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# **Krzysztof Penderecki's Music from the Perspective of the Category of Experience and Affective Poetics**

Z opornej materii  
Co da się zebrać?  
Nic, najwyżej piękno.

[From refractory matter  
What can be gathered?  
Nothing, beauty at most.]<sup>1</sup>

Czesław Miłosz

### **I. Penderecki. Committed Subjectivity**

Let me begin with a quote. In 2013, in a text with the very telling title *Penderecki: "One Must Have the Courage to be Oneself,"* prepared for *Liber Amicorum*, the composer's 80th birthday, Mieczysław Tomaszewski wrote significantly: "This is undeniable: the music of Krzysztof Penderecki leaves no one indifferent.<sup>2</sup> It attracts, moves, delights, arouses enthusiasm and gives food for thought. It fascinates tens of

1 Czesław Miłosz, from the 1962 volume *King Popiel*.

2 Where not indicated, word separations are from the author of the text.

thousands of listeners around the world. For some, understandably, it provokes resentment, resistance, protest and even loathing. It puzzles and amazes one and the other. It provokes questions: where is the secret of this phenomenon? What is the attraction of this music, invariably present on the world's stages? The answer must be sought in the unique personality structure of the author of *Threnody and Songs of Passing*. [...] It can be said that Krzysztof Penderecki has left his «fingerprint» on everything he has composed.<sup>3</sup> And among such individual peculiarities, "character traits forming an irreplaceable creative idiom,"<sup>4</sup> Tomaszewski lists the following: the spirit of independence, the spirit of contrariness, the spirit of changeability, the spirit of rootedness, the tendency to reach for extremes, the readiness to engage in the here and now, the innate ecumenism, the longing for a synthesis of musical language while feeling incompatible with reality.<sup>5</sup> In Penderecki's case, we can speak of a unity of ideological and aesthetic attitudes and creativity. The composer textualized his experiences in his works, which testifies to his genuine artistic commitment and ethos – a sense of value. Hence the significant role of creative inspiration and the organic context in which the idea of the composition grew, and its dramaturgy was born. Penderecki's strong identity was defined by spiritual and moral ties to tradition, which, paradoxically, at the beginning of his artistic path he wanted to negate in search of new-radicalized qualities. His later statement that music cannot be started from the beginning, it can only be creatively continued,<sup>6</sup> confirms the constructive side of his personality and his conviction that it is not enough to tear things down – it is more important to build on a known and canonical foundation.

In another text, also from 2013, Mieczysław Tomaszewski, noting the dialectical and dialogical nature of the composer's creative path, affirmed that "Krzysztof Penderecki changed – in a spectacular way – the surface layer of his nature, while remaining unchanged in the deep layer. Unchanging with regard to the most essential and fundamental matters and ideas."<sup>7</sup> Thus, we can forward the thesis that when it comes to the sound language, the imagery of Penderecki's music underwent a change – from radically sonoristic to neotonal-romantic, from *novum* to *datum*, while at the level of

3 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "Penderecki: «Trzeba mieć odwagę bycia sobą»" [Penderecki: "One Must Have the Courage to Be Oneself"], in *Liber Amicorum. Krzysztof Penderecki. 80th Birthday*, ed. by G. Słacz (Kraków: Ludwig van Beethoven Association, Schott, 2013), quoted in *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 8/9 (2016), 219.

4 Ibidem.

5 See: Ibidem, 219–221.

6 Krzysztof Penderecki, "Muzyki nie można zaczynać od początku" [Music Cannot be Started from the Beginning], *Ruch Muzyczny* 22 (1987).

7 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "Just wandering...». Penderecki's Creative Path", in programme book of the *Krzysztof Penderecki Festival on the Occasion of the 80th Birthday of the Composer*, ed. by E. Siemdaj, quoted in *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 8/9 (2016), 223.

what we call musical poetics, he remained in the sphere of qualities and values *constans*. I understand poetics – following Aristotle (and Igor Stravinsky<sup>8</sup>) – as a set of supra-linguistic and supra-technical norms or rules through which a specific artistic goal is realised. It is worth recalling that Aristotle was troubled mainly by three problems: (1) how a work is born; (2) what determines the creation of a work – an artistic object that is supposed to be beautiful, and (3) how to determine the universals of poetic creation. Thus, poetics was conceived in terms of a teleological discipline that was supposed to answer, to repeat, the key question: how to construct an object so that it achieves a specific, inherent purpose. The concept of "creation" (*poiein*) had its origin in two concepts – *genesis* and *generatio* – meaning: coming into being, being born by nature, and thus linked to the process of the natural generation of things. Penderecki was close to the purposefulness of artistic action – including when it came to creating a musical narrative with an awareness of the vectors of tension and relaxation, and directing the flow of sounds towards clear culminations, both statistical and syntagmatic. The following example comes from *Credo* and shows one of its expressive climaxes, *Et incarnatus est. Adagio*: the quintessence of singing and maternal tenderness with the highlighted words "...ex Maria Virgine..." ("and by the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh from the Virgin Mary"). Thanks to such compositional strategies, the music of *Credo* affects the listener profoundly: the quotations of the pleading chant *Któryś za nas cierpią rany* [Who Suffered Wounds for Us] from *Gorzkie żale* [Bitter Sorrows] and the Protestant psalm *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* [From the Depths I Cry Out, Which Is Thee, O Lord] stand out from the sonic universe. The composer's evocation of familiar motifs is crucial in shaping the listener's perceptions. Penderecki's attitude can thus be described as committed subjectivity: with all his work, he defended the idea of Western subjectivity, open and dialogical. An important message is hidden in the words spoken by the composer on October 15, 1994 on the occasion of his being awarded an honorary doctorate from the Academy of Music in Kraków:

Art must be reborn. I am not a prophet, I will not prophesy what kind of paintings painters will paint, what the music of the future will sound like. However, I believe in the future avant-garde, by no means understood as an institution (we all know that it was institutionalization that compromised the avant-garde movement in our century), but as the core of true creativity.<sup>9</sup>

8 Igor Stravinsky defined poetics in terms of how he "makes a piece." Cf. Igor Strawinski, *Poetyka muzyczna* [Musical Poetics], transl. by S. Jarociński (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1980).

9 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Labirynt czasu. Pięć wykładów na koniec wieku* [The Labyrinth of Time. Five Lectures for the End of the Century] (Warszawa: Presspublica, 1997), 23.

Example 1. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Credo*: lyrical moment *Et incarnatus est*

## II. In the Service of Expression

"I'm always looking for an overarching form of expression. Sound is only a means of expression,"<sup>10</sup> repeated Krzysztof Penderecki. Even in his avant-garde works, he was not content with sound alone: compositions such as *Polymorphia* and *De natura sonoris I & II* became dramatized stories, shaping the flow of expressive sonorism. *Fluorescences* (1961–1962; dedication: Südwestfunkorchester) was intended as a manifesto-provocation and was received as such at its premiere at the Donaueschingen Festival, dividing audiences into two opposing camps: some were captivated by the vibrancy of the new sound, others outraged by its ultra-modernity. "I even shocked the avant-gardists of the time"<sup>11</sup> – Penderecki would recall years later. *Fluorescences* epitomise – according to Danuta Mirka's term – sonoristic structuralism.<sup>12</sup> As the author writes:

form in sonoristic works is of paramount importance. It is based on a rigorous system of rules underpinning the compositional technique that Penderecki used in his sonorist period, a secondary manifestation of which is the material invention of sound effects. Krzysztof Penderecki's sonoristic system can be described as a generative grammar composed of two relatively independent parts: the basic system, which regulates the pitch of sound phenomena, their duration and dynamics, and the timbral system.<sup>13</sup>

The composer always adhered to the principle of logically designing the dramaturgy of a work, directing the listener's perception by means of tension and relaxation. After all, he compared culture to nature, and a musical score to composing a garden, in which even when he was acting like a "barbarian," he was building a higher order. In *Fluorescences*, he creates a diverse sonosphere by means of, among other things, crackles and murmurs, whistles and thumps, the sawing of iron and wood, the rustling of parchment, typing or the roar of a siren (see the example below). This composition symbolically closed Penderecki's sonoristic period of storm and thrust, his aggressive modernism, also characterised by an apologia for noise. The question can be posed: does it fulfil a "cathartic" role? *Fluo-*

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10 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Rozmowy lusławickie* [Lusławice Conversations], volume 1, interviewed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Olszanica: Bosz, 2005), 127.

11 Ibidem, 39.

12 Cf. Danuta Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna w Katowicach, 1997).

13 Danuta Mirka, "Sonorystyczny strukturalizm Krzysztofa Pendereckiego" [The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki], in *Muzyka polska 1945–1995* [Polish Music 1945–1995], ed. by K. Droba, T. Malecka, K. Szwajgier (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 1996), 236.

*rescences* belongs, together with *Emanations*, to "luminous" works, as indicated by their significant "radiant" titles.

Example 2. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Fluorescences*: in the stream of expressive sonorism – an apology for noise

The titles of Penderecki's works are important in the process of influencing the listener's perception. However, they were not always created first: one example is the famous *Threnody. To the Victims of Hiroshima* for 52 string instruments. The title came after the fact: the composer associated the drama of the music with the atomic tragedy. As he confessed,

The tragedy of Hiroshima is a tragedy of human dignity, humiliated by the cruelty and senselessness of militant evil. [...] Let the *Threnody* express my fundamental belief that the sacrifice of Hiroshima will never be forgotten and lost, that Hiroshima will become a symbol of the brotherhood of people of good will.<sup>14</sup>

14 Biuletyn Informacyjny Związku Kompozytorów Polskich [Newsletter of the Polish Composers' Union], No. 33 (1964). Quoted by Krzysztof Bilica, "«Tren – Ofiarom Hiroszimy»

Between the name of the expressive category, the musical material (its organization in terms of individual elements) designated by it and the expressive connotations, there can be a close, cause-and-effect relationship; the name cannot be "swapped." The connotations thus evoked are also intended to serve the idea of post-romantic mood. And as Barbara Szymańska writes: "«Being in a mood» makes a person open towards the world, open in such a way that the world can reach him, «stimulating him», revealing its successive faces to him, to which a person responds with a specific «mood»."<sup>15</sup> In his sonoristic works, Penderecki unleashed an imagination not only full of colour, but also, and perhaps most importantly, an imagination that was emotive in nature. It was, after all, in the twentieth century more than in any period before that artists turned to the interior, to the discovery and development of the subjective, which in turn give rise to forms and techniques that have come to be described as "expressionist." Penderecki has replaced the poetics of audial shock with a poetics of affective closeness to the viewer.

And there is also an important aspect of freedom that needs to be considered. It was written about Chopin in his time that he was very much a political pianist and composer, because through his sounds he composed a free Poland, which, as the sounds "said," "is not yet lost...." Similar comments were made about Penderecki with regard to his avant-garde sonorist works of the 1960s and 1970s, with which he changed the face of the sound of music in the second half of the 20th century. It was claimed that he was the freest composer from behind the Iron Curtain, a composer who had the courage to be himself in the case of the ideological and aesthetic dictates imposed from above. Sonorism became the stamp of the Polish Composition School, its calling card. The composer's bravery was also evident in the fact that during communist, he turned to religious themes, which at the time – in the political landscape – were barely present. Penderecki was a symbol and icon of this freedom. In a gesture of cultural dialogue and spiritual ecumenism, he composed the *Utronyas* (1970 and 1971). A citizen of the West (perhaps one should rather use Milan Kundera's term "Central Europe," with its apt definition: maximum diversity in a minimum of space) was reaching out in a conciliatory gesture towards a citizen of the East. And such was the dialogical genotype of the author of *Black Mask* (1986).

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na 52 instrumenty smyczkowe" ["Threnody – To the Victims of Hiroshima" for 52 String Instruments], in *Twórczość Krzysztofa Pendereckiego. Od genezy do rezonansu* [The Works of Krzysztof Penderecki. From Genesis to Resonance], volume 2: *Czas prób i doświadczeń 1960–1966. Faza "Trenu", "De natura sonoris" i "Brygady śmierci"* [The Time of Trials and Experiments 1960–1966. Phase of "Threnody," "De Natura Sonoris" and "Brigades of Death"], ed. by M. Tomaszewski (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2010), 21.

15 Beata Szymańska, *Przeżycia i uczucia jako wartości w filozofii polskiego modernizmu* [Experience and Feelings as Values in the Philosophy of Polish Modernism] (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1988), 47.

When he chose to put Gerhart Hauptmann's drama to music, he seated representatives of different faiths, nationalities and races at the same round table: a Huguenot and a Jansenist, an Evangelical-Lutheran and a Catholic, a Jew and a freethinker.

Penderecki turned his back on the avant-garde poetics of alienation from the listener: as a consequence, he committed a kind of betrayal of modernity – and this happened most clearly in the *St Luke Passion*. By returning to the archetype of the genre, he was re-embracing the experience of rudimentary emotions. As Michał P. Markowski notes, "man experiences the world, and hidden in this term is both the fact that the world of man cares (in the literal and figurative sense), and the fact that he cannot free himself from the world."<sup>16</sup>

### III. From the Memory of a Genre

*St Luke Passion* (1966), with which the composer "forsook" the avant-garde, symbolically anticipated the affective turn that took place in culture and the humanities from the late 1980s onwards. By reaching for the archetype of the genre, Penderecki grappled with the memory of the rhetorical affective narrative. The composer's identity began to be defined by a romanticising past and the imperative to create a language based on affective communication with the audience. The viewer, by experiencing expressive and – as Mieczysław Tomaszewski put it – topoidal music,<sup>17</sup> is supposed to find him or herself in intense affect. By employing the *topos* of passion, the composer wished, to recall his own words, to express not only the passion and death of Christ, but also the cruelty of the twentieth century: the martyrdom of Auschwitz. By venturing into a genre that reached its apogee in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, he was at the same time paying homage to the great composer. He based one of the two 12-note series, the building blocks of the work, on the B-A-C-H motif (also a symbol of the cross). By advocating a particular set of values – religious values, which in Communist times was an act of contestation and disagreement with the stripping of man of the realm of *sacrum* – he also showed himself to be a man of Christian culture. It comes as no surprise, then, that outside Poland, for example in Germany, he was regarded as the only known composer from behind the Iron Curtain who was free, as was noted earlier, or even – as a composer at liberty, taking his own independent path, against the current. "I was too young for my hand

16 Michał P. Markowski, *Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki* [The Politics of Sensibility. An Introduction to the Humanities] (Kraków: Universitas, 2013), 398.

17 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "W zadziwieniu i zadumie nad «pokoleniem 33»" [In Amazement and Thoughtfulness about "Generation 33"], *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 3 (2013), 24.

to tremble," the composer confessed years later in a conversation with Mieczysław Tomaszewski. "I just didn't realise what I was embarking on."<sup>18</sup> The manuscript of the *Passion* bears the date of its completion – 26 January 1966 – in time for the celebrations marking the Millennium of the Christianization of Poland. The composer arranged the narrative with the hand of a true dramatist-symphonist, drawing the listener into a thread of dramatically directed events. "My idea was that no one should stand on the sidelines," Penderecki explained; "anyone can be drawn in by this Passion crowd, the *turba* that demands the crucifixion of Jesus."<sup>19</sup> All the lyrics in the *Passion* are set to expressive music: they are sung, recited, spoken, whispered and shouted in the manner of exclamations familiar from the art of rhetoric:

Example 3. Krzysztof Penderecki, *St Luke Passion*: Scene I, *On the Mount of Olives*, Christ's aria *Deus meus*

By reviving passion, the composer brought together different musical worlds. The sound layer is dominated by dissonances that are dramatic in expression, contrasted by episodes of consonance, generally with the character of a concentrated prayer. In the music, Gregorian chant melodies (old modality) are combined with the dodecaphonic technique (a 12-note universe). Aleatoric effects (freedom of performance) are juxtaposed with the polyphony of Renaissance Dutch composers (scholarly counterpoint). Traditional singing (*cantabile*) is transformed into unconventional singing (e.g. sounds as low and high as possible); polyphony of

18 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Rozmowy lusławickie*, 152.

19 *Passio artis et vitae. Z Krzysztofem Pendereckim rozmawiają Anna i Zbigniew Baranowie* [Passio Artis et Vitae. Krzysztof Penderecki is Interviewed by Anna and Zbigniew Baran], in Krzysztof Penderecki, *Labirynt czasu. Pięć wykładów na koniec wieku*, 68.

Venetian origin is combined with sonoristic thinking, characteristic of Penderecki's expressive sonorism and the Polish school of composition. The monumental E major chord on the words *Deus veritatis*, repeated five times, which crowns the work, has a glow and conceals a sense of a road, for Penderecki in the 1960s – the experience of a new road. The restoration of the high passion genre to culture was a vital act in terms of returning to values consciously abandoned by avant-garde composers. Genre can be understood as a set of expectations and perceptions of tradition, deposited in both individual and collective memory.

"To exist – it means to interact with someone by means of dialogue. With the end of dialogue, everything ends. Therefore, dialogue actually should not and cannot end,"<sup>20</sup> wrote Mikhail Bakhtin. He stresses the fact that "a work is calculated for its response in another human being(s), for his or her active co-responding understanding," and adds, "A work is a link in the process of linguistic intercourse."<sup>21</sup> And one important observation: "Where there is style, there is genre. Style, moving from one genre to another, not only changes its sound in a genre setting to which it is not accustomed, but at the same time nullifies or modifies the given genre,"<sup>22</sup> writes the author. Bakhtin concludes his statements: "Thus, styles, both individual and linguistic, belong to speech genres."<sup>23</sup> Penderecki has created an individually recognisable authorial style, inscribing into it personalised genres – speech genres. Here it is worth quoting Grzegorz Grochowski's thought:

Genre is not an algorithm that allows the automatic production of particular textual forms, but rather a kind of social semiosis, an open and dynamic constellation of directives. It privileges certain arrangements of compositional and stylistic features, but only by identifying them as more or less appropriate to a given context, without making them necessary, mandatory components.<sup>24</sup>

Penderecki has always situated the viewer "in the affair," reaching for culturally familiar genres – an example is his *Concerto grosso* for three cellos and orchestra, completed in early February 2001 in Basel, and composed for the NHK orchestra in Tokyo. In this work the composer gives his own creative reinterpretation of the

20 Michał Bachtin, *Problemy poetyki Dostojewskiego* [Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics], transl. by N. Modzelewska (Warszawa: PIW, 1970, 381).

21 Michał Bachtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej* [The Aesthetics of Verbal Creativity], transl. by D. Ulicka (Warszawa: PIW, 1986), 369.

22 Ibidem, 356.

23 Ibidem.

24 Grzegorz Grochowski, *Pamięć gatunków. Ponowoczesne dilematy atrybucji gatunkowej* [The Memory of Genres. Postmodern Dilemmas of Genre Attribution] (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2018), 320.

Baroque model of the genre. The Baroque provenance comes to the fore in the way the musical narrative is guided by contrasting episodes and in the treatment of the three cellos as a distinguished *concertino* ensemble. However, in contrast to the order of the suite established in the Baroque era, which relies on serializing episodes and building up an adic-chain form, Penderecki thinks, and not only in this piece, in terms of evolutionary form and dramatic tension. The work's dramaturgy is supported, as is typical of the composer's individual style, by the interaction of two expressive models: lyrical and epic-dramatic. One can see in this the appearance not so much of triadic thinking, but of diadic strategy, which Karol Berger wrote, replacing the traditional triad with diad and separating two basic classes – the narrative, formed from the combination of epic and drama, and the lyrical. For the former, cause-and-effect chains are characteristic, for the latter – relations of probable or necessary implications.<sup>25</sup>

In *Concerto grosso*, the lyrical model is associated with the depiction of emotive states or situations, and comes to the fore in the *Adagio*-like phases. The epic-dramatic model is integrally linked to the plotting of the sound course, to give it a clear narrative form – and manifests itself mainly in the phases with accelerated movement, defined as *Allegro*. And, as in the music of Gustav Mahler (Penderecki's approach is close to Mahler's strategy of world-building by means of all available techniques), the colourful narrative episodes combine, by way of collage, elements of popular marches with elements derived from high music. Therefore, in the reception of *Concerto grosso*, its postmodern character has been pointed out, meaning stylistic diversity, the use of quotations – including self-quotations or the evocation of music that has already existed by way of allusion or reminiscence (see example No. 4). Marek Zaleski poses an important question:

What makes reminiscence such an extremely important category, and what determines its artistic significance? The reason, I believe, lies in the ability, inherent in literary [add: musical] repetition (through reminiscence), to make present what is an absence.<sup>26</sup>

Reminiscence or allusion, as a figure of reminder, thus becomes a category that confirms identity and membership in a particular cultural circle and system of val-

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25 See: Karol Berger, "Narracja i liryka, poetyckie formy i przedmioty artystycznego przedstawienia" [Narrative and Lyric, Poetic Forms and Objects of Artistic Representation], in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology*, ed. by J. Stęszewski, M. Jabłoński (Poznań: Ars Nova, 1993).

26 Marek Zaleski, *Formy pamięci. O przedstawieniu przeszłości w polskiej literaturze współczesnej* [Forms of Memory. On the Representation of the Past in Polish Contemporary Literature] (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1996), 6–7.

ues. The music that Penderecki practiced after *St Luke Passion* has become such a kind of conscious repetition – *in extenso*. As Zaleski says, referring to the condition of literature, “repetition, which strives to be a representation of reality” – words that one can also dedicate to the art of sound.<sup>27</sup>

#### IV. Music from Music / Music about Music. Intertextual *Ubu Rex*

The entire text of *Ubu Rex* is essentially a great deal of fun. It is hard to find deeper thoughts and values in a piece written by a student as a satire on a professor. But even *Scheisse* can inspire! It is like stepping off a pedestal and peeing on it. Fully conscious and with all the consequences.<sup>28</sup>

The composer made no secret of the fact that, in composing the music, he had adopted Jarry’s shtick: he mocked the classics of the genre and himself but, subscribing to the style of the author-ridiculer, he substituted the bluntness of verbal humour with the musical finesse of the vocal and instrumental ensembles from which his work was cut. In *Ubu Rex*, the composer was primarily interested in writing in other people’s styles, in practising Ubu music that drew generously from that which had already existed. Penderecki confessed that he “rubs shoulders”<sup>29</sup> with other composers in this work, not using quotations *in crudo*, but instead impersonating idioms that function and are identifiable in the tradition of opera theatre. Therefore, the opera *Ubu Rex* is an example of the genre of intertexts, and its reception resembles a kind of interlecture. The reception strategy may even turn into the act of tracking operatic *clichés*, peculiarly internalised in the composer’s musical language. In the suite of compositional intertextual strategies, musical conglomerations or palimpsests are particularly pronounced. An example: the grotesque coloratura of Mother Ubu, which echoes (or rather: hiccups) the virtuoso displays of the Queen of the Night from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. Mother Ubu begins the phrase proudly and ambitiously, in true Wagnerian (or R. Straussian) fashion, leading a breakneck endless melody (if one can speak of melody at all in this case) and – unable to cope with the high tessitura – finds a secure foothold (not to say: landing) in a cadenza à la Mozart or à la Rossini. A good example of her vocal display is

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27 Ibidem, 8.

28 “W poszukiwaniu siebie. Krzysztof Penderecki w rozmowie z Małgorzatą Janicką-Słysz” [In Search of Self. Krzysztof Penderecki in Conversation with Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz], *Studio 8* (1993), 17.

29 Ibidem.

the *quasi-cadenza* in the first scene from Act I, which incidentally, is then ironically brought down by a humorous clarinet solo passage (see example No. 5).

Example 4. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Concerto grosso: Allegretto giocoso* segment (manuscript)

The irony reaches its zenith when a nostalgic reminiscence of "beautiful singing" (in the tradition synonymous with opera, after all) is attended by a saw in the epilogue. Post- and neo-rhetorical figures are also inscribed in the dramaturgical continuum, fused with new meanings, thus passing into anti-affects. Examples include the invocative "Schreisel," referring to the rhetorical figure of *exclamatio*, or the sighing motifs of "Schade" from Act I, Scene 4 of *The Conspiracy*, evoking the figure of *suspiratio*. Both figures, which belonged to the art of expressing suffering (*patopia*), were parodied in *Ubu*. The method of association also occupied an important place in the repertoire of intertextual strategies: by way of cultural associations, Penderecki creates two circles of characters: the *buffo* (Ubu, Ma Ubu, Bardior, Piła, Kotys, Żyron) and the *seria* (King Wenzel, Queen Rosamunde, the king's sons). The *buffo* characters, borrowed from Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*, and who were previously featured in Bertold Brecht's songs, in their vocal parts usually attempt the style of Giuseppe Verdi, whose *Falstaff* Penderecki described as a masterpiece of comic opera<sup>30</sup>. In their singing, they exaggerate the periodicity of Verdi's phrasing, resort to a *parlando* technique, caricatured in their approach, and travesty operatic rhetoric, aiming for an anti-vocal newspeak.

In the area of musical language, major-minor tonalities (taken as if in ironic parenthesis) are juxtaposed with atonic and atonal sound complexes, freed from the systematic rules of traditionally understood tonality. There is a frequent interplay of diatonic with chromaticism, which is greatly assisted by the wind instruments, supported in colour by the percussion instruments. Strands of *quasi*-symphonic sound, most often the domain of the strings, recorded in the composer's catalogue of instrumental neo-figures, encounter their opposites in the form of whimsical passages of woodwind instruments breaking out of the orchestra, running in minor rhythmic values like short cascades of laughter. Penderecki was aware of the turning point that joined him with *Ubu Rex* and pointed out that

despite this clownishness, there is also a new language, at least for me. If only a different way of looking at the past, at other composers... And these works then, for some time, appear in the form of a quotation, in the form of a reference, often already in a different context.<sup>31</sup>

"Voices" from *Ubu Rex* can be heard in many of Penderecki's works. In the second movement of *String Trio*, written at the same time as the opera (1990/91), the *Ubu* theme (the moment of Father *Ubu*'s coronation) and the music from the instrumental intermezzo from Act II return like a leitmotif. Surprisingly, this rubbishy theme

30 Jan Tyszkiewicz, "After the Premiere, the Composer Said", *Ruch Muzyczny* 16 (1991), 5.

31 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Rozmowy lusławickie*, 141.

becomes a staple of the classical genre, growing out of the Beethovenian tradition. The "uboid" idiom also appears in the *Scherzo* from the *Divertimento* for solo cello and in the *Flute Concerto*, where references to *Ubu* can be recognised in the material rather than characterological sphere. But reminiscences from *Ubu* can also be identified in works representing the poetics of *claritas*, for example, in the *Sextet*.

## V. The Experience of Sublime Nostalgia

Krzysztof Penderecki was a musical rhetorician: his work was guided by three key principles known from the traditional art of persuasion: firstly, to convey something important – to teach; secondly, to move the listener and, thirdly, to give the listener aesthetic pleasure. In the *Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia. A Sea of Dreams Blew On Me* (2010), he drew on Norwid's famous poem *Chopin's Piano*. The composer emphasised that his *Songs*, commemorating Chopin Year, are at the same time a tribute to Polish poetry of the last two hundred years. Norwid thus appears in Penderecki's work in the company of Adam Mickiewicz, Tadeusz Miciński, Stefan Witwicki, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Aleksander Watt and Zbigniew Herbert. *Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia* is a unique cycle: in it, for the first time, Penderecki used so many poetic texts in Polish. He chose them himself, in an authoritative critical selection. The composer has often said that the Polish language – compared to, for example, German or Italian – does not carry melodic matter conducive to musicalisation. "Polish is very difficult," he confessed, "[...] almost impossible to sing, even for a Pole. Let alone for a foreigner!"<sup>32</sup> And he added: "*Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia* are for me a return to the origins of time, to my youth, to my fascination with poetry. And after more than 50 years a return to the Polish language."<sup>33</sup> As Przemysław Czapliński writes: "to establish one's roots – where the word «establish» is understood in its strongest sense, that is, language helps to strengthen them, but also to delineate, to build, to create. It gives, after all, not only an awareness of one's own origins, but also strengthens the bond between the recollector and the recollected, assigning it the role of the most durable bond of identity. Nostalgia gives order to biography, it gives direction to life and narrative."<sup>34</sup> Czapliński also adds: "A longing that saves – such an idea is perhaps only possible at a time when retrospection has the upper hand over

32 "Requiem Pendereckiego dla Chopina" [Penderecki's Requiem for Chopin], Krzysztof Penderecki in conversation with Jacek Hawryluk, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (14 January 2011).

33 Ibidem.

34 Przemysław Czapliński, *Wzniosłe tęsknoty. Nostalgie w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych* [Sublime Nostalgias. Nostalgias in the Prose of the 1990s] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 165.

forward thinking, when, fearful of separation from the past, we choose the status of exiles from the present.”<sup>35</sup>

Example 5. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Ubu Rex*: intertextual cadenza of Ubiza (manuscript)

35 Ibidem, 7.

According to Regina Chłopicka, the following attributes come to the fore in Penderecki's cycle: "fairy-tale and oneiric, lyrical and nostalgic (with a dominance of expressions of sadness and longing), dramatic and tragic, and prayerful and reflective (*quasi-ritual*)."<sup>36</sup> The dramatic-tragic character was integrally combined with the refrain-like returns of stanzas from Norwid's poem *Chopin's Piano* (stanzas I, II and III and a fragment of stanza VI). It is significant that the music in these returns is based on the symbolic "b-flat" sound, referring to the famous *Funeral March* from Chopin's *Sonata in B-flat minor* ("b-flat tonic impression!"). Norwid's line "And behold, you have finished your song," which the composer wrote into the text of Stefan Witwicki's poem *To the Polish Pine*. "The question arises," Chłopicka writes, "of whether the general message of the finale of *Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia* is a symbol of the split between the sphere of spiritual beauty of *The Angelus* and the brutal reality of Norwid's pessimism-laden poem *conclusion* «The dull stones groaned. The ideal – has reached the cobble-stones». Let us leave the answer to this question open."<sup>37</sup> Nostalgia has become the driving force behind Penderecki's works. A significant breakthrough was brought about by a kind of "retro" fashion – events from recent history were the subject of elation and, at once, reminiscence. Such nostalgic journeys or excursions into the world of the past signified a manifestation of a longing for ethos – the enduring values that defined the composer's identity.

## Conclusions and Final Thoughts

Krzysztof Penderecki's music is undoubtedly the art of the semiotic age. [...] The lost functions of music have again become important: expressive and appellative, phatic and symbolic, eliminated by the domination or exclusivity of the aesthetic function. The work thus again expresses and appeals, establishes understanding and conveys a message,

wrote Mieczysław Tomaszewski in 1988, on the occasion of a festival of Penderecki's music organised in Kraków, Lusławice and Poznań.<sup>38</sup> The author also points out that Penderecki's themes *in statu nascendi* are usually already characterised by some

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36 Regina Chłopicka, "Krzysztofa Pendereckiego Powiało na mnie morze snów... Pieśni zadumy i nostalgii. W kręgu fascynacji poezją polską" [Krzysztof Penderecki's "The Sea of Dreams Blew On Me..." Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia. In the Circle of Fascination With Polish Poetry], *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 4 (2014), 36.

37 Ibidem, 50–51.

38 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "Listening to Penderecki", *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 16 (2020), 210.

specific type of expression pronounced to the maximum.<sup>39</sup> The ecstasy of the *Lauds*, the prayerful and imploring tone in the *Te Deum*, the horror of *The Black Mask* or the sublime nostalgia of *Symphony No. 8 "Songs of Transience"*. These are just a few examples from a repertoire of essential affectations that Penderecki represented in sound. He was first and foremost a man of the theatre, with a perfect feel for the stage – and not just in the theatrical genre. That is why his music, as many exegese scholars have stated, represents a theatre of expression. "One notices in it," as Tomaszewski writes, "the panache and gesture, the slow shifting of sound «images», the hieratic, the *al fresco* painting, the closeness to the Baroque idiom."<sup>40</sup>

The composer often used the benefit of rhetoric – figures, gestures and strategies established in the cultural canon – in order to be able, in a conscious and understandable way, to shape the listener's perception – at the level of intelligible communication, to evoke a specific affective response. This applies both to those works with a verbal text, which Penderecki critically and carefully selected, as well as to those deprived of the meaningful effect of words. According to Peter Kivy, we read the expressive colouring of music in a similar way to how we read emotion in a person's face: we understand the message even though no words are spoken.<sup>41</sup> Leonard B. Meyer had already reinforced the view that each epoch can produce a very elaborate system of connotation in which certain melodic, rhythmic or harmonic means become signs of certain states of mind or are used to designate specific emotional states. And he noted that these said measures function as formulas that "signal a culturally codified mood or feeling."<sup>42</sup> Hence, one of Penderecki's compositional strategies has been repetition for the purpose of amplifying the message (*amplificatio*): words that stand out from the context, rhetorical figures and gestures, also – neoretorical, related to individual language (e.g. selected intervals and combinations of sounds) and the use of self-quotation. And with this, Penderecki joins the process of "mythicization." Marek Zaleski notes that the "very act of remembering is being mythicized, becoming a ritual of rescuing something from oblivion, bringing memory out of the abyss of oblivion, liberating the past. Returning to the past, which always exists ambiguously and in vague form, resembles a mythical hero: he undertakes an expedition into the depths of the labyrinth, having as his only support the frail and uncertain thread of memory."<sup>43</sup> Nowadays, memory is also defined in terms of an act of the imagination.

39 Ibidem, 205.

40 Ibidem, 206.

41 See: Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

42 See: Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

43 Marek Zaleski, *Formy pamięci*, 31.

The question of emotion and affect arises: these categories belong to different orders. As Brian Massumi writes:

An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized.<sup>44</sup>

It is therefore legitimate to consider Penderecki's music in the context of what can be termed the "affective" turn in culture, dating from the period after 1989. Ryszard Nycz writes of it that "it is probably the last of the most influential new orientations that, so far, have established themselves and gained a certain legitimacy in the new humanities. It is also a very representative type of study or turn for the field." The author concludes:

It is hard not to notice that it tackles an issue as old as culture and the humanities themselves, but at the same time it does so in a way that reorientates and restructures the field of research, generates new sub-disciplines (such as the study of emotional communities and their role in historical-civilisational processes), reconfigures the positions and meanings of other important concepts of the humanist vocabulary (such as, in particular, intellect, mind, experience, matter, sensuality, corporeality...) [...]<sup>45</sup>

These affective strategies direct us, as Przemysław Czapliński writes,

towards an analysis [let us also add, an interpretation] that takes into account the interaction between text and viewer. The work is perceived as a communicative play of affects, and the listener, being moved (being "in affect"), begins to participate in the perceptual and reception process based on co-feeling or divergence. In order to receive a work, we have to let it move us.<sup>46</sup>

The author emphasizes that it is all about affective concurrency and divergence. Penderecki was aware of what affects to use, how to use them and for what affects there would be in the listener of his music. Listening to the composer's works

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44 Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect", transl. by A. Lipszyc, *Teksty Drugie* [Secondary Texts] 6 (2013), 117.

45 Ryszard Nycz, "Wstęp" [Introduction], in *Kultura afektu – afekty w kulturze. Humanistyka po zwrocie afektywnym* [Culture of Affect – Affects in Culture. Humanities After the Affective Turn], ed. by R. Nycz, A. Łebkowska, A. Dauksza (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich, 2015).

46 Przemysław Czapliński, „Poetyka afektywna i powieść o rodzinie” [Affective Poetics and the Family Novel], in *Kultura afektu – afekty w kulturze*, 373.

– ranging from his dramatized sonoristic compositions to his late romanticizing works – we can conclude that what he practiced was affective poetics.

Penderecki's traditional way of composing takes on an additional dimension – a humanistic one. The colourful sketches of the scores, on which one can see the line of a pencil or crayon, reveal a constructivist sense of compositions designed according to a macro-plan, like a garden or a park, and an ability to hierarchise plans – to bring to the fore what is most important. It is enough to look at the outline of the textual dramaturgy of his *Credo*: it is a colourful, "expressive" construct – a logical structure of composition, hierarchical and systematized. As Janina Kraupe-Świderska noted,

Krzysztof Penderecki's IDEOGRAPHIES lead us even deeper into the process of creating a musical work. They are a completely new type of notation, revealing to us how in the author's vision musical sounds are combined with thematic threads; we can follow the stirrings of imagination and its influence on the formation of form.<sup>47</sup>

Endowed with an extraordinary colour-sound imagination, the author of the "Christmas Eve" *Symphony* emphasised referentially – I will reiterate – that he was never interested in sound *per se*, only in sound that has meaning – that carries a message for the listener who tunes into the tone of his piece and reads what it has to say to him. A feature of Penderecki's style is the practice of taking themes and motifs that are already settled in musical culture. And what has existed and acquired meaning in the past, exists in the here and now with even greater expression and intensity. And Penderecki, in order to achieve a powerful effect, aestheticizes and theatricalizes such a well-known past, thereby affecting the viewer.

Back in the year of Krzysztof Penderecki's 50th birthday, Mieczysław Tomaszewski formulated seven questions that the music of the author of the *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* might raise. These questions concern the following: coherence – what we call the congruence of all elements; structure and its suprasound sense; the question of the identity of the composer, how he marks his presence; the problem of its bond with the values of here and now, and its relation to musical contemporaneity; the attitude towards tradition and cultural integrity. These questions are of course open-ended: Penderecki's music invites us to listen to it anew. It is the same when one enters a garden whose colours change with the seasons, one's

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47 Janina Kraupe-Świderska, "Ekspresja i kolor" [Expression and Colour], in *Krzysztof Penderecki. Itinerarium. Wystawa szkiców muzycznych* [Krzysztof Penderecki. Itinerarium. Exhibition of Musical Sketches], screenplay and concept by A. Baranowa, Z. Baran (Kraków: Bunkier Sztuki. Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej, 1998), 25.

mood, the lyrical or dramatic situation and the sensitivity of the senses. "One must have a sharpened intelligence and awareness," the author of *Violin Concerto No. 2 "Metamorphosen"*, dedicated to Anne-Sophie Mutter, remarked, "but at the same time be attentive to one's inner world,"<sup>48</sup> and thus contrary to what we are constantly exposed to in the modern world of information overload, i.e. the distractions of the eye and ear.

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The metaphor of the garden, one often used by Penderecki, goes beyond the well-known and traditional dichotomy of culture and nature. As Mariusz Gołąb noted, "the theme of the garden can be interpreted much more broadly, treating it as a manifestation of human consciousness and a certain model for conceptualizing the world."<sup>49</sup> The experience of nature implies not only the geometric order of space, but also – a set of affectations related to growth and passing, rebirth and flowering, life and death. It was nature, along with culture, that created the depository of emotions, greatly affecting the viewer. The composer consciously "directed" the listener's movements: the dramaturgy of his works, most often taking the form of a dramaturgy of purpose, was always subordinated to expressive categories. They were meant to provide an intense experience, enriching and even changing a person. After all, as Constantin Floros stated, "No art manages to express emotions as powerfully as music. Thus, since time immemorial it has been considered the speech of the heart, of affects, sensations, and feelings."<sup>50</sup>

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48 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Labirynt czasu. Pięć wykładów na koniec wieku*, 22–23.

49 Mariusz Gołąb, *Ukryte ogrody, nieobecne przestrzenie. Literackie i kulturowe metafory współczesności* [Hidden Gardens, Absent Spaces. Literary and Cultural Metaphors of Modernity] (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 72.

50 Constantin Floros, "Refleksje nad wymiarem głębi w muzyce" [Thoughts on the Dimensions of Depth in Music], *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 2 (2013), 23.



Figure 1. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Credo* – colour construction of the work: manuscript<sup>51</sup>

51 Krzysztof Penderecki, "Credo", in: Krzysztof Penderecki. *Itinerarium*, 65.

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## Summary

"I'm always looking for an overarching form of expression. Sound is only a means of expression,"<sup>52</sup> repeated Krzysztof Penderecki (*Lusławice Conversations*, 2005). Even in his avant-garde works, he was not content with sound alone: compositions such as *Polymorphia* and *Fluorescences* became dramatized stories, shaping the flow of expressive sonorism. *St Luke Passion* (1966), with which the composer "forsook" the avant-garde, symbolically anticipated the affective turn that took

<sup>52</sup> Krzysztof Penderecki, *Rozmowy lusławickie* [Lusławice Conversations], volume 1, interwievied by Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Olszanica: Bosz, 2005, 127.

place in culture and the humanities from the late 1980s onwards. By reaching for the archetype of the genre, Penderecki grappled with the memory of the rhetorical affective narrative. The composer's identity began to be defined by a romanticized past and the imperative to create a language of affective communication with the viewer. The viewer, through experiencing expressive and, as Mieczysław Tomaszewski put it, "topoidal" music, is supposed to find himself in an intense affective state. That's why Penderecki often used the benefit of the human voice in his work: after all, it is the voice that can be endowed with a sense-making word and have a direct affective impact on listeners. The affects experienced in music become the stimuli of the listener, who begins to "co-participate" in the narrative of the work – not standing on the sidelines, but in the centre of events, which is what Penderecki wanted. The author referred in her text to Krzysztof Penderecki's music in extenso, showing several examples representative of affective poetics: from *Fluorescence* (1961–62), through *The St Luke Passion* (1966; series affects) and *Ubu Rex* (1991; buffa affects), to the cycle *Songs of reverie and nostalgia. A Sea of Dreams Blew On Me* (2010). As Constantin Floros stated, "No art manages to express emotions as powerfully as music. Thus, since time immemorial it has been considered the speech of the heart, of affects, sensations, and feelings." ("Thoughts on the Dimension of Depth in Music," 2013).

**Keywords:** Krzysztof Penderecki, experience, expression, affect, message, "topoidal" music

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