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Discussion of Composers
The Experience of Krzysztof Penderecki's Music and His Teaching of Composition

Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz (MJS): This is the third day of the International Symposium "Krzysztof Penderecki. Music as Experience," organized by the Department of Theory and Interpretation of the Musical Work on the ninetieth anniversary of the composer's birth. The event has been organized in such a way that discussion "tables" are held in the afternoon: today I would like to invite you to meet some composers. I have asked the participants to reflect on Krzysztof Penderecki's influence on their work. Sometimes people talk about a "fear of influence," but when we consider a personality like Penderecki, there can be no fear, in my opinion. Of course, each composer wants to assert his individuality, but we live in a world in which there diverse sources of inspiration and intertexts. Because of the title of our symposium, I will ask you to share your experiences with Krzysztof Penderecki's outlook and music. Perhaps you will also disclose to us which of his works have been a unique source of inspiration for you, or which experiences have been so special that they have remained stored in your emotional memory.

• The *Passion* Experience

Wojciech Widłak (WW): I was not in Professor Krzysztof Penderecki's composition class, but as a student I obviously came into contact with him – in the instrumentation classes that Marcel [Chyrzyński] and I both attended. However, if I were to talk about my first experience with the maestro and his music, I would have to go deeper – much deeper into the past, to what I recall was a key moment in my artistic and professional life. As a ten-year-old, I became a member of the Kraków Philharmonic Boys' Choir, which marked the beginning of an adventure lasting several years in which I took part in many performances, recordings of the *Passion*, *Utrenya* – including under the baton of Penderecki himself: As a boy attending only a first-grade music school, it was difficult for me to comprehend it all. Later came feelings of fascination and admiration, as well as a need to dig deeper into the matter, to reach for the scores themselves. We had countless rehearsals, and made many recordings and trips abroad, which was very appealing in the 1980s and an amazing experience. At the same time, it was also a fantastic, in-depth adventure in terms of music. And it was these experiences that led to my interest in composition. I still know *St Luke Passion* by heart to this very day, and I find it a very useful piece in my composition classes as I believe that a lot can be learned from it. It is a wonderful "textbook" of different techniques – both choral and instrumental. But that is not the essence of the piece: it also teaches us how to compose a monumental score based on a complex verbal text. Finally, it teaches us the ability to build a narrative and speak in contemporary language on themes that are universal. I think this is particularly important in the *Passion*, as well as in *Utrenya*, which has an ecumenical dimension. The musical language of the *Passion*, on the other hand, could only have been born, I believe, after the Second World War, when it became necessary to speak to the world in a completely different language about things fundamental to man, which reflected his full-blown existence. It is a work that goes beyond the oratorio tradition, the tradition of great vocal and instrumental forms. It is at the same time a performance, a commentary, a kind of "radio programme," a direct message.The *Passion* brings a combination of many contemporary forms. And this is where it started. Incidentally, I was able to see just how kind, warm, normal and ordinary a human being the professor was, when I happened to approach him during a break in a rehearsal and talk to him – I was ten or eleven years old at the time. And it was fun to chat with him. You didn't feel any barrier. He narrowed the distance between you and him. And then there were the classes, during which our composition teacher, Professor Marek Stachowski, who was himself a graduate, let me remind you, of

Krzysztof Penderecki, as well as his friend and close collaborator, believed that every student should complete a course in instrumentation and have some contact with Professor Penderecki – because he is our own treasure. Because although he is basically in the world all the time, he is also in Kraków, in our Academy, and we should take advantage of this fact. The classes were part of the second year instrumentation course. They were held once a month. And that's why I recall having to work until the last minute – I was probably preparing some piece by Messiaen for a big orchestra… And I was struggling to make it in time and missed the hour. I would arrive ten, fifteen minutes late, out of breath, because I had been writing until the last minute. I walked in and the professor had already gone, because he had to be somewhere else, on some business, or to create, to travel, to give concerts. He was just a very, very busy man. So there goes a month. And you had to set yourself another task. It was a class that taught us independence, which is extremely important in education. The professor somehow conveyed to us that you shouldn't lead the student by the hand too much, but rather throw him in at the deep end and teach him that you yourself must shape your future and your craft, as well as take control of the time you have at your disposal. And you must develop your talent as much as you can, not wait for someone to help you. Of course, a teacher is there to help, to show you, but do so rather by opening certain doors, pointing in certain directions, and not going into too much detail. It was such a bird's-eye approach to learning composition. I would say it was a very, very valuable experience.

In addition to these two pieces, another work that is important to me is *Polymorphia*, which I find quite beautiful. It's one that combines the ideals of broad classical and contemporary music (especially for those times). *Polish Requiem*, composed mainly in the 1980s, shows how those important issues that hurt and troubled us as a society at the time also affected Krzysztof Penderecki. I sometimes have the impression that Penderecki approached music similarly to the way in which Tadeusz Konwicki entered deeply into the matter of Polishness in literature. The *Polish Requiem* is a musical monument dedicated to the history of our country. I should also mention the courage to be oneself, something that the professor often repeated to us and which should be passed on to future generations. He was a man extremely focused on music – on what he was creating, and at the same time absorbing what was happening around him, which was later reflected in his music.

MJS: After my paper one student asked me whether Penderecki composed music to the poetry of Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, as they associated the aura of *Powiało*

na mnie morze snów… Songs of reverie and nostalgia with precisely this poet. I replied that I did not, while at the same time pointing to your *Symphony of a One Day* with texts from Baczyński's poetry. Are there any connections between these works?

WW: I think so. Looking at the matter from the perspective of craft and technique, I do indeed use certain sonorist techniques to some extent. I believe (and I think I'm not the only one to do so) that it represents one of the resources we have as composers. In the case of this symphony, however, once, at a thesis defense (wasn't it Łukasz Pieprzyk's), one of the reviewers asked why does a doctoral student choose to compose and what does composing mean for him, i.e. the creative imperative. And the professor himself replied by saying that the most important thing is for the composer to "write himself." And I wrote down and remembered this thought. It also serves as a guide to how Penderecki's music should be read. Yesterday's performance of *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* by Robert Kabara and Mariola Cieniawa, for example, said something in this vein. Talking to the performers confirmed that this is personal music, meaning it is, in a way, "composing oneself." It was the same with Mahler. And in the case of the *One Day Symphony* – this is "written" about a fragment of Baczyński's life. That was the idea – and maybe it somehow parallels Penderecki in this way.

MJS: "Writing the sounds of yourself" – music as autobiography – is post-Romantic thinking. Also, there is a trend in music theory and musicology towards "life-composition," for example, Constantin Floros. I will now ask Łukasz Pieprzyk to speak.

• The *Threnody* Experience

Łukasz Pieprzyk (ŁP): I think I am a representative of the last generation to have the pleasure of meeting the professor in person. When I started my PhD, Krzysztof Penderecki was experiencing his eighth youth: his subsequent youths can be counted in decades. And indeed at the time the music from his early period was enjoying a renaissance. This was during his collaboration with Filip Berkowicz and – through the latter – with John Greenwood. Early sonorist works, such as *Threnody* or *Polymorphia*, were performed at the Open'er Festival at the time. My meetings with the professor took place once a month. I even recall having one the day before Christmas Eve – the master firmly believed in routine. And the only ones present at his house in Wola Justowska were his family, Christmas tree baubles spread out all over the place, and me with my score. These meetings-sessions were special and highly personal. I was born in Katowice, where I studied at the music school until my matriculation. When I attended the Karol Szymanowski

Secondary School of Music, traveling about forty-five minutes by tram every day, I listened to recordings of Penderecki's early works on my Walkman: *Threnody* – To the Victims of Hiroshima, *Fluorescences* and *De natura sonoris* Nos. 1 and 2. I was used to certain recordings, such as the *Threnody* conducted by Antoni Wit. At that stage, I didn't yet know, I wasn't familiar enough with aleatoric techniques to realize that performances could differ from one another slightly. I remember one day listening to a different performance of *Threnody*, given by musicians who might not have been instructed by the professor and who had a different approach to the notion of "the highest possible sound." I recall that when I heard this very different interpretation of *Threnody*, I was extremely disappointed. I wondered how this piece could be played so incorrectly? And yet, it was correct! I never told the professor about this, although there were plenty of opportunities to do so. My doctoral studies were intended to last three years, but because of the subject I chose, they took – in my case – almost five. But the professor never asked me when I was going to finish, never suggested that maybe I had used up all those appointments and that I was no longer entitled to any more… I have no regrets. In 2021 I was asked to record a short memoir of the master.

[FILM]

> Good afternoon, my name is Łukasz Pieprzyk. I studied under Professor Krzysztof Penderecki from 2009 to 2014. It was a special time for me, like a dream come true. I worked with the professor on my doctorate, so it was a more mature relationship I had with him, than if it was just part of a composition course. It is only now that I fully recognize this. It may sound trivial, but Penderecki was a truly wonderful person, a true authority figure for me. When he died, something important for the modern era passed away with him. We all know how culture works today – and I don't mean as it did in the pandemic. Let's just say that real art is becoming less and less important. Professor Penderecki was one of the last composers to lead such an iconic life. The happiness I felt by spending time with him during those five years is hard to describe. We did not talk much about music, as there were many more interesting issues. We shared views on culture, politics, and films… In 2011 I said I wanted to make my own film with my own music as a PhD project. Perhaps the professor realized it was too much for one person, but he said I had to decide for myself. "If you want it, do it."
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> [EXCERPT FROM FILM MUSIC]
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> See you in New York when the pandemic is over!

MJS: Thank you for your film. It's difficult to comment on such a moving documentation, namely the photos in which you can be seen embracing Professor Penderecki in the Senate Hall as well as three photos of the rectors of our university. That famous triad of artists and friends: Rector Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, Rector Marek Stachowski and Rector Krzysztof Penderecki himself, who, as it says in the film, taught you to be Yourself in music.

ŁP: I think this is also simply a feature of my personality. First Professor Zbigniew Bujarski and then Professor Penderecki gave me the mandate to believe that the decisions I make are the right ones, because they are mine. From this I drew the conclusion that if we make mistakes in life, mistakes resulting from following our own path, we can learn something from them, fix something. On the other hand, if our mistakes in life come from following the bad advice of others – I'm thinking of the work of artists here, of course – it's very difficult to turn it into something good.

MJS: The photo of you and Zbigniew Bujarski is also touching. We also celebrated his birthday recently. In this wandering and searching for oneself, I see the idea of a road and being in a labyrinth, which is so close to Krzysztof Penderecki's aesthetics and philosophy. I would like to ask Mateusz Bień for his reflections.

• The Experience of the *Polish Requiem* and *Benedicamus Domino*

Mateusz Bień (MB): – Like all three of us taught by Professor Stachowski my first contact with Professor Penderecki was in his instrumentation classes. I was the oldest of the group. I remember that these classes always took place in his house in Wola Justowska. I don't recall them ever being at the university. I found the experience extremely ennobling, because the professor would send a car to pick me up and drive me, utterly terrified, to class – it was a completely different world. I was fascinated by instrumentology and instruments. It just so happened that I had studied the subject while I was still in high school and. I really enjoyed it at university, because many of my fellow students who had to prepare their instrumentation would come to me and I would happily write their assignments for them. Well, this fact came to the attention of Professor Stachowski, who told me to report to Professor Penderecki, because the latter would be able to teach me something. As I was very cheeky, I had a habit of deliberately introducing mistakes into my instrumentation, hoping in this way to test my professors and

see whether they would be able to find them. And of course I did the same with Professor Penderecki. In my first class, the professor not only discovered all my mistakes – the deliberate ones – but also found those I had made unintentionally. At that moment I acquired a completely different kind of respect for the professor, not as a composer, a creator, but as an individual with enormous knowledge and expertise. Truly enormous. We didn't usually talk about it, but this "kitchen" usually came out somewhere in those classes. I would also repeat what Łukasz said – that the professor was always open to things, was always ready to do something new. This led to some very unusual assignments: for example, that of orchestrating one piece for the strangest ensembles, and in a way that would "kill" the piece – for example, Debussy's *Voiles* prelude instrumented for a brass ensemble. This was a challenge, but also a gamble. We got to the stage where the professor said we had already worked out all the musical literature and suggested I orchestrate his *String Quartet No. 1*. But for what kind of line up? And how could this be done? I proposed what I called a *western quartet*, that is, only using instruments featured in westerns: a drum, a jittery piano, horse hooves. We departed completely from the standard, academic instrumentation. I remember that the very high notes in *String Quartet No. 1* were achieved in such a way that you had to push the piano against the wall so that the wheels creaked alike. I then had the following experience during the exam: opposite me, still a young student at that time, sat the faculty's elite. Professor Stachowski opened with precisely my western quartet, but did so in such a way that no one could see whose piece it was. And he asked the rest of the committee: what is this? Confusion reigned. Professor Penderecki looked up at the ceiling. And a stony-faced Professor Stachowski said: "Ladies and gentlemen, it would be better if you knew what this piece actually is." I could hardly contain myself at all this fun, such is the atmosphere of working with the professor. My final "instrumentation" assignment was a poem for choir. There was no melody. We instrumented the words and the sound. I can hardly imagine that classes like this are still being taught anywhere today. It was an unforgettable, eye-opening experience.

MJS: And which of Penderecki's works remain stored in your emotional memory?

MB: Firstly, the Polish Requiem – a piece that shook me to the core. Secondly, *Benedicamus Domino* for five-voice male choir. At first, I was disappointed by it. I was surprised that the professor had gone in that direction. It got me thinking for a very long time. Much later I came to see it as still a Penderecki piece. It doesn't matter whether it's vocal or instrumental, whether it refers to Old Church music or whether it's contemporary. It is simply always very good music. This thought

also led me to the personal decision that one should write the kind of music one likes. The kind of music that one wants to write. It freed me from a lot of problems, complexes, and concerns about whether I could be that good or whether I'm bad. I let go, simply thanks to reflecting on this piece. Maybe it's not very well known, maybe it's not very popular, but throughout my life it has served as a kind of key that many years later, maybe twenty years after listening to it, opened doors, giving me the comfort to write the way I want to.

MJS: And what are your, Marcel [Chyrzyński], experiences of the professor and his music?

• The Experience of *Cosmogony* and *Adagio*

Marcel Chyrzyński (MCh): My first exposure to Penderecki's music was in primary school. I heard the *Threnody – To the Victims of Hiroshima* in my music classes. I remember that it made a huge impression on me. It even shocked me: how can a string orchestra produce such sounds, such tones! Later, of course, I got to know more of the professor's works. And as regards those that impressed me the most, I would say, I will not try to be original here, *St Luke Passion*, *Stabat Mater*, *Fluorescences*, *Polymorphia*, *Cosmogony*. The last of these hasn't been mentioned yet, but it's also one of my favorite pieces. Incidentally, *Cosmogony* exerted a considerable creative influence on me when, in 2013, I composed a piece inspired by Betelgeuse, a star in the constellation Orion, which in my score is about to go supernova and explode in the coming cosmic time, with new stars rising from the dust. I alluded to a gesture from *Cosmogony*. It's a sonoristic piece, of course: there's a lot swirling and things happening in it – it's cluster-like, intense. And there's a pure E flat major chord in the tutti on the word "El Sol," meaning "The Sun." When composing my piece, I found that I would musically represent the supernova explosion with a pure C major chord, so that it wouldn't be like Penderecki's. I would like to go back once more to my school days. Just like Łukasz Pieprzyk in Katowice, I graduated from the Karol Szymanowski High School of Music. After winning two competitions for young composers, I decided that the path I had chosen for myself was the right one. Andrzej Krzanowski recommended an excellent teacher in Kraków – Marek Stachowski; I took a special exam with him. I was very fortunate that I ended up with Professor Penderecki for instrumentation. Uncharacteristically, I had my first two years with him (rather than just my second year), i.e. the first covering the period from Mozart to the early 20th century, and the second later music. As was mentioned by previous students, classes

usually took place once a month because the professor was very busy, travelling to concerts all over the world. I remember once when we were waiting for him, we were supposed to have a class in the rector's office, but the phone rang at the gatehouse. It turned out that the professor was ill and his chauffeur would come and pick us up and take us to Wola Justowska. This made a similar impression on me as it did on Mateusz Bień. The professor came out in a beautiful satin dressing gown and apologized for the whole situation, but said he had just returned from Argentina and had a cold, so the class would be held at his home. Of course, when I found out that I was going to have instrumentation classes with Professor Penderecki, I was a bit apprehensive, as I had only seen him on TV before, so I viewed him as a serious and dignified person, and I was afraid what form our collaboration would take, and what kind of relationship we would have with him. But during the first class it was already clear that the professor was very friendly and open to young people; he was very understanding an fully of empathy, so that the ice melted immediately and our time working with him was very pleasant and fruitful. As the classes took place once a month, we all made sure that we worked out our instrumentation down to the smallest detail, so that the professor couldn't pick on anything. And indeed, this was usually the case, but also, as Mateusz Bień said, it only took one look and if there were any mistakes, the professor caught them right away. Professor Penderecki's death also had a great impact on my work. I remember that in the spring of 2020, I received a commission from the Silesian Philharmonic for a piece for string orchestra. I was so deeply affected by the master's passing that I knew it would be a piece dedicated to him – *Adagio. Krzysztof Penderecki in memoriam*. In it I tried to pay tribute not only to the music, but also to the personality of Krzysztof Penderecki. My musical homage consisted in a reference to the *Adagio* from *Penderecki's Fourth Symphony* in the final fragment of the piece.

MJS: There are no quotations in your *Adagio* – only reminiscences or allusions.

MCh: Yes, reminiscences, textural references. There are no quotes directly.

MJS: You are a clarinetist. There are a lot of fantastic clarinet moments from Krzysztof Penderecki…

MCh: …I played Penderecki's *Three Miniatures for Clarinet and Piano* in high school.

MJS: You also represent a buffo approach in our compositional environment. Isn't *Ubu Rex* – Penderecki's masterpiece of "pataphysical" musical theatre – an important piece for you, a source of inspiration for musical comedy? After all, Ubica's *cadenza* is introduced with the clarinet.

MCh: The buffo approach was more typical of my work during my studies and a few years later. Nowadays I've entered a more serious phase.

MJS: I'm not saying that for Penderecki the clarinet only serves as a buffo instrument! We only need recall the *Clarinet Quartet* and the beauty of the idea of *claritas*.

MCh: I was a clarinetist, so that instrument features a lot in my work, and clarinetists, I'll admit, like my pieces and also commission me to write them. I've even vowed not to write any more compositions for clarinet. Roman Widaszek kept asking me to compose another piece for clarinet and symphony orchestra for him, and eventually, after five or six years, I caved in and after a break of almost twenty-two years I wrote my second clarinet concerto, but in this case I don't see the influence of the master. I believe you can hear reminiscences of Penderecki's music as well as allusions to his sound figures, gestures in the *Quasi Kwazi* cycle for solo clarinet.

MJS: I will now play the recording that Abel Korzeniowski prepared – unfortunately, he was not able to fly in from the United States.

[FILM]

• Experiencing the *Utrenya*

Abel Korzeniowski (AB): I bid you a warm welcome. I welcome all the participants of the symposium and my distinguished fellow composers at the discussion table today. Many thanks to Rector Wojciech Widłak and Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz for this invitation. My lifelong adventure with Krzysztof Penderecki's music began very early, in my primary school days, when I sang in the Kraków Philharmonic Boys' Choir. During concert tours at the time, we performed *St Luke Passion* and *Utrenya*. Two monumental pieces – what music! At the time, it felt impenetrable, brutal, even overwhelming and endless. Why endless? Because from my perspective, i.e. a small chorister, an eighty-minute piece to which a full four-hour rehearsal is devoted essentially loses its time frame. It is constantly stopping, retreating, repeating passages, sometimes with a reduced cast, such as just the strings and woodwind, or just the vocal parts. In a way, it is a different piece from its linear concert version. If we look at the volatile, unarticulated state of the piece during rehearsals, we can see something fascinating. Imagine one of the most poignant sounds I can remember from the *Utrenya*. The effect of a bow pulling on a cymbal. The notation in the score is very simple. A rhythmic value and a statement on

the general shape of the dynamics. In theory, it is difficult to imagine a part like this needing interpretation. One could say that it is impossible to play this element incorrectly. In practice, however, ninety-five per cent of the sound material that technically corresponds to the notation in the score will not fulfil its purpose in the piece. The cymbal may be too thin, too big, have too dark a tone, be too unpolished. That five per cent we look for in interpretation is determined by our emotional perception of all the elements at once. One could say that the whole score is a contextual notation for our pull on the cymbal, but also the emotional and cultural characteristics of our orchestra seem to be a much more important factor. That five percent sought in interpretation will sound different in a different ensemble, on a different continent. And here I come to the crux of what I learned from my lessons with the master during my composition studies. Every note, every phrase or choice of instrument has its own emotional value. And they are all subordinated to an overarching emotional concept. Take, for example, the *Threnody – To the Victims of Hiroshima*. The audience was not shocked by the fact that the musicians played unexpected parts of the instrument. What touched us was the deep emotional experience, the moment when we heard, or rather felt, the cries of thousands of victims pleading for help. Penderecki's music proved to be a non-abstract medium, conveying real human emotions, just like literature or drama. This understanding of music naturally broke the classical foundations of tone, rhythm, and timbre. And it broke them without difficulty. Tonality abandoned the Pythagorean harmonic system, which had hitherto been its main, rational basis. And so a cluster was born that expressed a previously inaccessible emotional state. This personal, emotional approach of Krzysztof Penderecki to every element of the piece was a lesson I took deeply to heart. And the contact I had with him became imprinted on my approach to music and shaped me as a composer.

MJS: I am grateful for these words. They resonates perfectly with what we articulated at the symposium – Krzysztof Penderecki's music carries a dimension of intense emotionality. Yesterday, during the "table" hosted by Iwona Sowińska-Zając, virtually all the performers spoke about this. Maciej Tworek emphasized in an evocative way that the music of the composer of *Passion* and *Credo* conveys clear and moving emotions for the listener. I will now turn to Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa, who was a student of Krzysztof Penderecki's composition, and combines two elements so close to him: composition and conducting.

• On Education as an Experience

Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa (JWN): I met Krzysztof Penderecki when I was already in my third year at university – halfway through. I matriculated at the university in 1968 and Penderecki was not present at the time. He had taught here much earlier, first as an assistant, then as an assistant professor. And when he got his assis tant professorship, his first student was Stanisław Radwan, who recently died – a phenomenal composer, mainly for the theatre, followed shortly afterwards by Marek Stachowski. Staszek Radwan was five and a half years younger than Penderecki. Stachowski was only two and a half years younger. These were his two outstanding pupils, who are sorely missed here today. It is they who experienced the full range of his teaching, when the professor was still teaching everything: harmony, counterpoint, instrumentation… Well, and also composition. He was a complete teacher who spent many hours with his students. When I came to the university, it was like this: I was admitted to Tadeusz Machl's composition class, then I had fugue and instrumentation with him, counterpoint and first composition techniques with Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, the second with Bogusław Schaeffer, solfeggio and a jazz music seminar with Lucjan Kaszycki; and dodecaphonic counterpoint with Marek Stachowski. And each of these lecturers told me what not to do. Very interesting. Tadeusz Machl said that you must not operate with four bars, that you have to change the metrorhythmics. You can't repeat them, because it's stupid and banal… Such then were those first two years at the university, revising all the time. The harmony is supposed to be dense. Machl loved César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns, i.e. those slightly "German" Frenchmen, but of course also the Group of Six. So, we did harmony with major sevenths, with added sixths and so on, rather than schromatized thirds, because that was too close to Richard Strauss or Wagner. We didn't listen to Mahler because it was kitsch. You also need to be aware that in the 1960s, Mahler was hardly ever played at the Kraków Philharmonic, and Art Nouveau wasn't sold at Desa. Everyone wanted to be very modern. Lucek Kaszycki showed us jazz functions. My idol at the time was Zygmunt Konieczny. When I came to Piwnica [pod Baranami] with my first song, Zygmunt rejected it and said that I wrote like Lucek Kaszycki: "What is this! These jazz functions…". Zygmunt Konieczny himself found it difficult at university. I saw him as a pioneer at the time. It was he – not Henryk Mikołaj Górecki – who was the first to shift modal chords and avoid dominant chords, which we used to call "inserted" chords. Dominant to dominant, etc. He avoided dense harmony and "rode" parallel thirds or, God forbid, chords in their basic form, but nothing like Bartók. Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, my future mother-in-law,

also pointed out every now and then that some things were not allowed. She, in turn, was enthralled by Darmstadt, atonality, and punctualism. And it was in this environment that Penderecki made his entrance. The rector at the time was very keen for Penderecki to start teaching in the middle of the year, but after the first semester, no new students could be accepted. And some current students dreamed of getting into Penderecki's class. But it wasn't that simple, because he demanded an exam. Six or seven people turned up for the exam, students of composition or theory. Only Jurek Horwath and I were accepted. Jurek founded the band Dżamble (he is no longer with us; he did not finish his composition studies, but nevertheless was extremely talented. He went to Germany to work as a saxophonist, then to Sweden, where he remained and pursued a more sophisticated form of entertainment close to jazz). What did the entrance exam look like? Penderecki asked me to orchestrate Schönberg's *Klavierstück* for a strange combination of instruments, such as trombone, accordion, celesta, and something else – saxophone or something similar. But he also asked us to add a two-part canon to the chorale he gave us, in the classical style – as they do in Dutch schools. We had never done that before. I was in the third year at the university and already had a fugue under my belt, and I had also completed two cycles of counterpoint classes. It's not that simple. You learn counterpoint here, but I don't think you add a canon to a given chorale, you just write canons – and anyone can do that. I thought that this man knew more than just what you learn after completing a regular course in harmony, counterpoint, and so on. Penderecki studied the Dutch when writing *Passion* and especially his *Magnificat*, in which he displays his phenomenal knowledge. He had already learned harmony and counterpoint from [Franciszek] Skołyszewski in high school, and later, while studying with Malawski, he was able to learn more modern techniques. The lessons were fascinating, short but frequent. For the first six months, they were longer. I was hoping for even more comments, but then Penderecki became rector and our meetings then took place not in the classroom but in the rector's office. I would wait for an hour or two outside his door, and then I had to show him my work quickly. That sparkle in his eye, those brilliant comments. I never heard him that something "shouldn't be done," that it was forbidden, that I had to compose something in such and such a style. There was openness – what you mentioned earlier – to searching for one's own "self." What I composed didn't resemble Penderecki, but nor did it resemble Machl, Moszumańska-Nazar or Stachowski, who imitated Penderecki a little in his early period. I received wonderful comments on the instrumentation: Penderecki immediately picked up on any mistakes. He gave me good advice – for example, that I should introduce a harmonic on the double bass instead of a regular note,

because a harmonic sounds more refined, and there is a wide range of harmonics on the double bass. We have all said here, and I myself have repeated it many times, for example on Polish Radio, especially after Krzysztof's death, what a warm, kind, and good man he was. Well, when I met him, he was thirty-seven years old, and he was not a kind and warm person. I am not judging whether he was a good man or not, because he probably was, but he was not kind and warm. He was a successful man, one of the most important composers in the world of avant-garde music, full of irony and sharp retorts. He was attacked by various circles – by traditionalists and by the so-called Darmstadters, post-pointillists, admirers of Boulez. Polish colleagues saw Lutosławski as a possible successor to Boulez. And yet all of sudden someone comes along here with sonorism. I think these were Penderecki's leaps forward. When he began composing with Malawski, the others had not yet left the Group of Six plus Bartók, and neoclassicism and folklorism were dominant. But they already wanted to leave: after 1956, Penderecki himself, still a very young man, briefly threw himself into post-pointillism. Very soon afterwards, he discovered sonorism. This is after October [1956]. Middle-aged or slightly younger composers are just beginning to enjoy the fact that they have managed to abandon that nasty socialist realist folklorism based on neoclassicism. They are enjoying atonal freedom. The second Viennese classics are now being discovered. All those composers whose works could not be performed earlier, whose students had not been able to hear live, but could only be studied. And everyone is rushing to do so. And Penderecki suddenly makes his leap forward. We haven't yet had our fill of the new reality of atonal music – and suddenly we have sonorism. They quickly begin to imitate Penderecki. His works enjoy success. They are bought for films, so they also write film music. And imitators of sonorism began to appear, timidly trying out individual effects, and then writing entire compositions in a sonoristic manner. And sonorism became a common language, especially in theater and film. So Penderecki runs away again – backwards. He begins, as he himself recently put it, to close the door behind him. Because he has already said everything he had to say in his early language. With *Passion of St Luke* accusations of betrayal of the avant-garde are already flying. Fine, if I am a traitor to the avant-garde, then I will be one completely. This is no longer my avant-garde. Penderecki flees backwards. And again they start chasing him, retreating behind him. The first shock is that he begins to write neo-romantically (those affinities of chromatic thirds). But the melodies are still atonal. The second shock – *Credo*. Not only does a harmony similar to tonality, that is tonal even, make its appearance, but the melodies begin to become tonal… Well, that's an absolute scandal. This lasts for about five or six years. Seven, eight. Everyone starts

to imitate him. They apply his style in various religious oratorios, written to order… They mix in a little Kilar to make it easier than Penderecki. A little Górecki, too – minimalism is also popular. But they also add a little of Penderecki's neo-romantic sauce. Because such density makes the weight of it all greater. Because Górecki has brilliant ideas. But when you imitate him and you lack his talent, it just becomes shallow, flat, and repetitive. Hence, it's better to use a neo-romantic technique that can be mastered. I say "surromantic" because I think it's something different. It's not "post-" or "neo-," but "sur-," like surrealism. Surromanticism. I think that Krzysztof, at the end of his life, the genius of the *Third Quartet* and *Chinese Songs*, was beginning to open new doors. We don't know what he would have achieved. And he would probably have found his imitators again.

MJS: And Krzysztof Penderecki's late style?

JWN: Of course, there are also the last twenty years of his life. By then he was a very kind, warm human being. Kind, understanding, a good listener and so on. But at the beginning all I recall is that sparkle, the retort. And, very importantly for those of us who are part of this university's community, he took his position as rector deadly seriously. That's why we had to wait so long for our classes. Sometimes he would be away for a month. Sometimes two, when he was in the United States. But then he would stay in Kraków for many weeks. And he took his position extremely seriously. He felt he needed to deal with a whole list of things waiting for him: because only Penderecki could talk to the authorities, only they wouldn't refuse him. They would listen. He could stomp his foot. No one could stand up to the secretary of the Provincial Committee, let alone the Central Committee. But he could afford to do so. He dealt with several different things each day. He dealt with one matter after another. I witnessed this while waiting outside the rector's office and knitting a scarf. Even then, we could see how it was. And later I experienced it as a young assistant, a lecturer at that university. After all, he was rector for fifteen years! And later, Penderecki was vice-rector for international relations. Some people wrote in Ruch Muzyczny that Penderecki himself said that it was actually impossible to teach composition. And in fact, he didn't teach. He just went to cafés with them [his students] and talked. I can't put it better myself, so I'll quote Stanisław Radwan from his book *Zagram ci to kiedyś…* [I'll Play it for You Someday…],[1] from the chapter *Lata nauki. Popatrz jakich miałem wspaniałych belfrów* [Years of Learning. Look what Wonderful Teachers I Had] – that's the subtitle…:

1 See: *"Zagram ci to kiedyś…". Stanisław Radwan w rozmowie z Jerzym Illgiem* ["I'll Play it for You Someday…" Stanisław Radwan in a conversation with Jerzy Illg] (Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2018).

And what kind of teacher was Penderecki? [– asks Jerzy Illg, note MJS], what methods did he use as your "professor?" Because a "class of two" is a fantastic, privileged situation for studying…

[…]

He was a great educator. And yet his experience up to that point had solely been in assistantships. He might have adopted certain methods from Malawski or Wiechowicz, but in his case, as an outstanding personality, his approach was nevertheless formed on the basis of his own reflections. He focused unbelievably on two poles. Namely, firstly on honest craftsmanship, so much so that he ensured each element of the counterpoint – because we are not yet getting to composition, I am only talking about the craft itself – was meticulously refined. He did not utter a single "maybe." He required us to "First learn the rules so you can break them. Because if you have good craftsmanship, breaking a rule can only happen for the sake of some higher goal, not because you can't do it, because you don't know how to do it." In this respect he was, one might say, medieval. He worked with Benedictine patience and consistency. Absolutely nothing should be let go, every problem must be solved. Keep combining, but follow the rules. This was one pole. The same applied to instrumentation. As I have discovered, nowadays students no longer have the luxury we had. For example, once a semester the professor would select one instrumental work from each composition student. The school would invite musicians from the philharmonic and pay them some money, and they would perform our works for us. It was a fast-track course. When you heard it, you realized: Wait, that's not how I imagined it. Where, then, was the mistake? Of course, at that time there was no possibility of recording it to play it back. There was only this one audition. But what method, for example, did Professor Penderecki use? We have atlases of instruments that are useful for every composition student, including in the later art of orchestration – because one student studied music education, another was a violinist, another a pianist, yet another a trumpeter and so on. The future composer always plays an instrument. And a string player and a pianist develop completely different kinds of imagination. As a result, great atlases of grips have been published, showing what can be played on a particular instrument, what is its scale: from *C3* to *C7* is such an instrument, and so on and so forth. Or showing that it is possible to trill just such a trill, and that on the clarinet, for example, going a semitone higher is already impossible. And that it was possible to leap on the violin – this was important to me – provided there is an empty string just somewhere to bounce from. I needed such an atlas for the violin.

[…]

[…] when I started learning instrumentation in composition, I needed that knowledge. […]

> […]
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> I wouldn't be able to say that Professor Penderecki used this or that method. There was no such thing. His method – if I could misuse the word method – was: "what is he missing?" And he would hound me in those places where I was weaker, to improve those areas…
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> [JI:] To improve the weak areas.
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> He was never interested in what I already knew. I hardly ever wrote for piano with him, because he would say: "You already know that. You can do that." On the other hand, he placed a huge amount of emphasis precisely on my weaknesses. This problem lies within the realm of teaching psychology rather than methodology. He believed that a classical education, whether in harmony, counterpoint or instrumentation, was fundamental. "Later on," he would say, "You will do to yourself what you will. You will overturn whatever you want. On the other hand, the first thing is to be able to place a note in such a way that it sounds. […]"
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> […] He was certainly disappointed with the path I chose. He told me not to get too involved in theatre. He certainly imagined it differently. I went down a different path. And I think Krzysztof may have been disappointed because of that. But he gave me bread to eat. The craft. I turned in every style – not because I was so skilled, but because I knew how to do it. So, I can say without hesitation that Krzysztof put the bread in my hand. Or, if you prefer, a fishing rod – not a fish, but a rod. I left him knowing how to write. As a teacher of craft, he was tough. When he said I had to write so many fugues, I had to write so many fugues. He didn't care that I no longer had time for it. He thought that if I said, "I was Professor Penderecki's student," it would be clear that I wouldn't make the kind of mistake whereby a cellist would ask me whether to play it over the neck or under the stand. What can a professor give me? An instrument. He won't give me talent because I have it or I don't have it, and this applies to every student after all. When he said I could write whatever I wanted as a thesis, this meant: "You are already at the next stage, you will already be responsible for it." Because the thesis is from a composition class, I can already compose. That is, to do what you want. And he clearly demarcated this point then. […].[2]

And he also talks about the wonderful school under Rector Rutkowski. I'll read some more of what Penderecki himself said, as Illg has also posted it here:

> I always recall Staszek Radwan with great fondness. He was one of my students – perhaps the best. Incredibly talented, less hard-working, with a fantastic sense of humor and a feeling of detachment towards his own abilities.

2 Ibidem, 86–90.

> We have remained friends to this day, and I regret that we see each other too rarely. He wrote so much great music for Polish theatre productions – it's a pity that his work in theatre claimed so much of his time that he was unable to develop his talent in classical music. Staszek is a great musical personality.[3]

That is how Krzysztof Penderecki described Radwan. And Radwan repaid him with this conversation with Illg, which refutes the claims that Penderecki repeatedly said that composition cannot be taught. I think that whoever quoted these words was simply in his final year. I was in my final year of conducting when Krzysztof Missona fell ill and another teacher, Napoleon Siess, came in and said: "What am I going to teach you? I can offer you an internship with the Silesian Opera, because you've already received your training from someone else here." Anyway, I'll tell you who I'm talking about – Krzysztof Meyer. Since his childhood Meyer had been a student of Stanisław Wiechowicz. The latter had died a year before Meyer's graduation, and Meyer was sent to Penderecki to finish his studies. And indeed, what could Penderecki teach him, since he was already a fully formed individual, somewhat enamored with Shostakovich. It was simply a different world. And presumably they never discussed technical issues. But justice must be done, and we must remember how seriously Krzysztof Penderecki treated technical matters and his mission as a teacher, as my colleagues here have already testified.

MJS: To confirm these words, I would also like to bring back the series organized by Marcel Chyrzyński, "Masters and their Students." I had the good fortune in 2018 to have a meeting with Professor Krzysztof Penderecki in Florianka, who then said we should teach instrumentation, counterpoint. The craft. Teach it intensively. I think that his claim that composition cannot be taught is a mental shortcut, meaning that talent cannot be taught, whereas technique must be taught. And here one is reminded of those important words of Zbigniew Herbert, Professor Penderecki's friend, who said to visual artists: "Be diligent, you must first learn the craft, and only then can you break down any boundaries." I remember two guiding ideas from that meeting in Florianka. The professor then said that he had actually been rebelling all his life: first against tradition and then against the avant-garde, but not for the sake of rebellion itself, but rather to find something new and to find himself. Secondly, he stressed the need to teach counterpoint, instrumentation, harmony and so on. This was a very important message for the younger generation.

3 Ibidem, 89.

• The *Stabat Mater* Experience

JWN: Let me add something else about the pieces. I was most impressed not by the *Threnody*, far from it, but rather by the *Stabat Mater*. Even before the *Passion*. I was in high school at the time, and I heard the piece in Floriana, where the three choirs could barely squeeze onto the stage. It completely shocked me. Why more than *Threnody* or *Polymorphia*? Because we know that you can do all sorts of things with instruments. I used to play the violin myself. You can screech on it, create more effects. In theatre music, you could do various things, you could imitate a rasp or the sound of wind. But we didn't think you could do something like that with a choir. The choir is regarded as more traditional. A human voice solo is something else. Berio was able to compose Sequenza because a single, very talented person, singer or singer, can 'do' amazing figures with his or her voice. But there are dozens of people in the choir and to demand of them something as extraordinary as the *Stabat Mater* is highly impressive. I was simply blown away when I heard it. My female colleagues felt the same, and it made a huge impression on us. To this day it remains one of my favourite pieces. And the other work, lying on the other extreme, is *Symphony No. 8 "Lieder der Vergänglichkeit,"* or *Songs of Passing*. For me this work is – in stepping back and opening the door behind me – the most profound manifestation of Penderecki's creative thought, a work of powerful, deep reflection. And I remember him choosing texts and still not being able to give up some of them; it was about composing a great song about trees, and a decision had to be made. But how brilliantly limited the work is, how magnificent it is in its plenitude, isn't it? Nothing to add, nothing to take away. And you can imagine how much creative effort and suffering this cost Krzysztof, how many beloved poems and ideas that could have been used in the execution of this piece he had to give up. But he was a master of form and was able to make sacrifices in order to create one of his best works.

MJS: Yes, these passages from Rilke are poignant. The same is true of *Songs of Reverie and Nostalgia*, where, in turn, passages from Norwid's *Chopin's Piano* function in a similar way.

Thank you so much for contributing this – this is a different repertoire. The term "surromantic" is also very good; I don't think any theorist or musicologist has proposed such a term yet. We tend to say "neo-romantic" or "post-romantic," and use inappropriate terms.

JWN: I used this word in a short paper I gave on stylistic transformation in Krzysztof Penderecki, based on the example of *Jacob's Awakening*. I was even nervous that my text would not go into print for a long time and that someone else would hear the term and use it.

MJS: So, it has come up in public today – it's a term, a conceptual category devised by Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa.

Agnieszka Draus (AD): I am not a composer. I am a simple listener, fascinated by the memories articulated. The name of Stanisław Radwan has been mentioned here; he was an exceptional figure, boasting such an intellect and warm sense of humor, which I myself witnessed at times. In a conversation with Anna Woźniakowska Marek Stachowski repeated the story that it was Staszek Radwan who persuaded him to study at the Academy, "because there's a young, talented composer there by the name of Penderecki." I would also like to add, Marcel, that in choosing C major instead of E flat major, you chose Haydn's light rather than Penderecki's? "Und es war Licht," isn't that the case? And then you mentioned the name of Konwicki, whom I associate in particular with his reinterpretation of Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), a very daring version – *Lava*, which offers a completely different perspective. For the younger generation, I recommend the film starring a young Artur Żmijewski. I thought it might be evoked today as a reference to the courage of Penderecki, who reinterpreted the great monuments of tradition. I associate *St Luke Passion* with such a reinterpretation. Who else would have dared to? I remember Professor Penderecki in his later years making remarks to the effect that he would probably not dare do so now, that it was a good thing he was only thirty-three, nomen omen, at the time. And when he got the proposal, without thinking long about it, he simply composed.

Elżbieta Penderecka (EP): It was commissioned by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne, where the head of contemporary music was Dr Otto Tomek. Krzysztof then said he would write a passion piece, and Tomek says: "Are you crazy! After Bach!" Krzysztof says: "Yes, after Bach. No one has written one, and I'm going to write it." And then, I remember, the intendant of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk was Klaus von Bismarck, who thought it was a great idea. I can confirm that [Krzysztof] wrote the *Passion* over the course of six weeks. I filled in the clusters, and Dr Tomek came to see us every week. On 30 March 1966, the *Passion* had its premiere. A newsreel was released – this was, after all, the communist era – reporting that a Polish composer had achieved incredible worldwide success. And then it was agreed that, about three weeks later, on 22 April, the *Passion* would be

performed in Kraków. It was unthinkable in communist times to perform a work with a religious theme.

AD: Thank you very much for your comments. I think it was Zygmunt Mycielski who said that the date on the score sounds proud, doesn't it? Not to mention the dedication to Elżbieta Penderecka, which appears written in the score.

EP: At the same time there was the premiere of *De natura sonoris No. 1* at the Royan Festival. And it wasn't until later, after that event, on 8 or 9 April, that Krzysztof came back. We had to wait an awfully long time for a phone call, so Krzysztof sent me a telegram. The period he spent writing the *Passion* was a very intense time indeed – six weeks at ZAiKS in Krynica, in the composers' house. We went away because we didn't have a flat, and he wrote there.

MJS: The *Passion* and the *Stabat Mater* (and *Stabat Mater* came first, after all) had a particularly strong impact – everyone recalls the Passion, and the experience of sonorism. After all, C major also features in Krzysztof Penderecki's music, in *Polymorphia*.

EP: I would also add something very important here. Krzysztof loved Shostakovich. We went to Moscow and met him at the Soviet Composers' Union. I had two *Passion* CDs with me, one from Harmonia Mundi and one from Philips. And I said to Krzysztof that I would give Shostakovich a recording. He said Shostakovich would never listen to it. I spoke good Russian. I went over and we talked to Shostakovich, who was a difficult conversation partner, but nevertheless opened up a lot. I said to him: "I have something my husband would like to give to the master." He looked at me, took the record. Five, maybe six weeks later, a letter from Shostakovich arrived: "Dorogoy Krzysztof. Samoye velikolepnoye muzykalnoye proizvedeniye dvadsatogo veka. Tvoy Dmitriy." Meaning: "The best work of music of the 20th century. Yours Dmitry."

MJS: Elżbieta, do you have this letter?

EP: It's lost, but it has been reproduced in books. Maybe I can find it.

MJS: A wonderful testimony.

EP: It was something extraordinary: a man who was so important to Krzysztof, the greatest symphonist of the 20th century.

MJS: Today Eero Tarasti demonstrated these Shostakovich motifs, in a semiotic interpretation, in the *Second Cello Concerto*. And as a representative of Finland, he also spoke about Arto Noras' wonderful performances of Penderecki's *Cello Concerto No. 2*. Many thanks to all the participants at the "table" and to Mrs Elżbieta Penderecka for her presence. A concert awaits us later today. The Milo student ensemble will perform Krzysztof Penderecki's sonoristic *String Quartet No. 2*, the

Dafô Quartet – *Quartet No. 3 "Notes from an Unwritten Diary"* – a wonderful, one might say, autobiographical piece. And then we will hear the Sextet, a hermeneutic interpretation of which, taking into account various traditional-musical-contemporary connections, was presented by Joan Grimalt from Barcelona. We love this composition. By the way, Elżbieta, we love the music of Krzysztof Penderecki in general, for which we thank you. As well as for the *Passion* and the phenomenon that is the *Passion*. Thank you very much.

EP: I would like to thank you all. There is no better gift for the ninetieth birthday of my late husband, with whom I spent fifty-five years of my life, minus three months. We knew each other for fifty-eight years, more than half a century. Thank you to everyone who participated in this three-day conference. Małgorzata, Teresa, Joan, all of you. I shan't name any more… To all the gentlemen who were students of my late husband. I remember when Mr Pieprzyk used to come to our house. And to all you students, I wish you what my husband always used to say – that you have strength to strive for your goal. I wish all of you that strength. When he was very young, Krzysztof would start work at five in the morning, a little later at six, towards the end – at seven. He came to me one day, shortly before he died, and said: "I wanted to write the ninth symphony for you." He was always afraid of it, and I said: "Krzysiu, you admired Shostakovich, who wrote fifteen, so why are you afraid?" He replied that Beethoven only wrote nine. This was less than two months before his death. So, I wish you a lot of perseverance and a lot of work. Thank you all very much.

MJS: Thank you very much, Elżbieta, for spending time with us. We were united – in our experiences and as community – by the music of Krzysztof Penderecki, music that has given us a variety of experiences that we have stored in our emotional memory.