I, Stephen V Guokas, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Music History.

It is entitled:
De Profundis Clamavi ad Te, Lietuva: Elements of Lithuanian Nationalism in Ciurlionis’s De Profundis Cantata

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De Profundis Clamavi ad Te, Lietuva:
Elements of Lithuanian Nationalism in Čiurlionis’s De Profundis Cantata

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Abstract

At the turn of the twentieth century, Lithuania received new freedoms from the Russian Czars, allowing for the creation of a distinct Lithuanian national identity. The arts, especially music, played an important but as yet understudied part in the establishment of this national style. The Lithuanian composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) displays this nationalism throughout his mature compositions, and this thesis will address the Lithuanian national movement in relation to Čiurlionis and his music.

Čiurlionis worked tirelessly to establish and promote Lithuanian music. He organized exhibitions, concerts, and composition competitions to inspire Lithuanian composers to employ material from their folk tradition within new works. He also detailed in two articles the musical characteristics of Lithuanian folk music and how a composer could use these characteristics in classical compositions.

This thesis examines Čiurlionis’s use of his self-prescribed Lithuanian folk music characteristics within his De Profundis and considers the integration of this folk tradition within his own compositional style, as stated in his 1910 article, “About Music.” Additionally, it explores Lithuanian nationalism in music at the turn of the twentieth century, addressing issues of authenticity and a “national” style. Finally, through comparison with extant studies concerning Bartók and Sibelius, this thesis presents Čiurlionis within the greater context of European—particularly central European—nationalism.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is hardly the effort of one man, and many people deserve thanks for their help and advice over the years. To my friends from CCM, from Concordia, from Madison, and elsewhere: thank you for all your support over the years as I pursue my academic and personal goals. To the Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Archives in Kaunas, and especially to Danutė, my most gracious host: thank you for all your time, help, and hospitality. Special thanks also to the Tangeman Sacred Music Center at the University of Cincinnati, who funded my research in Lithuanian. To my siblings, Elizabeth, Gregory, and Erin: thank you for putting up with me as much as you have; I am truly blessed to always have your love. To my parents, Charles and Linda: thank you for all you have given me, throughout my time at home and after I flew the nest. I am blessed also to have such loving parents, and to always have two people who listen to and advise me in all I do. To my thesis committee, especially my advisor, Dr. Jonathan Kregor: thank you for working with me these past two years. Your help and advice, both professional and personal, are things I will keep with me always. To Laura Benrey Rodriguez, who has carried me perhaps more than anyone these last years, thank you. My love and gratitude to all of you named here, and those others who, though unmentioned, have greatly impacted my life. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the memories of Stanislaus and Barbara Guokas, who made the journey from the Lithuanian fatherland so many years ago, and to the memory of my grandfather Vytautas, with whose support I began this journey back.

Soli Deo Gloria
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Chapter One: Lithuanian Nationalism and Čiurlionis

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis is considered today to be the quintessential Lithuanian composer. Čiurlionis led an extremely active artistic life, and through both his musical and literary efforts he greatly impacted the Lithuanian national movement. However, Lithuanian nationalism does not begin with Čiurlionis; rather, he inherited a long-standing tradition of cultural pride that stretches back centuries. This chapter explores that tradition and how Čiurlionis acted upon—and influenced—its musical development.

Lithuania: An Introduction

Lithuania has always been a proud country, and Lithuanians have always been an equally proud people. First identified by name in 1009 A.D., the Baltic tribes that inhabited the region existed in generally separate communities until King Mindaugas the Great united throughout the middle of the thirteenth century. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Lithuania battled against the Teutonic and Livonian Orders; Lithuania, a pagan country at that time, was considered heathen country and thus the knights were allowed to make war freely.

In 1392, Vytautas the Great was crowned Grand Duke of Lithuania, after two civil wars during which he unified the people and nobility of Lithuania. Through conversion and conquest, he expanded Lithuanian territory to stretch from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, including regions of present-day Poland, Belarus, Russia, the Ukraine, and others. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as it is known today, represented the golden age of Lithuania’s medieval history, and saw the construction of many abbeys, schools, castles, and churches. Additionally, at this time the Lithuanian nobility began to play a greater role within Lithuanian politics.
Following the death of Vytautas in 1430, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania began to decline. The nobility, desiring a break between the royal families of Lithuania and Poland, selected successors who simply were unable to command the loyalty and military prowess of Vytautas, and Lithuania’s Grand Duchy quickly diminished. Despite its small stature, Lithuania would remain an independent state until 1795, when the majority of Lithuania came under Russian control.

While under Russian sovereignty, life in Lithuania continued generally as usual. Despite some nobles siding with the French during the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian tsars pardoned these nobles (with financial penalties for supporting the opposition) and the Lithuanian state continued under a Russian governor. The situation escalated in the 1850s when a Catholic Lithuanian Bishop, Motiejus Valančius, began urging Lithuanian priests to preach and offer the Low Mass in Lithuanian. Prior to Bishop Valančius’s exhortation, services had been in Polish or Russian, the languages of the elite classes, and were designed to cater to these same classes. True Lithuanians—the people who inhabited this land for hundreds of years—were, at this time, predominantly peasants, and through his encouragement of the use of Lithuanian, as well as his support of other welfare measures, “Bishop Valančius had a greater influence on 19th century politics in Lithuania than anyone else.”

Following the 1863–4 Polish Uprising, the Russian empire instituted stricter measures within its western provinces, including Lithuania. Count Mikhail Muravyov, the Russian Governor-General at that time, banned all Lithuanian publications, introduced the Russian

educational system throughout Lithuania (with particular attention to the cities of Vilnius and Kaunas), and “initiated a new colonisation programme, under the terms of which Lithuanian domains and estates … were handed over to Russian settlers.”\textsuperscript{2} This oppression led both to mass emigration and to a new interest in national identity.

Within Lithuania, some changes were immediate. Muravyov oversaw the construction of new Russian cultural centers in major cities; though these were primarily frequented by Russian citizens, all Lithuanians were encouraged to visit them and celebrate being a part of the Russian empire. Religiously, Lithuanian Catholics were increasingly encouraged to convert to Orthodoxy, an encouragement that occasionally turned violent. One such incident was the Kražiai Massacre in 1893, in which Russian soldiers and citizens killed and injured a number of Lithuanian men, women, and children who prevented the overzealous Russian Orthodox citizens from razing the local Catholic church.

A new interest in national identity brought a new interest in the Lithuanian language. Prior to the nineteenth century, Polish had been used as the language of civilized people; this new interest in national identity, however, meant that it was quickly replaced with Lithuanian from the region of Samogitia, where the purest form of the Lithuanian language was ostensibly spoken.\textsuperscript{3} To further propagate the Lithuanian language, village schools, or daraktorinės, were established wherein a villager (usually a woman) would teach the children Lithuanian. Although


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 21.
the law forbade Lithuanian books and other printed materials, book smugglers would often bring these materials into Lithuania from neighboring Prussia.

In the 1880s a group of intellectuals came together at the University of Vilnius and formulated the first Lithuanian newspaper, *Aušra* [The Dawn]. Inspired by other nationalist movements, *Aušra* presented those aspects these intellectuals thought to be the most characteristically Lithuanian, such as weaving and folk arts. Essential to Lithuanian-ness, of course, was the ability to speak, read, and write Lithuanian, and the paper supported all who were teaching this language to their children. Additionally, in what was a novel step in Lithuania at the time, *Aušra* supported the concept of a Lithuanian culture independent from Russians, Poles, and Belarusians. To this end, it printed various inquiries into Lithuanian folklore and history, and advocated for Lithuanian as the sole language of the region. Its first editor, Jonas Basanavičius, wrote in the first volume,

> We will concern ourselves with spreading among our brothers news about our nation’s ancient deeds … we will not forget to collect and write about all sorts of Lithuanian monuments and ruins from which we can learn about the life, nature, and habits…of our grandparents.

This tone set the mission statement for subsequent installments of the paper, and indeed, its focus remained set upon this task. Virgil Krapauskas writes,

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4 The promotion of a Lithuanian state separate from Russians, Poles, and Belarusians was also inspired by other nationlist movements such as the separation of Magyar and gypsy traits happening concurrently in Hungary.

5 Ibid.

[Aušra] defined what Lithuanians were and what Lithuanians should do: Lithuanians should become educated and prosperous, should unite and live in Lithuania, should attempt to speak Lithuanian … they should feel Lithuanian.\(^7\)

To this end, the writers discussed all manner of subjects, including cabin-building, history, health, and folklore. They also began to define the nature of a Lithuanian: one had to be either Lithuanian by blood or by family history. They began excluding many of the Poles, Russians, Germans, and Jews who had previously been included within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and often forced a choice upon those of mixed Polish and Lithuanian ancestry. Although financial problems forced Aušra out of print in 1886, it began the task of uniting the Lithuanian people and defining Lithuanian culture.

Although Aušra ran for only three years, a new paper called Varpas [Bell] succeeded it in 1889. Varpas continued effectively where Aušra had ended, presenting traits that all Lithuanians should have, but also printing Lithuanian poetry and short stories. Among its editors was Jonas Basanavičius, who would go on to become the so-called patriarch of the Lithuanian national movement. Similar to Aušra, the newspapers were printed across the border in Prussia, and then either mailed in sealed envelopes to specific Lithuanian addresses or smuggled across the border. Varpas ran from 1889 to 1905, and continued the mission of establishing a distinct Lithuanian culture. The first editor, Jonas Gaidamavičius, wrote that these aims were “to raise Lithuania spiritually and economically, to throw off the habit of the Lithuanians of tying themselves to

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\(^7\) Ibid., 115.
other nations.”

Further, *Varpas* focused on theoretical articles, encouraging Lithuanians to establish cultural separation through non-violent means.

This nationalism finally resulted in political action in 1896 with the establishment of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Lithuania. The party, along with a Lithuanian society in Warsaw, was able to publish Lithuanian works to a greater extent than either of the papers, including two volumes of Lithuanian poetry. Further, the SDP was the first of many political entities to demand greater liberties from the Russian Empire, and this led ultimately to the repeal of the ban on Lithuanian publications and alphabet in 1904.

These endeavors created an ever-increasing number of political movements, and in 1905 a diet was held with more than 2,000 delegates in attendance. The meeting formally established what Lithuanian writers had been advocating for more than two decades: national autonomy, a central administration for Lithuanian territories, and the use of the Lithuanian language for all schools and official departments at the local level.

Though the diet did not resolve each of its goals, later years did witness the establishment of Lithuanian programs within schools and the establishment of various cultural committees and exhibitions. Ultimately, it is this world that Čiurlionis inherited and affected—through his compositions, publications, and letters.

Čiurlionis: An Introduction

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) was born in Varėna, Lithuania and raised in Druskininkai, Lithuania. As a child, his mother would often tell him Lithuanian folktales, and

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8 Ibid., 170.

9 Von Rauch, 22.
both of his parents sang folksongs around the house. When relatives visited, the whole family would gather and sing together in the evenings. Despite this, Čiurlionis belonged to a middle class family and regularly spoke Polish around the house.

As a young boy, Čiurlionis played flute at the court of Prince Michal Oginski in Plungė, and first studied music there from 1889–93. In 1894, Čiurlionis entered the Warsaw Conservatory, studying conducting and composition. He composed a great amount of pieces for piano at this time, and although he idolized Chopin during these student years, Anna Nowak notes that elements of Polish nationalism do not appear in Čiurlionis’s student compositions. For graduation in 1899 Čiurlionis wrote a De Profundis cantata for choir and orchestra.

Upon completing his studies in Warsaw, Čiurlionis pursued further training at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1901–3. During this period, he wrote the tone poem Miške [In the Forest], which encapsulates his own experiences within the woods that cover the Lithuanian countryside. Čiurlionis also sketched but never completed two different Lithuanian overtures, each named Kęstučis. In 1904 Čiurlionis began to direct a Lithuanian choir in Warsaw, and conducted many of his own folk arrangements. This continued into 1905, in which he spent the majority of the summer arranging folksongs and painting while on vacation near the Black Sea.

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In autumn of 1905, Čiurlionis returned to Warsaw to study the visual arts. Painting in particular attracted Čiurlionis, and he believed himself to be a synesthete. Čiurlionis painted many cycles with musical names, such as the *Funeral Sonata*, *Sonata of the Sea*, and *Sonata of the Pyramids*. Later that year he began to direct the choir for the Warsaw Lithuanians’ Society for Mutual Assistance. Additionally, in 1905 Čiurlionis was able to identify himself more easily as a Lithuanian, as persecution of ethnic minorities lessened considerably after the Russian Revolution of 1905.  

Following his visual art training in Warsaw, Čiurlionis re-dedicated himself to the cause of creating Lithuanian art, both visual and musical. He finished his tone poem *Jūra* [By the Sea] at this time, and also accepted positions as the chair of the Lithuanian Art and Music Committee and president of the Society for Lithuanian Art. Additionally, he began to direct folk choirs throughout Lithuania, many of which performed his own arrangements and compositions.

In 1907, he met and married the art critic Sofija Kymantaitė. Sofija aided Čiurlionis with his Lithuanian; Čiurlionis, having been raised in a middle-class Lithuanian home, spoke Polish as his first language, and spoke Polish and German at the conservatories. Sofija aided Čiurlionis with many of his publications, translating them for the various Lithuanian papers that were now permitted.

Čiurlionis died of pneumonia in 1911 after spending some time in a sanatorium in Marki, Poland. Lithuanians recognized him that same year by holding two exhibitions of his artwork, and the following year his works were presented in Moscow. In later decades, his artwork

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traveled throughout the world, and his major musical works, such as the De Profundis, Miške, and Jūra, were performed frequently within Lithuania and Central Europe.

Čiurlionis affected Lithuanian nationalism in a two-fold manner, through his music and his writings. Although this thesis will ultimately synthesize these two aspects of Čiurlionis’s nationalism, for the sake of introduction they are separated here, in order to more clearly trace Čiurlionis’s musical and literary development.

Čiurlionis the Composer

Michael Beckerman notes that, “A composer may naturally imbibe certain styles and approaches, but careful thought is necessary to integrate them into a larger whole, and much conscious study of musical technique is an inevitable part of the process.”13 This certainly seems to be the situation with Čiurlionis, where the music he heard and sang as a child manifested itself repeatedly within his own compositions; indeed, by the time he finally publically codified the musical traits which, for him, identify Lithuanian music, Čiurlionis had temporarily given up composing to pursue painting and professional obligations. Nevertheless, Lithuanian folk music was a constant source of inspiration for Čiurlionis from his first major work until his final compositions, and near the end of his life he himself identified these within his article, “Apie Muziką” [About Music], discussed below.

Early in his career Čiurlionis composed almost exclusively for piano; this was partly due to a fascination with Chopin during his student days, and partly due to Čiurlionis’s own proficiency at the instrument. One finds standard late-Romantic musical characteristics within these works, including, “repetition of a short rhythmic motive, the creation of a single mood, and

the division of the music into three large sections.”¹⁴ Čiurlionis also adopted select musical devices of Chopin specifically, including, “the drone bass or pedal point … [lending] a rustic feeling to the music by its evocation of the drone found in many types of folk music.”¹⁵

Čiurlionis’s nationalist tendencies begin to appear during his student years. In 1899 for graduation from the Warsaw Conservatory he composed a De Profundis cantata for choir and orchestra, and it is this work that marks the beginning of Čiurlionis’s nationalist style. His presentation here of the text in Lithuanian demonstrates his familiarity with Lithuanian nationalists; Virgil Krapauskas notes, “For many Lithuanian activists the preservation of the language became an important step in the struggle for … cultural identity.”¹⁶

Musically, the themes display many Lithuanian musical gestures and characteristics, which will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Further, when paired with a Lithuanian text, they beg to be interpreted through another lens. The combination of these gestures and the national symbol help to identify the piece as nationalist in origin, as will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Although he would not define characteristics of a Lithuanian style in print for another decade, Čiurlionis’s use of a Lithuanian text, itself considered nationalistic, qualifies the piece as national

¹⁴ Danutė Staškevičius “Stylistic Features in the Piano and Orchestral Music,” in Goštautas, 453.

¹⁵ Ibid., 454. Čiurlionis idolized Chopin during his years at the Warsaw; this can be attributed to the location itself (Warsaw) as well as Čiurlionis’s upbringing in Druskininkai near the Poland-Lithuania border. Staškevičius notes many other techniques Čiurlionis borrows from Chopin, including the “repetition of a short rhythmic motive, the creation of a single mood… the ABA [form]…[an] emphasis on linear writing, and expressive use of melodic chromaticism.”

¹⁶ Krapauskas, 14.
in nature. Indeed, Čiurlionis states as much in his diary when he writes, “People remember the source they are from and their language—let us return to our only source.”\(^{17}\)

Despite these early national leanings within his orchestral work, Danutė Staškevičius notes that Čiurlionis’s piano music does not exhibit national musical characteristics until he departs for Leipzig. She writes,

\[\text{[In]} 1901–04, \text{Čiurlionis exhibits for the first time a style influenced by folk music. He had carefully analyzed the melodic nature of Lithuanian folk songs in order to write a folk-like melody without actually quoting one … these folk-like melodies are generally longer and more singable, and they are often accompanied by modal harmonies, open-fifth chords, and drones … they do not exhibit the traditional functions.}\(^{18}\)

Although evidence of these musical characterics often exists in multiple national styles, especially as composers sought to write folk-inspired melodies to support their own nationalist causes, Čiurlionis’s writings, which include a letter detailing how he employs two Lithuanian themes within his *Kestutis Overture* (now lost), support Staškevičius’s claims.\(^{19}\)

Within this same period, Čiurlionis composed his first tone poem, *Miške*. The tone poem, whose title translates to “In the Forest,” depicted the woodlands that cover the Lithuanian countryside, and especially those near to Čiurlionis’s home in Druskininkai. Čiurlionis writes, “It opens with quiet broad chords, like the peaceful and sweeping sigh of Lithuanian pines,” and

\(^{17}\) Čiurlionis diary fragment held at the Nacionalis M.K. Čiurlionio Dailės Muziejus. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

\(^{18}\) Staškevičius, 458.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 462. E.g. modal harmonies, which exist within many folk genres across multiple cultural boundaries, but that when paired with other musical elements and a national symbol or narrative are representative of a specific ethnicity.
in the same letter he presents his hopes that both the audience and performers will understand his depiction.\textsuperscript{21} Here, the woodlands are identified as one of Beckerman’s “national symbols,” and the musical characteristics—now established in both orchestral and piano repertoire—can be considered Lithuanian. Čiurlionis submitted \textit{Miške} for a composition competition, and although he did not win first prize, he did receive a small sum of money which he used to enroll for further training in Leipzig from 1901–2.

While at Leipzig, Čiurlionis composed another \textit{Kestutis Overture}, though only sketches of this piece exist. Once again, Čiurlionis’s letters relay how he is employing two Lithuanian themes, as well as his general excitement to work with this material.\textsuperscript{22} Within the letter Čiurlionis does not clarify if he utilizes two pre-existing tunes or newly composed melodies in the folk style, but the sentiment remains: Čiurlionis is actively seeking out and experimenting with Lithuanian folk material.

In the summer of 1906, Čiurlionis lived in his hometown of Druskininkai and arranged more than sixty folksongs for choir and piano. Rimantas Astrauskas studied these folksong arrangements and notes that Čiurlionis retains much of the original character of the pieces, including the modality/bimodality, rhythmic simplicity, and harmonies.\textsuperscript{23} Čiurlionis performed

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Čiurlionis, letter to Petras Markevičius, quoted in Vytautas Landsbergis, \textit{M.K. Čiurlionis: Time and Content} (Vilnius: Lituanus, 1992), 61.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Staškevičius, 462.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Rimantas Astrauskas, “Čiurlionio Lietuvių Liaudies Dainų Išdailos: Naujos Ištarmės” [Čiurlionis’ Lithuanian Folk Song Harmonizations: New Thoughts], in Daunoravičienė and Povilionienė, 319–335.
\end{itemize}
these with the Vilniaus Kanklė, a folk choir that he directed in the capital, and other various Lithuanian folk ensembles at the exhibitions.

In 1907, he began to compose an opera based upon the folk legend of *Jūratė ir Kastytis* [Jūratė and Kastytis], though most of the sketches and materials for this are now lost. His wife, Sofija, was to write the libretto, and in a letter from June 21, 1908, he writes, “Zose, we are going to meet soon, and it will be beside our sea, which today is still casting pieces of your palace upon its shore...do you remember that, Zosyt? And what about *Jūratė*? Do you think of her?” This would have been the first Lithuanian national opera, and in letters to his brother and his wife, Čiurlionis exclaims his excitement to be working on such a national epic.

The same year, Čiurlionis completed his final major work, the tone poem *Jūra*. Čiurlionis finished composing it following a short vacation he and Sofija had on the coast of the Baltic Sea, and the poem reflects his sentiments concerning the sea itself. The piece is Čiurlionis’s best-known work, and orchestras both within and beyond Lithuanian perform it with some frequency.

24 Sketch fragments do exist at the Nacionalis M.K. Čiurlionio Dailės Muziejus Archives in Kaunas, LT. The author has obtained a facsimile of these sketch fragments, accessed 18 July 2015. *Jūratė* and Kastytis is a popular Lithuanian folktale that describes a love affair between the goddess of the sea (Jūratė) and a skilled mortal fisherman (Kastytis). The story ends in tragedy when the thunder god Perkūnas kills Kastytis, and binds Jūrate to the bottom of the sea. See *The Sky is Falling: Lithuanian Folk Tales* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1980) and Vytautas F. Beliajus, *Vakarine Daina* [Evening Song]: A Collection of Lithuanian Folk Tales, Legends, and Fables (Los Angeles: Bonnie Press, 1954).

25 Čiurlionis, letter to Sofjia Kymantaitė, in Landsbergis, 148. Zose and Zosyt were affectionate nicknames the composer had for Sofija; “pieces of your palace upon its shore” references the conclusion of Lithuanian myth of the lovers Kastytis and Jūratė, with whom Čiurlionis and Sofija associated themselves.

26 Landsbergis, 32.
The Baltic Sea serves here as a national symbol that would be known to all Lithuanians; multiple Lithuanian folk epics address it, and many folktales treat undines and sea spirits and how they interact with fisherman. Čiurlionis thus can present his musical material within a national dialogue, as he employs it to present a well-known national object.

Čiurlionis’s late compositions exist primarily for piano; the composer gave up composing in 1909 to devote more time to painting, and only a few piano works come from the period between the completion of Jūra and the composer’s death in 1911. These works begin to move towards 5-, 7-, and 9-tone serialism, though Čiurlionis retains the tripartite form and rhythmic simplicity of his earlier years. Also of note is that Čiurlionis retains his interest in folk music; Staškevičius observes that aspects of his folk-inspired music exist yet within the Op. 15 and Op. 18 variations. Music for Čiurlionis then creates a neat circle; he retains the influences of his youth even until his very final compositions more than twenty years later.

Čiurlionis the Writer

The majority of Čiurlionis’s writings concerning Lithuanian folk music and its hallmark musical traits will be examined in Chapter Two. However, it is worth addressing here the essential writings of Čiurlionis that display his interest in Lithuanian folk music and its use for composition.

27 See The Sky is Falling: Lithuanian Folk Tales and Vytautas F. Beliajus, Vakarine Daina [Evening Song]: A Collection of Lithuanian Folk Tales, Legends, and Fables.

Čiurlionis states within various early letters to his brother that he is working with Lithuanian themes in composition, most notably on the now lost *Kestųtis Overtures*. These letters, written around 1902, contain the first instances wherein Čiurlionis specifically mentions his use of Lithuanian folk material, though one can observe similar musical characteristics as early as 1899 in his *De Profundis*.

Čiurlionis becomes much more vocal in his desire to work with folk material in 1905. He writes in a letter to his brother Povilas, “Have you heard about the Lithuanian Movement? I am resolved to devote all my past and future work to Lithuania.”

Čiurlionis became very involved with this movement, and helped to arrange the First Exhibition of Lithuanian Art in 1906. The exhibition included selections from his own paintings and folksong arrangements, and Čiurlionis aided the choir in rehearsal. At the welcoming speech, the chairman Jonas Basanavičius, “made special mention of Čiurlionis’s works, which, he suggested, ‘may well mark the beginning of a new artistic trend.’” Commenting on the First Exhibition, Čiurlionis writes, “The Exhibition played a major role in the revival of our culture.”

At the conclusion of the exhibition, the newly formed Society of Lithuanian Art unanimously elected Čiurlionis its president. As president, he issued another art request for the

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29 Landsbergis, 32.

30 Ibid., 33.

31 Ibid., 34.
Second Exhibition of Lithuanian Art, in which he states, “Folk art is of especially great importance in the cultural education of every nation.”

Following his election as president of the Society of Lithuanian Art in 1906, Čiurlionis wrote much material on the musical characteristics that defined a piece as Lithuanian; these writings will be discussed in Chapter 2. Through his letters and publications, Čiurlionis promoted other Lithuanian composers whom he deemed to be writing proper Lithuanian music, exhorted a specific Lithuanian style, and defined his conception of a Lithuanian national style. *Table 1* lists these publications.

*Table 1: Čiurlionis Publications*

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication</th>
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<tr>
<td>Art Society Competition</td>
<td><em>Vilniaus Žinios</em>, No. 276 and <em>Viltis</em>, No. 145</td>
<td>1908</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Lithuanian Music’ by Česlovas Sasnausaks</td>
<td><em>Viltis</em>, No. 48</td>
<td>1908</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Society Music Competition</td>
<td><em>Viltis</em>, No. 59</td>
<td>1909</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Lithuanian Music’ by Česlovas Sasnausaks</td>
<td><em>Viltis</em>, No. 147</td>
<td>1909</td>
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<tr>
<td>About Music</td>
<td><em>Lietuvoje</em>, ed. Sofija Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė</td>
<td>1910</td>
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In total, Čiurlionis issued five different calls for art and music throughout his tenure as president of Society for Lithuanian Art, and the one issued for the Art Society Competition deserves special attention. Here, Čiurlionis offers a monetary prize to encourage capable composers to write in a Lithuanian style. He begins with a lament concerning the current state of

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32 M.K. Čiurlionis, “Antroji Lietuvių Dailės Paroda” [The Second Exhibition of Lithuanian Art], *Lietuvos ūkinkinas*, 1908, No. 9 and *Žarija*, 1908, No. 5. A note about Čiurlionis’s material published in Lithuanian papers: only these excerpts were available at the Nacionalis M.K. Čiurlionio Dailės Muziejus Archives. As such, the author of this thesis has omitted page numbers for the articles.
Lithuanian music, remarking, “even though [Lithuanian music] does exist, it has been scattered, lost, hidden, and forgotten.” He continues to decry that Lithuanian music now is composed of “foreign pieces that have been adapted to Lithuanian lyrics and completely unsuitable for the melodic content of the songs.” These publications were disseminated throughout Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and the United States; thus Čiurlionis here attempts to recognize and cultivate Lithuanian talent from all Lithuanian communities.

Beyond calls for art and music submissions, Čiurlionis wrote extensively promoting the music of other Lithuanian composers. Within two publications, an article and then a response to its rebuttal both titled “Lithuanian Music by Česlovas Sasnauskas,” he promotes Česlovas Sasnauskas as a correct composer of Lithuanian music. In the introduction to the first article Čiurlionis states, “Lithuanian music … does not exist yet … [but waits] for those who have been called, the true laborers of art, the founders of Lithuanian music.” He continues to describe Sasnauskas’s pieces, Kur bėga Šešupė [Where Runs the Šešupė] and Jau slavia sukilo [Now Slavs Rise Up], and describes their composer:

Sasnauskas’s most admirable quality as a Lithuanian composer is … that his work resounds with that truly Lithuanian note, that strange, old and elusive note which can be heard in our ancient songs … I believe that he would not be capable of producing an unlithuanian composition even if that was his intention...The spread of such music across


34 Ibid.

our country … [gives] the public … good music … and [provides] young composers with an example of how to compose and arrange music.\textsuperscript{36}

Čiurlionis accomplishes much within this short article. First he explains that there exists a woeful lack of Lithuanian music. He then presents Sasnauskas’s compositions as good examples of truly Lithuanian music, and finally closes by promoting Sasnauskas himself, exhorting young composers to emulate this authentic Lithuanian composer.

Čiurlionis’s second article concerning Sasnauskas explores in greater detail the composer’s use of folk material. Čiurlionis states in the introduction that Sasnauskas’s works are both Lithuanian and possess great musical value; he then states that this “marks the beginning of the development of [Lithuanian] cultural music.”\textsuperscript{37} While Čiurlionis values folk music and folk arrangements, he understands that there must also be high-art compositions, and offers Sasnauskas as a model for serious Lithuanian composers.

Following a detailed analysis of two of Sasnauskas’s original compositions, Čiurlionis turns again to the composer’s arrangements of folk music. One in particular, Sasnauskas’s “Tu mano motinėlė” [You, My Dear Mother], receives special attention. Čiurlionis remarks, “The folksong expands in Sasnauskas’s composition, never losing its simplicity and melody.”\textsuperscript{38} Čiurlionis again uses Sasnauskas as an example, stating that, “Our folksongs are so beautiful and

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
original, one must simply show them some love and begin to work the soil.”  

Through his publications as chair of the Lithuanian Art and Music Committee, Čiurlionis directs the attention of young composers and Lithuanian audiences towards music that he deems meritorious, and thus shapes the emerging Lithuanian style.

Čiurlionis published his longest and most important article, “Apie mužiką” [About Music], in 1910. Within this article, Čiurlionis presents the current state of Lithuanian music, the rich resources of folksong that exist to be explored, and the results of his own work with folk music, including musical characteristics that he claims identify the Lithuanian style.

Čiurlionis begins his article with a history of nationalism in music, citing composers such as Mascagni and Puccini for the Italians, Grieg for the Scandinavians, and Chopin for the Poles. He laments that there currently exists no comparable Lithuanian composer, and encourages those who are able to work to remedy this tragedy. Čiurlionis finds some consolation within Lithuanian folksong, but when discussing art music writes, “Why do we not perform greater, more serious pieces? We do not perform them because we do not have anything, nothing at all.”

In the remainder of this article, he describes elements of Lithuanian folk music that identify a piece as Lithuanian. His pronouncements will be addressed in Chapter Two, which regards Lithuanian folk music and its distinctive musical properties.

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39 Ibid.

Čiurlionis’s writings allow for a detailed examination of his concept of folk music, similar to that offered by scholars of Vaughan Williams, Bartók, Smetana, Dvořák, and other composers who wrote extensively about their compositional style and the use of folk material. Within the world of Lithuanian nationalism then, Čiurlionis clearly demonstrates musical characteristics that define his work as Lithuanian.
Chapter Two: An Introduction to Lithuanian Folk Music

Before examining Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata, this chapter will define the essential genres of Lithuanian folk music, and explore the musical traits that identify this folk music as distinctly Lithuanian. Although these traits alone cannot define a piece as Lithuanian, as Michael Beckerman notes, “a series of musical gestures...coupled with national symbols and narratives, tell an audience that the music is to be understood in a particular national context.”\(^{41}\)

This chapter thus explores the musical gestures that Čiurlionis couples with his national symbols and narratives to ensure that the audience understands his works as Lithuanian.

Lithuanian folk music exists primarily within vocal genres; in Lithuanian folklore, vocal music was the language of the gods and spirits and thus received a privileged position in Lithuanian musical hierarchy. Although instrumental music does exist, it was primarily used to double vocal parts at a wedding or other celebration to increase the volume of the performers. As such, instrumental Lithuanian folk music does not appear in nearly as great a quantity as the vocal music, nor does much purely instrumental music exist. With this in mind, this thesis will address the primary genres of vocal Lithuanian folk music, *dainos* and *sutartinės*, and explain select musical traits that define these genres.

**Lithuanian Vocal Folk Music**

The word “daina” (pl. *dainos*) in Lithuanian translates literally to song, and as such scholars often have a difficult time finding an exact definition for the word. Additionally, *dainos* are often grouped regionally, which means that the songs of some regions possess musical traits

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not found in other regions’ song, despite the fact that both selections would be called dainos. For example, in the southern region of Dainava, most songs are monophonic, whereas in Aukštaitija most songs are polyphonic. In spite of this difficulty however, a few important musical traits are common across all regions, including the use of the modality and bimodality, the long-short and short-long rhythmic pairs, the consonance of the major second interval, monotonous rhythms, and limited melodic ranges. Although these characterics are found within all Lithuanian folk genres, each genre usually exhibits one trait more frequently than the others. These genres will be discussed below.

Lithuanian folksong developed as a way for the Lithuanian people to express themselves. As a result, most Lithuanian folksong deals directly with the daily life of the people. There are many work songs, including songs for herding, haymaking, harvesting, and other important agricultural events. Although these songs became detached from their specific functions over time, they still retain a character (not to mention a text) that binds them to their respective activities.

Skirmantė Valiulytė writes, “The shepherding songs reflect…important aspects of rural life: the…tending of animals, the social situation of children, as well as references to ancient beliefs.” These songs often contain musical characteristics similar to Lithuanian laments, including use of the minor mode and slow, lyrical phrases. They were sung almost exclusively by men, as men were the ones who tended the sheep and other animals.

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Many haymaking songs have been recorded over the course of Lithuania’s history, and this coupled with the fact that these songs often relate to plants blooming and love have made them very popular. The love expressed is often young love, and thus the songs can be used in the wooing of a partner. Musically, these songs are unique in that they possess refrains, are often modal or bi-modal, and have complex forms, often with irregular phrasing. This means that the songs often contain two independent voices that possess different pitch collections, or modes. Further, they are sung “slowly and broadly, evoking the spacious fields and mood of the haymaking season.”

Harvesting songs, like haymaking songs, play a central role within the worksong category of Lithuanian folksongs. Because the harvest is so important to a family’s stability, these songs often portray love, marriage, and the family. They exist in all modes as the work of harvesting is viewed as both a noble process performed to supply for the family, as well as a difficult, yet necessary task. Musically, the most common modes are major and minor, although songs in the other “Church” modes (excepting Locrian) do exist. If a composition contains bi-modality, the pitch collection of the first voice is often transposed up a minor third or perfect fourth for the second voice.

Lithuanians possess many genres of folksong beyond work song, including laments, wedding songs, festival songs, narrative songs and ballads (similar to the Norse epics), and sutartinės, which are polyphonic chants.

\[^{43}\textit{Ibid.}\]
The first of these, the lament, is considered “one of the oldest [forms] of musical poetry [in Lithuania].” With origins in Lithuanian funeral customs, the first written evidence of this musical genre dates from the ninth century. Two types of laments exist: the *raudo*, in which a worker would decry his or her fate, and the *verkavimai*, wherein a bride sings of her loss of innocence and family at her wedding. Laments also often give human attributes to trees and other natural objects, where the spirits of dead family members are considered to rest (e.g., oak trees symbolizing familial patriarchs). Musically, laments are very exciting, as they constitute an improvisatory genre of Lithuanian folksong. In ancient times, families could hire professional lamenters to sing at funerals and other functions; these performers would then be paid according to their skills.

Lithuanian weddings were (and still are) enormous events, often “lasting a week or longer,” and this length coupled with the festival atmosphere meant a plethora of songs. The bridal laments, sung as the bride bids farewell to her family and friends, are very lyrical and slow, often with a wandering, modal melody.

Although these laments are the most important and noteworthy category of Lithuanian wedding songs, they are far from the only type of folk music performed at a Lithuanian wedding. The Lithuanian wedding folksong tradition also contains “satirical, drinking and banqueting

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songs, musical dialogues, games, dances, and marches.\textsuperscript{46} These songs are often upbeat, with a quick tempo, and feature syllabic text-setting and a major mode. Further, due to the volume required by performers, these songs often featured instrumental accompaniment and doubling.

By far the oldest of Lithuanian folksongs are the songs of the calendar year, which were written thousands of years ago to “accompany the celebrations and rituals of the calendar cycle.”\textsuperscript{47} Originally conceived as pagan songs, the texts were gradually replaced with Christian themes during the Christianization of Lithuania.

The most important of these ritual songs celebrate the end of the farming season and were sung from November to January. These songs often reflect a cheery or joyful mood, and discuss love and human friendship. They contain many musical characteristics that Čiurlionis would later codify into his Lithuanian style, including “a narrow range, three-measure phrases, dance rhythms, a controlled slow tempo, and a tonal structure based on Phrygian, Mixolydian, or Aeolian tetrachords.”\textsuperscript{48}

Although other festival songs are not as musically distinctive nor as common across the entirety of Lithuania, they must be noted here. The spring and summer feasts, which now include Easter and the Feast of St. George, often display modes with a major tonic triad (e.g. Ionian, Mixolydian) and were sung at a quick tempo.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Skirmantė Valiulytė writes that, “[the] most wide-spread songs in Lithuanian are narrative songs, closely related in character, plot, and style to the ballad genre,” and indeed if one examines the corpus of Lithuanian folksong, one finds this to be true.\textsuperscript{49} The ballad genre in Lithuania contains songs that tell not only of famous heroes and epics, but also of family histories and morals, and of Lithuania’s military history. As with the ritual songs, ballads contain many musical traits that Čiurlionis would later identify as distinctly Lithuanian, including “three or four line strophic forms…a question-answer type phrase, and [a] meandering melodic line.”\textsuperscript{50}

While the above folksong genres would all have been known greatly inside Lithuania, for the international audience, the best-known Lithuanian song is the \textit{sutartinė}. Daiva Račiūnienė-Vyčinienė writes that, “in many countries, the Lithuanian \textit{sutartinė} has become Lithuania’s ‘calling card’,” and indeed, one finds that at folk festivals and celebrations throughout the world these songs are both the most popular and the most identifiably Lithuanian.\textsuperscript{51}

The \textit{sutartinė} is a polyphonic chant, often with only two or three parts. Originally sung exclusively by women, it is now performed by ensembles of either gender (or even mixed genders). \textit{Sutartinės} developed out of work women performed around the house; as such many of the texts for these songs are related to chores and housework. However, these polyphonic

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\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

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chants also possess mythological importance, as they were sung to welcome new life, to celebrate a pregnancy, and to bless a newborn child. These sacred sutartinės were carefully guarded, and still today there exist in some very rural villages chants that have never been written down.

Musically, the sutartinė possesses characteristics that are distinctly Lithuanian in origin. Račiūnienė-Vyčinienė notes that, “the singing of the chants with an interval of a second was considered the most beautiful in folk tradition: the aim was sumušti, ‘to beat, to blend’; or sudaužytai, ‘to beat together’ the voices as well as possible.”52 This singing of the second was meant to symbolize the ringing of bells, itself considered a very beautiful and, in some regions, the most perfect sound. Due to this prevalence of parallel seconds, sutartinės are almost always bi-modal, frequently in the Ionian, Mixolydian, and Dorian modes.

There are two roles for the singers: the rinkėja and the pritarėja. The rinkėja, or “collector,” sings the text of the sutartinė, performing the melody without ornamentation. To Lithuanians, if a musician ornaments the folk melody, it means he or she considered himself or herself more important than the music, a grievous offense within the folk tradition.53 The pritarėja, or “accompanist,” sings refrain of the sutartinė, oftentimes repeating only one or two words, while singing in parallel seconds with the rinkėja. It should be noted that occasionally this accompanying role was performed by two women; in these cases, the women sang in parallel fourths or fifths.

52 Ibid.

53 Although ornamentation could exist within Lithuanian folk music, cultural practices prized and idealized unembellished and unornamented singing.
A final musical characteristic can be found across all genres of Lithuanian folk music: the long-short rhythmic pair. This trait often manifests itself homorhythmically within all voice parts, and gives a lilting or rocking quality to the music. Further, it can be inverted (i.e. a short-long rhythmic pair); this trait too is found across all genres of Lithuanian folk music.

Čiurlionis and Folk Music

This portion of the thesis will focus upon Čiurlionis’s writings concerning folk music. Some of these writings have already been discussed in Chapter One concerning Čiurlionis and nationalism; however, many of them bear reexamination here as they are now used to establish what Čiurlionis defines as Lithuanian. Čiurlionis’s musical characteristics will be combined with the previous discussion of Lithuanian folk music and used to evaluate the De Profundis in Chapter Three.

Čiurlionis’s family lived in Druskininkai, a small town in southern Lithuania. Growing up, he would have heard all of these songs sung by his parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and other relatives. Vytautas Landsbergis notes that, “[b]oth [of Čiurlionis’s] parents knew many Lithuanian songs and loved to sing them [around the home].”\(^{54}\) Landsbergis’s statement is further supported by Čiurlionis’s sister, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, who notes that as a boy her brother had a lovely voice and would often sing the highest part or octave in folksongs.\(^{55}\)

Čiurlionis’s interest in folk music persisted through his student years at both the Warsaw Conservatory and the Leipzig Conservatory; indeed multiple letters to his brothers and other


friends, dating from his conservatory years, reveal that he composed works either based upon or employing Lithuanian folk melodies. Many of these works are now lost, and were used as student and practice compositions for Čiurlionis.

While at Leipzig Čiurlionis furthered his involvement with folk music. He began to arrange folksongs, and, shortly following his graduation from Warsaw, he helped to arrange the first ever Lithuanian Art Exhibition. At the conclusion of the Art Exhibition, the members of the newly formed Lithuanian Art Council unanimously elected Čiurlionis as president, and his involvement with folksong only grew from there. As president, Čiurlionis arranged more than sixty folksongs for various choirs and ensembles, including one that he conducted. At this time he also completed his final major work, the tone poem Jūra, in which he presented many folksesque themes and other musical characteristics of Lithuanian folksong.

Čiurlionis’s interest in folk music ultimately came to a head in 1910, when he wrote “Apie Muziką” [About Music]. His wife, Sofija Kymantaitė, a Lithuanian art critic, featured the article in her book on Lithuanian culture, Lietuvoje. Within this article, Čiurlionis describes for the first time in print both which musical aspects he considers as authentically Lithuanian and ways in which a composer might use these traits within a composition.

Čiurlionis begins his article by identifying music as the primary art, “born alongside the human soul and…man’s most important and primary language.”57 He then continues by listing the importance of music to culture, noting that

the music of every nation does not lose its idiosyncratic characteristics because it is created by composers who are true sons of their fatherlands, who have inherited a love for their songs through the blood of their kinsmen and often...have an affinity for its nature and peculiarities. 58

Clearly Čiurlionis is stating a similar sentiment to what Beckerman writes almost eighty years later: a composer will “naturally imbibe” certain musical aspects based upon his or her upbringing, and these will influence that composer’s works subconsciously. Čiurlionis notes the specific nationalist tendencies of Tchaikovsky, Mascagni, Rossini, Grieg, and composers of other nationalities before ultimately lamenting that Lithuania does not as yet have a compositional tradition of its own.

Čiurlionis begins the next portion of his essay with a very grim pronouncement: “Lithuanian music...as of yet...does not exist.”59 He stresses that Lithuanian music, if it is to be truly Lithuanian, must expand from the folksong tradition, citing a multitude of songs that he claims every Lithuanian knows as examples from which a composer might work. He then expresses indignity that the main corpus of popular “Lithuanian” art songs at this time are not actually Lithuanian, but rather contrafacts of Italian, Russian, and Polish songs wherein the original text has simply been replaced by a Lithuanian one.

Following a long lamentation on the current state of Lithuanian music, Čiurlionis finally begins to discuss musical traits that, for him, identify a piece as Lithuanian. The most obvious, he claims, is rhythm. He writes, “[even the] unaccustomed ear of a foreigner will immediately

58 Ibid., 60.

59 Ibid., 63.
sense a certain monotonity for our rhythm.” Čiurlionis claims that this monotonity causes
Lithuanian music to have a “great and ceremonious solemnity,” and that this feature expresses
the deep connection to nature shared by all true Lithuanians.  

Concerning melody, Čiurlionis writes that Lithuanian music should possess, “a simple
melody that does not expand across the entire octave, often making [do] with four or five notes, a
simple rhythm, two or even just a single note.” He writes that this monotonity and limited range
are crucial to identify a piece as being Lithuanian, since “such a melody, repeated several times,
penetrates deep into the listener’s ear and begins to take over their entire being.” For
Čiurlionis, it is not enough that a piece be recognized as Lithuanian, but rather that the
Lithuanian-ness of a piece is undeniable, to the point that this aspect completely overcomes the
listener.

Čiurlionis, recognizing that most Lithuanian folk music is vocal in nature, gives some
advice as to the text-setting and melodic construction a composer should follow. He lists three
musical aspects that one can glean from these aspects of a piece:

1) The last syllable of every line is most often very quiet and frequently even silent.
2) Another important property is that most songs in the major key end in the third,
   whereas the music of other nations almost always end in the keynote.
3) Music in the major key often sounds so sorrowful as to be composed in the minor
   key. This occurs due to the monotonity and evenness of the rhythm.

60 Ibid., 66.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 68.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 73.
Elsewhere, Čiurlionis also gives some formal aspects of Lithuanian music. He claims that the style/genre of a song should dictate its meter, tempo, phrasing, and other musical aspects. For example, when discussing songs with a quick tempo, Čiurlionis states that works modeled on these should possess a pyramid structure, both melodically and formally. Even the note values are to follow this pattern, with the value shortening as the melody ascends and then lengthening as it descends.65

Čiurlionis concludes his article with an exhortation to Lithuanian composers, asking that each do his or her part and shoulder responsibility in the establishment of this new style. He lists examples of folksongs that exemplify the musical elements he has identified, and directs readers to an 1880 collection of Lithuanian folk music compiled by Antanas Juškevičias.66 Finally, he writes, “We are the link between our folksongs and the Lithuanian music of the future. Let us not be distracted by what the majority wants…our credo must be our oldest songs and our future music.”67 Throughout the article, Čiurlionis writes as if he is teaching these new composers; truly, he means for this article to be authoritative, as within it he describes a brand new school of composition, one that full incorporated elements of Lithuanian folk music and thus could be considered truly and authentically Lithuanian.

65 Ibid., 70.
66 Antanas Juškevičias, Lietuviškos dainos [Lithuanian Songs], (Kazan: Učenyja zapiski Imperatorskago Kazanskago University, 1880).
Although Čiurlionis does not mention harmony within this article, he does allude to it in other small publications concerning the work of another Lithuanian composer, Česlovas Sasnauskas. In “Lithuanian Music’ by Česlovas Sasnauskas,” he writes, “[voices] are led uniquely through his songs, along with a specially developed, simple and neat harmony.” He praises Sasnauskas’s use of harmony, which he claims, “does not detract from the main melody...but on the contrary lifts its beauty and clearly demonstrates its nature.” For Čiurlionis, melody clearly takes primary importance, and the harmony is thus meant to simply support and enhance the melody.

In another article of the same title, Čiurlionis defends Sasnauskas’s harmonic decisions, which have fallen under attack from various critics. He writes that so long as the harmony does not detract from the melody, rules of counterpoint should be followed in order to create interesting and novel harmonizations. Čiurlonis offers Sasnauskas’s work with the folksong Siuntė mano motinėlė [My dear mother sent me] as an example, writing that, “[Sasnauskas’s composition] is reminiscent of Siuntė mano motinėlė [its folksong basis] in its form, though much richer in contrapuntal combinations.” He continues to advocate Sasnauskas’s development of this folksong, noting that the composer modifies the harmony to more closely express the text of the song, while retaining the original melody. He especially praises


70 Ibid.

71 M.K. Čiurlionis, “Česlovo Sasnausko Lietuviška Muzika” [Lithuanian Music by Česlovas Sasnauskas], Viltis, 1909, No. 147
Sasnauskas’s setting of *Tu mano motinėlė* [You, my dear mother] which the composer has divided into a duet for alto and soprano with piano accompaniment. Čiurlionis writes that although the voices mostly retain the folk melody, the rich contrapuntal texture of the piano accompaniment allows for serious music to be created without excluding Lithuanian folk material, something anathema to Čiurlionis and his new style of composition.\(^{72}\) Further, he notes that Sasnauskas’s new compositions often retain aspects of folk music, including folk melodies and rhythms.

Čiurlionis concludes his article with praise for Sasnauskas and his method of using folk material, writing, “The [folksongs] expand in Sasnauskas’s [compositions], never losing [their] simplicity and melody” and exhorts young composers searching for a model to study his compositions.\(^{73}\)

This chapter has explored aspects of Lithuanian folk music, as listed by ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, other scholars, and Čiurlionis himself. The main attributes, monotony of rhythm, simple rhythms, and small melodic range, are all evident within Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata. Further, various folksong attributes, such as the prominence of the interval of a second and a concluding phrase with the melody ending on the third scale degree are also present within Čiurlionis’s work. Chapter Three will explore the *De Profundis* in greater detail, addressing issues such as text-setting, phrasing, harmony, melody, and rhythm within both the vocal and instrumental portions of the work.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Ibid.
Chapter Three: A Style Study of the *De Profundis* Cantata

Čiurlionis completed his *De Profundis* cantata for choir and orchestra in 1899 as his graduation composition from the Warsaw Conservatory. This date marks it as the earliest work in his mature style, which also includes the tone poems *Miške* and *Jūra*. These three works share many musical characteristics that identify Čiurlionis’s mature style, including similar melodic construction, harmonic content, and rhythm.

This chapter explores these musical characteristics, addressing rhythm, harmony, and melodic shape within the vocal and orchestral parts, and text-setting in the vocal portion. Each musical characteristic will be addressed first in *De Profundis*, and then also in Čiurlionis’s other folk-inspired works, including his folksong harmonizations, piano works that other scholars have identified as exhibiting distinctly folk elements, and his tone poems. This comparison verifies that the musical traits explored within the *De Profundis* are those Lithuanian musical characteristics that Čiurlionis used throughout his career not simply a single occurrence, but rather an important part of his compositional style. Following these separate examinations, this chapter will address whether or not the *De Profundis* should be considered a nationalist work based upon the style studies presented here.

**Part I: Vocal Sections of *De Profundis***

This portion of the chapter examines folk music characteristics within the vocal parts of the *De Profundis*. It will focus on the long-short dotted rhythm and rhythmic monotony; harmonic content, especially the presence of parallel seconds; melodic construction, including the limited melodic range; and the text itself.

The vocal sections of Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* can be divided into two separate groups based upon texture: choral and fugal. The fugal sections display a learned style that Čiurlionis
would have honed in his conservatory studies. The musical material of these fugal sections closely imitates Čiurlionis’s earlier student compositions, especially his Mass setting.\(^{74}\)

The choral sections, on the other hand, display the folksong elements. Musically, they express the rhythms, harmonies, and melodic shapes that Čiurlionis and other scholars have identified as distinctly Lithuanian, as discussed in Chapter Two. Thus this section will focus primarily on the choral sections, supporting Čiurlionis’s use of Lithuanian folksong traits in this work with his employment of these same techniques within other compositions that are noted as being folk-like in nature. The following section, concerning text-setting, will address both the fugal and choral portions of the cantata.

An examination of the rhythms within Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata reveals many folk elements displayed throughout the entire work. As Davia Račiūnienė-Vyčinienė and Čiurlionis himself have stated, monotonous, simple rhythms, and ostinati dominate the Lithuanian folksong landscape. Additionally, the dichotomy of long-short and short-long rhythmic pairs is essential to Lithuanian folk music, and often presents the very basis upon which the melody and accompaniment rest.

In the *De Profundis*, Čiurlionis wastes no time in displaying this feature; indeed, the very first choral sections present the long-short dotted rhythmic pair in the initial statements of the soprano, alto, and tenor (mm. 7–8). As if to emphasize this point, Čiurlionis further presents these three voices homorhythmically, so that the listener cannot help but identify this hallmark of Lithuanian folk music (see *Figure 1*).

\(^{74}\) Čiurlionis wrote his Mass setting as a collection of contrapuntal exercises during his time at the Leipzig Conservatory. The pieces are much more expansive than Čiurlionis’s other student works, however, and as such are often published with his other religious pieces, including Psalm settings and settings of sacred poetry by his wife.
This long-short dotted rhythmic motive returns often throughout the piece, and Čiurlionis uses it frequently to denote new sections of text and music, especially when presenting voices together homorhythmically. This is evident in mm. 13–14, 34–36, 65, 81–82, and 105–109, among other places. By employing this rhythm, Čiurlionis clearly hearkens back to the folksongs he would have heard in his youth.

Throughout both the cantata and his other nationalist works, including compositions for piano, folksong arrangements, and other psalm settings, this long-short dotted rhythm is present. Within the piano works identified by Danutė Staškevičius as folklike in nature, Čiurlionis presents this rhythm in similar fashion, spanning his mature years (1899–1909) as a composer. Within his settings of Psalms 29 (1898) and 66 (1899), for example, Čiurlionis displays the same long-short dotted rhythm within the initial motives that then are then treated imitatively throughout the piece. Čiurlionis set these Psalms during his student days at the Warsaw Conservatory, and though they are “student” works (similar to his Mass Ordinary), already some of the musical traits he would have imbibed (a la Beckerman) as a child are present.

Further, Čiurlionis’s piano output also gives evidence to the long-short dotted rhythm’s incorporation as a folksong element that Čiurlionis utilized throughout his compositional career.

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77 See Danutė Staškevičius “Stylistic Features in the Piano and Orchestral Music,” in Goštautas, 452–65.
In Op. 8, No. 1 (1901) for example, he employs the rhythm as a groundwork in the left hand, driving the rhythm forward (see Figure 2). This characteristic lasts even until his final completed composition, Op. 33 (1909). Within Op. 33, No. 1 Čiurlionis presents the rhythm across all voices, and throughout all tessituras, ensuring that a listener would identify this rhythm as a fundamental characteristic that he borrows from Lithuanian folksong.

Figure 2: Op. 8, No. 1, mm. 1–3.

This long-short rhythm also appears in approximately one-third of Čiurlionis’s folksong settings. Though one could argue that the accompaniment was his to choose (and thus he could present new, inauthentic material), the rhythm’s prevalence in the melody of folksongs such as Subatos Vakarėly, Kai Mes Augom, Ne Tėviškėlėj, Kareivužėlis, and Beauštanti Aušrelė confirm it as a musical characteristic common to Lithuanian folk music.

Moving beyond the dotted long-short pair, another characteristic rhythm of Lithuanian folksong is monotony, often presented as a string of eighth notes that move homorhythmically and homophonically through all voices. Čiurlionis demonstrates this in his settings of the folksongs Prapuoliau Močiute, Ganau Aveles, Ankstį Rytą Kėliau, and others. Both Račiūnienė-Vyčinienė and Čiurlionis consider this an important characteristic of Lithuanian folk music, and its presence within the De Profundis cantata is neither disguised nor hidden.

Although Čiurlionis first presents strings of eighth notes in mm. 30–33 and 40–46, the voices do not move homorhythmically until mm. 47–48 in the alto, tenor, and bass voices. This
technique appears again in the alto, tenor, and bass in mm. 66–68, and in mm. 68–72, the soprano joins the other three voices (see Figure 3). The Psalm settings again confirm this trait as one that Čiurlionis intrinsically knew. In both the homophonic chorale and fugue sections of his setting of Psalm 29, Čiurlionis presents strings of eighth-notes with syllabic text setting. One can witness this in mm. 9–12, and indeed Čiurlionis couples this technique with his dotted rhythm to mark the piece as distinctly Lithuanian, a fact further confirmed by his use of the Lithuanian translation of the Psalm text by R. Misiukevičiaus, as opposed to Latin.

*Figure 3: De Profundis, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, mm. 68–72.*

Within the *De Profundis* cantata, Čiurlionis employs standard Late-Romantic harmony, demonstrating his training at the conservatory as well as his preoccupation with Richard Strauss. The sonorities constructed are generally triadic, and the chords have a distinct cadential goal as the music develops. Modulations to mediant-related keys are common, and the work often achieves these modulations through pivot chords, often reinterpreting the dominant in the first key for the mediant in the second (e.g. mm. 8–14; see *Figure 4*).
Despite this use of standard-fare Late-Romantic harmony, however, some Lithuanian folk elements are presented within the course of the work. Although Čiurlionis does not write much concerning harmony in his article “About Music,” he certainly imbibed select aspects of the Lithuanian folksong tradition in his younger years when he sang and played music with relatives around the home. Further, despite Čiurlionis’s lack of commentary on harmony, Lithuanian scholars have observed harmonic musical traits that are distinctly Lithuanian.

Rūta Gaidamavičiūtė notes that Lithuanian folk musicians often employed parallel seconds within their songs, and states that this interval played a vital role in distinguishing
Lithuanian folk music from that of other Baltic cultures. As discussed in Chapter Two, the interval is found most commonly within the *sutartinė*, and Gaidamavičiūtė clarifies that these parallel seconds often led to bitonality within a piece. Although bitonality does not appear within Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata, the parallel second plays a prominent role within this work and his other folk compositions.

Within the *De Profundis*, Čiurlionis highlights this interval (and its compound equivalence, the ninth) most often when he employs the full choir in a chorale setting. Čiurlionis mostly uses this interval as an added note within a chord, often as the seventh or ninth scale degree. The first instance of this interval appears in m. 22, though he presents this musical characteristic with greater frequency a few measures later in m. 24. Indeed, this entire homophonic conclusion to a point-of-entry phrase displays the interval throughout many of its measures (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5: De Profundis, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, mm. 24–27. Seconds and ninths are in red boxes.*

Čiurlionis uses the interval of a second again near the end of the piece, where he sets the same text from his earlier second-prominent section. Again, the texture is homophonic and the
voices move generally in static or parallel motion, presenting this interval as a noticeable musical feature that clearly recalls Lithuanian folksong.

This prominence of the second in the De Profundis is not anomalous. Within his folksong settings one can discern his use of the interval to identify the sound as Lithuanian. Indeed, within other Lithuanian folksong collections, such as that of Antanas Šimkus, this interval is also employed within select songs as a hallmark of Lithuanian music. Further, within Čiurlionis’s other Psalm settings, dating from later in his career, he employs this interval with some frequency.

Čiurlionis spends much of his article “About Music” focusing on melody, the musical element that he considers most important to Lithuanian folksong. He writes that truly Lithuanian songs should contain, “[a] simple melody that does not expand across the entire octave, often making [do] with four or five notes.” Within his compositions, this limited melodic is evident, and the De Profundis is no exception.

The cantata displays a limited melodic range within the very first choral passages (mm. 6–9); in the initial statement, the soprano voice moves only a perfect fourth. Further, each sub-phrase of the initial section spans only a major or minor third (see Figure 6).

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80 The interval of a second does not appear frequently in his piano music; instead, Čiurlionis prefers to present the melody in octaves. This may be due to the fairly thick texture common within Čiurlionis’s left hand figures.

Figure 6: De Profundis, soprano, mm. 6–9.

Čiurlionis employs this style of melodic construction primarily within the choral sections of the cantata (see mm. 6–9, 13–17, 21–27, etc.). Often he uses it contrapuntally, with a lower voice moving in contrary motion against the melody (mm. 37 and 39). Further, the technique can also be used with points of imitation; in these cases, one voice states the initial limited range melody, and additional voices layer above or around it. Finally, it must be noted that Čiurlionis employs this technique throughout the entire cantata, from the opening vocal section in m. 6 to the final vocal close in m. 111.

This limited melodic range mirrors what one finds within Čiurlionis’s folksong settings. Throughout his arrangements, including *Kai Mes Augom, Linelis*, one finds the melodic range of a fifth or less. This limited melodic range can also be found in folk transcriptions of these songs, including those by Šimkus, and thus one can be assured that Čiurlionis’s use of these folksongs and their musical elements is authentic. Further, one finds this musical element within other folksongs that Čiurlionis did not harmonize, further cementing its status as a Lithuanian musical characteristic.

Čiurlionis employs his melodies differently throughout his folk-based piano works. Due to thicker left-hand textures, including block chords and arpeggiations, Čiurlionis presents the melody in octaves. This is evident with the Op. 11, No. 2 and Op. 13, No. 2, and demonstrates the importance of the melody in Čiurlionis’s eyes.
Within his article, “About Music,” Čiurlionis lists three musical aspects that define Lithuanian melodic construction within a piece. While these have been addressed in Chapter Two, they are worth repeating here:

1) The last syllable of every line is most often very quiet and frequently even silent.
2) Another important property is that most songs in the major key end in the third, whereas the music of other nations almost always end in the keynote.
3) Music in the major key often sounds so sorrowful as to be composed in the minor key. This occurs due to the monotony and evenness of the rhythm.\textsuperscript{82}

Although rhythm, and its monotony, has already been explored, the other two aspects, namely a softening on the final syllable and the conclusion of major passages on the third, need to be addressed.

The first of these, a softening on the final syllable, can be observed through the descending motion that occurs on the final syllable of the majority of Čiurlionis’s phrases. Within the first vocal phrase (mm. 6–9), the melody of both subphrases concludes with a stepwise descent. This lowering of the register would cause a natural softening within the voice, and is evident not only here, but also throughout the \textit{De Profundis} cantata; one can find this same technique used in mm. 54–55, 83–84, 103, and multiple other locations within the piece. This natural softening is also demonstrated within the performances of the work, including the 2012 definitive recording by Juozas Domarkas and the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra.\textsuperscript{83}

Further, one finds it within his harmonizations of \textit{Kai Mes Augom, Dainų Dainelė, Ne Tėviškėlėj,} and \textit{Ar Vėjai Pūtė}, among others. As in the \textit{De Profundis}, this quieting is often made obvious by a stepwise descent in the melody, prompting a lower volume in the voice.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{83} M.K. Čiurlionis, \textit{De Profundis}, Kaunas State Choir with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Juozas Domarkas, Lietuvos Muzikų Sąjunga, 2011, CD.
The second aspect of melodic construction proves much more difficult to examine due to the majority of the cantata being in the minor key. Čiurlionis does not offer any prescriptions as to what constitutes a Lithuanian song in the minor key; this is likely due to the modality of many Lithuanian songs. Often, it is not simply the minor mode, but rather a related mode such as Dorian or Phrygian that is evident within a minor-inflected Lithuanian folksong.

One passage within the *De Profundis* presents some aspects of major modality; mm. 45–60 alternate between D minor and F Major. Due to the contrapuntal and fugal nature of this passage, however, there is only one true cadence in F Major, and within this cadence the melody closes on the tonic, F. It can safely be said then that this aspect of Lithuanian folk music does not appear with the *De Profundis* cantata.

Within Čiurlionis’s other Psalm settings, one can find this technique used throughout the vocal passages. For example, in *Juk Tu, Viešpatie*, Čiurlionis’s setting of Psalm 130, both the solo vocal portions and choral portions of the work. Čiurlionis wrote this piece in 1899, and as such the musical elements evident here should be considered to be “imbibed” characteristics à la Beckerman; Čiurlionis would not have encountered this technique within the Conservatory, but rather learned them in his youth singing Lithuanian folksongs.

The opening statement of this work, “Viespatie, Tu,” closes with a stepwise descent, as does the opening section, which transitions from F minor to F Major (mm.37–39; see *Figure 7*). In fact, one finds that throughout the solo vocal portions of this work, the stepwise descent figure marks Čiurlionis’s cadence, thus prompting a quieting of the voice, something the composer later writes identifies as characteristic of Lithuanian folksong.
The choral portions of this Psalm setting also exhibit this stepwise descent to emphasize the softening of the final syllable. Cadences throughout the choral part, including mm. 70, 78, 86, and the final cadence in m. 98 all display this text-setting technique, which Čiurlionis states is a definitive musical element of Lithuanian folksong.

A final aspect of the De Profundis text must be considered before continuing on to the orchestral portions: the text itself. The De Profundis text, of course, comes initially from Psalm 130, and has been used frequently for composition. Čiurlionis’s work with this text then is not surprising; many others, including Hector Berlioz, Arvo Pärt, Nicolaus Bruhns, Armando Pierucci, and others have set the text for ensembles ranging from solo chorus to chorus and orchestra. However, Čiurlionis’s choice of language identifies his work as distinctly Lithuanian in nature.

Chapter One explored the Lithuanian nationalist movement, and the crucial role of language within it. For Lithuanians, and for many other ethnic groups at this time, the issue of language, and the unrestricted or official acceptance of their native tongues was a major point. For this reason, literary movements and the publication of national histories, poems, news, and other writings in the people’s language were vital to the establishment of any nationalist movement.

Čiurlionis’s decision to set his De Profundis text in Lithuanian then expresses a desire to present a major work in his homeland’s native tongue. For its composition, he used translations
by the poet Jan Kochanowsky; although these translations were in Polish (the language with
which Čiurlionis was most familiar at the time), his decision to present the final work in
Lithuanian clearly gives evidence of his nationalist tendencies. Further, this method of
composition—working with a Polish translation of the Psalms and then translating the text to
Lithuanian for the final draft—was common to Čiurlionis at this time, whose other Psalm settings
followed a similar construction process. Although some might state that this betrays a
superficial form of nationalism, the other musical qualities that are inherently Lithuanian,
combined with the national symbol of language, define this work as nationalist in origin. The
vocal portions of the *De Profundis* contain some of the most revealing, and most convincing,
evidence that mark the work as nationalist in design. Čiurlionis wrote the work, however, for
chorus and orchestra, and a complete style study must address the orchestral sections as well.
Due to the lack of an official score for the orchestral parts for the *De Profundis*, this thesis will
employ a facsimile of the manuscript score found at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art
in Kaunas, Lithuania for the style study of the orchestration.

**Part II: Orchestral Sections of *De Profundis***

Although Čiurlionis wrote his *De Profundis* cantata for choir and orchestra, in reality the
choir takes the central performing role, with the orchestra often acting as accompaniment. As
such, musical characteristics of Lithuanian folk music are slightly more difficult to identify
within the orchestral parts of the cantata. Further, the introductory and modulatory role of the
orchestra makes enhances this difficulty, as Čiurlionis often employs the orchestra simply to

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84 In each of Čiurlionis’s early compositions, the Polish text is clearly seen within his
sketches and autograph copies, which are housed at the M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art
in Kaunas, Lithuania. The author consulted these sketches for this thesis.
connect the choral passages. Despite this rather subordinate role of the orchestra, however, various musical traits of Lithuanian folk music appear throughout the work.

The opening measures of the piece act as a musical introduction to the whole work, and as such contain some elements Čiurlionis and other scholars note are prevalent within Lithuanian folk music. The bassoon motive of the opening two measures clearly presents a number of these elements: it has a limited range, it features the long-short rhythm contrast, and it softens on the last note (a note: although Čiurlionis lists this last element as pertaining to vocal music, it will be applied to his orchestral phrases as well, considering the final note as the last “syllable” of the phrase; see Figure 8). From here, the orchestration builds to a climax and prepares for the chorus’s entry just a few measures later. Even within the climactic measures, however, it must be noted that the long-short rhythmic combination that Čiurlionis employs frequently within his folk-based compositions is present here, and indeed plays a prominent role throughout the orchestral parts of the De Profundis.

Figure 8: De Profundis, bassoon, mm. 1–2.

As discussed above, the opening choir parts (mm. 7–10) exhibit many elements of Lithuanian folksong: long-short rhythm, limited melodic range, and a softening on the final syllable. Within the orchestral parts, the first and second horns and bassoon double the vocal parts; they thus display the same musical elements, albeit without text. As the vocal parts end, however, the orchestra takes over, and within this short section of the piece (mm. 10–13), one can find elements of Lithuanian folk music solely within the instrumental parts.
The long-short rhythm that Čiurlionis favors as an element of his “imbibed” Lithuanian folksong style features prominently throughout the *De Profundis*. He uses it constantly throughout the vocal portions, and—as discussed above—one is assured of its “folk-ness” through Čiurlionis’s own identification of it and its presence within his other folk-inspired compositions and harmonized folksongs. A study of the orchestral score for Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata reveals that this rhythmic combination saturates the instrumental parts as well, and is present within every major instrumental segment of the work. The opening motive, featuring this rhythm and a limited melodic range of only a minor third, returns often throughout the work, but the rhythmic unity is present even when this motive is not.

Figure 9: *De Profundis*, orchestral reduction, mm. 29–30.

The full orchestra presents its second motive of the work in mm. 29–30 (see Figure 9); indeed, at this point in the piece, Čiurlionis assigns each instrument identical rhythms. Further, he marks the section fortissimo, and employs the full orchestra (winds, brass, strings, and timpani) so that the importance of this section cannot be mistaken. The theme presented displays many characteristics of Lithuanian folk music, including the long-short rhythm and a limited melodic range. Both distinct themes exhibit elements of Lithuanian folk music.

Following the presentation of this second motive, the orchestra again doubles the vocal parts, this time for the fugal section in mm. 31–61. Orchestration beyond this doubling is very
sparse; there are some sustained chords in the horns, but the orchestra here is meant to softly support the chorus. Within the doubling, however, one again finds this long-short rhythmic contrast, and when the orchestra separates itself from the chorus, it maintains this rhythm.

Čiurlionis uses this same technique throughout his symphonic compositions. Indeed, within his first tone poem, Miške (written in 1902), one finds the rhythm present within the second and third themes. Čiurlionis’s use of this musical characteristic is thus not reserved for one composition, but rather consistent throughout his work, and a discussion of musical traits common to both works will now follow.

Miške opens with broad chords that Čiurlionis wrote represent, “the peaceful and sweeping sigh of Lithuanian pines,” and indeed, the first theme possesses a very light, broad, and serene affect; this can be accounted for due to the orchestral spacing among the strings (see Figure 10). This first theme progresses throughout the first large section of the work, eventually developing into a round. From here, Čiurlionis transitions into minor, and the second theme emerges (m. 52). Although this second theme does not possess the limited melodic range of Čiurlionis’s folk-like themes from other works, it does maintain the long-short rhythmic contrast (see Figure 11).

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Following the entrance of the second theme, this long-short rhythmic contrast is evident throughout the remainder of the piece. Indeed, excepting the initial theme, every theme and counter-thematic unit within Miške contains this rhythm. This follows logically from Čiurlionis’s own writings concerning music; in “About Music,” he states that “[even the] unaccustomed ear of a foreigner will immediately sense a certain monotony for our rhythm.”

There are few better ways to ensure the monotony of music within an orchestral work than to employ the similar figurations throughout the entire composition. Figure 12 presents this theme from Miške beside the main theme De Profundis; note the long-short rhythmic figuration and the rhythmic monotony employed consistently throughout Čiurlionis’s oeuvre.

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Beyond the rhythms and melodic range and content, Čiurlionis’s use of the orchestra within his *De Profundis* is rather standard Late-Romantic fare. The harmony, similar to that of the vocal parts, is fairly triadic, and modulations are accomplished through altered chords leading to mediant-related keys (e.g. B-flat minor to D minor). The fact that the motives, specifically the rhythmic and melodic content, display most prevalently elements of Lithuanian folk music demonstrate their importance for Čiurlionis in identifying a piece as Lithuanian.

**Is the *De Profundis* a Nationalist Work?**

Having considered the musical characteristics of Lithuanian folk music reflected within Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata, one question remains: is the work nationalist? As explained above, it exhibits many musical characteristics that Čiurlionis and other scholars identify as Lithuanian. Despite the abundant musical elements, or gestures, that scholars (including Čiurlionis himself) have identified as Lithuanian, these musical aspects themselves cannot solely define a piece as nationalist. Rather, they are one portion of the required material, with the other portion being a national symbol.
For Čiurlionis, and specifically for his *De Profundis*, a national symbol employed is the use of a Lithuanian text. As explained in Chapter One, the use of the Lithuanian language was very important to Lithuanian nationalists, and, as further chapters will explore, to nationalist movements across Europe. Within this work then, Čiurlionis unites musical gestures indicative of Lithuanian folk music with the national symbol of the Lithuanian language to present a composition that can, by Beckerman’s standards, be considered wholly nationalist in style.
Chapter Four: Reception and National Authenticity

Having examined Lithuanian folk music and nationalist musical characteristics that are both identifiable within the De Profundis cantata and consistent across Čiurlionis’s compositional output, this thesis now turns to address issues of authenticity and reception. Authenticity plays a crucial role for any nationalist movement or composer; without authentic representation, the movement or composer lacks recognition needed to “successfully” establish a national style. Further, for many music scholars, including Carl Dahlhaus and Daniel Grimley, a composer’s or work’s reception defines whether or not it is truly nationalist in nature. This chapter addresses both of these aspects as they relate to the Lithuanian national movement, Čiurlionis, and his De Profundis cantata.

Authenticity within Lithuania

John A. Hall writes, “[Nationalism] is the belief in the primacy of a particular nation, real or constructed”\(^8\) and within Lithuania one certainly finds this to be the case. As explored in Chapter One, the Lithuanian nationalist movement did not appear overnight, but rather grew steadily over a period of about fifty years. This occurred primarily from the encouragement of a number of religious and diplomatic leaders, including Bishop Moteijus Valančius and Jonas Basanavičius.

This two-fold approach to nationalism, concerning diplomatic and cultural or religious identity, is crucial for any authentic movement to survive. John Armstrong, in his article, “Towards a Theory of Nationalism: Consensus and Dissensus,” discusses the concept of ethno-

religious identity. Armstrong writes, “there is a fundamental continuity between identities of
diaspora groups (as religions of the *millet* type) and their modern expression as political
nationalism.” While he cites as examples Theodore Herzl’s Zionist movement and the
Armenian Hunchak party, this concept can be applied to Lithuania as well.

Through Roman Catholicism, and especially the efforts of Bishop Valančius, Lithuanians
of every region and class possessed an identifiable quality that united them across social,
geographical, and political boundaries. When Bishop Valančius encouraged Lithuanian priests
to preach and offer Low Mass in Lithuanian in the 1850s, this expressed to the Lithuanian people
that their language was not only accepted, but also validated by the Church.

Roman Catholicism also separated the Lithuanian people from an “other”: the Russian
citizens and other Eastern Europeans who resided in Lithuania at the time. Despite massive state
efforts to convert Lithuanian Catholics, including the construction of Russian cultural centers,
Orthodox churches, and the sacking of various Catholic churches, Lithuanians as a whole
remained Catholic, supported both by their bishops and apostolic exhortation from Rome. Religion thus played a crucial role in cementing the Lithuanian identity and in segregating
Lithuanians from their Russian rulers.

On the diplomatic side, Lithuanian nobles, although always under Russian control and
governance, did succeed in securing a few allowances from the Russians. Prior to the banning of
the Lithuanian press in 1864, a number of Lithuanian histories and books were published, often


90 Alfonsas Eidintas, Alfredas Bumblauskas, Antanas Kulakauskas, and Mindaugas
supported by a noble patron who had an interest in establishing a Lithuanian state. However, the establishment of a Lithuanian state did not happen until the next century. In 1905 a diet was held in Vilnius, and from this meeting came a resolution, adopted shortly after, that established a regional government for Lithuania, “a bicameral legislature, made up of the State Council and the State Duma, which shared legislative powers with the tsar.”91 By Čiurlionis’s time, then, the Lithuanian movement had established itself and its constituents with a unique identity, both politically, ethnically, and religiously.92

Regarding the stages of a national movement, Hall writes of a three-stage development, “from the collectors of folklore, to the ideologists of nationalism, to the final moment at which cultural revival becomes political demand.”93 Within Lithuania, again, one finds this to be true. Čiurlionis, Gaidamavičiute, and other Lithuanian scholars write of the earliest extant collections of folklore and song, which first appear in the 1780s. These collectors were often Lithuanians who understood the importance and unique cultural identity they possessed and thus transcribed Lithuanian folklore and song within their respective villages.

The ideology of nationalism appears around the same time as Bishop Valančius bolstered Lithuanian religious identity. While Bishop Valančius united Lithuanians via religion, a group of intellectuals came together at Vilnius University to attempt to unite Lithuanians via literary works. Throughout the mid-19th century they compiled and published the first collections of

91 Eidintas et al., 146.

92 Prior to the Lithuanian nationalist movement, Lithuania and Poland were considered primarily to be one entity, and it was thought that any revolution would create a unified Lithuanian-Polish state, in which Polish would be the preferred language. See Snyder, The Reconstruction of Nations.

93 Hall, 16.
Lithuanian poetry, prose, and histories, including histories that specifically discussed the Lithuanian people. Within these publications, they called for the establishment of a distinct Lithuanian homeland, and lamented that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had fallen so far from its past glories. The second generation of intellectuals, those who established the first Lithuanian newspapers (Aušra and Varpas), followed the groundwork laid by these first men; this ideology continued from generation to generation as Lithuania moved closer to independence, and continues even today as Lithuanians define, refine, and cement their Lithuanian identity.

These histories serve a second function within the establishment and authentication of the Lithuanian national movement. Umut Özkirimli explores J.S. Mill’s concepts of nationalism in *Discourse and Debates on Nationalism*. Özkirimli writes:

> This feeling of nationality may be the result of a variety of causes—race, descent, shared language and religion, but above all it is the ‘identity of political antecedents: the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past’ that creates a sense of nationality.

These Lithuanian authors and publications, then, established a national history and united the Lithuanian people with common recollections, such as the reigns of Mindaugas and Vytautas the Great, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, its union with the Polish royal family, and its fall to the Russians. Through the creation of a collective Lithuanian history—one in which there is an ideal

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94 Eidintas et al., 139–140.

Lithuanian state to which one can return—the authors further unified the Lithuanian people and strengthened nationalist sentiment. 96

The demand at the Great Assembly of Vilnius in 1905 for a regional government concludes Hall’s necessary three stages for the development of a nationalist movement, and helps to cement the Lithuanian nationalist movement as authentic. Although there was no Lithuania at this time, the desire for and movement towards a distinct Lithuanian state qualifies the movement; nationalist movements do not have to be from a specific state, but rather simply promoting and fighting for the freedom or recognition of said state. Additionally, following the establishment of the State Council and State Duma, Lithuanians established political parties and organizations, held elections, and finally had some control over their internal affairs. The nationalist movement as a whole created not only an ethnic entity, but also a political one.

A final point on movement authenticity must be addressed before moving on to Čiurlionis himself and the De Profundis cantata. Brackette F. Williams writes that whenever one considers a nationalist movement, one must address its history concerning internal and external relationships; that is, one must address from what or whom the national movement separates itself. 97

96 While this unification of an ethno-religious Lithuanian population did exclude Belarussian, Poles, and Russians who resided in Lithuania, people of these ethnicities were not considered “true” Lithuanians. Further, the religious unification was not as all-encompassing as the ethnic unity proposed, which included the promotion of Lithuanian language and culture. See Eidintas et al., History of Lithuania, 2nd ed. (Vilnius: Eugrinas Publishing House, 2015).

Concerning the Lithuanian nationalist movement, the “what” or “who” is rather straightforward: simply put, Lithuanians desired autonomy, or at least semi-autonomy, from the Russian empire. Had the Lithuanians been treated as authentic Russian citizens, the nationalist movement would likely never have come about. Instead, because of oppression, prejudices, suppression of language and culture, among other grievances, this movement thrived and further united Lithuanians against an “other,” namely, the Russian empire.

Although much of this history has been addressed previously in Chapter One, a few points bear repeating because they are more than simply historical facts; rather they are events that inspired and bolstered the Lithuanian nationalist movement. The first, of course, is the Russification process that has been discussed in this chapter. The prejudice against Catholic Lithuanians, the urge to convert and the support of Orthodoxy—these religious issues represented just one faction of the Russian “other” against whom the movement stood. Other aspects of Russification, including the construction of Russian cultural centers, can be added to this religious conflict; although they clearly supported Russia over Lithuania, they were not necessarily detrimental to Lithuanian culture.

The singular major event that defined the “other” at this point in Lithuanian history was the 1864 ban of the Lithuanian alphabet and press. By this act of suppression, Russia made clear its intentions to deny Lithuanians their own cultural identity, and this action by the “other” provided impetus for the rapid increase of the nationalist movement. This act of cultural repression by the other, Williams writes, helped to authenticate the national movement. Further, as this master’s thesis has recounted and demonstrated, this ban encouraged the establishment of
Lithuanian papers, which, though illegal, were widely disseminated throughout Lithuania as a sign of resistance and unity against the Russian empire.

An examination of the Lithuanian nationalist movement through the writings of John Hall, Jonathan Armstrong, Umut Özkirimli, and Brackette F. Williams demonstrates that this movement was in fact a true and authentic nationalist movement. It does not lack any identifiable trait, and it follows observed patterns, unifies its constituents within multiple areas (including ethnic group, religion, culture, history, and language), and opposes an “other” entity that is so necessary for a national movement. Further, the lack of a state does not preclude a nationalist movement; within Lithuania, the desire for and progress towards statehood mark the movement as nationalist. Having thus qualified the movement proper, this thesis will now address Čiurlionis, and his qualifications to be called a nationalist composer.

**Authenticity in Čiurlionis**

There exists a great deal of scholarship concerning nationalism in music, and the requirements for a nationalist composer seem to fluctuate somewhat based upon the region or country of the composer. Despite this, a few key elements remain: the composer must identify with his or her nationality or ethnicity, espouse a specific national style of composition, and demonstrate these traits not only through his or her music, but also through publications, letters, articles, or other extra-musical material. Regarding Čiurlionis, Chapter Two has already recounted many of his articles and publications in which he addresses folk music, and this chapter will continue with his literary output. Further, it will address three characteristics of a national composer as presented by Ben Curtis in his dissertation, “On Nationalism and Music.”

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Curtis states three characteristics of nationalist composers: rejection of the public’s taste in art, the creation of new national institutions to educate the public on national art, and the composer’s own ouvre that can be used as a model for this new style. Although Curtis addresses these characteristics in Smetana, Grieg, and Wagner, they are transferable, and their presence within Čiurlionis’s life helps to cement him as a Lithuanian nationalist composer.

The first primary characteristic of a national composer, namely that an artist identifies as his specific nationality or ethnicity proves tricky when dealing with Čiurlionis. Given his time period, geographic location within Lithuania, and middle-class upbringing, Čiurlionis spoke Polish instead of Lithuanian around the house as a child; this in spite of the fact that his parents knew many Lithuanian folksongs that he sang with relatives and his siblings. Due to his proximity to the Polish border and the long history of Polish-Lithuanian unity, many from his region considered a unified Polish-Lithuanian state to be the likely outcome of a national movement, similar to the state of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

This presents a problem when addressing Čiurlionis’s concept of national identity. His letters do not discuss much concerning this topic until he becomes involved with Lithuanian music and movements. The earliest reference is a letter to his brother Povilas in 1902, wherein Čiurlionis states that he is writing an overture using two Lithuanian themes. This is, unfortunately, all we know of the music, as the Kestųtis overtures were both lost. Prior to this, one can only speculate on Čiurlionis’s ethnic affiliation, although he most likely considered himself a Lithuanian and a Pole; for Čiurlionis, growing up with aspects of both cultures, this dual identity would not have seemed extraordinary or irreconcilable in any way.

99 Ibid., 31.
When Čiurlionis learned of the (specifically) Lithuanian national movement, he seemed to commit himself immediately. He writes enthusiastically to his brother, “Have you heard of the Lithuanian movement? I am resolved to devote all my past and future works to Lithuania.”

Clearly by this point in his life then, Čiurlionis understands that there cannot be a unified Polish-Lithuanian state, and chooses to ally himself with the Lithuanian movement running concurrently to the Polish one. It must be stated that Čiurlionis did not make this decision simply out of geographic convenience; although he resided in Lithuania at this time, he was offered a position at the Warsaw Conservatory, which he rejected. Although his decision to remain in Lithuania did not rest solely on his desire to be involved with the nationalist movement, there were opportunities present to Čiurlionis at this time had he chose to ally himself with the Polish nationalists instead.

Following the letter to his brother in 1902, Čiurlionis ardently maintained his identity as Lithuanian until his death in 1911. Whenever he writes about Lithuania or Lithuanian culture, he states, “our country,” “our land,” and “our culture.” As a composer and public figure then, Čiurlionis clearly identifies as a Lithuanian, and his personal assertion of this fact assures one of his status as a Lithuanian nationalist composer.

Within “On Nationalism in Music,” Ben Curtis proposes three attributes that can help cement a composer as nationalist. Curtis first states that, “nationalist artists react against a

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perceived decline in the taste and artistic standards of the public.”

Regarding this trait and Čiurlionis, one need look no further than his own publications.

In 1905, the newly created Lithuanian Society of Art unanimously elected Čiurlionis as its president. Acting in this position, it was Čiurlionis’s role to promote Lithuanian art, understood to be visual, musical, plastic, or craft. To accomplish this, Čiurlionis and the organization supported a number of art exhibitions, wherein Lithuanian artists, composers, painters, and craftspeople would submit authentic Lithuanian folk art to be displayed for the edification of the public.

Čiurlionis published two calls for art (one each for the exhibitions he directed), and within these calls, one finds Čiurlionis’s grim pronouncement concerning the state of authentic Lithuanian art. He writes that in a typical evening of “Lithuanian” song, “a choir sings several Lithuanian folksongs, followed by…foreign pieces that have been adapted to Lithuanian lyrics and completely unsuitable for the melodic content of the songs.” Later in the same article he comments on the state of “proper” Lithuanian composers and music, stating, “The only element we are missing is the public’s patronage and support of such musical talents.”

This reaction “against a perceived decline in the tastes and artistic standards of the public” seems to preoccupy Čiurlionis throughout the entirety of his role within the

101 Curtis, 31.


103 Ibid.

104 Curtis, 31.
Lithuanian Society of Art. Beyond these calls for art submissions, Čiurlionis also commented on the public’s desensitization to authentic Lithuanian art in newspaper excerpts and in his final article, “About Music.” He begins his article “Lithuanian Music by Ėčeslovas Sasnausakas” with the following: “One must admit that the present situation in the world of music is not a good one…One can see this spoiled musical taste of the people and their lack of sensibility for beauty everywhere.” 

Although he continues to exhort Sasnauskas as a proper Lithuanian composer whose compositions should be modeled by younger musicians, the grim stage has been set.

Čiurlionis expresses a similar position within “About Music,” wherein he explains which aspects of Lithuanian music are inherently “Lithuanian” and thus worthy of reproduction in music. He writes, “Lithuanian music still rests within our folksongs and the writings in which only museums seem to find value.” Here, Čiurlionis clearly criticizes the public that has thus far neglected Lithuanian folk music in exchange for the music of the Italians, Russians, and Poles; they have forsaken their own cultural heritage for music that Čiurlionis claims is “typically ridden to death.” It can summarily be said then that as a composer, Čiurlionis clearly meets Curtis’s first requirement that would identify him as a nationalist composer.

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107 Ibid.
As a second point, Curtis states that “national institutions…must be formed to enlighten the people.”\textsuperscript{108} In this regard, Čiurlionis does not reveal much in his writing; however a glance through the composer’s biography reveals more than sufficient support for this claim.

To begin, one must consider the art exhibitions and competitions that Čiurlionis, as head of the Lithuanian Society of Art, organized and promoted. Through these exhibitions and competitions, which always included a monetary prize for first place, Čiurlionis attempted to educate and promote the general public of Lithuania. The exhibition received many entries in the form of folk music, paintings of folk subjects, and crafts considered to be homemade treasures within Lithuania.\textsuperscript{109} The exhibitions were staged in well-known public locations (primarily in Vilnius, the capital), as were the top finishers from the art competitions.

Beyond these presentations for public enlightenment, Čiurlionis also directed various folk choirs around Lithuania and abroad.\textsuperscript{110} He helped to establish these institutions to present Lithuanian folk music to Lithuanians both within and without Lithuania; these choirs also performed many of his arrangements of folk tunes. Through these choirs, as well as his exhibitions and competitions, Čiurlionis thus established institutions for public enlightenment.

\textsuperscript{108} Curtis, 31.

\textsuperscript{109} Čiurlionis notes this when he summarizes the first two exhibitions; he writes that they received many arranged folksongs, but also “folk art objects such as…aprons, sashes, covers, carved spoons, and other types of everyday articles.” M.K. Čiurlionis, “Antroji Lietuvių Dailės Paroda” [The Second Exhibition of Lithuanian Art], \textit{Lietuvos ūkinkinkas}, 1908, No. 9 and \textit{Žarija}, 1908, No. 5.

\textsuperscript{110} Landsbergis, 32.
Although he did not establish any theatres, symphony orchestras, or other entities representative of “high” culture, Čiurlionis does meet Curtis’s second requirement.

A final aspect of nationalist composers, Curtis writes, is that they “assigned to themselves the task of…[creating] works of highest artistic quality that would serve as beacons of the national style.”¹¹¹ This third aspect proves the most difficult when one considers Čiurlionis, because he did not appear to value his work enough to promote it as representative of a distinct national style.

However, if one considers the reception of Čiurlionis, that is, his promotion by other scholars, Lithuanian nationalists, and artists, one can then view him as creating a distinctly Lithuanian style. As explained previously in Chapter Three, Čiurlionis thought that his music carried within it distinctly Lithuanian musical traits; this much is confirmed within his letters and diaries.¹¹²

Further, it must be remembered that Čiurlionis died young and unexpectedly, still very involved within the Lithuanian music and art environments. Although he had transitioned primarily to painting by the end of his life, there is no doubt that a composer as self-aware as Čiurlionis would have recognized his role in the establishment of a Lithuanian national style. However, one cannot create evidence from suppositions, and thus the verdict on Curtis’s third characteristic of national composers must remain open for now.

¹¹¹ Curtis, 31.

¹¹² See Chapter One, p.11–2. Čiurlionis writes, concerning his tone poem Miške: “It opens with quiet broad chords, like the peaceful and sweeping sigh of Lithuanian pines,” Čiurlionis letter to Petras Markevičius, quoted in Landsbergis, 61.
Concerning the third nationalist trait listed above, namely, that nationalist composers espouse a specific school of composition, one has again only to examine Čiurlionis’s publications. Within two separate articles titled, “Lithuanian Music by Česlovas Sasnauskas,” Čiurlionis presents Sasnauskas as a proper Lithuanian composer, and concludes the first of these articles stating that Sasnauskas is a composer who “has been called, [a] true laborer of art, [a] founder of Lithuanian music.”¹¹³

The remainder of these articles present characteristics of Sasnauskas’s music that Čiurlionis finds particularly admirable, and within it Čiurlionis exhorts young composers to model their own work after this truly Lithuanian composer. Finally, these articles close with praise for Sasnauskas; in the first he writes, “Sasnauskas’s most admirable quality as a Lithuanian composer is not that he is knowledgeable and capable of creating harmonies, but that his work resounds with that truly Lithuanian note.”¹¹⁴ Throughout these articles, Čiurlionis promotes a specific Lithuanian style, one he bases on the shoulders of the composer Česlovas Sasnauskas; in this way, he fulfills many requirements that mark him as a nationalist composer.

Although Čiurlionis considered Sasnauskas to be the quintessential Lithuanian composer, succeeding generations instead regard him as the Lithuanian musical patriarch, and this reception helps to establish Čiurlionis as a nationalist composer. Many musicologists, such as Carl Dahlhaus and Daniel Grimley, consider reception of a composer or work to be the most telling in determining the possibilities of nationalism within a composition, and the final portion of this chapter addresses Čiurlionis’s reception history as recounted by Lithuanian scholars in order to

¹¹³ Čiurlionis, “Lithuanian Music by Česlovas Sasnauskas.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid.
demonstrate that, no matter which view one takes when considering Čiurlionis, he has been received as a nationalist composer.

**Čiurlionis and Reception**

In “Horn Calls and Flattened Sevenths: Nielsen and Danish Musical Style,” Daniel Grimley comments, “Dahlhaus argues that the issue of national style in music belongs largely in the domain of reception history,” and this point must be addressed to dispel any doubts concerning Čiurlionis’s national styles.

Following his death in 1911, Čiurlionis was quickly heralded as a great Lithuanian visual artist. Exhibitions across Europe, supported especially by Russian and Lithuanian art societies, displayed his paintings in public galleries. Musically, critics such as Nikolai Rerikh wrote stirring eulogies and compared Čiurlionis to Scriabin, who would die a few years later in 1915. Rerikh noted that Čiurlionis, like Scriabin, was a presence that “stirred many young minds.”

Indeed, the Russians received Čiurlionis with much applause both during his life and posthumously, and throughout the 1910s the Russians published many books regarding Čiurlionis’s visual art.

In 1925, the newly formed Lithuanian state opened the Čiurlionis Gallery, a public museum that displayed the artist’s visual output. That same year the Lithuanian Ministry of Education published seven notebooks containing Čiurlionis’s music. Of these, the first three...

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117 Landsbergis, 47.
were the most popular; they contained his piano works, which performers gave in recital throughout Europe during this time. It must be noted that at this time no new shows of Čiurlionis’s art or performances of his orchestral compositions occurred; for a period of about ten years then, Čiurlionis was remembered only for his piano ouvre.

Public interest waxed in 1935–6 during the anniversary of Čiurlionis’s birth. The Lithuanian State Department organized a concert of his works, including the premiere of Jūra.118 Čiurlionis’s art received new showings at this time, and two books addressing his life, art, and music were begun (these were ultimately published in 1938).119 Musicians also regarded Čiurlionis highly at this time. Vytatutas Landsbergis notes,

the younger generations of Lithuanian composers viewed Čiurlionis as a model, a master who was the first to achieve a profound insight into the spirit of our folksong and to clothe it in an appropriate, stylish, modern garb.120

In this way, Čiurlionis should be viewed in a manner similar to Jean Sibelius, who established a Finnish style of composition that continued to be modeled long after he established himself as a composer.121

At the same time, Nicolaj Worobiow “was the first to place Čiurlionis’s biography in the context of international cultural developments and influences.”122 In short, he was the first to contextualize Čiurlionis and his works within the Lithuanian movement. From this point

118 Ibid., 50.

119 Ibid., 49.

120 Ibid., 67.


122 Landsbergis, 50.
onward, Čiurlionis and the Lithuanian nationalist movement were irrevocably linked, and, although Čiurlionis would not be heralded as the quintessential Lithuanian composer until the centenary of his birth, Worobiow’s book did inspire new scholarship and examinations of Čiurlionis’s work.

During the Soviet occupation, Čiurlionis received mixed official reviews. In 1940, the government established the Kaunas State Museum of Culture, which was renamed the Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Art Museum in 1944. The artist’s works endured a short period of harsh criticism, with censors accusing Čiurlionis of practicing “mysticism, decadence, and pessimism, and even ‘bourgeois nationalism.’”123 Despite this censure, Lithuanian orchestras performed his music occasionally, especially near important anniversaries of his birth and death, with 1955–6 seeing a new trend in Čiurlionis scholarship that “drew attention to the national and folk elements underlying his music and art.”124 In 1957, Čiurlionis’s younger sister, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, edited and published the first edition of his piano music including, for the first time, the majority of his folksong arrangements.

Throughout the 1960s and ‘70s, the scholarship on Čiurlionis continued to address his role in the nationalist movement, and the man himself consistently garnered international attention. Exhibitions were held in Moscow and Vilnius, a documentary entitled The World as a Great Symphony was made, and biographies were published to celebrate a man who had by 1956 become a hero of the nation.125

123 Ibid., 51.

124 Ibid. 51.

125 In 1955, an eighteenth anniversary celebration of Čiurlionis’s birth was held in Kaunas and included artists and scholars from across the globe. At this time there was a renewed interest
For the centenary of his birth, festivals and celebrations were organized around the world to commemorate the composer now hailed as the father of Lithuanian national music. Orchestras performed his tone poems and *De Profundis*, and many art galleries displayed his work. This is the time when Čiurlionis was fully embraced as a Lithuanian national composer. Prior to the centenary celebrations, the international community regarded Čiurlionis as a Lithuanian composer simply due to his nationality. But following the increase in scholarship that arose in response to Čiurlionis’s centenary, which included new examinations of his letters, diaries, sketches, and publications, Čiurlionis’s desire to establish a distinct Lithuanian style was re-discovered, and in turn he was propped up as the quintessential Lithuanian national composer.\textsuperscript{126} Scholars now placed Čiurlionis, “Lithuania’s great man,”\textsuperscript{127} next to national composers such as Bartók, Smetana, and Sibelius, although he did not receive the same international attention as the other composers. Similarities between Čiurlionis and Sibelius and Bartók will be explored in Chapter Five.

There can be no doubt that reception plays an important role in the determination of national composers; after all, any composer can state that he or she represents a specific ethnic group. The bigger question is whether the international community accepts such claims? With Čiurlionis, one finds the answer a resounding yes. Although scholarship was not immediately forthcoming as with other, more well-known national composers, the sentiments remain, and one can thus say that Čiurlionis’s reception further supports his reputation as a nationalist composer, in Čiurlionis and his work, and the resultant scholarship led to him being labeled a national hero by the following year.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 58. The phrase comes from Olivier Messiaen.
a reputation built upon his compositions, publications, and activity within nationalist organizations that promoted a distinct Lithuanian identity.

Authenticity and reception are important for any nationalist composer, and especially so for Čiurlionis, who is still relatively unknown on the international stage. This chapter has demonstrated that Čiurlionis was in fact active and deliberate in establishing a Lithuanian style, and that both the man and the movement he represented were authentic. Further, his reception history confirms both a conscious alliance with Lithuanian culture and the international community’s acknowledgement of Čiurlionis as a nationalist composer.
Chapter Five: Čiurlionis and Other Nationalist Composers

This final chapter will examine Čiurlionis in relation to two of his contemporaries, Béla Bartók and Jean Sibelius. Similar to Čiurlionis, these composers both lived and gained recognition within nationalist movements, Bartók in Hungary and Sibelius in Finland. These two composers were chosen based upon their similarity to Čiurlionis and the public’s familiarity with them; the goal of this chapter then, is to contextualize Čiurlionis within European nationalism through comparisons with better-known figures. Concerning Bartók, this chapter will focus upon his 1903 symphonic tone poem Kossuth, and regarding Sibelius, it will focus on the early works inspired by the Kalevala, including Kullervo and Finlandia. Following these comparisons, the chapter will summarize the arguments that demonstrate that Čiurlionis’s De Profundis cantata is, in fact, a nationalist work.

Čiurlionis and Bartók

Béla Bartók wrote Kossuth in 1903, after graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. Bartók composed the work in honor of Lajos Kossuth, a hero of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, and musicologist David Schneider asserts that one can find many traits of Hungarian music within the piece. Before discussing Schneider’s analysis, however, we must address the social situation that brought about this renewed interest in Hungarian nationalism.

Schneider lists five reasons for the encouragement of the Hungarian reawakening:

1. economic stagnation in the 1890s
2. a new requirement that even officers serving in specifically Hungarian regiments use German
3. the openly anti-Hungarian stance of the emperor/king’s nephew Franz Ferdinand
4. the increased pressure on the Magyars to share power with other ethnic groups living in the territory assigned to Hungary in the Ausgleich
[5] the observation in 1896 of the millennial anniversary of Magyar settlement in the Carpathian basin.\textsuperscript{128}

The Hungarian movement mirrors the Lithuanian nationalist movement in many ways. As in Lithuania, there are prejudicial, or anti-Hungarian, feelings among members of the ruling and upper classes, including the archduke Franz Ferdinand. The requirement of military officers, regardless of regiment or position to use German parallels, though in a lesssevere fashion, the ban on the Lithuanian alphabet and press. Further, the increased pressure to share power with the other ethnic groups echoes that placed on Lithuanians, who were forced into cooperation with Poles, Belarussians, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups who existed within Lithuania at this time. Although the movements did not share every impetus, the similarities are striking, and this allows for closer comparison between Čiurlionis’s and Bartók’s musical responses to these events.

Schneider’s analysis of Kossuth bears many similarities to the style study of De Profundis in Chapter Three. He begins by discussing the musical material that identifies the piece as Hungarian. Schneider cites the inclusion of “the so called Hungarian or ‘Gypsy’ scale [and]…two typically Hungarian rhythmic patterns”\textsuperscript{129} as the most obvious national musical gestures within the work. This musical gesture, the short-long, is typically found in the Hungarian folksong genre known as verbunko, and Bartók uses it throughout Kossuth to make clear connections to Hungarian nationalism (see Figure 1).\textsuperscript{130}


\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 47.
Bartók’s use of the “Gypsy” scale further establishes the piece as Hungarian in nature. The characteristic augmented second between the second and third scale degrees was understood by music critics and audiences alike as sounding “Hungarian.” The melodies and harmonies constructed through Bartók’s use of this scale then would have been recognized as belonging distinctly to this musical heritage, and distinguish the work musically from the tone poems of Richard Strauss and other composers who greatly influenced Bartók at this time.  

Schneider identifies one additional musical element within Kossuth that audiences at that time considered distinctly Hungarian: its form. Kossuth’s spontaneous, rhapsodic form, Schneider writes, is “intimately tied to the verbunkos [folksong] tradition,” further linking the piece to Hungarian identity. This tradition includes the segmentation of a composition into two main sections, progressing from a slower part (the lassú) to a faster part (the friss). Further, Schneider writes that “the lassú often begins with a highly embellished section,” and that each section often contains different rhythmic character. For Kossuth then, Schneider explains that the first part (sections one through five) correspond to the lassú, with its dotted rhythms and slower tempi. The second part (sections six through eight), with its quicker tempi and straighter rhythms correspond to the friss, with the final part (sections nine and ten) forming the restatement of themes and concluding the work.

These musical gestures would be for naught without a national symbol or narrative, and Bartók happily obliges the nationalist scholar in this regard. Not only does he name the tone

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131 Ibid., 45.
132 Ibid., 54.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
poem *Kossuth*, an obvious reference to the Hungarian hero Lajos Kossuth, he also writes a narrative describing the musical events of the piece in ten parts.\textsuperscript{135} With both of these components then, a national narrative and musical gestures, *Kossuth* projects a strong national style.

Beyond the historical similarities, namely that both *Kossuth* and *De Profundis* are the first major works composed by each composer, Bartók’s *Kossuth* displays many parallels with Čiurlionis’s *De Profundis* cantata. In both, one finds evidence of folk music elements, although neither composer would describe these musical elements in writing yet for many years. One also finds evidence of national symbols: for Čiurlionis, the use of the Lithuanian language; for Bartók, the reference to a national hero. Both compositions, then, should be considered as representative of their respective national styles, as both would have been intended and interpreted as nationalist in nature.

Bartók and Čiurlionis share many traits beyond their musical compositions. Both had a great interest in their respective folksong traditions. For Bartók, this meant embarking on song-gathering expeditions wherein he traveled the countryside and recorded folksongs before they were lost to time. While there is no evidence that Čiurlionis recorded folksongs himself, he did arrange and perform much Lithuanian folk music, either with the choirs that he conducted or on the piano.

Additionally, each composer wrote extensively concerning musical style, and especially on the need to include folk elements within composition. Čiurlionis’s literary output has already been explored in earlier chapters, but it must be noted that Bartók, perhaps more famously, wrote

\begin{footnote}{Judit Frigyesi, “Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism: The Development of Bartók’s Social and Political Ideas at the Turn of the Century” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), 270–277.}\end{footnote}
many letters, articles, and journal entries concerning folk music and its importance to Hungarian identity. These similarities between Čiurlionis and Bartók then, establish both as nationalist composers, and also help to authenticate Čiurlionis’s position as a nationalist composer.

Although Bartók and Čiurlionis lived in similar societies and were treated as second-class citizens by the ruling parties, the political environments of the two composers contain substantial differences. A different, yet equally famous and recognized national composer, Jean Sibelius, spent the first three decades or so of his life under the same Russian control as Čiurlionis. A brief comparison between the two will now be made to present the parallels between these two nationalist composers, working within movements under the same Russian tsar.

Čiurlionis and Sibelius

The political climates within which Jean Sibelius and Čiurlionis worked are very similar. In both Lithuania and Finland, literary and linguistic movements provided impetus for a national style of composition; for Sibelius, intellectuals such as Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Zachris Topelius inspired the Finnish people with national stories, histories, and an exhortation to learn Finnish, while Čiurlionis was inspired by his own group of intellectuals, discussed in Chapter Four. In Finland, this literary movement received official recognition via the Language Edict of 1863, which established Finnish as an appropriate language to address the Finnish population; Lithuanians would have to wait another forty-two years before their language was granted any similar treatment.

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138 Ibid., 36.
Beyond the national movements that inspired each composer, there are many historical parallels that exist between them. Both Sibelius and Čiurlionis studied in Germany, and scholars have noted Germanic influences within both composers’ early works. More importantly, scholars have noted the role folk music plays within the works of both composers (e.g. for Sibelius, Tapiola, Op. 112; for Čiurlionis, Jūra).

Sibelius’s interest in composing nationalist works seems to rest more on the expression of national symbols and narratives than folk music. Assuredly, while there are elements of Finnish folk music within his compositions, including the use of rhythms reminiscent of runo chants, small dissonant intervals, and multiple pitch centers, Sibelius’s greatest contribution to the Finnish national movement is via his musical narratives, which often express tales from the country’s mythos (e.g., The Swan of Tuonela). Additionally, Sibelius, like Čiurlionis, set many Finnish texts to music; by doing so, he exhibited national symbols beyond his narrative tone poems.

Čiurlionis, too, displays many national symbols through his large works. Unlike Sibelius and Bartók, however, these do not correspond to national heroes or myths; rather, they relate natural symbols, such as the Baltic Sea in Jūra, that would have been familiar to all Lithuanians. For Čiurlionis then, musical representation is not so much about expressing a particular story, but instead about portraying a musical landscape that helped define his homeland. Within De

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Profundis, this national symbol is the Lithuanian language, itself a point of contention between the Russians and the Lithuanians.

Čiurlionis shares many similarities with the national composers Béla Bartók and Jean Sibelius, and indeed, with even more nationalist composers such as Edvard Grieg and Bedřich Smetana. Each composer worked to establish a national style, one that incorporated folksong tradition into art music, and by doing so provided cultural stimulation for the masses, as well as an identifiable and distinguished musical style that was distinctly of a specific nation. Čiurlionis should be studied alongside these composers because through his musical works, writings, and public activity, he established a style of composition that is distinctly Lithuanian and further can be used as a model of how nationalism in music operates or materializes.

Final Thoughts

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis is the quintessential Lithuanian composer, and for good reason. Through his compositions, publications, and role within the Lithuanian movement, he introduced an approach to composition that incorporates Lithuanian folk elements to establish a musical style that is distinctly Lithuanian. While scholars have previously noted aspects of Lithuanian nationalism within his middle works (1904–1907), this thesis has argued that Čiurlionis imbibed these musical characteristics even as a young boy at home, and that as such they are present even within earlier major works, specifically the De Profundis cantata (1899).

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142 For scholarship concerning Smetana and Grieg, see Ben Curtis, “On Nationalism and Music” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2002). Curtis addresses Grieg, Smetana, and Wagner, and how these three composers establish nationalist styles of compositions within their respective homelands.

143 See Danutė Staškevičius “Stylistic Features in the Piano and Orchestral Music,” in Goštautas, 452–65.
Through an examination of Lithuania’s political climate during Čiurlionis’s time (especially the emergence of the Lithuanian nationalist movement) and Čiurlionis’s own writings, as well as via multiple criticisms regarding national style, including those of Ben Curtis, Carl Dahlhaus, Brackette F. Williams, and others, we can safely state that Čiurlionis is a nationalist composer. Further, through an exploration of Lithuanian folk music attributes present within the *De Profundis* cantata, as well as the presence of the Lithuanian text as a national symbol, I conclude that the work itself should be considered in a nationalist style.

This thesis thus provides a definitive study of one specific Lithuanian national work, not only establishing the *De Profundis* as a nationalist composition, but also further cementing Čiurlionis’s position as the quintessential Lithuanian composer. The opening line of the cantata states, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,” but given its language and national context, perhaps a better interpretation would be, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lithuania.” For Čiurlionis, who gave his life’s work for the Lithuanian movement, this message would certainly be appropriate.
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Scores


