>10</sup> At Vilnius University operate the Centre of Oriental Studies, the Confucius Institute, at Vytautas Magnus University (in Kaunas) – the Centre for Asian Studies; the subject “Musical Non-European Cultures” is taught at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and so forth.

Anyhow, an increasing interest of younger generations in Eastern culture and religion has a profound impact on the present-day conception of *sutartinės* as well on their various interpretations, both singing them in *a capella* and combining their singing with other musical styles or instruments (Indian *bansuri* flute, *tabla*), and the like. For example Lyla, a unique project of the famous Lithuanian folk music singer Veronika Povilionienė and the performers of Indian classical music merges archaic Lithuanian folk songs and instrumental improvisations performed in the Hindustani tradition. In their music these two apparently different cultures enrich each other and converge, revealing their distant, but common, Indo-European origins. In 2004 Lyla released the widely acclaimed album *Bitinėlio raga* (Bee Raga)<sup>11</sup>.

The group Atalyja (“The rain is coming”) positioned itself as a Lithuanian folk-rock music band presents an exciting combination of folk, rock and funk, with some features of Indian classical music (the group was awarded as the ethnoband of the year at the alternative music awards “A.LT”-2008). Well-known Lithuanian musicians and ethnomusicologists are among the members of the band. Some songs are coloured with oriental shades of North Indian instruments: the *bansuri* as well as *tabla*<sup>12</sup>.

### Concluding remarks

Some present-day examples of the *sutartinės* revival should be regarded as part of the mass culture, in which the reverence towards the East occurs as an attempt of people with Western identity to compensate, at least on a mental level, for the values and meanings that they lack in their immediate environment.

On the other hand, experimental crossover mixtures of the *sutartinės* with any kind of Eastern music can be understood as an acceptable method for young people to ‘open up to the world,’ to shape their own ‘Lithuania-as-part-of-the-world.’ This may offer a very fruitful perspective for the spread of the *sutartinės* tradition and promotion of the national culture at large. To align our argument with the thoughts of philosopher and art researcher Antanas Andrijauskas, the national culture that eschews “the longing for the world’s culture” has no future. The greater the ability of culture to naturally integrate the values of other cultures, the more profound impulses it receives for its growth (Andrijauskas, 1991, 253). Such peaceful dialogue of cultures may nonetheless

<sup>11</sup> The *sutartinė* “Ka bice”, performed by Lyla and Veronika Povilionienė, <https://www.pakartot.lt/album/bitinelioraga> (accessed Januar 27, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> The *sutartinė* “Gervelė” [“The Crane”], performed by folk rock band Atalyja (from CD “Močia” (2004)), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBnBeF-JY90>; accessed Januar 25, 2017).

lead to the problem of cultural transfer: that is, how to transfer meanings of 'foreign' cultures into one's native culture without damaging its authenticity. But one thing remains certain: it is through the natural integration of other cultures' and civilizations' values that we achieve a better understanding and appreciation of the specificity, spiritual riches and possibilities for self-realization that lie within our own culture.

One of the latest examples of such dialogue of cultures is the musical performance "A Merriadge of Sutartines and Flamenco" (*Flamenco ir sutartinių jungtuvės*)<sup>13</sup>. *Sutartinės* and flamenco<sup>14</sup> are enormously contrasting forms of expression of ethnic traditions and to a rational mind they do not fit, however, quite the opposite is true. Due to their unique differences they actually complement each other by exposing the hidden links, the beauty and richness of both cultures. [Fig. 5]

"Mugam and sutartines: dialogue" (*Mugamas ir sutartinės: dialogai*) another original project bringing together different cultures (symbolically representing the West and East). It was the first and the only, unique project in Lithuania connecting Azerbaijani and Lithuanian folk music<sup>15</sup> [Fig. 6]. This project unites not just two ethnic cultures and also completely different music styles: polyphony and monody, rock, fusion, free jazz, electro music<sup>16</sup>.



<sup>13</sup> It's a theatrical musical story about a meeting between Flamenco and Sutartines, love, nuptials, honeymoon and all that was born out of it. It is a performance of continuous movement and flow of inevitable interconnection. ("Sutartinės meets Flamenco", <http://flamenkofilmfestivalis.lt/performance/>; accessed Januar 18, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> As is known flamenco is at the heart of Southern Spain's Andalusian culture, connecting the singing, dancing and the guitar. The natural blend of Romani, Christian, Arabic, Sephardic, African, South American, and the local Spanish indigenous cultures played a role in developing the art of Flamenco.

<sup>15</sup> A promotional video recording of performance "Mugam and sutartines: dialogue", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mqc4IloUxNc>; accessed Januar 18, 2017)

<sup>16</sup> "Mugam ir sutartinės: dialogai" [Mugam and sutartines: dialogue] <http://www.terminal.menufabrikas.lt/en/mugam-ir-sutartin%C4%97s-dialogai>; accessed Januar 18, 2017)

Figure 5. Singer and author of the performance "A Merriadge of Sutartines and Flamenco" Brigita Bublytė with flamenco musician Javier Gomez (guitar, Spain) (Dmitrijus Matvejevas, photographer, 2014)



Figure 6. Mugam musicians (Elshan Mansurov, Malik Mansurov and Ehtyram Huseynov) with *sutartinės*' singers group Trys Keturiose during the concert in Vilnius (Vytautas Daraškevičius, photographer, 2015)

I hope that the understanding Eastern culture helps singers and musicians envisage modern possibilities of "western" meditation in *sutartinės*. However, another possibility, which cannot be excluded, is that the spirit of the East rather than the West lies in the very nature of *sutartinės*.

The spirituality of contemporary *sutartinės* performance practice manifests itself as an inner experience of holiness, as the harmonization of self, and as a communal feeling – as musical and universal coherence, a developing relationship with the listener, joy emanating from the result, as enlightenment.

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## Sound and video examples:

- Ex. 1. *Du dobilėli trys ratilėli*. Sung by *sutartinės*' singers group Trys Keturiose (from CD "*Sutartinės*" 1, nr. 18, Vilnius: Boma Record, 2003), <https://www.pakartot.lt/album/sutartines-2-cd/du-dobileliu-trys-ratileliu2> (accessed Januar 18, 2017)
- Ex. 2. *Trys keturiose linelius sėjam*. A fragment from audiovisual project "*Lino Laikas*" [*Linen Times*], performed by Trys Keturiose in Kaunas (filmed by Leonas Glinskis, 2009)
- Ex. 3. *Sadūto tūto*. Sung by *sutartinės*' singers group Trys Keturiose in *sutartinės*' festival "*Sesė Sodų Sodina*" [*Sis Plants the Orchard*] in Ramučiai, Kaunas district (filmed by Virginijus Kašinskas, 2014).

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### Литовські поліфонічні пісні сутартінес сьогодні: співвідношення Західної та Східної культур

Дихотомія «Схід-Захід» є філософською концепцією давнього походження. Не зважаючи на те, що Схід і Захід можна розуміти як культурні опозити, необхідно говорити про їх спільність у певних точках дотику. Спираючись на багатолітню практику співу і наукові дослідження, автор доводить, що музика сутартінес розуміється не як суміш різних вокальних партій, а як звуковий пульсуючий простір. В цьому сенсі сутартінес близькі до мінімалістичних – музичних та візуальних творів, які характеризуються багаторазовим повторенням елементів, їх строгістю і точністю. Під час виконання сутартінес, як і у традиційній східній музиці, характерною рисою є те, що за допомогою контрольованих емоцій, виконавець входить у певний стан і перебуває у ньому певний час (з власного співацького досвіду авторки). Говорячи про сутартінес, автор звертається до теми литовських стосунків зі Сходом, які є не так географічні, як психологічні. Відомо, що Захід у цілому схильний до пошуку насамперед виявів духовності на Сході. Тому зв'язки можуть розглядатися як одна з можливостей такого пошуку. Автор торкається питання, чи не є сучасне прагнення молоді співати сутартінес результатом пошуку духовності у східній культурі, тобто чи закладений в самій природі сутартінес "дух Сходу", а не "дух Заходу"? Проекти сучасної музики, які об'єднують західну і східну культури, допомагають зрозуміти оригінальні риси сутартінес і можливості «західної» медитації.

*Ключові слова:* сутартінес, литовський мінімалізм, духовність, Захід-Схід, діалог культур

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### Литовские полифонические песни сутартинес сегодня: соотношение Западной и Восточной культур

Дихотомия «Восток-Запад» является философской концепцией давнего происхождения. Несмотря на то, что Восток и Запад можно понимать как культурные опозиты, необходимо говорить об их общности в определенных точках соприкосновения. Опираясь на многолетнюю практику пения и научные исследования, автор доказывает, что музыка сутартинес понимается не как смесь различных вокальных партий, а как звучащее пульсирующее пространство. В этом смысле сутартинес близки минималистичным – музыкальным и визуальным произведениям, которые характеризуются многократным повторением элементов, их строгостью и точностью. Во время исполнения сутартинес, как и традиционной восточной музыки, характерной чертой является то, что с помощью контролируемых эмоций исполнитель входит в определенное состояние и пребывает в нем определенное время (из личного исполнительного опыта автора). Говоря о сутартинес, автор обращается к теме литовских отношений с Востоком, которые не столько географические, сколько психологические. Известно, что Запад в целом склонен к поиску прежде всего проявлений духовности на Востоке. Поэтому связи могут рассматриваться как одна из возможностей такого поиска. Автор задается вопросом, не является ли современное стремление молодежи петь сутартинес результатом поиска духовности в восточной культуре, не заложен ли в самой природе сутартинес «дух Востока», а не «дух Запада»? Проекты современной музыки, которые объединяют западную и восточную культуры, помогают понять оригинальные черты сутартинес и возможности «западной» медитации.

*Ключевые слова:* сутартинес, литовский минимализм, духовность, Запад-Восток, диалог культур

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