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THE PHENOMENON OF SINGING ‘FACE-TO-FACE’
IN THE PRACTICE OF LITHUANIAN POLYPHONIC
SUTARTINĖS SONGS

ABSTRACT

Questo articolo affronta il fenomeno del canate ‘faccia a faccia’ nella pratica polifonica lituana *sutartinės*. All’inizio del XVI sec., il cronista Maciej Strykowski descriveva il cantare «uno verso l’altro con la bocca spalancata». Zenonas Slaviūnas ha posto l’attenzione su uno specifico modo di cantare, durante la registrazione di diversi gruppi di cantori prima della Seconda guerra mondiale. Sebbene il fenomeno non sia stato studiato finora, si può ipotizzare che il canto ‘faccia a faccia’ sia essenzialmente un tipo di *sutartinės* di alto livello (la parola *sutartinės* deriva dal verbo *sutarti*, che significa mettersi d’accordo con un’altra persona). Alcune particolarità del canto ‘faccia a faccia’ dipendono da una differente comunicazione: quando si canta in due (‘all’opposto’), in tre (in canone, in ‘circolo’), in quattro (una coppia opposta all’altra), la comunicazione ‘faccia a faccia’ facilita il coordinamento tra le voci, aiuta a raggiungere la ‘rugosità’ richiesta dal canto, per sentire la vibrazione di un altro corpo e creare uno specifico spazio acustico.

PAROLE CHIAVE *sutartinės*, faccia a faccia, rugosità, armonia, comunicazione

SUMMARY

The article discusses the phenomenon of singing ‘face-to-face’ in the practice of Lithuanian polyphonic *sutartinės* singing. The chronicler Maciej Strykowski described singing «to each other with their mouths wide open» as early as the 16th century. Zenonas Slaviūnas drew attention to a specific way of singing during sound recording the singing of several singers’ groups before WWII. Although this phenomenon has not been studied so far, it can be assumed that ‘face-to-face’ singing is essential for high-quality *sutartinės* singing (the word *sutartinės* is derived from the verb *sutarti* ‘to agree’ with another person). Peculiarities of singing ‘face-to-face’ depend on different communication when singing in twos (opposing), threes (canon, ‘circle’), fours (pair opposite a pair), ‘face-to-face’ communication during singing facilitates the coordination of voices, helps to achieve the desired ‘roughness’ of singing, to feel the vibrations of another body, and creates a specific acoustic space.

KEYWORDS *sutartinės*, face-to-face, roughness, harmony, communication



1. Introduction

BEFORE discussing the phenomenon of singing ‘face-to-face’ of *sutartinės*, I will briefly describe the main features of these songs. *Sutartinės* are characterised by a specific musical language, archaic texts and elements of ritual choreography. The name for ancient polyphonic chants, called *sutartinės*, derives from the verb *sutarti* ‘to agree/attune’ with another person or ‘to reach an accord’. Broader meanings of the verb *sutarti* ‘agree’, cf., can also be ‘correspond/coexist/reconcile/resolve work in common/coordinate actions alongside’ and ‘tune/match/reconcile voices singing or instruments playing’.¹ Finally, the noun *sutartinės* ‘polyphonic Lithuanian folk songs’ correspondingly means ‘conformity/harmony/rhythmicity at doing something’ or, simply, ‘harmony/concord’.² Characteristic features of *sutartinės* are: linear polyphony; intertwining voices with regular or frequent harmonization at the interval of second; narrow melodic range; polyrhythms and rhythmic complementarity with frequent syncopation; a syllabic relationship between music and text; polytextuality (two different texts performed simultaneously); an abundance of onomatopoeic sounds such as *tūto*, *dauno*, *tititi*, *totata* and the like; the syncretic nature of the performance, where music (singing/playing instruments), text and movement are closely linked.³ The role of females predominate in the vocal polyphonic practice. A review of the plentitude of written descriptions of *sutartinės* permits the assertion that women were the fundamental *sutartinės* performers (singing by men is rarely mentioned).⁴

Many years of *sutartinės* singing observation from the side, both in formal and informal settings, have usually shown the close formation of *sutartinės* singers (in a circle, semicircle, facing each other) and singing ‘face-to-face’. For the first time, attention was drawn to such external behaviour of singers at the end of the 16th century.

The traveler and ethnographer Maciej Strykowski (1547-1593) described in the *Chronicle*⁵ the most important, according to him, pagan festival of that time, which was celebrated at the end of October when all crops had already been harvested. They would then hold a compound feast, sacrificing food and animals in abundance to their god Žemininkas (*Ziemiennik*):⁶

1. LKŽ XV: p. 948.
2. LKŽ XIV: pp. 238-239.
3. It is noticeable that *sutartinės* constitute an ancient phenomenon stemming from the Stone Age, the days of the hunting and gathering culture, a fact that both Lithuanian and foreign scholars often repeat in the academic literature (SLAVIŪNAS, *Raštai*, p. 276; ŠIMONYTĖ-ŽARSKIENĖ, *Skudučiavimas*; RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, p. 54-84; WIORA, *Die vier Weltalter*, p. 24; HICKMANN, *La musique poliphonique*, p. 244; *et al.*). For example, Marius Schneider, a distinguished researcher of ancient polyphonic forms, writes in a letter to Slaviūnas that the second intervals of *sutartinės* belong to the era of the hunting culture, i.e., the prehistoric period (SLAVIŪNAS, *Raštai*, p. 215)
4. SLAVIŪNAS, ed., *Sutartinės*.
5. STRYKOWSKI, *Kronika*.
6. Žemininkas (Ziemiennik), Žemėpatis, Žemėpati, Žemeliūkštis, Žemynas, Žemynėlis – the god of the earth, harvest and farm and home.

[...] also, they *sing to each other with their mouths wide open* (emphasis mine D.R.-V). I often attended their feasts and celebrations in Livonia, Kurzeme, Samogitia and Lithuania, in the vicinity of Suviekas, Obeliai, Subačius, Pasvalys and Basenbork,⁷ in towns beyond Sokolwo, Moisa and elsewhere, where I witnessed some strange pagan witchcraft, for there is still very little awareness of God in those parts.⁸

According to Strykowski, «*Žemininkas (Ziemiennik)* was a god of the earth, worshipped by those who kept serpents and lavished them with milk ... [*Bóg Ziemiennik albo ziemny, którego w wężów chowaniu i mlekiem karmieniu chwali...*].»⁹ Reflecting on this description, mythology researcher Nijolė Laurinkienė summarises: «Naturally, after the harvest, the need to sacrifice to the god of the earth arose. Thus, the tradition of performing ritual ceremonies for earth deities in autumn did indeed exist in the Baltic region».¹⁰

At this point, it should be explained that although Lithuania converted to Christianity in 1387, but elements of the Lithuanian mythology survived into the 19th century. However, in the Middle Ages the christening of the state meant only that the new faith was accepted mostly by the ruling class and its nearest environment. The agricultural majority of population still confessed the old faith of their ancestors for several centuries. According to ethnologist Arūnas Vaicekuskas the agricultural population worshiped the gods, which were actual only to them. First of all they worshiped the earth and domestic gods.¹¹

Very special feature of the religious tradition of the 16th - 18th centuries was that in this period disappeared Gods Sovereigns, which represented the all possible sacred powers. And great variety of various agricultural gods, which names we could find in the historical sources of the 16th - 18th centuries gained narrow and often very specific sacral functions. [...] However, in the ritual practice of the 16th - 18th centuries was evidently seeing the old faith ritual structures continuity. More often the pre-Christian rituals were carried out in the natural environment. The same things we can see in the 16th - 18th ages, then the agricultural population their gods settled and worshiped in the sacred groves or nearby the solitary old aged (or with unusual appearance) trees or stones.¹²

Zenonas Slaviūnas (1907-1973), an expert of *sutartinės*, was the first to draw attention to the singing technique described by Maciej Strykowski in the 20th century. Slaviūnas wrote:

7. Basenbork (Bassenbork) - Bauska Castle (also called Busche, Buschenborg and Bauskenburg).
8. Quoted from: VĖLIUS, ed., *Baltų religijos*, p. 549.
9. *BRMŠ II*, pp. 512, 546.
10. LAURINKIENĖ, *Žemyna*, p. 442.
11. VAICEKAUSKAS, *Ikikrikščioniškosios*, p. 250.
12. VAICEKAUSKAS, *Ikikrikščioniškosios*, p. 250. For more information on Lithuanian religion and mythology, see BERESNEVIČIUS, *Lithuanian Religion*.

Strykowski notes *the singing of one in front of the other with mouths wide open* (emphasis mine – D.R.-V.) in a way that a performance of *sutartinės* has been observed on several occasions, possibly due to the fact that they are sung loudly with «full voices». I have myself witnessed how some *sutartinės* performers (Lapienė, Stružienė, Jakubonienė), when they came to Kaunas to sing them at the Archives of Folklore in 1935-1939, *would stand in front of each other in a semicircle or facing each other without taking their eyes off each other until they had finished singing a sutartinė* (emphasis mine – D.R.-V.). Perhaps M. Strykowski was also more impressed by the unusual over-the-top manner of singing.¹³

A little later, when discussing M. Strykowski's contribution to the history of Lithuanian folklore, a scholar of historiography Ambraziejus Jonynas (1919-2006) drew attention to the aforementioned chronicler's remark «[...] *they sing facing each other with their mouths wide open* (emphasis mine – D.R.-V.)», and interpreted it as: «It probably refers to the singing of *sutartinės*. Such thought was supported by a very interesting observation of Zenonas Slaviūnas».¹⁴

It is worth reminding that today, *sutartinės* have disappeared from their traditional environment, which consists of the daily lives of villagers. It has been incredibly difficult to deliberate issues regarding their past origins, ages and vitality. Yet, claiming that this group singing tradition, which once flourished in the past, has completely disappeared would be wrong. (Though, honestly, any thoughts about a natural continuation of this broken tradition – one generation passing it on by word of mouth to the next generation – had seemed unlikely even to me over ten years ago.) The current renaissance of *sutartinės* among folk music groups in towns continues this vital tradition and prompts looking anew at this original type of music, highlighting certain aspects that have previously gone unnoticed and noticing issues still unstudied or relevant today.¹⁵ *Sutartinės* surviving up to our times and noted in comments by their performers merely provide evidence of their relationships with varied work forms (flax pulling, cutting down rye, hay harvesting and such), family rituals (weddings, baptisms) and calendar holidays (Shrovetide, Whitsunday, season's end, summer solstice et al.). Many other *sutartinės* deal with hunting, war and other themes. Clearly, the still surviving *sutartinės* are but a small part, the remnants of songs composed over various historical periods.

Returning to the practice of *sutartinės* singing today, it can be said that there are no longer any elder female singers – practitioners and witnesses of the 'face-to-face' singing once documented by chroniclers and folklore scholars.

The village singers themselves have not told any of the collectors of folklore of the 19th and 20th centuries anything specific about 'face-to-face' singing even though they often emphasized the necessity of good mutual agreement and harmony, the aspiration to sing in such a way that

13. SLAVIŪNAS, *Polifoninių sutartinių*, p. 32.

14. JONYNAS, *Lietuvių folkloristika*, p. 117.

15. For more about the revival of *sutartinės*, see: RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *The Revival*.

voices would «come together» with each other, «jingle» like bells («*Sutariant pašilėj, zvanku it varpai* 'An agreement in the woods tolls like a bells'»¹⁶), sound «like *skudučiai* 'multi-pipe whistles or pan-pipes'» («*Reikia, kad sutartinės skudučiuotųsi. Čia nėra skudučiovimo – pasako dažnai, kai nesutariam* 'The *sutartinės* have to be sung in a *skudučiai* 'multi-part whistles' sounding voice - that ain't the sound of *skudučiai*, people would say when we wouldn't come together'»¹⁷), etc. It is possible that the singers did not leave any comments about singing 'face-to-face' because for them such external behaviour was self-evident and did not require additional explanation.

In fact, there are no remaining photographs (let alone videos) proving such a way of singing. The earliest photographs of village *sutartinės* singers were taken in the 1st half of the 20th century when the singers posed for them specially with a few singers sitting or, less often, standing (Figure 1-4). There are only a few pre-war photographs of *sutartinės* singers dancing (Figure 5), the author of the photographs is Balys Buračas (1897-1972).¹⁸

Based on the few sources available and my own long-term experience of *sutartinės* singing, I assume that singing 'face-to-face' is an essential factor ensuring *sutarimas* 'the consensus' of singers. Let me remind you that the name of polyphonic songs *sutartinės* comes from the word *sutarti* 'to agree' which means to be in harmony, in tune musically and mentally.¹⁹ This strikes a strong similarity with other polyphonic and multipart singing/playing practices. In particular, this applies to polyphonic music based on the canon principle. A frequent emphasis is on «tuning» voices to one another or the necessity of their «agreement». Overtone flute players from South Russia tell each other, «*Lad!* 'Blend in/Tune up!'»²⁰ Komi players from Perm also seek better tuning of the *pöliannez* 'multi-pipe whistles'. They'd say, «*Golos-podgolos laditny* 'Got to agree; match the voice with another voice'». ²¹ This is similar to the concepts of the South Russian *kugikly* 'multi-pipe flutes' players from Plekhovo Village: *Ladit'* (*slazhivat'*, *podlazhivat'*) 'harmonize/agree' ('take control/accommodate') – that is, to play *kak nado* 'as needed', *kak dolzhno* 'how it's supposed to be', in all regards – by pitch, rhythm and the means of obtaining the sound (not only rhythmically in order, as first believed). Thus, as per the position of Tatyana Starostina, it is possible to add a special term

16. Commentary to the *sutartinė* (SLS, nr. 262). Written by Mykolas Miežinis around 1849.

17. Comment by Viktė Našlėnienė, age circa 80, Galvokai Village, Vabalninkas of Biržai. Written by Stasys Paliulis in 1936 (SLS, nr. 1179).

18. B. Buračas was an esteemed Lithuanian ethnographer, educator, and one of the most prominent local historians and photographers of the 20th century. Through his extensive travels across Lithuania, he amassed a vast photographic archive, collected hundreds of ethnographic artefacts, and documented folklore, recording over 3,500 songs and 200 lamentations, along with 800 descriptions of customs. His collection of photographic documents included 18,200 negatives and approximately 36,000 positives, although only about 11,000 remained after the Second World War. In 1937, he received a gold medal for a collection of 25 photographs at the Paris International Exhibition of Art and Technology.

19. For more see RACIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, pp. 386-387.

20. ИВАНОВ [IVANOV], *Волшебная флейта*, p. 70

21. ЖУЛАНОВА [ZHULANOVA], *Инструмент*, p. 160.



Figure 1. *Sutartinės* singers from Biržai, standing: Marė Bernatienė, Natalija Vaičiulienė and Banė Kregždienė, sitting Kasiulė Misiūnienė photograph by Adolfas Sabaliauskas, 1912



Figure 2. *Sutartinės* singers from Kupiškis: Damulė Petrylienė, Damulė Šlapelienė, Ona Mažeikienė, Ona Juodakienė, Damulė Lisienė, photograph by Balys Buračas, 1936, LTRFt 9007



Figure 3. Marijona Smetonienė, Karalina Masiulienė, Teresė Dirsiėnė and Morta Jasiukonienė from Užulėnis, Ukmergė district, photograph by Jurgis Dovydaitis, 1935, LTRFt 2757



Figure 4. *Sutartinės* singers Marijona Griėienė, Barbora Stimburienė and Agota Griėienė from Tatkūnai, Ukmergė county, unknown photographer, 1937, LTRFt 195(1168)



Figure 5. Women dancing 'Dobilalis', Smilgiai village, Kupiškis district, photograph by Balys Buračas, 1936, VDKM 3880

to the indivisible set of ways for folk performances – *ladovanie* 'agreement'.²² The Sardinian multipart singing practice must also be remembered. According to Ignazio Macchiarella, «the word *cuncordu* (literally concord) defines a four-man group, while *cantu a cuncordu* (by extension «in harmony singing») denotes the resulting singing.²³

22. СТАРОСТИНА [STAROSTINA], *По следам*, p. 85.

23. MACCHIARELLA, *Current Creativities*, p. 6.

The objective of this article is to find out why singing 'face-to-face' is essential to *sutartinės* singing practice, how the external manner of performance correlates with polyphonic singing, how it affects the articulation of singers, their social and emotional communication. In order to answer these questions, I decided to study singing practices of groups singing *sutartinės* these days.

I aimed to find out what singing 'face-to-face' means for *sutartinės* singers these days:

- whether it is the compliance with a certain *sutartinės* performance «canon» that has been pointed out by several folklore researchers (myself included);
- whether it is the way of performance determined by the long-term experience of a group's members.

I would like to highlight that, on the one hand, the principle of 'face-to-face' singing has not yet been studied in depth. Apart from the aforementioned descriptions by M. Strykowski, Z. Slaviūnas, and A. Jonynas, there are no other detailed studies available, aside from my own work.²⁴ Contemporary researchers tend to reiterate ideas from existing sources without further commentary.²⁵ On the other hand, for today's singers, the 'face-to-face' singing principle appears to be common knowledge – a self-evident aspect of practice.

This principle, especially significant for polyphonic singing, is not characteristic of other Lithuanian song traditions. However, it is recognised within the traditional singing practices of other cultures. The singers' behavior while singing, it could be said, is one of the common *Schwebungs-Diaphonie*²⁶ performance features. The outward behaviour of the singers, similar to the 'face-to-face' principle common to many Balkan nations. For example, Cvjetko Richtman, who discussed the polyphonic features found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, made a similar observation. Here the singers would simply turn their heads towards each other, so their voices could flow more readily. The singers would frequently stand in front of each other, so their voices would «hit against each other», «clang».²⁷ Ankica Petrović discussed singers standing close and facing each other as they perform *gangas* (recorded in numerous villages of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia). *Ganga* singers claim they stand close together when singing to feel united as well as to sense an identical physical experience from musical performances.²⁸ Analogical behavior by singers was also noticed in Papua New Guinea. As Gerald Florian Messner notes,

24. See: RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Lietuvių sutartinių*, p. 20; *Sutartinių audos*, p. 371; *Past and Present*, pp. 432-434, etc.

25. See: NAKIENĖ, *Sutartinių relikvai*, p. 19; ZDANAČIŪTĖ, *Alternatyvioji*, p. 17; BUBLYTĖ, *Bal-so tembro*, p. 130.

26. The Austrian ethnomusicologist Gerald Florian Messner and the German musicologist Rudolf Brandl, who began researching seconds polyphony as a widespread phenomenon at the 20th century's end began using a special term, *die Schwebungsdiaphonie* 'Interferential diaphony' (MESSNER, *Die Schwebungsdiaphonie; Do They Sound*; BRANDL, *Die Schwebungs-Diaphonie; Die «Schwebungsdiaphonie» im Epiros*).

27. РИХТМАН [RICHTMAN], *Полифонические формы*, p. 105.

28. PETROVIĆ, *Muzička forma ganga*, p. 52; quoted from: KRADER, *Slavic Folk Music*, p. 15.

when the women of Baluan Island (Manus Province) sing *weiis*, they must stand and sing «face-to-face» at about a 120° angle.²⁹

Naturally, the «mouth-to-mouth» [lit. transl. for «face-to-face»] singing type under discussion does not necessarily relate to the traits of *Schwebungsdiaphonie*. Possibly this reflects other forms of polyphonic singing that demand especially acute hearing from each singer of each other, i.e., a precise «coordination» of voices. Throat-singing is another example – it is the *katajjaq* of the Inuit and the *rekkukara* of the Ainu in which two women face each other.³⁰ Singing into another's face with singers standing in a close circle is a characteristic style of the Sardinian «concord» (*cantu a cuncordu*) tradition. Bernard Lortat-Jacob keenly observes that the singers «are quite familiar with the advantages they get from succeeding at polyphony – the power gained can be quadrupling (four people face-to-face) and/or «quadruplaning» (four planes or levels enacted to create unity)».³¹

But let us return to Lithuania to examine how the 'face-to-face' principle, first mentioned in a 16th-century historical source, functions in contemporary Lithuanian *sutartinės* singing practice. First of all, it is worth reminding that *sutartinės* are usually sung by two, three or four singers. The number of singers determines the basic categorization of the types of this music: *dvejinės* 'twosomes', *trejinės* 'threesomes' and *keturinės* 'foursomes'. Despite the number of performers or varied performance styles, only two voices always resound in *sutartinės*. Characteristics of singing 'face-to-face' depend on different types of *sutartinės*: *dvejinės*, *trejinės*, and *keturinės*.

Common *dvejinės* consist of counterpoint performed by two singers, as a pair (Figure 6). Both sing the same text but use independent melodies. Characteristic of many *dvejinės* is an enunciation of certain syllables at different times, rather than at once and insertions of short refrains consisting of interjections like *ta*, *lylio*, *lioj* et al. This enlarges the number of syllables in a stanza for one part and, by the same thought, adds a difference of rhythm to the melody. In the *dvejinė*, *Aš Verpčiu Plonų* (I'd Spin So Thin – Example 1), e.g., one voice sings, «I'd spin so thin, *tatatėla*». The other sings, «I'd spin so thin, *tatatatėla*» and such.³²

Common *trejinės* are probably the most popular singing style. Three singers (or, at times, groups) sing in strict canon (standing or, at times, sitting, in a circle or semicircle) (Figure 7). Each enters the song in stages, while another singer proceeds with the second part of the melody. This means the second singer enters, while the first is still singing; the third, while the second one is singing; and the first again, while the third is singing. The entire *sutartinė* is thereby sung around in a circle. For example, the *sutartinė* *Titity tatatoj*, written in the northern part of the *sutartinės* area (Biržai, Papilys, Vabalninkas and other nearby vicinities) (Example 2). This territory features

29. MESSNER, *The Two-Part Vocal*, p. 442.

30. NATTIEZ, *Some Aspects*; ID., *Inuit Throat-Games*.

31. LORTAT-JACOB, *Singing in Company*, p. 32.

32. For more, see: RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, pp. 210-218, 252-261.



Figure 6. *Dvejinė* singing by *sutartinės* singers of *Kupkėmis*, Vilnius Academy of Art, photograph by Andrius Morkūnas, 2011

Example 1. *Aš Verpčiu Plonų* (I'd Spin So Thin). *Dvejinė* 'twosome', sung by Ona Smilgienė, age 74, resides in Gavėniškiai Village, Papilys of Biržai. Transcribed by Adolfas Sabaliauskas, 1911. Printed: Text NS, No. 1, Mel. SbG, No. 460; SIS 269. Comment: «While spinning»

$\text{♩} = 116$

I

Aš verp - čiu plo - nu, ta - ta - tē - la,

II

Aš verp - čiu plo - nu, ta - ta - ta - tē - la,

po pluoš - te - li, ta - ta tē - la.

po gi pluoš - te - li, ta - ta - ta - tē - la.

sutartinės characterized by trumpeting inflections and the exclusive use of seconds between two voices. Another characteristic feature is the complementary rhythm. The retrograde (mirror reflection) principle, grounds numerous



Figure 7. *Trejinē* singing by singers of *Trys keturiose*, at John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, photograph by Peter Alunans, 2018

sutartinė musical pieces can be seen here (actually, it is usually *sutartinės* music being «read» backwards, i.e., its rhythm formulas: ♪ ♪ I ♪ ♪ II ♪ ♪ I ♪ ♪).

There are also more complex cases of canonical singing,³³ when the melodic line of one part is divided into certain sections, part of which is sung by the singer of another voice part, intervening in the «alien» part.³⁴

Common *keturinės* involve four paired singers performing this style antiphonally (a pair facing a pair) (Figure 8). The second pair repeats what the first pair has just sung. Each pair shares the different parts. One singer collects the lines of the main text (*rinkinys*), whereas the other singer repeats the accompaniment (*pritarinys*), singing the refrain in an independent melody line.³⁵ The female singer performing the main part of the *sutartinės* text, is called the *rinkėja* ‘collector’, whereas the singer repeating the refrain is called the *pritarėja* ‘accompanist’, *giedotoja* ‘hymn-singer/chanter’ or the like. For example, in the *sutartinė* *Ko tu, kad, berželi* (Why’s it, that, birch sapling – Example 3) *rinkinys* ‘the main collected’ text is:

<i>Ko tu, kad, berželi,</i>	Why’s it, that, birch sapling,
<i>Ko neaugai, lylia,</i>	Why ya’ didn’t grow, <i>lylia,</i>
<i>Ko neaugai, lylia,</i>	Why ya’ didn’t grow, <i>lylia?</i>

33. For more see RAČIŪNAITĒ-VYČINIENĒ, *Past and Present*, pp.146-196.

34. It is close to the voice exchange, composition technique in which sections of the melody are exchanged crosswise with voices that sound at the same time), see Ger.: *Stimmtausch*, in polyphonic music, the alternation of phrases between two voices of equal range, a feature found frequently in 12th- and 13th-century music (LATHAM, *The Oxford*).

35. For more see RAČIŪNAITĒ-VYČINIENĒ, *Past and Present*, pp. 197-210.

Example 2. *Titity tatatoj* [interj.]. *Trejinė*, recorded by a hymn-singer group from Biržai: Petras Lapienė, age 69, Kviriškiai; Marė Jakubonienė, Balzieriškis & Ona Stružienė, Druseikiai, in 1935. Mel. transcr. Jadvyga Čiurlionytė from record LTR pl. 186a(5)

I
1. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?

I
Ty - ti - ti ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?

II
1. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?

III
-

I
-

II
Ty - ti - ti ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?

III
1. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?

I
2. Ti - ti - ty ta - ta - toj, mū - sų bro - liai triū - bi - jo.

II
-

III
Ty - ti - ti ta - ta - toj, kas ti gra - žiai triū - bi - jo?



Figure 8. Antiphonal *keturinė* singing by singers of “Trys keturiose”, photograph by Jurgita Treinytė, 2006

and *pritarinys* ‘an accompaniment’ (is sung diaphonically with each stanza of the main collected text):

<i>Lioi, ko tu berželi,</i>	<i>Lioi, why you birch sapling,</i>
<i>Lioi, ko neaugai,</i>	<i>Lioi, why ya’ didn’t grow,</i>
<i>Lioi, ko neaugai?</i>	<i>Lioi, why ya’ didn’t grow?</i>

The melody of this *sutartinė* exhibits all the characteristics typical of the northern region of the *sutartinės* area (see above, common *trejinės*), including trumpet-like intonations, second harmonies, and complementary rhythms. Each of these elements requires attentive listening and coordination among the singers.

The fewer singers, the closer they are standing to each other and the more important the communication during singing ‘face-to-face’. Such communication, in my opinion, performs various functions:

— it facilitates voice coordination;

Adolfas Sabaliauskas (1873-1950), a Church Canon and folklorist, who wrote down several hundreds of *sutartinės* at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, pointed out the importance of rhythm in singing these polyphonic songs: «it is necessary to bind both melodies tightly to each other. A mistaken delay or rush on the part of one singer will instantly ruin the hymn, because the entire beauty is in the ‘clashing’, the syncopation. The hymns encapsulate the wonderful rhythmic nature of Lithuanians and their self-control, since rhythm is not in the ear but, rather, in a person’s blood».³⁶

36. SABALIAUSKAS, *North-Eastern Lithuanian*, p. 9.

Example 3. *Ko Tu, Kad, Berželi* (Why's It, That, Birch Sapling). *Keturinė* 'foursome', sung by O. Smilgienė (see Ex. 1), transcribed by A. Sabaliauskas, 1911. Printed: Text NS, No. 367; Mel. SbG No. 581; SIS 1430

I T Ko tu, kad, ber - že - li, ko ne - au -

II R Lioi, ko tu, ber - že - li, lioi, ko ne -

gai, ly - lio, ko ne - au - gai, ly lio?

au - gai, lioi, ko ne - au - gai?

III T Ko tu, kad, ber - že - li, ko ne - au -

IV R Lioi, ko tu, ber - že - li, lioi, ko ne -

gai, ly - lio, ko ne - au - gai, ly lio?

au - gai, lioi, ko ne - au - gai?

Coordination of voices is also essential to achieving the intended roughness of the sound. The pitch of the same note may vary depending on whether it is sung by one or two singers, as evidenced by the transcribers of these melodies written commentaries with the phonograph recorded (in 1935-1939) *sutartinės*, such as the following: «the lead singer changes the thirds as she sings - sometimes the minor, and sometimes the major third» (SIS, nr. 744); «when one singer is being recorded alone, she sometimes sings F sharp and sometimes F in the third and fourth beats. When two sing together, F sharp is more pronounced» (SIS, nr. 980 a); and «when all of them sing the *sutartinė* together, C sharp is heard in the second part of the text» (SIS, nr. 983 a).³⁷ Some of the subtleties involved in combining the melodies of the *sutartinės* have emerged through my own extensive practice of

37. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Sutartinės*, pp. 108-109.

singing them. It has become clear that, to achieve a well-«blended» sound (as I will discuss below), it is particularly important to widen the occasionally «too narrow» vertical interval of a second between individual vocal parts. This effort on the part of the singers is evident in the transcribers' previously mentioned observations on the *sutartinės*. Singers match their singing to that of others by adjusting to a horizontal, thirds intonation – all in the name of a decent «clanging together» of voices, either by expanding or by contracting them.³⁸ This might be named an uncommon «seeking roughness», analogical to Timothy Rice's expression, «seeking seconds».³⁹ Rytis Ambrazevičius also focused on this phenomenon when he was conducting acoustic tests on *sutartinės*. There is a variable interval between voices, so it would seem pointless to talk about a constant intonation of greater roughness. He observed a variable interval between voices. This means any discussion about a stable intonation of greater roughness would not be accurate. An attack of *glissando* sounds can be considered «the strongest search for roughness».⁴⁰

— it results in a better «beating» of voices;

Among many other names, *sutartinės* were also called *kapotinės*, root verb *kapoti* 'chop'. This naming could relate to the syncopated rhythm of *sutartinės* or, as folks say, a *susimušimas / susidaužimas* 'clanging/banging together'. These descriptions emphasize vocal articulation like a type of chopping.⁴¹ The aesthetic standard of beauty of ancient *sutartinės* was understood to be exactly this kind of sharp «clash» of seconds. *Sutartinės* singers themselves define, «*Saugimas bausis gražums, bet reikalau tam didelio taikos, idant sukriai ir gražiai sumušti* 'Saugimas 'singing *sutartinės*' [dialect var.] – that's horribly beautiful, but it demands tremendous order, so that it be tightly wound and nicely clanged.» (SIS, nr. 1195). Analogic write-ups about resonances of sharp seconds being exceptionally beautiful can be found in other nations as well. It is especially important to retain the inclination of those *sutartinės* singers to «hit» and «smash» their voices together and never lose their aim to «agree», e.g., «*Kai sutarydavo, regis, tai pagražu būdavo* 'When they'd agree, it'd be, I guess, so beautiful' (LLIM, nr. 268); «*Daudytėm labai tarydavo* 'They'd do it on *daudytės* 'long cylindrical wooden trumpets'» (LLIM, nr. 60), and other similar sayings.⁴² The musical expression of «banging together» in practice *sutartinės* singing involves vertical seconds, which are different from what is written in notated music – they are neither majors nor minors but «intermediary» seconds.⁴³ R. Ambrazevičius proves this with objective data from his acoustic tests on *sutartinės*. He asserts, «The vertical second intervals of *sutartinės* cannot be differentiated, the same as the thirds of one horizontal part cannot be».⁴⁴ As per this scholar's data, the principle of compressed anhemitonic scales exists in the concord of *sutartinės*, i.e., the intervals between voices are about the same, narrower than a tempered tone.

38. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Articulation of Sutartinės*.

39. Rice names the Shopi region of Bulgaria as the «seeking seconds» region: «Singers appear to 'seek seconds', when the second voice descends to the subtonic as the first voice arrives on the tonic» (RICE, *The Geographical*, p. 254).

40. AMBRAZEVIČIUS, *Sutartinių darna*, pp. 129-130.

41. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, p. 129.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 430-431.

43. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Sutartinių darna*, p. 137.

44. AMBRAZEVIČIUS, *Sutartinių darna*, p. 127.

Researchers on traditions of seconds polyphony, such as Nikolay Kaufman, G. F. Messner, R. Brandl, R. Ambrazevičius et al., have written many times that, when it comes to harmony, the congruence of voices (cf., the name of *sutartinės* stemming from the verb «agree»), the seconds would be best called consonances, not dissonances. This is taken from the standpoint of a certain «pleasure», which singers of the local tradition say they experience when singing in seconds.

– it helps to create a small harmonious «society» while singing;

Since ancient times *sutartinės* have been sung in small groups which were comprised of women, who had close family ties, female neighbors, or good friends. Those were the women who would constantly maintain not only social relations but also connections through singing. It can be stated that only when a female singer knows well the characteristics of another woman's vocal timber and her musical capabilities is it possible to carry out the requirements a village community applies to (by using voices as if to imitate *skudučiai* 'pan-pipes'; «to beat» the voices well – in other words, to harmonize them).⁴⁵

– it creates a specific acoustic and emotional space;

Here we can talk about total immersion into the present moment linked with a strong commitment to direct communication in all definitive aspects. Overall immersion to complete an assignment, sensing that the activity itself, not the performer, guides the effort. I repeatedly point out that such a sensation only comes with firm immersion in the singing, distancing from the earthly world and entering a certain mental state. As I have instructed, «When it seems the *sutartinės* music 'circle' is turning on its own and, you, the singer, must 'turn into it', you intervene with your own melody and words».⁴⁶

– it produces not only a sense of spiritual balance and satisfaction, akin to achieving a «good deal», but also a tangible physical sensation.

When all singers achieve the desired 'roughness' of singing together, each of them individually feels a kind of vibration throughout the body. At the moment of communication 'face-to-face', the physical connection between performers is of great significance because singers can feel the vibrations of other bodies while singing (about which I can personally attest from my own experience).⁴⁷ Attention can also focus on Amra Toska, who researched the music of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a sphere of sound: «Communication is conducted through the face-to-face interaction and, often, even the physical contact among performers is important, in terms of sensing the other's body vibrations during singing».⁴⁸

At this point, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the common English phrase 'face-to-face' (literally *veidas prieš veidą* in Lithuanian), which describes singing one in front of the other, has several different connotations in Lithuanian language, i. e. it can be singing *burna burnon* 'mouth to mouth' (perhaps more closely related to the formation of sound, its acoustic features) and / or *akis į akį* 'eye to eye' (indicating non-verbal eye contact). These nuances will also be reflected in the answers of singers.

45. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *The Role of Women*, p. 270.

46. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Sutartinių giedojimo*, p. 31; *Past and Present*, p. 567.

47. RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, pp. 462-463.

48. TOSKA, *Traditional Music*, p. 107.

2. Qualitative Research

During the course of qualitative research in the field, I interacted with 15 group leaders and their individual singers (25 people in total). Groups from different parts of Lithuania took part in the survey, including: Vilnius (*Laukis, Ratilio, Šalavija, Trys keturiose, Varangė*), Kaunas (*Kadujo, Sasutalas*), Kaunas District: Ringaudai (*Gaudė*), Garliava (*Mėta*) and Zapyškis (*Stuba*), Ignalina (*Čiulbutė*), Molėtai (*Alsūnė*), Biržai (*Žemyna*), Rokiškis (*Gastauta*) and Panevėžys (*Raskila*). The map (Figure 9) shows the locations of these *sutartinės* singers' groups. Although *sutartinės* have recently been sung all over Lithuania (especially after inscribing *sutartinės* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010), their original territory is the Northeast Aukštaitija (northeastern Lithuania).⁴⁹

The study was conducted between May and July 2023. Most respondents were interviewed during the international folklore festival *Skamba skamba kankliai* in Vilnius, prior to the event «Sutartinių takas» (held on 26 May in Bernardinai Garden) – an informal concert that brings together groups of *sutartinės* singers from various regions of Lithuania. Singer groups from Vilnius and Kaunas were interviewed in their respective localities during rehearsals in June and July.

Certainly, my own self-reflection,⁵⁰ which is based on my 40 years long experience of *sutartinės* singing and teaching, as well as consistent research of these songs,⁵¹ is also of great significance for the research.

The *sutartinės* group leaders (15) were provided with seven questions, requesting the leaders to share them with singers of the groups so that they could also reveal their personal insights and experiences while singing. The questions for the singers were as follows:

1. How are *sutartinės* usually sung in a group? (How singers position themselves while singing?)
2. Is it essential to sing 'mouth to mouth' ('eye to eye')?
3. Perhaps you could elaborate on your experience (personal and shared among the group members) of singing in this particular way?
4. Do you sing 'mouth to mouth' just for yourself (in everyday life, during celebrations, rehearsals) or also in concerts?
5. Have you noticed a difference depending on the formation of singers when it is sung differently during concerts (in a semicircle, etc.)?
6. Do you think that singing 'mouth to mouth' ('eye to eye') produces a different sound quality of a *sutartinė*, i. e. a different sound «effect», or

49. Vocal and instrumental *sutartinės* have only been documented in writing in a small area of Lithuania – currently the Northeast Aukštaitija (Uplands) ethnographic region. It encompasses Biržai, Kupiškis, Rokiškis, Ignalina, Švenčionys, Ukmergė and Širvintos along with parts of Panevėžys, Utena and Anykščiai towns (RAČIŪNAITĖ-VYČINIENĖ, *Past and Present*, pp. 84-88).

50. Since 1982, I have been leading a group of *sutartinės* singers, which was called «Trys keturiose» 'Three by Four' around 1994.

51. See Bibliography at the end of this article, also: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/ive/emm/?Page-Id=55>.



Figure 9. Locations of *sutartinės* singers' groups

is it more related to the creation of a unified spiritual state? (There is also a possibility to provide one's own interpretation)

7. Or perhaps the formation does not make any difference to you when it comes to singing? Perhaps it is equally good either way?

It was suggested to express thoughts completely freely, without avoiding answering several questions at once (because they are closely related to each other). To some questions, the singers answered very extensively. However, this article only provides a part of the answers (sometimes – only their extracts).

The most scientifically valuable and interesting responses are the original answers provided by practising singers to the questions posed. However, it is impossible to present all of them in this article due to the excessive volume of the text.

1. How are *sutartinės* usually sung in a group? (How singers position themselves while singing?)

In a circle, according to the Sun (we sing in the direction of the Sun traveling across the sky)». (Liuda Liaudanskaitė, leader of the group *Gaudė*)

...By sitting in a circle, always keeping at least a peripheral vision of each other. Sometimes, we used to keep the rhythm of *Jūratė* by holding hands on both sides... (Varsa Liutkutė-Zakarienė, leader of the group *Varangė*)

In our group, we have a relatively well-established singing arrangement, however, sometimes we have to make some adjustments to reach a better match of sound or more suitable timbres, therefore, we have to do changes and sing differently from what we are used to. It happens that sometimes you do not even think about it, you start to sing, but after finishing a *sutartinė*, you say that something is wrong. It turns out that you did not take over from the right

person and passed it on to the wrong person as well rather than doing it in the usual way. (Daiva Liudavičienė, *Laukis*)

When we sing not for an audience, we usually sing «mouth to mouth». Or in groups against each other. (Sigutė Mudinienė, leader of the group «Čiulbutė»)

...It is possible that at the process of *sutartinė* singing and learning, a kind of «purified» form emerges, which is the most suitable for voices, for singing and for the convenience of singers to observe each other while singing... However, most of the time, the standing order is established after singing for a longer time, looking for the best form of performance and taking into account the timbre of a voice, its strength or even the characteristics of a singer, such as to have a tendency to hurry up or slow down a bit, so that the singer following her has the opportunity to «help» in the situation. The key is to achieve harmony. (Rima Visackienė, *Trys keturiose*)

We always sing in a circle, both during concerts and rehearsals. The only difference is that we sit during rehearsals and stand during concerts (if we do not dance). We only try not to turn our backs to an audience. [...] However, the best is to have an audience sitting around in a circle, while we sing in the middle. (Nijolė Grivačiauskienė, leader of the group *Mėta*)

2. Is it essential to sing 'mouth to mouth' ('eye to eye')?

I was impressed by a group led by Varsa (*Varangė*, led by Varsa Liutkutė-Zakarienė – D.R.-V.) I once saw. The singers stood in a circle so close to each other that they simply formed a unity, and each of the singers had become only a part of the whole, there were no individual singers left. The singers were like gray mice, all the same, as if one by one they were insignificant. The whole was the most significant thing, as well as the production of a composition (certainly «mouth to mouth»). It was amazing. It is our aspiration... We still have a long way to go to achieve it. So that there would be no Ieva, Laima, Angelė, Nijolė, but rather only «Mėta»... In the 21st century, it is quite difficult. Now, every single person is considered as a personality responsible only for oneself, and, in general, that infinite closeness is quite impossible for a person of present time... (N. Grivačiauskienė)

For me, both singing methods 'eye to eye' and 'mouth to mouth' are crucial. Eye and mouth contacts are two different things. I believe that singing 'eye to eye' and 'mouth to mouth' strengthens that invisible thread that connects all singers through years of practice. (Lijana Šarkaitė-Viluma, leader of the group *Laukis*)

I believe that it is essential to sing in this way. Eye contact allows us to feel each other, to transmit our part in the shared circle in a more smooth, immersive, meaningful, personal way. (Kristina Capel Cuevas, *Laukis*)

For me, it is crucial to see the eyes, the face, the lips of another singer since it helps to adjust the voice, listen to each other, «talk» by sight. (Jurgita Grušaitė, *Laukis*)

It is not essential. It is important to feel. When singing *dvejinės* with Lina, it is essential to look at each other when reaching offbeat. At this point, eye contact

is much more important, but it automatically turns into singing «mouth to mouth» as well... (V. Liutkutė-Zakarienė)

Absolutely yes. I often catch a glimpse of my partner, because it is as if there is another (visual) niche that connects and maximises the feeling. (Audronė Žilinskienė, *Trys keturiose*)

It is very important. Sometimes there are singers who do not like to sing 'mouth to mouth', and it turns the process of singing into more challenging both for that person and me. (Lorita Kulakauskienė, *Sasutalas*)

...whenever I sing with a singer, who has no habit to look into my eyes, it is harder for me to sing for it feels as if there is no communication, mutual understanding, support. Also, there is no sound transmission, a good «beating» of voices. (Dalia Magylienė, *Laukis*)

...When you sing 'face-to-face' and «the eyes» meet or «the eyes meet the mouth» (it feels like 'mouth to mouth' to me), it seems that a *sutartinė* sounds completely different, you just try to get those two voices to «come together», it seems that only those two voices are the most significant. Therefore, I think that it is extremely important, in this case, that the timbre of singers is the same, so that the voices could «come together» and blend into the whole. (Lina Vilienė, leader of the group *Raskila*)

It is very important because otherwise, it is surely difficult to achieve harmonisation. If you close your eyes, you might be able to achieve it, but, in this case, those singing the other part at the same time should be as close as possible to you. Personally, when I sing folk songs, I spontaneously close my eyes, get immersed in a song, but it never happens when I sing *sutartinės* for I want to subconsciously maintain eye contact with a person with whom I sing different parts at the same time. (Eglė Kašėtienė, leader of the group *Šalavija*)

3. Perhaps you could elaborate on your experience (personal and shared among the group members) of singing in this particular way?

In order to «catch» a sound and text well, the contact is required. When singing in this way, a sound comes out with the same intensity and «the imitation» is much better, the melodies of *sutartinės* «come together» better. (Aušra Butkauskienė, leader of the group *Žemyna*)

Such a way of singing gives us a sense of security, privacy. It enables us to feel the overall energy of *sutartinės*. You do not have to please or appeal to anyone, you can simply be yourself while singing a *sutartinė* to the point at which it becomes «sweet». (Rita Pelakauskienė, leader of the group *Alsūnė*)

At times, singers keep a slightly different rhythm. While singing «mouth to mouth», it is possible to catch those differences and adapt. As a result, it allows to maintain the quality of diatonic scales. However, great concentration is required. (L. Kulakauskienė)

Singing in this way creates a kind of distinctive closed space, a connection between singers, and especially if a *sutartinė* has already been «well practiced», sung in the same formation for many times, then it is possible to feel physical vibrations when voices come together. Women listening to it can also feel it. If

one manages to feel it, then we say that a *sutartinė* was «alive», not only sung, but also felt. It turns out to be not only better sung, but also listened to. (S. Mudinienė)

...I feel personally that I join a *sutartinė* in a different way than I do when I sing just songs, where it is also necessary to listen and adjust, but in the case of *sutartinės*, I probably feel a greater closeness with those who sing together, I feel more internally prepared, more willing and more concentrated. When singing a *sutartinė*, one cannot «hide» behind other voices, an individual must be able to «endure» while singing its part and, at the same time, to listen to others singing together in order to stay in the unity. And yet another interesting feeling coming during singing is that a *sutartinė* itself becomes like an additional member of a singing group while it sounds and becomes more established. It feels as if a distinct individual who has «come» while singing. (J. Grušaitė)

...Above all, you test yourself in a *sutartinė* (i. e. the very initial familiarization with a new song), and then you can gradually join a *sutartinė*, which is still not very familiar with its general sound. It is the process of learning, an attempt to feel, immerse yourself in a *sutartinė*... It is not always simple and easy, and sometimes even extremely extraordinary. Not every *sutartinė* develops in the way mentioned above and is accessible for singing «mouth to mouth», however, once it moves in that direction and a *sutartinė* starts to move in a lively way, this mode of singing becomes a real leading indicator. (R. Visackienė)

4. Do you sing ‘mouth to mouth’ just for yourself (in everyday life, during celebrations, rehearsals) or also in concerts?

When we sing simple songs, we look at the audience and communicate with them while singing. On the other hand, when we sing *sutartinės*, we detach ourselves from an audience and only keep track of each other. An audience simply observes us. Just after finishing a *sutartinė*, we turn to an audience and bow. (N. Grivačiauskienė)

We rarely perform in concerts. Sometimes, we have to stand in a semicircle during a concert, then it is harder to sing. And we rarely experience the sense of «loosing track of time» in concerts. (Jūra Sodeikienė, leader of the group *Stuba*)

We always use this method when we sing. *Sutartinės* based on parallel seconds of Biržai region require increased concentration of hearing, attention, so singing ‘mouth to mouth’ is very helpful for this. (A. Butkauskienė)

We sing ‘mouth to mouth’ in everyday life, during celebrations, rehearsals and concerts, when there is no voice-over. (Milda Ričkutė, leader of the group *Ratilio*)

When we perform *trejinės* on stage, we stand in a semicircle to open the circle to a listener. (Nida Lungienė, leader of the group *Gastauta*)

During concerts, we also attempt to sing «eye to eye», but, unfortunately, the placement of microphones occasionally prevents this from happening. The

sound and perception of each other is then different. (K. Capel Cuevas)

It is absolutely necessary to sing 'mouth to mouth' in concerts, because otherwise, *sutartinės* do not sound, they only sound as if performed «from the scores». (L. Šarkaitė-Viluma)

...This method... is a kind of «indicator» or «guide» of *sutartinės* since if it is sometimes difficult or if circumstances do not allow to concentrate on singing *sutartinės*, which is absolutely necessary, singing 'mouth to mouth' is extremely helpful when it is wanted to «detach» oneself, concentrate and continue with a *sutartinė* until the moment comes when we feel that a *sutartinė* is alive, it moves and sounds... This method of singing or the expression... seems to «guarantee» the quality of singing by itself. The flow of *sutartinės* then seems to capture and unite the singers and the whole environment, whatever it contains... In my opinion, if they were not sung in this way, *sutartinės* would not sound properly. (R. Visackienė)

5. Have you noticed a difference depending on the formation of singers when it is sung differently during concerts (in a semicircle, etc.)?

The only difference is that it is more difficult to obtain the uniformity of sound when singing in a semicircle because the sound «goes» sideways and is inaccurate since it becomes indistinct as to what sound intensity, timbre, and so on, should a new melody «circle» begin. (A. Butkauskienė)

...In my view, the absence of eye contact and «non-closure of a circle» distracts the attention and a *sutartinė* becomes just a song. (K. Capel Cuevas)

Yes, the difference can be felt, because there is no clear sense of a circle and the continuous rotation of unity. (L. Liaudanskaitė)

...The sound does not go where it is supposed to. In *sutartinės*, the sound moves in a circle, however, when we are standing in a semicircle, this effect is lost. Also, it becomes more difficult to sing *sutartinės*, more difficult to synchronize with other voices...» (Leonora Smulskytė, *Gaudė*)

Of course, there is a difference when a person stands at a distance for it is less clearly audible. When we have to stand in a semicircle, we simply have to put more effort, pay more attention so that «the gaps» due to uncomfortably wide spaces between the people on the edges would not be as noticeable. (Laura Lukenskienė, leader of the group *Kadujo*)

For us, it is more comfortable and cozier to sing 'mouth to mouth', but during concerts, it is more comfortable in a semicircle, when an audience can see the faces of singers (it feels as if we are closer to listeners and include them in a circle as well)». (N. Lungienė)

...I think that I could distinguish with my eyes closed which recording of the same singers was made while singing 'mouth to mouth' and which was made while standing in a semicircle or, even worse, in a line... When singing 'mouth to mouth', a wonderful «cohesion» of different parts is achieved, «coming together» of voices. And at the same time, the emotional relationship between singers is warmer, more open. (E. Kašėtienė)

When we perform in front of microphones (in a semicircle), we are often required not to turn around to achieve a uniform sound. Personally, for me, it is very difficult to do. Even during concerts, I get to feel «the presence in a *sutartinė*», a kind of meditative state, unity and togetherness with other singers. When it is necessary to sing only by hearing while looking at an audience, which I, of course, «technically» manage to accomplish, a *sutartinė* sounds quite nice, but I do not feel any pleasure while performing it like this. (Daiva Morkūnienė, *Sasutalas*)

6. Do you think that singing ‘mouth to mouth’ (‘eye to eye’) produces a different sound quality of a *sutartinė*, i. e. a different sound «effect», or is it more related to the creation of a unified spiritual state? (There is also a possibility to provide one’s own interpretation)

In order to «capture» a sound and text properly, a contact is necessary. A singer must pass a sound exactly the same as it receives. A sound turns out to be equally intense and its «imitation» works significantly better. I think that it is the essential characteristic of the evenness of a *sutartinė* (which is fascinating when listening to a *sutartinė*) and the technique of performance. (A. Butkauskienė)

I think that a spiritual state, as well as immersive sound of a *sutartinė*, is created while standing in a circle and singing ‘mouth to mouth’. (Laima Kubilienė, *Sasutalas*)

Both of these. A spiritual state is extremely significant for me. When you always try to adapt to another woman, her temperament, character, a very close relationship is formed. This is what «to come together» refers to. (L. Kulakauskienė)

A spiritual state is created by many more things, such as a shared feeling, shared sound experience, taking responsibility for each other (for rhythm, intonation). The most important thing is to get to know and foresee each other, not only the ability to sing, but also human expression and acceptance, tuning in, acceptance of differences. (V. Liutkutė-Zakarienė)

Singing ‘mouth to mouth’ + ‘eye to eye’, without any doubt, determines the sound quality of *sutartinės*! If there is no connection between singers, then there is no *sutartinė*, only scores and lyrics! There must be «a thread» connecting all singers into the same sound space through the ‘eye to eye’ connection and the depth of perception! (L. Šarkaitė-Viluma)

...Singing ‘mouth to mouth’ has a very strong influence on the quality of sound and is definitely related to the creation of a spiritual state. After all, we usually sing not only ‘eye to eye’, ‘mouth to mouth’, but also ‘heart to heart’, ‘face-to-face’, which gives the state, mood, feeling, depth of the whole of that moment or several minutes. At that time, you live in one or another *sutartinė* within yourself and the established contact with other singers. (R. Visackienė)

7. Or perhaps the formation does not make any difference to you when it comes to singing? Perhaps it is equally good either way?

...We sing while facing a circle, and not an audience (the outside). A circle is a space for singers where voices «live». A semicircle or a line breaks the circle for a voice / sound goes out of limits and is harder to catch with the ears, to replicate, and then the singing becomes no longer even, deviating from the original version of *rinkėja* 'a collector' [main singer of text lines – D.R.-V]. (A. Butkauskienė)

Personally for me, a traditional circle of *sutartinės* is the best, but sometimes it is interesting to respond, call back both from further away and from another position. (L. Kubilienė)

I have noticed that even blind people almost always turn accurately to the interlocutor, i. e. based on a natural sound. Singing of *sutartinės* for me is also a communication, so even without thinking about how to stand, I think that I would always turn directly to the person I am singing with. In concerts, if there is a requirement to stand directly in front of an audience, I always have to control myself strongly, so that I do not forget and turn to another singer. (Daiva Morkūnienė, *Sasutalas*)

The formation of singers is certainly of great importance! At times, sounds do not get along, no matter what, however, after the change of positions, voices «come together». It is the same if you try to sing a *sutartinė* counterclockwise, everything turns upside down, the head starts to spin... (L. Šarkaitė-Viluma).

For me, it makes a great difference in terms of who I stand with and who I pick a melody from. It is especially relevant when dancing to *sutartinės* while holding hands, etc. (D. Liudavičienė)

We feel and sing the best when we sing 'mouth to mouth'. (S. Mudinienė)

Singing 'mouth to mouth' will always be the best. It turns singing into emotionally enjoyable and acoustically superior. (E. Kašėtienė)

It is good in either way when we can feel each other without any disturbance. The distances and formation must be usual. The sequence must be permanent for us (when we sing *trejinės*, as well as the pairs must be permanent in *keturinės*. Each pair has a separate relation of harmony between each other and a general relation with another pair. Eye contact is sometimes even disturbing, it is better without it. The feeling is more real... (V. Liutkutė-Zakarienė).

A summary of Predominant Answers

Answers to the 1st question («In what formation are *Sutartinės* usually sung in your group?») were:

- while standing (sitting) in a circle;
- while sitting during rehearsals and standing in a circle during concerts;
- in a circle according to «how the sun travels across the sky», «to the clockwise direction»;
- the place (order) of singers is of great significance in a circle;
- when singing to ourselves, in a circle, and in the case of singing to an

audience, in a semicircle (but not in a line);

- definitely «mouth to mouth», regardless of the method of singing (*dvejinė*, *trejinė* or *keturinė*);
- one in front of another in a circle, regardless of where an audience is seated.

Answers to the 2nd question («Is it essential to sing ‘mouth to mouth’, ‘eye to eye’?») were as follows:

- it is extremely significant, because it unites all singers;
- it results in a more personal, impactful contact while singing;
- results in a better coordination of voices;
- ensures a proper «coming together» of different voice parts;
- ensures a continuous, flowing sound of a *sutartinė*;
- it is impossible to imagine another way of singing *sutartinės* except for ‘mouth to mouth’ and ‘eye to eye’.

Although majority of singers speak about the characteristics of music (sound), such as the harmonisation of voices, the keeping of a unified tempo, the effectiveness of a sound («coming together» of voices) when singing «mouth to mouth», nevertheless, there is a prevailing view that singing ‘face-to-face’, above all, contributes to the creation of a unified spiritual state, a proper «harmonisation» in a circle of singers. In fact, according to the experience of several singers, singing «mouth to mouth» is not obligatory; sometimes, eye contact is more necessary (V. Liutkutė-Zakarienė), while in other cases, eye contact is also not mandatory since it is necessary to feel each other (J. Sodeikienė).

Based on the personal singing ‘face-to-face’ experience shared by singers (in response to the 3rd question), it becomes clear that:

- it is aimed to replicate another singer’s exact sound intensity resulting in a proper «coming together» of voices;
- the feeling of security, privacy, being yourself is achieved;
- shared internal state and sound-energetic field is created;
- after a proper «coming together» of voices, physical [body] vibrations occur;
- *sutartinė* itself becomes like another «person» singing it;
- sound structure connection is established, which transfers singers to another space;
- the management and control of experiences arising at the moment of singing takes place;
- when singing ‘eye to eye’, something indescribable, supernatural begins to happen;
- specific rules are not followed, the aim is to experience pleasure, lose track of time;
- when learning a new *sutartinė*, first you work on yourself, then you try to immerse yourself in it;
- it is the aspiration for a *sutartinė* to evolve in such a way that a sense of time is lost.

Answers to the 4th question asking if it is sung in the same way in everyday life and in concerts are as follows:

- in a concert, it is aimed to distance oneself from an audience in order to create one's own space;
- it is always sung in the same way, because *sutartinės* require concentration, attention;
- during concerts, *trejinės* are usually sung in a semicircle, avoiding standing with your back to an audience;
- sometimes the formation in a concert is determined by microphones;
- when standing in a semicircle in a concert, it is harder to sing, the feeling of «loosing track of time» is rarely experienced.

Answers to the 5th question asking if there is any difference in the quality of singing depending on the formation of singers are as follows:

- when standing in a semicircle, it is harder to achieve a sound uniformity, especially between singers on the sides;
- great distances between singers make you listen very carefully, put a lot of effort, observe the emergence of tension;
- singing in a semicircle makes you feel different because when you cannot maintain eye contact, there is no great pleasure to sing;
- if there is no clear circle, then there is no sense of rotation;
- «non-closure of a circle» distracts;
- it is more comfortable and cozier for singers to sing 'mouth to mouth', but in concerts, it is better to sing in a semicircle (as if involving listeners in a circle);
- only singing 'mouth to mouth' is achieved the desired «cohesion» of different parties and coming together of voices;
- it is the best to sing in a circle, because it helps a *sutartinė* to «immerse» singers in a continuous sound, a clear tempo of a *sutartinė* is established, a looseness in singing appears.

Answers to the 6th question asking what determines singing 'mouth to mouth' (a sound quality, a certain state of mind, etc.) are as follows:

- it determines both a spiritual state and sound;
- not only that since the most significant things are acceptance, adjustment, acceptance of differences;
- it is a crucial feature of the performance technique;
- if there is no connection between singers, then there is also no *sutartinė*;
- only this method of singing determines the evolution of a *sutartinė*;
- it determines the «coming together» of voices and the depth of shared feeling.

The 7th question that sounds like this «Or perhaps the formation of singers does not make any big difference?» was answered as follows:

- it is good in either way when it is possible to feel each other without any disturbance;
- the formation (sequence) must be usual, unchangeable;

- it matters who a singer stands next to and who picks a melody from;
- at times, sounds do not get along, no matter what, however, after the change of positions, the voices «come together»;
- a semicircle (line) breaks the circle and the singing stops being even;
- when a group has been singing for a long time and its members are close to each other, it can sing outside of a circle while doing something;
- it is possible to sing a *sutartinė* without the presence of eye contact only in a pinch;
- if you try to sing a *sutartinė* counterclockwise, nothing works out;
- singing 'mouth to mouth' is both emotionally enjoyable and acoustically superior;
- it is crucial for singers to follow, observe and feel each other, as well as to truly understand each other and come together in a *sutartinė*.

3. Conclusions

After summing up the selected answers of all respondents to all questions, the following conclusions are possible:

1. The qualitative research carried out by interviewing 25 singers of *sutartinės* revealed that current singing practice of singing 'face-to-face' is the basis of *sutartinės* achievement of harmony as a musical and spiritual process.

2. According to the majority of singers, exactly this method of singing is responsible for the quality of *sutartinės* sound (the coming together of voices, the establishment of a unified tempo, the evolution of *sutartinės*), certain physical experiences (vibrations through the body), the creation of emotional connection, the possibility to experience spiritual connection with other singers.

3. Most of the singers emphasised differences between singing for themselves and singing on stage. Although some of the groups attempt to maintain a close circle on stage and sing 'face-to-face', sometimes just to distance themselves from an audience, yet they admit that during a concert, they often have to step out of the comfort zone and make a formation according to the conditions.

4. One of the reasons why the singers stand not in a circle but in a semicircle is reluctance to stand with the back to a viewer («nasty», «rude», «feeling bad for standing like this»). Extremely significant is the observation provided by the singers that when standing in a semicircle, unequal gaps appear between the singers, therefore, differences in sound intensity between adjacent and marginal singers occur. The feeling of even *sutartinė* «rotation» disappears, there is no singing 'mouth to mouth' or 'eye to eye', which makes it more difficult to experience the feeling of oneness between the singers (although, from my personal observation, that connection sometimes becomes even closer under more complicated conditions for a greater responsibility for each other is felt).

5. The worst option is to sing in front of microphones during concerts, and especially when standing not in a semicircle but in a line. Then, according to majority of singers, *sutartinė* loses its essence altogether, becomes simply «a song» or something else but not a *sutartinė*. This statement is very important, and organizers of concerts and festivals should take this into account.

6. When singing 'face-to-face', peculiarities of singing *sutartinės* become less important, and when they are sung *pulkais* 'in flocks', i.e. in large groups (each group having 10, 20 and more singers), interpersonal contacts 'mouth to mouth' and 'eye to eye' emphasised by many singers are no longer present. Singing in large groups becomes more and more popular these days, posing a certain threat of losing the essence of *sutartinės*.

7. Although most of the singers emphasize the need to sing 'mouth to mouth', determined by the specifics of *sutartinės* itself, some singers mentioned that such practice came from various trainings and seminars of *sutartinės*. Nevertheless, it is worth clarifying that in seminars, people also share their personal experiences rather than some directives which were «handed down from above».

8. It is hardly the case that today's conception of singing *sutartinės* 'mouth to mouth' is identical to the conception of those singers whose singing was described by Maciej Strykowski in the 16th century. After all, *sutartinės* were an indispensable part of celebrations and rituals back then. Without a doubt, the concept of today's singers is also different from the understanding of those singers whose singing was recorded by a phonograph by Zenonas Slaviūnas in the middle of the 20th century.

9. The singers of these days place an emphasis not so much the musical harmony of the arrangements (although for most groups musical agreement is very important), but on the spiritual connection experienced at the time of singing *sutartinės*, as well as the experiences of meditation, «oblivion», «losing track of time» and others, which are essential for today's person seeking an antidote to noise, the fast pace of life and other stressful things.

This report focuses on vocal *sutartinės* which are unrelated to movement. Yet other body sensations and experiences are offered by dancing *sutartinės* exhibiting specific steps (treading, «shuffling», etc.) which are syncretically related to the accents and specific articulations of *sutartinės* melodies.⁵²

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