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National Aspects of Onutė Narbutaitė's Music: Creative and Socio-Cultural Approaches

Tendencies of globalization, becoming ever more vivid, inevitably reveal their controversial nature: on the one hand, they pose a threat to cultural distinctions, while on the other hand, this threat leads consequently to the growth of interest in multicultural phenomena.

Among the works of the Lithuanian composer Onutė Narbutaitė (*1956), the oratorio *Centones meae urbi*, for which she was awarded the Lithuanian National Award in 1997, seems to be the most fitting example for this issue. The oratorio is dedicated to Vilnius, the composer's native city, whose cultural variety is aptly reflected in the genre of "centones". The Latin word "cento" means a patch, while its plural form "centones" means a new text composed out of borrowed verses and individual phrases. A name for literary games in Antiquity, it later came to mean a musical game, too. One may also view such a choice of "genre" as a manifestation of postmodern consciousness which places special emphasis on the coexistence of an ethnically and socially diversified past in the present. According to some scholars, as much as modernism sought to form national identities, postmodernism developed our sensibility to the past which is multiple, split and heterophonic – like patchwork.¹

The content of national identity has been changing considerably in the period of postmodern globalization and international interaction. While international lifestyles were taking hold, national rhetoric was losing its effectiveness. In such a context, the title of Joshua Meyrowitz's book *No Sense of Place* may speak for itself.² There is a certain contradiction in that the national values considered most

¹See Jelena Tubina, *Mesta pamiati, monumenty i 'novaja' demokratija* ["Places of Memory and the 'New' Democracy"], in: *Topos*, No. 3, Minsk: European Humanities University 2000, p. 79.

²See Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place. The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour*, New York: Oxford University Press 1985, p. 81.

important under the conditions of colonization, tend to decrease in significance or even acquire a negative connotation under the conditions of freedom. Some scholars claim that national cultures can no longer ignore international influences. The concept of “globalization”, taken from Japanese business discourse (and popularized by Roland Robertson), seems to describe most precisely the interaction between international, global, and local elements. The process of globalization cannot disregard local identities or multi-culturalism as such. National identity did not disappear: it simply changed form.³

The content of Narbutaitė's oratorio is undoubtedly patriotic. This does not mean, however, that it raises the Lithuanian identity above all other national identities but rather that it helps to expose it through interplay with Polish, Jewish and other identities. At this point, it is valuable to quote some of the author's thoughts expressed in Wigry, Poland, at the meeting of Polish and Lithuanian artists in 1997:

My generation is the last one which still had a possibility to get in touch with the remnants of the mentality coming from the Lithuanian Grand Duchy through our grandparents. Quite a few of them learned Polish in their childhood years and spoke it as a vernacular. There was no contradiction, however, between this fact and their Lithuanian identity or self-determination. Unfortunately, due to general distrust towards Polishness, provoked by the historical circumstances of the interwar period, many of my contemporaries can hardly understand this interlacing of Lithuanian-Polish (or, more generally, Lithuanian-Nonlithuanian) identities. And I always felt very sore about that.⁴

The composer seems to have soothed this sore by creating the oratorio which eulogizes the multi-cultural richness of her native city. The texts, pronounced in Lithuanian, Polish, Latin, Yiddish and other languages, extend the borders of Lithuania's capital to the magnitude of a spiritual centre, thus reminding us that it was and continues to

³See Almantas Samalavičius, *Nuo masinės kultūros kritikos iki kultūros globalizacijos* [“From Criticism of Mass Culture to Cultural Globalization”], in: *Kultūros barai* [“Fields of Culture”], No. 4 (2000), p. 2-6.

⁴See composer's unpublished manuscript *The meeting of Polish and Lithuanian artists in Wigry (Poland) 1997* (translated into English by Veronika Janatjeva).

be a European city. In order to start discussing this composition, we may refer, once again, to the title of the above-mentioned book, *No Sense of Place*, because the cultural memory that underpins the oratorio is site-specific and global at the same time. The opening of the composition, with its symbolic sound of “birbynė” (a kind of Lithuanian reed-pipe) and brass fanfares, evokes the raising of a theatre curtain and frames the spiritual amplitude of the Old Town of Vilnius from its folkloric origins to manifestations of the royal court culture. The “birbynė” improvises the theme of an authentic folksong called *O ant Vilniaus aukšty kalnų* (“On the High Hills of Vilnius”).⁵

Vilniaus divertimentas (“Vilnius Divertimento”), an earlier piece by Onutė Narbutaitė composed in 1984, may be seen as a preamble to the oratorio. Both works display kindred features. This can be said about the use of folksong and re-evocation of archaic music. In *Vilniaus divertimentas*, the latter is represented by medieval polyphony, ample allusions to Baroque stylistics, and the use of early instruments, such as harpsichord, guitar, and recorders, confrontation and interaction between professional court music and non-professional folk music. *Vilniaus divertimentas* displays both simplicity (minimalism) and complexity (atonality) of the musical language. These features are developed to an even greater degree in the oratorio.

According to the composer, the first and the third movements of *Vilniaus divertimentas* might be regarded as a unit. They are the only explicitly minimalist pieces, based on repetitive techniques, in Narbutaitė’s entire oeuvre. Generally speaking, in the work of many Lithuanian composers reductionist tendencies quite often stem from their understanding of national sound. In this particular case, the modal structural basis was taken from the Lithuanian folksong *Ant Vilniaus miesto* (“In the Town Of Vilnius”). Both the first and third movement ‘demonstrate’ music as a gradual process whereby the structure becomes an audible element of the piece. Let us compare the original melody with the corresponding fragment of the score (see music example 1).

⁵The composer discovered this melody in a collection entitled *Vilnius lietuvių liaudies dainos* [“Vilnius in Lithuanian Folksongs”], compiled by G. Krivickienė-Gustaitytė, Vilnius 1992, p. 186 (melody No. 107).

The musical score is written for a vocal ensemble and an instrumental ensemble. The vocal parts are in the top system, and the instrumental parts are in the bottom system. The tempo is marked *Allegro*.

Vocal Parts:

Ant Vil-niaus mies - to glas-nus gla - se - lis, tan gla - si
 pur - vy - ne - lis, pur - vy - ni ru - dzy - me - (lis)

Instrumental Parts:

Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Cello, Fl., C., Fg., Vl., Vc.

The instrumental parts are written in 4/4 time. The Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet (C.) parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Viola and Cello parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet (C.) parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet (C.) parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo).

Music example 1: *Ant Vilniaus miesto* (folksong) and Onutė Narbutaitė, *Vilniaus divertimentas*

In the score the song is transposed to a different mode where intervallic stress is on the fourth (the fifth measure of the song is in *G-C*, while in *Vilniaus divertimentas* it is written in *C#-F#*). The primary source is split into several motivic groups that “gradually pass from one to another”.⁶ Although the rhythm and order of individual segments and even of the sounds are changed, the music remains close to the original folk tune. However, neither the use of folk music sources nor minimalist techniques are the main characteristics of Narbutaitė’s musical idiom.

A number of Narbutaitė’s works, written in the 1980s, conspicuously display a polystylistic structure, one of the most popular forms of postmodernist expression as one might say. However, this term can only be applied relatively to Narbutaitė’s works. The interaction of compositional models developed in various epochs is perceived here rather as an expression of new monostylistics,⁷ which attempts to abolish the distance between the past and the present. By employing material either drawn from folk music sources or created by other composers, Narbutaitė always leaves a clear trace of individuality, recognizable in the scope of her intellect, masterfulness, talent, and in the authenticity of her style. This individuality is very distinctive even when she uses stylistic allusions. She creates “a secret inter-text”, and “an internal essential structure”,⁸ belonging only to her, and reconciles precise calculation with the spontaneous development of thought.

This provides a possibility to equate folk and professional music sources. Nevertheless, the relationship of Narbutaitė’s creative ego with folksongs or music by Mozart, Schubert, and Chopin is different in each work. Generally speaking, one might describe the composer’s

⁶See Narbutaitė’s notes to *Vilniaus divertimentas* (unpublished manuscript, 1984).

⁷See Galina Grigorjeva, *Stilevyje problemy russkoi, sovetsskoi muzyki vtoroi poloviny XX v. – 50-80 gody* [“Problems of Style in Russian and Soviet Music of the Second Half of the 20th Century: from the 1950s to the 1980s”], Moskva: Sovetsky kompozitor 1989, p. 138.

⁸Marina Raku, *Pikovaya dama’ brat’ev Tchaikovskikh: opyt intertekstualnogo analiza* [“Tchaikovsky Brothers’ ‘Queen of Spades’: An Attempt at Intertextual Analysis”], in: *Muzikalnaya akademiya* 7, No. 2 (1999), p. 12.

approach as minimalist (or reductive and monostructural) in *Vilniaus divertimentas*, vocally melodious in *Winterserenade*, instrumentally pointillistic in *Mozartsommer* (which is also reductive and monostructural), and full of concerto-like contrasts in *Rudens ritornelė. Hommage à Fryderyk* ("Autumn Ritornello"). The last two pieces are based on a multitude of compositions by Mozart and Chopin respectively, whereas *Winterserenade* is based only on Schubert's song *Gute Nacht* from the vocal cycle *Die Winterreise* (as in the first and the third movements of *Vilniaus divertimentas*, which are based on one single Lithuanian folksong).

By analysing the "internal essential structure" of compositions not based on Lithuanian folklore, we attempt to find what makes Narbutaitė a Lithuanian composer. Her verbal statements become a valuable source here, because they have always reflected her literary talent and deep insight. She was "chastened" by the Communist Party for one of these statements that was published in the Polish musical magazine *Ruch muzyczny* in 1984:

Our historical experience is painful. Nevertheless, something has survived, and, first of all, our nation. [...] My connections with the music of my nation are as natural as ties with the land I am walking on. I have grown up in the surroundings of this music, although I have never had a specific intention to ask myself a question about my relationship with national classical and folk music. The more the world becomes technical, noisy, and brutal, the more we feel attracted to the world of Lithuanian folk songs, the world of 'truth sung in quiet voice'. While creating music, I do not use folk material, yet I know that if there was no such an old well of pure water, I would have become somebody else. [...] Art, music seem to remind me an island, where it is possible to listen to yourself and to the other. For me it is a prayer and a link to the world. Composition as a profession is like "a land, your own land". And in one moment it can slip away from your hands.⁹

For Onutė Narbutaitė the "land" (or composition as profession) never slips away from her hands. On the contrary, she stands ever more firmly on her feet in her own land and creates the world of "truth sung

⁹See Krzysztof Droba, *Młoda muzyka litewska* ["Young Lithuanian Music"], in: *Ruch muzyczny* 28, No. 18 (Sept. 16, 1984), p. 10 (translated into English by Veronika Janatjeva).

in quiet voice”, thus implicitly linking it to the world of Lithuanian folksongs (most of which are in minor modes). Furthermore, her compatriot, the painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) likewise reported from Leipzig that his teacher, Carl Reinecke was discontent with Lithuanian languor and folk spirit in his compositions. It seemed strange to the conservatory professor that Čiurlionis, being so young, wrote such sad music. Reinecke was more inclined to introduce Čiurlionis to models such as Mendelssohn, Weber, etc.¹⁰

In the catalogue of Narbutaitė's works the musicologist Ramunė Kazlauskaitė wrote: “From the very beginning, Narbutaitė's compositions were marked by distinctive images of ‘silence’ and ‘oblivion’, qualities also expressed in the titles of her early opuses. And irrespective of changes in time or expression, they continue to retain the perceptible and specific sadness of Lithuanian landscape”.¹¹ Images of sorrow are represented by Narbutaitė differently in each individual composition: transcendental and beyond reaching in *Mozartsommer*; desperate and burdened with life in *Winterserenade*; marked with mourning and presentiment of death in *Rudens riturnelė* (despite a certain sense of relief at the end). However, in all these cases the symbiotic construction of musical material is not only formal: Narbutaitė seems to identify herself with the cited composers and to share their fates.

These compositions share many common features characteristic of Narbutaitė's whole oeuvre. As a rule, they conclude with a coda that follows the point of culmination and displays the accomplished thematic structure (for example, in her String Quartet No. 2 and in *Opus lugubre* these codas are reminiscent of works by Debussy and Lutosławski). In *Mozartsommer*, this structure is borrowed from the second movement of Mozart's “Jupiter Symphony”. After using some motives from Mozart's *Requiem*, particularly from *Sanctus* and

¹⁰See Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' letter to Eugeniusz Morawski from Leipzig, June 26, 1902, in: *Čiurlionis apie muziką ir dailę* [“Čiurlionis on Music and Art”], Vilnius: Valstybinė grožinės literatūros leidykla 1960, p. 167.

¹¹Ramunė Kazlauskaitė, *Onutė Narbutaitė. Catalogue*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Music Information and Publishing Centre 2002, p. 4.

Lacrimosa, the main role is ascribed to the theme from the “Jupiter Symphony” – it is entrusted to express the most essential thing (the “psychological intonation”). After that we also hear motives from *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and, once again, from *Lacrimosa* (see music example 2a and b). Andrzej Chłopecki wrote on Narbutaitė's music:

In der Musik von Narbutaitė ist besonders stark die Kategorie der Ethik ausgeprägt, die jedoch bei weitem nicht die wichtigste in dem postmodernistischen Projekt ist. Einen von ihren Musiktönen bildet die Sehnsucht. [...] Es kann darin auch ein bestimmtes Gebet zu hören sein. Das ist aber kein Gebet der Klage. Es ist ein Gebet, worin durch Tränen das Lächeln der Hoffnung zu erkennen ist.¹²

A fairly wide coverage of Narbutaitė's music in the German press provides many examples concerning the way German audiences perceive her works. For example, Tilman Urbach wrote on *Mozartsommer*: “Auch über diesem ‘Sommerstück’ scheint der Schatten des Herbstes zu liegen. So elegisch sich die Kammermusik der Litauerin gibt [...]”, and on *Rudens riturnelė. Hommage à Fryderyk*: “Ein schmerzhafter, zuweilen dissonanter Impetus, ein stilles Trauern schwebt über dieser Musik; wie ein wehmühtiger Abschied wirkt das Stück [...]”.¹³

In the title of *Winterserenade* (for flute, violin, and viola, composed in 1997), there is a certain contradiction and, at the same time, the key to the *raison d'être* of its content. According to a traditional definition, a serenade is a lyric evening song under the window of the beloved one. While the attribute “winter” endows the serenade with unconventional nuances, it announces “Schubert's sorrow and his concern, freezing on the winter road”. In the coda of *Winterserenade* we can also hear allusions to the Schubert song *Gute Nacht* from *Winterreise*. It is a short *Hommage à Schubert*. To put it in Schubert's words: “Fremd bin ich eingezogen, fremd zieh' ich wieder aus”¹⁴ (see music example 3).

¹²See Andrzej Chłopecki's presentation of Narbutaitė's recent releases on “Finlandia Records” at the Frankfurt Book Fair, October 2002 (manuscript in German). For the Polish version see: Andrzej Chłopecki/Onutė Narbutaitė, *Tezy i odpowiedzi*, in: *Ruch muzyczny* 47, No. 3 (Febr. 9, 2003), p. 10-13.

¹³Tilman Urbach, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, in: *Fono Forum* 47, No. 10 (2002), p. 70.

¹⁴See Narbutaitė's notes to *Winterserenade* (unpublished manuscript, 1997).

Jupiter II

Andante rubato

Fl. *pp*

Vn. *pp*

Vi. *pp*

Tempo I

C. *ppp*

Eine kleine Nachtmusik

Fl. *pp*

Vn. *pp*

Vi. *pp*

C. *pp*

21

Music example 2a: Onutė Narbutaitė, Mozartsommer

Handwritten musical score for the first system, measures 18-20. The score is for four staves: Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vn.), Viola (Vl.), and Cello/Double Bass (C.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The first staff has a measure rest for measure 18, then plays in measures 19 and 20. The second and third staves play throughout. The fourth staff has a measure rest for measure 18, then plays in measures 19 and 20. The number '20' is circled in the first and fourth staves. The tempo/mood is marked 'E.k. N'.

Handwritten musical score for the second system, measures 21-22. The score is for four staves: Flute (Fl.), Violin (Vn.), Viola (Vl.), and Cello/Double Bass (C.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The first staff has a measure rest for measure 21, then plays in measure 22. The second and third staves play throughout. The fourth staff plays throughout. The tempo/mood is marked 'Lacrimosa'. The dynamics are marked 'ppp' (pianissimo) in measures 21 and 22. The number '22' is written at the bottom right of the system.

Music example 2b: Onutė Narbutaitė, *Mozartsommer*

Winterserenade demonstrates intertextual relationships. It is an authentic work “transfused” with a certain subtlety characteristic of Onutė Narbutaitė. Some critics called it a masterpiece. David Wohnlich in the *Basler Zeitung* stressed the melancholic mood of the composition: “*Winterserenade* by Onutė Narbutaitė, ein Meisterstück, das sich mit Schuberts *Winterreise* auseinander setzt und sich – etwas tiefstapelnd – ‘Paraphrase’ nennt. Unglaublich, was Schuberts kleines Meisterwerk für die 1956 geborene Komponistin alles hergibt: Licht und Schatten, überraschende ruhende Klanginseln inmitten melodischer Gänge, schillernde Farbigkeit und dunkle Melancholie”.¹⁵

The piece entitled *Rudens riturnelė. Hommage à Fryderyk* draws on many pieces by Frédéric Chopin:

- Waltz Op. 64 No. 1 in D flat major, dedicated to Delfina Potocka;
- Waltz Op. 64 No. 2 in C sharp minor;
- Waltz Op. 64 No. 3 in A flat major;
- Prelude Op. 28 No. 2 in A minor;
- Prelude Op. 28 No. 15 in D flat major;
- Prelude Op. 28 No. 18 in F minor;
- Nocturne Op. 48 No. 1 in C minor;
- Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2 in D flat major
- Ballade Op. 23 No. 1 in G minor;
- Ballade Op. 52 No. 4 in F minor;
- Etude Op. 10 No. 3 in E major (“Autumn”);
- Etude Op. 10 No. 12 in C minor (“Revolutionary”).

By tracing the implications of Chopin’s compositions, we arrive at the conclusion that they provide the possibility to detect and verbalize not only the syntactic structure, but also the semantic level and thus the content of Narbutaitė’s music. Intertextual vocabulary plays an important role in developing semantic processes of communication.¹⁶ The composer admits that “in the music of Chopin it is the combination of sophisticated elegance, beauty and true deep sorrow expressed

¹⁵David Wohnlich, *Begegnung mit Litauen*, in: *Basler Zeitung*, January 26, 2002.

¹⁶Mark Aranovsky, *Muzykalny tekst. Struktura i svoistva* [“Musical Text. Structure and Properties”], Moskva: Kompozitor 1998, p. 220, 221.

ANDANTE SOSTENUTO

Andante più mosso (Andantino)

14.

Music example 3: Onutė Narbutaitė, *Winterserenade*

in a simple and modest manner that fascinates me. They do not contradict each other”.¹⁷ The elegant and refined forms of Chopin are always saturated with placidity, feeling, and thoughts that do not just move, but often strike the listener as well. Such a shock can also experience hearing the *Largo* sections from *Rudens riturnelė*: Four *Largo* episodes form the image of an ever-approaching and finally impending death. They unfold the agonizing clash of Chopin’s romantic spirit against his milieu, the clash that brought him to death.

Melodija alyvy sode (“Melody in the Garden of Olives”, 2000) for two string quartets and trumpet definitely continues the list of Narbutaitė’s compositions pervaded with images of deep sorrow and death. This list includes *Opus lugubre* (*lugubre* means gloomy, sad, touching and funereal) for string orchestra, *Rudens riturnelė*, the cantata *Kai ateina paskutinė taikos diena* (“When the Last Day of Peace Comes”), *Ėjimas į tylą* (“Passing to Silence”) for organ, *Interludium* for flute, cello, and organ, *Gesang* (based on a fragment from Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*). Narbutaitė feels stronger and stronger in her own land, especially after composing the Symphony No. 2. Its second movement is an orchestrated version of *Melodija alyvy sode*, which, according to the Latvian composer Imants Zemzaris, is a “land of death”.¹⁸ Narbutaitė has recently finished a non-traditional oratorio entitled *Tres Dei Matris Symphoniae*, based on liturgical texts connected with the Virgin Mary (including *Stabat Mater*), commissioned by the Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt/Oder.¹⁹

The opuses in which Narbutaitė uses fragments and elements of texts that originally belonged to other texts (or to folklore) sound as authentically as those without any borrowings. The common attribute for all compositions is the individual attitude of the author to ‘events’ that appear in text, as well as their original formation

¹⁷Asta Andrikonytė, “Kompozitorė bando skrieti per laiko ribas” [“The Composer tries to soar above the limits of Time”], in: *Lietuvos rytas, Mūzy malūnas*, June 15, 1999, p. 1.

¹⁸Letter from Imants Zemzaris to Onutė Narbutaitė, 2001.

¹⁹*Tres Dei Matris Symphoniae* was premiered at the “Musikfesttage an der Oder” Festival in Frankfurt/Oder on 5 March 2004.

and setting that determines the authenticity of these works. Thus, Narbutaitė's national character lies in her individuality, while the latter is universal (both traditional and contemporary at the same time), what is inherent to every great artist. I maintain the opinion that postmodern music is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but includes aspects both of rupture and extension.²⁰ Like other modernists, Narbutaitė tends to put her personal imprint on historical and folkloric references. She seems to be in contact with the music from different epochs which she adopts to her personal idiom.

At an international conference, the Swiss musicologist Ute Stöcklin (who visited Lithuania on several occasions) claimed that "Die Entscheidung für die kulturelle Entwicklung des 21. Jahrhunderts aber wird nach wie vor von der künstlerischen Persönlichkeit abhängen. 'Das Feuer des authentischen Künstlers entscheidet' (Antonio Tapiès). Und damit haben wir es bei den fünf litauischen Komponisten zu tun".²¹

However, the German press expressed opinions that are quite different from those quoted above. For example, a review of the performance of Narbutaitė's *Melodija alyvy sode* (symphonic version) at the "young.euro.classic festival" in Berlin bears the title: *Gibt es in Litauen Olivenhaine?* and concludes with two even more spiteful questions: "So klingt jetzt also Litauen? Was ist daran das spezifisch Litaueske?"²² This presentation tries to answer these questions.

²⁰See Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism*, in: *Postmodern Music. Postmodern Thought*, ed. by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner, New York and London: Routledge 2002, p. 16.

²¹Ute Stöcklin, *Interdisziplinäre Gedanken zu einer Europakultur. Begegnung mit Litauen*, in: *XXI amžiaus muzika ir teatras: paveldas ir prognozės* ["Music and Theatre in the 21st Century: Heritage and Future Prospects"], Vilnius: Lietuvos muzikos akademija 2002, p. 59.

²²See Wolfgang Fuhrmann, *Gibt es in Litauen Olivenhaine? und andere Fragen bei young.euro.classic*, in: *Berliner Zeitung*, August 13, 2002: "Wie kommt eigentlich die Auswahl der Kompositionen zu Stande, die beim Festival young.euro.classic das nationale Musikschaffen präsentieren sollen? Das fragte man sich, zum wiederholten Mal, am Sonntag beim Konzert des Sinfonieorchesters der Litauischen Musikakademie ... Unvertraut mit dem Schaffen dieser

The most recent review comes from the United States. In the context of the festival and conference called “Baltic Voices” (Seattle, February 13-15, 2004), Richard Taruskin wrote about Narbutaite’s works:

Yet the strongest impression was made by Onute Narbutaite, a 47-year-old Lithuanian whose work had apparently never been performed in America. Her most characteristic mode is slow, ruminative, gorgeously lyrical and utterly haunting.

WinterSerenade (1997) – exquisitely played by Mr. Shmidt, the flutist Paul Taub and the violist Karen Bentley Pollick – is constructed of motifs from *Gute Nacht*, the first song in Schubert’s cycle *Winterreise* (“Winter Journey”), set for the ensemble of Beethoven’s early Serenade in D (Op. 25). But it is not a pastiche. Its wispy texture and absorbingly sustained mood keep it going three times as long as the original and make you forget it – until the ending, which releases your attention with a whispered quotation from Schubert’s piano introduction. For the rest, Schubert is magically transformed into nature sounds, sighs, sobs and faltering steps.

The second and last movement of Ms. Narbutaite’s Second Symphony, titled *Melody* (after a riotous first movement, called *Symphony*), was a charismatically melancholy hymn that wound its way through a brilliantly scored texture from violas in the middle of things to a high, wistfully Coplandesque unaccompanied trumpet at the end. (Not that Lithuanians would call it that.) It left my ears famished for more. It would not leave my head even after I had flown home, and I was much relieved to find that a CD was available on Finlandia. (*WinterSerenade* is on another Finlandia disc, called *Autumn Ritornello*.)

Ms. Narbutaite is a great composer. Discovering her would have been worth a far longer winter journey.²³

Tonsetzerin, müssen wir der Hoffnung Ausdruck verleihen, die ‘Melodie im Olivenhain’ mache in ihrem Kontext mehr Sinn. Also etwa zwischen ‘Fuge im Gemüsegarten’ und ‘Walzer unter Kokospalmen’, oder wie man sich die übrigen Satzbezeichnungen denken mag. Der Satz exponierte zwar einen deutlichen Texturkontrast zwischen flirrenden Cluster-Klängen und karger Einstimmigkeit, folgte aber nichts daraus. Das abschließende lange Trompetensolo (Etappensieg der Linearität?) erschien völlig unmotiviert. Oder haben wir den Hain vor lauter Oliven nicht gesehen? [...] So klingt jetzt also Litauen? Was ist daran das spezifisch Litaueske?”

²³Richard Taruskin, *North (Europe) by Northwest (America)*, in: *The New York Times*, April 18, 2004.

I agree with the opinion that individual or collective (national) identity is not fixed once and for all. It is directed outwards and can only be strong when it has the possibility to conform to changes taking place in the world, and safeguarding an internal integrity at the same time.²⁴ Thus, it is only by opening up to changes occurring in the world and by respecting others and protecting our own self-esteem, that we can hope to foster our own cultural identity.²⁵ Thus we may conclude by remarking that “Narbutaitė is a vivid artistic individuality and is open to the cultural entirety. She is in a constant process of becoming”,²⁶ and “not infrequently, her ‘modern memory music’ is described abroad as an example of archaic Baltic spirituality”.²⁷ The interaction of national and universal aspects in Onutė Narbutaitė's music was accurately described by Andrzej Chłopecki in his aforementioned presentation:

In ihrer Musik ist jene universelle, europäische Gestik zu spüren, ihre Tonsprache hat nichts gemeinsames mit dem Idiolekt, der den Unbefugten unverständlichen hermetischen Sprache. Sie ist aber Litauerin, ihr europäischer Geist ist durch die lokale Natur und Geschichte, präzise lokalisierte Wesensart und Kultur durchdrungen. Wie nur wenige von ihren Zeitgenossen vermag sie mit Kraft ihres Talenten, die Idee Ihres kleinen, würdevollen und schönen Heimatlandes auf die universelle Dialogebene unserer ‘globalen’ Kultur heraufzubringen. Diese Quelle sprudelt auch aus den litauischen Volksliedern [...].²⁸

²⁴ Almantas Samalavičius, *Nuo masinės kultūros kritikos iki kultūros globalizacijos* [“From Criticism of Mass Culture to Cultural Globalization”], in: *Kultūros barai*, No. 4 (2002), p. 5.

²⁵ Andrius Bielskis, *Dar kartą apie nacionalinę identitetą* [“Once More on National Identity”], in: *Kultūros barai*, No. 5 (2002), p. 3.

²⁶ Asta Andrikonytė [in conversation with Edmundas Gedgaudas], *Gaidos festivalyje kirtosi požiūriai á muziką* [“Different Approaches to Music Clashed at the Gaida Festival”], in: *Lietuvos rytas. Mūzy malūnas*, Oct. 3, 2001, p. 3.

²⁷ Ramunė Kazlauskaitė, *Onutė Narbutaitė. Catalogue*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Music Information and Publishing Centre 2002, p. 4.

²⁸ See Chłopecki's presentation (manuscript in German) of Narbutaitė's recent releases on “Finlandia Records” at the Frankfurt Book Fair, October 2002.