DEVELOPMENT OF ESTONIAN MUSIC FOR THE PIANO

by

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I hereby recommend that this document under my direction by Rein Vaga entitled Development of Estonian Music for the Piano be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

Signature of Major Professor  4/16/82

Acceptance for the School of Music:

Director, Graduate Studies in Music  4/16/82
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In order to understand the aesthetics of any musical form, one must first of all make the effort to appreciate the culture which produced it. For this reason, this paper contains a lengthy, although necessarily cursory, outline of the historical development of the Estonian nation. This historical perspective will hopefully acquaint the reader with the cultural background of the Estonians: one of the oldest, yet unfortunately one of the most unknown civilizations of North-Eastern Europe.

Although there exist a few renditions of the history and music of this country devoid of propaganda, there is very little in the English language dealing with the historical development, and next to nothing on the music. The most authoritative texts are therefore written in the Estonian language, and for this reason the following paper is based totally on my translation of these sources.

Since none of the music of Estonia is currently available outside of the Soviet Union, this report owes its completion to the generosity of a great many people: Professor Arthur Voobus, who sent this writer his seven volume work which is a monumental authoritative history of Estonia; Professor Roman Toi of the University of Toronto, who sent stacks of music at the graduate student rate (free);
Mai Laansen of the Association for Cultural Relations with Estonians Living Abroad, Tallinn, Estonia; and Juta Kurman of New York who also sent a generous amount of music. Special thanks go to Mr. Eduard Tubin in Tallinn for his correspondence concerning this project, as he is one of the composers studied in this paper.
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Chapter I

ORIGIN OF THE FINNO-UGRIC LANGUAGE GROUP

Estonia lies in north-east Europe. On the north and west, it is bounded by the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic sea; to the east lies Russia; to the south, Latvia.

The Estonians belong to the Finno-Ugric family of nations in which they, along with the Finns, Livonians, Karelians, and Vepsians form a sub-group called the Balto-Finnic. Other members of the Finno-Ugric family form their own separate groupings and are geographically separated from the Balto-Finns by a considerable distance. Except for the Hungarians, most of these groups in the Finno-Ugric family are dispersed throughout the eastern part of European Russia and Northwestern Siberia.¹

The original home of the Finno-Ugric language family is thought to be somewhere in the border areas of the Eastern Russian forest and steppe region, in the vicinity of the Volga. All of these people lived in this common geographical area until circa 2500 B.C., when the Ob-Ugrians and Hungarians left the common family. During the ensuing centuries, other sects broke with the original group, while the distant forefathers of the Estonians remained in their location until

the last century before the Christian era. It was at approximately this time that the Balto-Finnic group began a migration from the Volga region and slowly penetrated into their present habitat on the Baltic Sea.

Although it is not specifically known how many millennia this Balto-Finnic culture has existed, the consensus among archeologists and linguists is that the ancestors of the people who presently inhabit this region are members of one of the oldest civilizations in Europe.\(^2\)

These Balto-Finnic people were unknown to the ancient Greeks, although the Roman historians knew enough to label them collectively by the name of \textit{Aesti}; it was much later when this name came to be applied to the Estonians alone\(^3\) (the name of the country in the Estonian language is \textit{Eesti}).

\textbf{German Conquest - 13th Century}

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the western form of Christianity had spread from the south into the Scandinavian countries. The Russians in the mean time had been converted by missionaries from Byzantium. As a result of these conversions, the pagan Baltic peoples were constantly being attacked by crusaders from the East and West, and

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defended themselves successfully until the thirteenth century German conquest.

German merchants saw the economic advantages in penetrating the commercial centers in the Baltic and in Russia, and for this reason launched a well organized crusade with papal sanctions in the beginning of the thirteenth century. By 1218, all of southern Estonia was conquered by the Germans. This crusade marked the beginning of what was to become a permanent German colonization of the area.4

**Order of Teutonic Knights - 14th Century**

In 1219, after an agreement for much needed support from the King of Denmark, the German Bishop Albert landed in Northern Estonia, defeated the Estonians, and built a castle which centuries later would become the location of the capital of Estonia, Tallinn. In Estonian, "Taani-linn" means "Danish Castle."

The peasants rebelled continuously, forcing Denmark to realize that it would be unable to control Northern Estonia. As a result, the King sold his possessions to the Order of Teutonic Knights in 1346,5 and for nearly two centuries that Order remained as the ruling class in Estonia.


5. The Teutonic Knights were the remnants of the older German military order entitled Bretheren of the Sword.
Feudalization took place during these two centuries, and the territory of the Teutonic Order became known as Livonia.

By the mid sixteenth century, Old Livonia began to slowly disintegrate, allowing Ivan IV, Czar of Moscow, to launch a large scale offensive. The Russians conquered eastern and central Estonia, while the western and northern parts were split up between the Kings of Denmark and Sweden. The southern part of Livonia submitted to the Polish-Lithuanian State.

After several more decades of war, Sweden secured all of the Estonian and Livonian provinces, although the resident German nobility continued to exert an influential role over the peasants.

**Russian Rule – 18th Century**

In 1700, a coalition organized by Peter I of Russia fought against the Swedish King Charles XII. Once again, the Russians became the conquerors, destroying the Swedish defenses and taking into their possession Estonia, Livonia, and part of southeast Finnland.

The Russian conquest, now referred to as the Great Northern War, was to become one of the most devastating wars in history:

The campaigns left Estonia a desert, the Estonians a famine-stricken, disease-ridden remnant of the old peasantry. General Cheremetiev
was able to report to Peter: "There is nothing left to destroy...."  

It is estimated that the Estonian population was reduced to one-third of what it was before the war. The remaining peasantry lost what few rights they had enjoyed under Swedish rule: royal justice, hereditary privileges, and educational opportunities. Every check against the power of the landlord was eliminated.

**Russian Rule - German Landlords**

It was impossible for Peter to train a sufficient corps of officials to govern his newly acquired provinces. The Russian Czar relied instead on the local landowners; i.e., the German barons. These German Balts (remnants of the old Teutonic Order) asked only to be allowed to have undisputed possession of their estates and their serfs. In return, they promised to keep Estonia and Livonia the most orderly provinces in the Empire.

The German-Balts began to rebuild the ravished land and to begin production once more with the slave labor of the peasants:

In a word, the peasant was a dog, to be driven, beaten, sold and deprived...by his master who had every right over him but that of putting him out of his misery.... The peasants had no means of

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redress. They were unorganized and reduced to the last extremes of misery. They were illiterate and ignorant of the language of either their German or their Russian masters.

...They were not articulate, but the songs that voiced their misery went unheard by all but themselves, and a generation was to pass before any scholar had the curiosity to translate them.8

Political reforms began to be initiated by the German landlords during the middle of the eighteenth century as a hopeful means to increase the productivity of the serfs. Although these reforms were few and far between, the greatest reform came from the south in the guise of religion. It was this Lutheran impetus which gave the peasants desire for emancipation a religious sanction. The leaders of the reforming faction of the barons, especially the younger more liberally inclined ones, pressed the Czar for additional rights for the peasants. The result was a bill enacted in 1804 which gave the peasants who held land full tenant rights, including dues which were to be fixed by law. In addition, no peasants could be sold apart from the land which they had worked.

Alexander showed considerable compassion for the plight of the serfs. As a result of his firm persuasive abilities, a bill abolishing serfdom was passed in 1811 by the Estonian Diet, with a similar bill being passed in Livonia in 1818. The result of this action was that the

status of the serf population became that of a landless proletariat, whose rents were now to be paid in labor to the landlords. The serfs were still not permitted to come within the walls of the cities where the German classes lived.

A new agrarian system was confirmed by Nicholas I in 1849 which was to remain in effect until 1919. The essence of this reform was the division of each estate into two categories of land: the demense and the peasants, respectively. The new idea was that rents which had been paid in labor would be replaced by a monetary design. Eventually, the peasant was to be allowed to buy the section of land he worked.

This was a revolutionary idea. It changed the old feudal ways to a monetary economy, and began the principle that a peasant could actually become a land owner. This was the Estonian peasant's age-old dream; to become the owner of the land he had worked.

By 1868, the passport system was introduced to allow the peasants free movement, and the landlords right to sentence the peasants to corporal punishment was abolished. The growth of Estonians in the cities rose until by the late nineteenth century they were the predominant population and developed themselves into a bourgeoisie which lived side by side with the German-Balts.
Chapter II

THE NATIONAL AWAKENING

Kalevipoeg

The nineteenth century nationalist movement of the Estonian people received its greatest stimulus from the publication of folk-songs and folk-legends. A monumental work synthesizing this movement is the epic poem, Kalevipoeg. The author was Widri Roim Ristmets, and the poem was published in 1857 in German and in 1861 in Estonian. Here the message for the Estonian people was that they had once in mythological times been free. For the first time, many of their songs -- work songs, wedding songs, lullabies, songs of slavery, songs of a better life -- were presented in prose and musical form to capture the essence of their ancient heritage. Kalevipoeg was probably the most important factor influencing the national awakening of the Estonian people.

Ancient Folk Music

The Estonian cultural heritage had for centuries been formed by the creation, cultivation, and memorization of the ancient folk melodies. These melodies reveal stylistic characteristics which allow them to be assimilated.

9. The legend was also compiled in Finland. Although the versions differ, the ancient mythological characters are the same, revealing the ancient kinship between these two countries.
into two broad categories: 1) ancient melodies with narrow tessitura, monotonous rhythm, repetitive lines embellished by the performers improvisation; 2) the latter folk songs which consist of longer phrases, more lyrical style, wider tessitura and more varied rhythms.

Although a wide variety of rhythmic patterns occur in the ancient folk melodies, many are based on a redundant duple beat. These melodies are usually notated with four eighths per measure, since subdivisions of the beat seldom occur. Melodic movement is always restricted, often based on a pentatonic scale. See example 1:

Example 1. Łoőri, Łoőri, Łoőkene.

The austere sound of gently changing rhythms was to become one facet of the folk music composers of the twentieth century would try and capture. This recitative type of melody is shown in example 2:

Example 2. Ima vei nuku nurme pääle.
During the nineteenth century, folk music obtained a well developed interior structure of the bar. This development was due in part to the influence of the German Liedertafel, which resulted in the emergence of the popular song based on major-minor tonalities. See example 3:

![Example 3](image)

Example 3. Mina möistan morra teha.

**Song Festivals**

During the decade of the 1860's, a small but growing number of the peasantry began to receive a formal education. In 1857, the first Estonian newspaper was published in Pärnu, and seven years later another newspaper began publication in Tartu. These newspapers became the platform for all the Estonian reformers and were extremely important in vocalizing the nationalist movement.

These two newspapers were founded by J.W. Jannesen, who also founded a musical society called Vanemuine, which organized a song festival in 1869 in Tartu at which 44 male choirs and five brass bands assembled -- nearly 900 people altogether.¹⁰ For the first time, a huge mass of Estonian people gathered together in an atmosphere conducive to

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raising their consciousness of belonging together as a nation. Choirs became popular throughout the country, with a concurrent rise in music publishing. The song festivals were held intermittently: six more were held before the turn of the century. The festival in 1896 included 205 mixed choirs and 138 male choirs with the total number of participants totalling over 5600 people. In 1939, there existed choirs with a total of 25,000 singers in the country. During the years of Estonian political independence (1918-1940), the national song festivals took place four times with from 15,000 to 21,000 participants, performing in front of an audience of over 100,000, or one tenth of the entire population.

**Political Oppression**

After a setback during the reign of Alexander III, the Estonian nationalist movement once again resumed with increasing vigor under the rule of Nicholas II. The struggle between German-Balt interests, Russian imperialism, and the rights of the rising Estonian urban community were the burning issues in Tallinn. In this city, a lawyer named Konstatin Päts (later President of the Estonian

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Republic) began an influential newspaper in 1901 called Teataja. As a result of his political editorials, the Estonians for the first time voted for and obtained a clear majority on the town council of Tallinn.

In 1905, the year of revolution began in Russia, with the strike movement immediately spreading into Estonia. All political parties were dissolved, and the Estonian press was banned. After 1905, the Russians were grateful to the German-Balts for playing a part in suppressing the revolution in Estonia. By 1914, the German-Balts still held 90 per cent of the large estates and 60 per cent of the privately owned land in Estonia. They enjoyed most of the wealth in the cities, and over the decades built up the Lutheran church until it had become nine times as large as the Russian Orthodox.13

Sovereign Republic

Despite the revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks did not enjoy absolute dominance over all of Estonia. In February of 1918, the Bolsheviks outlawed all members of the German-Balt nobility in Estonia. This move to counter the German-Balt control was to have unexpected repercussions, as the resolution caused the German forces to start an offensive into Estonia. However, before their offensive

had reached Tallinn, the Estonian Republic claimed its independence on February 24, 1918, with the capital in Tallinn.

This was short lived, as German troops entered Tallinn, suppressed all national institutions, sent political prisoners into exile, and made German the official language.

In the fall of 1918, Russia attacked and captured the German border defenses. With the defeat of the Germans, the front-line was manned by Estonian military units. Konstantin Päts acted as the Estonian Minister of Defense and declared that there would be "no compromise with the Communists."

By February 24, 1919, the first anniversary of the Estonian Republic, the Russian army was on its way to defeat. Peace was achieved in February of 1920, as Soviet Russia "unreservedly recognized the independence of the Estonian Republic and renounced voluntarily and forever all rights of soverignity over the Estonian people and territory." 14

Chapter III
GROWTH OF PIANO MUSIC

During the nineteenth-century cultural awakening, the piano was relatively unknown among the Estonian people. Although some pianos did find their way into the homes of the German-Balt aristocracy, there was little chance that these expensive instruments could be purchased and utilized by the oppressed classes.

The Germans had politically dominated the Estonians for over six centuries. With the gradual emancipation of the peasantry and the resultant nationalism, the Estonians considered anything German anathema: the piano and its repertoire were considered particularly German. Therefore, what was to grow in popularity during the nineteenth century were instruments such as the violin and harmonium, which along with the brass bands and choirs were more appropriate for joining together and playing in an enjoyable atmosphere. In sum, the piano for most of the century was ill-suited and out of place in the expression of music indigenous to the Estonian people.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, social conditions were becoming more amenable for the growth of more serious art music, although there was no substantial
school for professional training in music. For this reason, the most talented were obliged to travel to St. Petersburg for study at the Conservatory.

Study of composition was important for these young Estonians, since they were all part of the late nineteenth-century cultural awakening and hoped to capture their vocal music heritage and express it in music. For this reason, most of these students were to study organ, since this was taught in conjunction with composition whereas piano was not.

**Rudolf Tobias**

Rudolf Tobias (1873-1918) began study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1893. He studied organ as his major instrument, as well as music theory and composition under Rimski-Korsakov. For his final in composition, he composed a cantata for male-choir, soloists and orchestra entitled *Johannes Damascenus*.

After graduation, Tobias returned to Tartu where he taught piano, conducted a choir, and taught at several of the high schools. He gave several recitals, and impressed audiences with his ability to improvise on provincial folk melodies. With some local financial backing, he was able to travel to Paris where he became acquainted with the modern opera. From Paris he moved to Teplitz in Bohemia (a region in west Czechoslovakia: formerly in Austria) and
eventually ended up in Leipzig. The premiere of his oratorio *The Sending of Ionah* made such an impact that it ended up in Leipzig. The premiere of his oratorio *The Sending of Ionah* made such an impact that it in effect led him to the professorial chair in music at the University of Berlin-Charlottenburg, where he taught until his death in 1918. His vast output includes cantatas, oratorios, symphonic poems, songs for choir, choir accompanied by orchestra, and solo organ works.

For the piano, his output included a piano concerto (the first by an Estonian-born composer), two sonatas, and at least 45 character pieces including a "Fantasia on Estonian Folk Melodies."

In compositional style, Tobias was partial to the short character pieces expressed in song form reminiscent of Schumann, while assimilating Chopin's harmonic style for capturing the concept of a folk song. See example 4:

These early works for piano were Tobias' attempt to capture at the keyboard the aesthetics of the ancient folk traditions. Rimsky-Korsakov had constantly pressed his young Estonian students to recognize their own heritage and to express this in music.\textsuperscript{15}

In his later years, Tobias experimented more with neo-classic formal structures, while adhering to ambiguous tonalities expressed with the use of chromaticism. His modern style can be seen in the Prelude in C-sharp minor (example 5).

Example 5. Prelude in C-sharp minor, measures 1-4.

Although the piano works of Tobias do not stand as his outstanding achievements, they represent one of the first attempts for a native composer to give to the Estonian people a piano repertoire which tried to capture a feeling of their heritage. In addition to raising the musical consciousness of the Estonian people through his teaching, interpretation, and articles on music, he led the way in raising the folk song melodies to a level of art: away from the Baltic-German influence in his late works, and away from the Russian models of his mentor Rimsky-Korsakov.

**Theodor Lemba**

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the piano had become firmly established as a solo instrument, with many young men now specializing in the instrument at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

One of the first Estonians to establish a career as a pianist was Theodor Lemba (1876-1962) who showed such great talent that he was awarded a scholarship at St. Petersburg. After graduation, he toured through Germany and France, and finally settled in Vienna in 1904 in order to study with Leschetitzky. He studied with the famous pedagogue for two years, and then accepted a position on the piano faculty at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1915. From 1922-1944, he taught at the Tallinn Conservatory. In 1944, Lemba was forced to immigrate to the United States.
Artur Lemba

Artur Lemba (1885-1963) followed his brothers example and was accepted at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1898. Before he had finished his studies, he had won a gold medal in piano performance as well as a silver medal in composition. His abilities were admired to such an extent that he was offered a position on the faculty immediately following his graduation in 1908; by 1915 he was granted full professorship.

Interrupted by the October Revolution, he left St. Petersburg for Tallinn, where he taught at the growing Tallinn Conservatory. From Tallinn, Lemba made extensive concert tours through Finland, Germany, and Hungary and was highly acclaimed for his performances of the Schumann Symphonic Etudes, Balakirev's Islamei, the late Beethoven Sonatas, as well as the Tchaikovsky and Liszt piano concertos. On occasion he would perform some of his own works along with some other Estonian compositions, but generally felt that the Estonian repertoire for piano was rather weak.

Artur Lemba had studied under Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov, and from there had inherited a direct line of

16. Ibid., 342.
romanticism which caused him to oppose the emerging "new" music. In his own compositions, Lemba continued to work primarily in a tonal framework, often supporting the simple melodic line with a clear and straightforward harmonic progression. See example 6.

Example 6. Järve Kaldal (Shores of the Lake), measures 1-3.

Lemba's works do not show a great deal of progressive movement in an evolutionary context. He enjoyed working within the framework of the nineteenth century concept of tonality, and never became more venturesome as the twentieth century progressed. What Lemba was able to capture however, was the essence of the folk melody: its simple and natural melodic movement, repetitive rhythmic patterns, and slow harmonic movement.

In the short character piece entitled "Kúlas," several of these compositional traits can be observed (example 7). The key of F-major is emphasized by the pedal point on F which is suggestive of the drone of the bag-pipes (a popular instrument for several centuries). Parallel movement of thirds in the melodic line was a typical method of
improvising a harmony in a folk tune. The counter melody in the left hand is based on the soprano part and moves in parallel motion with that part, maintaining the predominantly conjunct motion.


In measure 5, the drone in the bass moves to imitate the melody, the purpose being to establish the dominant. Harmonically, the establishment of the dominant is used to make the ensuing modulation to A-flat major (relationship of a third) more natural. This modulation is a surprise, since the dominant-seventh (of F-major) emphasized with the sforzando in measure 6 implies a return to tonic. See example 8.

Example 8. Kūlas, measures 5-6.
A-flat major is exposed long enough in measures 7-8 to clearly establish this tonality, and again in measure 9 a relationship of a fifth is used (to the sub-dominant of A-flat major) to modulate to D-flat major. Once again, third relation from D-flat leads to B-flat in measure 11, although this time in the minor mode. The B-flat minor tonality is never clearly established, as it becomes part of the modulation back to tonic. See example 9.

Example 9. Kúlas, measures 7-12.

This small work is in song form (ABA) with an exact return to the theme in measure 12. However, there is no particular melodic or rhythmic contrast in the B section (measures 7-12). This section may best be described as a simple harmonic variation on the material presented in the A section. The return of the folk melody theme in measure 12 is exact, although
embellished with octave support of the melody. After some brief modulations, the work remains in tonic until measure 21. Measure 22 begins a small coda which is based on the descending sixteenths of the opening melodic phrase. In measure 24, the tremelo in the bass blurs the establishment of F-major by alternation between F and G-flat, and then F and E-natural. Rhythmic augmentation occurs in the final four bars as the work quietly concludes with the E-F tremelo in the left hand being turned into an appoggiatura in the right. See example 10.


Artur Lemba was one of the early Estonian composers successful in expressing specific national individuality in the style of a serious art form. The result was not a mere adaptation of folk melodies to a simple accompaniment: rather a synthesis of the expressions painted by the centuries of folk heritage.
Heino Eller

Heino Eller (1887-1970) received his early musical training in composition in Tartu from Rudolf Tobias. In 1909 he was accepted by the St. Petersburg Conservatory, but unfortunately injured his hand and was forced out of the performance program. He decided to concurrently study law at the University while taking courses in composition at the Conservatory. During the Bolshevik Revolution, he was forced to leave the city, and then returned in 1920 to finish his program of study in composition. From 1920 until his death in 1970, Eller taught at both the Tartu Music School and the Tallinn Conservatory.

Eduard Tubin wrote of Eller, "He never specifically uses folk melodies, although the atmosphere he creates often projects the folk-lore thought, emotion and character of the people. His music requires a listener knowledgeable of Eller's style in order to understand the composers intent." (authors translation)\textsuperscript{17}

Eller's manipulation of the melodic line to represent folk music is based on his study of the compositional techniques of Grieg.\textsuperscript{18} His melodic lines are never complex,

\textsuperscript{17} Asvik, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol.IV, 18.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Muusikalise Lehekulgi}, ed. P. Kuusk (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1979), 89.
utilizing for the most part a narrow range and a clearly recognizable rhythm. All voices in his works are treated in a linear fashion and are carefully worked out to enhance the harmonic structure. In form, Eller sticks rigidly to established frameworks (e.g., sonata-allegro form) and has been criticized for allowing the formal construction to be emphasized at the expense of the music.

Although Eller is best known in Estonia for his orchestral and chamber works, he wrote dozens of works for solo piano. Many of his early works (circa 1920) reveal his attempt to work out musical concepts within strict classical or baroque polyphonic forms. Later works show an increasing thinning of texture while still maintaining a very tightly organized framework.

The Sonata in G-minor, composed between 1935-1940, reveals many aspects of Eller's succinct style. The first theme in the opening sonata-allegro form is stated immediately as a solo line supported by the barest harmony in the bass. See example 11.

Example 11. Sonata in G-minor, measures 1-6.
In measure 3, the melodic line contains a triplet figure which permeates the entire first movement and in effect becomes the most important rhythmic motiv used in the slow movement, as well as in the final movement. The motiv as used in the second and third movement is shown in example 12.


Another of Eller's traits is the constant shift of the rhythmic pulse which creates the natural flow reminiscent of the folk melody. See example 13.

Harmonic rhythm is rapid in the opening measures of this sonata, where tonic is established in the second measure and the dominant minor alluded to in measure 6. A favorite devise in his style is the sudden shift in tonality brought about by the use of sequence as shown in example 14.


In measure 19 of the 50-measure exposition, Eller already begins a development of the opening theme by introducing it into the left hand part in what at first appears to be F-major but in measure 20 turns out to be D-minor. See example 15.


The F-major ambiguity of measure 19 is additionally stressed by the cadence on tonic in measure 18. The ear does not expect the allusion to F-major in measure 20, and indeed the major triad is short lived. This manipulation of tonality
is a trademark of Eller's style, as he constantly changes his harmonies logically, while maintaining an intense atmosphere by alluding toward one tonality while actually establishing another.

Since much of the exposition has been a development of the opening theme, one might expect a large intricate development section based on fragments of the opening theme. Instead, Eller allows only 30 measures for this development section which begins with a complete statement of the opening theme in E-flat minor. See example 16.


This theme is then treated for 14 measures, stated in the keys of E-flat minor, B-flat minor, and F-sharp minor (G-flat minor), with the statements alternating between the right hand and left hand in stretto. In measure 66, exactly half way through the development, Eller introduces a new theme consisting of parallel fourths and fifths supported by a florid left hand line in sixteenths. See example 17.

This new theme might actually be the contrasting lyrical second theme one might have expected to appear in the exposition. Its effect in the development is a striking contrast of relaxation and stability by means of its quiet organum quality. This theme will later resume its proper position in the recapitulation as the coda to the first movement.

Eller was criticized by his contemporaries for composing esoteric music. In many instances, the austere and primitave expressions result in strikingly beautiful images of the folk-lore he tried to capture in music. Unfortunately, his strict reliance on the formal structure to carry his ideas more often than not tended to weaken rather than strengthen the music.
Eduard Tubin

Already during the years of the cultural awakening of the late nineteenth century there had grown the urge to write down and preserve the folk melodies. This categorization eventually resulted in a compilation of nearly 16,000 melodies representing centuries of cultural development in Estonian folk culture. Every Estonian composer tried to utilize this vast resource by developing a musical aesthetic which could convincingly contain and express this heritage. Although large forms such as the Eller Sonata in G-minor were developed, the most effective and suitable medium was found to be the small character piece based on one well-known melody.

Of all the students of Heino Eller, Eduard Tubin was to become the most productive. He was born in 1905 and at the age of fifteen entered the Tartu Seminary (Tartu Õpetaja Seminar). In 1924 he entered the Tartu Highest Music School (Tartu Kõrgemasse Muusikakool) where he studied composition and theory with Eller. After his graduation in 1931, Tubin traveled constantly during the 1930's between Tallinn and Tartu directing choirs and promoting musical activities.

19. Aavik, op.cit., 281. These are housed in Tallinn at the Estonian Folklore Archives.
Eller had insisted that Tubin become completely versed in classical and romantic compositional styles. As a result, Tubin developed a deep understanding and appreciation of the works of Beethoven, Brahms, and especially Sibelius. Many of his early works are in a direct line both structurally and harmonically with the late nineteenth century neo-classicists, while his works from 1930 on reveal his appreciation of contemporary compositional techniques.20

As a result of Tubin's ability to assimilate the techniques of the nineteenth century composers, he was more successful than Heino Eller in compositions requiring large formal structures. He composed eight symphonies which were performed throughout Europe and Scandinavia.

During the 1930's and 1940's, Tubin began experimenting with a combination of Estonian folk melodies and twentieth century compositional techniques. This was in part due to an earlier sojourn to Budapest which resulted in a close and long lasting friendship with Zoltan Kodaly.

In 1934, Tubin composed Two Preludes for Piano which exhibit his individualized style. In the first prelude, marked Lento Espressivo, the austere melody

20. Tubin was especially interested in modern music, and spent much time organizing concerts which included works by Stravinsky, Kodaly, Honegger, etc.
resembles an early folk melody by its usage of a narrow range and simple rhythm. See example 18.

Example 18. Prelude No. 1, measures 1-6.

The use of triplets in measure 2 establishes a secure feeling of the triple rhythm which is quickly altered by the feeling of a duple pulse in measures 3 and 4. The melodic phrase is therefore actually based on two groups in three, followed by two groups in two: \(10 = 3 + 3 \cdot 2 + 2\). Example 19 shows this rhythmic arrangement.


This rhythmic formula is loosely based on the type of folk melody which commonly uses this type of rhythmic arrangement. This is shown by example 20.

Example 20. Akame, mehed, minema.
The B section of this simple song form (ABA) introduces a contrast to the rhythmic ambiguity of the opening melody by maintaining a steady pattern of three-eights to a measure. Here Tubin implies C-major in the ascending right hand line while the left hand descends chromatically. Measure 17 is the climax of the B section which "resolves" suddenly from the fortissimo to a pianissimo in measure 18. The return to Tempo I in measure 21 is a quiet, slightly embellished restatement of the folk-song like theme which provides the ending to the work. See example 21.


The second prelude, Eesti Motiivi, is based explicitly on a popular folk-song melody (example 22).

Example 22. Üksi vennake.
Tubin slightly alters the melody and adds a counter-subject in the left hand which is offset by one-sixteenth. Example 23.


This two-phrase melody is repeated again with slightly more harmonic support. After four measures of transition material, the theme returns again, this time in octaves, with the preceding transitional passage now becoming the florid left-hand part. See example 24.

After a triple-forte in measure 19, the theme returns as in the first prelude, quietly and unadorned. The left hand provides the harmony with dotted-eighths, which suggests an improvisatory character, as shown in example 25.

Chapter IV

MUSICAL GROWTH DURING THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, piano performance as well as compositions for the instrument had gained a firm position in the musical life of the country. Almost all of the composers and performers were trained in the foreign models and cultures taught at St. Petersburg, and many returned to help build a firm foundation for musical education in their homeland.

When the Estonian army defeated the Russians in 1918 and formed the sovereign country of Estonia, a result of the war of independence was a total break with the Russians. Naturally, the young Estonian musicians had no desire to venture to St. Petersburg for their education. It therefore became necessary to systematically organize the education of musicians as well as the concert life in the now sovereign nation.

After the war, many of the Estonian musicians who had been pursuing careers throughout Europe returned to help in the building process. Although the move from large music centers to a considerably smaller scene was probably in many cases a difficult adjustment, the move proved exceedingly beneficial as the best performers returned to their now free democratic homeland to instruct the new generation of young artists.
Tartu Higher Music School

August Nielander attended the Conservatory at St. Petersburg, and after graduation became the band master of the Imperial Guard regiment of the Czar. During the October Revolution, Nielander returned to Tartu and organized the First Estonian School of Music in 1918. This school was to merge in 1925 with the Higher School of Music which was founded by Juhann Aavik.

The growth of the Higher School of Music was rapid, as Tartu had for over four centuries been a "university town."

The value of Tartu, like that of all universities, must be assessed not by quantity but by quality.... It is the atmosphere of Tartu that is significant, the spirit of the town and of its students.

Tallinn Conservatory of Music

In Tallinn, the Superior School of Music opened in 1919. This school gained a reputation quickly, as most of the faculty was of superlative quality. Enrollments during the first year exceeded 1000 students.


Both Artur Lemba and his brother Theodor worked to establish the piano department.

For lack of a better model, the administration of this school simply took the curriculum of the Conservatory in St. Petersburg and implemented it as the initial program. This curriculum was eventually to adjust itself to the needs of the Estonian culture. In 1925, the first class of graduates from the school emerged with a great deal of fanfare and publicity: for the first time, young Estonians were receiving their musical training from Estonian professors in their own native language and in their own land.

The Superior School of Music by 1933 had reached such an advanced stage of development that the name was changed to the Conservatory of Tallinn. It had 34 faculty members: 7 full professors; 14 senior teachers; 9 teachers; and 4 part-time faculty members. Part of the graduation requirements for piano were:

1. Bach fugue
2. Beethoven Sonata
3. Mozart or Haydn Sonata
4. Schumann work
5. One large or several small Chopin works
6. Virtuoso work of Liszt
7. Modern work
8. One movement from a piano concerto
9. One piece chosen by examiners
10. One ensemble piece


In 1920, there were comparatively few native professional pianists in Estonia. By 1940, hundreds had graduated from the two major music schools. During the 22 years of national independence, the young people had the privilege of receiving expert instruction, and the quality of performance eventually reached the standards of Western Europe.

Ties with former students resulted in frequent concert tours by Russians. In 1934 for example, Prokofiev gave a series of concerts in Tartu and Tallinn promoting his own works. The year 1927 included a substantial list of guest performers from all over Europe: Frederick Lamond; Ignaz Friedman, a student of Leschetitzky; Eduard Erdmann; Michael Zadora, a student of Busoni; Robert Casadesus; Anna Ehlers, a pupil of Wanda Landowska, etc.27

Many of the aspiring native talents who graduated from Tallinn and Tartu increased their knowledge and abilities by traveling to larger cultural centers in Europe. Vladimir Padva for example, taught at the Tallinn Conservatory and from there went to study with Zadora in Berlin. Many were to follow his example; furthering their careers in Germany or in France. These people brought back to Estonia their acquired knowledge, new ideas, and new impressions.

27. Ibid., 340.
Unfortunately, many of these younger generation pianists were caught up in the war years of the 1940's and were forced to end their careers and leave the mainstream of musical development. With the Russian invasion in 1940, the German invasion and occupation of 1941-1944, and the Soviet annexation in 1944, musical freedom of expression ground to a halt.

From 1944 on, Estonian composers were forced to follow guidelines established by the State. It is true that State resources are available for the arts in the Soviet Union, but the arts in Estonia now must acquiesce to the Russian Rule: ethnic and cultural values are not part of the Soviet design for social equality.
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