ROCZNIKI HUMANISTYCZNE
Tom LXXIII, zeszyt 12 – 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rh257312.7

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ČIURLIONIS IN LEIPZIG: ADAPTATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS

Abstract. Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis's time in Leipzig (1901–1902) was a formative period that shaped his artistic identity. While studying at the conservatory, he struggled with linguistic and cultural barriers, leading him to explore alternative means of self-expression through music and painting. This article examines Čiurlionis's adaptive strategies during this time, focusing on the role of adaptation and arrangement in his creative process. His *Kęstutis Overture* serves as a case study of artistic negotiation between personal expression and institutional constraints. The article also explores how his Leipzig experiences influenced his later visual works. By analyzing Čiurlionis's letters, compositions, and paintings, this study highlights the role of adaptation and intermediality in his artistic development.

Keywords: Čiurlionis; Leipzig; adaptation; intermediality; *Kęstutis Overture.*

ČIURLIONIS W LIPSKU. ADAPTACJE I ARANŻACJE

Abstrakt. Okres studiów Mikalojusa Konstantinasa Čiurlionisa w Lipsku (1901–1902) był czasem formowania się jego tożsamości artystycznej. Podczas pobytu w obcym mieście zmagał się z barierami językowymi i kulturowymi, co skłoniło go do poszukiwania alternatywnych środków wyrazu w muzyce i malarstwie. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje strategie adaptacyjne Čiurlionisa w tym okresie, opisując role adaptacji i aranżacji w jego procesie twórczym. *Uwertura „Kiejstut"* stanowi tu studium przypadku poszukiwania kompromisu między osobistym wyrazem a instytucjonalnymi ograniczeniami. Artykuł bada również, w jaki sposób doświadczenia lipskie wpłynęły na późniejsze dzieła malarskie artysty. Analiza listów, kompozycji i obrazów Čiurlionisa ukazuje znaczącą rolę adaptacji i intermedialności w jego rozwoju artystycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: Čiurlionis; Lipsk; adaptacja; intermedialność; *Uwertura „Kiejstut".*

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INTRODUCTION

Roughly a decade before Kandinsky published *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and Schönberg picked up the brush to paint his first self-portrait (1908), a Lithuanian artist who had just completed his composition studies in Warsaw traveled to Leipzig to continue his education. Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), who was soon to become the most important and original figure in Lithuanian art, arrived in Leipzig in October 1901 and spent nine months studying at the conservatory. I would argue that this was a crucial period in the formation of his artistic identity—a time when he decided to seek artistic expression through both sounds and images.

One of the most important areas of research on Čiurlionis's work involves attempts to understand how musical principles shaped his painting.[1] In my earlier studies on this issue, I joined this dynamic field of research by suggesting that the first impulses to connect music and painting in his work were related to the Lithuanian composer's symphonic poems. In this article, I build on those reflections by highlighting the crucial—yet previously overlooked—role the Leipzig study period played in shaping Čiurlionis's creative identity.

Čiurlionis's creative practice is rooted in principles of arrangement and adaptation, as he seeks to express ideas through words (in letters, poetry and prose), sounds (in music) and images (in painting, drawing and photography). Notably, this method emerged during a period when Čiurlionis was assimilating into German culture, grappling with linguistic limitations and the profound contrast between national temperaments—the reserved, distant, or jovial Germans versus the emotional, warm, and melancholic Lithuanians and Poles. Just as he had to arrange aspects of his life to adapt to a new environment, he came to appreciate the power of intermedial arrangements in shaping his artistic creations.

In musicology, the concepts of adaptation and arrangement belong to a network of related terms with overlapping meanings. Alongside transcription, palimpsest, and the German *Bearbeitung*, they describe creative practices of reworking existing material.[2] Adaptation, however, also means adjusting to changing circumstances. By drawing on the potential of this term's ambiguity, I wish to follow the approach of Constantin

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[1] See Vladimir Fedotov, "Polyphony in the Paintings of M. K. Čiurlionis," *Leonardo* 28, no. 1 (1995): 53–56; Ichiro Kato, "Čiurlionis, the Lithuanian Composer and Painter, and the Correlation Between Pictorial and Musical Compositions," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 7, no. 1 (1976): 40–44; Genovaitė Kazokas, *Musical paintings. Life and Work of M.K. Čiurlionis* (Vilnius: UAB, 2009); Žilvinas Svigaris and Laura Ivanova, eds., *Sonatiniai M. K. Čiurlionio garsovaizdžiai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Kultūros Tyrimų Institutas, 2022).

[2] Małgorzata Grajter, *Applying Translation Theory to Musicological Research* (Cham: Springer, 2024), 61–64.

Floros, who emphasized the importance of connecting a creator's life with their works.[3] I aim to describe how Čiurlionis's need to adapt to new circumstances during his studies in Leipzig led him to explore the possibility of intermedial translation of his own ideas as well as conveying hidden meanings within his instrumental music.

I will analyze Čiurlionis' letters for evidence of his engagement with music and painting, focusing on how he used images and sounds to clarify his thoughts and emotions. Examining his *Kęstutis Overture*, I will explore the tension between academic constraints and artistic authenticity, showing it as both an adaptation of a literary text and an adjustment to Leipzig's conservatory environment. Finally, I will highlight how his inner visions later took on painterly form upon his return to Warsaw.

1. RUNNING OUT OF WORDS

Čiurlionis's stay in Leipzig was a critical experience for him. The inability to communicate with those around him due to insufficient knowledge of German led to a deep sense of alienation. He developed an unusual friendship with another foreigner—a Swede, Carl Helbert Paulsson. Unable to express complex thoughts in a foreign language, they contented themselves with silence and each other's company, often during walks in nature. After five months in Leipzig, Čiurlionis did not feel any more at home:

> I thought I was slowly getting used to Leipzig. But far from it.… It has happened to me that when getting acquainted with a German, they ask me about my nationality. I say "Polish" and I always hear "Ach so!" I can't describe this "ach so" to you, but there's too much of something in it that repels me and discourages me from Germans and everything German. It goes without saying that I avoid all relationships, and now, just like in the first month, I am still alone. I'm friends with one colleague (a Swede—Paulsson), but it's sad because it's not really friendship. He doesn't speak Polish, I don't speak Swedish, and we both speak German poorly. Perfect. We start telling each other something and just at the most interesting point, we run out of words, or we don't understand each other.[4]

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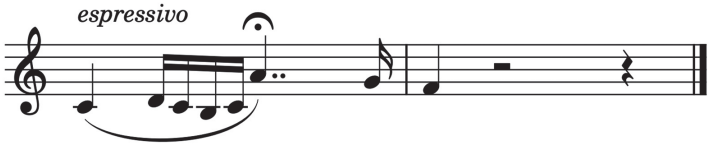
[3] Constantin Floros, *Humanism, Love and Music*, trans. Ernest Berhardt-Kabisch (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2012).

[4] M. K. Čiurlionis to M. Markiewicz (March 13, 1902) in *Korespondencija/Korespondencja, 1892–1906*, by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, ed. Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, Nijolė Adomavičienė, and Petras Kimbrys (Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejus, 2019), 334 (all translations of his correspondence are mine). Čiurlionis's national identity is layered and complex. Although he had no Polish ancestry, both Lithuanian and Polish were the languages spoken at home, and he attended a Russian school as a child. Later, his time at the Ogiński estate in Plungė and his studies at the Warsaw Music Institute deepened his ties to Polish culture. Yet, with the rise of the Lithuanian national revival, Čiurlionis increasingly identified as Lithuanian and developed a strong interest in his country's history.

When words fail to fully convey meaning, music can serve as an alternative mode of expression. In another letter, Čiurlionis recounted how he and his friend communicated their cultural identities by performing the traditional songs of their respective nations.[5] Indeed, when Čiurlionis was composing, playing, listening or imagining music while transcribing the scores of Richard Strauss's symphonic poems, Čiurlionis felt he was inhabiting another, better world.

2. LIFE IN SOUNDS

A perfect example of using music to express thoughts is a letter in which Čiurlionis characterizes German girls through a musical phrase (example 1): "I am not interested in meeting German girls. I don't like them. Each one has a leitmotif written on their forehead and in their eyes."[6]



Example 1. Motif proposed by Čiurlionis to describe German girls

The musical leitmotif suffices as a complete characterization. However, it requires a competent reader, such as Čiurlionis's friend, composer Eugeniusz Morawski. They understood each other perfectly in musical matters, exchanging ideas and asking each other for honest criticism. So, what did Morawski learn from Čiurlionis about young German women?

The written phrase is a cadence in F major, leading from the dominant to the tonic. The note C, ornamented with a *gruppetto*, serves as a springboard for a leap of a sixth to a long-held A, sustained by a fermata, after which the phrase closes with two quick steps downward, as if retreating from its initial boldness. "Espressivo", written above the notes, indicates emotional emphasis. The shape of the phrase suggests a crescendo leading to the climax on the high note and a slight decrescendo on the following two notes. The structure of this cadence is painfully conventional and formulaic. The expressive leap to the sustained high A, followed by a hasty descent of a third, gives the impression of affectation, restraint, and unnaturalness. These very traits come to the forefront, if this phrase is meant to describe the character of the women Čiurlionis encountered.

[5] M. K. Čiurlionis to Stasys Čiurlionis (May 6, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 396.
[6] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (May 2, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 390.

In a letter sent nearly two weeks later to Morawski's younger brother, Włodzimierz, Čiurlionis once again felt the need to use a musical metaphor to describe his perception of the surrounding reality:

> Absolute silence again. I have nothing to write. Now the silence feels like a general pause. (Gieniek will explain.) It's heavy. The past has disappeared somewhere, suddenly cut off; there is no future yet, and the present—a pause—nothing.[7]

A general pause halts the flow of the music, intensifying the tension that had been built earlier. Though no sounds are heard during the pause, it bears not only the immediate context of the preceding phrases but also the entire previous course of the composition. The general pause also anticipates the resolution of accumulated tensions. Only with this kind of technical knowledge of compositional craft can we fully grasp the meaning behind Čiurlionis's metaphor. On that particular night, as he wrote the letter and listened to the silence of the night on Elsässer Straße in Leipzig, it seemed to him like a pregnant silence, foreshadowing his imminent return to his loved ones in Warsaw and Lithuania.

In a poignant letter to Morawski dated May 20, 1902, Čiurlionis compared his sense of detachment from reality—which, using psychological terminology, we might call dissociation—to experiencing music with an impaired sense of hearing, as if with ears blocked. He likened his own life to the performance of a musical piece, emphasizing its singularity and transience.

> I still feel that I exist; that I'm doing wrong by doing nothing. I feel that time keeps moving forward, and I regret it. I have the impression that time is a very important tone poem, played by an orchestra specially for me. Something prevents me from listening; I hear nothing. And it's a shame, the composition continues, maybe it will end soon. What has not been heard—is lost. This composition—it's life, and it is only played once.[8]

Two days later, Čiurlionis described his recent experiences in a letter to another friend, Marian Markiewicz, saying that he was fully immersed in the study of counterpoint. Absorbed in his counterpoint studies, Čiurlionis began to perceive the reality around him in terms of a musical composition:

> I immersed myself completely in the counterpoint. I imagine the whole world as one great symphony: people are notes, Germans are dissonances and false notes, beautiful melodies, those far away from here, are Druskininkai and Warsaw.[9]

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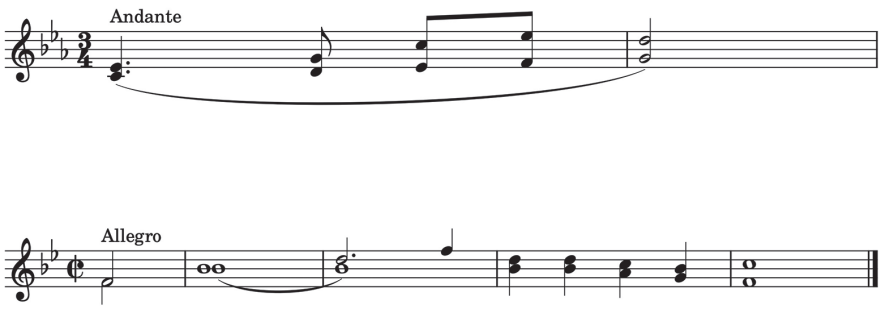
[7] M. K. Čiurlionis to W. Morawski (May 13–14, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 404.
[8] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (May 20, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 412.
[9] M. K. Čiurlionis to M. Markiewicz (May 22, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 416.

3. *KĘSTUTIS* AS A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE

We can now turn to the analysis of the piece Čiurlionis worked on in Leipzig under the guidance of Carl Reinecke. The concert overture had to take a form that was a compromise between his desire for authentic expression and the demands and expectations of his teacher. The early stages of work on this composition are documented in a letter Čiurlionis wrote to his brother Povilas:

> On Thursday, I went to Reinecke with the sketch of my overture, and I was thoroughly criticized. The old man had a lot of valid points, but in many places, he was completely wrong. He criticized precisely what I like about my overture, and said nothing about the parts I'm unhappy with.
>
> I would very much like to hear this overture performed by our orchestra, so I must work hard to ensure it pleases Reinecke. But since our tastes differ, the work is slow going. In the entire overture, I managed to incorporate only two Lithuanian motifs—one in the introduction in C minor, and the other in the middle in B-flat major. The ending is in the style of a funeral march—not bad. Now I'm stuck revising and reworking it, which is an unpleasant task.[10]



Example 2. Fragments of the *Kęstutis Overture*

We learn more about Čiurlionis's work on the overture from a slightly later letter to Eugeniusz Morawski. In it, Čiurlionis's internal struggle with the need to conform to his professor's recommendations becomes apparent. His expressions clearly indicate that he cared deeply about the personal resonance of the piece he was composing.

> I've completely cooled off from my earlier enthusiasm for all things in Leipzig, even for the Gewandhaus. Reinecke is a very decent fellow, but he's a softie. I've gotten to know him well, and I can assure you that I could impress him with my compositions in every lesson. A bit of melody, a bit of beautiful harmony, a smooth whole, with as few dissonances as possible, and not too much counterpoint—this is what he likes, frighteningly so! He has a strange fondness for the "golden mean in music" and insists that his students write as they did 100 years ago. Perhaps that's good

[10] M. K. Čiurlionis to Povilas Čiurlionis (February 6 and 8, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 292.

> as a starting point, but you'll agree that if a student writes a large orchestral piece, putting in a great deal of energy and effort, surely he has the right to say something of his own in his work; if it succeeds, that's the entire reward. But this old fool doesn't allow it—he immediately frowns, pulls out various scores, usually Mendelssohn and Weber, and shows how things should be done and that it's *fine*, but what you (the student) have written is not *fine*, and it would be good if you would kindly fix your dissonances, and then it will also be *fine*. The student (for example, me) makes the corrections but loses the desire and passion for the work, feeling like a fraud, lying to himself. It's not just that which makes the work discouraging; for instance, I can see the weak spots in my piece and expect Reinecke to point them out and explain why they don't work, but he doesn't notice them at all. Instead, he nitpicks over such trivial things that it's embarrassing.… But that's nothing, really—it's worse that he almost outright demands that I write cheerier pieces; he's made ironic comparisons between my works and bad weather a few times. I force myself to come up with cheerful themes, and nothing works, but he says it's *fine*. And so we continue. I'm very surprised that he agreed to the coda of my overture, which I'm sending you a sample of. If you don't want me to be very upset, you'll have to praise it, because it's the "least ugly" part of the entire overture.[11]

Čiurlionis even resorted to composing two versions of certain sections of the overture: one intended for his teacher's eyes, and another—kept for himself with the intention of including it in the final version of the piece.[12]

The letters suggest that Čiurlionis preserved only the two Lithuanian themes and the funeral march coda in his *Kęstutis Overture* from his teacher's influence. To understand his adaptation to Leipzig's aesthetics, we must consider the significant changes imposed on him, which distorted the piece's authenticity. Yet, he fought to retain key elements of his musical vision, making the slow introduction, the Lithuanian theme in B-flat major, and the funeral march coda especially significant.

The trouble is that the preserved piano reduction of the overture lacks the key sections: the introduction and the coda. The score of the *Kęstutis Overture* was reconstructed and orchestrated by Jurgis Juozapaitis.[13] Its first performance was part of a gala concert celebrating the 120th anniversary of Čiurlionis's birth. Due to financial difficulties, the score was not published until 2010. The only available recording was made by the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra in 2020, conducted by Modestas Pitrėnas and released by the Finnish label Ondine.

The sections that Čiurlionis described as being the most faithful to his original idea have not survived to our time. In the piano reduction of the overture, which served as the basis for Juozapaitis's reconstruction, the introduction (first 19 bars) and the coda are missing. Juozapaitis utilized two initial bars of the introduction preserved in a letter to Morawski and the last 10 bars of the introduction, from where

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[11] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (February 17, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 310.

[12] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (March 21, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 342.

[13] M. K. Čiurlionis, *Uvertiūra „Kęstutis", partitūra/Overture „Kęstutis" score* (Kaunas: Jonas Petronis, 2010).

Čiurlionis's preserved manuscript begins. For the coda, Juozapaitis used Čiurlionis's Fugue in F-sharp minor (VL 223), composed during the same period as the overture and fitting the funereal character of the coda as described in Čiurlionis's letter to Morawski. Juozapaitis enriched the arrangement by connecting the introduction and the ending, placing the fugue theme as a pedal point in the overture's introduction. He modeled the orchestration after Čiurlionis's other symphonic works, striving to retain the composer's characteristic polyphonic thinking, expressed through multiple parallel layers distinguished by different instrumental timbres (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion), and drawing on the inspirations Čiurlionis acknowledged at the time: Richard Strauss's symphonic poems, Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Pathetique Symphony*.

However, in the recording by the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra we hear a different coda. The initial theme returns, subdued and somber, with the tragic theme echoing and disintegrating into dust. The mournful Lithuanian song from the first bars of the piece raises its lament once again, but in the end, only the march-like beginning remains, and finally, just the rhythm of the funeral procession played on timpani. The music's last breath is the tonic, with the minor third present only as a memory. There is no trace of the theme from Fugue in F-sharp minor that is prominent in Juozapaitis reconstruction.

Juozapaitis's arrangement and Pitrėnas's performance bring Čiurlionis's music to life, yet extensive modern revisions alter its original character. While Čiurlionis's letters suggest the *Kęstutis Overture* once reflected his artistic vision, its later history challenges this assumption. Instead, the piece has become a contemporary reinterpretation where historical and fictional elements intertwine, shaping a version of Čiurlionis's work for modern audiences. Despite Juozapaitis's efforts to stay true to Čiurlionis's style, his reconstruction remains an interpretation rather than an authentic restoration. However, this fiction contains grains of truth, preserving what was most important for Čiurlionis to save—the two Lithuanian themes: the mournful and the heroic, which he regarded as the most valuable material in the piece.

Mourning, chivalry, and tragedy characterize the figure of Kęstutis[14] in Adam Asnyk's drama, written between 1875 and 1878 and set against the backdrop of the conflict between the Prussians (Teutonic Knights), Lithuanians, and Samogitians. In Asnyk's drama, the elderly Kęstutis is the only character who remains true to his principles until the very end. He acts righteously and nobly, judging not intentions but deeds, avoiding deceit and treachery, and placing the common good of the nation

[14] Kęstutis (1300–1382) was the coruler of Lithuania with his brother Algirdas (1345–1377) and later became the Grand Duke of Lithuania (1381–82). He defended his country's western borders against the Teutonic Knights.

above personal revenge. Kęstutis is steadfast in his desire to defend everything Lithuanian from the influence of German culture, which he sees as false and arrogant, striving at all costs to impose its values, culture, and way of life on others.

A tragic element is evident in Kęstutis's character from the very beginning of the drama. In scene 9 of act 1, he presents himself as an old man, fully aware that his time is coming to an end and that the chivalric values he holds dear will pass into history with him. However, the *wajdelota* (bard) foretells that Kęstutis's memory will fuel courage and hope in future generations, eventually leading to the rebirth of his beloved Lithuania.

When Čiurlionis wrote to his brother Povilas, saying that if he managed to complete the overture, gain Reinecke's approval, and have it performed, he would name it *Kęstutis*, there may have been an ironic subtext in his remark. The struggles of a Lithuanian student with his German professor, who sought to squeeze his student's wild imagination into the refined but rigid framework of German musical civilization, vividly mirror Kęstutis's efforts to preserve Lithuania's distinct character and protect it from the influence of a Western power.

The complex history of Čiurlionis's *Kęstutis Overture* has turned it into not only a document of the composer's life but also a symbol of resistance to foreign influences. It reflects Lithuania's independence aspirations, from the time of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (as portrayed by Asnyk), through the birth of its modern identity at the dawn of the 20th century (as expressed by Čiurlionis), and continuing into the present day (in musical arrangements of Juozapaitis and Pitrėnas).

4. LIFE IN IMAGES

Čiurlionis's existential experiences were not only expressed through music; they sometimes took the form of images. Although he did not immediately capture these in the medium of painting, he described them vividly in his letters. During that memorable night, when he felt the silence of Elsässer Street like a general pause in his stay in Leipzig, he also perceived a monstrous, mysterious presence lurking in the darkness of the night:

> I like silence, but today I can't stand it. It seems to me that someone is lurking. It's frightening. It occurred to me that there is an important secret in this silence. At times, it seems that this silent and black night is some kind of giant monster. It has spread out and breathes slowly, slowly. Wide open, motionless, enormous eyes, and in them the depth of indifference and one important secret.[15]

[15] M. K. Čiurlionis to W. Morawski (May 14, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 404.

It is possible that a reflection of this vision can be found in Čiurlionis's early painting *Fear* from 1903. From a dark background emerges the wide-open mouth of a swinging bell, above which two large eyes stare at us, their whites a blood-red color. It is highly likely that this painting combines the memory of that unforgettable night with the imagined sound of bell-ringing, shaped by the harmonic formula of bells that Morawski had sent to Čiurlionis.[16] Interestingly, the bell motif appears in many of Čiurlionis's early paintings, often initiating a sequence of subsequent works: *Funeral Symphony* (1903) and *Storm* (1904). As I've previously suggested, it is possible that these images were born in Čiurlionis's imagination while playing with the musical formula of the bells on the piano in his Leipzig apartment.[17]

Through the experience of art Čiurlionis tried to understand his own existential situation. This is evident from his account of a visit to the Leipzig art museum.

> In the local museum, there are 8 halls. Entering for the first time, I was dazzled: Murillo, Böcklin at the beginning. What will come next? But in the following halls, the paintings were less beautiful. In the last ones, impossibly ugly. I remember feeling sad and regretful in the eighth section, knowing that I wouldn't see more beautiful paintings later. I went back to Böcklin. Is life similar to the Leipzig museum? And were the experiences I had already the most beautiful paintings?[18]

In the Leipzig museum, Čiurlionis encountered the paintings of Arnold Böcklin, which left a lasting impression on him. These were two paintings whose proximity took on symbolic meaning in the viewer's eyes: *Hymn to Spring* and *The Isle of the Dead* (figure 1).

The spring celebrated in the first painting symbolizes youth, the awakening of life, the blossoming of creative talents—a virgin period free from the worries of adulthood. *The Isle of the Dead*, where the ferryman's boat is headed, represents the mysterious place of eternal rest. A dense cluster of trees conceals the island's interior in impenetrable darkness. The afterlife remains unknowable.

Čiurlionis's description reflects the existential crisis the young artist experienced during his studies abroad. "Is everything good and beautiful in life already behind me?" he seems to ask, comparing his own existence to a walk through an art museum. Returning to Warsaw allowed him to overcome this crisis. The path to confronting the demons of the past laid in pursuing painting studies, first at Jan Kauzik's drawing school and later at the newly established Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. In the realm of painting, Čiurlionis experienced a renewed dawn of creative potential.

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[16] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (June 9, 1902), 430.

[17] Paweł Siechowicz, "Imagination triggered by musical sounds. Čiurlionis's way into musical painting," in *Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Vilniuje*, ed. Nida Gaidauskienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Institutas, 2016), 288.

[18] M. K. Čiurlionis to E. Morawski (May 20, 1902), in Čiurlionis, *Korespondencija*, 414.

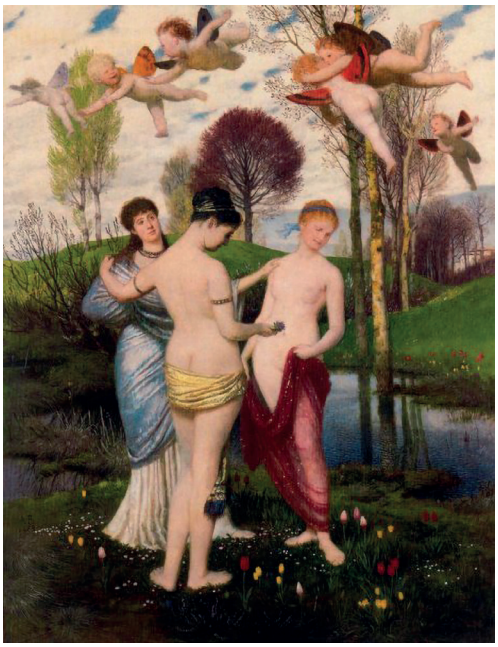

Figure 1. Arnold Böcklin, *Hymn to Spring* (1883)
and *The Isle of the Dead* (1883)

One of Čiurlionis's early paintings, *Night*, shows the continuation of the journey of a white-robed traveler who, in Böcklin's painting, seems to be at the end of his path—facing only darkness ahead. Čiurlionis arranges elements taken from Böcklin's painting in a new configuration adding a luminous moon glowing gently in front of the travel, restoring hope amid the night's gloom. In a second adaptation of the same theme, the traveler's silhouette dissolves into the moonlight, shimmering on the surface of the water, further emphasizing the eerie atmosphere of the scene (figure 2).

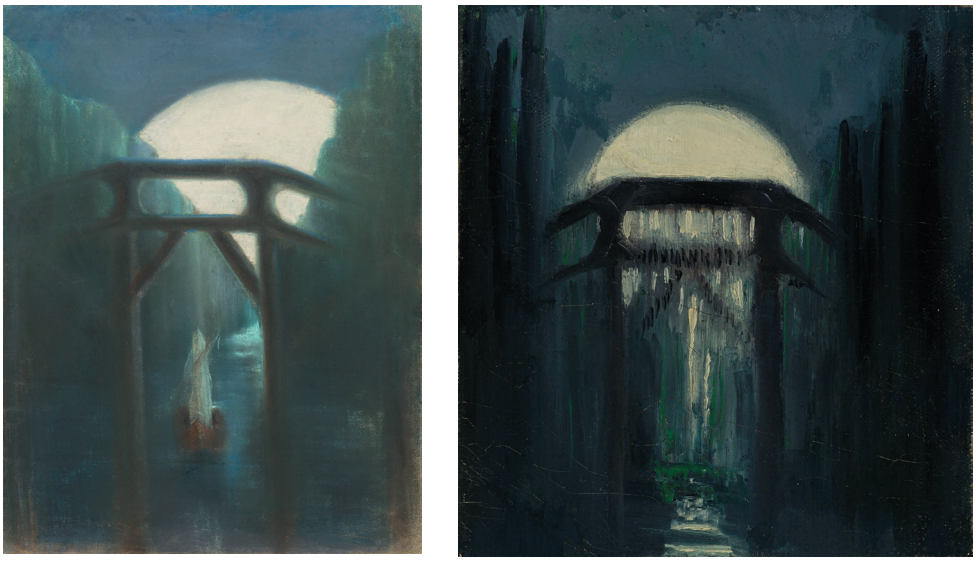

Figure 2. Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, *Night* (two versions, 1904/1905)

Other paintings from this period suggest that light and sound are interconnected in Čiurlionis's imagination. *Morning* (1903/1904) depicts the figure of a *wajdelota* (bard)—a conductor standing behind a lectern shaped like an archaic lyre made from the skull of a horned animal. With an uplifted hand, he summons the sun to resume its journey across the sky, drawing light out of the darkness. *Rustling of the Forest* (1904) shows scattered light in the forest, resembling the shape of a musician's hand playing on the slender trunks like the strings of a harp. It's possible that this painting corresponds to a key moment in Čiurlionis's symphonic poem *In the Forest*, where the appearance of the climactic theme is prepared by a slowing of the musical narrative, colored by the sound of a harp, associated with visions and the supernatural world of fairy-tale apparitions.[19]

The theme of the awakening and fading of light was also explored by Čiurlionis in his paintings *Sunrise* (1904) and *Sunset* (1904). In his early works, the figure of Moses appears—the prophet to whom God revealed Himself as a voice emanating from a burning bush. Moses's vision thus links light and sound, corresponding with the visionary experiences of the Lithuanian artist. Could the figure of the King, who in the *Rex* diptych is shown molding a man from clay at dawn and being sculpted in stone by the artist's hands at dusk, share something with the contemplative figure of Kęstutis, bending over his children like a kind Father, whose image is immortalized

[19] Siechowicz, "Imagination," 286.

by artists after his death—Asnyk in drama, Čiurlionis in music? The bearded figure, with a crown adorning his head, resembles the elderly man from Asnyk's tragedy, just as this old man resembles the God of the Old Testament, who, having created man, loses control over him.

Böcklin's *Hymn to Spring* also echoed in Čiurlionis's later work. The motif of spring flowers was taken up by Čiurlionis in his first painted *Sonata*. In *Scherzo*, the third movement of the painted cycle, he contrasts the colorful accents of flowers and butterflies with the massive silhouettes of rocks. In his painting *Spring* (1907), three trees grow on a lush meadow shimmering with the colors of flowers and butterfly wings. Could this be a distant echo of the three graces in Böcklin's painting celebrating spring (compare figures 1 and 3)? It seems highly likely that the memory of Böcklin's painting, in which the colors of flowers placed on two planes—foreground and background—correspond with the colors of the wings of putti floating in the air like butterflies over Čiurlionis's meadow, influenced the way Čiurlionis adapted the musical form of a sonata to painting. He positioned motifs representing the theme of the painting in the foreground at the bottom, transformed them in the background like in a sonata's development section, and repeated them at the top of the painting in a slightly modified manner, as occurs in the recapitulation of the sonata form.

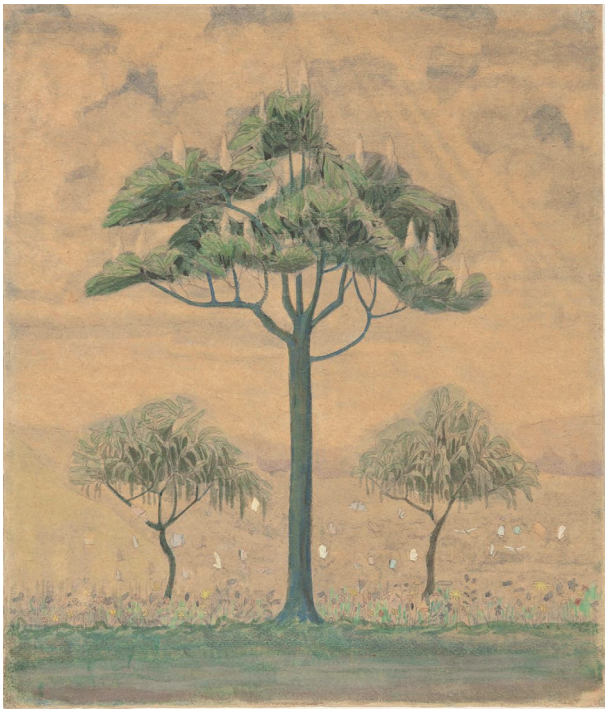

Figure 3. Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, *Spring* (1907)

The arguments described above complement the picture of Čiurlionis's creative process, which I have sought to illuminate in my earlier work. In this process, music connects with visual art in an exceptionally cohesive way. The reading of Čiurlionis's letters from Leipzig provides strong evidence that the themes he explored in both music and art should be interpreted in connection with his biography.

CONCLUSIONS

The examples I have discussed highlight the crucial role that the time spent in Leipzig played in shaping the artistic sensitivity of the Lithuanian creator. Čiurlionis arrived in Leipzig as a composer, eager to refine his skills in orchestration and immerse himself in the latest symphonic poems of Strauss. He left Leipzig with experiences that encouraged him to seek expression through painting.

During his stay in Leipzig, Čiurlionis sought ways to express his existential experiences through both sound and image—a fact documented in his letters to family and friends. By pointing out the links between the aesthetic experiences he gathered in Leipzig and his later visual art, I aimed to show how the composer gradually discovered within himself a need for pictorial expression. In my view, this need emerged progressively through the association of the perceived world with music (the world as a symphony, silence as a general pause), the discovery of visual impulses within musical structures (such as the bell motif sent by Morawski or the use of the harp in the symphonic poem *In the Forest*), and finally, through involuntary imagery (a monstrous creature emerging from the silence of night).

After returning to Warsaw and beginning his painting studies, Čiurlionis translated his musical experiences into images, such as *Funeral Symphony* and *The Rustling of the Forest*. His paintings also reflect influences from works by Böcklin, which moved him deeply at the Leipzig museum. One could say that a key factor in his artistic development was the adaptation of musical ideas to the possibilities of the visual medium, though inspiration from painting itself also played an important role. This process began in Leipzig, where the young composer struggled to adapt to life in a foreign city—but these very struggles proved to hold creative potential.

While composing the *Kęstutis Overture*, Čiurlionis was recognizing and consolidating his Lithuanian identity. Despite the need to conform to his teacher's expectations, he fought to preserve what was most valuable to him in the final score—themes derived from Lithuanian folk melodies. As a result of artistic compromises, the score came to symbolize the effort to maintain national identity when confronted with a foreign culture. Contemporary arrangements that fill in the gaps of the surviving score with musical material borrowed from different works strive to reconstruct the

original's dynamic tension between the familiar and the foreign. While they inevitably alter the original text, they remain faithful to the creator's intent.

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