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## Score as a Message: Archaeology of the Compositional Process of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis

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### **Abstract:**

*Textological analysis of musical manuscript seems is one of the most fruitful methods for reconstruction chronology of compositional process. This method known as genetic analysis is usual for literary works. But it is already done a lot to apply this method into music analysis (Vaidman 1987, Rosen 2001). Though there is no one universal technique for revealing genesis of a musical text of composition, main principles are common and successfully applied for critical editions of classical composers. Experience of textological analysis of manuscripts of Lithuanian composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) is presented in this paper. The “archeology of manuscript” and genesis of compositional process is reconstructed by analysis of all aspects of a musical text of composition.*

**Key words:** Čiurlionis, music manuscript, compositional process, music editing, genesis of a musical text

### **1. Theoretical background**

The textological analysis of music compositions, which includes analysis of the text and the manuscript itself, seems to be one of the most fruitful methods developed in the last decades for rediscovering chronology of a compositional process and for a better understanding of a composer himself. This method is developed and successfully applied in philology by French scholars first of all to analyse literary texts. Efforts to apply this method in musicology are also fruitful and are used mostly for preparing a critical edition of a composer. As an example here could be mentioned complete critical editions of classical composers, Mozart (<https://mozarteum.at/en/digital-mozart-edition/#info>) and Beethoven (<https://beethovens-werkstatt.de>) first of all.

The role of a text as the primary source that encompasses all aspects of compositional process and provides the foundation for further research of a composition became stronger already in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although text analyses were limited for a long time only to analysis of the texts of literary works, this method and concept soon passed into other verbal and non verbal systems of human expression, including music, painting, and even scents. Today the text (written or spoken) is the foundation and a primary given source for the philological thinking and all humanities. According to Bachtin, “Where is no text, there is no object of research and contemplation. Whatever the research objectives are, only the text may be a foundation” (Bachtin, 1979: 281–282).

One of the most known researchers of the old Russian manuscripts Dmitrij Lihachov defines text as a result of deliberate human activity (Lihachov, 1983: 128). According to him, text is only a linguistic expression of a creator’s idea, so everything that is not a language is not text either (for example, text errors). Lihachov considers that when a textologist analyses a manuscript, first of all he has to identify what belongs to the text, and what belongs to the manuscript (Lihachov, 1964: 9). Here we can find an analogous remark in the writings of English/Scottish musicologist Raymond Monelle where he noted that “text is defined by what is not-text” (Monelle, 2000: 151). In this way we define the limits of our analysis that are quite exact but also quite narrow. As one can see in the newest international musical publications, editors are more and more interested in that what is not a

text. Namely, editors find new meanings of the text itself and new possibilities for interpretation when they analyse not a text of composition (for example, The Carl Nielsen Edition). Of course, these are peripheral things and musical marginalia, but interest for that has increased in the last decades not only among musicologists but among performers and music teachers as well. It means that a modern understanding of a musical text became much wider and defines it as a coherent complex of signs organized in a meaningful message.

According to Russian scholar Polina Vaidman, all topics of music textology may be generally divided into two spheres: analysis of the text history and preparation of various texts for publication. Historical analysis of a text typically is realized in each level of formation of the text itself, when the manuscript is still being written by the author, when it is re-written by the copyist and edited by the editor, and also in all other cases where text is corrected and changed. Preparation of a critical edition belong to the second sphere where is important to define the type of publication, inner structure of works, system of dating, methods of identification of the main text, methodology of writing commentaries, at last notographical and orthographical processing (Vaidman, Korabelnikova, 1987:125–126). For this reason contemporary musicologists shifted their attention from composers' clean copies to an intensive and comprehensive analysis of drafts and sketches.

## 2. Genesis of the text

The main principles of the method of *Genetic critics* is first formulated by French philologist Pierre-Marc de Biasi in his book “Introduction aux Methodes Critiques pour l’analyse littéraire” (Biasi, 1990). According to de Biasi, two sorts of genetic analysis exist: genetics of scenarios or “not yet text” and manuscript (written) analysis or analysis of a text. The first one is suitable for analysis of all autographic documents that influenced the work’s conception and preparation (context), and the second one is suitable for analysis of various text editions and versions. On the other hand, de Biasi distinguishes two sorts of text analysis: the genetic textology and genetic criticism. If genetic textology deciphers and analyses a work’s manuscript(s), then genetic criticism only interprets the results of the deciphering. Genetic textology and genetic criticism have the same aim: to re-create the history of a “text birth” and to uncover the mysteries of its creation. The aim of this method is to highlight and to help understand the originality of the work’s text by grounding oneself on the peculiarities of the process that produced this text.

Genetic textology spans all “material traces” of the work, everything that is directly or indirectly connected with the analysed work – primary manuscripts used in the work, drafts, variants of developing certain places and author’s notes related with the work indirectly, the gathered material. The starting point of genetic criticism is the stating that the final text of the work is the result of a certain process.

Genetic criticism analyses another aspect. It is the dimension of a time. The time dimension of a text includes the moment of its “born” and is based on the presumption that even a relatively finished work is only a result of its genesis. When a work is analysed using this method, four phases of genesis are seen: preparation, writing, publishing, and after-publishing phases. Each of them also has several stages and purposes that are characteristic of certain types of manuscripts. For example, two more levels may be found in the preparation phase: the survey or “before primary” level and the decision level. The writing phase is the phase of implementing the conception. Here is the place where the core of genesis of a composition – drafts – lies. That is auxiliary writing sources, the “writing file” (drafts used in the future work, variants of developing certain places), final clean copies and transcripts by the author. When the “born process” of a text and manuscript is chosen as a primary point of view, a constantly changing world appears: nothing is finally defined, writing process is disturbed every second by the possibility of choice and selections (Biasi, 1990: 37). Though de Biasi keeps in mind and talks only about literary works, his method seems universal and application to the musical texts looks especially effective.

Coming back to the musical text we should remember its main characteristic that was noted already by musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Nattiez, 1975). According to Nattiez, exist a dual

nature of the musical text (and musical signs): acoustic and graphic<sup>1</sup>. Composer's thought breaks during the composing process in a new light spectre as if its in a prism – we see only separate details of an unbroken creative process in a manuscript. So it is almost impossible to reconstruct the whole entire creative process only by the score. The score never matches the composer's primary concept because the creative impulse most often forms as a sound structure. A conclusion arises that, as Raymond Monelle notices, when a score (musical text) is analysed, the existing possibility of deforming the meaning should not be forgotten (Monelle, 2000: 150).

But “text is always open to infinity,” Roland Barthes writes (Bart, 1989: 425). “Music, apparently, is always speech, never writing,” Monelle agrees (Monelle, 2000: 168). And Charles Rosen adds: “Nevertheless, composers always seek to control and influence the performing of their works, so they are inclined to write their works down, although they understand that notation is not perfect“ (Rosen, 2001).

### 3. The case study: Čiurlionis

How is everything that we already discussed reflected in a particular work of a musicologist? Here I would like to present a few personal insights formed during analysis and editing of Čiurlionis music manuscripts.

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) is the most known Lithuanian composer and painter. He lived in the time together with Arnold Schoenberg, Gustav Mahler, Sergej Rachmaninov, and Richard Strauss. Despite the famous names mentioned, Čiurlionis is one of the most original and innovative European artist of the break of 20<sup>th</sup> century. His creative heritage contains 220 paintings, about 600 pencil drawings, several poems and literal works, examples of artistic photography, and almost 400 musical compositions. Though Čiurlionis was active as a composer only 14 years, his music experienced great changes. Today we divide Čiurlionis' music compositions into two periods: the early period (1896–1903) which was influenced by romantic music and especially Chopin, and the mature period (1904–1910), where Čiurlionis formed unique method of music composition and reached synthesis of arts. A turn toward atonality and even a graphic music is noticed in this period too.

The first and foremost task starting to work with manuscripts of Čiurlionis was the collection, description and evaluation of the music manuscripts archive<sup>2</sup>. The success of all further work depended on how fully the musical archive is completed and described. Though the main music collection is preserved at National M. K. Čiurlionis art museum in Kaunas, there are some music autographs and important copies held in other Lithuanian State archives and even private collections. It is also important to note that a big part of Čiurlionis' manuscripts were destroyed or lost during the complicated history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only indirect signs testify that they existed. For example, hints in letters, musical fragments with dedication, front page (title) of not survived orchestral score, ect. After collection and evaluation of manuscripts and its copies it was possible to form a complete list of Čiurlionis music. Later it served as a base to prepare a complete catalogue of his music<sup>3</sup>.

The next question was to understand the method of composing process of Čiurlionis. This aspect was needed to reconstruct the whole picture of Čiurlionis as a composer and to specify different aspects of his music compositions. It was noticed that the style and methodology of writing the musical text of composition changed according to the years. Though at the first years of composing (including years of studies in Warsaw and Leipzig) Čiurlionis used to write at first a sketch or draft of the new composition and only then to prepare a clean copy, later (1903-1906) he left almost everything in drafts and unfinished sketches without clean copies. It was because he didn't have any hope to publish or perform his music. During 1908-1909 Čiurlionis changed a style

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, the concept of dual nature of a sign is taken from a Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure.

<sup>2</sup> Author of this article worked at the National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum in 1990-1998 and formed a scientific card file of musical archive.

<sup>3</sup> Catalogue was formed and published in 2007 (Kučinskis, 2007).

of writing music once more: he used to write a clean copy without any primary sketches or drafts – all creative process matured in his mind, and he wrote down fully completed work. In this case we can make correspondent conclusions what to look for and what not to expect to find in his musical archive. This strategy of analysis and reconstruction of musical heritage of Čiurlionis was confirmed by a batch of unknown music manuscripts discovered in an archive of his sister Jadvyga Čiurlionytė<sup>4</sup> in 2007.

Another problem working with Čiurlionis' music is unordered way of his autographs. It is a risk to get lost in his various music sketches, fragments, versions that consist up to 2/3 of the whole archive. Sometimes you can find a music of the same composition written in fragments and placed in different parts of the same book (volume of manuscripts) or in several books or even on separate leaves of paper (sometimes among his drawings). And vice versa – one music paper is compiled with sketches of various compositions. As a rule, such fragments are not dated, they were inserted into each other, written down most often with the same pencil, sometimes they were crossed out but later additionally edited by a composer... Such nature of manuscripts poses problems for editors of publications as well as for museum employees who have to register the collected archive. We can find registration mistakes already in the initial book of manuscript inventory. For example, two different manuscripts were registered under one title and kept as one manuscript. It was "Sanctus" for mixed choir and an Overture for a symphony orchestra (sketch of clavier).

Identification of fragments and relating them with an exact composition was the next step of editorial work. It was noticed that Čiurlionis used a particular manner to write down sketches. If the sketch not starts a new composition he do not write any necessary signs (clefs, keys, time signature), only notes. Only after linking a sketch to a composition the right key is fixed and all the sketch is edited following contemporary notation rules. Some early editors of Čiurlionis' music (Šimkus, Čiurlionytė) didn't pay enough attention to this feature and published scores with misleading text.

To make score clear for performer, the methodology used for critical text editions was accepted. The main principle of this methodology is to separate editorial inscription from the composer's text. Vytautas Landsbergis was the first who introduced this method in Čiurlionis editions. Though this practice was already used in the West, it was a novel method of music editing in a former Soviet Union<sup>5</sup>. The realization of this editorial principle included usage of brackets and parenthesis for verbal text and literal letters (tempo, dynamics) as well as crossing lines (legato, crescendo). Additionally added (by an editor) musical notes were printed in a smaller size – petite. This principle let to understand how an autograph of a composer looks like and what an editor added to the main text of composition.

In parallel of identification of Čiurlionis' writing style and manner the palaeographic research of his archive was done. The analysis of manuscript paper, signs of printer and water signs, writing tools and its subsequence, at last reconstruction of crossed and erased (but still seen) places was done. All this allowed to identify a lot of new fragments and sketches of unknown compositions that were "overlooked" by previous scholars. This also allowed to confirm or to correct the chronology and location (place of composition) of music writings on each page.

Analysis of writing tools became most important factor for identification of compositional process chronology. All Čiurlionis' music manuscripts were written only by using pencil or pen. There were few colours of pencil (black, red, yellow, violet) used by Čiurlionis, and also two colours of pen (black and brown ink) to write music manuscripts. Different pencils and pens were used in different years. According to this feature it was possible to identify the exact dates and place of writing several fragments and sketches. Finally, it served to form the complete chronological catalogue of Čiurlionis music which was prepared and published in 2007.

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<sup>4</sup> Unrecognized manuscripts were kept all her life at home together with her own music, shifted to the library of Vilnius University after her death in 1992, rediscovered and described by Kučinskas in February, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> The first edition in such a style was published in 1985 – Iš eskizų fortepijonui [From the sketches for piano]. Vilnius: Vaga, 1985.

#### 4. Conclusions

New method suggested by linguists for an analysis of literal works was successfully employed by musicologists for the music editing. Contemporary critical music editions are based mainly on the critical genesis of a text. It is a method where focus of researcher is concentrated not on the final version of a composition (clear copy of the text), but on the sketches and drafts which caused the latest version of a score. Though critical genesis contains two parts of analysis (textology and criticism), both of them are successfully used by scholars working on the music manuscripts.

After genetic criticism was applied to editorial work of Čiurlionis music, the compositional process of a composer and the main features of writing a musical text were identified. It let to recognize and to describe several new compositions among sketches of already known manuscripts of a composer. Additionally, an order of manuscripts at the National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum was revised and specified. Finally, a list of lost music manuscripts was formed and the Chronological Catalogue of Čiurlionis Music was compiled and published. All this work served for preparing new critical editions of Čiurlionis music which now are used as main source for the International M. K. Čiurlionis piano and organ competition held in Vilnius.

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