

Čiūto

Lithuanian folk song

Harmonization: Juozas Tallat-Kelpša

Juozas Tallat-Kelpša (1889 -1949)

His ancestors were of Tatar nobility who established kinship with Lithuanians. J. Tallat-Kelpša attended high school in Palanga, Lithuania and received a diploma in St. Petersburg, Russia. His early training in music was at the hands of his father, who was a church organist. Later he attended the school for organists in Rokiškis.

The composer lived in Vilnius from 1905 – 1907, during which time he attended the school of the Russian musical society and learned to play the cello. He became a grade school teacher and also organist at St. Michael's Church. Tallat-Kelpša was the director of the Lithuanian benefit society choir, which was later joined by the „Kanklių“ society choir. The ensemble had 70-80 members, organized evening concerts, and sang in church. In 1907 he composed the music to „Eglė žalčių karalienė“ (lyrics by G. Landsbergis-Žemkalnis) and staged the musical with his choir.

J. Tallat-Kelpša studied composition theory in St. Petersburg. During this period he directed Lithuanian and Belorussian choirs, conducted operettas, participated in drama performances, accompanied soloists, and composed music for stage performances. During summer vacations in Lithuania he documented folk songs and organized local choirs.

During the Soviet era, on the occasion of the 1940 elections to the people's parliament, the composer wrote propaganda works for choir and piano. In 1944 he was the director of both the Kaunas State Theatre and the Kaunas Conservatory. From 1944-1949 J. Tallat-Kelpša was the senior conductor of the state opera and ballet theatres. He received a Soviet prize in 1945 as an honored artist and the Stalin Prize in 1948.

Čiūto (The Harvesters' Song)

This harvest song is about the hard work of villagers, in this case young men, who scythe the hayfields and wheat fields.

Harvest songs (“sutartinės”) can have a number of themes. Most important is the song cycle with the theme “We will go, brothers, to harvest the hay”. The work itself in this group of songs is not described in any detail. It is merely mentioned in the first stanzas. Subsequent stanzas describe the harvest mood and surroundings: the workers are surprised by a storm and take shelter under a tree. This portrait of reality is merely a poetic device, whose emotional effect is enhanced by picturesque language and metaphors: “a thunderstorm is rushing towards us...” The storm is just a poetic tool to express an idea or an emotion, and has no direct link to the work itself. Similes are used to describe the love and protection that parents provide: “the oak tree is not our father”, “its branches are not arms”, “its leaves are not words”. The oak tree is a symbol

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of strength and manhood, but it's only a tree. It is not a loving father, who understands his son, can hold him close, console and protect him.

Many of these songs ("sutartinės") were songs related to work: sung while working, resting, going to work, or returning home after a day's labors. They were only sung communally by groups of workers – while harvesting fields of rye, oats, or hay, while gathering flax, spinning yarn, or performing other labors. The relationship with work is portrayed from the standpoint of the patriarchal family. The emphasis is on the commonality of work and communal efforts. Good work is praised, because it is in fact a measure of a person's worth.

Sources:

Music Information Center website – A Serf Song (1938).

Publications published in Soviet times:

Repertoire of the 1955 Song Festival "On the shores of the Nemunas river".

"Anthology of Lithuanian Choral Music".