

ONDINE

Onutė Narbutaitė

Centones Meae Urbi

(Oratorio)

Gunta Gelgotė · Nerijus Masevičius

Kaunas State Choir · Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra

Robertas Šervenikas

ONUTĖ NARBUTAITĖ (1956–)

Centones Meae Urbi (1997)

70:53

Oratorio for soprano, bass, choir and orchestra

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Opening. The Poet's Return | 5:22 |
| 2 | I Autumn | 13:31 |
| 3 | II Winter | 11:33 |
| 4 | III Spring | 17:34 |
| 5 | IV Summer | 14:58 |
| 6 | The Poet's Farewell. Closing | 7:51 |

GUNTA GELGOTĖ, soprano · NERIJUS MASEVIČIUS, bass-baritone

KAUNAS STATE CHOIR

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ROBERTAS ŠERVENIKAS, CONDUCTOR

Centones Meae Urbi (1997)

Wilno, Vilna, Vilnius – the Lithuanian capital’s history is a patchwork of cultures, music, and languages. This interwoven history is, in part, a result of its tumultuous history with centuries of changing hands and control from larger powers; but also, from the varieties of peoples who have come to call Vilnius home. This cultural melting pot has seen the city earn the nickname of Jerusalem of the North, as well as being home to many prominent cultural figures including Adam Mickiewicz, Czesław Miłosz, and Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (Elijah of Vilna), to give a few notable examples.

The disparate, but interconnected, elements which shape Vilnius’s history have been a point of fascination for many artists, especially when considering how it may reflect on Lithuania’s contemporary identity more fully. What adds to the fascination, but also complicates the relationship, is so much of the history is lost as a result of conflicts, most notably the Holocaust, meaning artists exploring this history are having to revitalise lost relics or chase the idea of what the city’s culture could have been.

The hopes of capturing this rich and complex tapestry have been evident within many works of **Onutė Narbutaitė** (1956*). A student of Julius Juzeliūnas and Bronius Kutavičius, two composers who gained renown through their own responses to Lithuanian history and identity, Narbutaitė came to prominence in the early 1990s shortly after Lithuania seceded from the Soviet Union. The decade was culturally significant as artists in all disciplines tried to respond to the new society that was beginning to evolve, as well as reexamine the past. Narbutaitė, alongside her contemporaries Vidmantas Bartulis and Algirdas Martinaitis, tried to reconnect to a history which they believe had been lost or needed reflection with new eyes and fresh minds.

During the 1980s Narbutaitė’s work was predominantly focused upon chamber-scale or choral works. Among them are works that demonstrate the composer’s fascination with poetry and the history of Vilnius. Both of which are central to *Centones Meae Urbi*.

As mentioned, 1990–2005 was a particularly important period for Narbutaitė which saw her composing many of her larger scale works like her Second Symphony, *Melodija Alyvy sode*, *Tres Dei Matris Symphoniae*, and *La barca*. These works came to embody Narbutaitė’s style and is described eloquently by Richard Taruskin:

“Not ‘tonal’. Not ‘romantic’. Not ‘retro’. Consonant.”

This magically familiar but also distant and unique sound quality not only makes Narbutaitė's music striking, but haunting and memorable.

The oratorio *Centones Meae Urbi* is a work of particular note which saw the composer awarded with the Lithuanian National Laureate in 1997; and up to this point, was the composer's largest work and first foray into orchestral oratorio. The four broad sections are mirrored on the seasons of the year and uses this natural cycle to reflect on elements of Vilnius's unique history.

To evoke this cyclical evolution, the role of the poet becomes deeply central to the work. Firstly, the importance of language to the various communities who have an historic connection to Vilnius; secondly, Narbutaitė's choice to book-end the work with *Poeto sugrįžimas* (Poet's Return) and *Poeto atsisveikinimas* (Poet's Farewell) demonstrates the composer's choice to make the poet central figure of this oratorio.

Opening / Poet's Return

Using the solo Lithuanian Birbynė (a traditional single reed instrument, which resembles a clarinet), the *Poet's Return* is based on text by Czesław Miłosz written in 1965. The interaction between the soprano soloist and the choir being a simple depiction of the various souls spotted in what Miłosz describes as the 'City with no name'.

Autumn

Autumn is one of the largest sections of the oratorio which consists of four different poetic epitaphs surrounded by old tombstone inscriptions from Vilnius cemeteries, and with Adam Mickiewicz's poem placed between them. The words of Joannes Biducius, Adam Mickiewicz, Petrus Royzius Maurus, Simon Nidevicius Leopoliensis, and Czesław Miłosz, not only capture the centuries of Catholic and Polish influence on the city but also touch upon some of the significant historic figures who have been laid to rest in Vilnius, including Queen Barbora Radvilaite (Barbara Radziwiłł in Polish).

The closing words of Miłosz are a poignant description on death, but also how history is often slipping from our hands:

"We wrote entire libraries of books...We lost a lot of battles like this. And now we are no longer there"

Winter

Based on *Piliarožiy rūkas* by Eugenijus Ališanka, Winter is an evocative depiction of the original poem. The question of forgetting is central, but also shows things aren't lost but hang like smoke absorbed into clothing leaving a "smell like eternal winter".

Spring

Royal Welcome

The Royal Welcome is a reference to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania-Poland. The text by Petrus Strzelec describes how 'the great ruler, will illuminate Vilnius...Just as river water revives a green poplar tree'. The lively brass and percussion depicting the magnificence and splendour of a monarchy which at one point boasted a kingdom which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Spring at Lukiškes

"*The flowers are happy that the kings have come*", these are the words of an anonymous poet from 1648. The evocation of spring being a common symbol of rebirth and new life, Narbutaitė uses this imagery to conjure images of previous brilliance. However, as the movement unfolds, the fraught energy shows this point was a fleeting moment surviving only in imagined memory.

Procession

The Spring Procession originates from *Pirmoji mylia, arba Paneriai* by Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius and originally describes a journey to Trakai Church. This solemn prayer-like text asks for peace and safety in their journey. Within the context of this oratorio, it can both be seen as the procession of time, from one season to another, but what is most likely the composer's intention is this text is another reminder of the impermanence of the people who call Vilnius home. Despite the rich history of the city, many of its travellers are now lost to the past.

Summer

Summer brings us the first utterances of Hebrew and Yiddish, starting with Mošë Kulbakas's poem *Vilnius* from 1926 which describes ominous things hiding in the dark corners of the city. This poem

is contrasted with Jeremiah's Lament from the Old Testament which describes the bitterness of God's chosen people in exile. The addition of Miłosz's *Where the Sun Rises and where it sets* further illustrates the overall theme of despair.

"On the corner a bookstore...printing and writing, Latin, Cyrillic, Hebrew, letters...they haven't changed since he passed through...Napoleon. Nothing has changed here."

Despite the grandeur witnessed in Spring, Summer is a strong reminder of how Vilnius has been the home of great loss and destruction.

The Poet's Farewell

"Why is it that I alone am entrusted with this city."

The Poet's Farewell draws again from Miłosz's *City with No Name*. These particular verses describe a broad reflection on Vilnius's history, acting almost like a commentary to the preceding movements of the oratorio. It also serves as a consideration of what is Vilnius at the time this work was written. The uncertainty of the future of Lithuania, whether intentionally done by the composer or not, is prevalent in this moment.

Closing

Vaidotas Daunys's short text, not only poignantly depicts an artist's connection to their city, but Narbutaitė is able to use it like a Credo for her own feeling on her home:

"When I am asked: do you believe that the secret of life lies in this city? – I answer: I am its participant."

The whole oratorio is both a significant exploration of a city's history and present culture, and a deeply personal expression of the composer's own connection to their home. History is fleeting, it has its glory and grandeur, it is tainted by its horror and destruction, and all we can do is participate in the present. The work is deeply embodied in Vilnius, but its greatness lies in its more universal considerations and hopefully this new recording will encourage a renewed interest in this great work.

Narbutaitė's position within contemporary Lithuanian music is truly remarkable. Arguably one of the most performed Lithuanian composers alive, and in many instances the first Lithuanian woman to achieve the heights she has managed to get to. She has been at the forefront of a cultural shift within Lithuania where each generation following in her footsteps have numerous prominent women composers including Raminta Šerkšnytė, Justė Janulytė, Žibuoklė Martinaitytė, Justina Repečkaitė, and Raimonda Žiūkaitė. But her influence in Lithuanian music is not just about improving the standing of women composers, her musical language and vision can be seen in many composers around her who have been inspired by her many great works. Much like Čiurlionis, Juzeliūnas, and Kutavičius have become hallmarks of the Lithuanian musical identity, Narbutaitė has left her mark for generations to come, and works like *Centones Meae Urbi* attest to this fact.

Ben Lunn

Centones meae urbi is a strange kind of musical essay about Vilnius, the city where I was born. I like reading essays by good writers about various cities. In our mind, many famous cities are directly connected with, and seemingly dependent on, images created by literature – resulting in a real intertwining of reality and fiction. With its numerous impressions and myths, Vilnius – within the context of Lithuania-Poland – is one of those cities. Its beautiful architecture, mainly baroque, is laid out in a picturesque hilly setting. I have no doubt that the pictorial, non-geometric layout of this city, the intricacy and versatility of its architectural forms, and its baroque lightness, have had a strong influence on the language of my music.

Vilnius University, established in 1579, has, at various times, been a major focus of Vilnius life, and a centre of attraction. The history of the city, like that of Lithuania itself, is a complex and frequently painful one. From its very inception, Vilnius was multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, a place where diverse cultures intersected and mingled; therein, I think, to a large degree, lies its charm. In that sense it is a typical Eastern – Central European city, which, in the mid-20th century – like many areas in this region – became a lost city for a large portion of its old population. One of its especially rich colours, the Jewish one, with its very developed, autonomous, and specific to this area cultural tradition, was totally erased.

The foundation, therefore, of my musical essay, is architecture, literature and history. It contains fragments, which made their way here from the various epochs, of multilingual texts written in this city, as well as authentic tombstone inscriptions, and newspaper headings from the beginning of the 20th century. Helping to connect them all are texts about Vilnius written from abroad by the famous Lithuanian-born Polish poet and Nobel prize laureate, Czesław Miłosz. In his destiny and situation, this writer is a fairly typical figure of the intertwined history of the Lithuanians and Poles, and of Vilnius in particular. The only text in the oratorio with no reference to Vilnius, is Lamentation of Jeremiah from the Old Testament.

This oratorio is an attempt to create, in sound, a city which no longer exists in reality. At the same time, what I wanted to say, through the rather intimate form of this music, is that its past is a tangible and appreciable part of our experience, and the source of our existence. In this sense, this very documentary oratorio also touches the completely universal theme of human life and death. All of it is expressed in the form of the seasons: the oratorio is composed of Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer – framed within an introduction and ending.

The Lithuanian, Polish, Latin, Yiddish, Hebrew and other languages, and texts from the different epochs determined the intonational diversity of the music. They are, however, neither authentic quotes, nor stylizations. I would call it a conscious openness to the suggestiveness of language and epoch. An openness which is subjective, and based on intuition rather than theory.

Onutė Narbutaitė

Gunta Gelgotė is a Latvian soprano who lives and sings in Lithuania. She has created quite a few roles in the Latvian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, and is often invited to perform with Latvian orchestras. She has participated in performances of Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, Gustav Mahler's 4th symphony and Francis Poulenc's Gloria with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra.

In Lithuania, the singer is also an active participant in musical life. At the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, she sang the role of Adele in Johann Strauss's Die Fledermaus, the Dream Girl in Onutė Narbutaitė's Kornet, Kunigunda in Leonard Bernstein's Candide, Olympia in Jacques Offenbach's The Tales of Hoffmann. With the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, she sang soprano part in Gustav Mahler's 4th symphony as well as Laurynas Vakarė's Five Love Songs.

Gunta Gelgotė received the Latvian Great Music award for the Debut of the Year in 2009 and was also nominated for this award in the category "For dedicated work throughout the year" in 2024. She was awarded the Golden Cross of the Stage in Lithuania in 2022 for the role of Julia in Bronius Kutavičius' opera Lokys at the Klaipėda State Music Theater. Gunta was also nominated for this award for the role of the Bird Woman in Bronius Kutavičius' opera-poem The Thrush – Green Bird.

Gunta Gelgotė regularly organizes chamber music programs, collaborates frequently with contemporary composers Mārtiņš Viļums, Imants Zemzaris, Georgs Pelēcis, Mykolas Natalevičius, Jonas Jurkūnas, Martynas Bialobžeskis, Evija Skuķe, Gundega Šmite, Dimitris Marionidis, among others. Onutė Narbutaitė dedicated her piece Labyrinth with texts by Ingeborg Bachmann and Jorge Luis Borges to the duet of Gunta Gelgotė and flutist Giedrius Gelgotas. The piece was awarded Best Work of the Year Prize by the Lithuanian Composers' Union.

Bass-baritone **Nerijus Masevičius**, one of the most famous performers of early and contemporary music of Lithuania. His musical career commenced in Kaunas where he studied cello at the Juozas Naujalis Music Gymnasium. Later he took on choral conducting at the Juozas Gruodis Conservatory. He also obtained diplomas of vocal performance and conducting from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre.

Masevičius is an active concert performer, participating in various events both in Lithuania and abroad. Masevičius has performed with a number of orchestras, including Lithuanian and St. Christopher's Chamber Orchestras, Lithuanian National and State Symphony Orchestras, Kaunas

Symphony Orchestra, Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra, Baltic Baroque Orchestra as well as different ensembles, such as Lithuania's Musica Humana, Banchetto musicale, Canto Fiorito, Morgaine, Estonia's Musica silentii, France's Antiphona and Le Poème Harmonique, Flori Pari (Poland), Alta Capella (Russia), Le Tendre Amour (Spain), Het kolektyv (Belgium).

He has participated in master classes led by early music educators and performers – Andrew Lawrence-King (Great Britain), Vincent Dumestre (France), Jean-François Novelli (France), Marc Mauillon (France), Rolandas Muleika (France), Wim Becu (Belgium), Jane Gingell (Great Britain), Jan Van Elsacker (Belgium), Roberto Balconi (Italy), Charles Daniels (Great Britain) and others.

Baroque operas, oratorios, and cantatas are equally important in his repertoire – Monteverdi's *Ballo delle Ingrate*, *Orpheus*, *Vespers*, Caccini's *Euridice*, Pagliardi's *Caligula*, Vitale's *Il ratto di Helena*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Bach's *Johannes-Passion*, *Matthäus Passion*, *B minor Mass*, Schütz's *Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz*, among others, as well as Lithuanian premieres or premieres abroad – Šerkšnytė's *Songs of Sunset and Dawn*, Martinaitis's *Summa (Mass of Animals)*, Augustina's *Journey of the Magi*, *Flood* by Tarasov and Mann, opera *Alfa* by Navickas, *Via Crucis* by Lukaszewski, *Mitternachtsstück* by Kagel, among others.

Masevičius' musical biography includes different festivals in Lithuania and abroad, such as the Thomas Mann Festival, the Vilnius Festival, Banchetto Musicale, Pax et Bonum, Jauna Muzika, Gaida, Kultur Festival (Turkey), Millennium Pace (Spain), Bach Festival, Vocal Fantasy (Israel), Baltic Sea Festival (Sweden), *Zalataja Maska*, *Renaissance* (Russia), *Passages*, *Theatre en May* (France), *Trigonale* (Austria) and more. Together with other musicians, he has recorded 22 albums, including *Cantate Domino* which contains music from the 17th-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania, W. A. Mozart's *Vespere solennes de confessore*, *Misa Criolla* by Ariel Ramirez, and Pawel Lukaszewski's *Via Crucis*.

Together with other musicians, his 22 albums include: Verdi's *Traviata* (2003), Mozart's *Vespere solennes de confessore* (2003), *Cantate Domino: 17th-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania* (2005), Baranauskas: *Kalbėjimas* (2007), Ramirez's *Misa Criolla* (2008), Lukaszewski's *Via Crucis* (2011, Poland), Vivaldi's *Beatus Vir* (2011), *Deus Deus meus: Giovanni Battista Cocciola (XVII a. LDK muzika)* (2015), Schütz's *Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz* (2019, Moscow), *Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla: Going for the Impossible – A Portrait* (2019, Deutsche Grammophon), *Evening song / Giesmė vakarinė* (2020, Ayros), *Lietuvių kompozitoriai: Between Music and Ritual* (2021, LMIC), *Martinaitis: Pradžios ir pabaigos knyga* (2022, LMIC), *Opera Alfa* (2022, Operomanija), *From Rome to Vilnius* (2024, Brilliant Classics).

In 2019, together with the creative group he received in the opera category the Golden Cross of the Stage for the opera Alfa.

For over 50 years, the **Kaunas State Choir** has been one of the most prestigious Lithuanian vocal ensembles.

Since 2021, the artistic director and chief conductor of the Choir has been Professor Robertas Šervenikas. Kaunas State Choir stepped up its international performing activity in 1992, when it started working with legendary conductor Lord Yehudi Menuhin, cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich and composer Krzysztof Penderecki who referred to Kaunas State Choir as one of the most capable and professional ensembles they had worked with. The Choir takes pride in having been directed by more than 70 Lithuanian and foreign conductors, produced an incredible number of works – more than 270 large-scale pieces by foreign and Lithuanian composers. Kaunas State Choir has hosted more than 3000 concerts and attracted huge crowds of music lovers. The discography of Kaunas State Choir includes more than 60 albums. The Kaunas State Choir has been performing Onutė Narbutaitė's works for many years: *Tres Dei Matris Symphoniae* 2004, 2008, 2019, and the oratorio *Centones Meae Urbi* 2023. The recording of *Centones Meae Urbi* was made in 2024 at the Lithuanian National Philharmonic.

kvch.lt/en

The **Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra** (LNSO), one of Lithuania's most important and advanced musical collectives, has been a part of Lithuania's cultural life and has significantly enriched it since its inception. The LNSO was founded in 1940 by Balys Dvarionas, a composer, pianist and conductor whose name is inseparable from the Lithuanian identity. From 1964 to 2015 the Orchestra was led by Juozas Domarkas, one of the most important promoters of Lithuanian culture, and since 2015, Modestas Pitrenas has served as its artistic director and principal conductor. Robertas Šervenikas is the Orchestra's second conductor, Juozas Domarkas is the honorary conductor and Victorien Vanoosten – the principal guest conductor.

The Orchestra's 84th season is marked by significant musical events. One of them is the release of a historic album for our country, Amilcare Ponchielli's opera *I Lituani* (The Lithuanians) on Accentus Music. The recording was an international success, with the classical music magazine *Pizzicato* remarking that "Pitrėnas overcomes dramaturgical shortcomings and the sometimes poor orchestration with a conducting style based on tension and melodic unfolding", and the Dutch music magazine *Music Emotion* describing the recording of the opera *I Lituani* as a 'must-have' musical novelty.

In the 2024–2025 season, the LNSO gave concerts with the renowned pianist Rafał Blechacz, participated in a concert performance of Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* with soprano Vida Miknevičiūtė, tenor Jonathan Tetelman, and bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel, and recorded Grażyna Bacewicz's Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 7 with Polish violin virtuoso Janusz Wawrowski, conducted by Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. The LNSO's upcoming engagements include collaboration with one of today's most sought-after violinists Christian Tetzlaff and the renowned tenor Joseph Calleja at the 29th Vilnius Festival, as well as tours in Poland and Latvia.

Having been an active participant in Lithuania's cultural life for 85 years, the LNSO performs around 50 concerts in Lithuania and abroad every year. It has visited many European countries, Japan, South America and South Korea, and has given concerts in some of the most prominent concert venues of the world, such as Musikverein in Vienna, the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Berlin, and many others. The LNSO has also performed at prestigious music festivals, such as the Schleswig-Holstein, Musica Romantica in Switzerland, the Warsaw Autumn, the Prague Spring, and elsewhere. The Orchestra has been conducted by important historical personalities including Jonas Aleksa, Mstislav Rostropovich, Krzysztof Penderecki, Christoph Eschenbach; has collaborated with Monserrat Caballé, Jessye Norman, Emil Gilels, Mūza Rubackytė, Mischa Maisky, and other illustrious soloists.

Alongside the most famous classical repertoire, the ambassador of Lithuanian music actively promotes the Lithuanian composers: the LNSO is a regular participant in the international festival of contemporary music *Gaida*, it premieres the works by Lithuanian composers, participates in recordings, and presents Lithuanian music in Euroradio live broadcasts.

Kaunas State Choir Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize Laureate, Professor **Robertas Šervenikas** is often praised for the intensive and diverse creative activities ranging from the first performances of large-scale symphonic compositions by Lithuanian composers to distinctive and mature interpretations of contemporary and classical repertoire. Maestro pays equal attention to opera, ballet and symphonic music, with a special emphasis on contemporary opuses.

Šervenikas is the first performer of many works by Lithuanian composers, among which most memorable are a terrific production of Onutė Narbutaitė's opera *Cornet* presented with the LNOBT company, performance of such majestic opuses as *Tres Dei Matris symphoniae*, the oratorio *Centones Meae Urbi*, *Melody in the Olive Garden* with the ensemble of the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society. He has recorded several dozen albums of contemporary music, many of them issued by Naxos, Finlandia Records and other record companies.

Šervenikas' international career was launched in 1997 at the Evian Festival. Šervenikas has been invited to conduct Israel Camerata, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Slovenian National Opera, the Russian State Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic (Great Britain) among other foreign orchestras. In addition, he regularly collaborates with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra. Maestro has led various orchestras in almost all European countries, Japan, South Korea, China, Thailand, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, Oman, Israel and Russia. He has graced the podium in such halls as Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Auditorium de Nationale in Madrid, Alte Oper in Frankfurt, Cadogan Hall in London, Konzerthaus in Berlin, Festival Hall and Symphony Hall in Osaka, Tokyo Suntory Hall, Metropolitan Art Space, as well as the philharmonic halls of Cologne and Hamburg.

www.servenikas.com

THE POET'S RETURN*Czesław Miłosz*from the poem *Miasto bez imienia / Miestas be vardo / City without a Name, 1965*

translated into Lithuanian by Almis Grybauskas

Soprano (in Lithuanian)

Kas pašlovins šį bevardį miestą,
 kai vieni jau mirę, kiti auksą plauna
 arba prekiauja ginklais tolimose žemėse?

*Who will honor city without a name
 If so many are dead and others pan gold
 Or sell arms in faraway countries?*

Koks dabar trimitas, susuktas iš tošies,
 Paneriuose kels nesančiųjų atmintį,
 Pėdsekių ir Valkatų, paleistos ložės brolių?

*What shepherd's horn swatched in the bark of birch
 Will sound in the Ponary Hills the memory of the
 absent –
 Vagabonds, Pathfinders, brethern of a dissolved
 lodge?*

Pavasarij dykumoj, tuoj už stovyklavietės,
 O buvo tylą lig kalnų vientisos uolienos,
 krūmokšniuose išgirdau laukinių bičių
 dūzgenimą.

*This spring, in a desert, beyond a campsite flagpole,
 – In silence that stretched to the solid rock of
 yellow and red mountains –
 I heard in a gray bush the buzzing of wild bees.*

Lėkė srove aidas, šlapi sielių rąstai,
 vyras su kepure ir moteris skarota
 keturiomis rankomis užsigulę laikė vairo irklą.

*The current carried an echo and the timber of rafts.
 A man in a visored cap and a women in a kerchief
 Pushed hard with their four hands at a heavy
 steering oar.*

Bibliotekoj po bokštu, puoštu ženklais Zodiako,
 Kontrimas šypsodamas sėmė žiupsnį iš
 tabokinės,

*In the library, below a tower painted with the
 signs of the zodiac,
 Kontrym would take a whiff from his snuffbox
 and smile*

nes, nepaisant Meternicho, dar ne viskas
prarasta.

O vingiuotom provėžom vidur Lydos trakto
riedėjo žydų vežėčios ir gurgėjo tetervinas
ant Didžiosios Armijos kirasyro šalmo.

For despite Metternich all was not yet lost.

*And on crooked lanes down the middle of a
sandy highway
Jewish carts went their way while a black
grouse hooted
Standing on a cuirassier's helmet, a relict of La
Grande Armée.*

*(English translation by Czesław Miłosz, Robert
Hass, Robert Pinsky and Renata Gorczy ska)*

Choir (in Polish)

Kto honorować będzie miasto bez imienia
kiedy jedni umarli, inni płuczą złoto
albo handlują bronią w oddalonych krajach?

Jaka surma w powijkach brzoźowej kory
otrąbi na Ponarach pamięć nieobecnych,
Włóczęgów, Tropicieli, braci z rozwiązanej łoży?

Tej wiosny na pustyni, za masztem obozowiska,
a cicho było aż po litą skalę gór żółtych i
czerwonych,
usłyszałem w szarym krzaku brzęczenie dzikich
pszczół.

Mijały z prądem echo i bierwiona płytów,
mężczyzna w czapce z kozyrkiem i kobieta w
chustce
czworgiem rąk napierali na wielkie wiosło
sterowe.

W bibliotece pod wieżą malowaną w znaki zodiaku
Kontrym brał z tabakierki szczyptę i uśmiechał się,
gdyż mimo Metternicha nie wszystko było
stracone.

I krętą koleiną pośrodku ludzkiego traktu
jechały żydowskie furmanki a cietrzew tokował
stojąc na kasku kirasjera Wielkiej Armii.

2

I AUTUMN

Epitaph One, or a Promenade at the Bernardines Cemetery

Joannes Bilducius

Cito pede labitur aetas / Greitai skuba metai / The year hurries quickly, 1596

Choir (in Latin)

Discito qui dubitas, cur sol exurgit ab undis
Et cur parte alia mergitur Oceano?
Ut tu mortalis caeli dum vesceris aura,
Semper ad occasum te properare scias.
Antroji epitafija, arba pasivaikščiojimas po
Rasų kapines

*Try to understand why the sun rises from the sea
And why it sets on the other shore,
In order to remember: you too, while enjoying
heavenly weather,
Are constantly approaching your own death,
unfortunately.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

Epitaph Two, or a Promenade at the Rasos Cemetery

Petrus Royzius Maurus

Epitaphia Barbarae Reginae / Epitafija Karalienei Barborai / Epitaph to Queen Barbora (16th c.)

Choir (in Latin)

Barbara, Sauromatum regina, hoc clausa
sepulcro est,
De Radivilorum femina nata domo.
Dat mortem, quae sceptrā dedit, Cracovia; regis
quae dederat thalamum, Vilna dedit tumulum.

*In this grave lies Barbora, queen of the Sarmatians,
Born of the noble house of Radvila the Great.
She met her death in Cracow, shortly after
being crowned,
Vilnius arranged her a wedding and gave her
a grave.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

From the Album of S.B.

Adam Mickiewicz

*W Imienniku S.B. / J S.B. Albumą, 1824 spalio 22, kelios valandos po įsakymo išvykti iš Lietuvos gavimo.
In the S.B. Album, October 22, 1824 – after being ordered to leave Lithuania*

Bass (in Polish)

Minęły chwile szczęśliwsze, niestety!
Kiedy na błoniach był kwiatów dostatek,
Kiedy mi łatwiej było o bukiety
Niżeli teraz o kwiatek.

*Sadly, the loveliest days have already passed,
When the fields were a myriad of colorful blossoms,
When bouquets of flowers bloomed all around, –
I can no longer find even a single tiny flower.*

Ryknęły burze, ciągle leją śloty,
Trudno wynaleźć na ojczystej błoni,
Trudno wynaleźć, gdzie kwiat błyskał złoty,
Listka dla przyjaznej dłoni.

*Only howling tempests clouding the skies.
In the empty meadow I search for
A little leaf, as if a dear memory
Which I'd like to give you.*

Co wynalazłem, niech tobie poświęcę,
Przyjmij go wdzięcznie, chociażby z tej miary,
Iż był ten listek w przyjacielskiej ręce,
Że to ostatnie są dary.

*What I have found, I offer you from the heart.
Though a sorry-looking thing,
Take this little leaf – it's been touched by my
hand, –
This is my last gift.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

Epitaph Three, or a Second Promenade at the Rasos Cemetery

Simon Nidevicius Leopoliensis

*Vilna invitat nymphas ad celebrandum Palatinae funus / Vilnius kviečia nimfas atvykti į Vaivadienės
laidotuves / Vilnius invites the nymphs to come to Palatine funeral, 1592*

Choir (in Latin)

Lilia cum myrto, violas et balsama Nymphae
Spargite vos Litauae numina sancta plagae
Funera dum iustis decorantur maesta querelis,
Et vestra humenti lumina rore madent.
Tęcinia Catharina decus memorabile gentis,
Deliciae Litavum morte subacta cadit.

*Myrtle and lilies, violets and fragrant balsam
Sprinkle, nymphs - for you are the goddesses of
the Lithuanian people,
While the funerary lament rings out, while the
ritual takes place,
While tears continue to course down your damp
cheeks.
Here Kotryna, jewel of the mortal human tribe,
The joy of the Lithuanians, suddenly fell, struck
by death.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

Epitaph Four or a Second Promenade at the Bernardines Cemetery

Joannes Rudamina

Terra vale / Žeme, sudie / Farewell, Earth, 1596

Choir (in Latin)

Nato animo caelis angustum quis negat orbem?
Quis patriae durum praeferat exilium?
Experiar dudum quae sum commentus, abibo,
Astra petam placido funere, terra vale.

*For the soul made for heaven, this world is too
constricted,
And severe exile is no longer a substitute for home.
I will try out what I have conceived, and take my
leave for there.
I will aim for the stars after my death. Farewell,
my native earth.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

P.S.

Czesław Miłosz

from the poem *Miasto bez imienia / Miestas be vardo/ City without a Name, 1965*

Soprano (in Polish)

A książek tośmy całą bibliotekę napisali.
A krain tośmy co niemiara zjeździli.
Bitew dużośmy, dużo przegrali.
Aż i nie ma, ni nas ni Maryli.

*Books, we have written a whole library of them.
Lands, we have visited a great many of them.
Battles, we have lost a number of them.
Till we are no more, we and our Maryla.*

*(English translation by Czesław Miłosz, Robert
Hass, Robert Pinsky and Renata Gorczyńska)*

II WINTER*Eugenijus Ališanka**from the cycle Piliarožių rūkas / Mist of Rose Mallows, 1991***Choir** (in Lithuanian)

ir vienas žodis, perveriantis darną,
ir vienas kūnas, virtęs valanda,
lėtoj liepsnoj vis šoka, užmiršti,

gorgonės akys, angelo širdis,
išgirdęs šauksmą grėžiasi į mus,
bet šauksmas iš toliau,

be džiaugsmo, tartum kaltas
įsigeria į rūbą baltas dūmas,
mes kvepiam amžina žiema

*one word, piercing harmony
and one body, turned into an hour
still dance in slow flame, forgotten,*

*the eyes of a gorgon, the heart of an angel,
one hearing the call turns to us,
but the call comes from beyond,*

*without joy, as if guilty
the white smoke soaks into cloth,
we smell of eternal winter*

*(English translation by Eugenijus Ališanka and
Harvey L. Hix)*

III SPRING**Royal welcome***Petrus Strzelec**Echo / Aidas, 1579***Choir** (in Latin)

Quod Sol vere novo campis hoc, maxime Princeps,
 Cum Vilnam Litavis ingredieris.

Populeis quod larga comis sunt flumina, Vilnae,
 Hoc si, Rex, in ea, magne, moreris.

*As the sun lights up the fields in early spring,
 You, noble Ruler, will light up Vilnius. An echo:
 you are.*

*As water from the rivers refreshes the green poplar,
 So will you, King, if you visit with us. An echo:
 you are.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

Spring at Lukiškės

unknown author

*Lukiškių pavasaris / Spring at Lukiškės, 1648***Soprano, bass, choir** (in Lithuanian)

Džiaugias žiedeliai, kad jump atėjo karaliai, –
 Saules išvydo, meto nelaukę, pražydo.

*The buds are happy, that the kings have come, –
 Setting eyes on the suns, they blossomed
 before their time.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

Procession

Mathias Casimirus Sarbievius

Prima Leuca, Seu Ponari ex: Quattuor Leucæ Virginis Matris seu publica ac solemnitas ad aedem, Divæ Virginis Matris Trocensem processio, 1622

*Pirmoji mylia, arba Paneriai / The first mile, or Paneriai, vertė
Translated into Lithuanian by Ona Daukšienė*

Choir (in Latin & Lithuanian)

Imus? an frustra fugiente
bruma

Omnis Aprili via risit herba,
Et cavæ valles viridique lucent
Arva sereno?

Imus. Inscriptæ sinuosa Divæ
Signa iam lenes rapuere venti;
Ni vetent rumpi, revocentque
tensi
Serica funes.

Interim pictis taciturna nusquam
Pompa sub signis fluat. Illa
magni
te maris Stellam, dubiisque,
Virgo,
Sidus in undis,

Einam? Ar tikrai, pasibaigus
žiemai,
Šypsos pakelėm žaluma
balandžio,
Klonių daubose ir laukuos
žolynai
Švyti džiaugsmingai?

Einam. Jau lengvi pasičiuo
vėjai
Vėliavų klostes, Dieviškiausiai
skirtas,
Audeklo šilkų pasigrobt
neleidžia
Įtemptos virvės.

Po margais šilkais nenutyla
niekaip
Eisena ilga. Ji tave, Mergele,
Jūrų žvaigždę ir virš bangų
audringų
Švyturį ryškų,

*Shall we go? When winter has
ended,
Will the April greenery truly
smile along the roadsides,
Grass-plots in the valley
ravines and fields
Glow happily?*

*Let us go. The winds have
already lightly grasped
The folds of the flags assigned
to the most Godly,
The silk threads of the cloth
are kept from being snatched
By taut ropes.*

*The long procession does not
quieten down
Under the bright silk cloths.
You, Virgin,
Star of the seas, bright beacon
Above stormy waves,*

Illa nil sancti dubiam pudoris
Te canat Matrem, facilemque
clausi
Aetheris portam, Tibi praepes
alti
Civis Olympi

Motina, tave, ji apgieda,
amžiams
Likusių skaisčia ir vartus
aukštybių
Galinčią atvert. Tau sparnuotas
vaikas
Aukšto Olimpo,

*It glorifies you, Mother, pure
Throughout the ages, and able
to open
The gates of the highest.
A winged child
Of mighty Olympus,*

Hinc et hinc pressis reverenter
alis
Attulit pacem. (...)

Modamas sparnais pagarbiai
aplinkui,
Neša taiką. (...)

*Beating his wings respectfully
around you,
Carries peace. (...)*

Mitis, et blanda prece
singularis
Virgo placari, scelerum solutos
Et bonos flecti, vacuosque
noxae
Suggere sensus.

Ramini visus, išgirsti
maldaujant,
Taikai mus, kaltes apvalai,
Mergele,
Sielas nuo bausmės išvaduoji,
leidi
Kreiptis į dangų.

*You console everyone, hear
our pleas,
Reconcile us, clean away our
sins, Virgin,
You release our souls from
punishment, you allow us
To appeal to heaven.*

Integram nobis sine labe
vitam,
Prosperam nobis sine clade
mortem,
Et sacros Nati Genitrix tueri
Annue vultus.

Leiski mums dorai nugyvent,
be gėdos,
Leiski mums gražiai, be
nelaimės mirti,
Leisk Sūnaus, kurį pagimdei,
švenčiausią
Veidą regėti.

*Allow us to live virtuously,
without shame,
Allow us to die peacefully,
without misfortune,
Allow us to see the holy face
of your Son,
Whom you begat.*

Haec ter alterno modulata cantu
Turba, carpemus viridis Ponari
Roscidas valles, et amoena
praeter
Arva vehemur.

Mes, minia, kuri tau ritmingai
giedam
Pakaitom giesmes, Panerių
rasotais
Slėniais vis tolyn brisdami,
keliausim
Žydinčiom pievom.

*We, the crowd, in turn
rhythmically singing
Hymns to you, wading ever
further
In the dew-laden vales of
Paneriai, will travel
Along flowering meadows.*

*(English translation by
Vida Urbonavičius)*

5

IV SUMMER

Yiddish, Hebrew and Cyrillic letters transcribed into Lithuanian

Texts from newspapers of Vilnius from between 1906 and 1911

Utarnikas, gegužės trisdešimta (birželio dvylikta) diena, tūkstantis devyni šimtai šešti metai, Vilniaus žinios, pirmasis lietuvių dienraštis. Oras birželio dvyliktą dieną. Diena smagi, barometras septyni šimtai penkiasdešimt penki, termometras dešimt laipsnių šilumos.

Apgarsinimas prieš tekstą už garmono eilelę arba jos vietą keturiasdešimt kapeikų. Po teksto reklamos, nekrologai ir taip toliau. Smulkieji apgarsinimai dešimt kapeikų, apgarsinimai spauzdinami vien lietuviškai.

„Kurjer litewski” praneša, kad ties Baltupio sodžiaus, tarp Kalvarijos ir Vilniaus ant Cedrono upelio kranto atrado kažkas puodą senovės pinigų kuriuos greit žmonės pasidalino. Tik maža jų dalelė pateko į „Kurjer litewski” redakciją. Yra tai variniai pinigėliai nuo tūkstantis šeši šimtai šešiasdešimt trečių metų su Lietuvos ženklu Vytim ir su paveikslu karaliaus Jono Kazimiero. Buvo ir sidabro pinigėlių, bet tie teko perpirkliams.

Aukos „Vilniaus kanklių” dramos ir muzikos veikalų išleidimui. Žmonių švietimo ministeris nutarė vėl atverti prasidejus tūkstantis devyni šimtai šeštą septintų mokslo metams penkiasdešimt tris Lietuvos mokyklas. Šiomis dienomis jau atvėrė dėl publikos Carienės Katrės skverą, kuris per visą pavasarį nežinia dėl ko buvo uždarytas.

Od wydawnictwa. *Dziennik Wileński* zacze wychodzić regularnie od dnia pierwszego września. Prosimy o pospieszne nadsyłanie należności za prenumeratą.

Petersburski bank handlowy prywatny, oddział wileński, ulica Wielka, gdzie magazyn Załkinda, wprost Teatru miejskiego, kupuje i sprzedaje papiery procentowe, akcji i monety zagraniczne.

Skład galanteryjno-norymberski Kauicz, Wilno, ulica Zamkowa Wielka, poleca: wyroby skórzane, grzebienie i szpilki szylkretowe, rogowe i inne wyroby. Wstążki, koronki, hafty i aplikacje. Porcelanę, fajans, majoliki et cetera. Żyrandole kościelne i salonowe.

Procesja Bocego Ciała w Wilnie nie doszła do skutku. Ulewa, która się rozpoczęła w czasie sumy odprawianej przez Jego Excelencje księdza biskupa, przeszkodziła, wielka szkoda, ale widacz nie taka wola Boża. Też ulice po których miała iść procesja zostały przyozdobione w wieńce, obrazy, dywany, chorągwie, ale to wszystko na nic się nie zdało. Lunał tak silny deszcz, że z ulic miejskich powtorzyły rzeki, nie podobna było ruszyć z miejsca. Smutek.

Wilnia. U nas trywając obyski i aryszty. Biez mała nie prachodzić dnia kab palicja nie pierietrasła adnu dzwie chaty, nie arysztawała kolki ludziej. Woś u paniedziałak palicja zrabiła obyś u redakcji hazety *Echo*. Zabrała usie pisulki i arysztowała ludziej. Pryszła palicja da kniharni Szlapelisa, szto pradaje litouskije i bielaruskije kniżki i u jaho zabrali niejakiye pisulki i kniżku bielaruskuju pad tytulam „Chrest na swabodu”.

Oifmerkzam far eltern. Cum ankommen den Ierjor in magazin Zalkind, Vilne, Bolšaja hoiz drei un zybecik vert erefent a speciale obteilung šiler kleider fun feršeidene uniformen. Vilner Vochenblat jom vav kaf hei tamuz tav reiš ajin alef.

Godovoj otčot o diejatielnosti imperatorskago vilienskago medicinskago obščestva za tysiača dieviatsot šestoj god. Voda Viliji ostavlajet na dne sosuda ničtožnyj naliot iz glinistych častic piesčinek i toj že ugle-izviestkovej soli. Ijuń miesiac prošol sovieršenno biez doždiej, pri silnoj žarie. V načalie ijulia vypal prolivnoj dožd. Potrebovaloš ustrojstvo osobyh opytnych kolodcev v Bernardinskom sadu. Svierch togo v rajonie Puškinskago skviera, Kafedralnoj ploščadi, Botaničeskago sada. Gorodskije ključ: Vengierskije, Ostrobramskije i Misijonierskije.

Moshe Kulbak

from the poem *Vilne, 1926*

Soprano, bass (in Yiddish)

(soprano) Dain freid iz trojer – di freid fun tife beser

In kapelje, jom-toivim zainen di levajes,
Un treist – di klore, laichtndike oremkait,
Vi štile zumer-neplen oif di rogn fun der štot.
Du bist a tunkele kameje aingefast in Lite.

A seifer iz ajeder štein, a parmet – jede vant,
Cebletert soidesdik un oifgeefnt in der nacht,
Ven oif der alter šul, a vaser-treger a gefrorener, –
Dos berdele farkašert, – šteit un ceilt di štern.

Your joy is sadness – joy of deep basses

In chorus. The feasts are funerals.

Your consolation is poverty: clear, translucent

Like summer mist on the edges of the city.

You are a dark amulet set in Lithuania.

Each stone a book; parchment every wall.

Pages turn, secretly open in the night,

As, on the old synagogue, a frozen water carrier,

Small beard tilted, stands counting the stars.

(bass) Bai-nacht iber štot bin ich allein a trojeriker oich: Nito kein klang.

(soprano) Nor ergec hoich a cheilevdike lichtl trift un flatert, –

(bass) Es zict a bal-mekubl aingevebt in boidem

Vi a špin, un cit dem grojen fodem fun zain leben:

Ëz ver faran arum in vaiter kalter pusteniš Vos mir, fartoibte, hern di farlorene gešreien?

(soprano) Un s'šteit far im Reziel blaijik in der tunkelkait

Mit alte, parmetene fliglen opgekrochene, Un oign-griber ongefilt mit zamd un špinvebs:

(bass) – Nito. Huc trojer iz šoin gornit mer faran.

(soprano) Un boidem iber boidem etemt op – di lungen

Fun der horbiker bašefeniš, vos dremlt in di berg. O, efšer bistu, štot, a cholem fun a bal-mekubl, Vos švebt a groje, in der velt, vi špinvebs onheib jesjen.

Only I am stirring in the city by night.

No sound.

A tallow candle flutters, dripping,

*Where a cabalist sits, tangled into his garret,
Like a spider, drawing the gray thread of his life.*

“Is there anyone in the cold emptiness?

In our deafness – can we hear the lost cries?”

*Raziel is standing before him; he gleams in the
darkness.*

The wings an old, faded parchment.

*The eyes – pits filled with sand and with
cobweb.*

“There is no one. Only sorrow is left.”

The garrets breathe – lungs of

*The hunchbacked creature who is drowsing in
the hills.*

O city! You are the dream of a cabalist,

*Gray, drifting in the universe – cobweb in the
early autumn.*

(English translation by Nathan Halper)

Lamentation of Jeremiah
Old Testament, Lamentations, 5: 1-22

Choir (in Hebrew)

1. Zechor, Adonai, me haja lanu;
habit ur`e et cherpatenu.

5:1 O Lord, consider what has happened to us; please pay attention and take notice of the disgrace we are suffering.

2. Nachlatenu nehefcha le-zarim,
bateinu lenochrim.

5:2 Strangers have taken possession of the land that we inherited, foreigners now occupy our homes.

3. Jedomim hajinu ein av;
imoteinu kealmanot.

5:3 We have become orphans and fatherless, our mothers have become widows.

4. Meimeinu bekesset šatinu;
echeinu bimchir javou.

5:4 We must pay money to drink our own water; we must buy our own wood at a steep price.

5. Al cavarenu nirdafnu;
jaganu, lo hunach lanu.

5:5 We are pursued—our adversaries are breathing down our necks; we are physically worn out and cannot find any rest.

6. Micrajim natanu jad,
Ašur lisboa lachem.

5:6 We have made treaties with Egypt and Assyria just to acquire enough food to keep us alive.

7. Avoteinu chat`u einam
anachnu avonoteihem savalnu.

5:7 Our ancestors sinned and are now dead, so we are left to bear their punishment.

8. Avadim mašlu vanu;
porek ein mijadam.

*5:8 Tyrants rule over us; there is no one to
rescue us from their control.*

9. Benafšenu navi lachmenu
mipnei cherev hamidbar.

*5:9 We risk our lives when we search for food
because murderous marauders lurk in the
countryside.*

10. Orenu ketanur nichmaru
mipnei zal'afot ra'av.

*5:10 Our skin is hot as an oven; we are feverish
from hunger.*

11. Našim be-Cijon inu,
betulot bearei Jehuda.

*5:11 Our wives have been raped in the City of
Zion; our virgin daughters have been ravished in
the towns of Judah.*

12. Sarim bejadam nitlu;
penei zekenim lo nehedaru.

*5:12 They executed the royal family by hanging;
they have mistreated our elders.*

13. Bachurim techon nasau
Un`arim baec kašalu.

*5:13 They force our young men to perform
menial physical labor; they make our boys carry
heavy loads of wood.*

14. Zekenim miša`ar šavatu,
bachurim minginatam.

*5:14 The elders no longer conduct business
at the city gate; the young men have stopped
playing their joyful music.*

15. Šabat mešoš libenu,
nehefach le-evel mecholenu.

*5:15 Our hearts no longer experience any joy;
instead of dancing with joy, we mourn and
lament.*

16. Nafla ateret rošenu;
oi-na lanu ki chatanu.

5:16 The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned!

17. Al ze haja dave libenu;
al ele chošchu eineinu.

5:17 Because of this, we are very sorrowful; because of these things, we can hardly see through our tears.

18. Al har Cijon šešamem
šualim hilchu-vo.

5:18 For wild animals are prowling over Mount Zion, which lies deserted.

19. Ata, Adonai, le-olam tešev;
kis`acha ledor vador.

5:19 But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.

20. Lama lanecach tiškachenu,
taazvenu leorech jamim?

5:20 Why have you forgotten us forever? Why do you forsake us so long?

21. Hašivenu, Adonai, eleicha venašuva;
chadeš jameinu kekedem.

5:21 Bring us back to yourself, O Lord, and let us return to you; renew our life as in ancient times.

22. Ki im maos maastanu,
kacafta aleinu ad meod.

5:22 Or are you determined to reject us once and for all? Are you angry with us beyond limit?

Czesław Miłosz

from the poem *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada / Kur saulė teka ir kur leidžiasi /*

From the Rising of the Sun, 1974

Bass (in Polish)

Natomiast co opowiem teraz nie będzie
zmyślone.

Uliczka, prawie na wprost uniwersytetu
Rzeczywiście nazywała się tak: Zaulek Literacki.

Na rogu księgarnia, ale nie tomy, szpargały,
Ciasno, aż do sufitu. Nieoprawne, sznurkiem
związane,

I druk i pismo, łacinka, cyrylica,
Hebrajskie litery. Sprzed stu, trzystu lat.

Z tej księgarni widziało się tuż naprzeciwko
Trochę na ukos, drugą taksą samą.

I właściciele podobni: wyblakłe brody,
Długie chałaty, zaczerwienione powieki.

Nie zmienili się od roku kiedy przejeżdżał tędy
Napoleon.

Nic nie zmieniło się tutaj.

Choir (in Polish)

Jeden zatem poranek. Bierze ostry mróz.
Mcy chłodem.

A wtedy dzwony. U Świętego Jana,
U Bernardynów, u Świętego Kazimierza,

I w Katedrze i u Misjonarzy,

U Świętego Jerzego, u Dominikanów,

*But what I am going to tell you now is not
invented.*

*The narrow street, just opposite the university
Was called, in fact, Literary Lane.*

*On the corner, a bookstore; but not books, just
sheaves of paper*

*Up to the very ceiling. Unbound, tied with string,
Print and handwriting, In Latin, Cyrillic script.*

*In Hebrew letters. From a hundred, three
hundred years ago.*

*From this bookstore you could see a similar one
Facing it. And their owners*

Were similar too: faded beards

Long black caftans, red eyelids.

*They hadn't changed since the day Napoleon
passed through the town.*

Nothing has changed here.

*And so, one morning. In biting frost,
All is cold and gray.*

And then the pealing of bells. At Saint John's

And the Bernardines', at Saint Casimir's

And the Cathedral, at the Missionaries'

And Saint George's at the Dominicans'

U Świętego Mikołaja, u Świętego Jakuba.
Dużo dzwonów.

*And Saint Nicholas's, at Saint Jacob's.
Many many bells.*

*(English translation by Czesław Miłosz and
Lillian Vallee)*

6

THE POET'S FAREWELL

Czesław Miłosz

from the poem *Miasto bez imienia / Miestas be vardo/ City without a Name, 1965*

Choir (in Polish)

Czemu już tylko mnie powierza się to miasto
bezbronne i czyste jak naszyjnik weselny
zapomnianego plemienia?

*Why should that city, defenseless and pure as
the wedding necklace of a forgotten tribe, keep
offering itself to me?*

Jak niebieskie i rude ziarna nizane w Tuzigoot
na miedzianym pustkowiu przed siedmioma
wiekami.

*Like blue and red-brown seeds beaded in
Tuzigoot in the copper desert seven centuries
ago.*

Gdzie roztarta na kamieniu ochra dotychczas
wyczekuje na policzek, i czoło, ale dawno nie
ma tam żadnego.

*Where ochre rubbed into stone still waits for the
brow and cheekbone it would adorn, though for
all that time there has been no one.*

Czym zasłużyłem, jakim złem we mnie, jaką
litością, na to ofiarowanie?

*What evil in me, what pity has made me
deserve this offering?*

Stoi przede mną, gotowe, nie brak ani jednego dymu z komina, ani jednego echa, kiedy przestępuję dzielące nas rzeki.

It stands before me, ready, not even the smoke from one chimney is lacking, not one echo, when I step across the rivers that separate us.

Może Anna i Dorcia Drużyno wezwaly mnie z trzechsetnej mili Arizony, bo nikt prócz mnie już nie wie, że raz kiedyś żyły?

Perhaps Anna and Dora Drużyno have called to me, three hundred miles inside Arizona, because except for me no one else knows that they ever lived.

I drepczą przede mną Nadbrzeżną, dwie papużki, szlachcianki ze Żmudzi, dla mnie rozplatając w nocy siwy kok starych panien?

They trot before me on Embankment Street, two gently born parakeets from Samogitia, and at night they unravel for me their spinster tresses of gray hair.

Tutaj nie ma wcześniej i nie ma później, wszystkie pory dnia i roku trwają równocześnie.

Here there is no earlier and no later; the seasons of the year and of the day are simultaneous.

O świcie długimi rzędami jadą gównowozy i magistraccy na rogatkach w skórzane torby zbierają kopytkowe.

At dawn shit-wagons leave town in long rows and municipal employees at the gate collect the turnpike toll in leather bags.

Halasując kołami „Kurier“ i „Śmigły idą pod prąd do Werek, a wioślarz strącony nad Anglią mknie rozpięty na swoim skifie.

Rattling their wheels, “Courier” and “Speedy” move against the current to Werki, and an oarsman shot down over England skiffs past, spread-eagled by his oars.

U Piotra i Pawła anioły opuszczają grube powieki w uśmiechu nad zakonnicą która ma myśli nieskromne.

At St. Peter and Paul’s the angels lower their thick eyelids in a smile over a nun who has indecent thoughts.

Brodąta, w peruce, siedzi przy kasie pouczając
dwanaście swoich sprzedawczyń pani Sora Kłok.

*Bearded, in a wig, Mrs. Sora Klok sits at the
counter, instructing her twelve shopgirls.*

A cała ulica Niemiecka podrzuca nad ladą
taśmy bławatnych towarów, przygotowując się
na śmierć i zdobycie Jeruzalem.

*And all of German Street tosses into the air
unfurled bolts of fabric, preparing itself for
death and the conquest of Jerusalem.*

Czarne książęce źródła stukają w podziemia
katedry pod grobowcem Kazimierza młodzianka
i głowniami dębowych palenisk.

*Black and princely, an underground river knocks
at cellars of the cathedral under the tomb of St.
Casimir the Young and under the half-charred
oak logs in the hearth.*

Z książką do nabożeństwa i koszykiem
służącej Barbara żałobnica wraca na Baksztę do
domu Romerów z litewskiej mszy u
Świętego Mikołaja.

*Carrying her servant's-basket on her shoulder,
Barbara, dressed in mourning, returns from the
Lithuanian Mass at St. Nicholas to the Romers'
house on Bakszta Street.*

O, jak błyszczą! To śnieg na Górze Trzykrzyskiej i
na Bekieszowej Górze, którego nie stopi oddech
krótkotrwałych ludzi.

*How it glitters! the snow on Three Crosses Hill
and Bekiesz Hill, not to be melted by the breath
of these brief lives.*

Z jakąż to wielką wiedzą skręcam w Arsenalską
i raz jeszcze otwieram oczy na daremny koniec
świata?

*And what do I know now, when I turn into
Arsenal Street and open my eyes once more on
a useless end of the world?*

Przez pokoje z szelestem jedwabi, jeden, drugi,
dziesiąty, biegłem nie zatrzymany, bo wierzyłem
w ostatnie drzwi.

*I was running, as the silks rustled, though room
after room without stopping, for I believed in the
existence of a last door.*

Ale wykrój ust i jablko i kwiat przypięty do sukni
było wszystkim co poznać i wziąć było dano.

*But the shape of lips and an apple and a
flower pinned to a dress were all that one was
permitted to know and take away.*

Ani czuła ani zła, ni piękna ni przeraźliwa, trwała
ziemia, niewinna, dla pożądania i bólu.

*The Earth, neither compassionate nor evil,
neither beautiful nor atrocious, persisted,
innocent, open to pain and desire.*

Na nic ten podarunek jeżeli pod ogniami
dalekich noclegów nie mniej było w tamtym
goryczy a więcej.

*And the gift was useless, if, later on, in the
flarings of distant nights, there was not less
bitterness but more.*

Jezeli nie mogę tak wyczerpać mego i ich
żywota, żeby w harmonię zmienił się dawny
płacz.

*If I cannot so exhaust my life and their life that
the bygone crying is transformed, at last, into
a harmony.*

Jak Urodzony Jan Dęboróg w antykwarni
Straszuna położony tam jestem na zawsze
między swojskie imię i imię.

*Like a Noble Jan Dęboróg in the Straszun's
secondhand-book shop, I am put to rest forever
between two familiar names.*

Maleje baszta zamku nad kopcem listowia
i jeszcze ledwo słyszalna, może to Requiem
Mozarta, muzyka.

*The castle tower above the leafy tumulus grows
small and there is still a hardly audible – is it
Mozart's Requiem? – music.*

W nieruchomym świetle poruszam ustami, rad
może nawet że nie składa się żądane słowo.

*In the immobile light I move my lips and
perhaps I am even glad not to find the desired
word.*

*(English translation by Czesław Miłosz, Robert
Hass, Robert Pinsky and Renata Gorczyńska)*

Soprano (in Lithuanian)

Nebėra čia anksčiau nei vėliau, visi dienos ir
metų laikai vienu metu traukias.

Auštant ilgom eilėm važiuoja šūdvežiai ir
magistrato tarnautojai prie užkardų į terbas
renka muitą.

Taškydamies ratais “Kurjeris” ir “Vikrusis”
liaukia pasroviui į Verkius, o baidarės irkluotojas,
numuštas viršum Anglijos, švaistos atsilapojęs.

Petro ir Povilo angelai nuleidžia sunkius vokus,
šypsodami virš vienuolės, kurios mintys
neskaisčios.

Barzdota, su peruku sėdi prie kasos ponია Sora
Klok, tuziną savo pardavėjų mokydama.

Ir visa Vokiečių gatvė svaido ant prekystalių
manufaktūrinius rietimus, ruošdamosi mirčiai ir
Jeruzalės paėmimui.

Juodi kunigaikščių šaltiniai beldžias į požemius
po Kazimiero karstu katedroje ir po ąžuolų
nuodėguliais.

Su tarnaitės kraitele ir maldaknyge gedinti
Barbora grįžta į Romerių namą Bokšto gatvėn iš
lietuviškų mišių pas Šventąjį Mikalojų.

Kaip tviska! Tai sniegas Trijų Kryžių kalne ir ant
Bekešo kalno, neištirpdys jo trumpaamžių
žmonių alsavimas.

CLOSING

Vaidotas Daunys

from essay *Vilnius. The Name and the Word, 1993*

Orchestra, soloists, choir (in Lithuanian)

Kai manęs klausia: ar tu tiki, kad šiame mieste
glūdi gyvybės paslaptis? – atsakau: aš esu jos
dalyvis.

*When they ask me: do you believe, that in this
city lies the secret of life? – I reply: I am its
participant.*

(English translation by Vida Urbonavičius)

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ONUTÉ NARBUTAITÉ

ONUTĖ NARBUTAITĖ (1956–)

1–6 Centones Meae Urbi (1997) 70:53
Oratorio for soprano, bass, choir and orchestra

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Kaunas State Choir · Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra
Robertas Šervenikas, conductor