

GENRE IN THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC BY ANDRIS DZENĪTIS

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Summary

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Andris Dzenītis (1978) is one of the most talented Latvian composers born in the 1970s. At present, he is a successful, active and internationally known composer, who is vivid, versatile and inimitable in his music. The composer's creative work covers all spheres of music: ranging from instrumental, choir and stage music to theatre, film and electronic music.

On the whole, in his instrumental music, despite the appearance of some classical genres (an instrumental concerto, a string quartet as well as a sonata and a symphony), there is a prevalence of compositions with an undefined genre – these are opuses with vivid, unusual and individual titles. Thus, it can be concluded that in Dzenītis' instrumental music, libergenres with unique titles are predominant²³.

Evaluating the interpretation of different genres in Dzenītis' instrumental music, the main conclusions are the following:

1. Two **classical genres** – the concerto and string quartet – have a significant place in his creative work. However, each of them is interpreted differently: e.g. the concerto genre, despite an individualized solution for each opus, maintains some significant characteristic features – an idea of dialogue, which reflects itself more or less in all concertos, and an idea of displaying the virtuosity of a solo instrument (it cannot be found, e.g. in the clarinet concerto *Urban Translated*, 2007/08, but it is implemented through the extended soloist cadenza in the piano concerto *Duality*, 2010). In case of the string quartet, the situation is different – it is hard to find any connection with the classical model of the string quartet, except only one aspect – the performing members (additionally, all of them are single-movement compositions). The most monumental classical genre – symphony (titled *Love is Stronger*) – appeared in 2017, and its performance was very successful and persuasive. Also, the sonata as a genre of chamber music has been in the composer's sight. When asked about the usage of these classical genres, the composer said that, on the one hand, it is like a game with the 'denominators' of classical genres (Dzenītis 2018b). On the other hand, Dzenītis also maintains the most essential characteristics of each genre, e.g. in the case of the symphony, it is a

²³Developing further the genre theory proposed by Lithuanian musicologist Gražina Daunoravičienė (1990a, 1990b), I use the term *libergenre* (originally, by Daunoravičienė, *librogenre*) to denote musical compositions where it is not possible to find signs of definite genres, consequently – the libergenre is a 'non-traditional' genre or 'free' genre.

globally understood topic, a deep and dramatic message; but in the case of the sonata, in turn, it is a conflict dramaturgy that comes from the classical sonata form.

2. On the whole, different models of **libergenre** prevail: 1) with recurrent ideas in the titles – ‘monologue’, ‘book’, ‘music’ (in Dzenītis compositions, they can only be considered as exceptions); 2) with unique titles – the main tendency within all of his creative work. Certain similarities concerning the genre situation can be also observed in music of Dzenītis’ contemporaries, e.g. Ēriks Ešenvalds, Anitra Tumševica, Santa Ratniece, and others. Similarly to Dzenītis, they do not completely avoid traditions. Thus, one can find both traditional genres and libergenres in the list of compositions by the mentioned composers.

An absolute denial of traditions, in turn, can be observed in the creative work by Gundega Šmite. The composer believes that, when considering contemporary music, genre has lost its significance. When asked about the role of genre in her music, Šmite answered: “I am not interested in genre as a composer, because I think that there are other priorities in contemporary music (which began with avant-garde in the 1950s), that define a composition more precisely [...]. No, working on a new composition, I do not think about what genre it should belong to.” (Šmite 2012) A similar situation can be seen in the instrumental music composed by Jānis Petraškevičs, Rolands Kronlaks and others. Thus, the creative work of Dzenītis vividly confirms the main tendency of the genre situation in contemporary instrumental music: it obviously reflects a gradual decline in the interest in genre, up to an actual denial of it.

3. A concept and philosophical idea of a composition, which is primarily expressed through a title, is always significant for a composer: it determines not only the dramaturgical solution of the composition, but often its form as well, which is particularly characteristic of libergenres – opuses which cannot be incorporated in the current system of genres. Nevertheless, it can be also reflected quite vividly within classical genres, specifically in the case of string quartets, since they are quite far from the traditional model of string quartet genre. The composer himself confirms that relating to, e.g. his saxophone concerto, it is “the essence of abstract music” (quoted after Lūsiņa 2014), although he made no secret of the fact that the content of this composition is a deep personal experience, without providing detail. Thus, the given title *E(GO)* is very significant to understand the content, since it functions as a code, a key for the perception of the composition’s main idea, although it cannot be understood simply and unambiguously.

4. As to performing members, a whole panorama can be characterised as manifold: most of the compositions in this group represent the sphere of chamber music, among them, there are opuses for various solo instruments and diverse chamber ensembles; there are significantly fewer opuses written for orchestra, although the composer's interest in orchestral music has been increasing recently. Thus, in terms of performing members, every single composition is different and unique, offering fresh combinations of colours and timbres.

5. In the course of the development of his creative work, processuality and continual narration become increasingly significant for the composer: "Particularly in recent years, I have been interested in a continual flow of music which does not seem to stop. When creating music, thinking in sequence is typical of me," says the composer (quoted after Bušs 2012). It explains the fact that within the external level of form, there is a predominant tendency to create single-movement compositions. Whereas, at the internal level of form, every single composition is created according to its concept and main idea, offering a different solution in every case. Nevertheless, there is a unifying factor – a gradual and determined development of music, as well as a clear direction towards a culmination, which is typical of Dzenītis: this was proven by analyses of the both the classical and libergenre compositions. The composer, when discussing his chamber symphony (*SIN*)*fonietta*, among other things revealed: "I cannot refuse transparent and outright emotionality, which is shown in my music by quite traditional perceptual affections, giving listeners a musical feeling and satisfaction." (Quoted after Auguste 2018)

A study of the composer's creative work proves that it is significant for him to not stop and linger on what has been achieved, but to continuously go forward and look for something new. The composer himself also expressed it clearly:

"I have always considered that an artist must search for new ideas and try to test oneself within various manifestations with different things all his life. That moment, when you stop and feel that something is very good and you could do it again and again, is really risky. I like to do experiments and search for new ideas within form solutions and instrumentation. It is a real passion for me." (Quoted after Bušs 2012)

Such a position is also reflected quite vividly in the sphere of genre, which is considered to be both a flexible and strong phenomenon: remembering the words of Evgenij Nazajkinskij – it is like 'a matrix', which unites compositions of a particular genre (Nazajkinskij 2003: 94–95). Dzenītis' compositions do not correspond to any 'matrix'. Every single work is different and unique (in terms of all parameters – title, performing members and form), and that is why the composer's creative work cannot be incorporated in the traditional system of genres.