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Muzyka polska po politycznym przełomie w 1989 roku
Twórcy, dzieła, inspiracje, konteksty

Polish music after the political breakthrough of 1989
Artists, works, inspirations, contexts

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GENERATIONS AND GENRES

Lutosławski would hardly have recognised the Polish musical landscape in the twenty-first century. He was a singular figure for whom creative collaboration did not arise (perhaps that is why his hints of possible operas never materialised) and for whom new technology was a mystery. Yet there were still many Polish composers after 2000 who, like him, remained faithful to traditional genres of symphonic, chamber and vocal music, whether they be abstract or programmatic.

Kotoński (d. 2014, aged 89) and Kilar (d. 2013, aged 81) were productive until the very end. Kotoński maintained his interest in nature-related topics in the gently beguiling *Black Star* for percussion ensemble (2010) but he also moved firmly into abstract genres with works such as the lively and lyrical Clarinet Concerto (2003). He also followed up Symphony no.1 (1995) with no.2 (2002) and no.3 'Góry' (Mountains) for choir and orchestra (2006). Perhaps surprisingly given his complete avoidance of the genre previously, Kotoński composed three string quartets (2002, 2008, 2013), the last of which is powerfully unsettling in its splintered unpredictability. In contrast, Kilar continued along familiar paths in his last decade. His principal output was still film music (he wrote his final scores in 2008, maintaining his long-lasting association with Zanussi) and his other music could not escape its influence. With *Lament* (2003), he began a series of modest works for a cappella choir, the last of which was *Prayer to Mother Teresa* (2013). These supplemented the grander ambitions of his (sometimes quasi-) sacred works for voices and orchestra, such as Magnificat (2006), Symphony no.5 'Advent' for choir and orchestra (2007) and Te Deum (2008), with their interlocking of devotional handwringing and the stiff echo—what Szymanowski called 'skrzępte widmo' (coagulated spectre)—of folk-related pieces from the 1970s and 80s. Much the same applies to the couple of nominally abstract works since 2000: Symphony no.3 'September Symphony' (2003) and especially Piano Concerto no.2 (2011). The Third Symphony—like Penderecki's Piano Concerto no.2 'Resurrection' (2002, rev. 2007), whose Polish premiere at the 2002 'Warsaw Autumn' provoked a decidedly mixed

reaction in the Philharmonic Hall and a furious polarisation of opinion caused by a newspaper review provocatively headlined 'Socialist-Realist Penderecki',¹ — is a commemoration of the 9/11 attacks in New York and elsewhere in the United States in 2001. The Polish penchant for memorialisation here steps out of home territory into one where the maudlin and the kitsch are ever-present dangers. It is a quite different situation to that of 1984 and one which has little or no appeal to younger generations.

One work where Kilar may be said to have risen above the expected is Symphony no.4 'Symphony of Motion' for soprano and baritone soloists, choir and orchestra (2005), composed for the World Year of Physics (2005 marked the centenary of Einstein's 'miracle year' and the 50th anniversary of his death). Despite its blatant indebtedness to Górecki's Third Symphony (with a nod to the latter's Second Symphony as well), there is some persuasive music. Kilar also follows Górecki's example of creating music from cyphers by deriving the principal motif G-E-C-H (B natural)-A from physics: Gravity, Electric field strength and Einstein (not, apparently, Energy), C—the speed of light, H—Max Planck's constant, and Atom. It is all couched, however, in the Christian terms of God as First Mover and of Dante's depiction of Purgatory and Paradise. For good measure, Kilar throws in a heavy-handed version of *Dies Irae* (cf. the more allusory use in Górecki's *Little Requiem*). But, as in *Missa pro pace*, Kilar eschews energy or momentum, and the multidimensional dynamics of physics are left out of the equation. His world remained cloistered and saintly.

Kilar and Górecki (d. 2010, aged 76) jostled alongside each other for much of their careers—they were almost exact contemporaries, were based and worked in the same city and embraced similar genres, apart from film music. If a difference were to be found, it might be crudely encapsulated by observing that Kilar favoured composing *in modo maggiore*, while Górecki preferred *il modo minore*. Sometimes, Górecki veered in Kilar's direction, as in the choral-instrumental cantata to St Adalbert, *Salve, sidus polonorum* (2000). But Górecki's main problem in the last fifteen years was his creative disquiet. Not for him the regular flow of compositions that characterised Kotoński, Kilar or Penderecki. Whether or not this was triggered by the unprecedented success of the Third Symphony in the 1990s or by the many encroachments on his time that ensued, this malaise meant that for the rest of his life he released nothing substantial apart from the Third String Quartet '... songs are sung'. This profound work was not premiered until 2005, ten years after it had been to all intents and purposes completed.

Taking his lead from a quatrain by the early twentieth-century Russian writer Velimir Khlebnikov—'When horses die, they breathe, / When grasses die, they wither, / When suns die, they go out, / When people die, they sing songs.'—Górecki's five-movement work is a contemplation enriched by life experience and a witness to human frailty. Not for the first time, he glances back to Szymanowski (a brief if forthright quote from the Second Quartet), while the extensive internal thematic cross-referencing recalls the *quasi fantasia* structure of his own Second Quartet. The central and only fast movement recalls the circus-style jollity of his immediately preceding works, *Little Requiem* and *Concerto-Cantata*, but its brevity within the

quartet's 55-minute span and its stuttering conclusion speak now of uncertainty and restlessness. The mood is certainly melancholic, not to say sombre (the fourth movement includes the term *MORBIDO*). The musical material is familiar—rocking 'lullaby' motifs and harmonies, contrasts of intense lyricism and keening dissonance—with major and predominantly minor thirds playing a key melodic and harmonic role as the work progresses from the opening *Eb-Gb* dyad to the concluding *Eb* major triad. This is a troubled search for transcendence. The abiding impression is that the Third String Quartet is 'preoccupied with the elusiveness of memory, with the mind's ability to repeat ideas but to lose itself in them through that very repetition'.ⁱⁱ

As far as the wider world was concerned, when Górecki died that was the last that would be heard from him. But his family and publishers knew that there were other compositions in varying stages of completion. With inside knowledge of his father and his compositional intentions, the composer Mikołaj Górecki (b. 1971) has prepared several such pieces for publication and performance, including the choral-instrumental *Kyrie* (2005, premiered 2014) and the one-hour, four-section oratorio *Sanctus Adalbertus* for soprano and baritone soloists, choir and orchestra (1997, premiered 2015). The brooding *Kyrie*, commissioned by and dedicated to the recently deceased Pope John Paul II (to whom *Beatus vir* was also dedicated, over 25 years earlier), has echoes of the much earlier *Ad matrem*. It is bound together by low-register tolling with an open-intervalled melodic refrain in the strings. The central 'Christe eleison' provides a moment of unexpected luminosity.

When Górecki composed *Beatus vir*, he had in mind a cycle of large-scale pieces about saints. *Sanctus Adalbertus* is the second part of this unfulfilled cycle. Its composition also benefited *Salve, sidus Polonorum*, whose third section is a variant of much of the third movement of the oratorio ('Hymnus'). The oratorio is stripped-down Górecki. Apart from 'Hymnus', the textures are spare, even in moments of exultation. The head-motif of the opening 'Psalm' and 'Lauda' is a gaunt diminished triad, and there are lengthy fixations on a single pitch (*Eb* in 'Psalm') or a single triad (second inversion A minor in 'Lauda' that is pitted polytonally, and remorselessly, against the vocal lines). The air of sackcloth and ashes is salved by the concluding E-major 'Gloria', which is grounded in that staple Polish reference point, *Bogurodzica*.

By far the most important of these posthumous works is Symphony no.4 'Tansman Episodes' (2006, premiered 2014). Mikołaj Górecki's work in realising the short score for performance was more extensive in terms of orchestration than in the other pieces, although he had the unrivalled advantage of having his father's instructions and compositional practice at the forefront of his mind. There are classic Górecki procedures here: a cyclic motto, derived from the letters of Aleksander Tansman's name (though that seems to be the extent of the connection), dissonance played off against consonance, allusions and quotations. In the opening movement, the motto theme thunders forth as if in the hands of Mussorgsky, whereas in the finale it has all the jauntiness of Górecki in party mood. Elsewhere, there is yet another reference to the final movement of Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and allusions to Stravinsky and John Adams, and there is a totally unexpected 'trio' in the third movement's

'scherzo' that is scored for just four instruments: piano (it has an obbligato role in the symphony, as in *Little Requiem*), cello, violin and piccolo. This epitomises the boldness and confidence of the work, as if Górecki had overcome whatever uncertainties and fragilities had plagued him since the mid-1990s. There can be no greater sign of this than the bombshell moment just before the end when, for four bars only, he introduces a stentorian declamation of Siegfried's theme from Wagner's *The Ring*. Although it is tangentially connected pitch-wise and intervallically with other material, this climactic moment stands proud and enigmatic in its isolation. It is hard to escape the impression that Górecki was having fun in composing this last orchestral work. It emerged swaggeringly from beneath the shadow of its benign predecessor.

No doubts have ever seemed to assail Penderecki's productivity, although the days of the monumental symphonic or oratorical statement seem to have receded. He supplements his new pieces with arrangements and revisions of existing works. He has also been much involved in bringing into being the gleaming modern facilities of The Krzysztof Penderecki European Centre for Music (2013) at Lusławice (east of Kraków), where he had long ago renovated the manor house and planted an extensive arboretum. Like his near contemporaries, Penderecki has remained faithful to the genres that he espoused in the last decade or so of the twentieth century. His substantial catalogue of concertante works now includes Concerto Grosso no.2 for five clarinets and orchestra (2004), Largo for cello and orchestra (2003, rev. 2007), whose title, like that of the Fourth Symphony 'Adagio', belies its real character, Horn Concerto 'Winterreise' (2008 rev. 2009), Double Concerto for violin, viola and orchestra (2012) and the Trumpet Concertino (2015).

Among Penderecki's chamber music since 2000, which includes miniatures for solo instruments (*Capriccio per Radovan* for horn, 2012) and duets (*Cacciona in memoriam Giovanni Paolo II* for violin and viola, 2009), one stands out for comment for its revival of a genre that seemed forgotten in his output. After the first two string quartets, the miniature *Der unterbrochene Gedanke* (1988) aside, there was a gap of 40 years before the Third String Quartet 'Leaves of an unwritten diary' (2008). This 'diary' seems to stretch back to the earlier quartets in its intercutting of ideas. The keening viola highlighted at the start gives way to a recognisable trope, the lumbering oscillation of a minor third G-Bb in waltz time. But rather than build on this, Penderecki destroys it with figurations that would not have gone amiss in the 1960s. The kaleidoscope even includes a gypsy tune that in his childhood he heard his father play. The retrospective air is not new in his output, but it has become more personal. As with Górecki, a composer may change style but rarely character, except to reveal more than hitherto.

Penderecki has attached great importance throughout his career to choral music and has expanded his range of *a cappella* works, including the composite *Missa brevis* (2002-12). The sequence of symphonies (no.6 is still to appear) has reached no.8 'Lieder der Vergänglichkeit' (Songs of Transience) for soprano, mezzo-soprano and baritone soloists, choir and orchestra (2005, rev. 2007) which has been joined by other vocal-symphonic works: *Kadish* (2009), commissioned by the city of Łódź to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the liquidation of the city's Jewish ghetto,

Powiało na mnie morze snów... (A sea of dreams did breathe on me..., 2010), commissioned to mark the bicentenary of Chopin's birth, and *Dies illa* (2014), Penderecki's third take on Dies Irae texts. Continuing threads are self-evident in two of the works here, but the Eighth Symphony, with its proto-Mahlerian tone, and *A sea of dreams*, with Polish texts that range from Cyprian Norwid (excerpts from 'Chopin's Piano') to one by Aleksander Wat, written when he was imprisoned by the NKVD in the Lubyanka in Moscow, break new ground in that they are really extended song cycles and show an expressive relaxation in Penderecki's music. If his move in the mid-1970s from sonorism to post-romanticism was for some an unwelcome surprise and for others a blessed relief, these masterly song-settings bring a gentleness to complement the robustness that has characterised his music from the beginning.

There is no denying the fact that Górecki and Penderecki, along with Lutosławski, have dominated the image of Polish music over the past fifty years. As the sole survivor, Penderecki is ever-present at home and abroad both on the concert platform and in recordings. Slightly younger composers, now in their seventies, are still active, among them Ptaszyńska and Meyer. Ptaszyńska also celebrated Chopin's bicentenary, with her most recent opera *Kochankowie z klasztoru Valdemosy* (2010), based largely on a 1973 radio play about Chopin and George Sand. She continues to draw on her distinguished early career as a percussionist, as in *Street Music* for percussion orchestra (2008) and *Of Time and Space* for percussion, tape and orchestra (2010). Meyer is especially prolific, focusing on chamber and orchestral music in the open manner and compositional virtuosity for which he is known. His pianistic background is shown to good advantage in the thoughtful and intricate Sixth Piano Sonata 'Sonata breve' (2005) and Six Intermezzi (2013). The string quartets are still the backbone of his output and now look like surpassing in number those of his idol Shostakovich (no. 14 was composed in 2014). Among his works for larger forces is Symphony no.8 'Sinfonia da Requiem' for choir and orchestra (2009), with texts by the poet Adam Zagajewski. Long in its considered gestation, it tackles the issue of anti-semitism in a particularly powerful way, not least in the second movement, which is a purely instrumental response to one of the ongoing sores in Polish wartime history, the pogrom at the town of Jedwabne in 1941.

The atavistic need for some Polish composers to memorialise their past is largely generational, but not consistently so. The work of Serocki, Baird and Schaeffer, as children of the 1920s, is devoid of such references, even though they were approaching adulthood during World War II. In contrast, those composers born in the 1930s and 1940s have frequently reacted in their music to outrage and suffering. Those born in the 1950s came to maturity in the 1970s and early 80s, at a time of great social and political unrest, and their connectivity was instinctively contemporary rather than retrospective, as discussed in Part IV. It also was 'of its time' and not beyond. As for composers born since 1960, memorialisation has been almost entirely irrelevant to their creative world, to their present and future, even while some of their older colleagues cannot let go of the past.

Among the composers who bridge the gap is Krauze. Not one to dwell on the past, he nevertheless contributed to the Chopin bicentenary and the orchestral *Hymn do*

Tolerancji (2007) was written for the unveiling of the Polish designed and funded Tolerance Monument in Jerusalem the following year. Elsewhere, he pursues his quixotic path that still has roots in unism, repetition and collage within a mainly diatonic framework. *Listy* (Letters) for pianos and orchestra (2010) is a musical reimagining of Krauze's correspondence with composers and performers as diverse as Polish friends such as Tomasz Sikorski, Serocki and the harpsichordist Elżbieta Chojnacka and others including the composers Louis Andriessen, Dusapin, Grisey, Lachenmann and Takemitsu. He conceives of these 'letters' as 'independent fragments. Some are repeated, while others appear only once. Some are like unfinished sketches while others are complete wholes'.ⁱⁱⁱ His ability to interweave these 'independent fragments' into an impressionistic tapestry is magical. The same is true of *Rivière souterraine 2* for piano-derived electronic sounds and orchestra (2013), which brings to the concert platform a continuation of the original spatial composition *La rivière souterraine* written a quarter of a century earlier. Another revisiting is implied by the installation *Idyll 2* (2015). Krauze's sensitive soundworld, innovative approach to materials and pioneering installations still echo through the music of much younger Polish composers.

Krauze is also important in recent developments in Polish opera, not least because so few twentieth-century composers born before the Second World War—Penderecki apart—contributed significantly to the genre. Since Penderecki's last opera in 1991 (not counting his partial reworking of *The Devils of Loudun* in 2012), Krauze has composed five. From the three versions of the chamber opera *The Star* (1981, 1994, 2006), the last of which is reduced in personnel to a single soprano, computer and two cameramen, the list—with a strong presence of twentieth-century Polish drama—comprises *Balthazar* (2001, after Wyspiański), *Yvonne, Princess of Burgundy* (2004, after Gombrowicz), *Polyeucte* (2010), *The Trap* (2011, after Różewicz) and *Olympia from Gdańsk* (2015). When it comes to later composers, it is striking how many of them have turned their hand to one or more works for the operatic stage since 2000. As samples there are Kulenty's *Hoffmanniana* (2003), Szymański's *Qudsja Zaher* (2005, premiered 2013), Sikora's *Madame Curie* (2012), Knapik's *Moby Dick* (2014), as well as Mykietyn's *King Lear* (2012, dubbed by the composer a 'musical') and *The Magic Mountain* (2015).

Knapik, Szymański, Lasoń, Wielecki and Kulenty belong to the post-war generation, born in the 1950s and early 1960s and, while some of their contemporaries moved into the experimental world of improvisation, most have stayed within tried and tested boundaries of genres used by their elders. Knapik is one of several examples of composers who have taken administrative posts for the better good, and his tenure as Rector of the Music Academy in Katowice (2002-08), where his teacher Górecki had also filled the same position, undoubtedly affected his productivity for a period. But his most recent pieces are substantial. *Concerto of Song Offerings* (2014) is for that rare trans-genre combination of solo piano, choir and orchestra, and was written for the new NOSPR concert hall in his home city. More significantly still, as the leading exponent of large-scale lyric opera in Poland, he has produced the four-act *Moby Dick*. Like Szymański's *Qudsja Zaher*, it is not dramatic theatre, and Knapik's description of it as an *opera-misterium* recalls Szymanowski's use of those words for *King Roger* 90 years earlier. The reflective nature of the opera is

underlined by placing Melville's final tragedy at the front, in Act I, and throughout the opera the biblical dimensions of the plot are key to its ethos. While the textural and harmonic richness of Knapik's earlier large-scale works remains, he too cannot resist inserting a little local colour—the Renaissance prayer for protection in the night, Waclaw z Szamotuł's *Already Dusk Is Falling*, that Górecki had also plundered on several occasions.

Szymański's long-awaited opera is one of the most challenging works to emerge from Poland this century. Alex Ross's description of Szymański as 'a composer of a severe and inward cast'^{iv} may fit *Qudsja Zaher*, but Szymański's personality is broader than this. In this instance, death, mythology and mystery intertwine, mingling the past with the present: the everlasting Ferryman, the Afghan woman Qudsja who turns out to be a reincarnation of someone from a thousand years before, the Icelandic teacher with fifty syncopating schoolboys in tow. There is rarely an explanation from Szymański about his music, and despite the storyline and visual stimulus there is none here either. The pervasive slow tempi and elongated counterpoint—familiar enough in shorter works from *Miserere* to the second movement of the Piano Concerto or the orchestral *Sostenuto* (2012)—are an uncompromising test of concentration. There are no frills and little acknowledgment of conventional theatrics. It too is an *opera-misterium*, but one that perplexes as much as it enlightens. In that sense, it resonates with interdisciplinary art forms that are situated outside standard spaces and their traditions and which are increasingly attractive younger Polish composers.

Szymański has a penchant for diverting titles such as *Chlorophaenhylohydroxipiperidinofluorobutyrophaenon* for chamber ensemble and other [pre-recorded street] sounds (2002), *Compartment 2*, *Car 7* for string trio and vibraphone (2003, originally a dance score), *Ceci n'est pas une ouverture* for orchestra (2007), *Four Hegelian Dances* for organ and two positive organs (2011) and *Dissociative counterpoint disorder* for harpsichord (2014). His quirky humour belies the punctilious compositional fabric of his music, whether that be serious or playful, or both. He can turn from the languorously sensual soundscape of *Chloro...*, with its kinship to Krauze, to much more compact formulations like those of the Four Pieces for string quartet (2013), whose deadpan title is a successor to those of Two Pieces (1982) and Five Pieces (1992). *Ceci n'est pas une ouverture* seems to recapitulate the structure of the Piano Concerto, its opening jollity dispersed in an instant and replaced by sustained sonorities. But the surprise entry of the delicious, not to say frilly third section suggests that this is indeed a fast-slow-fast overture of olden times, before it is itself superseded by a mock-solemn fanfare and a hint of a trio sonata that is in its turn exploded. His mode of utterance is as enigmatic as ever.

Among Szymański's near-contemporaries, Lasoń's expanding series of string quartets includes the broad, seven-movement span of no.5 (2004) and the intimate portrait in music of the Silesian String Quartet—one of the stalwarts of new Polish music since the late 1970s—in no.6 (2005). The unsettled, brittle no.7 (2007) is in stark contrast to the continuous stream of dense orchestration in the retrospective Symphony no.4 'SATJA'. Lasoń looks even further back in *Laetatus sum* for orchestra (2013), a palimpsest on the music of the Polish Baroque composer Gorczycki.

Wielecki's focus, on the other hand, remains in the modern world, not least through his artistic leadership of the 'Warsaw Autumn'. His output still contains traditional elements: Piano Concerto (2009) and orchestral works such as *Czytanie* for small orchestra (2014). Yet, drawing on his experiences as a performer, his compositional approach is instinctively forensic, especially in terms of performance practice, such as keeping a string player's fingers and bowing arm in constant motion, as in the String Quartet (2004). In terms of his musical material, since *Tafla* for orchestra (2002) he has developed a melodic procedure that he calls 'composed-trill technique', further examples of which may be found in the orchestral *Ławice* (2005) and *Hazard and Necessity* for string quartet and electronic media (2006). (There is more than a hint of the sonoristic gene here, and Wielecki is not alone in this.) In *Czytanie*, paralleling Krauze's *Listy*, Wielecki opens out his palette by 'translating' words into music, developing his concept from pieces that he composed in the 1980s and 90s. His openness to non-traditional ideas is supported by works commensurate with the 'Mały Jesień' initiative. *Dolina Suchej Wody* for chamber orchestra (2007) arose from a site-specific project with children in the Tatra Mountains, and among Wielecki's more recent pieces are what he calls 'dramatised forms'—*Model subiektywny* (2012) and *Łagodne kołysanie* (2013)—designed in part for the young performer.

Like Wielecki, Kulenty is driven essentially by non-programmatic compositional challenges underpinned by her formative experiences in Dutch musical life. From her initial 'polyphony of arcs' in the 1980s and 90s she developed 'polyphony of time' in Trumpet Concerto no.2 (2002), from which emerged '*musique surrealistique*', as in the Saxophone Concerto (2015). Kulenty is rather fond of the concerto genre: there have been eight since 2000 as well as *E-motions* for accordion, strings and percussion (2011), her first venture in *musique surrealistique*, and *Viola-Viva* for viola and chamber orchestra (2013). In the Trumpet Concerto, Kulenty combines her polyphony of time with European trance music. The result is a tour-de-force of solo and orchestral virtuosity, a dynamic, variable-speed heterophony whose frenetic and often sequential circularities—a sort of madcap, Escherian scherzo—stood out from the other contenders at the 2003 International Tribune of Composers. (*Not I* for voice, ensemble and electronics (2010) by Zubel and *Canzon de' baci* for voice and orchestra (2012) by Andrzej Kwieciński (b. 1984) were subsequent Polish winners at the Tribune in 2013 and 2014 respectively.) Kulenty also pursues her polyphonies with the reduced line-ups of chamber music. Apart from several string quartets, there are *Rainbow 3* (2003) for wind duet and piano, which doggedly explores three layered overtone spectra, and the effervescent *Preludium, Postludium and Psalm* (2007), written for the TWogether Duo (cello and accordion), just one of the latest in a long line of young ensembles to encourage new Polish writing.

There are many younger Polish composers who also concentrate on instrumental composition, even if opportunities for orchestral performance are fewer than they were. They include Mikołaj Górecki, Joanna Woźny (b.1973), Wojciech Ziemowit Zych (b.1976), Kwieciński and Marcin Stańczyk (b. 1977), and they illustrate the wide stylistic range that now characterises Polish music. (Contemporaries of note who share similar platforms include Maciej Zieliński (b.1971), Aleksander Nowak (b.1979) and Tomasz Opalka (b.1983).)

Górecki, who lives in the United States, is the most conservative of this sample of five, although not, for instance, by way of an easy-going patter-minimalism or as a clone of his father. From the beginning, his outlook was darkly expressive in an amalgam of the lyrical and the energetic that recalls the spirit of Bacewicz, as in *Overture* for string quartet (2000), or some of his father's keening melodies, such as the first movement of *Concerto Notturmo* for violin and orchestra (2003). While the three-movement *Anamorfozy* for orchestra (2006) develops an edgy intensity and confirms Górecki's ability to shape a musical narrative, *Nocturne* for orchestra (2011), dedicated to his father on the first anniversary of his death, is unashamedly plush.

The difference with the music and stance of Woźny, who studied with Beat Ferrer in Graz, where she is still based, could hardly be starker. Her focus on change and transformation is shared by many others, but her realisation of its potential can be very specific. In the gruff *Return* for tenor saxophone and ensemble (2006, rev. 2009), it concerns the nature of repetition in music. In *Loses* for orchestra (2006), the shifting temporal relationships between timbral and motivic layers initially conjure up the spirit of Varèse, only to be refracted and dispersed into a void. If an expressive interpretation is to be dared in Woźny's abstracted world, it may be found in her titles: *break off* (2009), *disintegrated* (2010), *divided* (2011), *lost motion* (2012), *suspended* (2013), *brown, fizzled out* (2013/14) or the Beckettian *some remains* (2014). In some of the chamber works, like *kahles Astwerk* (Bare Branches) for voice, flute, violin and cello (2007/8), with its Japanese-inspired brevity and gestures, she presents a more intimate face. Woźny's attention is habitually drawn to minutiae from which larger ideas may develop. This is carried out to dramatic effect in *as in a mirror, darkly* for ensemble (2010, rev. 2013), which takes as its deconstructive cue the dust particles or scratches on film or glass and whose musical counterparts become entities in their own right, to be explored in a sort of suspended animation.

Zych also presents challenges to his listeners, not all of them musical. Although his formative influences include composers such as Grisey, Kurtág, Lachenmann, Ligeti and Sciarrino (non-Polish teachers and musical inspirations are frequent among this generation), Zych is even more indebted to non-musical sources and especially to philosophers—Schopenhauer (*Poruszenia woli* for orchestra, 2005-6), Derrida (*Différance* for two pianos and percussion, 2007-10) and Levinas (Symphony no.3, 2011-13). Unlike the other four in this sample group, he is based in Poland (Kraków) and is noted for sequestering himself away from anything that might trivialise his creative life. There is more than a suggestion of Lutosławski in this discipline and, indeed, in his mastery of abstract musical argument (the Bass Clarinet Concerto, 2003, makes for an interesting comparison with Lutosławski's Cello Concerto). Not unlike Woźny, Zych often takes a simple, small idea and then sees where it leads him. Sometimes this can be an opening pitch, as in *SOLILOKWIUM I 'Boiling-Hot Mind'* for chamber ensemble (1999), the Bass Clarinet Concerto or *Différance*, whose 90 minutes of deliberation, inspired by three words (' 'active' moving discord') extracted from Derrida's famous 1968 essay of the same name, constitutes Zych's most ambitious work. From his early years, Zych has shown a pensive and penetrating approach to his musical material which, as in Symphony no.1 for 20

players, is often brutal, turbulent and never neatly compartmentalised. Not for Zych the simple psychological structural contrast of 'Hésitant-Direct', rather 'Explosante-fixe'. His music evinces a determined confidence, but it is not always conflicted or violent: *The Friends of Kasper Hauser* for chamber ensemble (2004) consists of six crisp miniatures, now disjointed, now directional, like slightly deranged pen-portraits. Zych has also explored spatial composition, recently with *Symphony no.3* (2011-13) and *Roundflow/Throughflow/Outflow* for eight spatially amplified cellos (2014), whose trilling motives swirl and eddy in a manner not dissimilar from computer-controlled diffusion but which are fundamentally enhanced by the physicality of live performance.

The youngest of these five introduces a different expressive dimension, that of fragility. Despite toying in his teens with alternative media, as in *Play with me, please...* for five mobile phones (2002) and *joinT4* for rock ensemble (2003), Kwieciński soon opted for classical acoustic ensembles. His music combines post-sonoristic and motoric textures that move from the diaphanous to the closely woven, as in the first of two string quintets (*Umbræ*, 2004), which presses forward in a tone of nervous anxiety, or the spare, dislocated and frantic, as in the second (*mural*, 2008-10), inspired by the multi-angled perspectives of William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. There is also a Dutch dimension (he studied and still lives in The Hague) and a fascination with the distant musical past (he earlier studied Baroque singing), not least with the structural principles of the passacaglia. Kwieciński not only draws sustenance from the spectralists (again) but also from his contacts with Kyriakides, Kulenty, Padding and others, yet he distils these several sources (not to mention links with Polish composers such as Szymański and Mykietyń) into a distinct, personal and ascetic language. Even more significantly, his outlook has been shaped by non-musical influences, as in *mural*, and perhaps surprisingly, given his love of precision, by the drip paintings by Jackson Pollock (*no.27 1950* for ensemble, 2006; *no.32 1950* for violin and chamber orchestra, 2007). He often revisits his musical subject matter, as in the attenuated *Luci nella notte I-IV* for different ensembles (2003-12), where Gesualdo and Buxtehude pass like ghosts through the texture. Repeated motivic ideas and phrasal paragraphs also form an integral part of Kwieciński's palette, both in works that incorporate his vocal background, such as *Canzon de' baci* and *non si può fuggire* for voice, piano (8 hands) and vibraphone (2014), whose kaleidoscope of gestures drily mocks the conventions of early opera, and in the purely instrumental pieces. The more dynamic side to Kwieciński's musical personality is evident in the post-Stravinskian *Concerto. D Major* for harpsichord and orchestra (2013, rev. 2014), with its extended techniques echoing Serocki's *Swinging Music*, and in the Rameau-referencing *Contregambilles* for string quartet (2014).

Stańczyk's output is also referential, with the paintings of Strzemiński, who so shaped the music of his teacher Krauze, being the strongest draw. He has made several forays into opera, notably *Solarize* (2014) as part of Project 'P', and other non-concert genres, of which the 'interactive musical sculpture' *Tajemnica Chopina* (2010), with its dark percussive remnants of seven dismantled preludes from op.28, is among the most striking of all the Polish bicentenary offerings. The kernel of his work is instrumental, often partnered with electronics and requiring extended

techniques and vocal versatility from the players. The soundworld ranges from the spectral and whimsical, as in *Geysir-Grisey* for ensemble (2006) to the exuberantly minimalist, as in *woven music* for orchestra (2013), inspired by the textile machinery that once dominated the commerce of his native city, Łódź. The central ground is occupied by virtuosic works that owe much to Stańczyk's take on Strzemiński's art. It has been the musical potential in Strzemiński's use of afterimages in his solaristic paintings that has made an impact, hence not only Stańczyk's use of the term (*Three afterimages* for double bass, 2008) but also the more recent series of *Aftersounds* (2013-). Characteristically, he refracts his source material, sometimes by means of a background programme (the elusive scherzo that is *Nibiru - La rivoluzione della terra sconosciuta* for chamber ensemble, 2009) or distorts it (the sinister exploration of memory loss in *Analessi Rotte* for cello, two voices and trombone, 2009), or confronts it with the pace of modern-day life, as in the deceptively titled orchestral *Sighs* (2008-10, rev. 2012) and *Mosaïque* for cello and live electronics (2012). He has also, perhaps surprisingly, thrown the sonic responsibility to the performer and the audience in *Possible Music* (2012, rev. 2015), whose simple instructions, even though they advise using his own music as a benchmark, are but a distant echo of the texted compositions of half a century ago.

ⁱ Andrzej Chłopecki, 'Socrealistyczny Penderecki', *Gazeta Wyborcza* (12-13 Oct. 2002); see also Nicholas Reyland, 'Warsaw Autumn 2002', *Tempo* 57/223 (January 2003), pp. 76-8.

ⁱⁱ Adrian Thomas, note in CD booklet, Nonesuch 104380-2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Zygmunt Krauze, note in programme book of 53rd 'Warsaw Autumn' (Warsaw: ZKP, 2010), p. 45.

^{iv} Alex Ross, 'Drowned Sounds', *The New Yorker* (3 March 2014).