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Mieczysław Tomaszewski – a European and a Pole

It was hard to believe the news of his passing away, as we were all accustomed with the thought that – may all other things perish – Tomaszewski is there: teaching, speaking, writing, and publishing for all generations. He was an ideal and an idol of a European music master, something which Herman Hesse portrayed in his *Glasperlenspiel*. He was the embodiment of many issues in music and cultural history. I remember first hearing about him from his colleague, piano professor Jan Hoffman from Academy of Music in Kraków who in 1973 and 1974 thought masterclasses in Helsinki, which I attended. He told me about the a circle or club they had in Cracow, which regularly gathered after the war for discussions about music, culture, philosophy. Then I came to know him myself during my many visits to Cracow and when we arranged a Polish music symposium in Helsinki with Tomaszewski, Bristiger, Stęszewski, Chłopicka, Malecka and many others.

He knew the whole European culture and art history from the inside. When you read his books and texts they are full of references to the most central literary figures of our tradition, from all periods. I remember the time when I once studied the Polish symbolist poet Przybyszewski, due his

short treatise: *Zur Psychologie des Individuums. I. Chopin und Nietzsche* (because Jean Sibelius had read it and dedicated a copy to his friend, the pianist Adolf Paul); I mentioned this to Tomaszewski and he answered: "He was my grand-uncle!"¹

In his late years Tomaszewski got interested in semiotics, being comparable to the Swedish musicologist Ingmar Bengtsson who also adopted semiotic view for his extensive monograph *Musikvetenskap* (1973). Yet, Tomaszewski understood the narratological studies of Chopin and regularly attended the Musical Signification congresses all over the Europe until recent years: Imatra, Vilnius, Cracow, Louvain–Brussels, Canterbury–London. He was the chair of the Cracow Congress "Music: Function and Value" in 2010, which figures as one of the most perfectly arranged conventions in the history of the project².

We may easily identify Tomaszewski as a typical Polish scholar due to his remarkable and distinguished study on Chopin (1999)³, probably the most important and all-encompassing monograph on the composer's life and work. However, he was also active in the Beethoven festivals in Kraków and later in Warsaw, organized by Elżbieta Penderecka for more than twenty years. Within this festival, Tomaszewski led his own international symposium on various aspects of Beethoven's output. By this he wanted to show that just as Chopin is a universal figure, Beethoven likewise belongs to all nations. He wrote to me and invited me for the 6th Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in March 2002, subtitled "Beethoven – Schubert – Chopin. The quest for the expression of one's existence. The relationship between art and life." Next year he wrote once again and invited me to the same event dealing with the great musical tradition preceding the era of Beethoven: "Beethoven and the Musical Tradition of the Baroque". Moreover, I remember that as early as in 2001 he had invited me to the academic symposium on "Beethoven and the Music of 20th Century, Century of Apocalypse and Hope"⁴. I mention these because the

1 Stanisław Przybyszewski's grandmother (Mariana Krajewska) was Mieczysław Tomaszewski's great-great-grandmother.

2 11th International Congress on Musical Signification "Music: Function and Value" took place between 27th September and 2nd October 2010 at the Academy of Music in Kraków. The proceedings of the Congress were published in two volumes as *Music: Function and Value*, Vol. I and II, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2013.

3 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Frédéric Chopin und seine Zeit*, Laaber-Verlag, Laaber 1999.

4 International conference "Beethoven and the Music of the 20th Century, Century of Apocalypse and Hope", Academy of Music in Kraków, April 11-12, 2001.

titles and topics are so characteristic of Tomaszewski's broad humanist interests in music.

Nevertheless, with his incredible erudition, he also had philosophical aspirations and in this sense organized in Cracow a major symposium on transcendental values, such as beauty and truth in music⁵. I could not believe that any other person would have had the courage to take such a theme as the topics of an international symposium in our time of postmodern knowledge and post-truth. Having myself dedicated much time in these years to my own existential semiotics⁶ where such notion as transcendence plays a cogent role, it was delightful to see that there were other scholars interested in it as well. With my own theory which is still growing and getting more elaborated, I often come to a situation in which I need to show that it pretends to be what Algirdas J. Greimas called '*englobant*', surrounding (the term, by the way, borrowed from Karl Jaspers⁷), whereas other approaches would prove to be '*englobé*', surrounded. This may sound a little stubborn as an attitude but we know that progress in science, if any, oftentimes appears so that old theories are shown to be special cases within a broader, more comprehensive intellectual framework. Without claiming that all could be just 'reduced' into existential semiotics, I next try to pursue such a mental experiment, with Tomaszewski's general philosophical ideas on music and art history. I also tried the same existential interpretation of his Chopin study and this essay has already appeared in the congress proceedings. In fact, I had also sent the following text in the occasion of his 90th birthday and I take the liberty to repeat it here now:

It has been particular pleasure to meet You, I believe, already twenty years ago; your important works on the Polish master (Chopin) have revealed for us an authentic vision of his output in the context of Polish culture and history. More than that, your indefatigable and multidimensional activities in the field of aesthetics and theory of music have had an impact on us as well as on semiotic science, as you are a part of great Polish tradition of the sign studies. Your enthusiastic and profound words about the structure and sense of musical works, their creation process, your universal models of composers' life, the different stages of their works, your knowledge

5 International Conference "Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty", Academy of Music in Kraków, 2008.

6 Eero Tarasti, *Existential Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2000.

7 See: Algirdas J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale*, Larousse, Paris 1966, p. 226.

of European musical culture from Beethoven to Penderecki – all this have given us an exemplar to follow, a higher goal to achieve, an aspiration to realise. It is so due to admiration for your life and your inexhaustible creativity⁸.

Here I shall deal with some essays of Tomaszewski which can be considered characteristic of his writing and approach. At the 10th International Congress of the Musical Signification project, which was held in Vilnius Music Academy on 21-25 October 2008, Tomaszewski delivered a speech on *Das Musikwerk in der intertextuellen Perspektive. Von der Inspiration bis zur Resonanz*⁹. In general, you may allow me to make the following note: his theories sound better in German than in English. He started from the observation that we live in a cultural space (*Kulturraum*) which constituted an intertextual space. Musical work does not emanate *ex nihilo* but from its cultural context. But in this space a musical work has its *differentia specifica*, and its interpretation is based upon inner relations in a work, but they are expanded into outer relations as well. In this context a musical work can be considered in its whole existence under three aspects: biographical, cultural, and historical. The work is first determined by the biography of its creator. It is mirroring the concrete creative phase of the composer. Here one may observe that Tomaszewski does not start discussing the theory generally accepted even by traditional musicologists like Carl Dahlhaus, who drew it from the Russian formalists, namely that the real author is to be distinguished from the so-called 'implied' author. Constantin Floros has, certainly correctly, noticed that in Gustav Mahler's case the parallelism of life and music goes perhaps deeper and broader than one can imagine¹⁰. Yet Dahlhaus once said in a congress on music philosophy (in Helsinki 1986) that the hero of a Mahler symphony appearing by its themes is not the same as Mahler himself (which the Finnish scholar Erik Tawaststjerna then immediately denied about Sibelius). Yet, Tomaszewski is certainly right in saying that there are certain traumatic experiences which a composer then tries to put within the brackets, but often repeats them endlessly. This is the same

8 Trans. by I. Sowińska-Fruhtrunk.

9 *Before and After Music. Proceedings from the 10th International Congress of the International Project on Musical Signification, Vilnius 21-25 October 2008*, ed. L. Navickaitė-Martinelli, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Umweb Publications, International Semiotics Institute, Vilnius- Helsinki-Imatra 2010, p. 93-105.

10 Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler and the Symphony of the 19th Century*, trans. N.K. Moran, Peter Lang, Bern 2014.

as what Charles Mauron once stated in his psychocritic method based on the idea of obsessing myths which the author repeats, so that ultimately he writes only one work through his life. Tomaszewski references such moments as Beethoven's *Heiligenstädter Testament* 1802 or Chopin's diary from 1831. These are certainly existential moments in one's life, *Grenzsituationen* which have a decisive impact on creativity. It is what Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers called *Scheitern*, getting down, ruined. However, Tomaszewski proposes that such moments could be studied comparatively as narrative texts; thus taking a step towards a truly semiotic interpretation. He also calls such turning points as knot points of one's life story – let it be like in the model of *eines Heldenlebens* by Jan de Vries or Vladimir Propp's 'functions' in the *Morphology of Russian Fairy Tale*¹¹. Such points have their hierarchy, sure, but also their consecutive series. Yet, difference to a narratological analysis is here that those moments are seen like from inside the subject him/herself. In this respect, the Tomaszewski's model could be paralleled with our 'zemic' analysis. If in the existential semiotics the subject's mind is articulated via four phases following the semantic categories of *Moi* and *Soi*, i.e. body, person, profession or values (*Moi1, Moi2, Soi2* and *Soi1*)¹², then we might see that Tomaszewski's six phases of the composer take place each within the temporal unfolding of each mode: so composer's body, person, profession and value judgements pass through such a development almost like in a Goethean *Bildungsroman*. Tomaszewski's knot points are like developments in one's life story or 'narrative' and they are intimately based upon his own experiences, *Vorverständnis*, preunderstanding and all his extensive cultural knowledge.

The first moment is the assumption of the heritage: each composer is born into a certain music culture. He seldom decides himself that he will study music but he is put to study it – by his parents or educators.

11 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Życia twórcy punkty węzłowe. Rekonesans*, "Res Facta Nova", 2010, No. 11, p. 81-90.

12 E. Tarasti, *Existential...* op. cit. The concepts of *Moi* and *Soi* were created by Paul Ricoeur and interpreted by Tarasti as follows: "*Moi* represents the individual aspects of the subject and encompasses two dimensions of her subjectivity: the body (*M1*) and psyche (*M2*). *Soi* refers to the subject's social sphere in which the symbolic level, and communication processes are part of it. *Soi* is composed by *S1* that represents the norms, ideas and values of the social context that are virtual and potentialities of a subject; and *S2* represents the norms, ideas and values of the social context actualized by the society", quote after: Grisell Macdonel, *Existential semiotic analysis of the temporal and subjective dimensions of art music performance*, "Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology", 2015, No. 14, DOI 10.14746/ism. 2014.14.9, p. 153.

Therefore in order that later a great genius emerges the terrain must be prepared. There will be no Sibelius unless there is musical life, symphony orchestras and conservatory before him. There is no Chopin unless there is centuries' long tradition of Parisian salons kept by rich literary ladies. There is no Villa-Lobos in the tropics without an entrance of the European music culture of centuries before. Next comes the *first fascination* i.e. our subject is excited, attracted, enthusiastic by some new phenomenon. It is like love at first sight, so it is with an encounter with *Andersartigkeit*, i.e. the Otherness. The logical relation of difference instead of similitude. It is the crystallization of the ideal. Romain Rolland portrays this in his novel *Jean-Christophe*. It is followed by a contradiction and resistance, a kind of Storm and Stress phase, it is *rebellion* against restricted social, cultural, and moral limitations. It is an effort to liberate oneself from overwhelming cultural conventions. So it is a romantic attitude, source of romantic irony, we might add. It is clear in Mahler's saying *Tradition ist Schlamperei!* Umberto Eco put it in the form that the aesthetic moment in a text is always based on its norm breaking. Thereafter comes the moment of meaningful meeting and it means the formation in ripe years of the work and its *distinct personality*. Communication is no longer a mechanical transmission of a message but becomes existential. It is followed by an *existential threat*, it is a phase in which shadows appear in life, in the form of first health crisis (Sibelius: a tumor in throat, Chopin: lunge disease); it is followed by doubts about one's choice of one's way. This is the *memento* point. At the end comes the deep sense of *loneliness*, and also freedom from fantasies of all previous limitations; it is the moment of separation, *farewell*, return to the past, and a glance at the future, reenlivening of memories, almost like irrational. There is no doubt that the generative course or path of a composer unfolds as a narrative arch of his life. It has an invariant nature like Tomaszewski puts it. So these six phases serve also as 'punctuation' criteria of one's life, they form life phases of a creator but also stylistic periods. Thus the beginning is just the *assumption* of a *heritage*: composers, for instance, write fugues, string quartets etc. in order to learn the profession. The *early fascination* means finding idols and models in other creators, like every Brahms work makes a reference to Beethoven, Ludwig Spohr was the master of the Finnish Fredrik Pacius etc. The *ripe phase* constitutes the real personality of the composer, so what is truly 'Beethovenian – Chopinian – Schubertian'. The *climax*,

i.e. the top point of one's career is meeting with the other, and finding in a dialogue one's identity; then comes the existential threat, a moment of *katharsis*, this phase means turning from the autobiographical inspiration towards spiritual, pantheist, philosophical and sacred thematic. At the end comes the late last creativity, deepening in oneself, separation from immediate reality; work adopts a soliloquial farewell character. Here come often mystical and metaphysical accents.

We could well see how these moments or phases could be situated in our zemic model as its particular articulations. Their weight seems to be different in diverse moments. One phase foregrounds aesthetic values i.e. the intelligible aspects (*S1*), the other one professionalism (*S2*), still another one personality (*M2*). Thus we reach a highly qualified view on what happens in the story of composer's life and this knowledge could be then applied a.o. to biographical studies. I intend to use it in my monograph on Wagner.

However, Tomaszewski is not only satisfied with making the diagram, but notices also the manners whereby it can be transcended. Namely, the negativity, i.e. negation, can manifest as well as affirmation. A subject can be fixed with one knot refusing to pass into the following one. And this leads into false emphases of each case. Already Guido Adler stated that classical style and its balance of content and form can be fixed as academic style. So in Tomaszewski's view fixation in the beginning phase leads into traditionalism, the stagnation in early phase into *epigonentum* in which models of the idols are only copies. The fixation into ripe phase leads to mannerism¹³. It is amazing that fixation also can occur in the high point of one's career leading to the academism. At the end the last phase overemphasized leads one to particular ascetism. Thus combining the Tomaszewskian mythical model of our composer hero with the zemic model, we can develop it into an evaluative model whereby we can judge different artistic phenomena.

Moreover, Tomaszewski distinguishes the cultural aspect of his paradigm and, in order to scrutinize it, he applies Roman Jakobson's model of function in communication: so the emotive or expressive function – I have to correct a little his ideas also in some points – refers

13 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Chopin, Szymanowski, Lutosławski w swych stylach późnych i ostatnich* [w:] *Styl późny w muzyce, literaturze i kulturze*, eds W. Kalaga, E. Knapik, Śląsk, Katowice 2002.

to the composers' or the messages' and one's emotional state. Impressive or appellative function is in the Jacobson conative task, i.e. the effort to have an impact on the listeners, of every music work which fights for something. The referential function is not about the transmission of messages, but evokes the context where communication takes place. The messages and their codes belong to the metalinguistic function. The phatic function is simply checking the physical channel – and not just a tendency to make sacred, spiritual or patriotic music. At the end comes the aesthetic or poetic function, where the form is *autoriflessivo*, *Ohne Interesse, ohne Begriffe* as Kant said, it is the musical work as such. The functional theory animated the Prague circle and was further elaborated of course by Jan Mukařovský¹⁴.

Moreover, comes the historic aspect which manifests the inspiration phase, the contextuality and resonance phase. These equal in the existential theory to pre-signs, act-signs and post-signs. Yet, they can also be denied i.e. the tie with the past can be broken, the situation can be isolated, the future can be ignored. The musical work becomes a conceptual entity. In these ideas Tomaszewski comes close to Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* after all. To conclude, Tomaszewski says, one needs all these issues, the fight between new and old as the *spiritus movens* in musical history. One could still specify this by noting that the central semiotic force could be in those two movements, one from the concrete and sensual to spiritual via sublimation and the other from the abstract, intelligible via embodiment to concrete and corporeal, i.e. between *gegenständlich* and *ungegenständlich*.

It is highly exciting that Tomaszewski organized an international symposium in 2012 on *Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty*. There he tackled one problem rather much neglected in the semiotic tradition, namely that of values. The valid value theory in the contemporary mass media society living in the 'extase of communications' as Jean Baudrillard once put it, is based upon structural linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916; he said that no linguistic term had a value as such and *per se*, but only in relation to other terms, the continuum of other signs. It is the position of the sign which decides its value. Therefore, value is not an absolute entity but a relational unit. This 'semiotic' view

14 Jan Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign, and Function: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Burbank, P. Steiner, Yale University Press, New Haven 1978; idem, *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*, trans. M.E. Suino, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1970.

was then expanded to the whole mass media society in which one thinks analogously that values are relative and decided by certain group of people against another group. Yet, there is another philosophical standpoint which postulates that values are universal, virtual and then actualized by some human agent and then realized in their mutual impact in a society. Roman Ingarden had such a theory. There is also one in existential semiotics.

It is worth noticing that values in Tomaszewski's view are in this latter category. That is not often presented in contemporary discussion, rather it shows a civil courage to think like that. It is as John Ruskin once said that he does not understand how opinions which are wrong as such would become true by merely the fact many are supporting them. In his essay *Beauty and Truth, Imagination and Expression*, Tomaszewski admits that when one tries to apply these transcendentals to works of art and to study them in reality, it raises many questions and doubts. Plato speaks about illusion and Tatarkiewicz about appearance. St. Augustine said: "all is false in the art," and in Goethe the very title of his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* reveals truth and falsehood. The whole avant-garde of the 20th century has declared transcendental values improper, inadequate and discreditable. One remembers Adorno who said there cannot be such issue in the post-Holocaust era. Yet, we cannot be satisfied with the distinction that only science deals with truth and arts' beauty. Gustav Mahler remarked: "Die Musik soll nicht schmücken, sie soll wahr sein"¹⁵. And we know how for Marcel Proust, the obligation of the writer was to reveal the truth. Roman Ingarden then emphasized that a work of art must have a faithfulness to the world view of its author, at least.

In our theoretical framework we might say that it must reflect and represent his zemic model. Maria Gołaszewska, a great aesthetician from Kraków, emphasized in her essay *Aesthetic culture* that art has to be blended to the whole of one's life:

Art is a value which may first seem to be alien and unnecessary but when knowledge and experience grow and the aesthetic sensibility increases, it becomes an essential ingredience of one's life and personality. This state is the highest stage of aesthetic culture¹⁶.

15 *Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty*, eds T. Malecka, M. Pawłowska, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2014, p. 13.

16 Maria Gołaszewska, *Esteettinen kulttuuri (Aesthetic culture)*, trans. Riitta Koivisto), "Synteesi", 1982, 1/82, p. 22.

This we could well interpret again in existential semiotic manner by observing the development of one's zemic via its four modes of being. Moreover, the models of aesthetic attitudes distinguished by Gołaszewska are somewhat similar to Tomaszewski's: 1) a respect for traditions, highest artistic achievements – see above Tomaszewski's idea of the heritage phase of an artist; 2) an expression of a personality, i.e. an authentic, spontaneous experience of beauty: value is not so much the art work itself but our ability to *Einführung*, experience; 3) a model of a complex aesthetic experience is typical of 20th century civilization. Tomaszewski, however, sees the situation more dialectically; as an opportunity of both affirmation and negation. The respect to values can appear either sincerely or insincerely, untruthfully. So we encounter four cases of artistic creation in our recent past: authentic art, *musica vera* like Górecki's *Beatus vir* or Penderecki's *Credo*; 2) rhetorical art; 3) hyperbolic art, spontaneous homage to negative values; 4) panegyric art: *musica falsa*. This would be certainly what marxist theorists call *falsches Bewusstsein* in the art. Moreover, there is kitsch and Tomaszewski refers to Carl Dahlhaus. However, we know how difficult the notion of kitsch is as a concept of aesthetic judgment. For instance, for Dahlhaus, Tchaikovsky's *andante* theme for horn in the slow movement of the *Fifth Symphony* is kitsch. But certainly it represents authentic beauty for many sincere listeners.

Then in Tomaszewski's essay appears the impact of technology in the form of music examples as sound tapes illustrating theoretical issues. This is a reference to the text as enunciation. His printed texts were originally written as conference speeches. Therefore beauty and truth are best defined *ostensively* i.e. by showing: this music is beautiful, this is truthful. We can hear them from powerpoint directly. However, Tomaszewski adds here the categories of expression and imaginary to complete the picture. There would be much to be said about Tomaszewski as Chopin scholar in which field he is an eminent and incomparable figure. But I have already commented in detail the Chopin interpretations of his book (1999) in my essay for the Chopin congress. There, I noted how the zemic model functions and explains many features in Chopin's music.

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Mieczysław Tomaszewski – Polak i Europejczyk

Streszczenie

Mieczysław Tomaszewski współtworzył wielką polską tradycję muzykologii, filozofii i historii muzyki. Wyróżniała go wyjątkowa i szeroka erudycja, która pod koniec kariery naukowej zaprowadziła go również do idei semiotycznych, a zatem związanych ze znaczeniowością muzyczną. Jeden z jego modeli stanowił syntezę różnorodnych aspektów życia kompozytora, od wczesnych wpływów po zagrożenia egzystencjalne, samorealizację, dokonania, aż po końcową samotność. Ma on charakter uniwersalny i można go zinterpretować przez pryzmat różnych modeli poznania, na przykład tak zwany *zemic model*. W historii muzyki Mieczysław Tomaszewski był jednym z czołowych badaczy twórczości Fryderyka Chopina w Polsce i na świecie. Jego zainteresowania obejmowały także dzieło Ludwiga van Beethovena, wokół którego organizował serię sympozjów w Krakowie i w Warszawie. Filozoficzne zagadnienia prawdy i wiary w transcendentnym aspekcie muzyki zainspirowały go do napisania wielu niezwykłych i ważnych esejów.

Słowa kluczowe: Fryderyk Chopin, filozofia muzyki, transcendencja, prawda i piękno, znaczenie muzyczne

Keywords: Fryderyk Chopin, music philosophy, transcendence, truth and beauty, musical signification