

Romanticism still alive ...

A few trends in contemporary Latvian symphonic music

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Summary

The neoromanticism proves to be a characteristic trend in the contemporary Latvian symphonic music. This style is preserving and developing the ideas of *new simplicity*, *new sensuality*, *new tonality* and *new romanticism*, which emerged in the 70s of the 20th century.

As to the conceptual level modern Latvian symphonic music is dominated by a wide range of powerful contrasts. The system of musical images of the neoromanticism is rich in both a more universal scope means of expression and belief in ethic ideal. Such a line is typical for the symphonies written in the 90s of the 20th century by such composers as Arturs Maskats, Juris Karlsons, Pēteris Vasks and Andris Vecumnieks. This music carries on the tradition of the so-called *great symphony*, pioneered in the 19th century by such luminaries as L. van Beethoven, J. Brahms, A. Bruckner, G. Mahler and F. Schubert and continued in the 20th century by such masters as Jānis Ivanovs, W. Lutoslawski and D. Schostakovich. In general it is possible to single out two major trends in the diverse genres of Latvian modern symphonic music.

The first is represented by depictive visionary elements typical for tradition of historical romanticism. We can find vivid examples in such musical pieces as *Manu jaunu dienu zeme* [*The Land of My Youth*] by Romualds Jermaks and *Aizgājušās vasaras zvans* [*The Chime of the By-gone Summer*] and *Teikas* [*Tales*] by Selga Mence. Sometimes pastoral sceneries are saturated by intense psychological experience. As it surfaces in the cycle *Trīs jūras dziesmas* [*Three Songs about Sea*] by Maija Einfelde. The dramatic element of different moods is combined with very acute means of expressions towards impressionism. Very close to it seems to be the piece *Koncentriskās aprises* [*Concentric Outlines*] by Romualds Kalsons, being full of very expressive images.

The second trend is more characterised by system of lyrical images and an introvert sounding. It is dominated by the melodious air, pertaining to a solo-performed song, coral and canto. Listening to such music brings about a pleasant and long-lasting experience of one particular emotional state. Besides, the above trend presents a free synthesis of both the means of tonal writing and those typical for the music of minimalism. Such a stylistic model is frequently present in the music of diverse genres by Pēteris Vasks. And he is not the only one. The 90s of the 20th century witnessed the debut of Rihards Dubra, who composed music of a congenial with style. His symphonies and other instrumental pieces display a peculiar synthesis of principles characteristic of early romanticism and minimalism.

Owing to the presence of different styles and distance in time, the above trend may be perceived as neoromanticism within the context of Latvian symphonic music. Even more so, as it has gradually substituted not only the trends of neoclassicism and avanguard music, written in the previous decades, but also the music of the

polystylistic line. Neoromanticism proves to be one of the most striking elements of Latvian symphonic music, as it still maintains the actuality and importance of the *new simplicity*, encountered in the works of many Latvian composers who belong to different generations.

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