

CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE TRENDS IN THE CONCERT *KANKLĖS* REPERTOIRE

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In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the structure of Lithuanian folk instruments kept changing. The *kanklės* acquired features of European musical instruments. The presently established term for a modified type of the Lithuanian *kanklės* is the concert *kanklės* (with the range of C-c4).

The model of the *kanklės* made in 1964 has not changed till the present day. That model was adapted for the performance of more sophisticated compositions that the *kanklės* players arranged by themselves or had specially composed for them by Lithuanian composers.

The traditional techniques of playing the concert *kanklės* that had formed and became established in the late twentieth century currently represent the basis of performance of the traditional *kanklės* repertoire. Despite its rather rich and controversial history, the concert *kanklės* is a relatively young instrument that can be said to be looking for its true character and true function. The present demand for, and supply of, music as well as its diversity are huge; therefore, the music repertoire is extremely rich. Among the plentiful trends of music styles, the concert *kanklės* musicians continue to maneuver and aim for the instrument to become established in the milieu of professional music. Contemporary academic composers like experimenting and looking for innovations as well as unheard-of and undiscovered sound and timbre. Thus, new compositions reveal some new *kanklės* playing trends.

NON-TRADITIONAL PLAYING TECHNIQUES:

The non-traditional playing techniques include: playing behind the bridge, playing a detuned string, playing covered strings, *glissando* on covered strings, *glissando* with a tuning key/metal bridge over a string, a semi-tone *glissando* pin, a sliding *glissando* cluster, *pizzicato* of individual notes and chords (by plucking a string with the fingers to the top), striking open strings with a palm, striking covered strings with a palm, striking strings with a wooden stick/a tuning key/ a metal stick/ a (piano) hammer, producing random sounds with a bouncing ball, playing with a (violin) bow over strings, and rapping at the body of the *kanklės*.

The use of non-traditional techniques of touching strings in the new music of the twenty-first century slightly changed the principles of notation. Close collaboration between composer and performer became of great importance. If it is impossible, it tends to result in new means of musical expression: the performer becomes like the co-author of the composer as each reads the musical text in their own ways.

Piece G.r. for *kanklės* solo (2002) by Egidija Medekšaitė is a step towards another stage of *kanklės* music repertoire. The music language of the piece significantly differs from other compositions written for the *kanklės* up to the present. Graphic notation of the musical text, precise use of time in seconds, and auxiliary means (a small metal ball, a pencil, playing behind the bridge, making a detuned string vibrate, the use of improvisation, bending of pins by extracting the sound of bending, etc.) opened up new possibilities of the use of the *kanklės* techniques.



No. 1 *Piece G.r.* for *kanklės* solo (2002) by Egidija Medekšaitė

Snowing in Magnolia Blossoms for *kanklės* solo (2007) by Vytautas Germanavičius consists of small and large episodes, intertwined through different musical characteristics, dynamics, and tempos. The form of the composition consists of four episodes united by five repetitive passages different in their mode and rhythm, and three small episodes, or connecting units. The characteristic of each episode or connecting unit is revealed by changes in the tempo, meter, and dynamics of the composition as well as by different means of sound expression: harmonics, chromatic *glissando* with a tuning key, *tremolo-glissando* by increasing the sound amplitude, *tremolo-glissando* by covering the strings with a palm, a trill passing into *tremolo*, quatertones, etc.



No. 2 *Snowing in Magnolia Blossoms* for *kanklės* solo (2007) by Vytautas Germanavičius



No. 3 *Snowing in Magnolia Blossoms* for *kanklės* solo (2007) by Vytautas Germanavičius

In the composition *From Circe to Charybde* (originally *От Цирцеи к Харибде*) for *kanklės* solo (2011), Kira Maidenberg used rather conventional playing techniques. However, a new approach to the *kanklės* by a foreign composer provided the instrument with different sound. Maidenberg used the usual sound sequence, or re-tuning (when not playing), random *tremolo* in a certain register and in a certain rhythm, random sound, striking open strings with the edge of a palm, playing behind the bridge, muffling the strings with the other hand, the re-tuning of the sounding string in a certain direction, the usual *glissando*, the trembling *glissando*, and a long *tremolo* chord. The composition was inspired by the Siren legend, written down by Leonardo da Vinci.

The wind died down, and the sails were hanging limp from the masts. Everything seemed to have frozen up. Even the silver reflection of the moon on the water did not move. Yet suddenly the silence of the night was disturbed by mysterious sounds. It seemed like the waves were whispering and sharing the impressions of the previous day. Soon, someone's enchanting singing came out of the depths of the sea. The voice was so tender, and the tune was so amazing that it was impossible not to admire it. The voice lulled the sailors to sleep. Then, with a splash, a strange creature with the girl's face and body and with a scaly tail of a fish emerged. It was a siren. Sirens are more menacing than the most terrible storm on the high seas. On reaching the swaying ship, the beauty of the sea quietly rose onto the deck. Her eyes sparkling, she touched each sailor with her hand, and those breathed their last without waking up. The ship sailed the oceans without purpose until it crashed into coastal reefs, taking the mystery of what the siren had done to the depths of the sea.

Paatkinimai

1. kanklės atvirkštine rodykle ir modifikuojama kanklės (atvirkštine rodykle ir pėlyje)	2. kanklės garsas kanklės garsas
3. garsas atvirkštine rodykle kanklės (atvirkštine rodykle ir pėlyje)	4. garsas dūka garsas dūka
5. garsas kanklės garsas kanklės	6. garsas garsas garsas garsas
7. garsas už kanklės garsas už kanklės	8. garsas garsas garsas garsas
9. garsas kanklės garsas kanklės	

No. 4 From Circe to Charybde (originally *От Цирцеи к Харибде*) for *kanklės* solo (2011) by Kira Maidenberg

Completely ignorant of the specificity of playing the concert *kanklės*, Maidenberg wrote the composition only by imagining how the composition could sound when performed by the instrument. The unheard-of character of the string vibration allowed the performer certain freedom. When trying to “read” and to correctly perform the set tasks, the first performer of the composition—the author of this presentation— had an opportunity to search and to experiment.

The first amplified *kanklės* (previously referred to as *acoustic-electric*) were produced in 2002. The use of that kind of *kanklės* in concerts caused considerable controversy among *kanklės* players. Given the fact that playing the instrument essentially differed from the tradition of playing the concert *kanklės*, it had to have a specially adapted repertoire.

I believe the specificity of the amplified *kanklės* allows the performer to play merely the compositions specially written for that instrument or carefully adapted transcriptions that do not diminish the sound of that type of *kanklės*. The main disadvantages of the amplified *kanklės* to be mentioned include the long-lasting sound that creates the impression of an eternal pedal (the music blends up and does not produce clear sound), the use of the tuning pin is very loud (as the *kanklės*’ sound is amplified, so is that of the pin), a huge resonance difference between the high and low ranges, and an impression of uneven timbre on the entire scale of the *kanklės* sound (the range of the amplified *kanklės* is C–c4). Positive characteristics of the amplified *kanklės* should also be noted, which may provide it with an advantage over the concert *kanklės*. Due to the sound amplification, that type of the *kanklės* can sound at a chosen volume and produce different effects by means of the loudspeakers and effect processors. That is especially important and interesting in the performance of contemporary academic (and popular) music (given the composers’ ideas).

Reflections by Vaida Striaupaitė-Beinarienė (2016/2017)

Reflections in the water can be both accurate and altered—they can have different shades and textures. This composition creates symmetrical and sometimes changing musical reflections, both horizontal and vertical, using the principle of symmetry in a variety of parameters—the pitch of sounds, rhythm, and texture. The composition won the Lithuanian Composer's Union new works for solo piano competition.

In 2017, I arranged the composition and adapted it to the amplified *kanklės*. I used amplifying effects and included several episodes from another composition by Vaida Striaupaitė-Beinarienė, the trio *Water Mirages*, also with the prevalence of the amplified *kanklės*.



No. 5 Reflections by Vaida Striaupaitė-Beinarienė (2016/2017)

Contemporary music is an especially ambitious field which requires from the performer not merely good technical skills, but also a philosophical approach, deep musical thinking, strong concentration, and particular hearing. When I tried examining the material of contemporary compositions, I often encountered various unexpected solutions and deeply encoded meanings. How performers manage to do it depends on their abilities, knowledge, and senses. The timbral exclusiveness, the abundance of playing techniques, the possibility of amplifying, and other exceptional characteristics of the concert *kanklės* provide more freedom in music making, in seeking professional performance, and in creating a new repertoire for the concert *kanklės* and a new academic history of music making.