

УДК 821.111 (73)

DOI: 10.32589/2411-3883.22.2025.359631

**Jūratė Landsbergytė Becher**

DA researcher, Department of Music and Theatre History

Lithuanian Culture Research Institute

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2356-7264>

jurate128@yahoo.de

## THE SENSE OF LIGHT IN THE CREATIVITY AND THE WAY OF LIFE OF LITHUANIAN COMPOSER RAMŪNAS MOTIEKAITIS

**Abstract.** *The quest to explore the depth of modern life's intensity and the meaning of creativity leads composer Ramūnas Motiekaitis (\*1976) to a profound connection with the natural world, oscillating between openness and solitude. It is here that the genuine perception of music as a harmony of the world, imbued with a sense of sacredness, is born. This unique link between creativity, silence, and their contemplation on life reflects the influence of traditional Japanese culture, which the composer studied and explored. Therefore, Motiekaitis' aesthetic investigation into the openness and closedness of Japanese culture towards the West, alongside his deep interest in the works of Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996) and texts regarding the silence of music, led the Lithuanian to a unique new interpretation of the sacredness in listening to the hum and the singularity of observation. Consequently, it can be said that the Lithuanian composer and Japanologist settled into his own world of ideas, experiencing the phenomenon of music as if inspired by Shintoism or Zen practice, merging light and hum into a philosophical unity that transcended the Darkness of the present world, into the continuity of the post-apocalypse, and into dissolving in time.*

**Keywords:** *light, hum, Japanese art, tradition, Motiekaitis, aesthetics, nature*

**Юрате Ландсбергитє-Бехер**

дослідниця відділу історії музики та театру

Інституту досліджень литовської культури

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2356-7264>

jurate128@yahoo.de

## ПОЧУТТЯ СВІТЛА У ТВОРЧОСТІ ТА СПОСОБІ ЖИТТЯ ЛИТОВСЬКОГО КОМПОЗИТОРА РАМУНАСА МОТЪЄКАЙТІСА

**Анотація.** *Прагнення дослідити глибини сучасного життя з його насиченістю та сенсу творчості приводить композитора Рамунаса Мотъєкайтиса (\*1976) до щільного зв'язку зі світом природи у процесі його коливань між відвертістю та самотністю. Саме тут народжується справжнє сприйняття музики як світової гармонії, просякнуте відчуттям священного. Цей унікальний зв'язок між креативністю, тишею та спогляданням життя віддзеркалює вплив традиційної японської культури, яку композитор вивчав та досліджував. Відтак, естетичне проникнення Мотъєкайтиса до відкритості та закритості японської культури щодо Заходу, разом з його глибокою зацікавленістю творами Тору Такеміцу (1930–1996) і текстами, де йшлося про тишу у музиці, сприяло унікальній інтерпретації литовським композитором відчуття сакрального під час слухання дзижчання та неповторності спостережень. Отже можна стверджувати, що литовський композитор і японіст занурився у власний світ ідей, переживаючи феномен музики наче крізь призму синтоїзму або практик Дзен, і поєднуючи світло і дзижчання у філософську єдність, здатну вийти за межі Пітьми сучасного світу, у тяглість пост-апокаліпсису, та розчинитися у часі.*

**Ключові слова:** *світло, дзижчання, японське мистецтво, традиція, Мотъєкайтис, естетика, природа*

The contemporary understanding of Lithuanian identity encourages us to examine more closely the unique desire for unity of life and creativity, reconnecting with an archaic, primordial, and deeply rooted feeling—the need for a space separated from

the flux of progress, fashion trends, and breakthrough actions. Instead of adopting the modernist global *pursuit of fashion*, some creators are exploring the anonymity of anti-fashion, islands of silence, depths of introspection, and sources of pu-

rity. Here, we can discuss the philosophy of rejecting external fashion, embracing the naturalness of creativity, the paradigm of nature, and the myth of salvation from civilisation—realised through music, the sounds of the natural world, and the quest for solitude.

This leads us to the convergence of life and creative lines of the exceptional Lithuanian composer Ramūnas Motiekaitis (\*1976) into a particular phenomenal unity of expression, in no way connected to the dynamics of the zeniths of the contemporary world. Despite this, Motiekaitis is the author of musical compositions and musicological writings, conducts research on artistic aesthetics, and holds the titles of Doctor of Science and Associate Professor at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Ramūnas Motiekaitis is like an outsider in fashion, who, having discovered an island in the solitude of the forest, remains an advocate and spreader of the idea of the universe, a mediator of sound images, a leader in philosophical discussions, and a director of performances of the unknown. Even his clothing—a thick cloth cloak covering his shoulders in its own way evokes the image of a pagan priest. When discussing Motiekaitis more broadly, the unique transcultural Lithuanian universality of identity emerges first and foremost, particularly the connection with Japan, the country where the composer lived for three years, studied traditional culture, and wrote a dissertation on the interactions between Eastern and Western art, all within a distant space. Here, identity integrity and transcendence emerge, surpassing the conceptual boundaries of time and geography, relying on the mysteries of pagan pantheism and Shintoism. Motiekaitis carefully studied the works of the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996), examining the essence of his Japonisme and discovering the significance of subtlety in the interaction of instruments with air, space, and the phenomenon of timbre in various spheres. Takemitsu's thoughts, which are also present in his writings in *Confronting Silence* (Tokyo: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), aligned with Ramūnas Motiekaitis' worldview philosophy, leading even further into the infinity of threads of Japanese transculturality. The composer says: 'It is not easy to grasp where *Japan* begins and where it ends' (Motiekaitis, personal communication, March 14, 2025).

Thus begins the intriguing realm of Selfhood between Lithuania and Japan, with horizon lines

leading to creativity that 'does not strive for originality' (Motiekaitis, *ibid.*).

The composer further states this essence to be a principle of his creative philosophy:

'I think that I construct my aesthetics by opposing monumental and heroic romanticism. At the same time, it resists progress, revolution, and the cult of originality. And this draws me closer to something unknown, which, in some aspects, would connect with Japan, and not only with it.' (*ibid.*)

The isolation of Japanese traditions from global progress offers this opportunity.

The music here is imbued with phenomena of primordality, demanding careful observation, attentive listening, and surrender to the flow of time. This principle is also closely linked to Baltic minimalism, the aspect of archaism, and essentially originates from deep Japanese culture, becoming Ramūnas Motiekaitis' own work and way of life. There is no room here for *the play of fashion* or the *paradigm of dramaturgy*, but rather the opposite—one turns to what is unchanging, eternal, and does not betray or recode with different meanings. The principle of will is discarded, and thoughts shift to nature and its style everywhere—in fabrics, ornaments, musical scores, the creation of soundscapes, and contact with the instrument. The composer himself plays the Japanese flute, known as the Shakuhachi. Here, his engagement with sound becomes very intimate, as if a gust of wind is speaking to silence itself. This also aligns with the object of Motiekaitis' research—the relationship of Takemitsu's work with the timbres of silence—confronting silence. The transcultural space, as experienced by the Lithuanian composer, embodies a natural link between Japanese traditions, Zen principles of nature, and the flow of currents that are unaffected by civilisation's vanity, turning away from time. This realm of solitude and loneliness is echoed in Motiekaitis' work and way of life. It extends into longing—it is an ornament, a vibration of light, the secret life of dots and lines—both in scores and sound images.

It is worth mentioning here the composer's connection with Japanese visual art, where *listening to the meaning* is conveyed through subtle strokes. Traditional listening pieces in Japanese graphics are well-known, such as *Listening to the Rain*, *Listening to the Bamboo*, *Listening to the Wind in a Pine Grove*, and *Listening to Insects*. In the first

image of the painting, we see three trees—a grove and three people, as if lost in a minimalist patch of emptiness, where the mystery of the dash-dot detail begins, possibly representing the code of life. These meanings unconsciously take hold in the music of Ramūnas Motiekaitis, transcending into the notation of his scores like delicate strokes. According to Gaidamavičiūtė, a dot also signifies movement, such as a gust of wind. (Gaidamavičiūtė, 2023, p.62–63) Motiekaitis' work, *Listening to Pines* (2017), is a revelation of such creativity—the flow and other natural phenomena in the space of *musical notation*. It is both the space of the composer's being and existence, living alone in a hut in the forest near Vilnius. The world of his philosophy and the centre of harmony is created through his relationships with his close environment.

It is also important to revisit the concept of light in this context. Motiekaitis' recent works are dedicated to light and its philosophical and aesthetic paradigm. The first notable example was the piece *Light on Light* (for trombone and string quartet, 2004), which explored the pulsation of lightning-like light as well as the brightness and power linked to the expression of the trombone's vigorous voice. Meanwhile, the recent work *(Shine)Hum* [Šviesogaismė] (for two flutes and organ, 2020) is entirely meditative, capturing the subtleties of the flow of light, the depths of shadows, and dissolutions in the heights. Here, light dissolves and spreads in the *hum*, merging with space in a halo of timbres, breathing with gusts of wind and the infinity of nature. Consequently, it appears endless, paradigmatic, and, in this way, akin to Baltic minimalism. It is vital that everything here unfolds as if by itself, without the author's intervention, inspired only by road signs, a predictable sense of time, and perhaps even by coincidence... Furthermore, this follows Motiekaitis' principle: to allow everything to flow naturally, acting merely as a mediator and engaging in attentive *listening*. Such a flow, driven by impulse, triggers the phenomenon of light through the ornamental horizontal of the sound of instruments. The very sense of distance then creates a sphere of another space—an alternative to the dramatic dynamism of conflicts and the egocentric grandeur. However, this niche state becomes something more than just a soundscape; it possibly signifies the dawn of life in a post-apocalyptic world.

'Motiekaitis' language is not hermetic—it is refined and at the same time ascetic,' writes musicologist Rūta Gaidamavičiūtė (Gaidamavičiūtė, 2023,

p. 62). The gaze is also focused on the visual state of the music:

Even externally, the score appears as if the author has barely touched it with the thinnest possible line, with dots of sound scattered here and there. It is like an outline of a thought, which requires the inner silence, the primordial emptiness, of both the performers and the listeners to understand' (Gaidamavičiūtė, 2023, p. 63).

The interpretation of *(Shine)Hum* thus evolved into transcultural interdisciplinarity—the participation of the natural landscape in the creation of the work, as seen in Vytautas Oškinis' video "Šviesogaismė" (2025).

The meanings of light have become a new area for Motiekaitis' philosophical music aesthetics in the work *The Aesthetics of Light* (on tape, 2022). This is another expression of the glow of music towards a sense of transcendence, demonstrating the composer's desire to intertwine the breadth of his explorations systematically.

It can be said that the transformations of post-minimalism have spilt over into a dimension of limitlessness, where the paradigm of light, the leitmotifs of flow vibrations, and visionary scenography dominate.

Here, water becomes a necessary, shadowy background, lending meaning to the music, which seeks to restore the continuity of the water flow, its undulations, cyclicity, and ritornello. This, in its own way, coincides with the ornamentation of **fabric**—the embodiment of the archaic in contemporary culture. Motiekaitis' work also follows in its footsteps by listening to the rustle and gusts of wind, a unique cultural mission related to **light**—Enlightenment, almost sacred sources of nature, the meaning of becoming alive. And this is happening in the current epoch of Darkness, which is recognised as having arrived by philosophers Gintautas Mažeikis and Algis Mickūnas (2025). When the meaning of the existence of minors, the significance of embodying details, and the depths of the sources of the intonational cell are rejected, then such a choice by Ramūnas Motiekaitis reveals the author's authenticity in rejecting barbaric dynamism and adopting a philosophical, creative perspective, crossing bridges of time into the silence of the future. The participation of fragile meanings of existence in this listening—this is how the entire work of Motiekaitis can be described—unveils the depths of unknown phenomena, which may absorb or even save the world. It is about aesthetics—the

composer's field of thought that names this *nameless* realm between distances. It is worth noting him as the author of a monograph dedicated to the significance of deep meanings in Japan: *Poetics of the Nameless Middle: Japan and the West in Philosophy and Music of the Twentieth Century* (2011), which received the highest Lithuanian musicology award, the V. Landsbergis Prize. Within this context of Japanese distances, the author's unique need for solitude, withdrawal from the public, and controversy was fostered. This very creation demands unlistening (!), attention to conceptuality, Western conceptual activities, and immersion in meditative states of Oriental introspection. Music philosopher and Ramūnas' friend Edvardas Šumila comments on this exceptional creator under the Lithuanian sky:

'It is reflected in his composition process as much as in its result, that is, weighed on the, I must say, dialectics between fighting your demons, daring to speak something through your music and yet trying not to explicate too much, to resist melodramatic or overly excessive gestures.' (Šumila, 2020, p. 2).

The complexity and simplicity of Ramūnas Motiekaitis' work intersect with the medium of aesthetic philosophy, where events unfold and take place: creativity, musicology, Japanese tradition, Baltic archetypes, the exploration of depths, and the Enlightenment, alongside processes of distancing. The expression of creativity can be described as 'soothing in between' (Šumila, 2020, p. 8), where randomness, constant change, and the need for distance play a crucial role. Finally, the book itself offers the final word, opened by the author, providing insights into the previously mentioned monograph *Poetics of the Nameless Middle: Japan and the West in Philosophy and Music of the Twentieth Century* (2011). Musicologist Edvardas Šumila concentrates here on the phrase 'Nameless Middle as essential aspects of Motiekaitis' expressions.' (Šumila, 2020, p. 9) It is worth emphasising that this entire phenomenon projects a sphere, encompassing everything around us and through which it flows, overcoming all obstacles and transcending the light. Remarkably, nothing can hold it back.

Philosopher and political scientist Professor Gintautas Mažeikis highlights the destructive power of philosophy—the toxic role of imperialist metaphysics, which was particularly active in Europe before the Second World War and is now reawakening as the irrationalism of unchecked power and the *supermachismo* of the chosen ones, reinforced by a reli-

gion of transcendental significance. 'Reborn imperial metaphysics in Russia, dozens of philosophers and professors, led by Alexander Dugin, debate what geopolitics should be and what Russia's global role should be' (Mažeikis, 2025, p. 3), arguing for the crushing of the rotten West and the defence of the true values of the Russian world. Then this distant island of silence between the West and Japan, and its *intonational cell*—the space of Ramūnas Motiekaitis' listening—emerges. Listening to the wave of lines in the sunset light... Primordality, not belonging to progress, but to an agreed way of life, *protection without codes*, ... with the safeguarding of the vaults of internal order—the sky shaded by trees. Such a paradigm of creativity and the way of life, where the Baltic connection of Japanese tradition meets a *time traveller*, an independent listener, and a participant in the freedom of the arts.

And its code is a sign of light—an ornament—a sound.

A garment to cover yourself.

### Conclusions

It can be argued that an intercontinental, trans-cultural Self has matured in the Lithuanian creative space, as exemplified by the phenomenon of composer Ramūnas Motiekaitis' expression, which observes the archaism of Lithuanian-Japanese traditions and contemplates the flow of soundscape. This uniquely exceptional convergence of the solitudes of creativity and life implies a philosophy of deep aesthetics and its various manifestations through thought, text, drawing, score, and relationships with instruments and sound.

The nature of all these phenomena is connected through the sphere of listening to the rustling of the wind, trees, birds, the sea (Oškinis, 2024) and the sound of a flute fluttering between heaven and earth—a retreat from textuality, a declaration of narratives, ideas and concepts into contact with space, with air, with the vibration of a gust or sound. Such strokes of Ramūnas Motiekaitis' existentialist expression reveal the following fields of meaning.

**1. Depth.** A sense, a feeling of **depth**, the path to the sources, the paradigm of water in music.

**2. Infinity.** A sense of **infinity**—vibration, intonation, cell, ornament, minimalist code—sacredness, continuity, horizontality.

**3. Light.** Light is an unstoppable flow, the Enlightenment of processes, the antithesis of Darkness.

**4. Silence.** Silence as a parable of solitude and unity, an impulse for vision.

**5. Listening**—a fundamental transfer of the Japanese visual art tradition to the level of process dramaturgy of Lithuanian music minimalism, melting it down to absolute continuity.

**6. Drawing**—the *nature* of the score of lines and dots, the graphic ritornello of tree branches, and a sense of structure through a stroke.

**7. Aesthetics** as a body of philosophical thought, a parallel factor in the field of creativity, a net between words, sounds and script.

Discursive dynamics, embedded in and governed by the context of ideas, insights, and cultural connections, perhaps reflecting the future after the post-apocalyptic Darkness of the rejected and the survivors.

Ramūnas Motiekaitis' *listening to silence* may not be an accidental, albeit improvisational, but a reasonable and meaningful step towards humanity's destiny.

### Конфлікт інтересів

Автор не має потенційного конфлікту інтересів, який би міг вплинути на рішення про опублікування цієї статті.

### Використання штучного інтелекту

Штучний інтелект у дослідженні не застосовано.

### LITERATURE

Gaidamavičiūtė, R. (2023). *Su lietuvių muzikos tėkme*. [With the Flow of Lithuanian Music]. Vilnius: Lietuvos muzikos ir teatro akademija.

Mažeikis, G. (2025, February 5) *Naujų pasaulio imperatorių metafizika*. [The Metaphysics of the New World Emperors].

<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/2478450/gintautas-mazeikis-nauju-pasaulio-imperatoriu-metafizika?srsltid=AfmBOooAHpuXUGlFFbInj7dFnGrGdEt-3uovp2jQyLgdYw6zNwkc3EaLM>

Motiekaitis, R. (2011). *Poetics of the Nameless Middle: Japan and the West in Philosophy and Music of the Twentieth Century*. Helsinki: Indigo print, <https://hdl.handle.net/10138/27428>

Motiekaitis, R. (2020). *Šviesogausmė* [(Shine) Hum]. [Score]. Vilnius.

Oškinis, V. (2024). *The Link Between Lithuania and Japan Through the Sea*. [Score].

Šumila, E. (2020, January). The Pursuit of Balance: The Soothing Rhetoric of Ramūnas Motiekaitis' Music. Lithuanian Music Link. 23.

<https://www.mic.lt/en/discourses/lithuanian-music-link/no-23-january-december-2020/edvardas-sumila-soothing-rhetoric-of-ramunas-motiekaitis-music/>

Takemitsu, T. (1995). *Confronting Silence*. Tokyo: Fallen Leaf Press. ISBN 0-914913-36-0.

