

Teresa Malecka

The Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5251-9555>

Krzysztof Penderecki's Creative Path "Rooted in Earth and Heaven." The Question of Aesthetic and Value



Look at a tree.
It teaches us that a work of art
must be doubly rooted:
in the earth and in heaven.
No creation can come about without roots.¹

¹ Krzysztof Penderecki, *Labirynt czasu. Pięć wykładów na koniec wieku* [Labyrinth of Time: Five Addresses for the End of the Millennium] (Warszawa: Presspublica, 1997), 39–40.
Photo 1. Source: https://penderecki-center.pl/uploads/PENDERECKI_CRACOW_131.jpg (last accessed: 29.10.2025).

The generation of Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Zbigniew Bujarski – all born in 1933 and thus referred to as “Generation 33” in music theory discussions – made their entrance during the political crisis of 1956 that followed the death of Stalin, a crisis known as the Polish October, which ushered in a brief moment of liberalization. This was when these young composers made their debuts at the International “Warsaw Autumn” Music Festival.

Is the category of “generation” relevant to any discussion of the above-mentioned artists? It is certainly possible from a purely chronological point of view, but is that enough? The differences between them appear greater than the similarities in almost all aspects of their individual creative paths. Yet the time and also the place that they shared, as well as the country where they lived and worked, constitute at least one common thread: their attitude towards their immediate reality, towards history and towards tradition.

The reception of Krzysztof Penderecki’s music in 20th- and 21st-century culture has been profuse, and abounds in all manner of texts: from short reviews of premieres through detailed and profound analyses of individual works or their groups, all the way through to an extensive and synthetic discussion. Critics and scholars have tried to decipher his work from a variety of perspectives; some of these will be represented in Discussion of Music Theorists.

An understanding of Penderecki’s music can be gauged by following certain traces of his works and stylistic phases in consecutive fashion; this discussion can also be conducted within the category of genre. This paper strives to combine and complement these perspectives.

Krzysztof Penderecki – Composer

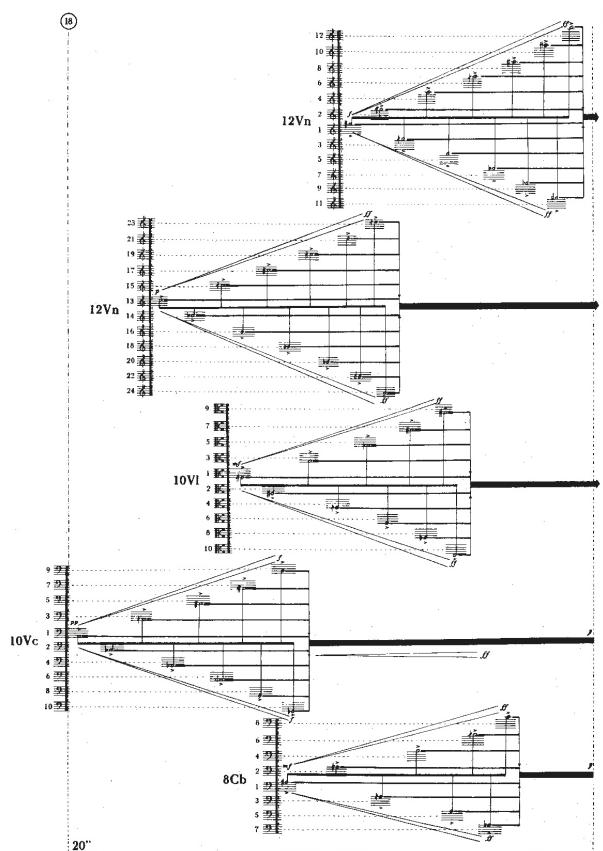
Krzysztof Penderecki’s years as a student under Franciszek Skołyszewski, Artur Malawski and Stanisław Wiechowicz were a time spent accepting and consolidating tradition and technique. They were immediately followed by a fascination with novelty (dodecaphony, serialism).

It was at this time that young Krzysztof Penderecki famously won an unprecedented three prizes in a competition organized by the Polish Composers’ Union. It was well worth the effort for a young artist intent on seeing the world, even if it meant he had just a short time to compose three pieces involving different perfor-

mance methods (*Strophen*, *Psalms of David*, *Emanations*). The composer said: "I wrote one with my left hand, the second with my right, and I asked someone to copy the third one for me." I have since learned from Elżbieta Penderecka that that someone was none other than the composer's close friend Zbigniew Bujarski. Victory in this competition came with a grant and a passport to travel to the West, both of which had earlier been equally impossible for the young artist.

This grand entrance, as it were, and Penderecki's first contact with both the avant-garde and with Darmstadt – its symbol – was followed by the emergence of the composer's highly individualised stylistic idiom, i.e. sonorism, which was soon to become the *differentia specifica* of the Polish Compositional School, represented by some of its most eminent creations, such as *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, *String Quartets* (Nos. 1 and 2), *Polymorphia* and *Fluorescences*.

This new music required a new notation.



Example 1. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, No. 18, PWM 1961

Still, it can be argued that even during this avant-garde period the artist had an uneasy but real longing for tradition. *Polymorphia* is one of Penderecki's most avant-garde, sonoristic pieces. It includes two final culminations: first – the sonoristic achieves its maximum power in a *forte fortissimo*, after which, following a two second-long rest, the music shifts to the famous C major chord tutti.

Krzysztof Penderecki explained: I've been hit over the head so many times for that C major chord... Nobody seemed to understand... They all wrote that it's been just glued on. And the truth was that it was there from the start... I first wrote the C major, and then wrote the whole piece back to it.²

The 1966 premiere of *St Luke Passion* on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of Muenster Cathedral became an event in itself. This was the most groundbreaking work not only in the composer's own *oeuvre* but in Polish music as a whole. (In fact, the premiere also coincided with the celebrations marking the 1000th anniversary of Poland's conversion to Christianity). Many years later, Penderecki commented: "the only way to save Man is to bring back the sacred dimension to reality." He also noted his own return to tradition both in terms of his composing language and his return to values abandoned by the avant-garde, as well as in terms of his return to the category of genre, which he had also jettisoned during his avant-garde period: "I decided upon the passion archetype to express not only the Passion of Christ but also the cruelty of our century, the martyrdom of Auschwitz... Today (1993), I would also add: of Sarajevo."³ Of what – now?

2 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Rozmowy lusławickie* [Lusławice Conversations], volume 1, interviewed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Olszanica: Bosz, 2005), 143.

3 Krzysztof Penderecki, *Labirynt czasu*, quote from Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 1: *Rozpętanie żywiołów* [Unleashing the Elements] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2008), 190.

CORR

49

4
4

tn 1 *mf* 2 *mf* 3 *mf* 4 *mf*

tb *tmp* *gliss.*

Basso solo *oc-lum est e - -i. E - men da- sum er-go il - lum di-mil-tom.*
 cresc. e accel. *f*

VC

vb *s.p.* *f* *gliss.*

gng 2 *p*

org *{* *p*

accel.

I

S Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
A Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
T Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
B Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
f *p*

II

S Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
A Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
T Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
B Tolle hunc et dimitte et dimitte Barabbam.
f *p*

III

S Tolle hunc nobis Barabbam.
A Tolle hunc nobis Barabbam.
T Tolle hunc nobis Barabbam.
B Tolle hunc nobis Barabbam.
f *fff*

A

4 2 4 3
4 4 4 4
4 2 4 3

tmp **pp**
org
ped

Brtsolo
p
Po- -ler si vis, Po- -ler trans-fer co- li- -cam is- lum a met.

VC 6-10 **pp**
1-4
vb
5-8 **pp**

B

3 4
Po- -ler, verum- ta- men non me- -o vo-lun- -tas, sed Tu- o li.

Brtsolo
VC
6-10
vb
5-8

Evang: Apparuit autem illi angelus de caelo, confor-
tans cum. Et factus in agonia, prolixus ora-
bat. Et factus est sudor eius sicut guttae san-
guinis decurrentis in terram.

A

4 5 4 2 5
4 4 4 4

ar **p**
org
Brtsolo
p
De-us me- -us, De-us me- -us, (es - pi- ce in me, De-us me- -us.

VC
tutti
pizz.
vb
tutti
pizz.

Example 2-3. Krzysztof Penderecki, *St Luke Passion*, p. 6, 49. PWM / Moeck Verlag 1971

Penderecki's "bringing back the sacred dimension to reality" was not limited, in his work, to the culture of the Christian West. It also contains a very visible Eastern Orthodox strand, represented by choral pieces to texts from Orthodox prayers, including the most eminent of these, the bipartite *Utreanya*, (1970, 1971) a dramatic complement to *Passion: The Entombment of Christ* and "The Resurrection" His works in this category, in particular the two parts of *Utreanya*, contain elements of Orthodox culture: lyrics in Old Church Slavonic, connotations with Orthodox liturgy, stylizations and even quotations from the Orthodox Matins.

The image shows two pages of a musical score for Krzysztof Penderecki's *Utreanya*. The top page, marked with a circled '7', features a vocal part for 'solo T' (Tenor) and a choral part for 'CORO' (Coro). The vocal line is highly rhythmic, consisting of short, sharp notes. The choral part consists of multiple staves for 'CORO 1', 'CORO B', and 'CORO II', each with its own specific rhythmic pattern. The instrumentation includes woodwind parts: 'ob 1,2', 'cl 1,2', 'cl b', 'cl cb', 'sf a', 'sf brt 1,2', 'fg 1-3', 'cfg', and 'ob 1,2' again. The dynamic is marked as 'ff'. The bottom page, marked with a circled '8' and the word 'Vivo', continues the vocal and choral parts. The vocal part for 'solo T' is now marked 'B prof.' and 'solo'. The choral part for 'CORO' is now divided into 'CORO 1,II' and 'CORO B', each with its own rhythmic patterns. The instrumentation includes 'vc 1-10' (string basses) and 'vb 1-4' (double basses). The dynamic is marked as 'pp'. The vocal parts throughout the score are written in Old Church Slavonic text.



Example 4–5. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Utreanya I*, part III, score, p. 14–15. PWM, Kraków 1977; *Obikhod notnovo cerkownowo peniya*, part 1, Pinsk 1929, p. 291: Song 5

Solo tenor sings: "Blessed art Thou Lord. Teach me Thy statutes." – very high register. It is either a highly expressive song of the deacon of a church or the prayer of an individual eyewitness of the events of Good Friday after the death of Christ).

It was impossible to organise a premiere of *Utreanya* in the Soviet Union. It was not until 1995 that such an event was able to take place, thanks to *Perestroika*.

Thus the question arises of whether, in the 1970s, Krzysztof Penderecki was a precursor of ecumenism, and whether he played a part in breaking down the barriers between the cultures of East and West.

The events that took place in Poland during the 1970s – the emergence of an opposition, the birth of the Workers' Defence Committee, the election of a Polish Pope and eventually the "explosion" of Solidarity – served as the impulse for producing two major works that bear perhaps the strongest brand of historicity in his output. In the words of Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "it is truly not easy for a composer in this country to run away from history."⁴

Te Deum (1979–80), a hymn dedicated to the Pope, was composed in a cantata-oratorio convention as a reaction to a joyful event, but the expression of its music bears the weight of Poland's history that had been anything but joyful. The meaningful quotation from *God Save Poland*, a song that functioned as a quasi-anthem of Solidarity, with its banned line "Return to us, O Lord, our free fatherland," which the composer developed in a simple, traditional and highly dignified harmony, became its expressional and symbolic climax.

4 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 1: *Rozpętanie żywiołów* [Unleashing the Elements] (Kraków: PWM, 2008), 190. Volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise] (Kraków: PWM, 2009), 61.

(30)

4 quasi da lontano

COTO Bo - ze coś Pol - skę przetak licz - ne wie - ki o - ta - czał blas - kiem po - te - gi i chwa - ly

S Bo - ze coś Pol - skę przetak licz - ne wie - ki o - ta - czał blas - kiem po - te - gi i chwa - ly

A Bo - ze coś Pol - skę przetak licz - ne wie - ki o - ta - czał blas - kiem po - te - gi i chwa - ly

T Bo - ze coś Pol - skę przetak licz - ne wie - ki o - ta - czał blas - kiem po - te - gi i chwa - ly

B Bo - ze coś Pol - skę przetak licz - ne wie - ki o - ta - czał blas - kiem po - te - gi i chwa - ly

pp

niente

SOLO Sal - vum fac

p

Example 6. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Te Deum, Boże coś Polskę*, No. 30, Schott Music, ED 7107, Mainz 1980

It was also at this time when Penderecki started working on his great "Polish history book" – *Polish Requiem* (1980–2005). The movements of this monumental funeral mass are dedicated, significantly, to major figures and events in Polish history: Katyń, St. Maksymilian Kolbe, the Warsaw Ghetto, the Warsaw Uprising, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Penderecki in 2005 reacted to the death of John Paul II with *Chaconne per archi*; introduced between *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* it is a wordless – and hence perhaps all the more poignant – instrumental lament of exquisite beauty.

Ciaccona
(*in memoria Giovanni Paolo II*)

Adagio (♩ = 64)

con sord.

VI. I

VI. II

Va. div.

Vc.

Cb.

VI. I

VI. II

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

Example 7. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Polish Requiem, Ciaccona (in memoria Giovanni Paolo II)*, p. 199, m. 1–9, Schott Music, ED 7731, Mainz 2005

Requiem had its beginning in the famous *Lacrimosa* dedicated to Lech Wałęsa and Solidarity (the fragment composed for the unveiling of the monument to the victims of the December 1970 massacre);

Example 8. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Polish Requiem, Lacrimosa*, p. 171, m. 6-9, Schott Music, ED 7731, Mainz 2005

Years later, Krzysztof Penderecki reminisced:

I was moved beyond anything. I experienced before or after. The falling snow, the thousands of people, the intensity... What can I say? Even now, in my Lusławice home, I relive these moments over and over again.



Photo 2. Monument to the fallen Shipyard workers of 1970

Andrzej Chłopecki described the historical and patriotic importance of Krzysztof Penderecki thus: "Polish matter, alive in the collective subconscious, finds its great form thanks to Penderecki. It opens with *Passion*, it culminates with *Polish Requiem*." And he then added: "Only in music has Polish culture achieved such a pregnant testimony of those times."⁵

5 Andrzej Chłopecki, "«Polskie Requiem» in Festiwal muzyki Krzysztofa Pendereckiego, Kraków, Lusławice, Poznań 1988", in Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise], 93, 190.

Opera stands apart in of the composer's *oeuvre*, comprising four great musical/dramatic works and four visions of contemporary musical theatre.

The avant-garde *Devils of Loudun* (1969) is based on historical events, and then on Whiting's adaptation of Huxley's book. The Libretto was written by Penderecki himself. Opera is a type of musical drama (with leitmotifs); it has also been defined as a historical opera or an expressionist drama. It abounds in unconventional musical effects, some of them naturalistic – that articulate manic states and emotions. It is also a type of expressive sonorism. The tragedy of Father Grandier, "a victim of political intrigue and idealistic martyr, faithful to God and following in Christ's footsteps" according to Edward Boniecki, is played out against a background of the madness of devil-possessed nuns.

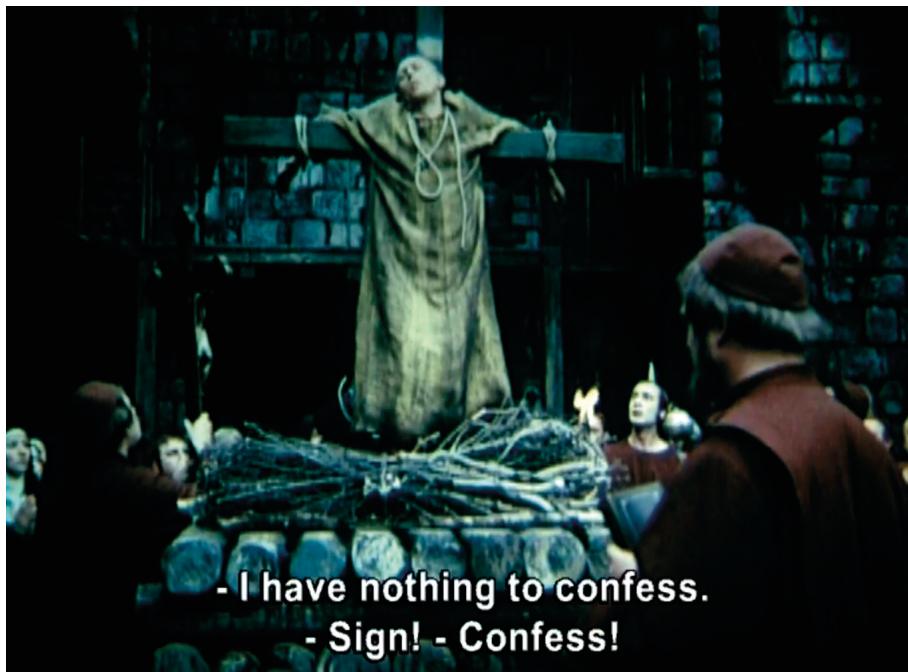


Photo 3. Krzysztof Penderecki, The Devils of Loudun, finale, Father Grandier – Andrzej Holski. A studio production from the Hamburg State Opera; directed by: Joachim Hess, 1969

Paradise Lost (1976–78), which Penderecki gave the subtitle *Sacra rappresentazione*, is evidence of the composer's constant desire to return to biblical themes,

in this case, via Milton's epic poem. The means of musical expression play the dramaturgical role in this work; it can be argued that they are subservient to the personae and the personae's different universes of good and evil. Agnieszka Draus emphasizes the fact that "Penderecki places Man at the centre of his work."⁶ Moreover, as Regina Chłopicka significantly points out "*Paradise Lost* is the discovery of love as the only force that can transform the world."⁷

The composer described his *Black Mask* (1984–86), adapted from Gerhart Hauptmann, as "a short, single-act piece, seemingly enclosed within a single breath with absolute unity of plot, time and place," but also as "a single great baroque *danse macabre*." Again, according to Chłopicka, "it comes in a clear expressionist hue. In this opera, the composer consciously displays his new face, which is a synthesis of all that has manifested itself in his music so far according to his own maxim of "absorbing all that has been."

The opera buffo *Ubu Rex* (1990–91) is Penderecki's most intertextual work. Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz remarks: "*Ubu Rex* is an intertext [...] and its reception is a kind of inter –reading,"⁸ the composer himself described it as a sarcastic look back at the entire history of music, which now has nothing left that he could treat as holy." Elsewhere he said: "I make fun of the classics, but also of myself."

He also planned a *Phedra* adapted from Racine; fragments and drafts remain; they were edited and put together by Jurek Dybał, and had their premiere in February this year.

As this was happening, several other important developments in the composer's creative work and artistic activity took place on other planes.

After his experiments with unconventional sound effects, in the 1970s he embarked on his large-scale instrumental works, which evolved stylistically towards what has been described as new romanticism or, to use the term preferred by

6 Agnieszka Draus, "Krzysztof Penderecki – «Paradise Lost». From Milton's Poem to the *Sacra Rappresentazione Libretto*", in *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre*, ed. by T. Malecka (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 1999), 178.

7 Regina Chłopicka, *Krzysztof Penderecki między sacrum a profanum* [Krzysztof Penderecki Between the Sacred and the Profane] (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2000), 98.

8 Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz, "Intertextual Strategies of Krzysztof Penderecki in the «Ubu Rex» Opera", in *Krzysztof Penderecki – Music in the Intertextual Era. Studies and Interpretations*, ed. by M. Tomaszewski, E. Siemdaj (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2005), 200.

Krzysztof Penderecki, new humanism, and towards two basic genres, where the avant-garde artist seems to part ways with the avant-garde: the symphony and the instrumental concerto. The borderline runs through *Symphony No. 1* (1973) and its clashing stylistic trends; *Violin Concerto No. 1* is already a new opening. Many significant works were to appear within this genre and to enter the repertoires of eminent performers, including *Violin Concerto No. 2 "Metamorphosen"* for Anne-Sophie Mutter, *Concerto* for horn and orchestra "Winterreise," *Concerto* for flute and chamber orchestra, two cello concertos, *Piano Concerto Resurrection*, *Double Concerto* for violin, viola and orchestra, and *Concerto Grosso* for three cellos and orchestra.

Example 9. Krzysztof Penderecki, *Concerto grosso No. 1 for 3 Cellos and Orchestra*, No. 3-4 Adagio (manuscript), 2001

According to Mieczysław Tomaszewski's brilliant interpretation, the *First Symphony* cycle with its four characteristically-named movements *Arche I*, *Dynamis I*, *Arche II*, and *Dynamis II*, "seemingly analogous to the classical symphony form, has a different sense here."⁹ The difference mainly lies in the sphere of sound: still sonorist yet also expressive. In the words of Tomaszewski, "the titles given to the individual parts of the work do more than just colour and complement; they seem to express their nature, function and character."¹⁰

With regard to *Symphony No. 2 "Christmas"* the composer thus commented:

Completed 7 years after the first, it is already fully related to the tradition of 19th-century symphonism – that of Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, Sibelius, Shostakovich – filtered through the sensitivity and expressive means of a composer who had done his time in the avant-garde... I could use Mahler's words to say that I relate my music to "the complete human being" – "the feeling, thinking, breathing, suffering, human being."¹¹

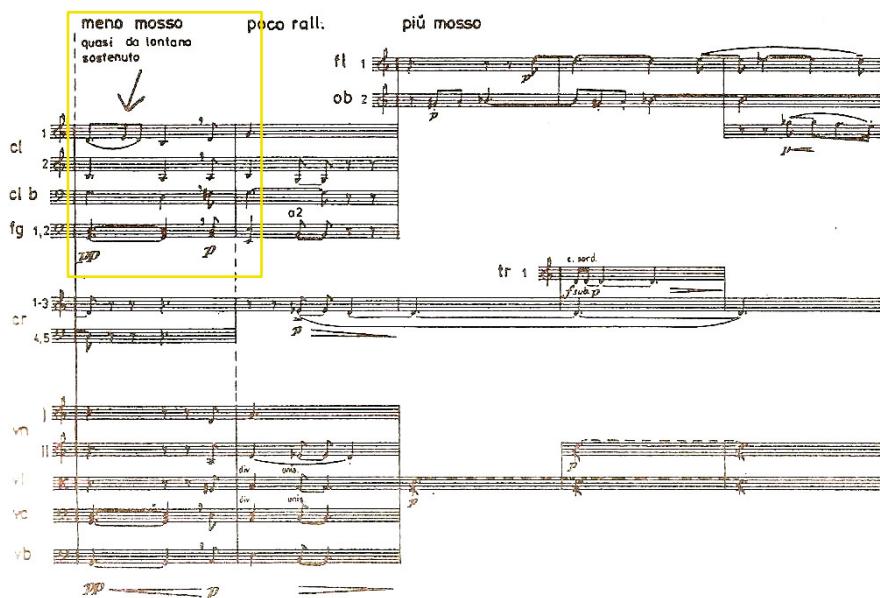
We may recall that, for Gustav Mahler, the symphony was to be "like the world," built "with every means of accessible technique." For Krzysztof Penderecki, the author of eight symphonies – (he was planning his Ninth, and he already had its overall design in place, as we know from his wife, "Dear Elżbieta," to whom he planned to dedicate it as he had done with *Passion*) – symphonies all differing greatly in terms of their form, orchestration and message, the symphony became the genre with the potential to save the world and culture before the flood that threatened to destroy all fundamental values. He wrote, "I have long been thinking about the flood and the need to build an ark." The function of this ark as to be performed by the symphony genre. Perhaps – especially in the case of the *Christmas Symphony* with its recollection of the carol *Silent Night*... Kinga Kiwała stated: "The message full of peace of these few tones may incline one towards reflection... Probably not by accident the Composer named his piece *Christmas*.¹²

9 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "I Symfonia" [Symphony No. 1] in *Twórczość Krzysztofa Pendereckiego. Od genezy do rezonansu* [The Creativity of Krzysztof Penderecki. From Genesis to Resonance], volume 4, ed. by idem (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2010), 46.

10 Ibidem.

11 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise], 190.

12 Kinga Kiwała, *Dzieło symfoniczne w perspektywie polskich koncepcji fenomenologicznych. Lutosławski, Górecki, Penderecki* [A Symphonic Work From the Perspective of Polish Phenomenological Concepts] (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2013), 119.



Example 10. II Symphony

It was in the instrumental medium that the discrete and important strand of chamber music was born. The composer said that "after taking lessons in late Romanticism and applying the potential of postmodern thinking, I find my ideal in *claritas*."¹³ This was a time in which Krzysztof Penderecki produced a number of masterpieces of chamber music, such as the superb *Quartet* for clarinet and string trio, described by the composer himself as "reflexive," or *Sextet*, shimmering with its various musical forms, moods, expressions and characters. Among these, *String Quartet No. 3 "Pages from an Unwritten Diary"* holds a place of its own: a highly personal work, it deals with childhood memories and was described by its author as a kind of *Sentimental Journey*.¹⁴ He first heard the tune of the Hutsul song – in his words, a *kolomyika* which is quoted in the piece – played on the violin by his father, a native of Rohatyn, Ukraine.¹⁵

(*Quartet No. 4*, left in drafts, is now completed, published by Schott and performed on stage). In an allusion to how Joseph Haydn understood the quartet genre – a conversation of four equal partners – Mieczysław Tomaszewski referred

13 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise], 183.

14 Ibidem, 303.

15 Ibidem, 17.

to it as "a conversation with oneself, a conversation with one's own memory."¹⁶ Penderecki's "Sentimental Journey" is also "personal music"; he wrote it for his own 75th birthday. According to Ewa Wójtowicz, "the introduction of this melody can be described in categories of retrospection,"¹⁷ which I think ushers in a discussion of this piece in literary terms: as pages from a diary, if only an unwritten one.

The musical score for String Quartet No. 3 consists of four staves representing the four string instruments. The score is divided into three systems. System 1 (measures 22-421) starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes markings like "poco a poco cresc." and "cresc.". System 2 (measures 421-433) includes dynamic changes from *ff* to *p*, and markings like "sul G", "sub. p", "ff", "sub. p", "pizz.", "arco", and "ff". System 3 (measures 433-444) includes dynamics from *ff* to *pp*, and markings like "sub. p", "pp", "p", "mf", and "p". The score is written in various time signatures, including common time and 3/4.

Example 11. *String Quartet No. 3*

16 Ibidem, 305.

17 Ewa Wójtowicz, *Oblicza kwartetu smyczkowego w twórczości kompozytorów krakowskich* [Facets of String Quartet in the Works of Cracovian Composers] (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna im. Krzysztofa Pendereckiego), 306.

At the turn of the new millennium, the sacred sphere makes itself felt in the Maestro's two large-scale vocal-instrumental works, two cantata/oratorios in a language that attunes tradition with modernity, and also in two different facets. In his *Seven Gates of Jerusalem*, the composer turns to the Old Testament books of Psalms and Prophets; in his *Credo*, he makes use of the liturgical texts of parts of the mass as well as textual and musical interpolations of church songs, quotations from Polish Lenten church songs: *Ludu mój ludu* [O my People] and *Któryś za nas cierpiął rany* [Ye Who suffered Wounds for Us]. These two works bring Penderecki's idea of *sacrum* into the very centre of Christianity, itself understood by the artist in an ecumenical, indeed a universal sense.

The driving moments in the dramaturgy of both works – in a way, too, their centres and culminations of expression – are as different as they can be. The Jerusalem piece has its central moment in what can be seen to be a dialogue between the speaker, Ezechiel (N.B. performed in the local language of each performance), and the voice of God, itself conveyed in the highly expressive tones of bass trumpet.

Regarding *Credo*:

In a conversation preceding the premiere *Credo* conducted by Helmuth Rilling in Oregon, Krzysztof Penderecki said:

Credo is a text about belief. At one point in one's life one has to stop and say to oneself: "Yes, I believe. And so I wrote *Credo*."¹⁸

In *Credo*, the centre coincides with the moment of *Crucifixus*, but its preceding *Et incarnatus estis* charming in the highest degree in a woman's song about the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary.

18 Ray Robinson, "Krzysztof Penderecki's *Credo* (1996–1998): A Brief Introduction", in *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theater*, 62.

27

Fl. 1 19 $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ pp

Ob. 1 $\frac{4}{4}$ pp

Cr. 1 *poco animato* senza sord. solo

Solo A. *poco animato* Et in car - na - tus est, — et in car - na - tus, in-car - na - tus est, —

VI. I $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

VI. II $\frac{4}{4}$

Va. $\frac{2}{4}$ as

Vc. $\frac{4}{4}$

Cb. $\frac{4}{4}$

≡

Ob. 1 *poco animato*

Ob. 2 $\frac{2}{4}$ f — p

Cr. 1 $\frac{4}{4}$ r - l - r

Solo A. $\frac{4}{4}$ et in car - na - tus est de Spi - ri - tu san - - - clo - ex Ma - ri - a, ex -

VI. I $\frac{2}{4}$ mf

VI. II $\frac{4}{4}$ p

Va. $\frac{2}{4}$ mf

Vc. $\frac{4}{4}$ pizz. arco

Cb. $\frac{4}{4}$ pizz. arco

Example 12. *Credo*

Coming back to The Old Testament – *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* is just a step away from the theme of the Chosen People – after all, as John Paul II declared, we all have our common father in Abraham – and this provides the composer with a natural reason to once again return to the Holocaust (already evident in *Dies irae* and *Death Brigade*). This time, the inspiration for such a highly moving piece came from the poetry of the fourteen-year-old Abramek Cytryn, written down before his death in the Łódź Ghetto. Krzysztof Penderecki believed the young boy's poetry was mature beyond his years: "People grew up quickly in that hell."¹⁹ *Kaddish* (for soprano, tenor, speaker, male chorus and orchestra) provides a consistent effect by bringing together liturgical texts, those taken from the Old Testament and those written by the Jewish teenager. The composer created a musical depiction of the tragedy of the ghetto with by means of devices connected with tradition. In his own words: "to prayers said in Eastern Galicia, in the Ukraine and even further south in Romania."²⁰ He constructed the dramaturgy with a means of musical expression that begins in abundance and ends in asceticism. The final and lonely prayer of the cantor, the funereal "orphaned kaddish" is a call to praise God – in spite of all – and eventually becomes a call for peace.

Penderecki's masterpiece of the 2000s gave rise to a late romantic hybrid genre of song with orchestra. Lyrical in expression and oriental intone colour, *Chinese Poems* later became his *Sixth Symphony*. Siglind Bruhn writes of the work: "...this lied symphony [...] presents moving musical images to conjure up the loneliness and transience of human life."²¹

Symphony No. 7 "Songs of Transience" to lyrics from German poetry was planned as a conversation with trees, but, according to the composer, was "even more about evanescence." This work is a wonderful concord between nature and culture.

Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia "A sea of dreams did breathe on me..." was conceived and written in connection with the celebrations of Chopin Year (2010). At the same time, Penderecki's tribute to Chopin appears to be a tribute to Polish poetry, history and culture. The combination of texts by some of Poland's greatest poets and the recurring line from Norwid's poem *Chopin's Piano*, "I was with you those all but last days," conjures up a poignant whole, attuned to music that is both new and deeply traditional.

19 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise], 320.

20 Ibidem.

21 Siglind Bruhn, "Penderecki's Sixth Symphony, «Chinesische Lieder»: Heir to «Lied von der Erde» and «Lieder der Vergänglichkeit»", *Teoria muzyki. Studia, interpretacje, dokumentacje* [Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation] 16 (2020), 51.

The cycle's dramatic finale to Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer's lyrics: "Angelus bells are tolling, blessed art thou, Mary, blessed be Christ" in the form of a *passacaglia*, is yet another reminder of "the sacred dimension of reality," including of Polish reality.

Value

Mieczysław Tomaszewski addresses the value of Krzysztof Penderecki's work using the metaphor of "regaining paradise."²² He writes: "Losing paradise began with the 20th century. Never before was the rift with the culture of the past so radical and so irrevocable."²³ He goes on to say: "Regaining paradise consisted in restoring links to tradition, once so violently destroyed, and in revindicating the values once consciously or wantonly abandoned by European music."²⁴

Krzysztof Penderecki thought of the 20th Century as a difficult epoch. Music came under pressure from the avant-garde, and then avant-garde itself found itself in crisis. In his lecture given on the occasion of the awarding of his honorary doctorate – N.B. the first *honoris causa* in the history of our Academy – he said: "Thus we must now look for hope in paradox. [...] Despite the fact that we have been seeking so many sources of inspiration from the output of the entire century, the artistic language has become shallow and lowly. We are now in a situation where the most creative thing we can do is to open the door behind us [...]."²⁵

"For all his striving for universals, the contemporary artist is torn and alienated. The conscious association with tradition became, for me, a chance of overcoming the rift between the artist and the audience."²⁶

He also added:

"Synthesis must not consist in a mechanical joining of elements. It must be the result of a unifying experience, a homogeneous alloy."²⁷

"The need for synthesis is characteristic of the entire modern epoch. This is the response to the poignant feeling of the disintegration of the world."²⁸

22 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju*, [Reclaiming Paradise], 331.

23 Ibidem.

24 Ibidem.

25 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [Rebellion and Liberation], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raju* [Reclaiming Paradise], 325.

26 Ibidem.

27 Ibidem, 329.

28 Ibidem.

The significance of Krzysztof Penderecki as an artist is obviously measured by the significance of his compositions. But then these would not be what they are if the composer had been a different man.

Penderecki – The Man

One could scarcely find a similarly active conductor, the best performer of not only his own works, but also and to a large extent of the Polish and general canon, including pieces by his Polish friends.

This is because he was a remarkable teacher of such Polish composers as Marek Stachowski, Abel Korzeniowski, Stanisław Radwan, Antoni Wit, Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa, and also of many students, both under-graduate and doctoral, around the world: in America, in Europe, in South Korea and elsewhere. Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa recalls that “his claim that he could not teach was just a pose. In fact, he was an excellent teacher. He only need cast a single glance at a score to be able to make a few small suggestions that would be key to changing your thinking and beginning to find your own way.”

He devoted 15 years of his most active creative years to our Academy, serving as Rector during a difficult period of intense political pressure. It was during his term of office that the Academy opened itself up to the world at large; indeed, it was Poland’s first higher school of music to achieve academy status; and it was Rector Penderecki who offered professorships to eminent Polish musicians, including Andrzej Hiolski, Zbigniew Bujarski and Jerzy Katlewicz. He made us feel safe and we could always count on his help in times that were difficult for reasons both political and, especially, personal.

It is thanks to the atmosphere that he as Rector was able to produce, and thanks also to his knack of surrounding himself with the greatest talents, that the phenomenon now referred to as the Kraków Compositional School (comprising such luminaries as Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, Zbigniew Bujarski, Marek Stachowski) was able to emerge. Krzysztof Penderecki, the most famous and the most eminent – though not the oldest – among them, functioned as their Maestro, more because of his *oeuvre* and his distinguished, creative and friendly personality, rather than his seniority or official status. I think that this sense of closeness and friendship at that time were of paramount importance to Krakow’s composers.

This special atmosphere fostered by Professor Penderecki also bore fruit in an entire community of then-young theorists of music under the tutelage of Professor Mieczysław Tomaszewski. This gave rise to what Bohdan Pociej once defined as the Kraków School of Music Theory (Regina Chłopicka, Krzysztof Droba, Roman Kowal, Teresa Malecka, Józef Rychlik, Krzysztof Szwajgier, and Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa). Our first all-Polish conference on theory was held in 1975 and was fully focused on the work of Krzysztof Penderecki and the processes of conception, notation and execution in his *oeuvre*. He was very patient with our papers; more importantly, we could listen to his responses; he was always kind and open-minded. These sessions on our Maestro's music became a once-in-a-decade fixture on the academic calendar of our team that later comprised the Academy's Department of Music Theory and Interpretation up until 2018. And he was always there for us, always patient, always open to questions and interpretations.

Then there is the broader cultural roleplayed by this great composer. The first chamber music festivals were held in Lusławice at the end of the 1970s; best described perhaps as the private festivals of Elżbieta and Krzysztof Penderecki, they commissioned many important chamber works of then-young composers from Poland, Lithuania and other countries in Central-Eastern Europe. The idea was to give support to composers living in countries under communism.

And first the park at Lusławice, with its ever more and often exotic trees, "my trees" as Penderecki was wont to say, followed by the Krzysztof Penderecki European Centre for Music, built to make his dream come true: the dream of nurturing young talents by the world's most eminent musicians.

In the 1990s, Penderecki served as artistic director of the Casals Festival in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He was advisor to the Beijing Music Festival, guest conductor of the China Philharmonic Orchestra, and first guest conductor of Hamburg's Norddeutscher Rundfunk Orchester and Leipzig's Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Sinfonie Orchester – not to mention his term as artistic director of the Kraków Philharmonic in 1987–90.

All these achievements ran alongside yet another strand of his life, that of his family, his children, his beloved granddaughter Marysia (the dedicatee of some of his works), and his many friends from all over both Poland and the world.

One thing that stands out about both Krzysztof and Elżbieta Penderecki is that there was never a situation in which either was not ready to help other people.

The conclusion must establish some category of human greatness. According to Władysław Stróżewski, "one's greatness requires an integrated use of one's entire potential. When we observe great people, we are not at all surprised by their ability to devote themselves in full to their actions. [...] There is one word to describe this situation: **passion**. [...] Combined with genius, or simply with talent, in a given field, it cannot fail but to lead to greatness. Passion is the premonition and sign of greatness."²⁹

Translation Jan Rybicki



Photo 4. Source: https://penderecki-center.pl/uploads/PENDERECKI_PARK_8.jpg

29 Władysław Stróżewski, *O wielkości. Szkice z filozofii człowieka* [About Greatness. Sketches of Human Philosophy] (Kraków: Znak, 2002).

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Summary

An understanding of Penderecki's music can be gauged by following certain traces of his works and stylistic phases in consecutive fashion; this discussion can also be conducted within the category of genre and history. This paper strives to combine and complement these perspectives. Penderecki's first contact with the avant-garde and with Darmstadt was followed by the emergence of the composer's highly individualised stylistic idiom, i.e. sonorism, which was soon to become the *differentia*

specifica of the Polish Compositional School. *St Luke Passion* (1966) was the most ground break in Polish music in which the avant-garde meets tradition.

After avant-garde period Penderecki's legacy includes numerous traditional genres: oratorios, symphonies, operas, string quartets and other chamber music genres, instrumental concerts, songs, songs with orchestra, symphonies with vocals. In the semantic layer, sacred themes dominate in their diversity: Christian-Catholic and Orthodox, but also Old Testament. The history of Poland and universal history occupy an important place. Texts – in the original languages: Latin, German, Polish, Old Church Slavonic – constitute the foundations of the vocal-instrumental works of the composer. The composer's opinion on tradition was following:

We are now in a situation where the most creative thing we can do is to open the door behind us... For all his striving for universals, the contemporary artist is torn and alienated. The conscious association with tradition became, for me, a chance of overcoming the rift between the artist and the audience.

The text presents also Krzysztof Penderecki's various activities other than composition, as: an outstanding conductor, a wonderful teacher, with particular emphasis on serving as the Rector of the Academy of Music in Kraków for 15 years.

Keywords: Penderecki, value, avantgarde, tradition, history

Teresa Malecka – music theorist, head of the Documentation Center of Krakow Composers Output; editorial head of "Music Theory. Studies, Interpretations, Documentation." In the years 1992–1999 – vice-rector for students and in 2002–2008 – vice-rector for science and didactic of Academy of Music in Kraków, initiator and organizer of many international and Polish musicological conferences, as well as scientific editor of the books. She has done research on Russian music (Rimski-Korsakov, Mussorgski) on contemporary Polish music (Penderecki, Górecki, Bujarski), on the word-sound relationship and that between the arts in a semiotic perspective. The author of books: *Słowo, obraz i dźwięk w twórczości Modesta Musorgskiego* (1996) and *Zbigniew Bujarski. Twórczość i osobowość* (2006), and about 120 scientific articles; she took part in the international congresses and symposia (West and East Europe, USA, Poland). Teresa Malecka is the Member of Polish Composer Union, Societe Internationale d'Histoire Comparee du Theatre, de l'Opera et du Ballet, the head of Artistic Board of Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival, in the years 2010–2018 the member of the Board of National Center of Science in Poland. Since 2025 Honorary Member of Polish Composer Union.