

Composer/Theorist **Ann K. Gebuhr** is an alumna of Indiana University (B.M. in Piano Performance and M.M. and Ph.D. in Music Theory). As a tenured university professor of music theory and composition for forty-five years, she also established a national and international presence as a composer. Now retired, she continues to write, compose and guest lecture. She lives in Houston, Texas.

Robert S. Hatten is also an alumnus of Indiana University (M.M. Piano Performance and Ph.D. in Music Theory). He is currently Marlene and Morton Meyerson Professor in Music at The University of Texas at Austin. In addition to writing three books on musical expressive meaning, he served as librettist for Dr. Gebuhr's two full-length operas, both premiered in Houston.

Ann K. Gebuhr

Houston, Texas

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4199-8191>

Robert S. Hatten

University of Texas, Austin

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5350-952x>

The Inspiration of Krzysztof Penderecki: A Personal Retrospective from the United States

Ann: Quite a few years ago, when I was a young Master's degree student at Indiana University, a good friend and mentor suggested the works of Krzysztof Penderecki to me as a possible thesis topic. Penderecki was in his mid-thirties at the time, and he had already made a rather large impression on the musical world with two works that have become intrinsically identified with music of the last half of the twentieth century, *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* for fifty-two string instruments, and *the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to St. Luke* for double choir, boys' choir, soloists, narrator, and large orchestra. I bought recordings of those two works and was both overwhelmed and intrigued: overwhelmed because of their avant-garde, revolutionary nature, and intrigued because they spoke profoundly as music to

everyone who heard them. I chose an additional piece, his *Dies Irae* for soloists, choir and orchestra, and became immersed in his compositional style and sound for the next year and a half.¹ That experience and study has had a profound impact upon my own compositional language – not in terms of specific techniques, but as sound which communicated something elemental, something which touched and moved and enriched the very core of its perceivers.²

Robert: I met Ann in 1976, when we were both beginning our doctoral studies in music theory at Indiana University.³ I was also impressed upon encountering the sonoristic works of Penderecki, but my scholarly engagement came indirectly through my participation in the early Beethoven Easter Festivals organized by his wife, Elżbieta Penderecka, and the academic symposia inspired by Professors Tomaszewski, Malecka, and Chłopicka of the Kraków Academy of Music. There, I met another American, Ray Robinson, a choral conductor who had written extensively on Penderecki's work.⁴ Since I had taught a course on twentieth-century opera, it was not completely out of my field of expertise (primarily devoted to musical meaning in Beethoven) to accept an invitation to present a paper on the occasion of Penderecki's 65th birthday, at an International Symposium in Kraków.⁵ I demonstrated how

1 Ann K. Gebuhr, *Stylistic Elements in Selected Works of Krzysztof Penderecki*, MM thesis in music theory, Indiana University, Bloomington 1970. To my knowledge, this was the first scholarly study of Penderecki's work in the United States.

2 This paragraph is taken from my paper, *Near the Center of the Labyrinth: Krzysztof Penderecki in the New Millennium*, presented at Penderecki's 70th birthday symposium in Leipzig, Germany 2003. In the paper I explore Penderecki's compositional career through the metaphor of a journey through a spiritual labyrinth, modeled on the one carved into the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France.

3 We became life-long friends, and I served as her librettist for two operas premiered in Houston in 1990 and 2000.

4 Ray Robinson (1932-2015) served as dean of Peabody (1963-69) and president of Westminster Choir College (1969-87). He eventually moved to Florida with his wife Ruth to develop the choral program at Palm Beach Atlantic University (1989-2002). He co-authored, with Indiana theory professor Allen Winold, *The Choral Experience: Literature, Materials, and Methods*, Harper & Row, New York 1976; reprinted by Waveland Press, 1992, a text that first introduced Penderecki to choral conductors in the United States. The two later collaborated on *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, Moeck, Celle 1983. Even in retirement, Ray devoted much of his time researching and writing about the music of Penderecki (including editing three volumes of *Studies in Penderecki*), and he and his wife endowed a scholarship for the Kraków Academy of Music.

5 Robert S. Hatten, *Penderecki's Operas in the Context of Twentieth-century Opera* [in:] *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre: Studies, Essays and Materials*, ed. T. Malecka, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 1999, pp. 15-25.

each of Penderecki's four major stage works, from *Devils of Loudon* to *The Black Mask*, might be understood as in dialogue with significant twentieth-century trends in opera and *sacra rappresentazione* (*Paradise Lost*), and with musical styles or operatic subjects as found in theatrical works by Schoenberg, Berg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Messiaen, Zimmerman, Ligeti, and others. Penderecki explored styles ranging from expressionist to post-modern; and reflecting theatrical ventures into the grotesque and absurdist (*Ubu rex*), with textures ranging from his innovative sonoristic style to Webernesque pointillism and allusions to late Romantic chromaticism.⁶ These four works by themselves reflect a remarkable span of exploration and integration, but they are but one strand of an extraordinary career that spanned his earliest electronic experimental works to the intimacy of the late chamber works.

It was Ray, and his co-editor Regina Chłopicka of the Kraków Academy of Music, who next encouraged me to contribute to the second volume of his three-volume periodical, *Studies in Penderecki*, for which I combined analysis and interpretation to explore the eclectic inspirations and stylistic syntheses of Penderecki's award-winning *Psalms of David* (1958).⁷

Ann and Robert: Penderecki's commitment to the humane side of music goes hand in hand with his ongoing engagement with spiritual issues, as so compelling surveyed by Regina Chłopicka in her interpretive study of the vocal-instrumental works.⁸ From his first masterwork in this realm, the *St. Luke Passion*, to his widely performed *Polish Requiem*, and culminating in his late *Credo*, Penderecki essayed three powerfully transformative encounters with the genres of passion, requiem, and mass. His original conceptions explored both the public and private

6 Penderecki's use of chromaticism was every bit as systematic as his approach to timbre and texture in the sonoristic works. For the former, see Scott Murphy, *In the Beginning of Penderecki's Paradise Lost*, "Twentieth-Century Music" 2013, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 231-48; for the latter, see Danuta Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki*, Music Academy in Katowice, Katowice 1997. Danuta is now a full professor in the music theory department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

7 Robert S. Hatten, *Structure and Spiritual Expression in Penderecki's Psalms of David*, "Studies in Penderecki" 2003, No. 2, pp. 273-81.

8 Regina Chłopicka, *Krzysztof Penderecki między sacrum a profanum: Studia nad twórczością wokally-instrumentalną*, Akademia Muzyczna, Kraków 2000. Also indispensable as an overview of Penderecki's career up to 2003 are two books by Mieczysław Tomaszewski: *Krzysztof Penderecki and His Music: Four Essays*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2003 and the "virtual interviews" (essays with interleaved quotes from Penderecki) found in *Penderecki*, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Warsaw 2003.

dimensions of these liturgical genres, reconceiving them to reflect the existential struggles and conflicts of the twentieth century.⁹ One may find analogous spiritual conflicts at the heart of his first two stage works, and the devastating loss of spirituality haunting the final two. This profound dimension marks Penderecki's music in a way akin to Schoenberg's and Stravinsky's late works, but with a closer tie to the religious traditions and national aspirations of the Polish people, a connection with homeland that was unfortunately severed in the case of the two renowned exiles from Germany and the Soviet Union.

In a very personal way, Penderecki's example inspired Ann to follow her own religious tradition in composing her opera on the Lutheran martyr *Bonhoeffer*. As Charles Rosen once observed, sometimes the deepest influence is the least apparent on the surface; although musically Ann's style does not directly draw on Penderecki's, the spiritual commitment is as deep.

We were honored to give a joint presentation in 2013 as part of the Kraków Academy's celebration of Penderecki's 80th birthday (along with the 80th birthdays of Górecki and Bujarski).¹⁰ For this occasion we analyzed the first three numbers of his late song cycle, a retrospective summing up of his styles that included songs written from all periods of his career. In our joint tribute to his work, we were reminded once again of his profound commitment to expression, achieved through a fusion of stylistic resources with his own contributions, but with an emotional intimacy that is often lacking in music of the so-called avant-garde.

These reflections document our personal reminiscences of the impact on our lives of one of the most influential composers of our time. In addition to his compositions, we note with awe Maestro Penderecki's extraordinary

9 See, for example, Ann K. Gebuhr, *From Sketch to Reality: Subtext in Penderecki's Credo* [in:] *Krzysztof Penderecki – Music in the Intertextual Era: Studies and Interpretation*, M. Tomaszewski, E. Siemiej (eds), Akademia Muzyczna, Kraków 2005. Ann subsequently organized an academic conference in Houston on "Credo: The Arts as Expression of Belief" (January 2007), featuring Penderecki's *Credo* in a performance for which he was invited to conduct (but due to his ill health at the time, Maestro Jahja Ling of the San Diego Symphony – and a former student of Penderecki's – stepped in to conduct). Presenters included our by now dear friends Regina Chłopicka and Teresa Malecka, as well as Scott Murphy from the University of Kansas (see note 6), Siglind Bruhn from the University of Michigan, and ourselves. Robert's paper was later published as *Troping of Meaning in Penderecki's Credo*, "Teoria Muzyki", 2018, No. 13, pp. 11-23.

10 Ann K. Gebuhr and Robert S. Hatten, *A Sea of Dreams Did Breathe on Me... Songs of Reflection and Nostalgia*, published as *Powiało na mnie morze snów... Pieśni zadumy i nostalgii*, transl. E. Schreiber, "Teoria Muzyki", 2015, No. 7, pp. 53-74.

conducting career, as well as his tenure as rector of the Kraków Academy of Music, where he has inspired such devoted colleagues and scholars. He also lent his support and participation to Madame Penderecka's Beethoven Easter Festival (founded in Kraków and moved to Warsaw), an annual showcase for performers that included his own works alongside other masterpieces of the repertoire from Bach to the present. Hearing superb performances of early works like *Fluorescences* (1962), we found a new appreciation of his constructive genius and artistic power in pieces that once appeared avant-garde but that now can be experienced as "classical."

When we think about Penderecki's place in music history, we will always remember his extraordinary mind and heart. He was that rare composer whose mission led him constantly in search of new materials and means to express his deepest responses to both inner and outer experience. As voice of his time, his music embodied a courageous faith in Poland's emergence from Communism into a world of free inquiry, while recognizing Poland's unique place as a nation united by faith. His inner explorations challenged a faith that was strongly grounded in history and tradition to face, as well, the existential spiritual struggles of modern life. Penderecki's outer experience on the world stage was also marked by a pseudo-conflict, when he was "accused" by critics of retreating from the single-minded pursuit of an avant-garde that was itself in danger of losing touch with humane communication. His decision to pursue his own path has been more than rewarded by the ardor he has inspired in countless performers and conductors who have shared his concerti, symphonies, and spiritual works with increasingly sympathetic audiences around the world.

Penderecki's example may also have helped inspire a significant turn among late 20th- and early 21st-century composers, who would reconfigure traditional resources of expressiveness wherever they might be found and, like Penderecki, fashion new syntheses from eclectic sources. His lasting testament is that of a composer's uncompromising struggle to express the spiritual through music, sharing its deeply humane significance. Future scholars will continue to be impressed by his unswerving commitment to that fusion of sound and spirit. And we who miss him will continue to cherish the profound inspiration of his life's work.

Bibliography

- Chłopicka R., *Krzysztof Penderecki między sacrum a profanum: Studia nad twórczością wokalnoinstrumentalną*, Akademia Muzyczna, Kraków 2000.
- Gebuhr A.K., *From Sketch to Reality: Subtext in Penderecki's Credo* [in:] *Krzysztof Penderecki – Music in the Intertextual Era: Studies and Interpretation*, M. Tomaszewski, E. Siemdaj (eds), Akademia Muzyczna, Kraków 2005.
- Gebuhr A.K., Hatten R.S., *Powiało na mnie morze snów... Pieśni zadumy i nostalgii*, transl. E. Schreiber, „Teoria Muzyki”, 2015, No. 7.
- Gebuhr A.K., *Near the Center of the Labyrinth: Krzysztof Penderecki in the New Millenium*, text presented at Penderecki's 70th birthday symposium in Leipzig, Germany, 2003.
- Gebuhr A.K., *Stylistic Elements in Selected Works of Krzysztof Penderecki*, MM thesis in music theory, Indiana University, Bloomington 1970.
- Hatten R.S., *Penderecki's Operas in the Context of Twentieth-century Opera* [in:] *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre: Studies, Essays and Materials*, ed. Teresa Malecka, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 1999.
- Hatten R.S., *Structure and Spiritual Expression in Penderecki's Psalms of David*, „Studies in Penderecki”, 2003, No. 2.
- Hatten R.S., *Troping of Meaning in Penderecki's Credo*, „Teoria Muzyki”, 2018, No. 13.
- Mirka D., *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki*, Music Academy in Katowice, Katowice 1997.
- Murphy S., *In the Beginning of Penderecki's Paradise Lost*, „Twentieth-Century Music”, 2013, Vol. 10, No. 2.
- Penderecki*, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Warsaw 2003.
- Robinson R., *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, Moeck, Celle 1983.
- Robinson R., Winold A., *The Choral Experience: Literature, Materials, and Methods*, Harper & Row, New York 1976.
- Tomaszewski M., *Krzysztof Penderecki and His Music: Four Essays*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2003.

Inspiracje Krzysztofa Pendereckiego: osobista retrospekcja ze Stanów Zjednoczonych

Streszczenie

Ten osobisty hołd dla dorobku i kariery Mistrza Pendereckiego skupia się na teoretycznych i analitycznych opracowaniach badaczy ze Stanów Zjednoczonych, z perspektywy dwojga Amerykanów, na których mocno wpłynęły innowacyjne kompozycje i rozwój stylów muzycznych Krzysztofa Pendereckiego. Artykuł śledzi rozwój stanu badań od pierwszych amerykańskich analiz *Trenu* oraz *Pasji według św. Łukasza* (autorstwa dr Ann Gebuhr, 1970), poprzez promowanie jego twórczości przez dr Raya