



Vytautas
BACEVIČIUS

Orchestral Works • 2

Piano Concertos

**No. 1 'Sur des thèmes
lituaniens' and No. 2**

Symphony No. 3

Gabrielius Alekna, Piano

**Lithuanian National
Symphony Orchestra**

Christopher Lyndon-Gee



Vytautas
BACEVIČIUS
(1905–1970)

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**Piano Concerto No. 1 ‘Sur des thèmes lituaniens’,
Op. 12 (1929) 15:12**

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| ❶ | I. Allegro moderato – più mosso – Allegro molto – Moderato – Vivace – | 3:42 |
| ❷ | II. Andante sostenuto – Moderato sostenuto – | 5:13 |
| ❸ | III. Allegro moderato | 6:17 |

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 17 (1933) 26:30

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------|
| ❹ | I. Allegro | 6:15 |
| ❺ | II. Andante – Moderato – Andante | 4:54 |
| ❻ | III. Allegretto | 8:45 |
| ❼ | IV. Allegro | 6:36 |

Symphony No. 3, Op. 33 (1944) 32:48

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| ❽ | I. Moderato maestoso – Allegro molto | 12:59 |
| ❾ | II. Andante doloroso | 9:55 |
| ❿ | III. Scherzo: Allegro leggiero – Moderato | 3:22 |
| ⓫ | IV. Allegro maestoso – Maestoso | 6:32 |

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Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970)

Orchestral Works • 2

The life of Vytautas Bacevičius is defined by exile.

He chose a first form of exile when, in 1926 at the age of 21, he left the Poland of his birth, his mother's country, abandoning the Polish style of his name, Witold, to accompany his Lithuanian-born father Vincas (Wincenty) to the then-capital of Lithuania, Kaunas. Eastern Lithuania (including the historic capital of Vilnius, founded in 1322) was at that time occupied by the Second Polish Republic, as was much of western Ukraine. Bacevičius almost immediately became a key figure in the musical life of this small nation, barely eight years after its independence from Imperial Russia, in 1918.

He chose exile again when, in 1927, he began to spend substantial parts of each year in Paris, studying piano with Santiago Riera at the Russian Conservatoire that had been set up there by Nikolay Tcherepnin; the latter became his composition teacher. In subsequent years he followed a dual existence between Kaunas and Paris, developing a fine reputation as a pianist, and beginning to imprint himself upon concert programmes with early works such as his *Piano Concerto No. 1* (1929) *Piano Concerto No. 2* (1933), both subtitled 'on Lithuanian themes', *Symphony No. 1* and *Poème électrique* for orchestra (1934). His relationship with his sister Grażyna grew closer during these years, as she too studied composition and violin in Paris during the same period; Vytautas often featured her music on his piano recital programmes.

Finally and conclusively, he had exile forced upon him while in the midst of a tour of piano recitals in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when the Second World War broke out. Within days, the Nazis had thrust northwards from Poland to invade Lithuania, effectively obliterating the country. Bacevičius's passport was soon rendered worthless, and he found himself a stateless person; a situation that, if anything, worsened when Soviet control of his homeland superseded at the end of the war. By September 1940, he had succeeded in obtaining papers to allow him to settle in New York, finding work there and at the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Although he visited Paris in 1961, reuniting there with his two sisters for a few weeks, he was never again to see either Poland or the country for which he yearned as a native, Lithuania.¹ He died on 15 January 1970, at the Queens Jewish Hospital, New York, and is buried in the Cypress Hills Cemetery in Queens.² Despite the optimism of his arrival, he had never loved America; from a vast correspondence, merely those letters that survive total 1,600, written on an almost daily basis to his sisters and to various friends in Poland and Lithuania. They offer a vivid record of his inability, unwillingness even, to lay down new roots in this alien land.

Vytautas Bacevičius was born in Łódź, Poland on 9 September 1905, the second child of a Polish mother, Maria Modlińska (1871–1958) and her slightly younger Lithuanian husband Vincas (1875–1952), his name inherited from his paternal grandfather, Witold Stanisław – Vytautas Stanislaus in Lithuanian (St Stanislaus is the patron saint of Lithuania). In February 1909, his younger sister Grażyna, also destined to become a composer, was born, with a last sibling Wanda to follow in August 1911. His elder brother Kiejstut, born a year earlier in 1904, was a successful concert pianist, too; while Wanda became a journalist and published twelve volumes of poetry.

In the second half of the 19th century and until the Second World War, Łódź was a major cultural and university centre, a status that it has vigorously recovered today. A generation before Bacevičius, the great Polish-American pianist Arthur Rubinstein (1887–1982) was born in Łódź; it is also the birthplace of film director Roman Polanski (b. 1933), the conductor Paul Kletzki (1900–1973), the architect Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946), and a distinguished roster of writers, mathematicians and physicists, including some who worked on the Manhattan Project. Bacevičius's mother Maria Modlińska was descended from an aristocratic family of architects, who chose to settle in Łódź rather than in Warsaw precisely because it was such a forward-looking centre for the arts.

Bacevičius's pedigree as pianist was impeccable. His primary teacher in his teenage years at the conservatory in Łódź had been Józef Turczyński, a student of Anna Yesipova and Ferruccio Busoni, thus making him an artistic 'descendant' of Liszt; while Santiago Riera, his professor in Paris, had enjoyed an illustrious career as a virtuoso, upon which he was launched by Georges Mathias, one of the brightest pupils of Fryderyk Chopin.³ Bacevičius's piano recitals in Paris in his mid-twenties attracted admiring, if small audiences, not least because of his forward-looking programming. For instance, at the Salle Gaveau on 23 November 1931, he performed a challenging programme of Scriabin – a selection of *Études* and *Poèmes* and the *Tenth Sonata* – Albeniz, Szymanowski, Prokofiev's *Fifth Sonata*, five of his own works, four of them, like the Scriabin, entitled *Poème*, and ended with Ravel's *Toccata*. He frequently played Debussy, Ravel, Rachmaninov, Falla, Granados, Čiurlionis, and the *Petite Suite* of Alexander Tcherepnin, son of his teacher, holding up Debussy in particular as a 'kindred spirit' and as particularly demanding. In a review in *Le Ménestrel*, a week after his recital of 14 December 1928, the critic Joseph Baruzi wrote:

I wasn't disappointed. It doesn't mean that we can [yet] regard Bacevičius as a pianist who had completely mastered his technique: most of his interpretations of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt were marked by some kind of stiffness and weakness. Nevertheless, he played six preludes by Debussy and two poems by Scriabin (*Masque* and *Étrangeté*) with much exaltation and, in some places, energy; besides, he introduced a very expressive piece *Katarinka* by J. Gruodis.⁴

Clearly, his youthful 'weakness' in the classics had been mastered by the time Bacevičius was playing regularly at Carnegie Hall in the 1950s, for the American reviewers repeatedly praised him for his lightness of playing and called him 'a genuine specialist of spiritualised interpretation.'⁵ One anonymous critic wrote of him in the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1956 that he played with 'steel fingers' but 'enveloped Chopin's lullaby with the soft breathing of spring.'⁶

His pianistic gifts and standing achieved during his Paris years were such that he was invited to sit as a jury member with his compatriot Arthur Rubinstein, with Emil von Sauer, François Casadesus, Walter Gieseking, Carlo Zecchi and others of the great names of the day for the 1938 Ysayë competition. The laureates launched on their careers that year were no less than Emil Gilels and Jakob Flier.

But the key remark of Joseph Baruzi's prescient review of December 1928 must surely have been: 'However, what I seem to recognise in him as a pianist is a really talented composer.'⁷

For, from his very earliest years in Łódź, Bacevičius was intent upon acquiring skills and a presence as a composer. His earliest 'romantic' efforts as a teenager rapidly evolved once he reached Kaunas, and he was almost immediately assessed as a talent to reckon with by colleagues such as Jeronimas Kačinkas, initially on the basis of works that extolled the value of a Lithuanian folk music heritage. His Parisian experiences rapidly made themselves felt, however, and – stimulated by Honegger's *Pacific 231* and *Rugby*, by Mosolov's *Zavod* ('The Iron Foundry'), and by a Prokofiev whose recitals and whose highly personal brand of polytonality he had much admired – his brief orchestral work *Poème électrique*, premiered in Kaunas in January 1934, became a landmark in Lithuanian music of the time.⁸

Clearly, his pianistic immersion in Scriabin's music had risen to the surface of his own creative impulse as early as 1926 and 1927, in three *Poèmes* for solo piano entitled successively *Contemplation*, *Mystique* and *Astral*, followed in 1928 by an unperformed orchestral work *Poème symphonique* for an unprecedented 188 instruments. These early works already convey resonances of Scriabin's *Universe Symphony*, the first part of the latter's *Preparation for the Final Mystery*.

Crystallizing gradually over the next 20 years, Bacevičius arrived at his concept of a 'cosmic music', perceiving his artistic heritage in common with the aesthetic of Scriabin, Bartók, Jolivet, Varèse and latterly Stockhausen. There is no evidence one way or the other whether Bacevičius ever met Varèse while he lived in New York; his somewhat self-effacing nature, under-confident bordering on paranoid, would tend to suggest that he almost certainly did not. During his Paris visit of late 1961 he heard Messiaen at the Trinité, but rather than waiting to introduce himself, he sent a note and did not follow up. At the same time, his *inner* self-confidence knew no bounds, crystallizing at the time he wrote his *Symphony No. 6 'Cosmique'* in this declaration in a letter to his sister Gražyna:

What I am trying to create is a new theory of musical creation, based on the philosophy of [American occultist] Claude Bragdon, who maintains that music is the most important element of the existence of the *Universum*. ... The **Thought** or the **Light of Wisdom** is the product of the perpetual vibration of the universe, which, in turn, is responsible for the magnetism that maintains the balance (both material and spiritual;) of the *Universum*. ... Music, the symbol of supreme Thought strives towards the core and the source of existence, of the *Universum*.⁹

Three years later, he was even clearer about his creative methodologies and objectives:

From now on I'm going to write *pure and atonal* music. I'm going to draw all my ideas from my own Universe and filter them through my own mentality guided by my own knowledge. Since I hate mathematical puzzles, systems and techniques, I reject and have no intention of borrowing from others; my logic will be naturally based on the strictest discipline, which will take into account all conditions necessary to create purely atonal music – not serial, however, since my music will be *virtually unrepeatably*, yet with much stress on *structures rhythmiques*. ... I hope you believe me, [Gražyna], that I need no intuition to enter my extra-material Universe, its purely abstract spheres, higher and higher into the light, the apex of perfection.¹⁰

His existence in the now hated north-eastern corner of the United States became ever more withdrawn and iconoclastic even as he continued, of desperate necessity, giving piano lessons.

... for all Americans, *culture* equals the luxury appliances in their kitchens, the air-conditioner, refrigerators, cars, excellent roads, colour TVs etc.¹¹ In their stupid reasoning, this is followed by science and art and spiritual culture, and you could never convince them that science and the fine arts could be superior in countries 'behind us' in terms of civilization.¹²

Despite his negativity about the world around him, his productivity as a composer continued to blossom; much of his solo piano music was published by Mercury Music Corporation in 1967, and in 1969 he even received an ASCAP award.

But he had paid the costs himself of Mercury's publication of his works to the imprint's owner, Rabbi Milton Feist, which is probably the circumstance behind the outburst in yet another letter: 'In America, you buy friendship with money, and disinterested friendship in the European style is unthinkable.'¹³

He was doubtless thinking back to the sense of promise and opportunity he had experienced in 1938, when the prestigious publisher Universal Edition of Vienna – publishers of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern and Bartók – had brought out his *Deux Grotesques* and *Premier mot*.¹⁴ His existence in America was that of a lonely and increasingly socially isolated man; never married, culturally alienated, ever more nostalgic for the Europe he had lost, close only in his epistolary relationships with his brother and sisters; his orchestral music unperformed and ignored. Yet he kept on writing, and the conviction of his artistic vision is all the more remarkable given his hostility to the American musical environment and his isolation from all that he felt had formed him as a young man.

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

Chronologically close together, these youthful piano concertos could almost be considered a single work, with much continuity of thematic material and a broadly similar manner. By the time of the *Concertos Nos. 3 and 4* (released on Naxos 8.573282), the composer has evolved a completely different stylistic approach, much informed by his exposure to Bartók and to Scriabin. Studying in Paris, aged 24 when the *Concerto No. 1* was written, Bacevičius is highly nostalgic for his homeland – a homeland that, in fact, he had only recently discovered, after growing up primarily in Poland. Thus it is that he populates these scores with a rich selection of well-known Lithuanian folk melodies; 'tunes' that, to every Lithuanian, evoke instantaneous recognition. In the scores, they are usually marked simply (especially in *Concerto No. 1*), 'Le thème lithuanien' (in his still imperfect beginner's French), and some of these took a fair bit of tracking down. While rehearsing for these recordings, the members of the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra were often 'singing along', and I was readily able to gain from them knowledge of the first lines of the texts. Only one stumped everyone – the very first melody used in the *First Concerto* (*Devynias sodas išjojau* – 'I rode through nine homesteads'), and this, being an older melody that has fallen into relative disuse, took some detective work. I am thankful to Mr Linas Paulauskis of the Lithuanian Music Information Centre for his invaluable assistance in tracking down this melody and its accompanying text.

In neither concerto are the movements marked as such, and they flow continuously on from each other. But their contrasts are unambiguous, as are the tempo markings that separate them. These *de facto* movement divisions are reflected in the track markings we have adopted for these recordings.

Piano Concerto No. 1 'Sur les thèmes lithuaniens', Op. 12 [sic]: both the first and second movements open with quite lengthy solo cadenzas, the first of which, as early as bar nine introduces the folk song *Devynias sodas išjojau, niekur mergelės neradau* in the tenor voice, highly decorated by filigree work in the right hand; this melody will be further elaborated in the orchestral music that follows. Perhaps these opening solo cadenzas are testimony to the composer's significant identity as a solo pianist, who is essaying for the first time an orchestral presence.

The Lithuanian themes are not at all used as primary thematic materials of the music. Rather, they are present in a fragmentary way, as 'head motifs' that emerge here and there as if always present as a background to the music. In both the first movement and the finale, we hear fragments of the same, unidentified *thème lithuanien* that corresponds to the text *Devynias sodas išjojau*. Then, a new theme enters the finale, whose text *Oi tu ieva, ievuže* is now written into the score, referring to the 'bird cherry' tree (*Prunus padus*¹⁵), with its riot of small white flowers in the spring; known throughout Lithuania as the 'Eve' (*ieva*) tree, especially in the Suvalkija region, where this song originates.

Bacevičius proudly writes '452 measures' at the conclusion of the score, one of his earlier large-scale achievements.

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 17: Again, the 'movements' of the work are continuous, though they fall into clearly differentiated sections; in this case, four movements. In this *Second Concerto*, he is consistent in writing within the score the words of the folk songs that are featured: for example, in the first movement, *Einu per dvarelį* ('I am walking through the manor'), and *Šaltyšius* ('The Elder'). The poem of this latter is quite subtle in its lightly implied message that the Village Elder spent at the public house all the money with which he was supposed to purchase musical instruments, and a pie, for his sons waiting at home. The music grasps with both hands the opportunity to make much fun of this, with jaunty rhythms, depicting the gradually encroaching effects of the drink.

A sustained cello C leads without a break into the *Andante*, couched in a manner of musing melancholy highly typical of the composer in his slow movements, in which a harmonically 'dull' or 'depressed' orchestral part is contrasted with an elaborately decorated solo part.

The third movement is a spirited *de facto* Scherzo, alternating the *de rigueur* 3/4 music of this form with 2/4 piano interpolations, in lieu of any kind of formal 'B' section. A concluding, long *sostenuto* A flat in the piano is loudly interrupted by the fourth movement, where assertive chords from the orchestra lead to a *fugato* for the solo piano that is recapitulated four times, the third and fourth initiated by bassoons. *Per šila jojau* ('I rode through the forest') is the main focus of attention here.

Throughout both concertos, the use of the folk melodies is unselfconscious, fluent and spirited, contributing greatly to a spirit of lightness and celebration in these youthful works.

Symphony No. 3, Op. 33

The *Symphony No. 3* is one of the very first works Bacevičius wrote after his arrival in the United States in 1944, following his period 'in limbo' in Buenos Aires at the conclusion of a tour of piano recitals that saw him stranded, suddenly stateless, a distant victim of the Nazi invasion of Lithuania. In this music, he expresses his early optimism for his refuge and new home, that would only later turn to alienation and bitterness.

Thus, the tone of the work is overall energetic, positive and confident, culminating in the citation of *The Stars and Stripes Forever* towards the conclusion of the fourth movement.

The *Symphony No. 3* was never performed in Bacevičius's lifetime, though there are documentary records showing that he pursued a possibility with the Südwestfunk in Stuttgart in the mid-1950s, that came to naught. These performances and recording in Vilnius in 2021 constitute the world premiere of the work.

Following a somewhat mysterious introduction, the *allegro* and the *moderato* of the first movement alternate five times; the propulsive energy of the *Allegro molto* always dominating the more *cantabile* passages.

In the second movement, strangely, the harp does not participate at all in the texture as a whole, and yet has a lengthy cadenza in the middle of the movement, which then returns to the *doloroso* of the opening.

And now we meet a true Scherzo, with the entire string body *pizzicato*, alternating with *moderato* sections *arco*, in which the solo oboe doubles the plangent string melody. This vigorous and highly confident piece of orchestral writing is a great stride ahead for the composer.

The *finale* is a rather more miscellaneous assemblage of assertive music, not quite sure of its direction until, at the final *maestoso*, the dominating momentum of the 4/4 headstrong music is subsumed into the 3/4 of *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, leading to a quick conclusion. This most quintessential of American patriotic melodies gives a clear insight into Bacevičius's gratitude at having secured relief from his stateless 'limbo', and his initial optimism as he set out on a life, still of unknowns, that awaited him in his new country.

Bacevičius's music deserves a place in the wider repertoire, not only as a shining representative of his numerically small nation's disproportionately influential presence in the world, but also for moments of melting lyrical beauty and fascinating harmonic originality that draw one to repeated hearings of his work.

The Poems of the Lithuanian Folk Songs cited in the Concertos

A brief note on the Lithuanian language: Lithuanian belongs to an ancient group of non-Slavic languages designated by the broad term Indo-European – of which the now extinct East Prussian is the most distinguished cousin – part of whose heritage derives ultimately from Sanskrit and ancient Greek. At least 3,500 years ago, a persecuted religious minority left northern India and walked to the then sparsely inhabited shores of what is now called the Baltic Sea, joining the thin numbers of Nordic peoples already there. Words like *ugnis* ('fire' – *agni* in Sanskrit) testify to this heritage. Lithuanian remains highly inflected, requiring declension in seven cases (plus three additional cases in archaic versions of the language), and complex verb conjugations. However, apart from a few words like *draugas* ('friend' – *drugh* in Russian) Lithuanian has largely resisted incursions from the languages of its neighbours. Today, two primary dialects survive (each with regional sub-variations): Aukštaičių (Aukštaitian), spoken in the capital city of Vilnius and the East; and the more ancient, quirky and irregular Žemaičių (Samogitian), spoken in the coastal regions of Klaipėda and the West.

The folk songs here utilised by Bacevičius are instantly recognisable to modern-day Lithuanians, just as *Mary had a little lamb* or *O Waly, waly* would be to English ears. The poems are ancient creations, in various dialects and many versions, of a world view that precedes the exceptionally late arrival of Christianity in Lithuania, in slow stages between 1322 and 1387. Instead, they gloriously exalt the still tenacious rural, peasant traditions that have their roots in the rich pagan religions that spring from knowledge of, and reverence for the earth.

As in so many 'peasant' traditions, the poems are often 'risqué' in ways completely in harmony with a simple, rural lifestyle that predates machines and mechanical tools of any kind, electricity, travel beyond a few miles from home, and any form of communication beyond the immediate community. Images like 'horse' for male sexual energy, 'garden' or 'homestead' for the welcoming embraces of the female are common to many cultures. In these poems, they are heartily and liberally employed! But these images are ambiguous, and while they may at times be openly erotic, they can also be simply humorous, or, in the context of forced enlistment for war, carry a charge of tragedy.

¹ This nostalgia is not a little reminiscent of that of Poland's national poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), who was born in modern-day Belarus (Byelarus), spent his university years in Vilnius, moved to Paris, and never again set foot in Lithuania. Nonetheless, the opening lines of his 1834 epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* are 'Litwo! Ojczyzno moja! ty jesteś jak zdrowie : Ile cię trzeba cenić, ten tylko się dowie, Kto cię stracił.' ('Lithuania my country! My homeland! You alone are health: Your worth can only ever be known by one who has lost you.')

² Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz (b. 1964): *Vytautas Bacevičius i jego idee muzyki kosmicznej*, Kraków 2001, 159

³ Ona Narbutienė (1930–2007), *The Fate and Spread of Vytautas Bacevičius's Artistic Vision*, (Vol. II) Vilnius 2005; English translation in Stanevičiūtė, Ruta and Janatjeva, Veronika, eds., *Vytautas Bacevičius in Context*, Vilnius 2009, 21

⁴ Joseph Baruzi in *Le Ménestrel*, no. 51, 21 December, 1928, p. 545; cit. in translation in Vita Gruodyte (b. 1966): *Vytautas Bacevičius in the Context of Interwar Paris*; in Stanevičiūtė and Janatjeva eds. *op. cit.* Vilnius 2009, 63

⁵ Edmundas Gedgaudas (b. 1933), *Vytautas Bacevičius the Pianist*; in Stanevičiūtė and Janatjeva eds. *op. cit.* Vilnius 2009, 34

⁶ Gedgaudas, *ibid.*, 34

⁷ Baruzi, *op. cit.*, in *ibid.*, 63

⁸ Ona Narbutienė, *Vytautas Bacevičius*, in *Vytautas Bacevičius: A Return of the Restless Artist — A centennial celebration of Vytautas Bacevičius*; programme book of the *Vytautas Bacevičius Music Festival*, Vilnius, 16 September – 25 October 2005, English translation Veronika Janatjeva, 28

⁹ From a letter of 13 March, 1960 to his sister Gražyna; cit in Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz, *Vytautas Bacevičius's Creative Evolution: Towards Cosmic Music*; in Rūta Stanevičiūtė-Goštautiene and Audrone Žiūraitytė, eds., *Constructing Modernity and Reconstructing Nationality: Lithuanian Music in the Twentieth Century*, Vilnius 2004, 33

¹⁰ From a letter of 18 March, 1963 to his sister Gražyna; cit in Krzysztof Droba (1946–2017), *Vytautas Bacevičius in America, or, An Artist in the Cage*; in Stanevičiūtė and Janatjeva eds. *op. cit.* Vilnius 2009, 132

¹¹ How well do these observations resonate with Henry Miller's *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (New York 1945), written soon after the latter's own return from the ten years he lived in Paris and a year in Greece; coincidentally, a chapter of Miller's book offers a profile of Varèse.

¹² From a letter of 9 June 1966 to his sister Wanda; cit in Krzysztof Droba, *op. cit.*; in Stanevičiūtė and Janatjeva eds. *ibid.* Vilnius 2009, 123SXX

¹³ From a letter of 3 June 1966 to his sister Wanda; cit in Krzysztof Droba, *op. cit.*; in Stanevičiūtė and Janatjeva eds. *ibid.* Vilnius 2009, 123

¹⁴ Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz, *Vytautas Bacevičius i jego idee muzyki kosmicznej*, Kraków 2001, 161

¹⁵ Sometimes known in England as the Mayday Tree.



Bacevičius at the Salle Pleyel, Paris, 1929



Bacevičius getting into a taxi, Chicago, March 1941

Devynias sodas išjojau

Devynias sodas išjojau,
niekur mergelės neradau.
Dešimtą sodą prijojau,
sužvingo mano žirgelis.

O ko sužvingai, žirgeli,
ar čia jau junti mergelė?
Vidury sodžiaus kiemelis,
visų prasčioji trobelė.

Visų prasčioji trobelė,
visų gražioji mergelė
už balto stalo sėdėjo,
raudona rože žydėjo.

Oi, tu ieva ievužė

Oi tu ieva, ievužė,
Ko nežydi žiemužė?
O-ja, o-ja-ja.
Ko nežydi žiemužė?

Kaip žydėsiu žiemužė?
Šalna kando žiedelius.
O-ja, o-ja-ja.
Šalna kando žiedelius.

Šalna kando žiedelius,
Vėtra laužo lapelius.
O-ja, o-ja-ja.
Vėtra laužo lapelius.

Nine Homesteads

*I rode through nine homesteads,
Could not find a maiden anywhere.
I came to the tenth homestead,
And my little horse neighed.*

*Why did you neigh, precious horsie,
Is this where you sense a maiden?
In the middle of the homestead there is a courtyard,
And a simple little hut.*

*A simple little hut,
The most beautiful maiden
Sitting at a white table,
And blossoming like a red rose.*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 1, first movement.]

Oh, you fair bird-cherry

*Oh you fair bird-cherry,
Why don't you bloom in winter?
Oh-ya, oh-ya-ya.
Why don't you bloom in winter?*

*How can I bloom in winter?
The frost has bitten my blossoms.
Oh-ya, oh-ya-ya.
The frost has bitten my blossoms.*

*The frost has bitten my blossoms,
The storm is breaking my leaves.
Oh-ya, oh-ya-ya.
The storm is breaking my leaves.*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 1, third movement.]

Einu per dvarelį

Einu per dvarelį,
Pro žirgų stainelę:
Eisiu, eisiu pažiūrėti,
Ką veikia bernelis.

Ar žirgelį šeria,
Ar balnelį šveičia.
Oi, kur josi, bernužėli,
Kam rengi žirgelį?

Mergužėle mano,
Balta lelijėle,
Šiandien gavau aš raštelį
Joti į vainelę.

Einu per dvarelį,
Pro rūtų darželį,
Girdžiu verkiant mergužėlę
Rūtelių daržely.

Cit, neverk, mergele,
Balta lelijėle,
Kai sugrįšiu iš vainelės,
Užtversiu darželį.

Šaltyšius

Šalia kelio vieškelėlio
Gyveno šaltyšius.

[*Refrain: Vai dūda ir vėl dūda,
Vai tai dūda dūdytėlė
Gyveno šaltyšius.*]

Jis turėjo tris sūnelius,
Visus tris, kaip vieną . . .

Walking Through the Manor

*I'm walking through the manor,
And through the horse stall:
I'll go, I'll go see
What is my boy up to?*

*Is he feeding his horse,
Or maybe scrubbing the saddle.
Oh, where shall you go, dear boy?
What are you preparing your horsie for?*

*Dearest maiden mine,
Whitest blooming lily,
I received a note today,
Calling me to war.*

*I'm walking through the manor,
Through the rue garden,
I hear a maiden crying
In the rue garden.*

*Hush, do not cry, my maiden,
Whitest blooming lily –
When I'm back from war,
I shall put a fence around the rue garden.*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 2, first movement.]

The Elder

*Just beside the highroad
Lived an elder.*

*[Refrain: Reedpipe here and there again,
Oh that little reedpipe,
There lived an elder.]*

*He had three dear sons,
All three as one . . .*

Vienas Jonas, antras Baltrus,
Trečias Matijošius . . .
Nuvažiavo į Alvitą
Pirkti Jonui dūdą . . .

Jonui dūdą, Baltrui skripką,
Matijošiui pyragą . . .

Jis užėjo pas Maušiuką
Ir nieko nebliko . . .

Anei dūdos, anei skripkos,
Anei pyragėlio . . .

Verkia Jonas, verkia Baltrus,
Verkia Matijošius.

Du broliukai kunigai

Du broliukai kunigai,
Du broliukai urėdai.
[Tik aš viena vargo dieną
Grėbiau lankoj šienelį.]

Man šienelį begrėbiant,
Kirtimėlį bekertant
[Ir nulūžo grėblelis,
Naujo grėblio kotelis.]

Bėgsiu greitai tekina
Pas brolelį urėdą:
[— Mesk, brolelį rašyti,
Imk grėblelį taisyti!]

— Mesk, brolelį rašyti,
Imk grėblelį taisyti
[Kyla juodas debesėlis,
Sulis lankoj šienelį.]

*The first one was Jonas, then Baltrus,
The third one – Matijošius . . .*

*And he rode to Alvitas
To buy a reedpipe for Jonas . . .*

*Reedpipe for Jonas, violin for Baltrus,
And a pie for Matijošius . . .*

*He visited Maušiukas
And then nothing remained . . .*

*No reedpipe, no violin,
Not even a pie . . .*

*Jonas is crying, Baltrus is crying,
Matijošius too is crying.*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 2, first movement.]

Two priest brothers

*Two priest brothers,
Two forest stewards.
[I'm the only one who, on a day of misery,
Raked hay in the field.]*

*As I raked the hay,
As I cut the straw
[And the rake broke,
The shaft of my tiny new rake.]*

*I'll run fast
To my brother, the forest steward:
[Cease your writing, brother,
Take this rake, mend it!]*

*— Cease your writing, brother,
Take this rake, mend it!
[The dark cloud is rising,
The hay in the field shall be soaked.]*

— Nei aš mesiu rašyti,
Nei aš mesiu skaityti:
[Tekyl' juodas debesėlis,
Tekyl' lankoj šienelj.]”

Per šilą jojau

Per šilą jojau
Šile šėką roviau
Ir pašėriau bėrą žirgą
Po žalia eglele,
Po žalia egle(le).

O kai nujojau
Pas savo mergele
Pasistačiau sau žirgelį
Uošvelio dvarely.

Išein' uošvelis,
Senasis tėvelis,
Ima mane už rankelės
Veda už stalelio.

Sėdžiu už stalelio,
Žiūriu pro langelį:
Sniegti, lyja, rasa krinta
Ant mano žirgelio.

Oi uošvi, uošveli,
Senasai tėveli,
Kad priėmei mane jauną,
Priimk ir žirgelį.

— *I shall not stop writing,
I shall not stop reading:
[Let the dark cloud rise,
Let it rise over the hay in the field.]*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 2, second movement.]

I rode through the forest

*I rode through the forest,
I pulled up grass in the forest
And fed my sorrel horse
Under the green spruce,
Under the little green spruce.*

*And when I rode
To my maiden,
I left my little horse
In my father-in-law's manor.*

*The father-in-law arrives,
Dear old father,
Takes me by the hand,
Leads me behind the table.*

*I'm sitting at the table,
I'm looking out the window:
It's snowing, it's raining, the dew is falling
On my precious horsie.*

*Oh father-in-law,
Dear old father,
If you've accepted me, a youngster,
Please accept my horsie too.*

[paraphrased in Piano Concerto No. 2, fourth movement.]

*Original texts established with thanks to
Mr Linas Paulauskis of the Lithuanian Music Centre,
and to Mr Gabrielius Alekna.
English translations © Laūra Karnavičiūtė*

Gabrielius Alekna



Photo: Gedmantas Kropis

Pianist Gabrielius Alekna has built a prolific performance and recording career bridging the cultures of his birth country of Lithuania and his present home of the United States. A graduate of The Juilliard School (Doctor of Musical Arts), Alekna was awarded Second Prize at the 2005 International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna, Austria. His performance credits include solo recitals at the United Nations Office in Geneva, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and concerto appearances with the Vienna Radio Symphony, Juilliard, and Bilkent Symphony Orchestras as well as with every major orchestra and ensemble in his native Lithuania. His recordings are issued on the Ondine, Toccata Classics, and Naxos labels, and include the most comprehensive Bacevičius catalogue of any pianist, including many first recordings.

www.gabrieliusalekna.com

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra



Photo: Dmitrij Matvejev

Marco Polo, Col Legno, Ella Records, Naxos and Avie Records labels. Modestas Pitrenas has served as artistic director and principal conductor since 2015. Robertas Šervenikas is the orchestra's second conductor, and Juozas Domarkas is honorary conductor.

The Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) was established in 1940 by the composer, conductor and pianist Balys Dvarionas. The orchestra presents around 50 concerts annually in the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall and across Lithuania. It has also performed in some of the most prestigious international concert venues, such as the Musikverein Wien, the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Berlin, and the Barbican Centre in London. The basis of the LNSO's rich repertoire consists of oratorios and symphonies from various epochs, as well as modern contemporary music, with an emphasis on well-known works by Lithuanian composers and also first symphonies by many young composers. Since 1991, the LNSO has regularly participated in the GAIDA contemporary music festival. The orchestra also presents music by Lithuanian composers on Euroradio broadcasts. The LNSO's discography includes numerous releases on the Ondine, Accentus, www.nationalphilharmonic.eu

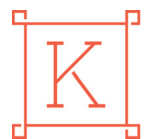
Christopher Lyndon-Gee



Internationally renowned conductor Christopher Lyndon-Gee is known worldwide for his catalogue of many dozens of recordings, almost all of these since 1994 with Naxos. These include the complete orchestral music of Igor Markevitch and of Edgard Varèse; most of the symphonies and orchestral works of George Rochberg (a project still in progress); and, since their first collaborations in Kyiv in 2016, recordings of music by Valentin Silvestrov. Other prize-winning recordings include the music of Hans Werner Henze, Ottorino Respighi, Dmitry Shostakovich, Larry Sitsky (his opera *The Golem*), Igor Stravinsky, Arthur Bliss and Richard Strauss. His musicianship has been recognised by the Sydney Critics 'Best Conductor' award for his work with the then Australian Opera (now Opera Australia), by five GRAMMY Award nominations, multiple nominations for other major awards such as Cannes and Echo Klassik; and by the Pizzicato Prize in Luxembourg. His history and close associations with many orchestras include Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, England, Australia, the United States, Lithuania, the Republic of Georgia, Russia, France, Switzerland, the Havana Philharmonic (Cuba), and the Kyiv Philharmonic, Presidential Orchestra and Kyiv

Chamber Orchestra in Ukraine. Primarily a composer, Lyndon-Gee won the Onassis Prize in Athens for his ballet score *Il poeta muore* ('The Poet Dies'), based on the life of Pier Paolo Pasolini and on Loris Jacopo Bononi's book of the same title. The Australian National Critics awarded him 'Artist of the Year' for his choral-orchestral *Hymn for Sarum: Te Deum*; and, also in Australia, he won the Spivakovsky prize for his *Poema per Gaspara Stampa*, honouring Italy's great 16th-century female poet. Numerous other works led to two MacDowell Fellowships in the USA; to a Paul Sacher Foundation Fellowship, and (for his writing about music) to multiple Visiting Scholar invitations to the Berenson Library at Villa I Tatti, Florence. He is currently working on a concerto for violin that will be entitled *Mémorial pour Pierre*, slated for its premiere in November 2025 in Vilnius.

Vytautas Bacevičius's life was defined by exile and migration during the turbulent first half of the 20th century, but his impressive catalogue represents a remarkable creative spirit undimmed by adversity. Composed while studying in Paris, the youthful *Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2* represent Bacevičius's nostalgia for his native Lithuania in their unselfconscious and spirited use of folk melodies, all of which contribute to their light and celebratory nature. Written not long after his arrival in the United States in 1944, the *Third Symphony* expresses an early optimism for the composer's new home in its energetic, positive and confident tone, culminating in a citation of *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.



LIETUVOS
KULTŪROS
TARYBA

Vytautas
BACEVIČIUS
(1905–1970)

- | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| 1–3 | Piano Concerto No. 1 ‘Sur des thèmes lituaniens’, Op. 12 (1929) | 15:12 |
| 4–7 | Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 17 (1933)* | 26:30 |
| 8–11 | Symphony No. 3, Op. 33 (1944)* | 32:48 |

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Gabrielius Alekna, Piano 1–7

Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra

Christopher Lyndon-Gee

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet

Texts for the folk songs referenced in the piano concertos and English translations are included in the booklet, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/574414.htm

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A co-production with the Lithuanian Music Information and Publishing Centre (LMIPC)

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Recording production, editing and mastering: Vilius Keras

Recording engineers: Evelina Bajorinienė, Donatas Kielius

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Booklet notes: Christopher Lyndon-Gee

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