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## CHOPIN IN THE WRITINGS AND MUSIC OF 20TH-CENTURY POLISH COMPOSERS

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*Abstract.* Many volumes have already been written about the Polishness of Chopin's music and about his influence on composers of various nationalities active in the Romantic and later periods. In this text the author looks at how Chopin was viewed by 20th-century Polish composers regarding two aspects: 1) how they interpreted his music in the context of its links to Polishness and 2) whether and how they took on his musical concepts in their own oeuvres. This will allow to shed some light on the reception and resonance (to use the terminology of Mieczysław Tomaszewski, a distinguished expert on Chopin and 20th-century Polish music) of the figure and music of Chopin in Polish music of the previous century. There will be examined an extremely patriotic public speech given by Paderewski in 1910, as well as Szymanowski's opinions from the 1920s. Moreover, the politically driven celebrations of Chopin Year in 1949 will be recalled. The special attention will be put on the musical genres associated with Chopin: preludes, mazurkas, etudes, and piano concerto. The author will look for their reinterpretations in the output of 20th-century Polish composers: Szymanowski, Panufnik, Lutosławski, Serocki, Knittel, Mykietyn, or Baculewski. At the end, the question about the legacy of Chopin will try to be answered by recalling opinions of composers active in the 21st-century (Knapik, Zielińska, Wielecki). All the presented views draw the picture which perhaps might be best explained by Stefan Kisielewski's expression: "Chopin is like a magic object with a different reflection in each mirror."

*Keywords:* Polish XX century music, Polish composers on Chopin, Chopin influences on Polish music, Chopin genres in Polish XX century music, Chopin and the Polish composers.

*Chopin is like a magic object with a different reflection in each mirror* (Kisielewski, 1958. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 213–214).

Fryderyk Chopin (1910–1849) is an artist that needs no introduction. A genius whose music belongs to the whole world and at the same time one in which all Poles find an element of the elusive Polish soul. In the period when Chopin lived and worked — mainly as an émigré in Paris — Poland was no longer to be found on the map of Europe: between 1795 and 1918 the country was partitioned among its powerful neighbours: Russia, Prussia and Austria. Chopin's beloved Warsaw was ruled by the Russian tsar's governor. The composer left home in October 1830, a few weeks

before the outbreak of an armed rising against the tsar, which came to be known as the November Uprising. He never returned to Poland and expressed his longing for his homeland in his successive pieces. Many volumes have already been written about the Polishness of Chopin's music and about his influence on composers of various nationalities active in the Romantic and later periods. In this text I would like to look at how Chopin was viewed by 20th-century Polish composers regarding two aspects: 1) how they interpreted his music in the context of its links to Polishness and 2) whether and how they took on his musical concepts in their own oeuvres. My observations will be based, on the one hand, on opinions about Chopin expressed by various composers and collected above all in two important anthologies, *Kompozytorzy polscy o Fryderyku Chopinie. Antologia* [Polish Composers on Chopin. Anthology] (Tomaszewski, 2017) and *Chopinspira* (Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010) and on the other on selected musical works. Consequently, I will try to present a sketch — it will certainly not be a complete and detailed picture — which will shed at least some light on the reception and resonance (to use the terminology of Mieczysław Tomaszewski, a distinguished expert on Chopin and 20th-century Polish music) of the figure and music of Chopin in Polish music of the previous century.

#### 1910 — Paderewski

1910 was the year of the centenary of Chopin's birth. The occasion was marked by, among others, great anniversary celebrations in Lviv, a city which under Austro-Hungarian rule cultivated Polish cultural traditions (co-existing with Ukrainian and Jewish traditions) also in music. Between 22 and 28 October 1910 the Lviv Philharmonic hosted the Chopin Year celebrations and the 1st Congress of Polish Musicians. The most important guest was the eminent pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941). One of the concerts featured the Polish premiere of his *Symphony in B minor "Polonia"*, Op. 24 (1907) and he himself delivered a passionate speech on Chopin's music. It was the quintessence of how Chopin's music was perceived at the time — as national art that was to boost the morale of a nation oppressed for years by the partitioners and to give hope for regaining independence. That is why Paderewski spoke about what Poles felt when listening to works by the great Fryderyk. In this he hit the following note:

Native air blows gently on him [the listener — B.B.-L.], a familiar landscape emerges before his eyes. Under the faint blue of a sorrowful sky — broad plains of his homeland, grey ribbon of the forests, cultivated land, fertile fields, fallows, poor sands... [...].

He [Chopin] is ours and we — his, for in him our entire collective soul is revealed. So let us strengthen our hearts to survive, to endure, let us form our thoughts for brave, just deeds, let us elevate our feelings to faith, strong faith, for a nation with such a great, immortal soul shall not perish... (Paderewski, 1910. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 130, 136).

In his address Paderewski, himself deeply involved in pro-independence actions (in 1918 he became the prime minister of the first government of Poland reborn as a result of the Great War), summed up, in a way, and strongly highlighted such a perception of Chopin's music — as an embodiment of Polish landscapes and the Polish spirit. This thoroughly romantic belief reflected the idea — popular in the partition period — of creating “to cheer people's hearts”, yet as a consequence not only did it considerably limit the interpretation of Chopin's music, but it also led to the emergence of poor-quality, stylistically imitative compositions — mazurkas or polonaises — apparently modelled on the style of this outstanding artist. As Tomaszewski wrote: “The centenary of Chopin's birth — the year 1910 — came at a point of the greatest idolatry of feelings towards him and at the same time the greatest decline of the Chopin thought.” He commented on Paderewski's speech in the following manner: “The great pianist plays here on his Polish listeners' feelings with the highest possible virtuosity, using all possible strings: from the loftiest to the cheapest. [...] This was not a speech about Chopin, but a grand patriotic address to the nation delivered ‘to cheer people's hearts’” (Tomaszewski, 2017).

And although the interpretation of Chopin's music solely in national-patriotic terms was present in Poland also later (particularly under the Nazi occupation during the Second World War), generations of composers active after the regaining of independence in 1918 tried to find in Chopin's oeuvre inspirations free from both excessive, exalted visions of Polishness, and blind imitation of selected elements of his musical style, above all those associated with folk music. A key role in this refreshed view on the role of Chopin in Polish music was played by Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), who often spoke about the significance of his

great predecessor's music — in the context of both its Polishness and the novelty of the musical means used in it. Szymanowski also drew on Chopin's composing legacy also in his own works in a creative and original manner.

#### *Szymanowski*

Szymanowski is a composer who played an extremely important role in Polish music of the first half of the 20th century. Evolving from a fascination with the music of Richard Strauss and Max Reger to interest in impressionism on the one hand, and Orientalism and Scriabin's intense expressionism on the other, after returning to Poland in 1919 he developed a style that was soon termed national: drawing on elements of Polish folklore and at the same time on Chopin's legacy. He spoke many times about Chopin, seeing in his music elements that were often unnoticed or greatly distorted by the 19th-century tradition. In 1923 he wrote:

He [Chopin] was one of the greatest 'revolutionaries' in music, for by demolishing formal and 'spiritual' traditionalism, he paved the way to freedom for it. Yet his unerring instinct and high culture immediately showed him the way to his own steadfast 'discipline'. His vivid imagination drew the main directions and borderlines. It is only in these voluntary fetters that his *metier* developed — beautiful 'craft' of his formal perfection (Szymanowski, 1923. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 178).

This was where he saw the significance of Chopin's music and himself tried to take on this perfection of *metier* in his own oeuvre. In this Szymanowski rejected the perception — still typical of Paderewski — of Chopin as someone who expressed the Polish spirit solely through connections to Polish folk music or "reference to Polish landscapes". On the contrary, he challenged the perception of Chopin's Polishness only in such a narrow, local perspective. He saw it much more broadly. As he wrote:

Fryderyk Chopin is an eternal example of what Polish music can be, and one of the highest symbols of a Europeanised Poland — which loses nothing of its racial distinctiveness, but stands on the highest level of European culture (Szymanowski, 1923. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 179).

Thus, he shifted the emphasis in the perception of Chopin's music in Poland, pointing not only to its link to the Polish land, but also to the perfection of the musical craft itself — and thus to the connection

between Chopin's music and the most exquisite tradition of European music and culture. This corresponds brilliantly to an approach which is probably best expressed in Szymanowski's often quoted statement: "Let Polish music be 'national' but not 'provincial', and let it be 'national' in its racial distinctiveness, but let it head without fear for where its values become human values" (In Janicka-Słysz, 2010, p. 93). In this, as Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz writes:

Presumably, he understood 'race' after H. Taine, a French 19th-century philosopher and theorist of culture, as a set of constant primeval qualities making up the deep layer determining a nation's face and features, also its culture. In the view of the composer of *Słowieńskie*, a musical work is Polish and 'racial', if its composer seeks in his artistic endeavours to originally transform deep, immanent layers of national culture (Janicka-Słysz, 2010, p. 93).

Szymanowski, too, looked for creative inspirations in Polish folk music — mainly that of the Podhale and Kurpie regions — finding in it refreshing sources of "national culture". Hence the presence in his oeuvre of *Kurpie Songs*, *Harnasie* ballet, *String Quartet No. 2* and *Violin Concerto No. 2*, *Symphony No. 4 "Concertante"* as well as *Mazurkas* — a cycle with what is probably the most direct reference to Chopin's achievements.

At this point it is worth stopping to consider the music. Szymanowski was the first Polish composer who drew on Chopin's legacy in an original and creative manner in his own compositions. First, when still a young man, he composed *Preludes* Op. 1 (1899–1900), nine charming miniatures, still quite romantic in their expression. His later references to Chopin undoubtedly included the cycle of virtuosic, fiendishly difficult *12 Etudes* for piano, Op. 33 (1916), which took up Chopin's concept of the concert etude, not only technically demanding, but also very intense, varied in its expression and mood. And finally, the *Mazurkas* Op. 50 (1924–26) — twenty miniature masterpieces modelled on those by Chopin, but invigoratingly fresh and original in sound and structure, mainly thanks to their use of folklore from the Podhale region, brilliantly incorporated into the composer's musical language.

Towards the end of his life Szymanowski added *2 Mazurkas* Op. 62 (1933–1934), closing his entire oeuvre with these two miniatures. We can expand the group of Szymanowski's Chopin inspirations by adding *Symphony No. 4 "Concertante"* Op. 60 for piano

and orchestra (1932), formally closer to the traditional three-movement concerto than to the four-movement symphony. In this case, however, works closer to Szymanowski's heart were not Chopin's piano concertos but later pieces by masters from the 19th and early 20th century (Prokofiev or Bartók), in which the orchestra played the role of an equal partner, revealing the full colour of the instrumental sounds and combinations, including those alluding to folklore.

Preludes, etudes, mazurkas and piano concertos would be the genres which — renewed and filtered through Szymanowski's talent — would continue to be present also in later works by Polish composers. In any case, one can find references to both Chopin and Szymanowski in the oeuvres of many of them.

#### 1949

After years of war and occupation (1939–1945) Poland found itself within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. The cultural policy quickly introduced in Poland by the country's communist government sought to popularise music, addressing it to an uneducated mass audience. This was the spirit of interpretation of music by composers from the past, including Chopin, in whose case links to folklore were emphasised above all. 1949 was to be the year of grand, nationwide celebrations of the centenary of the composer's death, which included a huge campaign of anniversary concerts, lectures and exhibitions, mostly with strongly propagandistic overtones. The composer and pianist Bolesław Woytowicz (1899–1980) tried to explain the whole campaign in the following manner: "Today we want to mobilise these 'cannons hidden among roses', to reveal the beauty of Chopin's oeuvre to the entire Polish nation, to make Chopin's legacy available to those masses who are not only direct recipients but also direct creators of new culture" (Woytowicz, 1949. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 193). It is worth mentioning that the phrase "cannons hidden among roses" quoted by Woytowicz was used with reference to Chopin's music for the first time by Robert Schumann in one of his reviews, but it took on an extraordinary meaning during the Nazi occupation of Poland, when the Germans banned performances of Chopin's compositions within the territory of occupied Poland, introducing severe sanctions for violations of the ban, sanctions including arrest and death (see Naliwajek, 2016).

According to the celebrations of the Chopin Year in 1949, the composer Andrzej Panufnik (1914–1991)

was struck more by the political side of the events, recalling years later:

Even at a Warsaw exhibition commemorating the centenary of Chopin's death, the largest portrait dominating the whole area, was not that of Chopin but of Karl Marx, whose colossally enlarged features dwarfed the interesting documents, manuscripts and photographs illuminating the composer's life. A musicologist friend of mine, Stefan Jarociński, had mounted the exhibition, and I innocently asked him what Marx had to do with Chopin. 'Oh, a very great deal,' Stefan assured me, blinking earnestly. 'The portrait shows us the epoch in which Chopin lived!' Shamelessly the press proclaimed that for the first time in the history of Poland the great genius of Chopin was finally recognised and acknowledged, thanks to our Socialist government (Panufnik, 1987, p. 189).

Yet among the numerous initiatives of the Chopin Year 1949 there were those that are worthy of note. They include a competition for composers, the results of which brought Panufnik 1st prize in the symphonic works category for his *Sinfonia rustica*; the 2nd prize went to Artur Malawski (1904–1957) for *Symphonic Variations*, while the 3rd prize was not awarded. According to the announcement in *Ruch Muzyczny* (1949 no. 9), among works for piano and orchestra no 1st prize was awarded; the 2nd prize went to Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–1969) for her *Piano Concerto* and the 3rd — to Artur Malawski for *Toccata*. There was no 1st and 2nd prize for a piece for piano solo; the 3rd prize went to Tadeusz Szeligowski (1896–1963) for *Sonata*. Awards were also given to Alfred Gradstein (1904–1954) for *Adagio and Scherzo* and *Mazurka*, as well as Irena Garztea (1913–1963) for *Four Portraits*. And while the chamber compositions have fallen into oblivion and Bacewicz's *Piano Concerto* is certainly inferior to her violin pieces, the works by Panufnik and Malawski have become part of the symphonic repertoire, winning favourable reviews from critics and audiences. In Malawski's case, there are no clear references to Chopin's music, while Panufnik's symphony is based on folk melodies from the Kurpie region, combined in an original way with the composer's modern musical language (the composer emphasised that in writing the work with the Chopin Year in mind he felt somewhat obliged to "base the work and the whole idea on folklore"), with delicately dissonant harmonics oscillating between the major and minor modes (e.g. simultaneous use of minor and major thirds in triads, avoidance of



tonal unambiguity). It is undoubtedly one of the most interesting Polish symphonies from the late 1940s.

Panufnik would reveal links to his great romantic predecessor in his oeuvre on many more occasions. In the Chopin Year he wrote one more piece — the *Polish Suite* for soprano and piano. The composition was commissioned by UNESCO and performed during a special concert entitled *Homage to Chopin*, which took place in Paris on 3 October 1949. Panufnik was the only composer invited from Poland, although the programme of the concert also featured a piece by Aleksander Tansman, who had been living in France for 20 years. Other composers whose new works were also performed on the occasion were Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, George Auric and Henri Sauget. Panufnik's piece deserves particular attention — the composer created a cycle of five vocalises drawing on the atmosphere of Polish folk music though without any text. As he noted years later:

Knowing Chopin's life-long love for Polish folk music, I made use of some melodies and rhythms from the region near Warsaw where he was born. I treated the voice as a purely musical instrument without need for text, and wrote five *vocalises* for soprano and piano, *Suita Polska* (Panufnik, 1987, p. 176–177).

A bit like in *Sinfonia rustica*, simple melodic phrases of the soprano acquire an original harmonic piano background in Panufnik's setting. In later years the composer changed the original title to *Hommage à Chopin*, and arranged the work for flute and strings (1966) — and it is in this version that the composition is better known, although it seems that its original version should also become part of the concert repertoire, enchanting as it is with its original sound aura and changing moods of the individual movements. Without a doubt Panufnik remains one of the most important artists in Polish music after 1945, also in terms of finding inspiration in the legacy of Chopin's music in many fields, including film (he was involved in producing film impressions: *Three Studies by Chopin*, dir. Eugeniusz Cękański, 1937 and *Ballad in F minor*, dir. Andrzej Panufnik, 1945). Perhaps it was he who was the most successful in capturing the essence of Chopin's style, described by the composer and music critic Zygmunt Mycielski (1907–1987) in the following manner:

What matters in Chopin's music, it is not the theme of a mazurka, krakowiak or carol in the *Scherzo*, but the atmosphere — a thing more difficult to define

than a four-bar song which we could tap out or compare with a folk song noted down by Oskar Kolberg. The key, the transformation, the source of inspiration — they are the essence of what Chopin created, of what is his creation and invention, and what aspires to be the Polish musical style (Mycielski, 1949. In Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 204).

#### *Piano Concerto*

The year 1949 was marked not only by the Chopin celebrations. In the history of post-war Polish music the date has much darker connotations. It was then that the government introduced the doctrine of socialist realism as one to be observed in art, including music. Socialist realism was officially proclaimed in music in August 1949 during the Congress of Composers and Music Critics in Łagów Lubuski. Following guidelines originating in Moscow, music was to be created with the new, socialist times and a wide audience in mind, and any manifestation of modernisation of the musical language could come against accusations of formalism, which condemned such works to artistic oblivion. This is not the place to discuss in detail what this involved and how it affected Polish music — I have written more on this subject in *Facing a New Reality: Polish Composers in the First Years after 1945* (Bolesławska, 2019). Here I would like to point to the establishment in Łagów of a group of young composers called Group 49. This marked, in fact, the entry onto Poland's music scene of the young generation. The group was made up by the composers Kazimierz Serocki (1922–1981), Tadeusz Baird (1928–1981) and Jan Krenz (1926–2020) — also an excellent conductor — who soon presented their new compositions, including piano concertos. In 1949–52 each of the members of Group 49 presented his own version of the genre — Baird composed his *Piano Concerto* in 1949 (Chopin Year), two years later Serocki showed his *Romantic Concerto* (1950), and in 1952 Krenz conducted a performance of his own *Concertino* for piano and small orchestra. The most interesting and best among these three pieces is the concerto written by Serocki, who was not only an outstanding composer, but also a highly-valued pianist. The very title, *Romantic Concerto*, suggests references to 19th-century music. Traditionally made up of three movements, in each movement the work draws on folk motifs presented in a 20th-century harmonic language. The final rondo with a mazurka theme is a clear reference to the Chopin tradition, although both the lyrical

phrases of the second movement and the energetic first movement fit well with not just with the tradition of the romantic concerto but also piano achievements of Prokofiev or Ravel.

Although Serocki was clearly displeased with the work and later withdrew it from the catalogue of his compositions, it was acclaimed by critics and the composer's biographer, Tadeusz Zieliński, hailed it as "one of the most beautiful piano concertos in Polish music after Chopin" (Zieliński, 1985). Nevertheless, all three concertos were soon forgotten and did not become established in the concert repertoire; their composers made their mark on Polish music largely due to their work after 1956.

In January 1962 Birmingham hosted a performance of *Piano Concerto* by Andrzej Panufnik, who had been living as an émigré in England since 1954. It is undoubtedly a work of high artistic stature, a work in which Panufnik demonstrates his affinity with the Chopin tradition — be it in the second movement, full of subtle, delicately lithic sounds, or in the energetic finale. Yet the piece stood no chance of becoming part of Poland's musical life, because Panufnik's name was proscribed until 1977. It was not until the 1990s and later that Panufnik's *Piano Concerto* found committed performers in Poland: above all Ewa Półożka (who recorded it with the LSO conducted by the composer for Conifer Records in 1991) and Paweł Kowalski.

Thus, in fact, the first piano concerto in Polish music after the Second World War which not only generated great interest, but also drew in a worthy manner on the Chopin tradition was *Piano Concerto* by Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994), composed in 1988. Its premiere and perhaps even more so its first Polish performance at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in September 1988 caused huge excitement, not only because Poland's most important composer tackled a traditional genre associated with Chopin, but also because the performer was to be the outstanding pianist and winner of the 1975 Chopin Competition Krystian Zimerman. Lutosławski, regarded as one of the leaders of the so-called Polish school of composition and author of original technical (controlled aleatory technique) and formal (end-accented form) concepts, indeed revealed a somewhat different face in his piano concerto, combining modernity with the tradition of the genre. He described the piece as follows:

My *Concerto* is a work drawing on the tradition of the so-called great pianism, on the 19th century, on the

oeuvres of Chopin, Liszt and Brahms. These are composers who elevated the piano to heights never known before or since. What is written for the piano today is not of the same calibre as works of those masters. My *Concerto* is a hybrid, as it were. This was my intention: to create such a strange 'marriage' — of my sonic language and the tradition of 19th-century pianism; and this became the *raison d'être* of the piece. It would have been hard for me to extract from the piano things that were completely new, that had never been heard and would have been comparable to the achievements of 19th-century pianism. [...] But although the pianism of my concerto is in many places 19th-century pianism, it obviously has nothing to do with 19th-century music as such (Markowska, 1990, s. 5).

The single-movement *Piano Concerto* is indeed an excellent synthesis of a late 20th-century language and references to traditional pianism (virtuosic elements, reflections of the *brillante* style etc.). Without a doubt it remains one of the most important pieces in Lutosławski's oeuvre and at the same time one of the most important piano concertos in the history of Polish music — in all respects a worthy successor to Chopin's concertos.

The following years brought more Polish works in the genre. The first to mention was *Piano Concerto* by Paweł Szymański (b. 1954), composed in 1994 and called by Elżbieta Szczepańska-Lange "anti-concerto" on account of its programmatic anti-romantic and anti-traditional nature. In her review Szczepańska-Lange noted:

Despite clear relics of the concerto form (supported even by a trace of romantic narrative, Schumannian or Lisztian), it is more of an anti-concerto, a strong but rather inevitable conclusion to the history of the genre in general. No showing off (although fiendish difficulties for the performers), an ascetic orchestral part, 'holes' in the piano texture, strangely disturbing rhythm (almost combo-like at times) emerging as a result. Underactivity. Szymański's hand: dry, wooden tutti sounds, quite a lot of sound patches painted, it would seem, with watercolours and blurred as if someone dripped water on them. From behind all this we hear the composer's derisive chuckle (and his earlier *Miserere*). The drama of the end of some story. Whoever else will want to use the concerto form will find it extremely difficult (or perhaps will not succeed at all). Could it be that Szymanski — always an extraordinarily sensitive barometer of the state of culture — now

wishes to confirm for his part the theory of the end of the form? Deliberately? (Szczepańska-Lange, 1999).

The other concertos of the period were two repetitive-folkloristic works by Wojciech Kilar (1932–2013), composed respectively in 1997 and 2011; as well as probably the most controversial among them: dramatic and grandiloquent *Piano Concerto "Resurrection"* (2001–2002) by Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020). In none of them, however, is the reference to the Chopin tradition so obvious or so brilliantly executed as in the case of Lutosławski's work.

#### *Piano solo works*

While the piano concerto genre is not well represented in 20th-century Polish music, solo genres drawing on the Chopin tradition — including primarily preludes, mazurkas and etudes — were much more frequently tackled. Mazurkas — probably pieces with the strongest associations with Polishness — were composed usually by émigré artists like Aleksander Tansman (1897–1986) and Roman Maciejewski (1910–1998). The latter in particular became famous as a composer of mazurkas, which he wrote throughout his long life. Many of them, in fact, draw more on Szymanowski's output in this field, including the use of folklore from the Podhale region, like in *Mazurka No. 9 Echo of the Tatras*. After returning from the United States to Sweden, in 1987 the composer wrote in a letter to his family: "I have returned to Poland, to composing mazurkas, and I would like to present in them the most complete picture of the Polish soul" (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010: 104). Thus, the Polishness of Chopin's music (including his mazurkas) was clearly felt particularly by émigré composers, as is evidenced also by Andrzej Panufnik's music composed in England (see Bolesławska, 2015).

This sentimental attachment to Chopin, discernible in composers living outside Poland, is perfectly summed up by Krzysztof Knittel (b. 1947), who recalled his stay in the United States on a scholarship in the late 1970s in the following manner:

... spring 1978, already the third month of my stay in the United States on a scholarship, the music library of the Department of Music, State University of New York in Buffalo, I have just begun listening to Harry Partch's opera, fascinated with the unusual colours and scales of the instruments built by him, with the original sound of his ensemble and charm of the musical con-

cept... at some point I notice a Chopin record on the shelf... I put it on straight after listening to Partch's opera... my eyes went wet after the very first notes, three months in the United States were enough for me to feel that strange longing and tender warmth... (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, s. 39).

Soon after that, in 1983, this basically avant-garde composer associated with performance movements wrote his modest yet charming and romanticising *Four Preludes* for piano...

Preludes were written by many other Polish composers as well. In most cases the miniatures were composed in cycles and the biggest number of them is to be found in pre-1956 piano music — they were written by young artists like Kazimierz Serocki (*Suite of Preludes*, 1952), Zygmunt Mycielski (*Six Preludes*, 1954), Roman Palester (1907–1989; *10 Preludes*, 1954), as well as Wojciech Kilar (*Three Preludes*, 1951) and Henryk M. Górecki (1933–2010; *Four Preludes* Op. 1, 1955). Worthy of note among later pieces are those by Krzysztof Meyer (b. 1943; *24 Preludes*, 1977–78), Krzysztof Knittel (*Four Preludes*, 1983), Paweł Łukaszewski (b. 1969; *Two Preludes*, 1989–1992), Paweł Mykietyn (b. 1971; *Four Preludes*, 1992), Paweł Szymański (*Two Preludes*, 1994) or Witold Szalonek (1927–2001; *Three Preludes*, 1996). It should be noted that in the case of these miniatures, characterised by concentrated musical content, all these composers sought inspiration not only in the oeuvre of Chopin, but also those of Bach, Szymanowski or Shostakovich.

The situation is similar in the case of etudes — although there are surprisingly few cycles drawing on Chopin's pieces or Szymanowski's *Etudes* Op. 33 in Polish music from the second half of the 20th century. First and foremost, I should certainly again mention Panufnik and his *Circle of Fifths*, a cycle of twelve studies in the form of variations composed in 1947. Panufnik recalled the writing of the piece in the following manner:

I decided [...] to compose a cycle of twelve studies. Each piece would strongly contrast with the previous one in terms of tempo and dynamics; however, to achieve unity, all were based on the same melodic line, rising and falling like a double wave, with a different key for each study. The first was in C sharp (major-minor), the next in F sharp, a fifth lower; the next in B, again a fifth lower, continuing in this manner, descending a fifth each time. After twelve such descents, the cir-

cle was completed and I arrived back at C sharp having used every key in the scale. For this reason I name the work *Circle of Fifths* (later it was published as *Twelve Miniature Studies*) (Panufnik, 1987, p. 163–164).

He then added in his author's note:

The wish to explore various aspects of pianism was my starting point for the composition of a cycle of short, strongly contrasting pieces - in the form of a Circle of Fifths (as the work was originally entitled when published in Poland). Besides this sequence of related keys, the Studies alternate between turbulence (fast tempi) and meditation (slow tempi).

Each study is interwoven less or more obviously with a double wave-like melodic line in order to achieve unity throughout the whole work. (<https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Andrzej-Panufnik-Twelve-Miniature-Studies/1520> [accessed 20 April 2021])

Thus in the very idea of the work Panufnik drew on both Bach (a circle of fifths) and Chopin (a cycle of virtuosic etudes) — in the case of the latter also by introducing a quasi-folk theme permeating all parts of the cycle. In its original 1947 version the whole opens with a *Prelude in C sharp minor*, followed by *Interlude in F sharp minor*, *Study in B minor*, *Interlude in E minor* etc., until the *Postlude in A flat minor* closing the cycle. However, within the various miniatures the composer treats the minor-major tonality in an ambivalent manner; he uses a musical language that is full of dissonances and “rough” chords, and applies plenty of accidentals. After emigrating to the United Kingdom, Panufnik abandoned key signatures and names of the successive parts, and published the whole work as *Twelve Miniature Studies*, in two volumes containing six studies each. Yet this may not have been a good decision — the best way to listen to the work is to listen to the whole of it, as a combination of a cycle of studies with sophisticated variation form. This aspect was pointed out by Małgorzata Gašiorowska after a performance in 1990 in Warsaw:

Listening to these 12 pieces in the form of variations (this was the subtitle of the composition when it was first performed in 1947 and 1948), we submit ourselves — more than to the unravelling of these speculative complexities of mode — to the operation of another, fundamental idea permeating Panufnik's entire music: the idea of variation. We hear this folk (quasi-folk) theme approached in various ways in the convention of great virtuosic variations (Gašiorowska, 1990).

It is a great pity that the cycle is so little known among pianists, a situation which in Poland was certainly a result of the ban on Panufnik's name imposed by communist censors. In the cycle one can find everything that is important in terms of both excellence of compositional technique and purely pianistic values: technical, virtuosic and interpretative, with regard to the shaping of diverse emotional moods.

A method slightly similar conceptually — that is drawing on both Bach and Chopin — was used over half a century later by Krzysztof Baculewski (b. 1950) in his own cycle of *12 Etudes for Piano* (2006). When asked about his affinity with Chopin, he said: “The form of a cycle of pieces arranged in chromatic order, although not referring to the tonal system, does *a priori* generate associations with him [Chopin] and with similar ideas from the past” (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, 19). Baculewski was referring to Bach, having consciously incorporated into his composition e.g. a quote from Bach's *Prelude in C major*, regarding it as a kind of “forerunner” of such cycles of miniatures — which in his interpretation is a combination of the idea of etudes and preludes.

#### “Grappling” with Chopin

The above overview of themes relating to the impact of Fryderyk Chopin's legacy on the oeuvre of 20th-century Polish composers leads to a conclusion that Chopin's oeuvre has been interpreted in a variety of ways marked by plenty of references and inspirations. There are clear continuations of Chopin genres as well as their modifications and reinterpretations. The Chopin tradition is still very much alive, both in the consciousness and oeuvre of successive generations of Polish composers.

At the end it is worth touching upon the question of Polish composers “grappling” with Chopin's music on account of its function of national symbol so strongly attached to it in Poland. Chopin's works have for years been functioning outside the musical sphere, used as they are during national holidays and celebrations, heard on the radio, television or mobile phones on more or less serious occasions. This provokes a variety of reactions, like in the case of the composer Lidia Zielińska (b. 1953), who admits:

I have a problem with Chopin. [...] When I hear even a single phrase of Chopin, I hear it as a sound sign, a kind of a logo. I involuntarily think that an important



figure must have died or that someone wants to force me to have patriotic feelings (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, s. 72–73).

In statements about Chopin collected by the music theorist Krzysztof Droba to mark the Chopin Year in 2010 (and which include the above quotation) we find similar themes interwoven with a whole range of feelings. Yet the dominant reaction seems to be admiration and emotion, to which artists active at the beginning of the 21st century admit somewhat reluctantly, however. Tadeusz Wielecki (b. 1954) writes openly: “I’m maddened by the fact that I’m moved by Chopin, that is by someone anachronistic. I’m irritated by the fact that I enthuse over Chopin...” (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, s. 60). But Eugeniusz Knapik (b. 1951) admits that a recording of Chopin music he heard accidentally in a car transported him into an unreal dimension, enabling him to “touch immortality” (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, s. 38). He adds, somewhat saddened: “How fu-

tile, in comparison with Chopin, our reality, including musical reality, seems to be” (In Droba, Bolesławska-Lewandowska, & Szczepańska-Lange, 2010, s. 37).

The above themes associated with the presence and reinterpretations of Chopin’s music in the writings and music of Polish composers of the 20th and 21st centuries could be continued for a long time. These reflections point only to selected tropes, definitely worth further studies. It seems, however, that the references presented here already make it possible to close the present reflections with a quotation from which comes the motto of the paper. Thus, as the composer and music critic Stefan Kisielewski (1911–1991) wrote in 1958: “Chopin: although he is exceptionally uniform, from the moment of his death until today everybody has seen in him something different — according to their needs and predilections. [...] Chopin is like a magic object with a different reflection in each mirror” (Kisielewski, 1958. In Tomaszewski, 2017, s. 213–214).

*Translated from Polish by Anna Kijak*

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### **Болеславска (Болеславска-Левандовска) Беата**

#### **Шопен у музичних доробках польських композиторів ХХ ст.**

*Анотація.* Уже написано багато томів про польськість музики Шопена та про його вплив на композиторів різних національностей, що жили і творили в періоди романтизму та пізніших періодів. У цьому тексті авторка розглядає, як Шопена розуміли польські композитори 20-го століття: 1) як вони інтерпретували його музику в контексті її зв'язків з польськістю та 2) чи втілювали вони його музичні концепції у своїх творах і як вони це робили. Це дозволить висвітлити рецепцію та резонанс (за термінологією Мечислава Томашевського, видатного знавця Шопена та польської музики 20-го століття) постаті та музики Шопена в польській музиці попереднього століття. У статті розглянуто надзвичайно патріотичну публічну промову Падеревського 1910 року, а також думки Шимановського 1920-х років. Крім того, нагадано про політично мотивоване святкування Року Шопена в 1949 році. Особливу увагу приділено музичним жанрам, пов'язаним із Шопеном: прелюдіям, мазуркам, етюдом, фортепіанному концерту. Їхнє переосмислення авторка побачила у творчості польських композиторів ХХ століття Шимановського, Пануфніка, Лютославського, Сероцького, Кніттеля, Микетина та Бацулевського. Наприкінці є змога відповісти на питання про спадщину Шопена, засновуючись на думках композиторів, які діяли в ХХІ столітті (Кнапик, Зелінска, Велецький). Усі представлені погляди малюють картину, яку, мабуть, найкраще можна пояснити висловом Стефана Кісілевського: «Шопен схожий на чарівний предмет, що має різне відображення в кожному дзеркалі».

*Ключові слова:* польська музика ХХ століття, польські композитори про Шопена, вплив Шопена на польську музику, жанри Шопена в польській музиці ХХ століття, Шопен і польські композитори.