

OCCUPIED MEMORY:
POLISH COMPOSERS AND GERMAN MUSIC AFTER
THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

The occupation of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union during the Second World War had profoundly negative impacts on Polish cultural life. Although conflict ostensibly ended in 1945, the ensuing four decades of communist rule proved just as devastating. Until now, much of the discourse on Poland has concentrated on the effects and legacy of Communism, while consideration of the ‘German question’ has largely been neglected. Using the composers Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994) and Henryk Górecki (1933–2010) as case studies, this thesis focuses on the web of musical interactions between Germany and Poland in the decades following WWII, tracing how these composers came to terms with the music of their occupiers. The investigation is driven by questions intersecting with issues of memory, aesthetics, and national identity: what were Lutosławski and Górecki’s attitudes toward pre-war German music? Did they have similar responses to post-war German music? How were they able to face these problems against the backdrop of Soviet hegemony? Above all, the fundamental debate over music’s ineffable, abstract qualities persists: to what extent is music (and art in general) able to transcend messy cultural concerns, and remain untainted by political events? In asking these questions, I probe the complex artistic landscape of mid-century Eastern Europe, along with music’s specific role in this process of negotiation.

Both composers responded quite differently to Poland’s cultural landscape after 1945. Lutosławski retreated into abstraction and sought refuge in realms of music deemed absolute, while Górecki, on the other hand, moved in the opposite direction toward a musical style grounded in the here-and-now, and tethered umbilically to concerns of the everyday. Also telling are the similarities between them: a shared love of Bach and Viennese Classicism, a more equivocal relationship with Schoenberg and his followers, and an underlying, deeply wrought humanism.

DECLARATION

I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Given that this project considers the effects of occupation, war, and colonisation in a distant time and place, it is impossible to overlook a similar situation much closer to home. I would like to begin by acknowledging and paying my respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which a majority of the work for this document took place: the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

It is upon their ancestral lands that the University of Sydney is built, and as we consider the knowledge gained and exchanged within these pages, may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Indigenous Custodianship of Australia.

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Notes on the text

The Polish language, while seemingly strange and unfamiliar to Anglophone ears and eyes, is easily broken down with a few pointers. Importantly, a word's stress always falls on its penultimate syllable, and all vowels without diacritics are simple and short. There are two nasal vowels, *ą* and *ę*, which are close to the French 'on' and 'un' respectively, and also the lengthened vowel *ó*, which is like the English 'oo.' Consonants are mostly similar to English, except for *c*, which is soft ('ts'); *j*, which is also soft ('yes'); and *w*, which is the hard 'v.' Our letter *w*, as in 'why' or 'will,' is replaced in Polish by *ł*. Witold Lutosławski could be rendered as "Vee-told Loo-toh-sway-ski," and Henryk Górecki as "Hen-rick Goo-ret-ski."

With regard to certain terminology used throughout, capital-C Communism is used for the concept and doctrine (as with Marxism), while lower-case-c refers to its use as a descriptor (as with communist Poland). Sometimes this differs in quoted extracts, but I have opted to retain the author's original usage where this occurs. Similarly, I use 'post-war' to refer to the period after the Second World War (1945 onward), while 'pre-war' refers to the time of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939).

INTRODUCTION

By the time the Red Army entered Warsaw in January 1945, there was nobody and nothing to liberate, except for stray dogs and rats. A huge desert of rubble remained as a monument to the city which suffered more than any other in the whole war.

- Adam Zamoyski¹

The Second World War and After

As the Second World War drew to a close, Poland was left in ruins. Close to six million citizens, including three million Jews, had been killed as a result of the occupation, war, and Holocaust, amounting to nearly one-fifth of the pre-war population. Entire cities were razed, and even as the German army retreated they destroyed as much in their path as they could. Under Stalin's diplomatic pressure the boundaries of the country lurched westward, displacing millions more. The Polish city Lwów became the Soviet Lviv; the German Breslau became the Polish Wrocław; and later, in honour of Stalin, the city of Katowice became Stalinogród. Without moving, former citizens found themselves exiles in countries no longer their own.²

Along with this physical devastation, Poland sustained immense losses to its cultural and spiritual heritage. While the Poland which emerged on the other side of the war was more "ethnically and religiously homogenous" than it had been for many centuries, it was, as historian Adam Zamoyski points out, anything but a wholly unified society.³ Poor governance, ethnic tensions, mass resettlement, poverty, disease, and lingering anti-Semitism impeded the slow process of recovery, and the population that survived were "a profoundly

¹ Adam Zamoyski, *Poland: A History* (London: HarperPress, 2009), 331.

² In events which would continue to resonate well into the twentieth century, several million ethnic Germans were also expelled from newly Polish territories in the aftermath of the war. Euphemistically referred to as a 'resettlement' or 'population transfer' these expulsions complicate narratives of Polish victimhood, and the resulting issues of responsibility and reparation continue to be points of contention between the two countries. See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memories of Universal Victimhood: The Case of Ethnic German Expellees," *German Politics and Society* 23 (2005): 1–27.

³ Zamoyski, *Poland*, 345.

damaged mass of individuals, many of them reduced to a feral day-to-day existence.”⁴ But this was only the beginning.

Following the ‘free’ election of 1947, where Stalin’s favoured *Blok Demokratyczny* (Democratic Bloc) gained 80% of the vote, and the ‘shotgun wedding’ merger of the main communist parties in 1948 to form the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (Polish United Workers’ Party; hereafter PZPR), Poland’s transition into a Soviet satellite state was all but complete. The early stages of Poland’s newfound life behind the Iron Curtain have by now been substantively documented: the cycles of three- and five-year plans; collectivisation; food shortages and steep production quotas; suppression of the Catholic Church; rapid industrialisation and rampant pollution; and cultural oppression, surveillance, and censorship.⁵ What is less understood, if at all, is the extent to which reflections on wartime experiences were possible in the post-war era. In other words, were there any opportunities to come to terms with the past, while faced with the daily challenges of the Socialist present?

In both Germany (particularly the Federal Republic of Germany, colloquially ‘West Germany’) and later the Soviet Union, such reflection on the past – while still dealing with the present – became a matter of widespread public debate in the decades following the Second World War. In Germany, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (“overcoming/coming to terms with the past”) arose in the late 1950s, as German people struggled to understand, cope with, and move beyond the legacy of the Third Reich. Much later, in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, *glasnost* (“openness” or “publicity”) was invoked as a form of self-assessment. *Glasnost* signalled an increased freedom of speech and political transparency, and was accompanied with admissions of past mismanagements by the Party. Crucially, both these movements were

⁴ Zamoyski, *Poland*, 345.

⁵ See for example Zamoyski, *Poland*, 338–353; Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17–48; and Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–54.

inward-facing: Germans asked of themselves how Hitler and the National Socialist Party had emerged and held sway so compellingly, while the Soviets considered corruption, abuses of power, and the cult of personality within their closed-off government. Poland's own reckoning with Stalinism came in late 1956, in the wake of Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech." But while this Thaw led to a major reassessment of the Soviet influence on Poland, its consequences for Poland's relationship with Germany are less clear.

After the premiere of Henryk Górecki's piece *Scontri* (Collisions) at the 1960 Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, critics were sharply divided by its crushing orchestration and uncompromisingly dissonant idiom, as well as by the aesthetic and political questions raised by such music in communist Poland. Favourable assessments lauded Górecki's timbral innovations, his musical, spatial, and organisational logic, and his place as a true avant-gardist in the Soviet satellite. Detractors found it senselessly noisy, ugly, and repulsive, and downright dangerous if it were to become a model for future compositions.⁶

Of all the responses generated, however, one of the most interesting came from composer-critic Joachim Olkuśnik (1927–2008). He felt that *Scontri* was all-style-no-substance, and griped that "If Górecki aimed to shock the public with *Scontri*, he undoubtedly succeeded." More tellingly, Olkuśnik took issue with the title – a sort-of counterpart to Luigi Nono's 1955 piece *Incontri* (Meetings) – by suggesting that "if the author of this work had just called it, for example, 'The Battle of Grunwald,' he may even have won over the many staunch conservatives who were offended by his techniques."⁷ A foundation of Poland's

⁶ Much of this discussion is drawn from Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," *The Journal of Musicology* 26 (2009): 205–239.

⁷ Quoted in Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 222–223.

national mythology, the Battle of Grunwald was a major conflict in 1410 which saw a decisive Polish victory over the German Teutonic Knights. Even today, almost every single Pole understands the Battle's significance, and nearly all would have travelled at some point to the National Museum in Warsaw to see Jan Matejko's gargantuan depiction of it, a stunningly detailed 10-metre long, 4-metre high canvas.⁸

Olkuśnik's invocation of Grunwald, while perhaps not the majority opinion, suggests a fascinating snapshot of Poland's post-war psyche and musical climate: an avant-garde piece of music, otherwise reprehensible and repulsive in that reviewer's eyes, could be made intelligible by alluding to a national myth. The avant-garde abstraction of *Scontri* could, in other words, be redeemed through an accompanying story, and the "monstrous sounds" similarly heard by another reviewer, Jerzy Waldorff (1910–1999), could be reframed as icons of military violence through a programmatic sleight-of-hand. Despite any difficulty in the musical language itself, a simple change of title could have a potentially enormous effect on the work's reception,⁹ and as Lisa Jakelski observes, the addition of such a nationalistic narrative "had the added advantage of being anti-German."¹⁰

The reference to the Battle of Grunwald (and its subtly anti-German message) by Olkuśnik in a public forum, as late as 1960, is an intriguing entry-point for my study. In a musical climate still recovering from the hangover of easily comprehensible, directly representational socialist realism, this brief account of *Scontri*'s reception highlights how the arts presented an arena in which to mediate the wounds of political history, and how music offered a powerful (if somewhat equivocal) tool to examine the ongoing traces of German

⁸ A more detailed exploration of the Battle of Grunwald – both the conflict and Matejko's painting – and how it came to occupy such a key place in Poland's identity, will form part of Chapter 2.

⁹ Cf. the modification by Krzysztof Penderecki of the title of his piece 8'37" to the more direct *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*.

¹⁰ Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 223.

occupation in post-war Poland. What is certain, nonetheless, is that Górecki never quite followed through with the rather dire predictions of that second critic Waldorff, who in his distrust of avant-garde ethos believed that

he [Górecki] is on a bad path of exploration. If he goes any further down this road, he will perhaps be able to increase the effects of his actions only by putting baskets of dead rats onstage and ordering them to be hurled into the audience during the performance of his next work.¹¹

In the example of *Scontri*'s reception, music's power lies in its potent ability to refract personal, public, and political sentiments through a seemingly abstract medium, where a multiplicity of interpretations can arise as a result. What would it mean if, instead of the Battle of Grunwald, Olkuśnik heard the Warsaw Uprising, where that city was almost destroyed by the Nazis in 1944? Or, perhaps, the failed Kościuszko Uprising of 1794, where Russian victory removed Poland from the map for 123 years?¹² Is he hearing – or wishing to hear – something innate in ‘the music itself,’ or something more personal and subjective? And other than using music, through which media would it be possible to voice such opinions behind the Iron Curtain?

Danielle Fosler-Lussier addresses similar questions in her study *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (2007), where she makes a compelling case for music's powerful capabilities as a referent of post-war cultural and political values. With the rise of the Soviet Union and the United States as opposing superpowers, music was a key battleground between the “competing visions of modernity” that each promoted as a means of differentiation. Fosler-Lussier summarises this as a division between “aestheticist modernism in the West and socialist realism in the East.”¹³ Using Béla Bartók's oeuvre as a lens, Fosler-

¹¹ Quoted in Jakelski, “Górecki's *Scontri*,” 222.

¹² These events were of course not equivalent in socialist Poland – commemorating the Warsaw Uprising carried very different implications to protesting against Russian aggression, for example.

¹³ Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), xi.

Lussier investigates how his reception varied across East and West in the decades following the war, at times cutting against broader socio-political sentiments, at others firmly reinforcing them. Bartók meant very different things to very different stakeholders, and one of the surest signs of his music's ideological malleability was that after 1948, it was condemned in equal measure by Eastern and Western critics. Bartók's music was seen at the time as an outmoded and untenable practice by both groups, but for completely opposite reasons: the Soviets balked at his perceived aestheticism and formalism, while the Western avant-garde regarded him a dead end, especially when compared with Weberian serialism.¹⁴ He was, as Fosler-Lussier writes, "a composer whose music was at once too modern and not modern enough."¹⁵

Fosler-Lussier's study is one of many recent examples which explore how music and music-making were integral to the cultural negotiations following the war, and how this took place between countries and across borders.¹⁶ Similarly, as Jakelski makes clear in a different publication, the "binary logic" characteristic of the era was useful in formulating other social, aesthetic, and political divisions.¹⁷ Yet despite the unique cultural perspectives offered by music and music-making, their role in the relationship between Poland and Germany has largely been overlooked. For example, publications such as Sheldon Anderson's *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc: Polish-East German Relations: 1945–1962* (2001), and Kristin Kopp and Joanna Niżyńska's edited volume *Germany, Poland and Postmemorial Relations: In Search of a Liveable Past* (2012) have begun to explore the complex and contested relationship

¹⁴ For example, the French composer and violinist André Hodeir (1921–2011), a student of Messiaen, wrote in 1961 that Bartók was "composer of the past," since his music still retained reference to conventional consonance and dissonance, and was thus inferior to the "neutral colouring and uniform density" of Webern's. Quoted in Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, 46.

¹⁵ Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, xiii–xv.

¹⁶ Fosler-Lussier's third chapter, "'Bartók Is Ours': The Voice of America and Hungarian Control over Bartók's Legacy," addresses the propaganda battle between American and Hungary over the composer following the severe vetting of his music in Hungarian radio broadcasts and concerts. See Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, 51–71.

¹⁷ Lisa Jakelski, "Witold Lutosławski and the Ethics of Abstraction," *Twentieth-Century Music* 10 (2013): 175.

between Poland and Germany after the Second World War, but music goes almost completely unmentioned in either case.¹⁸ Although both texts illuminate the important ideological, cultural, and historical factors that inform responses to this shared history, perspectives such as those offered by the receptions of Bartók or *Scontri* are missing from their narratives.

Anderson's work centres primarily on diplomatic issues, drawing on archival research to examine the frosty relationship between the Polish and East German (GDR) communist parties. Rather than any supposed Marxist hegemony or camaraderie between two members of the Soviet Bloc, the image that Anderson paints revolves around border squabbles, trade disagreements, and irreconcilable ideological differences. His study's emphasis on bureaucratic issues means that there is little space devoted to art as such – Anderson is a historian and an economist, not a cultural theorist – though he muses that “Given the centuries of conflict between Poles and Germans [...] continued enmity between them was hardly surprising, regardless of their political affiliation.”¹⁹ *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc* can be understood as an expansion of works by Josef Korbel (*Poland Between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy toward Poland, 1919–1933*), and Harald von Riekhoff (*German-Polish Relations, 1918–1933*), which cover similar matters of diplomacy over the course of the Weimar Republic.²⁰ Like Anderson, both Korbel and von Riekhoff explore the strained relationship between the two countries, which precipitated the collapse of Poland's already-precarious liberty in September 1939.

¹⁸ Sheldon R. Anderson, *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc: Polish-East German Relations: 1945–1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Kristin Kopp and Joanna Niżyńska, eds., *Germany, Poland and Postmemorial Relations: In Search of a Liveable Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁹ Anderson, *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc*, 4. Anderson's previous publication, an expansion of his doctoral dissertation, was *A Dollar to Poland is a Dollar to Russia: United States Economic Policy Toward Poland, 1945–1952* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

²⁰ Josef Korbel, *Poland Between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy toward Poland, 1919–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Harald von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations, 1918–1933* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971).

Similarly, musical perspectives are also overlooked by the contributors to *Germany, Poland, and Postmemorial Relations*, despite the editorial focus on reconciliation between memory and identity. Building on the foundations laid by Anderson, Korbel, and von Riekhoff in their studies of diplomacy, *Postmemorial Relations* examines this bilateral dynamic across a wider variety of platforms, ranging from law-making and history-writing to literature, visual arts, and the naming of public places. It also concentrates on a much later period of time, and the “German-Polish memory discourse” is considered only in relation to post-1989 (i.e. post-communist) events. As Kopp and Niżyńska explain, this move is based on “the premise that 1989 constituted a historical divide that shifted memory cultures in both countries,” and is closely tied to the concept of “postmemory,” which they define as a “returning to the past by generations who did not themselves experience it.”²¹ Postmemory – or “post-memory” as it was originally coined by Marianne Hirsch – is the negotiation of others’ memories, and is intrinsically linked with family, community, and culture.²² Kopp, Niżyńska, and their contributors therefore use postmemory as a lens through which to critique the re-establishment of national identity for both nations, and to emphasise the interdependencies between Poland and Germany that emerged in the post-communist period, where the cultural and political issues at stake had changed beyond recognition since the late 1940s.

In Kopp and Niżyńska’s volume, the omission of musical discussion is perhaps the most obvious in instances where it would have had the most to offer, as in Wanda Jarząbek’s

²¹ Kristin Kopp and Joanna Niżyńska, “Introduction: Between Entitlement and Reconciliation: Germany and Poland’s Postmemory after 1989,” in Kopp and Niżyńska, *Postmemorial Relations*, 5, 9.

²² Hirsch first developed her theory of postmemory in relation to Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel/memoir *Maus*. In *Maus*, Spiegelman depicts his father’s experiences as a Polish Jew through the Holocaust, interspersed with a parallel narrative set in the present-day, where Spiegelman gathers his father’s story through interviews and reflects on their relationship. See Marianne Hirsch, “Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory,” *Discourse* 15 (1992–1993): 3–29. Although postmemory is an appealing and powerful interpretive frame, it is unwieldy when applied to music, and of limited relevance to this study since Lutosławski and Górecki’s memories of the war are their own.

historiographic chapter “Shadows of Memory in Polish-German Relations (1989–2005),” which touches on cinematic depictions of Poles and Germans, or Angelika Bammer’s ruminations on memorial attachment in “When Poland was Home: Nostalgic Returns in Grass and Wolf.”²³ A musical perspective would also have provided a strong counterpoint to Przemysław Czapliński’s chapter “Declaring War: Attitudes Toward the Years 1939–1945 in the Literature of the Post-1990s,” which explores the shifting depictions of the German occupation by contemporary Polish authors.²⁴ Czapliński’s work highlights how certain constructions of the Second World War, such as those loaded with connotations of irrationality, externality, and extraordinariness, prevent productive reflection on its significance. The result, as Czapliński writes, is that “Peace and war are thus separated by a vast gulf that is not subject to any mediation,” something which in turn reinforces the Polish “grand narrative” of innocence and victimhood within mainstream discourse.²⁵ Such a narrative is an unavoidable feature of any study of mid-century Europe – indeed, this thesis perpetuates it to some extent – but it is also problematic in addressing cases where Polish victimhood is blurred, especially in relation to the Holocaust and to the general case of Jews in Poland.²⁶ Czapliński argues that the deconstruction of this narrative, lies, therefore, in an understanding of the years 1939–1945 as a continuation and intensification of latent pre-war tensions, and he supplies the writings of Marek Bieńczyk, Jan Tomasz Gross, and Ida Fink as

²³ Wanda Jarzabek, “Shadows of Memory in Polish-German Relations (1989–2005),” and Angelika Bammer, “When Poland was Home: Nostalgic Returns in Grass and Wolf,” in Kopp and Niżyńska, *Postmemorial Relations*, 25–42; 109–130.

²⁴ Przemysław Czapliński, “Declaring War: Attitudes Toward the Years 1939–1945 in the Literature of the Post-1990s,” in Kopp and Niżyńska, *Postmemorial Relations*, 131–146.

²⁵ Czapliński, “Declaring War,” 135.

²⁶ Some of the more divisive issues in this category are the Jedwabne pogrom, where more than 300 Jews were murdered by the local Polish population of the town of Jedwabne on 10 July 1941; and the Auschwitz Covent Controversy, the debate over Catholic memorial iconography at the Auschwitz-Birkenau site. See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *The Massacre in Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Before, During, After* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs and Columbia University, 2005); Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, eds., *Memory Offended: The Auschwitz Covent Controversy* (New York: Praeger, 1991); and Alison Moore, “Is the Unspeakable Singable? The Ethics of ‘Holocaust’ Representation and the Reception of Górecki’s Symphony No. 3,” *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 8 (2011): 1–17.

affirmative examples. Rather than equating the war with irrationality, as in an “inexplicable natural disaster, [which] can only be endured,” the works of these authors forge a much stronger link between wartime and ‘everyday life,’ allowing the confrontation of uncomfortable truths otherwise effaced by constructions of Polish martyrdom.²⁷ Music’s aptness for the linking that Czapiński advocates lies in its close, often unavoidable ties with the past. Geoffrey Cox, for example, demonstrates that the mythologies of *tabula rasa* (blank slate) or *Stunde Null* (zero hour) espoused by the more polemical figures of the Darmstadt School – who supposed a total break with the past – were precisely myths, and several such figures retained clear links with pre-war musical traditions. Boulez was strongly influenced by pre-war surrealism for works such as *Le soleil des eaux* and *Le marteau sans maître*, and Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* borrowed instrumentation cues from American big band music through its brass writing and use of electric guitar.²⁸ Boulez’s stance would soften much later, however, admitting in 1989 that “history is there of course; it made us what we are.”²⁹

Filling this musical gap in the works of Anderson and Kopp and Niżyńska, research by Jakelski and Joy Calico has explored music’s function in the “cultural diplomacy” between different Cold War players. Jakelski’s work details the role of the Warsaw Autumn Festival as site of negotiation between East and West, and Calico traces the performance history of Schoenberg’s controversial late cantata *A Survivor from Warsaw* in post-war Europe, highlighting its different resonances in East and West Germany, Austria, Norway, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.³⁰ Their work points to the multivalent and often contradictory position of music after the war, as well as the ability of specific works to act as proverbial

²⁷ Czapiński, “Declaring War,” 134, 139.

²⁸ Geoffrey Cox, “A Return to the Future or Forward to the Past?” *Contemporary Music Review* 29 (2010): 257.

²⁹ Quoted in Cox, “A Return to the Future,” 257.

³⁰ Lisa Jakelski, “The Changing Seasons of the Warsaw Autumn: Contemporary Music in Poland, 1960–1990” (PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009), and *Making New Music in Cold War Poland: The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); Joy H. Calico, *Arnold Schoenberg’s A Survivor from Warsaw in Postwar Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

coal-mine canaries, measuring the relative strictness of State policies in different countries.³¹ This study is greatly informed by Jakelski and Calico's research, but takes a slightly different direction in its focus on the composers themselves. It originates from a fundamental question: for Polish composers, was German music (in the broadest sense) able to transcend its cultural baggage accumulated under Nazism, and remain abstracted from the political sphere? Or was it forever tainted through nationalistic, wartime associations? In his poem *Dwie Krople* ("Two Drops"), first published in 1956, the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998) quotes the epic drama *Lilla Weneda* (1839) by one of Poland's great "Three Bards," Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849):

Nie czas żałować róż, gdy płoną lasy

[No time to grieve for roses, when the forests are burning]

It is this grief for roses that the following pages will explore: against the political reality the Soviet era, what time or space was there to contemplate Germany's damage? Using the composers Witold Lutosławski and Henryk Górecki as parallel case studies, I will extract an interpretation of their compositions, writings, and interviews from the late 1950s onward that offers some answers to the questions posed above. In particular, this comparison will be considered alongside the differences between Lutosławski's and Górecki's responses to serialism and dodecaphony. Although the late 50s may themselves seem very 'late' for such an investigation – more than a decade after the war's conclusion – the reasons are largely practical. With the exception of concert works such as the still-popular Concerto for Orchestra (1950–54), Lutosławski's music from the first post-war decade was intended to be functional and utilitarian, and while it offers glimpses into Lutosławski's working methods and foreshadows techniques elaborated upon in later works, the pieces of this time were written mostly to pay the bills. Demarcating between art that is 'serious' and art that is not,

³¹ Calico, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, 1.

Steven Stucky writes that these functional pieces constitute “a separable period in Lutosławski’s creative life.”³² Górecki, on the other hand, was a generation younger, and so compositions before his *Songs of Joy and Rhythm* (1956) are either juvenilia or student works. Furthermore, due to Poland’s socio-political climate under the communist leader Bolesław Bierut, the Thaw of 1956 (explored in more detail below) was the first real opportunity to take stock of recent events, and the first reprieve since the outbreak of war in 1939. Before the Thaw, at least, it seems that the forest fire of Stalinism was too pressing.

As Juliusz Słowacki’s poetic metaphor indicates, this thesis treads across a difficult, nebulous terrain. It is not possible to ascribe any one, universal response to the legacy of German war-time occupation, nor is it possible to isolate this from the concurrent ugliness of Soviet post-war governance. Grief, trauma, and their memorialisation are not linear.³³ Nor are they easily compartmentalised: we cannot conclude, for example, that psychological response X is *uniquely* the result of event Y. If a grief for roses was subsumed by the more pressing forest fire, then evidence of it, if it existed at all, is similarly suppressed. In music this difficulty is compounded even further, since the attribution of hard, objective meaning is notoriously controversial – this perhaps justifies, to some extent, its absence in the works of Anderson and Kopp and Niżyńska.³⁴ It would be risky to claim that a certain melody, chord, form, or orchestration conclusively represented a composer’s feelings toward a country. More

³² Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and his music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 37. Stucky describes Lutosławski’s compositional procedure for some of the songs for solo voice or children’s chorus required by the Polish Radio broadcasters: “Typically the radio would send a text to the composer by messenger and he would dash off a musical setting, sometimes spending as little as half an hour at the task” (p. 42). Of course, while the amount time spent composing is by no means an indicator of musical quality, Lutosławski was largely dismissive of this work, and commonly referred to it as secondary to more “serious” – and private – work. See also Charles Bodman Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, 3rd edition (London: Omnibus Press, 1999), 19.

³³ Maria Cizmiciu, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40–41.

³⁴ The implications and applications of meaning in music, and in particular with regard to ‘absolute’ music, will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3 concerning Witold Lutosławski. For overviews of recent thinking on the subject, see Daniel Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

dangerous still would be to infer that a difference in compositional idiom between any two composers indicated a personal animosity. Leonard Bernstein suggested as much in the very first Young People's Concert by the New York Philharmonic in 1958, when he claimed that "Music is never about anything; music just is." He continued: "if I play you notes, just notes on the piano like that, those notes on the piano don't tell you any ideas. Those notes aren't about burning your finger, or Sputniks, or lampshades, or rockets, or anything."³⁵ But, as Fosler-Lussier points out, there is much more to it than that:

the list of things he [Bernstein] claimed music is *not* reveals a particular kind of anxiety that was characteristic of the cold war era. Bernstein's statement does more than simply demonstrate that Sputnik and rockets were on his mind. The very fact that the conductor found it necessary to disentangle music from these possible referents before a crowd of schoolchildren implies that musical ideas and the icons of cold war culture were already intertwined.³⁶

Taking lead from Fosler-Lussier, the investigation undertaken for this project relies on several different avenues of inquiry, including history, aesthetics, memory, trauma, identity, and politics. Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the current state of English-language scholarship on music of the Polish post-war era, drawing attention to its main trends and characteristics. This section will trace how two key events played significant roles in shaping this field of study: the advent of the New Musicology in Western academia, which shifted musicological discourse from an analysis-based approach to one contingent on socio-cultural issues; and the concurrent collapse of Communism in the late 1980s, which altered access to source materials, personal testimonies, and archival evidence. As I will argue, however, a side-effect of these changes is that the narratives of research then became overwhelmingly political in nature, closing off other possible interpretive frames with their concentration on the reach of the State.

³⁵ Quoted in Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, xi.

³⁶ Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, xi.

Chapter 2 will focus predominantly on historical events, laying the groundwork for Polish-German interactions in the twentieth century. Alongside discussion of the Battle of Grunwald and the Three Partitions, which are significant in the mythologies of both countries, I will also explore the cases of Fryderyk Chopin and Karol Szymanowski, who also experienced difficult relationships with German culture. Both in their lifetimes and afterward, history and politics greatly shaped the receptions of these two composers, and their respective legacies were guided by the competing forces of nationalism, folklore, and statelessness.

Turning to Lutosławski and Górecki, Chapters 3 and 4 will explore their music, writings, and interviews. In a somewhat Freudian fashion, I will consider what these composers say as much as what they leave unsaid, and what is in their music as much as what is not. The dissimilarity between my chosen composers has necessitated quite a different approach for each, and I hope that the reader will persevere when I claim that Lutosławski and Górecki used two very opposite strategies to reach similar artistic goals. For Lutosławski, in Chapter 3, I will use the growing discourse surrounding his artistic abstraction – which is framed by the tensions between narrative, drama, ‘plot,’ and absolute music – as a springboard for a discussion of his work for string orchestra *Musique funèbre* (Funereal Music), completed in 1958. Although a tone-row and dodecaphonic techniques form the backbone of *Musique funèbre*, Lutosławski always denied any similarities with Schoenberg: this section will focus on unpicking this apparent insincerity.

The final chapter will examine Górecki’s Symphony No. 1 (1959) by employing Margarita Mazo’s theory of an “unpredictable past.” Communism’s censorship and falsification of records destabilised the relationship between ‘then’ and ‘now,’ leading some artists in the Soviet sphere to imbue their work with what Mazo calls a “documentary feeling.” This was an attempt to reconnect the present with an authentic past, and was manifested in music by intertextuality, polystylism, and anachronism. This chapter will assess

Górecki's Symphony as belonging to this movement, which helps make sense of oddly out-dated features in the work, such as a harpsichord cadenza. Like Lutosławski, Górecki also appropriated serial techniques, but in a rather different fashion and for different aims.

In the course of this thesis, I am not seeking to uncover some one-to-one correlation between a Polish composer's wartime experiences and their subsequent attitude toward German music. That would be impossible. Rather, I hope to explore the aesthetic, moral, personal, and political issues at play in the post-war era, and consider the wide range of influences which are involved in the creation of artworks. Germany emerges as a significant dimension, but it can never be the whole story.

CHAPTER 1

GRIEF FOR ROSES

In the final analysis, art for the masses might not be art at all, but rather a tinsel product, half propaganda and half pablum.

– Wes Blomster¹

Converging Paths

Writings about Poland's musical climate in the first post-war decades can be organised according to two main criteria: (a) when they were written – that is, before or after the collapse of Communism in the late 80s – and (b) whether they engage with the socio-political issues in the music they discuss. These two factors are broadly related: pre-1989 literature tends to focus on 'the music itself' – Toby Thacker would call these works "studiously apolitical"² – while post-1989 literature is often more socio-cultural in approach. The life-and-work type of composer monograph somewhat straddles this divide, often combining a wider historical survey with a strong analytical component.³ There are several factors behind this correlation between epoch and subject matter, however one of the most significant is simply a case of accessibility. The flow of information across the Iron Curtain was stilted and unsteady, and although musical scores and recordings were able to reach the West relatively unscathed, reliable reports of living conditions, social circumstances, and performance logistics often did not. Furthermore, there were also major disciplinary changes in humanities and the arts, which contributed to this shift toward a more contextually-embedded understanding of music both in Poland and in general.

¹ Wes Blomster, "The Reception of Schoenberg in the German Democratic Republic," *Perspectives of New Music* 21 (1982): 115.

² Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler, 1945–1955* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 1.

³ See, for example, Adrian Thomas, *Górecki* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); or Charles Bodman Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, 3rd edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).

Of the post-1989 research that is concerned with the socio-cultural dimensions of music-making in Poland after the war, much of it is characterised by a ‘top-down’ approach. This trend is possibly the symptom of a field still in its relative infancy: the largest target is typically the first mark. Many studies are dominated by an interest in the systems of governance, political enticement/enforcement strategies (‘carrots or sticks’), and the implementation and implications of socialist realism – *socrealizm* in Polish.⁴ Given the area of study in question, this approach ironically parallels a Marxist conception of culture, with the interaction of politics/economics as the base which shapes and supports music as part of the superstructure.⁵ Nonetheless, questions of the correlation of subject and methodology aside, the primary result of the previous 25 years of investigation is that we have a fairly sound image of the professional lives of composers after 1945, and how they negotiated a complex and variegated political terrain day by day. What we also have, however, is the larger-scale metanarrative that these political manoeuvres were the main – and only – source of ‘external’ influence upon these composers and their work, and that their music responded to this pressure in a variety of ways.⁶ In discussing the “unevenness” in quality of Polish post-war compositions, for instance, Lidia Rappoport-Gelfand writes that the “cause of inadequacies lay in ideological pressure from ‘above.’”⁷ It is not possible to completely move away from this premise, as it is undoubtedly true that at least until 1960 in Poland, nearly all

⁴ Some of the more prominent examples include Lidia Rappoport-Gelfand, *Musical Life in Poland: The Postwar Years, 1945–1977*, trans. Irina Lasoff (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1991); Marina Frolova-Walker, “‘National in Form, Socialist in Content’: Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998): 331–71; Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and David Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2013).

⁵ See Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, revised edition (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 130–143. As Adrian Thomas rightly points out, “The links between political systems and the state of health of their artistic outpourings is a familiar feature of Stalinist thinking,” Thomas, *Polish Music*, 44. Thomas gives the example of jazz music, and in particular bebop, which was seen by both Hitler and Stalin as signs of America’s dangerous and irrepressible degeneracy.

⁶ See Thomas, *Polish Music*, 59–79.

⁷ Rappoport-Gelfand, *Musical Life in Poland*, 38.

music – especially if it was to be performed – faced some kind of political pressure, ranging from stipulations on style and genre to the vetting of venues and musicians.⁸ But here I am more interested in a different kind of pressure: that of the past.

Although communist aesthetic doctrine (‘socialist in content and national in form’) was a major aspect of post-war musical life in Poland, it was not the suffocating ideological blanket apparent from Western narratives about the East.⁹ *Socrealizm* was integral to a wide range of activities, from mass songs for workers’ choirs in rural manufacturing districts to state-sponsored music festivals in cosmopolitan centres. It also supported a darker side, involving artistic censorship, denunciations and the charge of “formalism.” But despite all this, however, its lasting legacy was surprisingly meagre.¹⁰ One of the major causes for this lack of staying power was that in music, at least, the movement had a relatively short life-span. A generally-accepted inauguration was the composers’ conference over 5–8 August 1949 in Łagów, Western Poland. The PZPR was primarily represented by Deputy Minister of Culture and Art, Włodzimierz Sokorski (1908–1999), backed by the prominent Marxist musicologist Zofia Lissa (1908–1980), and it was in that quaint countryside town that *socrealizm*’s tenets of an accessible, egalitarian music for the masses – without the Western qualities of abstraction or avant-gardism – were imposed upon its attendees. These principles, along with several examples of music satisfactorily (and unsatisfactorily) obedient to them

⁸ As late as 1972, Lutosławski faced difficulties in engaging the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich to perform his Cello Concerto at the ISCM festival in Graz, due to Soviet intervention. In 1970, Rostropovich had been an outspoken critic of the Soviet treatment of writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and the Soviet government responded by drastically curtailing his freedom of travel. See Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and his music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 91–95.

⁹ The neighbouring Shostakovich’s well-publicised Party woes are a famous example of this distorted assessment. See Michael Mishra’s chapter on Shostakovich’s reception history in his *A Shostakovich Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 1–26.

¹⁰ Andrzej Panufnik, Witold Lutosławski, and Zbigniew Turski, among others, were among the composers branded as “formalist” in the late 40s and early 50s. As Lisa Jakelski writes, one of formalism’s greatest assets was the flexibility of its definition: pessimism, abstraction, “intellectual speculation,” and even a lack of melody were all symptoms identified by the Moscow-trained musicologist and powerful governmental taste-arbiter Zofia Lissa. See Lisa Jakelski, “Witold Lutosławski and the Ethics of Abstraction,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 10 (2013): 173; and Frolova-Walker, “Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics,” 368.

were discussed and debated by participants, with the affair later chronicled by the journal *Ruch Muzyczny* (Musical Movement). The preface to that particular issue indicated the sensibilities expected of composers: “The contents of works created in the socialist epoch must be free of pessimism, nihilism, catastrophism and escapism. And that is because the socialist epoch brings with it greatness, certainty and joy.”¹¹ The Łagów conference was comparable to a similar event staged eighteen months earlier in Moscow (where Shostakovich and Prokofiev received censure), and can be understood as the culmination of official sentiments developing in Poland since the end of the Second World War.¹² The vehemence of this policy dissipated considerably over the period to follow, however, and only seven years later the death knell of musical *socrealizm* was sounded in October 1956 by the inaugural Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music.¹³

The very existence of the Warsaw Autumn festival is intrinsically connected with the political events of 1956, known as the Polish Thaw. In March of that year, the incumbent Polish communist leader and hardline Stalinist Bolesław Bierut passed away under mysterious circumstances in Moscow, to be replaced in October by the reformist Władysław Gomułka.¹⁴ The ascension of Gomułka sparked hopes for an autonomous Polish government, and a more relaxed cultural environment free from Soviet intrusion. Initially, policies implemented by Poland’s new leader seemed promising of change, including the removal of

¹¹ From *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/14 (October 1949), p. 1, quoted in Thomas, *Polish Music*, 43–44.

¹² In the Soviet Union, such ideals had been circulating since the mid-1920s, and formally coalesced into “socialist realism” in the early 30s. Compare the *Ruch Muzyczny* editorial with the statutes of the 1934 First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers: “Socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.” See Blomster, “The Reception of Schoenberg,” 116.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of the Łagów conference, see Thomas, *Polish Music*, 40–58. In-depth accounts of the festival itself can also be found in Cindy Bylander, “The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, 1956–1961: Its goals, structures, programs, and people” (PhD Diss., The Ohio State University, 1989); and Lisa Jakelski, “The Changing Seasons of the Warsaw Autumn: Contemporary Music in Poland, 1960–1990” (PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009). Bylander traces the origins of the festival to as early as 1954, within a year after Stalin’s death.

¹⁴ Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 47.

Soviet advisers from the Polish Army and Ministry of Internal Affairs, the de-collectivisation of farms, and the lifting of constraints on the independence of the Catholic Church. The establishment of a music festival during this period dedicated to avant-garde music (with a large and ongoing representation from the West) is a strong testament to this cultural shift.¹⁵

The honeymoon was short-lived, however, and hopes for a truly liberated Poland were quickly dashed by Gomułka's insistence on a "Polish road to socialism." Less than a year after he came to power, Gomułka's Thaw 'refroze' with fresh economic concessions made to the Soviet Union, and in some cases public and intellectual repression returned to levels *higher* than during the Stalinist period.¹⁶ Speaking in a radio broadcast in early 1957, Gomułka stated: "Only a socialist Poland can appear on the map of Europe as an independent and sovereign state. The Party is the primary guarantor of this independence, underwritten by the friendship between the Polish and Russian peoples, the guarantor of neighbourly, fraternal Polish-Soviet relations."¹⁷ Lisa Jakelski observes that while "Gomułka may have sought a 'Polish road,' he did not seek to change Poland's ultimate political destination."¹⁸ Even following the refreezing, the Warsaw Autumn remained something of a unique outlier in the Soviet Bloc. It returned annually from 1958, and was seemingly immune to the ideological persecutions faced by practitioners in other cultural spheres such as literature. International observers were incredulous: "Here in a Communist country," wrote the American critic Everett Helm (1913–1999), "technically a satellite in the Soviet orbit, is a festival in which Western music and Western esthetic [*sic*] orientation predominate – where abstract painting and 'radical' music are cultivated as freely as if Warsaw were a suburb of Paris."¹⁹

¹⁵ Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, 101, 116–119.

¹⁶ Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," *The Journal of Musicology* 26 (2009): 208–210.

¹⁷ Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, 121.

¹⁸ Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 208.

¹⁹ Helm was an early champion of Darmstadt, writing in his piece for *The Musical Quarterly* in 1959. Quoted in Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 211.

Throughout the 60s and 70s the festival became a cornerstone of Polish musical life, and its format permitted – even encouraged – composers and musicians to maintain strong ties with the West and its avant-garde community. In both 1959 and 1960, for example, the top prize in the Festival’s Young Composers’ Competition was a funded study trip to Western Europe – a curious decision considering the wider social situation following the refreezing.²⁰ To offer as a reward the possible (and probable) exposure to bourgeois aestheticism and Western ‘formalism’ facilitated by such a trip indicates the somewhat ad-hoc bureaucratic principles of the time. Any possibilities of a return to *socrealizm* in the decades after the Polish Thaw were thus negated within the musical sphere by the opportunities, connections, and mobility offered by the Warsaw Autumn.²¹ Although it was always present to some degree, state interference (in musical matters at least) was kept to a minimum, a situation unique amongst the Soviet Union’s satellites.²²

Another reason for the ongoing obscurity of much of the music produced under *socrealizm*, along with other pan-Soviet iterations, is that the music itself generally inspires little popular or scholarly esteem. Other than infrequent appearances as curios, very few of the works produced under its principles remain in the repertoire – Lutosławski’s Concerto for Orchestra and Paganini Variations are the most visible exceptions. The general assumption, for the most part, is that it is bad music, made worse by being written for the wrong reasons. Steven Stucky’s pronouncement concerning Lutosławski’s output in the decade immediately following the Second World War – which mainly consisted of folk-tinged quasi-*Gebrauchsmusik* children’s tunes, incidental music for radio, and mass songs – is characteristic of prevailing attitudes: “It would be a mistake to take too seriously the

²⁰ Jakelski, “Górecki’s *Scontri*,” 229.

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of this “mobility,” see Jakelski, “Pushing Boundaries: Mobility at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music,” *East European Politics and Societies* 29 (2015): 189–211.

²² Stucky, *Lutosławski*, 62.

functional music by which Lutosławski supported himself and his family from the war's end until about 1960, for clearly he himself did not take these works to be serious artistic statements."²³ This rationale – reinforced by Lutosławski's own comments – is a reasonable rubric in itself, but also one which potentially over-privileges the composer's personal intent. Over the course of the study I take a slightly different view, by regarding my chosen composers as highly knowledgeable observers of their music – voices who hold opinions worth listening to – but ultimately not as the definitive interpreting authorities. Michael Klein articulates such a stance in his hermeneutic/intertextual analysis of Lutosławski's Symphony No. 4 (1992), when he states that "I view his interpretations as neither authoritative nor transcendental but as open to agreement, refutation, counterargument, misunderstanding, or outright denial."²⁴ The composer's thoughts are certainly valid, in other words, but they can also be disagreed with.

Nonetheless, in spite of the other possibilities for research into the music-making of a country across four decades, scholars have generally kept their gaze trained upon the manoeuvres of the communist administration in post-war Poland. The reasons for the ongoing vogue for this line of governmental inquiry can be traced to two major factors – or rather, two *events* – which stem from roughly the same period of the late 80s and early 90s.

The New Musicology, and the Collapse of Communism

The first event responsible for the current directions of Polish music research is linked to the disciplinary changes brought about by the New Musicology. Heeding the calls of Kerman, Kramer, McClary, and others for the study of music as an artefact contingent on its cultural,

²³ Stucky, *Lutosławski*, 38. See also the reception of Shostakovich's cantata *Song of the Forests* (1949), which has been roundly criticised and ridiculed for its political subservience and apparent naivety. Pauline Fairclough, "Slava! The 'official compositions,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 268–276.

²⁴ Michael Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 112.

political, and geographical situations, and *not* as a succession of sounds in time or notes on a page, scholars were (and still are) drawn to the organisation of society under Communism, and to the place and production of art in this context. Jaroslaw Szurek, in his article “Subversive Sounds: Music and Censorship in Communist Poland,” exemplifies this approach, and his sentiments are echoed by many other authors:

There are times when culture is so deeply influenced by the surrounding political circumstances that it is impossible to analyse and judge works of art, music, and literature without taking into account all of the external factors that predetermine their creation and reception. The decade following the end of the Second World War in Poland is undoubtedly one such period, with artistic, social, and political forces closely intertwined and cultural life directly shaped and controlled by the Communist government.

One instrument of control was particularly useful in the regime’s attempts to limit and use artistic creation for its own purposes: the doctrine of socialist realism, the principles and guidelines of which were enforced by the institution of political censorship.²⁵

Around the same time that the New Musicology was gaining traction in academia, the impending implosion of Communism captivated the popular attention and imagination of the West. Largely shut off since the Second World War, the inner workings of the Soviet machine always held a fascination for outsiders, and the revolutionary events of the late 80s channelled this steady interest into near-hysteria. As the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, avenues of inquiry that were previously unavailable suddenly became a concrete reality. ‘Recently discovered...’ is commonly seen in publications of the period (and continues even now), as letters, official documents, verbal testimony, and other sources become freshly and more widely accessible. Kopp and Niżyńska name “the opening of archives, the establishment of an independent mass media, and the rapid increase in book translations,” as the major factors behind the widespread changes to the discipline.²⁶ As international and academic debate expanded in response, these changes gradually coalesced to shift the prevailing scholarly

²⁵ Jaroslaw Szurek, “Subversive Sounds: Music and Censorship in Communist Poland,” *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 11 (2008): 143.

²⁶ Kopp and Niżyńska, “Between Entitlement and Reconciliation,” 4.

discourse beyond the quasi-analytical approach prevailing in publications such as Stefan Jarocinski's "Polish Music after World War II" (1965).²⁷ Given this new availability of information, it is only natural then that scholars cast their eye toward the governing bodies, examining the systems behind the people which drove Polish music-making since 1945.

A highlight from this archive-based research movement is Adrian Thomas's "File 750: Composers, Politics, and the Festival of Polish Music (1951)" from 2002, concerning the funding process for works to be written for the aforementioned festival, and the correspondence between several notable composers, including Lutosławski and Andrzej Panufnik (1914–1991), and the *Związek Kompozytorów Polskich* (Polish Composers' Union; hereafter ZKP).²⁸ Thomas's research in the titular "File 750" in Warsaw's Archives of Modern Records – which comprises mainly of the funding requests and rationales for submission – presents a highly personal and at times moving snapshot of the professional lives of several mid-century Polish composers. Even more interesting, however, is the image presented of the ZKP: the Union appears as nuanced, ideologically relaxed, and even generous with its funds, which Thomas describes as a "hands-off largess." Other additions to this literature include Nicholas Reyland's article "Lutosławski, 'Akcja,' and the Poetics of Musical Plot" (2007), which illuminates the composer's little-understood concept of musical *akcja* ("action," or "plot") through a series of unknown/forgotten lecture manuscripts discovered in the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel; Jakelski's already-mentioned 2009 article "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," which uses extensive archival research to track the professional furore over the premiere of Górecki's piece, and the subsequent aesthetic debate which raged across the ZKP general assembly and *Ruch*

²⁷ Stefan Jarocinski, "Polish Music after World War II," *The Musical Quarterly* 51 (1965): 244–258.

²⁸ Adrian Thomas, "File 750: Composers, Politics, and the Festival of Polish Music (1951)," *Polish Music Journal* 5 (2002), accessed 14 March 2016, http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issue/5.1.02/thomasfile.html.

Muzyczny; and David Tompkins's comprehensive book *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (2013), a publication particularly enlightening through its comparisons between the two neighbouring states, and its exploration of the political issues at stake in the establishment of a socialist realist programme for art and culture.²⁹

Beyond Politics

In recent years, this 'top-down' focus has begun to shift due to the emergence of a growing body of literature that explores a 'bottom-up' approach to political engagement, or addresses other facets of artistic creation in the post-war milieu. Most of these studies are centred on countries that experienced totalitarian rule in the twentieth century. However, with the significant exception of Jakelski, few scholars have set their sights explicitly on the music of Poland. Jakelski's 2017 publication *Making New Music in Cold War Poland: The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* is a detailed account of the Festival's role as a mediator for a large cross-section of cultural actors on either side of the Cold War divide, and is the culmination of more than a decade of research into Polish music-making.³⁰ Through close consideration of the Festival's founding, funding, year-to-year curation, performance logistics, public and Party reception, international connections, and its function as an arena for cultural diplomacy and soft power, Jakelski examines the literal and metaphorical "mobility" that it facilitated in the late 50s and 60s. It was this mobility, Jakelski argues, that was an essential factor in the negotiation of Poland's post-war cultural identity, and it both reified and problematised the country's geopolitical position as caught between East and

²⁹ Nicholas Reyland, "Lutosławski, 'Akcja,' and the Poetics of Musical Plot," *Music and Letters* 88 (2007): 604–631; Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 205–239; David Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2013).

³⁰ Lisa Jakelski, *Making New Music in Cold War Poland: The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

West. For example, while the Festival was largely successful at promoting “cross-border cultural ties” that “obscured nation-state boundaries, destabilised presumptive hierarchies of value within the Eastern Bloc, and mitigated Cold War divisions,” it also tacitly reinforced certain geopolitical demarcations, as through the behind-the-scenes placement of required quotas of “socialist” or “capitalist” music, or the strict tracking and rotating system of programming for representatives of each socialist Eastern European state.³¹

Jakelski’s research joins several other publications – all of which, bar one, date from the last 10 years – in which political circumstances form the background to the investigation, rather than its explicit focus. Mark Slobin’s edited collection *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe* (1996) was one of the first English-language studies to address the musical landscape of the former Eastern Bloc, and Slobin identifies three recurring issues – modernity, identity, and continuity – that link the volume’s contributors in their investigations of these vastly differing (yet geographically close) cultures.³² But despite the range of insightful and eclectic perspectives offered in *Retuning Culture*, from Michael Beckerman’s exploration of the ambivalent role of folk music in communist Czechoslovakia, to Donna A. Buchanan’s interface between wedding musicians and social identity in Bulgaria or Barbara Rose Lange’s survey of *lakodalmas* rock (rural popular music played on modern electric instruments) in post-communist Hungary, Poland’s representation in the volume is remarkably meagre. Anna Czekanowska’s “Continuity and Change in Eastern and Central European Traditional Music” measures seven pages amongst *Retuning Culture*’s 270+, and contributes little more than a generalised contemplation of the instances in which Poland’s folk culture has indeed experienced both change and continuity in the twentieth century.³³

³¹ Jakelski, *Making New Music*, 8; Jakelski, “Pushing Boundaries,” 194–195.

³² Mark Slobin, ed., *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

³³ Anna Czekanowska, “Continuity and Change in Eastern and Central European Traditional Music,” in *Retuning Culture*, 92–98.

A path forward is opened by the somewhat analogous case of Hungary, whose music was the subject of two significant volumes from 2007: Rachel Beckles Willson's *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, and Fosler-Lussier's already mentioned *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture*.³⁴ Beckles Willson's book is a twin study of the composers György Ligeti (1923–2006) and György Kurtág (1926–) which paints a complex portrait of the competing demands faced in Hungarian post-war life, such as the evaluation of the differing legacies of Bartók and Kodály. The divergences, and more strikingly, the parallels, between Ligeti and Kurtág are grounded in issues of displacement, exile, and shared cultural heritage – Ligeti fled to the West in 1956, but remained closely connected with Hungarian musicians, while Kurtág stayed – and Beckles Willson also makes revealing observations through her comparisons between music and (Hungarian) language. On the other hand, Fosler-Lussier's survey takes a very different perspective. As mentioned previously, *Music Divided* is not really about Bartók at all, but rather a study into how his posthumous reception served as the focal point of the aesthetic debates between East and West after the war. Fosler-Lussier's choice of Bartók over, for example, Stravinsky – in whose reception similar issues are played out – is largely motivated by the biographical accident of his death in September 1945: unlike Stravinsky, Bartók could exert no personal influence on his post-war reception, nor refigure his style in response to socio-historical developments. Bartók's case is also highly instructive since, at a time when composers' entire oeuvres were often tarred with the same brush, his music was sharply divided between pieces officially praised and those officially criticised. Fosler-Lussier demonstrates that tracing the

³⁴ Rachel Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

changing nature of this distinction (and its justification by critics) reveals a great deal about the cultural values at play during the early Cold War.³⁵

Other publications include Toby Thacker's *Music after Hitler, 1945–1955* (2007), which explores the rebuilding and evolution of German music after the war; Peter Schmelz's endlessly fascinating *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (2009), an account of Soviet Russia's musical grey market – criticised and unrecognised, but not officially illegal – primarily based on oral testimonies of participants; and Eckehard Pistrick's study of displacement and diaspora, *Performing Nostalgia: Migration Culture and Creativity in South Albania* (2015).³⁶ In addition to these sources, another publication that strongly influenced this study is Maria Cizmic's *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (2012), a hermeneutic consideration of how trauma, loss, and memorialisation appear in and relate to the music of Alfred Schnittke, Galina Ustvolskaya, Arvo Pärt, and Henryk Górecki, even if this was not the composers' direct musical intent.³⁷ Using a methodology mixed from sociology, psychology, musical analysis, and cultural studies, Cizmic devotes one chapter to each composer, and offers a focused essay on a singular issue related to their work. For Alfred Schnittke, Cizmic links manifestations of disruption, non-linearity, collage, and fragmentation in his Concerto for Piano and Strings (1979) with a musical representation of trauma: the subversion and 'failure' of tonal references in Schnittke's polystylism, for example, mirrors the "breakdown of linear narrative frequently ascribed to the effects of trauma."³⁸ The second chapter, on Galina Ustvolskaya's Piano Sonata No. 6 (1988), probes the correlation between the physical discomfort in

³⁵ Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided*, xiv.

³⁶ Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler, 1945–1955* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Peter J Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Eckehard Pistrick, *Performing Nostalgia: Migration Culture and Creativity in South Albania* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).

³⁷ Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Cizmic notes that of her chosen composers, only Górecki's piece – his Third Symphony – "intentionally began life as a response to historical traumas" (p. 10).

³⁸ Cizmic, *Performing Pain*, 27.

performing the work – involving the continuous repetition of painful hammering gestures to play clusters with the fists, palms, and forearms (generally at four or five *forte* markings) – and the physical pain of Soviet cultural trauma. While some of her contentions are problematic (what does this mean for other performatively-challenging music, such as that of Morton Feldman or the New Complexity school?), Cizmic’s embodied consideration of musical performance presents an intriguing perspective into the possible representations of trauma.³⁹ In a different vein, Cizmic’s third chapter addresses the use of Arvo Pärt’s *Tabula Rasa* (1977) in the Georgian director Tengiz Abuladze’s 1984 film *Repentance*. Exploring the intersection between sound and image, Cizmic understands Pärt’s *Tabula Rasa* as a form of testimony, partaking in a dialogue of shared emotion with the onscreen action. In turn, “*Repentance* provides a pertinent context in order to understand some of the dynamics involved in Pärt’s compositional style.”⁴⁰ Her final chapter, centred on Górecki’s Third Symphony, examines the thorny issues of Holocaust representation and the work’s symbolism as an expression of human suffering, as well as the ethical implications of its phenomenal commercial success.

Although I do not agree with all of Cizmic’s assertions, *Performing Pain* is an insightful volume that has provided much as a model for my own work, particularly through the modular nature of her chapter structure. Despite each case study operating independently, with their own unique frameworks and goals, they are all united by the same fundamental concerns. Likewise, since Cizmic’s examples are drawn from the late 70s and 80s, her work opens up the possibility of a similar investigation – dealing with music’s capability and potential to “bear witness” to traumatic events – applied to a slightly earlier period of Eastern

³⁹ In her introduction, Cizmic lists other documented situations of overlap between music and trauma: “music created during a traumatic event, as with music making in the Nazi concentration camps; music that causes pain, as with the use of music in torture; music making effected by a traumatic event, as in the wake of 9/11; and formal musical features that metaphorically demonstrate the effects of trauma.” See Cizmic, *Performing Pain*, 10.

⁴⁰ Cizmic, *Performing Pain*, 28.

Europe's volatile history. In construction and objective, therefore, if not actual content and execution, my study and *Performing Pain* share much in common.

A Word on German Music

When confronting the legacy of German music in the mid-twentieth century, a myriad of associations are invoked. Space does not permit an exhaustive examination of each and every connotation of this repertoire, but in concluding this chapter I would like to address some issues with great bearing on this project as a whole. For more than two hundred years, Germany (along with Austria) has been the seat of Western Art Music, the centre against which the musics of Italy, France, and Russia are othered.⁴¹ We are reminded of this every day through our concert halls, radio broadcasts, CD releases, and the Three B's – Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms.⁴² As Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter write, “the words ‘German’ and ‘music’ merge so easily into a single concept that their connection is hardly ever questioned.”⁴³ But despite this synonymy, it would be very wrong to consider ‘German Music’ as a homogenous mass, all governed by the same principles and measured by the same criteria. The contrasting reception of the Second Viennese School compared with that of the ‘First’ (i.e. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) is an obvious example, and in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, distinctions such as these were further complicated by attributions of political allegiance. In a period when attitudes toward composers were commonly bifurcated between music and ‘man’ (as in Arturo Toscanini’s apocryphal quip

⁴¹ For a characteristically acerbic account of Russia’s position, see Richard Taruskin’s “Others: A Mythology and a Demurrer (By Way of Preface),” the introduction to his *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi–xxxii.

⁴² It is important to remember that the original third B, the French Berlioz, was jettisoned from the triumvirate by Hans von Bülow in favour of Brahms.

⁴³ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, “Germans as the ‘People of Music’: Genealogy of an Identity,” in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

“For Strauss the composer I take off my hat; for Strauss the man I put it on again”⁴⁴), is a musical response to Arnold Schoenberg based on Schoenberg the “Emancipator of Dissonance,” the Austrian/German, the Jew, the Modernist, the Bourgeois, or the decadent Westerner? Is he a patriot, whose twelve-tone technique of composition would “secure for German music an ascendancy for the next hundred years,”⁴⁵ or a vilified *entartete Künstler* (degenerate artist) exile? And conversely, what is to be made of music predating the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of the French Revolution? As Wes Blomster writes, during the Expressionism debate of the 1930s (carried out predominantly in print by communist émigrés such as Hanns Eisler, Ernst Bloch, and Georg Lukács), a major issue that vexed participants

was the position of the great cultural heritage of the bourgeois world in a post-bourgeois social order. What, for example, would the citizens of this new society find in the work of Mozart, himself both the product and representative of the world which these men hoped to see banished forever?⁴⁶

Pauline Fairclough’s contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to the Symphony* explores how these same issues tangled haphazardly in early Soviet Russia, where a desire for a musically literate proletariat was mediated by the troublesome socio-historical narratives of great Western composers.⁴⁷ In that particular context, Bach, Mozart, and Haydn were read as the turning-points away from a feudal (and Catholic) Europe, and feted as the forerunners of democratic culture. Similarly, Beethoven was positioned as an incontestably revolutionary figure, and one wholly in harmony with Marxist ideology. His pugnacious

⁴⁴ Quoted in Bryan Gilliam, “‘Friede im Innern’: Strauss’s Public and Private Worlds in the Mid 1930s,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 (2004): 565–566. The widespread popularity of this remark reveals as much about the common perception of Toscanini as it does of Strauss. In a similar vein, see Shostakovich’s 1971 letter to his friend Isaak Glikman, where he wrote “Stravinsky the composer I worship. Stravinsky the thinker I despise.” Dmitry Shostakovich, *Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman, 1941–1975, with a Commentary by Isaak Glikman*, trans. Anthony Phillips (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 181.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Applegate and Potter, “Genealogy of an Identity,” 20.

⁴⁶ Blomster, “The Reception of Schoenberg,” 119.

⁴⁷ Pauline Fairclough, “‘Symphonies of the free spirit’: the Austro-German symphony in early Soviet Russia,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, ed. Julian Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 360. Fairclough also quotes a 1929 article in the journal *Proletarskiy muzikant* (Proletarian musician), which suggested that the work of Schubert, Liszt, Schumann, Wagner, Mozart, Rossini, Bizet, Grieg, Chopin, Haydn, Bach and Verdi were suitable for workers’ audiences (p. 361).

disregard of class and fiery commitment to personal freedom were part of his wide appeal, and Fairclough cites incidents such as his refusal to give way to the Imperial family at Teplitz or his rejection of Napoleon as the dedicatee of the Eroica Symphony as endearing him to the Soviet populace. The fact that these composers largely depended on the patronage of rich aristocrats, and were closely tied with the conventions of court music-making (or in Beethoven's case, the free-market music publishing industry) was tactfully ignored. Their status was so assured that even explicitly religious works such as Mozart's Requiem, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and Bach's B Minor Mass were wildly popular in early Soviet Russia.⁴⁸

In post-war Poland, similar debates took place regarding the nature of German music, though the situation was in no way a direct parallel with Russia. Commentators of varying backgrounds were generally wary of the negative influence (and even threat) that contemporary German music posed for Poland's burgeoning Socialist society. But it is unclear whether this was due to Germany's catastrophic instigation of the Second World War, or for the tendency to equate contemporary German music with catch-all Western modernism – a view formulated in response, for example, to the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music. Likely, it was a little bit of both. Added to this mix was a healthy dose of musical nationalism, driven by the desire to assert a uniquely Polish cultural identity throughout the “Polish People's Republic,” one which was unsullied by neighbouring influences. The extent to which this nationalistic attitude, particularly in relation to the arts, was a descendent from the Polish grievances of statelessness resulting from the Partitions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2, but its twentieth-century incarnation was equally impassioned.

⁴⁸ Fairclough, “Symphonies of the free spirit,” 361–366.

Jakelski recounts one such instance of this trifecta of cultural conservatism, political nationalism, and Teutonic distrust by the eminent composer Tadeusz Szeligowski (1896–1963), who addressed the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly in December 1960:

Szeligowski was aghast at the Polish embrace of compositional techniques originating in the Western European avant-garde. The danger of adopting these techniques, he contended, was not simply that Polish music would lose its national identity. By writing music in a Western European style, young Polish composers would also inculcate Western European values, a process Szeligowski envisioned as leading first to “aestheticism,” a chilly elevation of form over content, and finally to barbarity. For Szeligowski, this bleak endpoint was inescapable, considering the source of the Western avant-garde. “The ‘West’ means West Germany and how they compose,” he explained. His resentment stemmed from memories of Nazi occupation: “I fear that country, from which great discrimination flows . . . in the psyche of that nation lies discrimination from the arts to race. We learned that the hard way.” In Szeligowski’s estimation, composers falling under the spell of Darmstadt were failing to heed the brutal lessons of the Second World War.⁴⁹

Szeligowski’s comments, supported by a strong personal conviction, are a minefield of competing beliefs. But despite being built on somewhat shaky ground (“those are not Germans, if one is talking about the summer courses at Darmstadt,” Lutosławski would counter during the Assembly⁵⁰), and perhaps not representative of the dominant opinion, he also demonstrates that the memories of Nazi occupation remained a potent arena of aesthetic debate some fifteen years after the fact.

Questions such as these are of course not new for musicology. They are confronted, directly or tacitly, in any study of Richard Wagner, or Richard Strauss, or James Brown, where good and even great music was produced by artists potentially compromised by non-musical factors.⁵¹ The Second World War condensed and concentrated these issues of guilt by association, as in the case of the mastermind of the Holocaust, Reinhard Heydrich, who

⁴⁹ Jakelski, “The Changing Seasons of the Warsaw Autumn,” 38–39. The ellipses are retained from her text.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Jakelski, “Górecki’s *Scontri*,” 227.

⁵¹ Anti-Semitism, political collaboration, and domestic violence are some such examples that have exerted influence on the reception of these musicians. See Thomas S. Grey, “The Jewish Question,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 203–218; Michael Walter, “Strauss in the Third Reich,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, ed. Charles Youmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 226–241; and Yamma Brown, *Cold Sweat: My Father James Brown and Me* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2014).

was described by the playwright Max Frisch as “a distinguished and very sensitive musician, who could hold forth with spirit and true connoisseurship, even with love, on Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Bruckner.”⁵² Likewise, as George Steiner wrote, “We know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day’s work at Auschwitz in the morning.”⁵³ But this is not the place to rehash these arguments. In order to both focus my argument and to prevent this document from becoming unwieldy, I would like to concentrate on two particular meanings of German music in post-war Poland, and what these meant for Lutosławski and Górecki: the status of the Western Art Music masters such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven; and the post-tonal and serial works of Schoenberg and his followers. In this respect, I adhere somewhat to the *Grossdeutsch* conception of Germany which flourished in the nineteenth century, as I efface (at my own risk) the historic and present-day distinctions between Austria, Saxony, Prussia, or any other cultural shading.⁵⁴ Similarly, I acknowledge that considering Schoenberg as a ‘German’ composer is not without its great problems, given his treatment under the Nazi regime and Jewish background.⁵⁵ But while Schoenberg was certainly not a ‘German’ composer in the same sense that Bach was, for a large portion of his life he was seriously invested in such an identity, suggested by his famous pronouncements about his twelve-tone technique. Despite these issues, the question of dodecaphony is perhaps most revealing as a counterpoint to Lutosławski and Górecki’s responses to eighteenth-century music: in general, what emerges is that they placed extremely high value on Bach’s music, as well as on Viennese Classicism. They were less enamoured, however, with Schoenberg and serialism, even though dodecaphonic techniques played significant roles in their respective compositions.

⁵² Quoted in Cox, “A Return to the Future,” 253.

⁵³ George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays 1958–1966* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 15.

⁵⁴ Applegate and Potter, “Genealogy of an Identity,” 16–17.

⁵⁵ For more information on these tensions, see William Kangas, “The Ethics and Aesthetics of (Self) Representation: Arnold Schoenberg and Jewish Identity,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 45 (2000): 135-170.

Finally, as a whole, the discussions of Lutosławski and Górecki aim to challenge the widespread assumption of a ‘hermetically sealed’ post-war avant-garde practice – one that was socially abstracted and detached. Such a position has resurfaced in a recent book chapter by David Fanning, where he asserts that:

The projects of the 1950s Western avant-garde were seemingly diametrically opposed to Soviet Socialist Realism in stylistic terms, since they were for the most part recklessly adventurist, experimental and hostile to all such received genres as symphony, rather than, as in the USSR, guardedly pusillanimous, conservative and wedded to the past. *But the two traditions were at one in their disengagement from social issues* [emphasis mine].⁵⁶

As my investigations of both composers will demonstrate, Fanning’s binary narrative of Western freedom/experimentalism vs. Soviet restriction/conservatism of this time is deeply inadequate, and Poland’s musical climate always displayed shades of grey.

In Lutosławski’s case, evidence suggests that his commitment to abstraction was socially and politically motivated, as a means of satisfying the authorities without sacrificing his own integrity as a composer. Even at the height of *socrealizm* in Lutosławski’s output, he was always driven by what he perceived as a public need for art. For Górecki, on the other hand, the documentary impulse I understand to be present in his work is the complete opposite of Fanning’s “disengagement,” in that it is indelibly linked with his sense of here-and-now. Górecki’s Symphony No. 1 therefore acts as a historical record – not dissimilar to a photograph or newspaper – which both inscribes and comments upon the reality of his experiences.

More seriously, Fanning’s reading is also deeply teleological, in that he regards the avant-garde explosion of the 50s – the period under discussion here – as merely paving the way for future work. He writes that in Poland, “after the first flurries of excitement had died

⁵⁶ David Fanning, “The symphony since Mahler: national and international trends,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, 119.

down, most composers willingly ditched the modernist baggage for the sake of re-engagement with the symphony.”⁵⁷ The Poland that he calls the “crucible of communicative post-war musical modernism” is an assessment drawn only from much later works, such as Lutosławski’s Second and Third Symphonies (1968 and 1983), and Górecki’s own famous Third Symphony (1976). If anything, the post-war music of Poland described in this study falls in an area between Fanning’s East-vs.-West extremes, and one which is better described by mixing the descriptors he offers. In Lutosławski’s *Musique funèbre* we find, for example, a “recklessly adventurist” idiom which remains “wedded to the past,” while Górecki appropriated the symphonic genre precisely to engage with social issues. But these are merely two examples, and should not be taken as the representative techniques of their respective oeuvres. Fundamentally, Lutosławski and Górecki were concerned with artistic integrity, and the ways in which they sought this ideal were many and varied. Before turning to these composers, however, I will begin first in the fifteenth century, when tensions between Poland and Germany were already starting to simmer.

⁵⁷ Fanning, “Symphony since Mahler,” 123.

CHAPTER 2

A SHARED HISTORY

Jak świat światem / nie będzie Niemiec Polakowi bratem

[As long as the world is whole / no German will be a brother to a Pole]

– Old Polish Saying¹

Polish-German Relations since 1410: The Battle of Grunwald and the Three Partitions

To say Poland and Germany share a complicated past is an understatement. They were uneasy neighbours even during rare harmonious periods, and their historical relationship had an immense importance across what is now Central Europe. The forerunners of these modern states (including Prussia, Habsburg Austria, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) tussled for land and wealth across many centuries, shaping the ethnicity, language, religion, and culture of the lands either side of the Oder and Neisse rivers. The first part of this chapter will briefly outline two crucial points of conflict between Poland and Germany before 1939, selected due to their particular prominence in the myth-making of each country. These are the medieval Battle of Grunwald, a cherished symbol of Polish military valour; and the series of annexations in the eighteenth-century which constituted the Three Partitions of Poland, dark events which eliminated the nation from the map for 123 years. The second half of this chapter will then survey the Polish experience across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, now taking music as the main point of reference. Given the nature of this project and its goals, there is a significant bias toward Poland in each case; it must be stressed, however, that the portrayal of a glorified victimhood is not the intent either.

¹ Quoted in Sheldon Anderson, *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc: Polish-East German Relations: 1945–1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 1.

The Battle of Grunwald

The Battle of Grunwald, fought on 15 July 1410, is a cornerstone of modern Polish national and political identity. The battle was part of the larger Polish-Lithuanian-Teutonic War (1409–1411), which pitted an alliance of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania against the German Teutonic Knights. After bloody and protracted fighting, the defeat of the Knights was signalled by the death of their leader, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen. In the centuries following Grunwald, the political potential for such a powerful victory of Polish forces over the Teutons has been acutely perceived by both nations, and the conflict has been revisited in a number of different contexts.²

For the Knights, the crippling losses of leadership, soldiers, and funding due to the Grunwald conflict instigated an extended period of decline. For Poland and Lithuania, conversely, the victory consolidated the strength and viability of their alliance, and in 1569 an official Commonwealth was established between the two. In more recent times, the Battle's reception has been closely shaped by its depiction in a nineteenth-century painting by the celebrated Polish artist Jan Matejko (1838–1893), adding an artistic dimension to the event's mythology. An immense oil on canvas spanning 426cm x 987cm, Matejko's *Battle of Grunwald* was completed in 1878, and is often discussed alongside his later piece *Prussian Homage* (1882), which depicts Albrecht Hohenzollern – the last Grand Master of the Knights and Duke of Prussia – swearing allegiance to Poland's King Sigismund I the Old in 1525. Painted at a time when the partitioned Poland's sovereignty was unrecognised by the surrounding states, and when the newly unified Germany was emerging as the dominant

² For a more detailed discussion of the Battle of Grunwald's commemoration and nation-building properties, see Patrice Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 159–183.

central European force under Otto von Bismarck, both artworks defied the widespread political oppression to express a brazen Polish nationalism.³



Figure 2.1: Jan Matejko's *Battle of Grunwald*, 1878 (Wikipedia Commons)

The paintings were a great public success during their initial exhibitions across Warsaw, Berlin, Moscow, Rome, Budapest, and Paris, although they often drew equal rebuke from the ruling classes of these constituencies. *Prussian Homage* was declared “derogatory” in the press when displayed in Vienna in October 1882, and even the Polish aristocracy in Krakow (perhaps pressured by their Austrian overlords) criticised the depiction of von Jungingen’s death at the hands of Lithuanian peasants in the *Battle of Grunwald* as unworthy of his elevated status.⁴ Nonetheless, in spite of patrician objections, Matejko’s paintings were celebrated by nationless Poles as iconic artefacts of their country’s former glory. Danuta Batorska also detects a commemorative aspect in the two paintings, writing that the *Battle of*

³ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, revised edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 138.

⁴ Danuta Batorska, “The Political Censorship of Jan Matejko,” *Art Journal* 51 (1992): 60. Also telling is the reception of *Prussian Homage* in 1884 at the Royal Academy in Berlin, where “the jury unanimously voted to recommend to the kaiser [*sic*] the award of the great gold medal to Matejko. [...] The kaiser, however, on the advice of Bismarck, who recognised the painting as anti-German propaganda, declined to follow the jury’s recommendation” (p. 61).

Grunwald and *Prussian Homage* “were intended to remind oppressed Poles of these two most important historical events and their consequences for Poland.”⁵

Considering that both paintings celebrated Polish might over German weakness, it is natural that they became highly contested symbols of Polish independence during the Second World War. Both artworks topped the list of artefacts sought-after by the Nazis for destruction under their agenda of cultural genocide, and almost immediately after the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, the hunt began for the *Battle of Grunwald* and *Prussian Homage*. Their custodians were well-prepared, however, formulating evacuation plans by late August: *Prussian Homage* was spirited away from its home in Kraków to Zamość, south-eastern Poland, and stowed away in a church crypt on 3 September, while the *Battle of Grunwald* reached Lublin from the National Museum in Warsaw on the morning of 9 September. Famously, the Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels placed a bounty of two million marks on the paintings, which was later raised to ten million after initial searches were unsuccessful. Nonetheless, through the shrewd planning (and luck) of their guardians, the paintings remained hidden throughout the war, and are still proudly exhibited today as testaments to the indomitable Polish spirit.⁶

In Germany, the Battle of Grunwald also has a significant history independent of Matejko’s painting. Up until the First World War, it was commonly known there as the Battle of Tannenberg, using the German name for the nearby town of Stębark. In August 1914, during the early days of the War, the German army won a crushing victory over Russia in a similar location. Triumphant, the Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg (and later President of Germany) christened his conquest as the modern ‘Battle of Tannenberg’ – though the conflict

⁵ Batorska, “Jan Matejko,” 58.

⁶ Batorska offers a more detailed account of the near misses involved in the concealment of these paintings, as well as the lives regrettably lost through this course of action. Batorska, “Jan Matejko,” 61–62.

was actually closer to Olsztyn, with Tannenberg/Stębark 30km to the west. Hindenburg's distortion in the naming of the battle thus framed the 1914 victory as atonement for the German defeat 500 years previous, and it was "hailed as having erased the ancient dishonour of the lost earlier battle."⁷ A generation later, in 1939 the name Tannenberg was again invoked, this time as the codename (*Unternehmen Tannenberg* – Operation Tannenberg) of Hitler's extermination program in Poland at the outset of the Second World War.

Unternehmen Tannenberg built on the associations of retribution established in 1914, suggesting the Third Reich's investment in the revised connection between Tannenberg and Germanic triumph.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Three Partitions (1772–1795)

The events depicted by these two Matejko paintings, along with several other battles, treaties, and weddings, played a significant role in the eventual construction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, officially enacted by the Union of Lublin in July 1569.⁸ At its height, the Commonwealth sprawled over roughly one million square kilometres and housed a population of fourteen million, making it one of the largest states in Europe. Also noteworthy was its political configuration – a curious precursor of a modern democratic system – with its combination of central parliament, local assemblies, and elected kings; something of an isolated idiosyncrasy when compared with the absolute monarchies of its neighbours. As Adam Zamoyski notes, however, the benefits obtained through the combination of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy in the Polish system were offset by the combination of their faults.⁹

⁷ Batorska, "Jan Matejko," 63, n. 10. Batorska also provides several other versions of the battle from the German nationalistic perspective, including the curious case of the German embassy in Warsaw protesting and preventing the sale of postage stamps issued by the government to commemorate Grunwald in 1938.

⁸ This occasion was commemorated by yet another famous Matejko canvas. The *Union of Lublin* (1869) is housed today in the Lublin Museum, and though far smaller than either the *Battle of Grunwald* or *Prussian Homage*, it is still in Matejko's typically large dimensions (298cm x 512cm).

⁹ Adam Zamoyski, *Poland: A History* (London: HarperPress, 2009), 82.

After a golden age of prosperity in the sixteenth century characterised by widespread religious freedom, by the middle of the seventeenth century internal disorder amongst the nobility (the *szlachta*) and increasingly destructive external conflicts had greatly weakened the Commonwealth. The invasion and occupation campaigns by the Swedish during the Deluge, between 1655 and 1660, were the devastating culmination of these border skirmishes, and resulted in the loss of approximately one third of the Commonwealth's population. A near-constant state of affray continued through into the eighteenth century. Despite a promising political union with Saxony in the early decades (with Augustus II the Strong reigning as the leader of both domains) and subsequent attempts at political reform by the last King, Stanisław August Poniatowski, after his election in 1764 – too little, too late – Poland was a bloated fruit ripe for picking by its neighbours.¹⁰

Beginning in 1772, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was carved up in a succession of Three Partitions, in which Prussia, Russia, and Habsburg Austria each annexed increasingly larger slices of territory for themselves (though Austria did not participate in the Second Partition). The First Partition was ratified on 22 September 1772, partially under the auspices of France, with the pretext of maintaining a balance of power during the ongoing Russo-Turkish War. Poland was incapable of any meaningful political or military resistance to these encroachments, and the territories ceded in this First Partition amounted to approximately 30% of the Commonwealth's former size, with a comparable proportion of its population. Most devastating, however, were the economic implications, especially in relation to foreign trade. Prussia's claim on much of the North-Western shoreline (including Royal Prussia and the northern Greater Poland province, but excluding Gdańsk) gave it

¹⁰ Or perhaps an artichoke: in the lead up to the First Partition, Frederick the Great of Prussia believed that Poland should be eaten up "like an artichoke, leaf by leaf." Quoted in Jerzy Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland: 1772, 1793, 1795* (London: Routledge, 2014), 17. Lukowski observes that this phrase was a conscious echo of a statement by Victor Amadeus II of Savoy, who had similar designs on Milan (p. 17, n. 23).

control over some of Poland's most developed areas, as well as its main artery, the Vistula River. This stranglehold slashed Poland's capabilities of maritime commerce, and opportunistic trade levies forced it even deeper into fiscal distress.¹¹

Following this brush with extinction after the First Partition, the enfeebled Poland underwent an extraordinary transformation and renewal in public and political life over the next two decades. Nearly every aspect of the Commonwealth's organisation, from its military and literature to its education curriculum and farming practices, was newly directed toward the revival of the state. These changes were insufficient to ensure Poland's survival, however, and in a perverse way they only accelerated its downfall. The French Revolution of 1789 had left the major European powers weary of the mutinous potential of a convalescent Poland, and after the state's eleventh-hour implementation of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, which promised far-ranging political and economic reforms, Russia and Prussia stepped in to stymie any risk of upheaval.

The Second Partition of Poland was enacted in 1793, and once more Prussia and Russia each helped themselves to a slice of territory. The Poland which remained – merely a buffer state between the two forces – was narrow and elongated, with an area of roughly 212,000 square kilometres and a population of four million.¹² Soon after, following the failed Kościuszko Uprising of 1794, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was liquidated in its entirety in 1795 in the Third Partition by Russia and Prussia, joined again by Austria. Although there were small, ephemeral pockets of Polish independence throughout the nineteenth century – the Duchy of Warsaw under Napoleon, the Russian puppet Congress Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Posen under Prussia, and so forth – none of these,

¹¹ Zamoyski, *Poland*, 194–196: After the First Partition “Prussia took the opportunity to foist a trade agreement on Poland which introduced draconian duties on Polish corn shipped down the Vistula” (p. 196).

¹² Zamoyski, *Poland*, 213.

according to Norman Davies, “could be rated higher than autonomous dependencies of foreign governments.”¹³ The Third Partition completely wiped any trace of a free, sovereign Poland from the face of Europe, where it remained *in absentia* for 123 years until its resurrection by the Treaty of Versailles in 1918.

The Three Partitions were, and still are, regarded by Poles as a great travesty. This is made even more tragic by the retrospective belief that tides were changing for the better by the last third of the eighteenth century, and that the recovery from the previous century of disrepair was well underway – that is, until external forces intervened. Given an extra ten, twenty, or thirty years, what reform might Poland not have achieved if left to its own devices?¹⁴ Outside of Poland however, the Partitions were justified by their perpetrators under several different pretexts, many using the rhetoric of colonisation. Though their details differed, the common threads of these rationalisations were that Poland’s demise was wholly self-inflicted: civil unrest in the eighteenth century had left the Commonwealth ravaged and dysfunctional, and it was in dire need of intervention from its concerned and more enlightened neighbours.

These variously coloured insights behind Poland’s disintegration have a basis in truth, but only in part. To claim that the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was solely due to internal factors ignores the contributions made by the politicking, opportunism, greed, and anxieties of other nations. In his assessment of Poland’s case, Davies utilises a metaphor first employed by the great Polish-Lithuanian bard Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1885):¹⁵

¹³ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 138.

¹⁴ Davies (*Heart of Europe*, 275–277) provides a concise but comprehensive account of the historiographical forces at play in the reception of the Partitions.

¹⁵ Mickiewicz’s ethnic roots and national identity are complex: he was born to a Polish father and possibly Jewish mother in what is today Belarus, which was then part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that had been annexed by the Russian Empire. He wrote all his works in Polish, and yet identified most strongly as a Lithuanian. Today he is considered to be Poland’s premier national poet, and stands with Zygmunt Krasiński and Juliusz Słowacki as one of Poland’s “Three Bards,” but has also been claimed to a certain extent by Lithuania and Belarus. Nonetheless, being “Polish” or being “Lithuanian” was certainly not mutually exclusive: the circumstances of Lithuanians were almost indistinguishable to those of Poles following the Partitions, and

Writing some thirty years after the destruction of the old Republic, Adam Mickiewicz evoked the primeval forests of his native Lithuania and ‘the giant oaks of centuries’ which weaken and split and eventually crash on the ground that fed them. Old Poland was such an ancient oak – weakened and split. But it did not topple of its own accord. It was felled by the axe.¹⁶

Irrespective of the degree of rot within its trunk, or of the supposedly virtuous motives of the lumberjacks, it is safe to say that the felling of the Polish oak in the Three Partitions wreaked greater havoc on the lands and people of the Commonwealth than any internal government – dysfunctions included – ever could have.

Much later, in the twentieth century, the Partitions were recognised as a precedent when Poland was divided up again by Germany and the Soviet Union, during and after the Second World War. Those sympathetic to Poland regarded these occupations as the newest manifestation of the German and Russian oppression systematised by the Partitions, while the aggressors evoked these same events to lend history’s gravitas to the redrawing of the map. In the Soviet Union, the narrative of benevolent liberation was again raised, insinuating that twentieth-century Poland remained as incapable of self-governance as its eighteenth-century ancestor had been.¹⁷ The Marxist-tinged historiography of the Soviet Union would also ascribe classist reasons for the weakening of Poland in the lead-up to the First Partition: Poland’s economy had been driven into the ground by its indolent gentry, leaving the working underclass on the brink of collapse. It followed, therefore, that these rural peasants suffered most through the decades of mismanagement by the *szlachta*, and thus had the most

they both yearned for the same freedom from the yokes of foreign masters. See Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 148; and Czesław Miłosz, “Vilnius, Lithuania: An Ethnic Agglomerate,” in *Ethnic Identity: Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lola Romanucci-Ross et al., 4th edition (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006), 74. Miłosz notes, however, that language in Lithuania was also embedded in notions of class, as the Polish language was historically linked with the upper class and nobility, and its use was a mark of status, while Lithuanian was generally confined to the peasantry (pp. 73–75).

¹⁶ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 273.

¹⁷ The Red Army were of course the liberators of Kraków, Warsaw, and Poznań in the final stages of the Second World War. But Poles were not ignorant of their land’s trophy-status, as Czesław Miłosz makes clear in *The Captive Mind*: “Then, in the low ground between the snow-covered hills, I saw a file of men slowly advancing. It was the first detachment of the Red Army. [...] Like all my compatriots, I was thus liberated from the domination of Berlin – in other words, brought under the domination of Moscow.” Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), x.

to gain from the Partitions.¹⁸ Regardless of whether one believed the standpoint of victim or perpetrator, an inexorable continuity linked the Partitions with the Second World War.

Polish Composers and German Music: The Nineteenth Century Onward

The study of Poland under the Partitions presents a complex situation for the scholar: how best to trace the history of a country which did not exist? There was nothing that resembled a Polish government, nor economy, army, education system, or even geographical boundaries; there were no markers of a discrete and sovereign nation. These symbols were instead subsumed by the nineteenth-century narratives of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, leading to a haphazardly piecemeal historiography at best, and complete effacement of the Polish story at worst. The solution, as proposed by Davies in *Heart of Europe*, is to look elsewhere: “the essential sources of its history have to be sought less in social, political, and economic affairs than in the realm of culture, literature, and religion – in short, in the world of the Polish spirit.”¹⁹ For Davies, the window into this Polish psyche is fundamentally through its literature, which was “smelted in the same fierce fire” as its politics, and he devotes some fifty pages to a close reading of key authors and their ideas.²⁰ In a similar fashion but to a lesser extent, music and the visual arts (as we have seen with Matejko) likewise became surrogate outlets to Poles for nationalistic expressions which were otherwise suppressed.

Across all these cultural endeavours, two intertwined topics, which Davies calls the two great

¹⁸ Of all castes involved, however, it was actually the peasantry who experienced the least change after Poland was dismembered, for “the question of which kingdom or empire they might be living in was irrelevant, and they would pray for the Austrian Emperor in church on Sunday as readily as for the King of Poland.” Zamoyski, *Poland*, 218.

¹⁹ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 139. Davies however stresses the difficulties of such a task owing to the wide variations across places and times, and that “Polish” experiences contrasted strongly due to the differing constitutions of the partitioning powers. As he writes, “developments in Warsaw, in the Congress Kingdom, have constantly to be contrasted with those in Wilno or Kiev, just as life in Prussia followed a different path in the Grand Duchy of Poznań from that in Breslau or Danzig” (p. 153).

²⁰ It is precisely this inextricable link between time and place that has made Romantic Polish literature, whilst “comparable to all the great literatures of Europe,” “markedly unsuitable for export, and largely untranslatable.” See Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 154.

themes of the age, persistently arose: “the preservation of national identity, and the restoration of national independence.”²¹

Following Davies’s counsel, the second half of this chapter will depart from the previous socio-historical frame for an exploration of music’s place in the cultural ‘Poland’ across the turbulent nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In this section I will summarise how the twin goals of preservation and restoration affected the production of music by nationless Poles, and perhaps more importantly, how these maxims shaped the reception of their music. As will be seen, production and reception were often very different beasts, owing to the Romantic predilection for hyperbole, embellishment, and myth-making. Just as Davies traces the history of the era through the consideration of its authors (using them as reflections of actual social and political events), the following discussion will focus on the experiences of Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849) and Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), figures who loomed heavily over the subsequent music of Poland. While a complete commentary on this topic is beyond the scope of this study, I will concentrate on the aspects of these composers’ music and personal aesthetic which had attained a symbolic resonance by the twentieth century, and which still exerted some influence over Lutosławski and Górecki. In the case of Chopin, his enduring reception and legacy as a nationalist composer is of most interest, while for Szymanowski, his vocal – and highly influential – disavowal of German music will come under scrutiny, particularly in light of an early career strongly inspired by a late-Romantic, progressive German idiom.

Through this discussion of Chopin and Szymanowski, I will also lay the foundation for Polish-German interactions in the twentieth century, where a number of parallels emerged with the nineteenth. For example, following the Partitions, there was a strong turn toward

²¹ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 153.

France as a cultural influence (Poland and Napoleon shared similar enemies), which was later mirrored in the 1920s when it was Paris – not the Weimar Republic cultural jewel of Berlin – where Polish composers continued their studies after local matriculation. This French connection continued through the 1930s and 40s, as Nadia Boulanger’s neoclassicism and the music of Arthur Honegger and Albert Roussel remained inspirations for the interwar generation.

More broadly, there was an acute awareness of the vital roles music and art played in nation building. These qualities were equally recognised by King Stanisław after 1764 in Poland, by German-speaking states from the early nineteenth century, and by the puppet Soviet government installed in Poland after the Second World War – though the nations envisaged by their leaders could not have differed more. Across his reign, King Stanisław invested heavily in cultural initiatives (accumulating large international debts in the process), with the hope of renewing his failing state and the goal of leaving behind something worthwhile for posterity. He clearly intuited that with the political demise of his nation looming, a strong cultural legacy was more vital than ever.²² Similarly, from the early 1800s onward in German-speaking lands, the field of music history emerged as a subset of historical study itself, as both disciplines worked toward the consolidation of a Germanic state firmly built on the (musical) greatness of its forefathers. Recall Schumann’s 1839 veneration of Beethoven as evidence of music’s power as national adhesive:

As Italy has its Naples, France its Revolution, England its Navy, etc., so the Germans have their Beethoven symphonies. The German forgets in his Beethoven that he has no school of painting; with Beethoven he imagines that he has reversed the fortunes of the battles that he lost to Napoleon; he even dares to place him on the same level with Shakespeare.²³

²² Zamoyski, *Poland*, 202–203. Ironically, it is precisely this patronage of the arts which led to the perception of the King after his death as frivolous, unconcerned with the more concrete affairs of his realm.

²³ Quoted in Celia Applegate, “What Is German Music? Reflections on the Role of Art in the Creation of the Nation,” *German Studies Review* 15 (1992): 21.

In contrast, the Soviet program of socialist realism and enforced optimism – regardless of actual experiences to the contrary – was a vital tool in the objective of total control over its Polish constituency. The resulting “novels about tractor drivers and paintings about concrete factories” suggested that through the representation of a falsely prosperous ideal, there was the expectation that everyday life would one day come to be a reflection of the art.²⁴

Before moving onto Chopin and Szymanowski, however, there will be a brief detour to Johann Sebastian Bach in the eighteenth century – perhaps one of the more unlikely names to be encountered in this area of discussion. This is not merely frivolous, but rather raises two points which have been overlooked so far: the issue of ethnicity amongst shifting borders, and the possibility of amicable, even constructive, Polish-German interactions in the cultural sphere.

Johann Sebastian Bach: Poland and Saxony

J.S. Bach is regarded, along with Beethoven, Wagner, and Brahms, as one of the most quintessentially Germanic of composers. Bach’s indisputable greatness stands as a testament to the cultural wealth permeating every fibre of the nation’s *Volk der Kunst*. Ever since Johann Nikolaus Forkel’s 1802 Bach biography and Felix Mendelssohn’s famous ‘revival’ of the *St Matthew Passion* in Berlin in 1829, the hagiography of Bach as simultaneously both a German *and* a universal genius towering at the centre of the Western Canon has proved extremely resilient over the subsequent two centuries.²⁵ Forkel’s writing is permeated with what Celia Applegate terms the German “national mission,” urging in his preface: “this man, the greatest musical poet and the greatest musical orator that ever existed, and probably ever

²⁴ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 7.

²⁵ Applegate, “German Music,” 28.

will exist, was a German. Let his country be proud of him; let it be proud, but, at the same time, worthy of him!”²⁶

In light of Bach’s gilded seat in the German pantheon, it is interesting to consider the nature of his ties with Poland – a connexion largely due to the convolutions of eighteenth-century politics. Between 1723 and his death in 1750, Bach was famously based in Leipzig as the Cantor of the Thomasschule at the St. Thomas Church. At that time, Leipzig was one of the busiest cities in the Electorate of Saxony, which was, as mentioned previously, joined in a personal union with Poland: since 1679, the ruler of both Poland and Saxony had been Augustus II the Strong, a great patron of the arts also famed for his abilities in archery, drinking, and fornication.²⁷ When Augustus II died in 1733, he was succeeded by his son, Augustus III, also known as Frederick Augustus II in Saxony. Augustus III was idle and indolent, and though he ruled for some thirty years, just two of these were spent in Poland. He much preferred to base himself in his native Saxony, and his lax approach to the Commonwealth’s governance is generally regarded as one of the main factors behind Poland’s decline in the mid-eighteenth century.

Bach’s *Mass for the Dresden Court* (which would later form part of his *B Minor Mass*) was dedicated to Augustus III in 1733 upon his succession as the Elector of Saxony, accompanied with an entreaty for promotion to “Electoral Saxon Court Composer.”²⁸ Bach’s request was not immediately successful, but by the time of the publication of the *Goldberg Variations* in 1741, he had garnered not only that position, but another more curious one, as indicated on the piece’s title page:

*Clavier Übung bestehend in einer ARIA mit verschiedenen Veränderungen vors
Clavicimbal mit 2 Manualen. Denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths-Ergetzung verfertigt*

²⁶ Quoted in Applegate, “German Music,” 28.

²⁷ Augustus the Strong’s reign as King of Poland was briefly interrupted between 1706 and 1709 by Charles XII, the young King of Sweden. See Zamoyski, *Poland*, 175–180.

²⁸ George B. Stauffer, *Bach: The Mass in B Minor: The Great Catholic Mass* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 30.

von Johann Sebastian Bach *Königl. Pohl. u. Churfl. Sächs. Hoff-Compositeur, Capellmeister, u. Directore Chori Musici in Leipzig. Nürnberg in Verlegung Balthasar Schmids.*

[Keyboard exercise, consisting of an ARIA with diverse variations for harpsichord with two manuals. Composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach, **composer for the royal court of Poland and the Electoral court of Saxony**, Kapellmeister and Director of Choral Music in Leipzig. Nuremberg, Balthasar Schmid, publisher.]

Bach held this dual title, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer, from 1736 until his death, though he never once set foot in Polish territory. Until very recently, the connections between Bach and Poland were completely unexplored, and although evidence remains scant, some headway has been made through consideration of Bach's references to Poland in the libretti of his cantatas (where it is referred to as Sarmatia²⁹), or through the activities of his pupils and contemporaries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.³⁰

Bach has nonetheless never been claimed as a 'Polish' composer. He has never been positioned as an alumnus of the Royal Polish Court, or as the illustrious ancestor of Polish composition. The reasons behind this are self-evident: Bach's ethnicity, religion (Lutheran), culture, and reception history are so wholly Germanic that it would be delusional to maintain otherwise. The growing attention to Bach's relationship with Poland, however, raises several interesting issues. For one, such research offers insight into the movement and propagation of music across borders, and the exchange of cultural practices at the time. Undoubtedly, Saxons stayed Saxons and Poles stayed Poles over the reigns of Augustus II and Augustus III, but

²⁹ Sarmatia was a fashionable name for Poland used in the eighteenth century, and "Sarmatism" was an ideology propagated by the Polish nobility which "maintained that they were descended from the warrior Sarmatians, whose prehistoric conquest of the docile Slavonic tribes justified the subsequent supremacy of the *Szlachta*." Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 285. See also Szymon Paczkowski, "Bach and Poland in the Eighteenth Century," *Understanding Bach* 10 (2015): 124–127. As Paczkowski writes, the image of Sarmatia familiar to Bach was of "a little-known country, half-mythical, lying somewhere in the East, somewhat wild, somewhat magical, inhabited by ancient, valiant and gallant people. [...] For the inhabitants of civilised, genteel and prudent Protestant Saxony, and probably for Bach as well, Catholic Poland represented a totally different land, geographically distant, with strange governance and alien customs" (pp. 124–125).

³⁰ A student of Bach's, Lorenz Mizler (1711–1778) was particularly important in the development of the Załuski Library in Warsaw, the first public library in Poland. Paczkowski, "Bach and Poland," 134.

this period saw a high level of cooperation between the two very different states. Bach himself was personally involved in this front: one of his last signatures (from 6 May 1749) is found on a receipt for a pianoforte sold for 115 thalers to the influential Polish nobleman Jan Klemens Branicki, to be delivered to Białystok in eastern Poland.³¹

Likewise, there was the growing popularity of the polonaise as a dance form, with its triple meter and characteristic first beat division. Later made fashionable by Chopin, the initial proliferation of the polonaise can perhaps be traced to the links between Poland and Saxony. Predating Bach, Georg Philipp Telemann spent time in Poland between 1704 and 1707 after a stint in Leipzig, and composed many Polish-inspired works, including several named polonaises and a “Concerto alla Polonese,” (TWV 43:G7).³² Bach himself wrote stylised polonaises, which occur notably in the French Suite no. 6 (BWV 817), and the Orchestral Suite no. 2 (BWV 1067), and there are later instances by Mozart (Piano Sonata no. 6, K 284/205b), Beethoven (the third movement of the Triple Concerto Op. 56, marked *Rondo alla Polacca*), and Schubert (ten polonaises for piano four-hands in D 599 and D 824), which consolidated its place as a musical topic in the consciousness of the early-nineteenth century.³³

Exploring Bach’s involvement with Poland – which was rather more than in-name-only – is not an attempt at usurping the dominant narrative of his place in the German canon, or a proffering of some revisionist alternate history. Instead, I only wish to raise a point largely overlooked in our understanding of music’s development in Central Europe. Current scholarship is not yet in a place to fully assess the extent of Bach’s impact on Polish musical

³¹ Paczkowski, “Bach and Poland,” 127.

³² For a treatment of Telemann’s Polish forays, see Steven Zohn’s chapter “Telemann’s Polish Style and the “True Barbaric Beauty” of the Musical Other,” in his *Music for a Mixed Taste: Style, Genre, and Meaning in Telemann’s Instrumental Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 469–502.

³³ Stephen Downes, “Polonaise,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 13 May 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

culture, although given his impact on the work of Chopin and Szymanowski, and later, Lutosławski and Górecki, asking that question is still a vital step in this study.³⁴

Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849): Cultural and Political Nationalism

Chopin is one of Poland's greatest sons, a national hero synonymous with the virtuosic tempest of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Although Chopin's own personal commitment to the "Polish Question" as an émigré (or, for the more fanciful, exile) in Paris has recently been questioned, his reception as a Polish patriot and nationalist is firmly cemented in public and critical opinion.³⁵ As has been pointed out elsewhere, however, music and nationalism make uncomfortable bedfellows, and the premise of 'hearing' Poland through Chopin – or hearing Norway through Grieg, or Finland through Sibelius, (though never Germany through Beethoven) – is more a reflection of late nineteenth-century patterns of thought than any immanent qualities of the music itself.³⁶ It is vital to recognise that the reception of Chopin, particularly after his death, took place in a socio-political milieu governed by "the belief that it was to his nation – and not to a creed, a dynasty, or a class – that a citizen owed the first duty in a clash of loyalties."³⁷ This climate of increased national awareness gave rise to two principal varieties of nationalism, cultural and political, which gradually elided together over the course of the century. According to Jeffrey Kallberg:

"Cultural" nationalism evoked images of Polish customs, beliefs, social forms, ethnic groups, and language but omitted any overt sense of the political status of the country. In "political" nationalism, the issue of the sovereignty of Poland lay at the expressive

³⁴ Michael L. Klein offers a particularly stimulating case for joining Bach, and Lutosławski together with Chopin in a web of intertextual relation, adding, among others, Scott Joplin, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Shostakovich as nodes in this connection. See Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 4–11.

³⁵ Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Deconstructing a "National Composer": Chopin and Polish Exiles in Paris, 1831–49," *19th-Century Music* 24 (2000): 161.

³⁶ Daniel M. Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2006), 11.

³⁷ Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 81.

core of the composition; if more general cultural resonances were felt, they were at the periphery.³⁸

In other words, the crux of the debate surrounding Chopin's perception as a patriotic composer is contained in the conflation of those aspects which are national (or in Kallberg's terms, "cultural") with those which are explicitly *nationalist* in his oeuvre. Chopin's music often signals the former through his Mazurkas, Polonaises, settings of Polish texts, and works such as the *Fantasy on Polish Airs* (Op. 13), or the *Rondo à la Krakowiak* (Op. 14); claims for the latter are tendentious at best.

This is nonetheless a slippery slope. As Kallberg's survey of contemporary responses to Chopin's music shows, it was an easy progression from the relatively neutral hearing of Chopin's Polonaises and Mazurkas as dance forms imbued with the spirit of his native homeland (though coloured by notions of raised-fourth strangeness and exoticism to western-European ears), to hearing the Polish sentiments expressed in these dances synecdochically throughout all of his music, even in pieces couched in more general styles of European Romanticism (such as the *Études*) without explicit Polish qualities. Responses such as the following were commonplace:

We may safely maintain that not any nation may boast of such a great, truly national composer. In Chopin's works, every note is national, every note beautiful – truly beautiful – divine – each thought sublime, heavenly!³⁹

And similarly, from M. A. Szulc, author of the first Polish monograph on Chopin:

In his music the national character is revealed in its finest splendour: the very same air that we breathe, the same sky to which we raise our eyes, the same longing and sorrow that permeates the songs of our people. He has sung most movingly of our unhappiness, he recounts better than anyone the greatness of our past and of our hopes, he alone has sapped the sweetest nectar from the flowers that bloom in abundance on our native soil. [...] He is one of the worthiest representatives of our nation.⁴⁰

³⁸ Jeffrey Kallberg, "Hearing Poland: Chopin and Nationalism," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 245.

³⁹ Antoni Woykowski quoted in Kallberg, "Hearing Poland," 250.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Zofia Chechlinska, "Chopin reception in nineteenth-century Poland," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 217. Also notable for

From here it was only a small step for commentators to construe the ‘Polishness’ in Chopin’s music as a political act, an act of defiance, especially in the context of the political repression after the failed November Uprising in 1831. Following the Uprising, Russia began a program of de-Polonisation in its partitioned territory, where “land was confiscated, expatriation enforced, the Church, and above all the Polish language, suppressed.”⁴¹ Much sympathy for the Polish cause was garnered abroad, especially in the revolutionary hotbed of Paris. In the aftermath of the quelled rebellion, the national character in Chopin’s music thus took on a patriotic dimension, and his works came to symbolise the struggle of Poles in the mid-nineteenth century. Even after Chopin’s death, the reception of his music as a fundamental expression of Polishness against foreign oppression continued along similar lines, further stoked by the events of the 1848/9 ‘Spring of Nations’ revolutions across Europe and the unsuccessful January Uprising against Russia in 1863.

There was also a tendency to elaborate and falsify certain aspects of Chopin’s life, and both unscrupulous biographers and the press had a propensity for adorning his rather private character with spurious myths.⁴² According to Jolanta Pekacz, in the wake of the Partitions of Poland and the November Uprising,

It was simply a matter of course to assume that a composer so obviously “Polish” in his music had to be also a staunch Polish patriot. [...] [T]he nineteenth-century stereotype of a Polish national composer demanded that his life and work constituted an inseparable unity, that the one consistently informed the other. If the historical reality did not fit it, that reality had to be changed.⁴³

Never mind that only a relatively small portion of his output could be seen to exemplify “cultural nationalism” in the first place. In his introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to*

its hyperbolic enthusiasm is the Liszt/Sayn-Wittgenstein ‘biography’ of 1852, which has often been treated as the patient-zero of Chopin mythologising. Particularly striking is the lengthy discussion of the Polish word *żał*, to which is ascribed a host of pseudo-allegorical significances for Chopin, when it merely means ‘regret.’ See Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, trans. John Broadhouse, 2nd edition (London: William Reeves, n.d. [1912?]): 81.

⁴¹ Jim Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1980), 12.

⁴² For an in-depth study of the inaccuracies in Chopin’s biographies, see Adam Harasowski, *The Skein of Legends around Chopin* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1967).

⁴³ Pekacz, “Chopin and Polish Exiles,” 162–163.

Chopin, Jim Samson explains that Chopin's supposed patriotic fervour was extensively elaborated upon even after his death, citing "the urn of Polish earth which he supposedly took with him on leaving Warsaw" as one of the more untenable myths which sprung up around the composer.⁴⁴

An example was likewise set by the activities of other Poles abroad, and parallels were often drawn between Chopin and the poet Adam Mickiewicz, also living in Paris since the Uprising. Mickiewicz was extremely active politically, and his participation in various efforts against Austria and Russia cultivated the public image of a nationalist Polish Romantic in exile, whose sole calling was the reinstatement of his country's sovereignty.⁴⁵ Mickiewicz was the spitting image of the "preservation/restoration" idealist identified by Davies. Chopin, on the other hand, was largely indifferent – even contemptuous – toward politics, although it is undeniable that he was sympathetic to the Polish cause in a generalised sense. To judge by the company he kept and events he attended while in Paris, it seems that pragmatism rather than patriotism defined his choices, and he much preferred aristocrats to nationalist radicals.⁴⁶ An infamous example of this reticence was Chopin's refusal to write a 'national opera' at the behest of his former teacher, Józef Elsner (1769–1854), who believed it would serve as a powerful patriotic statement. Mickiewicz similarly chastised Chopin for his lack of engagement with the political potential of his music, and the two rarely saw eye-to-eye. The unsuitable comparison with Mickiewicz and other Poles, as well as the glut of biographical tall-tales, culminated in the enduring (and endearing) formulation of Chopin as the arch-patriot composer, whose day-to-day life was tirelessly devoted to his homeland. In the fifth edition of *A History of Western Music* (1996), Donald Grout and Claude Palisca perpetuate this fabrication, writing that "although Chopin lived in Paris from 1831, he never

⁴⁴ Jim Samson, "Myth and reality: a biographical introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, 6.

⁴⁵ Peckacz, "Chopin and Polish Exiles," 162.

⁴⁶ Peckacz, "Chopin and Polish Exiles," 171–172.

stopped loving his native Poland or suffering because of its misfortunes.”⁴⁷ As recently as 2016, Halina Goldberg remains committed to this narrative, linking Chopin’s spatial dislocation from Poland with a pathological nostalgia and “bifurcation of consciousness,” claiming that “Since his true self remained in Warsaw, even the most corporeal and noisy manifestations of the present [in Paris] would often feel to him like a dream.”⁴⁸

The Polish political situation in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was remarkably similar to that of the post-war period in the twentieth, and the comparison is of great relevance to this study. In both eras, Poland had just suffered major aggressions from both Germany and Russia (during the Partitions and the Second World War), but it was the more recent and arguably more devastating actions of Russia which dominated public discourse. In 1831, the Russian suppression of the November Uprising dashed any hopes for the growing autonomy of Warsaw, leading to heightened Polish repression, while in 1945 Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union, and remained closely in its orbit for more than forty years. Polish reflection in the aftermath of both events was driven by the consideration of Russia’s actions, leaving little space for reconciliation with the impacts German involvement. In the previously-quoted words of Juliusz Słowacki’s (which Szymanowski himself would later allude to in a 1920 essay⁴⁹), “there was no time to grieve for roses while the forest burned”: the looming issue of Russia dwarfed other considerations, no matter how important.

As we have seen, Chopin’s reception was cast against Russia’s shadow over Polish affairs. Some of his more famous works, such as the ‘Revolutionary’ Étude, Op. 10, no. 12,

⁴⁷ Quoted in Peckacz, “Chopin and Polish Exiles, 163.

⁴⁸ Halina Goldberg, “Nationalizing the *Kujawiak* and Constructions of Nostalgia in Chopin’s Mazurkas,” *19th-Century Music* 39 (2016): 238–239.

⁴⁹ Karol Szymanowski, “On Contemporary Musical Opinion in Poland,” in *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski*, ed. and trans. Alistair Wightman (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 79. First published in the short-lived magazine *Nowy Przegląd Literaturny i Sztuki* (New Review of Literature and Art) in July 1920.

are entirely received within this context. More often than not, the ‘nationalist’ strains perceived in his work were also associated with an anti-Russian sentiment, leaving us with a skewed understanding of Chopin’s works in relation to other musical cultures, such as that of Germany. This is one of the reasons why, for example, the connection between Chopin and Beethoven is only dimly understood, with Chopin portrayed as largely indifferent toward the latter. Although some anecdotal evidence would suggest that Chopin was somewhat ignorant of Beethoven’s work, and aloof of what little he did know, our understanding of this perceived division results, as Wayne Petty argues, from distinctions in our understanding of the two: “Beethoven, the heroic figure larger than life; Chopin, more the anti-hero, a creature too fine for this cruel world.”⁵⁰ It is not difficult to discern the nationalist tropes encoded in this comparison. But even if it were the case that Chopin’s music shows an immunity from Beethoven, we could potentially argue, *à la* Harold Bloom, that this absence is more meaningful than any presence.⁵¹

If Chopin’s relationship with Germany remains opaque, the relationship that Germany (or rather, the Third Reich) had with Chopin is much clearer. Just as with the works of Jan Matejko, Chopin’s standing as an esteemed Polish cultural symbol made his image a target of Nazi desecration upon the invasion of Poland. His music was banned from performance, and the publication and sale of his compositions were forbidden. The most spectacular display of this repression was the destruction, on 31 May 1940, of the bronze Chopin statue which stood in Warsaw’s Łazienki Park – one of the very first monuments destroyed in that city by the Nazis.⁵² A small-scale model of the cast managed to survive the war, however, and in 1958

⁵⁰ Wayne C. Petty, “Chopin and the Ghost of Beethoven,” *19th-Century Music* 22 (1999): 281.

⁵¹ See Petty, “Ghost of Beethoven,” 282–284.

⁵² Waldemar Okoń, “The Monument of Fryderyk Chopin by Waclaw Szymanowski: Concepts and Reality,” in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, ed. Halina Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 44. Waclaw Szymanowski, the sculptor of the Warsaw monument is no relation to Karol Szymanowski, the composer.

the statue was reconstructed, and reinstated in its original position. The inscription at its base now contains an excerpt from the poem *Konrad Wallenrod* by Mickiewicz:⁵³

*Płomień rozgryzie malowane dzieje,
Skarby mieczowi spustoszą złodzieje,
Pieśń ujdzie cało...*

[Flames will consume our painted history,
Sword-wielding thieves will plunder our treasures,
The song will be saved...]

Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937): Germany, Folklore, and “Splendid Isolation”

Despite his birth more than thirty years after Chopin’s death, Karol Szymanowski was the first Polish composer with any genuine claim as Chopin’s heir, though his recognition outside of his homeland remains minimal. Other than the operas of Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872), the decades after Chopin’s passing saw a paucity of any music which could be championed and celebrated as truly Polish art, borne from a nation without a country. Because of this, Szymanowski’s style developed from a potpourri of influences, shaped by his upbringing within a musically-minded, land-owning family in Tymoszkówka (now a region in Ukraine). The trajectory of Szymanowski’s career is curious: in his youth and student years he was strongly influenced by the *Neudeutsche Schule*, as well as by Richard Strauss. This decidedly non-Polish idiom was a reflection of his dissatisfaction with the “self-consciously nationalistic subject-matter” that characterised the output of his Polish predecessors – as well as many of his contemporaries – and which stood as the dominant musical aesthetic at the time.⁵⁴ Szymanowski was wary of the hollow, “hopelessly mundane” state of Polish music at the turn of the twentieth century, which in its obligation to

⁵³ It has been suggested that *Konrad Wallenrod* served at least partially as the model of Chopin’s First Ballade, Op. 23. See Jonathan Bellman, “Chopin’s Polish Ballade Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55–85.

⁵⁴ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 27.

nationalistic expression had stagnated any growth beyond Chopin's example.⁵⁵ In response to this, he was initially compelled to seek inspiration from further afield. Szymanowski's mature works, composed around the First World War, were a "unique dialogue between full-blooded, impassioned late-Romanticism and a delicately shaded Impressionism," which also bore the fingerprints of recent French and Russian music.⁵⁶ This was further refined through an interest in the exotic and archaic, and Arabic and Mediterranean influences are also evident in works such as the opera *King Roger* (1924), set in twelfth-century Sicily. Later in life, Szymanowski was captivated by the folk music of the Polish Highlanders from the Tatra Mountains (the *Górale*), integrating this piquant, coloristic idiom into his compositional language from the 1920s onward.

For the superficial observer, there is a sense of discontinuity in Szymanowski's musical output, a wayward flitting from one touchstone to the next. We can find there the fingerprints of Chopin (in juvenilia such as the 9 Preludes, Op. 1); Strauss (the Concert Overture, Op. 12); Liszt (Fantasia for piano, Op. 14); 'Arabic' exoticism (*Love Songs of Hafiz*, Op. 24/Op. 26); and several other hints of Debussy, Scriabin, Bartók, and Stravinsky. To the unsympathetic eye, works reminiscent – even derivative – of such an array of influences may suggest an intrinsic lack of creative individuality. The premiere of his First Violin Concerto in 1922, for example, saw the work dismissed by leading critic Piotr Rytel (1884–1970) as "a further symptom of Szymanowski's incomprehensible zigzagging from one work to another."⁵⁷ Similar charges can be levelled at many other composers working over a comparable period – Schoenberg and Stravinsky most famously – perhaps suggesting that this eclecticism was merely 'par-for-the-course' of the modernist composer, and not any deficiency on Szymanowski's part. In fact, Jim Samson speculates that the stimulus of a pre-existing

⁵⁵ Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 16.

⁵⁶ Jim Samson, "Szymanowski and Polish Nationalism," *The Musical Times* 131 (1990): 135.

⁵⁷ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 263.

musical model was an essential component of Szymanowski's creative process, and that he *needed* a certain degree of external influence to synthesise his own idiom.⁵⁸ This hypothesis would account for Szymanowski's stylistic restlessness, explaining how he continually sought inspiration from fresh sources as he wrung others dry. It is also strengthened if we consider that by the end of his life, he had grown tired of his folkloristic phase and begun looking elsewhere for a new, ultimately unrealised direction. A parallel emerges here with the American composer Charles Ives, eight years Szymanowski's senior, who also borrowed from existing music extensively as his creative wellspring. While the two were almost certainly unknown to each other, Peter Burkholder's description of Ives's approach fits equally well with Szymanowski's 'solution' to creative gridlock: "Ives's increasing dependence on borrowed music provided a way to write music of exceptional individuality that nonetheless had strong ties to tradition, both in using familiar tunes and styles (and the tonal gestures they inevitably invoked) and in extending and transforming the traditional methods of reworking existing music."⁵⁹

The alienation from the musical establishment that Szymanowski felt for much of his life, as well as an estrangement from broader Polish society, can be considered along similar lines to the stylistic eclecticism mentioned above: both indispensable to his creative life, and shared by many others of his generation.⁶⁰ Szymanowski appears to have vacillated over the benefits of this creative distance, sentiments captured in his 1922 essay "My Splendid Isolation."⁶¹ Although he was unerring in his self-righteousness, disappointment was a

⁵⁸ Samson, *Szymanowski*, 79–80.

⁵⁹ Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 418.

⁶⁰ See Arnold Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 30–53. To a certain extent, compare this also with the experiences of Sibelius, Elgar, and Rachmaninoff. See Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 173–174.

⁶¹ Szymanowski, "My Splendid Isolation," in *Szymanowski on Music*, 95–101.

frequent occurrence, and after a concert of new works in Warsaw, Szymanowski wrote the following to his musicologist friend Zdzisław Jachimecki in 1920:

there is no real contact between myself and the Polish (or at any rate Warsaw) public, I seem strange, incomprehensible to them. [...] The European climate of my art does not suit this local provincialism. I am an embarrassment, because I unmask and debunk. [...] The concert was in the Conservatory Hall, which holds 550 to 600 persons. Despite the presence of Paweł Kochański [...] and my sister,⁶² it was not completely filled. This means that there were not 600 people in Warsaw who cared what I had been doing for the last five years!⁶³

In any case, the notion that he was not unique in his circumstances does not in any way mitigate the negative effect such neglect had on his already-tumultuous personal life, marred as it was by an intense inward frustration, anti-Semitism, alcoholism, and ill health.

While the greatness of Szymanowski's achievements cannot be denied, especially given his short and difficult life, his direct influence on the music of Poland is another matter. In truth, Szymanowski stands more as a figure to be acknowledged, but not one to be followed, as indicated by the lack of any sustained tradition built upon his foundations. Long having been the outsider and outcast, a mere month after his funeral ceremonies a memorial concert in Warsaw's Philharmonic Hall "was virtually empty."⁶⁴ Szymanowski's legacy is one of wonder but ultimately alienation, as Witold Lutosławski's evocative reflection affirms:

At a concert of the Warsaw Philharmonic, I heard for the first time the Third Symphony ("Song of the Night") by Karol Szymanowski, certainly a great composer of his time. The music is fascinating in its harmony, sound-colours, and emotional force of great originality. At that moment to hear the Third Symphony of Szymanowski was as if the door of a miraculous garden opened in front of me. I was in a state of excitement for weeks. I tried to recreate Szymanowski's harmonies on the keyboard. At that time I discovered the whole-note scale, up to then unknown to me. The entire experience was a true initiation into the music of the twentieth century.

⁶² Paweł (Paul) Kochański (1887–1934) was a distinguished Polish violinist, later famous for his career in New York. He was the leader of the Warsaw Philharmonia at the age of 14, and throughout his life proved a warm friend for Szymanowski, notably providing the cadenzas for both violin concertos. Stanisława Szymanowski (1889–1938) was a singer who frequently collaborated with her brother, and was one of the leading interpreters of his work. See Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 7, and 23–24.

⁶³ Quoted in Teresa Chylińska, *Szymanowski*, trans. A. T. Jordan (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1981), 101.

⁶⁴ Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

Strangely enough, however, the music of Szymanowski had practically no influence on what I composed later.⁶⁵

I have quoted the excerpt at length to suggest how Szymanowski's example was instructive in an important but highly generalised sense, and that, as indicated by Lutosławski's final line – "strangely enough" – his path presented such a decisive cul-de-sac that to follow it was unthinkable, or at least unconsciously self-evident.

Szymanowski had a difficult relationship with German music, something shared by many of his generation. In his youth, Szymanowski's musical tastes were strongly shaped by the two senior male figures closest to him: his father Stanisław, and his uncle, Gustav Neuhaus. Stanisław was a deeply musical man who played both piano and cello, and whose childhood home had hosted Liszt and Liszt's fated Polish pupil, Carl Tausig (1841–1871). Of greater bearing on Szymanowski, however, were his father's patriotic sentiments: an intense love for Poland which was solidified by the Russian repression of the 1863 uprising. Stanisław's anti-Russian attitude was so pervasive that, despite strong familial connections in St Petersburg, Szymanowski and his brother Feliks (also a talented pianist and composer) were sent instead to study in Warsaw, a cultural backwater compared to the musical prospects in Russia at the time.⁶⁶ Similarly, Stanisław barred entry to the family home in Tymoszkówka to any Russian visitors. In a 1903 letter to Szymanowski, Stanisław wrote that while he would be willing to accept any differences of opinion between them on matters such as religion, it would be "most painful" for him to "discern a lack of love for your country" in his son.⁶⁷ Despite Stanisław's patriotism, however, Szymanowski remained ambivalent toward

⁶⁵ Witold Lutosławski, "Life and Music," in *Lutosławski on Music*, ed. and trans. Zbigniew Skowron (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), xiv. Typescript in English, unpublished in Lutosławski's lifetime. Similar sentiments from Lutosławski can be found in his conversations with Tadeusz Kaczyński: "[Szymanowski's Third Symphony] marked my initiation into contemporary music, and as such became a kind of symbol for some years after. Then came a strong reaction against the whole somewhat over-delicate aesthetic of that period, and my work never again showed the direct influence of Szymanowski." See Tadeusz Kaczyński, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski*, trans. Yolanta May (London: Chester Music, 1984), 33.

⁶⁶ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 16.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 6.

Poland and Polish music for a large portion of his career. Compared against those more active figures such as Mickiewicz, Szymanowski had rather different ambitions.

The influence of Gustav Neuhaus, on the other hand, was profoundly important for Szymanowski – though it would be remiss to suggest that he was any sort of surrogate father-figure in Stanisław’s place. Neuhaus was a Rhinelander, and a fine musician who was also well-read in German literature and philosophy, particularly Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It was with Neuhaus that Szymanowski had his first formal musical education, learning piano at his music school in Elisavetgrad (now Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine). Here he was introduced to the works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Chopin, and Alistair Wightman suggests that “Szymanowski’s strong predilections, musical, literary and ideological, for German art and culture in the early stages of his career can undoubtedly be attributed in the first instance to his contact with Neuhaus.”⁶⁸ Neuhaus’s children, Natalia and Henryk (the future professor of the Moscow Conservatoire and teacher of Emil Gilels and Sviatoslav Richter), were also vital companions at this time, and much domestic music-making occurred amongst the families.⁶⁹ As Szymanowski would later recall:

Although far away from major musical centres, thanks to my highly musical surroundings I became accustomed to the *best* music from my youngest years. My earliest musical memories are of Chopin, Bach and *especially* Beethoven. This accounts for the fact that I have never had, do not have, and never will have any [...] inclinations for the music of Puccini, Massenet or Mascagni.⁷⁰

Szymanowski’s ‘Germanic’ idiom, which spanned the first third of his output (including several settings of German poetry), was often sharply criticised in the press, with commentators lamenting that he was not writing music more like Moniuszko or Zygmunt Noskowski, the thoroughly nationalistic composers from the previous generation. That this

⁶⁸ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 9.

⁶⁹ For an account of one such evening, probably in 1896, by Szymanowski’s friend Bronisław Gromadzki, see Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 10.

⁷⁰ Letter to Adolf Chybiński, dated 4 March 1909. Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 10. Emphasis in original.

was exactly the kind of music he was consciously avoiding fell on deaf ears. One particularly vocal critic was Aleksander Poliński, correspondent of the *Kurier Warszawski*. Referring to the name Young Poland in Music (*Młoda Polska*) used by Szymanowski and a loose group of composers, performers, and conductors, Poliński wrote: “I am concerned about a ‘Poland’ which does not serve the nation as Chopin and Moniuszko did, but slavishly follows German musical fashion.”⁷¹ In a later review of Szymanowski’s First Symphony, Poliński was harsher still, comparing the Pole unfavourably with Strauss:

one can find only the faults and nothing at all of the genius of Strauss ... On all sides Harmonic Cayenne pepper and Mixpickelsalat-Dissonance prevail ... He [Szymanowski] does not have the right to be called a composer, only a copyist. And there is no Pantheon for copyists.⁷²

Szymanowski, for his own part, was aware enough of the threat that Strauss’s influence posed to his search of a unique compositional voice, a danger most apparent in larger musical forms. He expressed these misgivings to several friends around 1912, although certain dissatisfactions can be traced a little earlier. The decisive turning-point was his one-act opera *Hagith* (Op. 25) completed in 1913, in many ways a *Salome*-lite which conclusively rendered Szymanowski’s Straussomania a dead end. The unsatisfactory compositional process and creative deadlock of *Hagith* was remedied by Szymanowski’s travels abroad in 1913 and 1914, where his interest in the exotic was renewed. There he came into close contact with French and Russian musics in the salons of Paris and London, and witnessed performances of the Ballets Russes in Vienna. The music of Stravinsky was exceptionally important during these years, and in a 1913 letter to Stefan Spiess, Szymanowski wrote: “I am terribly taken with him and par consequence I begin to hate the Germans (Naturally I am not talking of the old ones!).”⁷³ This exposure to music outside of the late-German style was revelatory for Szymanowski, and the music of Ravel, Debussy, and especially Stravinsky

⁷¹ Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 55.

⁷² Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 68–69.

⁷³ Quoted in Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 119.

offered him the path forward for which he had been searching: one distinct from both Polish mainstream composition and from the German influence which had caused him such consternation.

The further Szymanowski slipped from the influence of Strauss and the progressive German school, the more unfavourable he was in his assessment of the German tradition. Although never going so far as to disown the work of his early career, he was unabashed in dismissing the late-Romanticism of Strauss as the “art of yesterday.”⁷⁴ More recent German developments were likewise repugnant, and “like most Poles,” writes Thomas, “he abhorred Schoenberg.”⁷⁵ Yet still, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Szymanowski’s music remained remote from Polish culture, and very little could be said to resemble the patriotic example of his father. On the whole, Wightman suggests “that nationalist concepts were subsidiary to a broader European view, and that for a certainty his destiny was not initially to be linked with the fight for the re-creation of the Polish state.”⁷⁶

Immediately following the First World War, however, this standpoint radically changed. The War set in motion a creative crisis for Szymanowski, forcing him to re-evaluate the public value of his work. To a certain extent, he became aware of the potentially altruistic contributions that his art could make to the nation, and as a leading Polish composer, he felt that he had artistic obligations which extended beyond his personal circumstances. It was also around this time that Szymanowski began to take an interest in the folk culture of the Tatra Mountains, which led to the development of what he called his “lechitic” style – a generalised and stylised ‘peasant’ idiom present in works from *Stopiewnie* (1921) onward. This was a surprising move for Szymanowski, since throughout his career he had been outspoken against

⁷⁴ Quoted in Thomas, *Polish Music*, 7. From the essay “On the Work of Wagner, Strauss and Schoenberg,” written c.1925–1926 but unpublished in his lifetime.

⁷⁵ Thomas, *Polish Music*, 7.

⁷⁶ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 21.

the appropriation of folk material, which reminded him too strongly of the provincialism of late nineteenth-century Polish music.⁷⁷ It was the example set by Stravinsky, in fact, which offered the model for this new use of folk material, a way forward far removed from the tired clichés of the older Polish generation. The renewed statehood of Poland undeniably played some role in this abrupt about-face and sudden nationalistic investment, but a yoking of the two together conflates correlation with causation. It also disregards other factors, such as Samson's theory of Szymanowski's need for external influences mentioned previously, and the fact that in the 1920s a much broader movement of interest in folk culture was taking place, significantly raising the artistic profile of Highland traditions in other disciplines such as architecture and wood-carving.

In the public sphere, at least, Szymanowski coupled his turn toward folklore with an appeal for a move away from Germanocentrism, writing in "My Splendid Isolation" that "I am aware that it is difficult to rid oneself of a valued foreign treasure, but one must do so if one is to discover one's own jewels. This rejection is the starting point from which contemporary French and Russian music has developed."⁷⁸ The allure of *Górale* music was thus twofold: as a private, personal source of musical inspiration, and as a public, nationalistic statement in tune with the dominant rhetoric of the period. Samson suggests that Szymanowski's musical patriotism was in some ways a "cover-story," allowing for the exploration of his own interests.⁷⁹ We have seen then that Szymanowski's music, like Chopin's, was appropriated to a nationalistic cause, even though the patriotic intentions behind it were questionable in their sincerity.

⁷⁷ Samson, *Szymanowski*, 151.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Samson, *Szymanowski*, 157.

⁷⁹ Samson, "Polish Nationalism," 137.

Interestingly, a similar kind of incongruity surrounding musical nationalism has also been identified with respect to German music, especially regarding *intent*. In their essay “Germans as the ‘People of Music’: Genealogy of an Identity,” Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter explore the conscious engagement with nationalism in the music of several nineteenth-century German composers. Their results are inconclusive, but also point to a scholarly slippage all too prevalent in discussions of this period:

If we compare Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms in terms of their musical response to a sense of national identity, we find very different devices, approaches, and musical means of evoking nationhood, or at least commenting on its state of being. We might be justified in interpreting all of these devices as evidence of nationalism in music or as evidence of a composer’s national identity influencing his compositions. We might not be justified, however, in regarding such evidence of national consciousness as either stable or even essential to the composer’s work.⁸⁰

The preceding discussion of Szymanowski, along with Applegate and Potter’s words of warning, demonstrate the complicated artistic nationalism that began to ferment in the mid-nineteenth century. A potential minefield, debates of national style were directed as much (or even more so) by knee-jerk pseudo conservatism and nationalistic prejudice as careful aesthetic consideration and analysis. The critic Poliński was again the most visible culprit behind this trend. In 1889, for example, he took aim at Zygmunt Noskowski – Szymanowski’s teacher and the dedicatee of his Op. 10, *Variations on a Polish Folk Tune* – for using German chorale melodies rather than Polish folk music for the harmony exercises in his classes. “Commendably patriotic though Poliński may have appeared,” writes Wightman, “his plea that students be permitted to impose harmonic strait-jackets of basically German origin on native folk-music is indicative of a lack of understanding of the real nature of such a culture.”⁸¹ There is a similar irony in Poliński’s previously-quoted criticism of Szymanowski “slavishly” following “German musical fashion” rather than the style of

⁸⁰ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, “Germans as the ‘People of Music’: Genealogy of an Identity,” in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 10.

⁸¹ Wightman, *Szymanowski: Life and Work*, 38.

Moniuszko, if we consider (a) how indebted Moniuszko was to Germans such as Weber; (b) what a step backwards he was from the musical innovations of Chopin; and (c) that he was 35 years old in the grave at the time.⁸² It was Moniuszko's provincial nationalism that Szymanowski had to work so hard to overcome, and so entrenched was the former's leading status in Poland that Szymanowski had no choice but to look elsewhere.

This issue of influence and allegiance – whether one leaned more to the East or to the West – was a vital question in the aftermath of the war, as Poland strove to carve a place suitably balanced between the two extremes. Just precisely what the quality of 'Polishness' in music meant, however, was widely contentious, and commentators were divided on the benefits of neighbouring influences, as well as the new allure of the avant-garde and the old legacy of nineteenth-century folk appropriation. Jakelski notes that the fraught position between East and West was equal parts push and pull: "Polish musical life was dependent on the West for information and hungry for its recognition, but nevertheless wary of a too close identification with Western culture that could strain its relations with neighbouring Soviet and Eastern European powers."⁸³ The following case studies of Witold Lutosławski and Henryk Górecki will explore different manifestations of this debate, and the composers' musical responses to their respective circumstances and goals.

⁸² Samson, *Szymanowski*, 14–15. Here Samson gives a compelling explanation for Moniuszko's ascension as the father-figure of Polish music, which held "a significance for the nation [...] entirely disproportionate to its musical quality."

⁸³ Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," *The Journal of Musicology* 26 (2009): 228.

CHAPTER 3

AUTONOMY AND ABSTRACTION: LUTOSŁAWSKI'S ABSOLUTE MUSIC

Some artists, writers, and philosophers maintain that the duty of a creative artist is to express the world in which we live. The great writer Joseph Conrad says even that the duty of the artist is to do justice to the visible world. I am definitely against such a view. I think the visible world, the world in which we live, has no difficulty in expressing itself without our help. We are not predestined to express the real world in the art. The ideal world, the world of our dreams, of our wishes, of our vision of perfection is the arts. Access to this ideal world is given to creative artists. Their duty is to enable access to this world to other people through their works.¹

I cannot help saying frankly that a composer who theorises too much, and talks too much of artistic programs and musical perspectives of the future, always seems to me somewhat ridiculous. Music must be able to fend for itself, and if it cannot, then so much the worse for the composer. But no program, no theories can save it. I think that there are rather too many loquacious composers today who only compose examples for use in polemical debates. I am rather tired of this situation, and what interests me most at present are the works that exist in their own right, independent of theoretical or historical significance.²

“Our vision of perfection is the arts”

Witold Lutosławski was famously reluctant to address the relationships between his music and the society in which it originated, and stressed that his was an absolute music. Likewise, over his lifetime he was wary of the haphazard designations of programmatic elements in his works by critics and commentators, and resisted their endeavours to uncover what his music meant. This, however, has not stopped others from continuing to try, and interest in this topic does not appear to have abated, nor shown signs of slowing down.³ Lutosławski was always

¹ Lutosławski, “Life and Music,” in *Lutosławski on Music*, ed. and trans. Zbigniew Skowron (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), xxi. From an address delivered upon receipt of the 1993 Kyoto Prize.

² Lutosławski, “Improvisations on a Given Theme,” in *Lutosławski on Music*, 110. From a letter to the Swedish periodical *Nutida musik*, first published in Swedish in 1959/1960.

³ Recent research to address such connections include John Casken, “The Visionary and the Dramatic in the Music of Lutosławski”; and Maja Trochimczyk, “‘Dans la Nuit’: The Themes of Death and Night in Lutosławski’s *Œuvre*,” both in *Lutosławski Studies*, ed. Zbigniew Skowron (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36–56, 96–124; Michael L. Klein’s chapter “Narrative and Intertext: The Logic of Suffering in

sceptical toward the ascription of specific extra-musical meanings to his music, which is well documented in numerous interviews, writings, and lectures through his career. Although he understood and even sympathised with interpretations that conflicted with his own, variations on his fundamental principle of abstraction are always reiterated across these media.

Some of the clearest instances of this circumspection can be found in the interviews with Lutosławski conducted by the Polish musicologist Tadeusz Kaczyński, which took place at several points across the 1960s and 70s. These interviews were first published in Polish in 1972, and were translated into English along with additional, later discussions, as *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski* in 1984.⁴ Along with the compelling insights into Lutosławski's compositional 'toolbox' drawn out by Kaczyński throughout these wide-ranging discussions, something notable is the interviewer's repeated return to the topic of musical expression and content, and Lutosławski's repeated – and increasingly exasperated – brushing off of the subject. During their discussion of Lutosławski's *Trois poèmes d'Henri Michaux* (1963) for chorus and orchestra, Kaczyński first broached the overlap between poetic and musical imagery. While Kaczyński sought some confirmation of a concrete meaning in operation throughout the piece, Lutosławski sidestepped the issue, remarking that music “contains more meanings than any other art or – to be more precise – has *no* definite meaning, which comes to the same thing.”⁵ Later, as they moved onto the String Quartet (1964), the following exchange occurred:

KACZYŃSKI: There are several mysterious places in this work. *Funèbre* [Rehearsal Figure 45] is one of them. I know you dislike being questioned about the problems of expression, but the term you use provokes it. I wouldn't ask this question had you

Lutosławski's Symphony No. 4” in his *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005): 108–136; Nicholas Reyland, “*Livre* or Symphony? Lutosławski's *Livre pour orchestre* and the Enigma of Musical Narrativity,” *Music Analysis* 27 (2008): 253–294; and Lisa Jakelski, “Witold Lutosławski and the Ethics of Abstraction,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 10 (2013): 169–202.

⁴ Tadeusz Kaczyński, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski*, trans. Yolanta May (London: Chester Music, 1984).

⁵ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 2. Emphasis in original.

used the term ‘*Grave*’ at this point; but ‘*Funèbre*’ evokes the climax of a drama. What is the dramatic structure of the Quartet, then?

LUTOSŁAWSKI: The term ‘*funèbre*’ isn’t meant to suggest any hidden non-musical content. I use these descriptive terms at the points which demand special interpretation. I want to achieve a particular expression, colouring, or way of performing. The word ‘*funèbre*’ tells the performer which particular effect I’m hoping for more emphatically than the word ‘*grave*’ would. But as I’ve already said, this isn’t meant to be a work of funereal character. This word doesn’t appear in the list of movements: it merely indicates the kind of interpretation required.⁶

Lutosławski’s response raises more questions than it answers, and it is difficult, for example, to reconcile his conscious and very deliberate choice of the marking *funèbre* over *grave* with his claim in the next breath that a funereal character was not his intention.⁷ His remark about *funèbre* not occurring in the movement list is also curious, and it is understandable why Kaczyński then pushed this point when the discussion turned to Lutosławski’s Symphony No. 2 (1967). I have quoted this excerpt at length because it demonstrates both the depth of Lutosławski’s musical thought, as well as his considered and humble way of expressing himself:

KACZYŃSKI: You call the first movement of your Symphony ‘*Hésitant*’ and the second ‘*Direct*.’ These rather programmatic names prompt one to ask further questions which might help us to get to the bottom of the matter. If you use the word ‘hesitation’ we have to ask, ‘Before what?’ When we hear about the ‘direct’ motion we have to enquire, ‘Where to?’ [...]

LUTOSŁAWSKI: I quite understand the reasons behind this extremely probing question. As usual, in such a situation – you’ll no doubt remember there was a similar point in our previous conversation – thought comes to a stop, being afraid to enter the dark regions where the meaning of music is under discussion.

I really haven’t the courage to tackle the subject of meaning in music. The longer one thinks about it, the more questions one finds. One thing is certain: music isn’t composed in order to express any single idea. If I were to give a precise answer to your question, such as that the first movement of my Symphony does represent some hesitation, or that the second leads decisively to a happy (or perhaps unhappy) ending – it wouldn’t make much sense. The whole point is that even if the music carries associations with a wealth of human emotion, these associations are different for everybody. The conclusion seems simple: it doesn’t matter whether the composer was affected by influences outside music in the course of writing his work, whether the composition is linked with certain events in his conscious or unconscious mind, or whether he wants to express something which might be described in words. All this is

⁶ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 18.

⁷ Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 113.

connected with the sources of musical inspiration, but for me it never becomes the kind of purpose which music is meant to serve.

That's why, like so many other composers, I couldn't say what it is exactly that my music is trying to say, any more than I could explain the meaning of a Debussy prelude or a Bach partita. But isn't it one of music's greatest attractions that it says something which can't be said in any other way?⁸

Finally, when discussing the orchestral piece *Mi-Parti* (1976), Kaczyński again questioned the work's dramatic plan, which he interpreted as "a skirmish between the weak and the strong elements" in the piece.⁹ Lutosławski maintained his stance, however, responding: "I cannot conceive of a composition of mine where any fixed non-musical meaning could be permanently attached to the sounds." He continued:

That's why my first reaction on hearing any commentary on my composition is to dissociate myself from it. Does it mean I am against such an interpretation and consider it improper? Not at all. Everybody has a right to receive music in his own particular way, if he finds it fulfilling. I am merely opposing the statement that there is one objective truth about a piece of music and that music has a meaning beyond itself.¹⁰

As Lutosławski suggests, the multiplicity of musical meaning and the highly subjective nature of such ascriptions indicate that any attempts to uncover extra-musical content are misguided. His opposition to the idea that there is "one objective truth about a piece of music" presents something of an inversion to Mendelssohn's oft-quoted expression, from a 1842 letter to Marc André Souchay: "A piece of music that I love expresses thoughts to me that are not too *imprecise* to be framed in words, but too *precise*. So I find that attempts to express such thoughts in words may have some point to them, but they are also unsatisfying."¹¹ But although they differ on the details, it seems that both Lutosławski (especially recalling his earlier comments regarding *Trois poèmes*) and Mendelssohn reached

⁸ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 43–44.

⁹ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 89.

¹⁰ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 90.

¹¹ Quoted in Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2011), 85. Emphasis in Kramer's text. Letter dated 15 October 1842, from *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Pewter le Huray and James Day (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 311.

the same ultimate conclusion. In Lawrence Kramer's words, "too much meaning equals no meaning."¹²

Lutosławski's aesthetic of absolute music also informed how he listened to the works of others. He was doubtful – or at least unconvinced – by programmatic compositions, and mentioned in that same interview concerning *Mi-Parti* that "I have nothing against this form of art, but I myself react to music quite differently. I even listen to the programme works by Berlioz, Strauss or Karłowicz as if they were 'pure' music, probably against the composer's intentions."¹³ After Kaczyński implied that programs are often useful for communicating with wider audiences, Lutosławski further clarified his position:

I am not so sure that this is the best method of educating a listener. If you take him away from music itself to meanings beyond it, you might lead him astray, deprive him of authentic reactions by suggesting your own to him. Perhaps the very listener we are so intent on patronising, on simplifying things for, is richer in possibilities than we suppose. [...] And that is why I view any discourse about the so-called content of a composition with some scepticism; to my mind this content is absent.¹⁴

Through this overview of Lutosławski's aesthetics, several characteristics of his musical thought become apparent. For one, he believed that music should speak for itself, and that it should be of high enough quality to do so; it should not lean on some program as a crutch.¹⁵ Linked closely to this was the firm belief that music and verbal expression are incompatible, and that attempts to cross this gulf are doomed to failure. More relevant for this investigation, however, is his claim that "it doesn't matter whether the composer was affected by influences outside music in the course of writing his work," which would appear to flatly

¹² Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 85.

¹³ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 89. Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876–1909) was Polish composer understood as a stylistic bridge between Chopin and Szymanowski, whose late Romantic style was heavily influenced by Wagner. He died in an avalanche while skiing in the south of Poland. See Alistair Wightman, *Karłowicz, Young Poland and the Musical Fin-de-siècle* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996).

¹⁴ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 91.

¹⁵ Mark Evan Bonds has demonstrated that this type of thinking was shared similarly by both Schoenberg and Stravinsky (though with varied shades of sincerity), and that it "resonates with long-standing attitudes toward this kind of music as expressed by Mahler ('not the highest rung on the ladder') and Schumann long before ('Let me first hear that you have written beautiful music')." See Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 258–259.

invalidate the entire premise of this thesis. His comments make clear that any search in his music for compositions ‘about,’ ‘in response to,’ or ‘influenced’ by historical events – and in particular the Second World War – is a fruitless task. There are no *Polish Requiems* or *Threnodies* in his catalogue of works, and even if there were, it is unlikely that he would have ever spoken about their subjects.¹⁶ Since the “ideal world” is the realm of the arts, why pollute it with man’s petty struggles? Also puzzling in Lutosławski’s thought is the distinction – which appears so clear to his eyes – between a funereal atmosphere and a funereal subject in the String Quartet.

For the most part, Lutosławski sought an answer to these issues through his concept of *akcja*, a technique of organising musical material.¹⁷ As conceived by Lutosławski, *akcja* – broadly translated as ‘action’ or ‘plot’ – is integral to his construction of large-scale forms, and is concerned with the progression of one event to another. Crucially, *akcja* takes place on some abstracted plane separated from musical representation or expression, and so any ‘plot’ invoked is distinct from any ‘program.’ It is a means of imparting coherence, and of leading a listener through a piece, rather than any form of storytelling. Lutosławski’s *akcja* also draws upon principles of theatre and dramaturgy, where we could perhaps imagine the ‘action’ of one actor interrupting another as operating independently of any onstage story.¹⁸ Thus, as Lutosławski explained to Irena Nikolska, “I write absolute music, although I try to introduce

¹⁶ Lutosławski did compose a *Requiem* fragment as a graduation piece for his composition diploma in 1937, of which the *Lacrimosa* has been published. Apart from this, however, works expressing grief, suffering, or death, especially in any liturgical sense, are absent from Lutosławski’s oeuvre. The *Polish Requiem* is Krzysztof Penderecki’s, and it was completed in 1984, with movements later added in 1993 and 2005. Various sections are dedicated to the *Solidarność* movement and its leader Lech Wałęsa, the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, victims of the Katyn massacre, and the Warsaw Uprising, and so on. See Wolfram Schwinger, *Krzysztof Penderecki: His Life and Work: Encounters, Biography and Musical Commentary*, trans. William Mann (London: Schott, 1989), 233–235.

¹⁷ See Nicholas Reyland, “Lutosławski, ‘Akcja,’ and the Poetics of Musical Plot,” *Music and Letters* 88 (2007): 604–631; “‘Akcja’ and Narrativity in the Music of Witold Lutosławski,” (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 2005).

¹⁸ See Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 61–64; Irena Nikolska, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski (1987–92)*, trans. Valeri Terokhin (Stockholm: Melos: En Musiktidskrift, 1993), 97. As Lutosławski said to Nikolska, “By ‘action’ I understand a purely musical ‘plot’ – not what is described as programme music. A purely musical plot. That is to say, a chain of interrelated musical events. For the listener to follow the thread. From beginning to end.”

new dramatic elements into it.”¹⁹ *Akcja* is intriguing because it suggests both a distance and a closeness to a source of inspiration: Lutosławski is able to freely appropriate certain extra-musical principles, yet repudiate any extra-musical *content* as such. Speaking with Kaczyński about the Cello Concerto (1970), Lutosławski remarked that the music contains parallels with theatrical conflict, but that this “mustn’t be exaggerated and considered as the essence of the work.” Appealing to the non-representational qualities of instrumental music, he stated bluntly that “If I wanted to write a drama about a conflict between an individual and a group, I’d have done it in words.”²⁰ Michael Klein appropriates this perspective to interpret the String Quartet’s apparent ‘funereal’ inconsistency, suggesting that “an indication of *funèbre* [...] allows for an expression of grief *as if* at a funeral while denying the representation of an actual funeral.”²¹ A more complete discussion of *akcja* is beyond the scope of this argument, however some of its principles – particularly a facilitation of both distance and closeness – are useful as a blueprint for Lutosławski’s use of absolute music, which will be considered later in this chapter.

Despite Lutosławski’s suggestions to the contrary, his commitment to this aesthetic of musical autonomy sits uncomfortably against instances in his music which seem to deserve – or even demand – a programmatic reading. It is this disconnect that has proved a boon for several recent researchers. Lisa Jakelski, for example, points to the “evocative immediacy” of moments such as the passage near the end of the third movement in his *Chain 2* (1985) for violin and orchestra, or Rehearsal Figure 77 in the Cello Concerto, which appear to suggest links with an extra-musical interpretation. At both of those points, Jakelski hears reconciliation in the face of prolonged and bitter confrontation.²² Similarly, Nicholas Reyland

¹⁹ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 90.

²⁰ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 64.

²¹ Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 114.

²² Jakelski, “Ethics of Abstraction,” 169.

has explored the tensions between the title of Lutosławski's *Livre pour orchestre* (1968), and the narrative cohesion of the music contained by it. Klein, likewise, finds numerous features of the composer's works which signify suffering.²³ Despite the variety of methodologies employed, ranging from the archival research of Jakelski to the hermeneutical engagements of Reyland and the intertextual explorations of Klein, all authors share an implicit – and sometimes explicit – refusal to accept Lutosławski's belief in the abstract nature of his music. Just as Lutosławski overrides Berlioz or Strauss when those composers link a specific program to their music, Jakelski, Reyland, and Klein override Lutosławski himself in their search for latent meanings in his work. Following their lead, the objective of this chapter is to explore how (if at all) Lutosławski's perceptions of German music are inscribed in his work. But rather than dispute his claims, I will do the opposite.

Rather than attempt to determine *what* Lutosławski's music means, or even, perhaps more importantly, *how* it creates meaning, I will instead take his statements at face-value, and 'buy in' to his claims of music's autonomy. Rather than interrogate any inconsistencies in his accounts of his own music, I will accept, in other words, the tale of the unreliable narrator. If the distinction can be made, then, I am more interested in the meaningfulness of Lutosławski's claims for meaninglessness than in any *specific* meaning of his music itself. In formulating this position I am indebted to the recent work of Mark Evan Bonds, who, via Lydia Goehr and Richard Taruskin, approaches absolute music as a "regulative concept," which stands as "a premise that can be neither proven nor disproven but that provides a framework for discussing other ideas."²⁴ Given the polemical nature of 'musical meaning' on the whole, I argue that this is the most appropriate way of addressing Lutosławski's aesthetics.

²³ Reyland, "Livre or Symphony?" 253–294; and Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 108.

²⁴ Bonds, *Absolute Music*, 6.

Lutosławski's convictions of the absolute nature of music were clearly deep-rooted, given that he also regarded music by other composers – even those works with an explicit program – as absolute music. This aspect of his practice has already received some scholarly attention, although work is far from complete. The Polish musicologist Zbigniew Skowron, in his contribution to the volume *Lutosławski Studies* (of which he was also the editor), reconstructs the “aesthetic situation” of Lutosławski's practice through an examination of the composer's journals and interviews. While Skowron broaches topics such as inspiration, empiricism, rationality, and even metaphysics in relation to Lutosławski's outlook, this abstraction is only briefly touched on.²⁵ Similarly, Reyland's work on *akcja* is limited to the structural implications of the concept, and he prefers to dodge the question of abstraction altogether.²⁶ Returning to the idea of a “regulative concept,” in accepting Lutosławski's conception of his music as absolute, what other ideas can be discussed through this framework, and how are we able to relate this to other areas of his music and life? What does it reflect of Lutosławski as a person and as a composer? And what could his motive have been for such a strong commitment to this aesthetic? Considering that “absolute music is an extra-musical idea,”²⁷ Lutosławski's consistent and impassioned defence of his music's autonomy can then be read in a number of ways: as an ethical choice, made in the shadow of *socrealizm* to reclaim artistic integrity and independence; as a political move, shielding his music from unwanted – and perhaps dangerous – interpretations; as a strategy of legitimisation, couching his avant-garde techniques in a rhetoric derived from ‘great’

²⁵ Zbigniew Skowron, “Lutosławski's Aesthetics: A Reconstruction of the Composer's Outlook,” in *Lutosławski Studies*, 3–15. Skowron states that “following the path of nineteenth-century absolute music, Lutosławski was striving towards the world or purely musical emotions which he was shaping and expressing with the help of modern resources, while transcending his own existential experiences into elusive, almost metaphysical qualities” (p. 12). Quotations are supplied where Lutosławski draws parallels between himself and Haydn, but Skowron does not probe this area any further.

²⁶ Reyland, “Poetics of Musical Plot,” 604–631.

²⁷ Daniel Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.

classical composers; or as a method of maintaining a depoliticised relationship with past German music, since absolute music has, so to speak, “no history.”²⁸

The first two of these interpretations – abstraction as ethically and/or politically motivated – are common topics in Lutosławski scholarship. They certainly feature to some extent in most accounts of his music, and I will later return to some of this literature in greater detail. The result of the wide acceptance of this ethical/political frame, however, is that little concern has been directed at other possible interpretations of Lutosławski’s steadfast musical autonomy. As I will argue in this chapter, however, Lutosławski’s retreat into an autonomous and abstracted musical aesthetic also comes into conflict with the contentious position of absolute music in post-war Eastern Europe, where its roots in nineteenth-century German Romanticism (and hence German nationalism) were balanced by twentieth-century totalitarianism’s widespread appropriation of cultural objects as propaganda. In other words, while Hitler and Stalin’s abuse of socially contingent art pushed musicians away from representation and ‘meaning’ in their work, the alternative, especially for Poles, was potentially just as undesirable.²⁹ From this perspective, Lutosławski’s commitment to an absolute aesthetic emerges as significantly marked or unusual, and deserving of closer scrutiny. Furthermore, Poland’s unique position *between* East and West problematises the main narrative of absolute music in the twentieth century, which has been construed as an obligation on one side of the Iron Curtain and a taboo on the other. Issues of

²⁸ Chua, *Construction of Meaning*, 3–4. As Chua writes, “an absolute by definition cannot have a history; God – the absolute absolute – cannot be historically grounded, and neither can the surrogate absolutes of the secular world such as Reason or the Transcendental Ego; they all claim to start from nothing, as a self-sufficient method or metaphysical entity, without genealogy or narrative.”

²⁹ For an account of the German recovery from Nazism’s artistic policy, commonly described as the *Nachholbedarf*, or “need to catch up,” see Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28–30. Similarly, as Laura Silverberg demonstrates, at least until the late 1960s a cultural unity between East and West Germany was – perhaps surprisingly – a strong concern of the GDR, more so even than solidarity with other members of the Soviet Bloc. See Laura Silverberg, “East German Music and the Problem of National Identity,” *Nationalities Papers* 37 (2009): 502–509. The GDR saw itself as “the sole heir to and protector of Germany’s greatest ‘humanist’ traditions, while West Germany – poisoned by American influence – represented an evolutionary dead end, the logical continuation of German imperialism, fascism, and cultural decadence” (p. 507).

homogenisation aside, such a perspective is of only limited usefulness in this case.³⁰

Acknowledging these factors, the aim of this chapter is to examine the third and fourth interpretations listed in the previous paragraph – legitimisation and de-politicisation – in relation to Lutosławski's claims of music's autonomy.

While much of the material for this argument has been drawn from Lutosławski's own remarks or writings, it is important to note at this juncture that a composer is not necessarily the definitive voice on the interpretation of their music. Lutosławski – like many composers of the twentieth century – belonged to a lineage stretching back at least as far as Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner, and Schoenberg, of composer-critics equally prodigious in the areas of music and letters. As Steven Stucky writes:

The composer's role in recent decades has come more and more to encompass not only making the work of art but explicating it as well; and, given how difficult much of the recent repertoire has been to make sense of aesthetically or to analyse technically, scholars have been only too happy to accept the composer's assistance. For a number of major figures in this century, our understanding of their work rests fundamentally on their own opinions about how they made it and what it means.³¹

Stucky stresses that by being overly reliant on the composer's perspective, we run the risk of encoding their subjective, often highly biased ideas into scholarship, rather than scrutinising them critically. We forget, perhaps, that they are all unreliable narrators to some extent.

Stucky cites the receptions of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in particular, which the composers themselves (and their disciples) played a very active role in shaping. This situation is understandable – what composer wants their intentions mangled by a naïve musicologist, and what musicologist would dare tackle Stravinsky's *Threni* alone? But the fact remains that even for someone who, in Stucky's words, was as “unusually objective” as Lutosławski, this “parallax error” remains.³²

³⁰ For one example of this narrative – and its complications – see Bonds, *Absolute Music*, 297.

³¹ Steven Stucky, “Change and Constancy: The Essential Lutosławski,” in *Lutosławski Studies*, 130.

³² Stucky, “Change and Constancy,” 130–131.

In addition, as Jakelski intimates, we must also heed the very real possibility that “all public speech in a socialist context was marked and potentially immoral.”³³ While many of Lutosławski’s published interviews would fall under this category, it remains difficult to gauge how many of his responses were a ‘front.’ Nonetheless, several discrepancies have arisen: Stucky has noted verbal inconsistencies regarding the notion of a “folklore period” in Lutosławski’s works, and more seriously, Adrian Thomas has pointed to other instances where the composer has been misleading regarding his output of socialist realist mass songs.³⁴ Lutosławski asserted in interviews that while he did write some mass songs – stressing that they were for monetary rather than ideological reasons – the texts that he chose contained “no political implications whatsoever.” Thomas finds, however, that of the ten or so that Lutosławski wrote, only one is without overt military or political connections. More intriguing still is the existence of the piece *A July Garland* (1949?), subtitled “A triptych for solo baritone, men’s choir and symphony orchestra,” which celebrated the fifth anniversary of the July Manifesto of 1944, a political document issued by the Soviet-backed Polish Communist Party.³⁵ Although many of Lutosławski’s writings and comments form the backbone of this chapter, and are accepted on face value, I am very much aware that his comments must be taken with a grain of salt.

The next section of this chapter will provide an overview of Lutosławski’s life until the Thaw of 1956, with the aim of highlighting the formulation of his musical aesthetic and his difficult experiences of the Second World War. Following this, the extra-musical implications of composing absolute music in the post-war period will be addressed in greater

³³ Jakelski, “Ethics of Abstraction,” 177. Later, Jakelski makes the similar point that “serving others,” which Lutosławski advocated as a responsibility of artists, “could never be an entirely apolitical aspiration in socialist Poland” (p. 178).

³⁴ Stucky, “Change and Constancy,” 131, n. 10; Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55–56.

³⁵ Adrian Thomas, “File 750: Composers, Politics, and the Festival of Polish Music (1951),” *Polish Music Journal* 5 (2002), accessed 13 November 2016, http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issue/5.1.02/thomasfile.html.

detail, as I explore the possible meanings it held for a composer in Lutosławski's position. Here, I will also consider his professional and artistic investment in the music of the Western Canon, and how abstraction provided both political distance and a means of legitimisation from the past practices of other composers. Finally, I will turn to his piece *Musique funèbre* (Funereal Music), completed in 1958 for string orchestra, where several of these issues collide head-on. At the crux of this discussion is the tension between Lutosławski's oft-repeated refutation of links with the techniques of Schoenberg, and the fact that *Musique funèbre* is completely saturated by a single twelve-note tone row. In Lutosławski's eyes, absolute music served as a means of decoupling music from any external associations, leaving him to freely choose his own compositional lineage. By emphasising some connections and toning down others, Lutosławski carefully crafted the image of an 'accessible' twentieth-century composer, whose avant-garde techniques were always grounded in "the great spirits of the past."³⁶

"My generation: a happy one?"

The forties and fifties were hard times. But not only for me: for my generation. Just think of it: childhood and youth between the two world wars. The Bolshevik Revolution (which had not spared my family). On the threshold of maturity: World War II, and the Hitlerian occupation. My generation: a happy one?³⁷

Lutosławski's lifetime maps almost exactly onto the "short" twentieth century, first proposed by Eric Hobsbawm in 1994 (the year in which Lutosławski died). Hobsbawm's century, subtitled the "Age of Extremes," is bookended by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the fall of Communism in 1991.³⁸ Lutosławski was born in Warsaw in 1913, and his parents Józef and Maria (née Olszewska) were both members of the Polish *ziemiaństwo*,

³⁶ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 80.

³⁷ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 82.

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

or landed gentry.³⁹ Their estate was near Drozdowo, some 150 kilometres northeast of Warsaw, and at the time belonged to the Russian partition of Poland. Lutosławski wrote fondly of his time in Drozdowo: “It was not without influence on my character that I spent my early years in contact with nature. Beautiful forests, fields, rivers, meadows, and gardens are still in my memory.”⁴⁰ But his pastoral upbringing was short-lived, and in 1915 the family was uprooted by the First World War, fleeing to Moscow where Józef was involved in nationalist politics. From this base in Moscow, Józef, along with his brother Marian, travelled widely throughout Russia organising émigré troops for a Polish counter-offensive. By the time of the February and October Revolutions of 1917, however, these aspirations came into conflict with those of the insurgent Bolshevik forces. The pair were arrested in the northern port of Murmansk in April 1918, and charged with counter-revolutionary activities and the forgery of documents. Both were executed without trial on 5 September 1918.⁴¹ Józef was a well-trained amateur pianist, and Lutosławski recalled to Nikolska that

According to those who intimately knew him, he played the piano in a most impressive manner, particularly as regards [*sic*] Beethoven’s sonatas and some pieces by Chopin. I don’t remember him playing, but, as I was told later, I often listened to his music, sitting just under the grand.⁴²

When the war ended, the Lutosławski family returned to Drozdowo to find their estates ravaged, and in 1919 they settled in Warsaw. That year, Lutosławski began his first piano lessons with Helena Hoffman, a well-known teacher in Warsaw. Lutosławski had a clear aptitude for the instrument, and by the time he was nine he started to compose small piano pieces. Remembering this early predilection, Lutosławski wrote that “I don’t remember being indifferent to music. It has always fascinated me and I could not imagine myself having

³⁹ Charles Bodman Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, 3rd edition (London: Omnibus Press, 1999), 1.

⁴⁰ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, xiii.

⁴¹ Lutosławski has vague memories of visiting his father in Moscow’s Butyrskaya Prison shortly before Józef’s execution. Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 4.

⁴² Nikolska, *Conversations*, 21. Józef apparently studied at some point with Eugène d’Albert (1864–1932), a former pupil of Franz Liszt. While many sources offer this fact, the precise time or place of his studies with d’Albert have not been verified, though Bodman Rae speculates it may have happened during Józef’s time in either London or Zurich. See Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 4.

another profession than that of a musician, or even a composer.”⁴³ At the age of thirteen he also started to play the violin, which he continued for six years, and at fourteen began private study in composition with Witold Maliszewski (1873–1939), who had been a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. For reasons that are not quite clear, given Lutosławski’s strong pull toward music, upon completing his *gimnazjum* (high school) studies in 1931 he enrolled at the University of Warsaw to study mathematics.⁴⁴ He maintained his musical lessons over this time, and in 1932 he also entered the Warsaw Conservatory to study formally with Maliszewski, who had recently been appointed there. Altogether, Lutosławski continued at the University of Warsaw for two years, but in 1933, when the simultaneous pressures of music and mathematics proved too difficult, he switched to music full-time and also dropped the violin in favour of piano lessons with Jerzy Lefeld (1898–1980).

Lutosławski’s time with Maliszewski was mixed. He found Maliszewski too conservative (“He belonged to the Russian school [...] and was not interested in modern trends”), and when the composer presented his teacher a score of his *Symphonic Variations*, written completely independently, Maliszewski “declared openly that he did not understand it.”⁴⁵ Maliszewski made clear to Lutosławski that “if I was to continue writing such music he could not teach me anymore,” but the pair parted on good terms, and Lutosławski was forever grateful of his teacher’s integrity for not stifling an aesthetic that he disagreed with.⁴⁶

More importantly, Maliszewski also instilled in Lutosławski the importance of a structure’s psychological and emotional aspects, largely through his lectures on the formal

⁴³ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, xiv.

⁴⁴ Throughout his high-school studies Lutosławski had shown strong mathematical ability, and when a friend of his chose to study in the field, he “followed suit.” Lutosławski said that “I wanted to have a university education – I did not want to confine myself to music.” Nikolska, *Conversations*, 21.

⁴⁵ Bálint András Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, trans. Stephen Walsh [?] (London: Chester Music, 1976), 4–5. Speaking with Nikolska, Lutosławski presented a similar opinion: “To him, Rimsky-Korsakov was the last word. More modern things did not exist for him.” Nikolska, *Conversations*, 28.

⁴⁶ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, xiv, 218–219.

schemes of Beethoven. Maliszewski's conception of form, apparently stemming from his own classes with Glazunov at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, distinguished between four characters or components: "introductory, narrative, transitional, and concluding."⁴⁷ Of these, Maliszewski placed the most importance on the introductory and concluding sections, influencing Lutosławski's later development of "bipartite" and end-weighted forms. Such characteristics can be observed in two-movement works such as the String Quartet ("Introductory Movement" and "Main Movement"), and Symphony No. 2 ("Hésitant" and "Direct"), but their influence is also felt in *Livre pour orchestra*, the Cello Concerto, and *Mi-Parti*.⁴⁸ In addition, Maliszewski also emphasised the *function* of a formal section over its explicit content, which is a central feature of Lutosławski's controlled aleatorism.

Lutosławski recalled in a conversation with Charles Bodman Rae that, according to Maliszewski, "only in the Narrative [section] is content the most important thing to be perceived, while in all the other three the role of the given section in the form of the music is more important than the content."⁴⁹ Interestingly, in Lutosławski's reflections on his teacher, he stressed that this psychological conception of form was a distinctly Russian method, in opposition to then-current German schools of thought. He wrote elsewhere that Maliszewski's method "was not generally accepted and even ardently opposed, for instance, by the Germans," and also speculated that this was because German theorists "regarded this method of approach as 'unscientific.'"⁵⁰ Despite not always seeing eye-to-eye, Lutosławski always maintained a deep respect for his former teacher, stating that the "impact of his lectures on me can scarcely be exaggerated."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 89. For more detail on these differing characters, see Zbigniew Skowron, "Lutosławski's Aesthetics," 11–12.

⁴⁸ See James Harley, "Considerations of Symphonic Form in the Music of Lutosławski," in *Lutosławski Studies*, 175.

⁴⁹ Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 8. For an in-depth examination of this technique of "limited aleatorism," see Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 75–116.

⁵⁰ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, 219; Nikolska, *Conversations*, 89.

⁵¹ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 89.

A student work from Lutosławski's time with Maliszewski, the three-movement Piano Sonata of 1934, was performed in concert by the composer during a 1935 exchange program at Riga Conservatory. Karol Szymanowski, nearing the end of his life, was in attendance, and the Sonata apparently impressed him. As Thomas writes, "Tantalisingly, this was to be the one and only meeting between two of the major figures in twentieth-century Polish music."⁵² In 1936 and 1937 Lutosławski received Diplomas in Piano and Composition respectively, and soon after was conscripted into one year of military service, where he trained in signals and radio communications. He was well-suited to this task, and proved extremely adept at transmitting Morse code, relying on his manual dexterity and memory for patterns from his musical training.⁵³

Following his year of service, Lutosławski began to prepare for a study trip to Paris for lessons with Nadia Boulanger, although this never eventuated. At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 Lutosławski was mobilised, stationed first in Krakow and then in Lublin, to the country's south east. There he was captured by the German army, but managed to escape after only eight days when the concentration of his guards lapsed.⁵⁴ Together with a handful of his section-fellows, they set out on the 400-kilometre journey back to Warsaw on foot across Poland's war-torn countryside. Reflecting much later with the Hungarian musicologist Bálint András Varga, Lutosławski confided that the "experience has left a lasting impression on me ... The real shock, however, was caused by the fact that we had lost the war so soon."⁵⁵ His brother Henryk, an officer in the Polish army, was not so fortunate, and died in a Siberian labour camp in 1940 after being captured by the Russians.

⁵² Thomas, *Polish Music*, 3.

⁵³ Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 11.

⁵⁴ "At that time," he recalled, "prisoners were not yet being guarded so rigidly as later – the Germans were in want of experience." Nikolska, *Conversations*, 30.

⁵⁵ Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 7.

Back in occupied Warsaw, Lutosławski eked out a living by playing concerts in the city's cafes. Joined by fellow composer Andrzej Panufnik, the pair formed a piano duo, arranging and transcribing works from the Western canon for performance. They made over 200 such arrangements, from Bach organ toccatas through to Mozart, Brahms, Debussy, Ravel, and Szymanowski, but apart from the *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* – still popular today – all of these perished in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.⁵⁶ In spite of the horrors and hardships of the occupation, and a number of close calls with imprisonment, Lutosławski was able to put a positive spin on his time in Warsaw: “All in all, I played in a café from about December 1939 up till July 1944, every day – quite good practice.”⁵⁷

Accounts of Lutosławski's work in the decade or so following the war – between 1945 and the Thaw of 1956 – vary significantly across the differing narratives of his life. Scholars are inconsistent in their treatment of his involvement with the Polish Composers' Union, and some also overlook the relative freedom of travel he experienced until 1949.⁵⁸ The general consensus seems, however, that these years were spent “lying low.”⁵⁹ Lutosławski himself largely glossed over this time in his accounts of his life, subsuming it entirely under the “gloomy period” of *socrealizm*, and focusing more the injustices and vagaries of cultural policy.⁶⁰ As previously mentioned, over this period he tended to split his compositional activity in two, with works falling into either “serious” or “functional” categories. “Serious” compositions included the First Symphony (1947), the Overture for

⁵⁶ Three days before the Uprising, Lutosławski and his mother fled the city. The only scores that Lutosławski could take with him were the sketches for his First Symphony, a few student works, some studies, and these Paganini variations. Bodman Rae, *Lutoslawski*, 16.

⁵⁷ An encounter at a cafe in which Lutosławski and Panufnik narrowly escaped arrest (and subsequent interment in a concentration camp) is related in Nikolska, *Conversations*, 33–34; see also Varga, *Lutoslawski Profile*, 8.

⁵⁸ Lutosławski, though active in the Composers' Union (he served as Treasurer between 1946–7 and was a member of the board for 1947–8), was never as prolific as Panufnik. He also participated in a diplomatic mission to the USSR in 1951. Thomas, “File 750,” accessed 20 January 2017. Lutosławski travelled to France twice, in 1946 and 1948, and on both occasions spent three months there. He also travelled to Copenhagen in 1947, and to Amsterdam in 1948. See Nikolska, *Conversations*, 35–36.

⁵⁹ Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 78; Bodman Rae, *Lutoslawski*, 33.

⁶⁰ Lutosławski, *Lutoslawski on Music*, xvi.

Strings (1949) and the Concerto for Orchestra (1954), while the umbrella “functional” covered assorted works for film, Christmas carols, children’s songs, and incidental music for the theatre. Stucky notes that Lutosławski would claim that these functional works were written “with the left hand,” and the composer disliked too much critical attention being paid toward them.⁶¹ Nonetheless, despite Lutosławski’s ambivalent relationship with these works, Bernard Jacobson, Charles Bodman Rae, and Stucky all agree that in a technical sense, the boundary between functional and serious was permeable. There are many correspondences in construction, for example, not only between serious and functional works of this time (such as an intense focus on canon and counterpoint), but also with other, ‘mature’ works to come (as in the principle of material built from limited interval classes, and end-weighted forms).⁶²

State presence in artistic matters slowly increased in the latter half of the 1940s, culminating in the Łagów conference of 1949. Over this time, composers were encouraged to participate in the re-building of statehood through their work, and Lutosławski happily obliged. He recognised that “after the years of war, utterly destructive for Polish culture, there was a great need for good applied music, designed for amateurs, for music schools, for children.”⁶³ Works composed in such a fashion include the set of twelve *Melodie Ludowe* (Folk Melodies) for piano (1945), and the *Dwadzieście Kolęd* (Twenty Carols) for voice and piano (1946), both of which were commissioned by the state-owned publishing house *Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne*. But he would always emphasise that this did not indicate any approval of Soviet policy, or any ideological compromise on his behalf. Such a stance raises potentially complicated issues of agency and compliance (does Lutosławski’s professional remuneration from a State source indicate political co-operation?) which I do not intend to

⁶¹ Stucky, “Change and Constancy,” 141.

⁶² Space does not permit a more thorough explanation of these features and overlaps, but they are in any case widely acknowledged by Lutosławski scholars. See Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance*, 78; Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 22–45; Stucky, “Change and Constancy,” 134–135.

⁶³ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 37.

pursue here, but as I will argue later in this chapter, Lutosławski's conception of absolute music allowed him to circumvent this very same issue himself. Speaking with Varga, he was uncompromising on the distinction between socially-useful composition and collaboration:

I had to make a living, I had to earn money. I never wrote anything that would have complied with the official requirements, but I was not adverse to the idea of composing pieces for which there was a social need. (Children's songs, and so on.)⁶⁴

A key event of this period occurred when Lutosławski's First Symphony (completed in 1947) was blacklisted, and branded as "formalist" following a performance in the 1949 Chopin Competition gala concert. In the aftermath of that concert, where Russian jury members walked out in a show of dissatisfaction, the Vice-Minister for Culture Włodzimierz Sokorski reportedly said that "Such a composer as Lutosławski should be thrown under a street-car."⁶⁵ The work was not performed for ten years afterwards. Sokorski's words appear to have been an empty threat, however, and other than the Symphony's disappearance from concert halls, there were few material consequences for Lutosławski. Only a year later, Sokorski would attempt reconciliation, as Lutosławski related to Nikolska:

During the 1st Congress of Polish Composers (1950), held in the building of the Nation Museum, Minister Sokorski took me aside, to a store-room (where brooms, buckets, litter-bins, etc., were kept) – he badly wanted to have a tête-à-tête with me. 'Do write,' he said, 'something like Shostakovich's *Song of the Forests* – we'll give you a State Prize.'⁶⁶

Lutosławski respectfully declined.

Around this time, a preoccupation with folk music took hold over Lutosławski.

Thomas observes that, with the exception of the Overture for Strings, all of his concert works from these years drew heavily from folk sources, which are also often reflected in their titles.⁶⁷ While Lutosławski always downplayed any ideological significance – folk themes

⁶⁴ Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 8.

⁶⁵ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, xvii. See also Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 32.

⁶⁶ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 40.

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Polish Music*, 73.

were amongst the most heartily approved by the State – it is perhaps no mere coincidence that in the following years he produced *Mała suita* (*Little Suite*, 1950), *Tryptyk śląski* (*Silesian Triptych*, 1951), *Bucolics* (1952), the monumental Concerto for Orchestra (1954), and *Dance Preludes* (1954).⁶⁸

The year 1954 was busy for Lutosławski, containing several portentous events. In June he was awarded a Prime Minister's Prize for his children's music, which was the culmination of the steadily-growing State accolades he began receiving in the 50s.⁶⁹ These awards both surprised and troubled Lutosławski, and he was aware of the propaganda value of official approval, which co-opted his works into the government's aesthetic narrative: 'We approve of Lutosławski, therefore he is a model Socialist composer complicit with the regime.' In the interviews with Varga, Lutosławski remarked that the Prize was a

shock because I realised that I was not writing innocent, indifferent little pieces, only to make a living, but carrying on an artistic creative activity in the eyes of the outside world. That depressed me because I strongly opposed the official guidelines and regarded them as absurd.⁷⁰

In addition, his "folklore-tinctured" Concerto for Orchestra was completed in August, and premiered in November by the newly-formed Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. The work was a great success, and despite bearing certain concessions to *socrealizm* which are apparent today – a potpourri folk-based idiom, an overblown grandiosity at points, and the *de rigueur* triumphant conclusion – it has remained one of Lutosławski's most popular pieces, both at home and abroad.⁷¹ While the quality of its music is rightly deserving of praise, a significant share of the Concerto's sensation was undoubtedly tied to Panufnik's spectacular defection to

⁶⁸ Lutosławski took pains to stress that his interest in folklore greatly predated this period, and instead stretched back to the 1930s. Citing Bartók, he also emphasised that composers have always been interested in folklore, regardless of the political situation. See Nikolska, *Conversations*, 37; Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 9–10.

⁶⁹ Stucky also lists: second prize for mass songs in 1950 (no first prize was awarded); first prizes for *Silesian Triptych* and other mass songs in 1951; and a State Prize, Second Class, again for the *Triptych* in 1952. See Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and his Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 46.

⁷⁰ Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 8–9. This quote also appears in Stucky, *Lutosławski and his Music*, 46; Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 35; and Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance*, 82–83.

⁷¹ Thomas, *Polish Music*, 76–78.

the West in July of that year. The slightly-younger Panufnik (Lutosławski's former duo partner in occupied Warsaw) was unequivocally Poland's leading composer at the time, drawing top commission fees as well as numerous conducting engagements and travel opportunities abroad.⁷² By fleeing the country – and effectively becoming a nonperson – Panufnik left a vacuum for Lutosławski to fill, and so the Concerto was hailed from its first performance as the unequivocal triumph of Poland's *highest* talent.⁷³

The final occurrence of 1954 – the one with the greatest bearing on this chapter – happened toward the end of the year when the conductor Jan Krenz (1926–) suggested that Lutosławski compose a work to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Bartók's death. The work resulting from Krenz's germ, which would become *Musique funèbre*, was not finished in time for Bartók's anniversary in September 1955, and instead took Lutosławski over four years to complete. But by the time of its premiere in Katowice in March 1958 and a subsequent appearance at the Warsaw Autumn, Poland's musical landscape had shifted tremendously following the Thaw, and the dramatic logic and emotional power of this work would catapult Lutosławski to international acclaim.

Absolute as Extra-Musical

*I must say that to live in the world of sounds is happiness. This world is detached from politics, from all the troubles of current events. Only occasionally does one return to the routine of everyday life, with its disturbing atmosphere – one returns to it, only to leave it again for the world of music.*⁷⁴

Music, as Carolyn Abbate writes, “is at once ineffable and sticky; that is its fundamental incongruity. Words stick to it [...] Images and corporeal gestures stick as well.”⁷⁵ It has the

⁷² Thomas, “File 750,” accessed 10 January 2017.

⁷³ Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance*, 84.

⁷⁴ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 150.

⁷⁵ Carolyn Abbate, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 523.

potent ability, unfortunate or not, to retain associations from previous contacts or connections. Nowhere is this more evident than in cinema, where we will forever associate Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* with proto-man's discovery of tools in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Lutosławski, by contrast, vehemently repudiated any musical stickiness, and while a number of factors could have influenced this position, Abbate reminds us that in many cases, "rhapsodies to music's autonomy or pure abstractedness deny that music gets sticky out of sheer fear of stickiness."⁷⁶ Bonds concurs:

The claims of purity and autonomy, qualities closely associated with absolute music, frequently mask their own ideological premises. We always listen to or think about music within a specific historical moment and cultural context, and the idea of "pure" music is itself an abstraction, for the "purely musical experience" is never purely musical.⁷⁷

Putting this fear of stickiness aside for the time being, the prevailing interpretation of Lutosławski's belief in musical autonomy positions it as ethically and politically motivated, part of a desire to distance himself from the State's aesthetic demands after the war. Maja Trochimczyk speculates about Lutosławski's "wish to detach himself from Marxist notions of music as a 'reflection of society,'" and Klein situates his denial of extra-musical meaning as a response to the Polish government "calling for composers to write music with overt programs and socialist content."⁷⁸ Jakelski goes a step further, writing that the "period's hackneyed rhetoric imbued musical choices with moral import, turning the composition of absolute – as opposed to vocal-instrumental or programme – music into an ethical question." Her research demonstrates the numerous issues (personal and public) at stake in Lutosławski's adoption of abstraction, and unpacks a "moral code" of "withdrawal, integrity, and autonomy" central to his work, which he articulated across several speeches and compositions.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Abbate, "Drastic or Gnostic," 523.

⁷⁷ Bonds, *Absolute Music*, 4.

⁷⁸ Trochimczyk, "Dans la Nuit," 112; Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 114.

⁷⁹ Jakelski, "Ethics of Abstraction," 173.

Jakelski also notes that Lutosławski's embrace of the absolute – particularly in an address made at the 1981 Congress of Polish Culture – resonated strongly with an upsurge of interest in Romantic aesthetics during the shipyard strikes in Gdańsk. From a different perspective, however, we could examine this resonance against the backdrop of the concept's historical associations with nineteenth-century *German* Romanticism.⁸⁰ In Lutosławski's frequent references to music's sublime qualities, for example, we find several parallels with the artistic *Geisterreich* formulated by E. T. A. Hoffmann in the early 1800s.⁸¹ Most famously, Hoffmann applied this sort of reading to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, using language and imagery encoded in the proto-German nationalist Prussian Reform movement.⁸² While I do not wish to put the cart before the horse, these historical resonances – especially from the present-day viewpoint – cannot go unnoticed when considering the relationship between Polish and German music. And as Taruskin affirms, the very German-ness of ascribing value to absolute music is vital in any contemporary formulation of the issue:

Our modern concept of “absolute music” is not completely or even accurately defined if we do not emphasize the supreme value placed on it as an art-experience, since the nineteenth century, by musicians who have inherited the German Romantic aesthetic.⁸³

From a slightly different political perspective, it is also apparent that abstraction played a crucial role in Lutosławski's self-construction as a composer. Both during and after the dominant Stalinist period, he always positioned himself as an artist who did not make any concessions to the regime, and maintained that his intentions were humanistic rather than ideological. Although we know that this distinction is much, much blurrier, Lutosławski always bristled when the topic came under discussion:

⁸⁰ Jakelski, “Ethics of Abstraction,” 181.

⁸¹ As Hoffmann wrote in his 1813 *Kreiseriana*: “Our kingdom is not of this world, say the musicians, for where do we find in nature, like the painter or the sculptor, the prototype of our art? Sound dwells everywhere, but the sounds – that is, the melodies – which speak the higher language of the spirit kingdom, reside in the human heart alone.” See Stephen Rumph, “A Kingdom Not of This World: The Political Context of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Beethoven Criticism,” *19th-Century Music* 19 (1995): 50.

⁸² Rumph, “A Kingdom Not of This World,” 54, 59.

⁸³ Richard Taruskin, “Is There a Baby in the Bathwater? (Part 1),” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 63 (2006): 175.

The very thought that many people believed me to have collaborated with the regime is bitterly painful to me. All of that is slander of the first water: I've never been disposed to make a compromise.⁸⁴

In his eyes, he simply wrote music for use – a kind of *Gebrauchsmusik* – where “social need” shared nothing in common with political need, and where its only content was its functionality. The supposedly abstract nature of these “functional” compositions allowed him to sidestep culpability as a beneficiary of the State, and it likewise shielded his work from unwanted associations or emotional scrutiny. This point of emotion was especially vital following the blacklisting of his First Symphony, just over a month after Zbigniew Turski's Symphony No. 2 (1948) was condemned for being too relentlessly tragic.⁸⁵ So in Lutosławski's case, the principles of autonomy pointed both inward and outward, functioning as a cover for his public work and also colouring how he experienced his own art. But it seems that abstraction also served other purposes for Lutosławski, especially in relation to older music – and this is where Abbate's “fear of stickiness” becomes most perceptible. The distance from past German music that the *idea* of absolute music provided for Lutosławski also helped to legitimate his compositions in the post-war milieu, in a parallel to Schoenberg's appropriation of Brahms through his own essay “Brahms the Progressive.”⁸⁶

The wartime experiences of Lutosławski (and, as we shall see, Górecki) left very real impressions on his psyche, and so it is conceivable that at least some of these experiences may have informed his relationship to music closely associated with Germany. Other authors, such as Klein, have also detected this latent potential for tragic readings of his music:

Moments signifying suffering are frequent enough in Lutosławski's music that we might view him as both agent and victim in the narrative of his compositions. As with Chopin, Lutosławski's life lends itself to the biography theory of musical narrative, in which tragic events miraculously inscribe themselves into the fabric of the music. The violent death of his father, the terror of the Nazi work camp, the repression of the

⁸⁴ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 39.

⁸⁵ Jakelski, “Ethics of Abstraction,” 174.

⁸⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Nicole Grimes, “The Schoenberg/Brahms Critical Tradition Reconsidered,” *Music Analysis* 31 (2012): 155.

Soviet regime, and the very history of Poland lend ample events for us to read as narratives in his music.⁸⁷

If, however, music lacks the ability to convey any “meaning beyond itself” – to paraphrase Lutosławski’s earlier statement – then any socio-political detritus accumulated during the difficult years of Nazi occupation is simply brushed off without a trace. In this sense, Lutosławski used absolute music as a means to insulate himself from interpretations such as Klein’s, and to dispute any manifestation of a composer’s psyche in their art.⁸⁸ Although German music in general – with the notable and extreme exception of Wagner – has proved remarkably resistant to this stickiness, the invective of Tadeusz Szeligowski recounted by Jakelski in Chapter 1 points to the urgency of this issue in post-war Poland.⁸⁹

“Intrinsic Connections” and Legitimation

*Anyway, neither Tchaikovsky nor Rakhmaninov are composers without whose music I could not live, whereas Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms are indispensable to me.*⁹⁰

A recurring feature in Lutosławski’s interviews and writings is a strong desire to link himself with past composers, and he would often emphasise correlations between his techniques and those of Western Art Music’s doyens. In his interviews with Varga, he claimed that

I owe a great deal to the Viennese classics. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven have taught me important things about classical form and about large-form in general. [...] There is a very strong desire in me for a closed large-form, and no-one brought it to such perfection as the Viennese classics.⁹¹

Again, to Varga:

⁸⁷ Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 108.

⁸⁸ Klein acknowledges this point, prefacing his own discussion with the remark that “Lutosławski likely would have found distasteful the narrative analysis that follows.” Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 112.

⁸⁹ As Celia Applegate writes, “German music as a whole enjoys in popular perception an extraordinary independence from the culture in which it was created and canonized. This independence is not granted to German literature or German visual art, to German religion or German philosophy, to German enterprise or German invention.” See Applegate “What Is German Music? Reflections on the Role of Art in the Creation of the Nation,” *German Studies Review* 15 (1992): 21.

⁹⁰ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 85.

⁹¹ Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 15.

In Haydn symphonies, the recapitulation of the first subject is preceded by a long section whose purpose is to create a feeling of expectation in the listener. He achieves that by repeated fragments of already exposed themes to the point of boredom – otherwise the recapitulation would not have the desired effect. Haydn was a master of leading the listener through a composition.⁹²

Crucial here is Lutosławski's emphasis on an abstracted *thematic* process rather than the harmonic tension of a retransition, which glosses over the more familiar standing-on-the-dominant model of such sections. In a similar fashion, Beethoven was invoked in Lutosławski's conversations with Nikolska:

I wanted to master Beethoven's methods of structuring what I call intramusical processes. These methods proved to be extremely innovatory; Beethoven had – and still has – no equal in this respect. Of particular interest to me was the way he was apt to guide the listener through the musical edifice he had erected. His ability to make a succession of musical events unpredictable, to counteract the listener's habits and customs, to build an irreproachable (but not stereotyped) musical form [...] has had an enormous influence upon me.⁹³

Similar to his discussion of Haydn, we see an interest in the meta-Beethoven, abstracted to an “intramusical” level.

Lutosławski's conviction in these matters has seeped into the broader critical reception of his work, which likewise focuses on the links between modern and traditional aspects in his music. Drawing parallels with composers such as Debussy, Stravinsky, and Bartók, Skowron writes in the preface to *Lutosławski Studies* that Lutosławski “belonged to a group of twentieth-century composers who [...] searched for modern expressive techniques which would not, however, break the *deep* ties with the past.” Skowron continues: “In Lutosławski's case [...] both aspects, the spirit of modernity and an open mind towards tradition, are intrinsically connected, so that it is impossible to completely understand his music without considering their role in shaping his creative attitude.”⁹⁴ Skowron's position is

⁹² Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 27–28.

⁹³ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 76–77. Other examples of Lutosławski's claims to this effect can be found in Nikolska, *Conversations*, 89–90; Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 139; and Douglas Rust, “Conversation with Witold Lutosławski,” *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1995): 208.

⁹⁴ Skowron, “Preface,” in *Lutosławski Studies*, v. Emphasis in original.

laudable, and has provided a highly useful lens through which to observe Lutosławski's music. Several essays in *Lutosławski Studies*, for example, support Skowron's "principle aim" of "verify[ing] a hypothesis that Lutosławski created his own *equivalents* of the musical qualities and aesthetic values stemming from the tonal tradition."⁹⁵

In spite of this, however, these "intrinsic connections" are generally under-theorised. Skowron believes that Lutosławski's highly unique treatments of form stemmed entirely from his classes on Beethovenian structure in the 1930s, and while this is true in this "intramusical" sense (as in through *akcja*), it is only one part of the picture.⁹⁶ We must remember, for example, that the unconventional method which Maliszewski applied to Beethoven – which was controversial and not widely accepted – was just as important as the music itself. In much the same way, Stravinsky talking about Bach is just as much Stravinsky talking about Stravinsky. Skowron's reading also downplays Lutosławski's inadvertent hearing of John Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra on the radio in 1960, which was the major catalyst for his development of limited aleatorism. Likewise, in the realm of pitch-material, Skowron reads the thirds and perfect fifths prevalent in Lutosławski's chord aggregates as a retention of "the archetypes of tonal language."⁹⁷ I believe, instead, that these intervals are better understood as reflecting the composer's fundamental interest in the building blocks of sonority – based on the overtone series – rather than any vestige of tonality.⁹⁸

Considering the shakiness of Skowron's conclusions, along with the frequency and alacrity with which Lutosławski drew connections between his own work and that of "the Viennese masters," a less charitable interpretation might suggest that the "*deep* ties with the

⁹⁵ Skowron, "Preface," vii. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁶ See Varga, *Lutosławski*, 27–28; Skowron, "Lutosławski's Aesthetics," 10–11.

⁹⁷ Skowron, "Preface," v.

⁹⁸ Stucky's overview of Lutosławski's aggregates demonstrates a treatment of interval-class combinations quite independent of "tonal" implications. Stucky, *Lutosławski and his Music*, 116–118.

past” discerned by Skowron are more a product of Lutosławski’s self-positioning than of any quality in his music itself. In either case, these statements by Lutosławski recall the sentiments expressed by Schoenberg’s essay “Brahms the Progressive,” as well as in several other of his writings collated in *Style and Idea*.⁹⁹ Schoenberg’s pleas are often read as deliberate attempts at legitimisation, where he formulated the ostensibly conservative Brahms into a harbinger of musical modernism far outstripping the innovations of Wagner. As Friedhelm Krummacher writes, Schoenberg’s tendency to draw connections between the Austro-German tradition and his own music was “intended to confront criticism of his own works with historical connections that could serve to legitimate his new procedures.”¹⁰⁰

Clear parallels emerge between Lutosławski’s vocabulary of formal processes in Haydn/Beethoven and Schoenberg’s assessment of the “unrestricted musical language which was inaugurated by Brahms the Progressive.”¹⁰¹ Just as Schoenberg used purely musical terms to relate himself to Brahms (Peter Burkholder lists “irregular phrasing, harmonic innovation, motivic saturation, and avoidance of repetition”¹⁰²), Lutosławski’s abstraction in regards to formal processes positioned himself in a similar relationship with Viennese Classicism. In this sense, in the aftermath of Nazi occupation, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are not great *German* composers, but simply masters in their field, detached from any national association. Lutosławski would also apply the same process of abstraction to the music of Schoenberg, but in reverse. His 1958 composition *Musique funèbre* draws heavily upon the principles of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique, but Lutosławski always took great pains to repudiate any such connection, even in direct discussions of that piece. In the

⁹⁹ Arnold Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive,” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 398–441. “Brahms the Progressive” was first written in 1933, and later revised in 1947. In the same volume, see also “New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea,” 113–124; “National Music (2),” 172–174; and “Composition with Twelve Tones (I),” 214–245.

¹⁰⁰ Friedhelm Krummacher, “Reception and Analysis: On the Brahms Quartets, Op. 51, Nos. 1 and 2,” *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994): 27.

¹⁰¹ Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive,” 441.

¹⁰² Peter Burkholder, “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” *19th-Century Music* 8 (1984): 76.

final section of this chapter, I will explore how these issues of abstraction, influence, politics, and stickiness collided in *Musique funèbre*, and how claims for absolute music allowed Lutosławski to keep his distance from Schoenberg.

Musique funèbre: Distance and Closeness

*No, I do not see any relationships to dodecaphony.
But if they should exist, they are secondary and superficial.*¹⁰³

Musique funèbre is scored for string orchestra, and is divided into four sections which are performed *attaca*: “Prologue,” “Metamorphoses,” “Apogee,” and “Epilogue.”¹⁰⁴ The “Prologue” opens as a slow dirge, with two solo celli tracing a sinuously coiled melody in their low register. The celli are in canon, with the second voice displaced by a minim and a tritone. Gradually, other instruments – also in pairs – join the progression, ascending in score-order through the pitch space. *Musique funèbre* bears the inscription “à la mémoire de Béla Bartók,” and its first notes establish an immediate sonic link with Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. Closer inspection reveals, however, a radically different organisation with respect to pitch and meter.¹⁰⁵

Beginning with the Cello I, the initial statement of the melodic line (or *dux* of the canon) is constructed from the strict alternation of tritones and semitones. The line which emerges from the combination of these intervals – tritone ‘up,’ semitone down – unfurls through imbricated iterations of an [0167] tetrachord. Once all twelve chromatic pitch-classes

¹⁰³ Lutosławski quoted in Martina Homma, “Lutosławski’s Studies in Twelve-Tone Rows,” in *Lutosławski Studies*, 194. From a 1958 interview concerning *Musique funèbre* with Bohdan Pilarski published (in Polish) in *Ruch Muzyczny*.

¹⁰⁴ *Musique funèbre* is also known by its Polish name, *Muzyka żałobna*. Though grammatically inaccurate, since both *funèbre* and *żałobna* are adjectives, it is most commonly known in English as *Funeral Music*. See Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 66.

¹⁰⁵ There is another, much earlier aural link with Franz Liszt’s Fantasy and Fugue on BACH (1855/1870), which in bar 84 contains a remarkably similar passage to Lutosławski’s ‘melody.’

have been stated in this fashion, the intervallic sequence then proceeds in inversion (tritone ‘down,’ semitone up), and is also transposed from the starting pitch by a tritone. Figure 3.1 shows the progression of this melody, highlighting the inversion/transposition of the second half. The numbers underneath the score indicate the ordinal placement of successive notes, which will come in handy later.

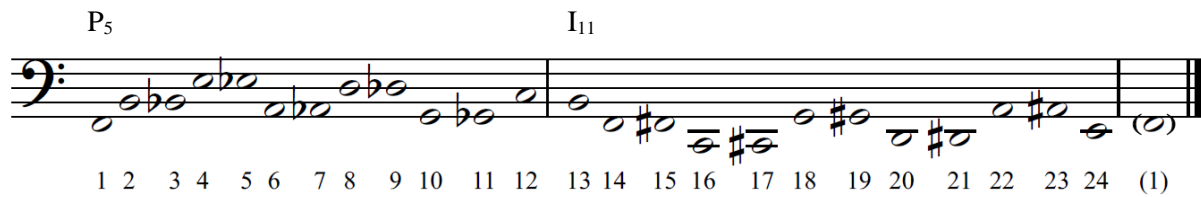


Figure 3.1: Tone Row of *Musique funèbre* (after Stucky, Lutosławski and his Music, 71)

As can be seen from the second half of the “double-row” (as Bodman Rae calls it), the 24th note – E – sets up the re-entry of F, which allows the pattern to restart once again. It forms a loop, closed and continually generative.¹⁰⁶ The entry of the Cello II one minim after the Cello I (a *comes* of the canon), answers with the melody in the same rhythmic setting, but now transposed by a tritone. This transposition is shown in Figure 3.2, and is the only transposition of the melody used in the canon – that is, each subsequent *comes* alternates between the original melody and its tritone transposition. The second half of this transposed double-row in the Cello II is simply an untransposed inversion of the initial twelve notes, as the two successive tritone-transpositions cancel each other out.

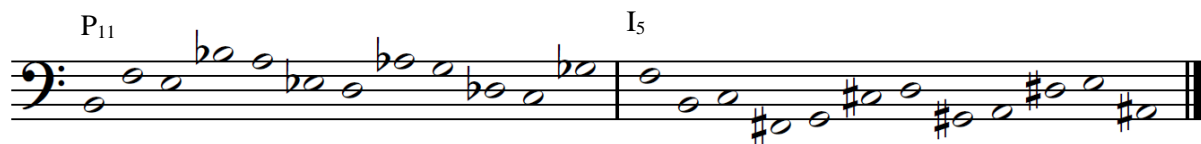


Figure 3.2: Comes of the initial row, highlighting row forms

In addition, a seldom-recognised feature of these two double-rows is that the transposed form of the melody shown in Fig. 3.2 (comprised of derivations P₁₁ and I₅

¹⁰⁶ A useful if limited heuristic in observing the score of *Musique funèbre* is that the ‘sharp’ side of the inversion contrasts with the ‘flat’ side of the initial row. Thus, the relative progression of the row can be easily parsed in each canonic voice.

respectively) is also replicated in the double row, though in *retrograde*. We can easily trace its path, starting at the B at position 2 in Fig. 3.1 and moving backwards through the ordinal positions (2, 1, 24, 23, 22, etc.) – assuming, of course, enharmonic equivalence. This quasi-palindromic feature carries strongly Bartókian echoes, but Lutosławski always claimed that any correspondance was coincidental. In his characteristic fashion, he would acknowledge the possibility of a connection, but then swiftly sever it by invoking his authorial intent:

Whilst writing this piece I have not sought inspiration amongst Bartók’s own music, and any eventual resemblances that may appear in *Musique funèbre* are unintentional. And if these resemblances do really exist, then this proves once again the undeniable fact that studying the works of Bartók has been one of the fundamental lessons to be taken by the majority of composers of my generation.¹⁰⁷

Along with its stark, curling melodic line, another distinctive characteristic of the “Prologue” is the section’s isorhythm. As in a Renaissance motet, a fixed number of pitches (called a *color* – in this case the 24-note double-row) interact with a fixed (though different) number of rhythms/durations (the *talea* – shown in Figure 3.3).¹⁰⁸ As each new instrument in the canon enters, they too play and repeat this *talea*, meaning that it resounds throughout the entire section. The fact that 24 and 17 are co-prime (they share no divisors other than 1) means that the *color* must go through 17 different rhythmic permutations before returning to its original alignment with the *talea*. The first section of the “Prologue” can then be understood as the interaction between two interlocking but fundamentally separate systems: pitch, controlled by the double-row and its tritone transposition; and rhythm, which is generated entirely from the *talea*.



Figure 3.3: *Talea of Musique funèbre* (after Stucky, Lutosławski and his Music, 70)

¹⁰⁷ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Stucky, *Lutosławski’s Music*, 70-72; Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 67.

The interaction of these two systems can be seen in Example 3.1, which reproduces the Cello parts from the opening section of the “Prologue.” The numbers above the Cello I correlate with the double-row in Fig. 3.1, and the beginning of each new *talea* cycle is marked with an asterisk. The canonic entries of Viola I and II – in bars 6 and 11 respectively, which are triggered by the commencement of a new *talea* – are omitted.

The musical score is divided into three sections, each starting with a new *Talea* cycle marked with an asterisk (*).
 - *** Talea 1:** Cello I (bars 1-11) and Cello II (bars 1-11). Cello I starts with a dynamic of *p*. Cello II starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes a trill marked 'T6' in bar 1.
 - *** Talea 2:** Viola I (bars 4-20) and Viola II (bars 4-20). Both start with a dynamic of *mp*.
 - *** Talea 3:** Viola I (bars 7-16) and Viola II (bars 7-16). Both start with a dynamic of *mf*.
 The score uses various time signatures: 5/2 for the Cello parts and 3/2 for the Viola parts. Bar numbers are indicated above the staves.

Example 3.1: Opening passage of *Musique funèbre*, omitting Viola parts

The row which saturates the “Prologue” remains prominent throughout *Musique funèbre*, and it continues to govern two of the piece’s three remaining sections: the “Metamorphoses” and

“Epilogue.”¹⁰⁹ “Metamorphoses” consists of twelve smaller segments – the titular metamorphoses – which are each built from a single statement of the twelve-note P row, transposed down by a perfect fifth (or rather, T₅) every time.¹¹⁰ With each subsequent metamorphosis of the row, more and more itinerant notes (derived from a quasi-locrian mode) are interspersed between the principal pitches of the line, until the original is almost imperceptible. Example 3.2 reproduces the viola part of the first transformation of the row, indicating the notes of P₅ with a downward arrow. Here, the added pitches are all semitone neighbours of the main line. Example 3.3 (overleaf) picks up the process a little further along, showing a reduction of the melodic line in the fourth metamorphosis, shared between the violins and basses. A greater number of ‘external’ pitches have by now been added, though the main line (now P₈) is still present to some degree. By the point of the sixth metamorphoses (Example 3.4, also overleaf), however, which is dovetailed between Violin III and Viola I, the row is almost completely lost. Also notable across these excerpts is the increase in rhythmic activity and density, which builds toward a flurry of semiquavers in later iterations.

65 pizz. ↓

69 ↓

73 ↓ etc.

Example 3.2: Viola line in the first “Metamorphosis,” showing pitches of P₅

¹⁰⁹ Space does not permit a more complete analysis of *Musique funèbre*, however very detailed treatments of the work are found in Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 66–72; and Stucky, *Lutosławski and his Music*, 70–78.

¹¹⁰ The first is P₅, the second is P₁₀, the third is P₃, the fourth is P₈, and so on. Bodman Rae notes here the similarity to the construction of the first movement of Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, which also utilises transpositions by a fifth. See Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 67–68.

Example 3.3: Reduction of the fourth “Metamorphosis,” now built from P_8

Example 3.4: Reduction of the sixth “Metamorphosis,” now built from P_6

Following “Metamorphoses” is the climax of the work, “Apogee,” which is the only moment of *Musique funèbre* untouched by the row. Lasting just twelve bars, the “Apogee” traces a five-octave, twelve-note chord that gradually concertinas into an A-Bb dyad just below middle C.¹¹¹ The final section, “Epilogue,” is a counterpart to the “Prologue,” and follows a similar structure but truncated and in reverse. It begins with a tutti unison statement (at *fff*) of the row form P_9 set to the *talea*, and the isorhythmic canon then returns in eight voices.¹¹² Instruments gradually drop out (this time beginning with the highest first), until the solo cellist who began the work is left playing the last four notes of the double-row (pitches 20–24 in Fig. 3.1) alone. As *Musique funèbre* comes to a close, the final tritone between A# and E rings out into silence.

¹¹¹ A harmonic reduction of this section can be found in Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 70.

¹¹² The double-row is present in a reversed form this time, with the I_{11} row stated first, then followed by P_5 .

Schoenberg vs. Debussy

For a piece so fixated on single tone-row (as well as employing several derivations through transposition and inversion), Lutosławski's claim that it shares nothing in common with dodecaphony appears disingenuous. The answer to this contradiction lies, I believe, in Lutosławski's aesthetic principles, and a 'misreading' – or as Bloom would call it, "misprision" – of Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique. At numerous points in his interviews and writings, Lutosławski would identify two major streams of composition in the twentieth century: the Second Viennese School, centred on Schoenberg and his disciples, and a more diffuse stream originating with Debussy, which included early Stravinsky, Bartók, Varèse, and Messiaen.¹¹³ Unequivocally, he would identify himself as belonging to this latter group, and claimed on several occasions that the Second Viennese School was completely "alien" to him.¹¹⁴ The opposition between these two movements, as Lutosławski understood it, stemmed fundamentally from their differing treatment of vertical harmony. The followers of Debussy were empiricists, highly sensitive to the aural possibilities of pitches and untethered by the rules of harmonic function. For Debussy, "the only criterion of progress as to the technique of composition was his own experience."¹¹⁵ The Second Viennese School, on the other hand, were viewed by Lutosławski as systematic theoreticians:

To Schoenberg, the chord is not an independent creation. It is the result of [aural/expressive] experience only in a small degree. The role of meaning of the chords is not of primary importance in the course of the composition. Above all, simultaneous sound is not the result of a choice made according to its qualities of expression or sound colour (I cannot find words that would give a more precise description), but is simply the function of the use of the row that is the foundation of the dodecaphonic technique. In this manner, the simultaneous combination of tones is

¹¹³ See Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, 21–22. Similar statements are found elsewhere in *Lutosławski on Music*: 112, 168, 191–192, 233, 267, and 271; as well as in Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 15; Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 8; and Nikolska, *Conversations*, 75–76.

¹¹⁴ Kaczyński, *Conversations*, 8; Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 17; and Stanisław Będkowski and Stanisław Hrabia, *Witold Lutosławski: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 6.

¹¹⁵ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 76.

subordinated to new functional laws, laws that establish the sequence of horizontal and vertical sounds¹¹⁶

Lutosławski would support his distinction between these sensual and intellectual approaches by contrasting their respective responses to a perfect fifth and to a tritone. According to one side, the difference was qualitative, and each interval suggested vastly different emotional and psychological responses; for the other, it was merely a difference of quantity, of seven semitones as opposed to six.¹¹⁷

Lutosławski's work-around in the case of *Musique funèbre* – which is overwhelmingly systematised across several parameters – was again through recourse to his intent. Rather than vertical harmony arising as a somewhat coincidental by-product of the tone-row, as he understood in the Schoenbergian process, he claimed to have structured *Musique funèbre*'s row with the intention of generating specific harmonies when employed in canon. In other words, it was the row which was the by-product of vertical aims. Lutosławski stated that

what matters [...] is the vertical result of using this row. It is comprised solely of tritones and minor seconds. Used canonically it gives certain harmonic results which, contained neither third nor sixth, produces a certain atmosphere of open sonority which corresponds particularly to the title of the piece.¹¹⁸

In addition, he would claim – spuriously – that the very intervals which he used were incompatible with the twelve-tone technique, and remarked to Nikolska that the “Prologue” and “Epilogue” are “built on unisons and octaves, which are *not* used in dodecaphony.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, 22.

¹¹⁷ Lutosławski, *Lutosławski on Music*, 23.

¹¹⁸ Lutosławski quoted in Bodman Rae, *Lutosławski*, 67. Lutosławski's realisation of his aim to create a “special kind of harmony,” however, is not entirely water-tight. In bars 17 and 18 for instance, there momentarily arise three different sixths between the canonic lines: a Db–A between Vc I and Vln III, and an Eb–G between Vc II and Vln IV, both in bar 17; and a B–G, again between Vc II and Vln IV in bar 18. As more voices enter, similar intervals are encountered with increasing (though still very much occasional) frequency. This is to be expected from the very nature of the pitch organisation – the dominant interval-classes (other than octaves/unisons and tritones) are fourths and fifths, which can only be stacked so far before generating a third/sixth.

¹¹⁹ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 144. Emphasis in original. See also Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, 11.

Lutosławski's explanations are unsatisfactory for two main reasons. First, considering how often he would appeal to a listener's experience and the Debussian aural sensitivity, Lutosławski's stated intentions do little to account for the actual experience of *Musique funèbre*, and the *horizontal* scrutiny invited by the structure of the opening canon. The ascending tritone, the slipping in-and-out of phase, the snatches of unison, the staggered *talea*, even the drama of the two soloists in the orchestra's front desk: the listener is almost compelled to trace the temporal unfolding of the winding melody – which voice is which? and how are they related? Even if the goal of a third-less harmony becomes clearer with the added voices, it is impossible not to be pulled along by the gripping arc of the melody. What Lutosławski misses (or rather, conceals), therefore, is that 'harmony' and 'melody' are inseparable parts of a discrete whole, and that both elements create each other. The assertion that his vertical approach is somehow distinct and dissimilar to Schoenberg's is no different to claiming "I have drawn a vase while Arnold has drawn two faces in profile; our works therefore share nothing in common."

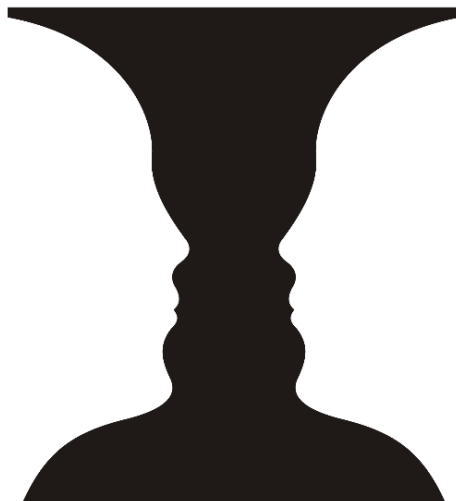


Figure 3.4: Figure-ground reversal in a Rubin Vase

Second, his vertical justification for the employment of a tone-row then does nothing to account for its pervasive presence in the "Metamorphoses," where third-less harmony no

longer prevails. The main vertical sonorities of the “Metamorphoses” are [0257] tetrachords and [02479] pentachords (the pentatonic collection), meaning that the particular harmonic capabilities of the row are superfluous in this setting. It is also unclear why this row, now freed from its initial purpose, would then be treated so systemically in a complete cycle of transpositions, with an equally systematic process of elaboration.

A better solution rests on the power that absolute music afforded Lutosławski, the ability to extract (and abstract) certain qualities from past music and composers while refusing the burden of any other concomitant attachments. In the same way that Lutosławski used absolute music to draw close to Haydn and Beethoven, he deliberately uncoupled dodecaphony from Schoenberg in an effort to deny their kinship. In this sense, Lutosławski emerges as a careful gardener, picking blossoms and pruning foliage. From Haydn he plucked a thematic process and from Beethoven a method of ordering events, while also trimming off their harmonic and formal foundations in an idiom vastly dissimilar to his own, along with their potentially problematic national associations in the wake of the Second World War. In the case of Schoenberg, on the other hand, he divorced a compositional technique from its author. Tone rows, as with any other musical device (a *cantilena* melody, a second subject, an interruption of one line by another) belong simply to the realm of music. A Taruskin might suggest that this is Lutosławski “confess[ing] his easy debts precisely in order to hide the hard ones,” but the actual situation seems somewhat simpler.¹²⁰ Recalling a

¹²⁰ Richard Taruskin, “Revising Revision,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46 (1993): 137. Also published in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 354–381. Impetus for such a reading can be found, for example, in the interviews with Nikolska: “I must confess that I am far from being eager for coming into contact with what is being produced by my contemporaries. Musicologists, critics, experts in aesthetics, music-lovers – they are all anxious to familiarise themselves with a wide range of phenomena of the art of sounds. As for me, I refrain from that: listening to other composer’s music hampers my work.” And later, “At the same time, I find great enjoyment in listening to music of former times [...] I want to maintain contact with the great spirits of the past; I *must* maintain it – it gives me a criterion of real value in art.” See Nikolska, *Conversations*, 79–80. Emphasis in original.

statement that I quoted earlier, music, for Lutosławski, is a world “detached from politics, from all the troubles of current events” – music just *is*.¹²¹

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that while Lutosławski’s biographical facts point to several opportunities for a tragic or calamitous reading of his work, his sometimes forceful avowals of music’s autonomy greatly complicate these ascriptions. The flip-side of this, however, is that his conception of absolute music then becomes a powerful lens through which to critique other aspects of his music, especially when considering the extra-musical implications of this apologia. Through the investigation of his piece *Musique funèbre*, it becomes clear that absolute music provided a route for Lutosławski to utilise certain techniques of dodecaphony while denying any similarities with Arnold Schoenberg. The reasons behind *these* claims deserve further scrutiny in the future; however, this particular thread ends here. For Lutosławski, the abstract nature of music transcended any worldly issues.

¹²¹ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 150.

CHAPTER 4

TIME, MEMORY, AND LOSS: GÓRECKI'S PASTS AND PRESENTS

Many of my family died in concentration camps. I had a grandfather who was in Dachau, an aunt in Auschwitz. You know how it is between Poles and Germans. But Bach was German too – and Schubert, and Strauss. Everyone has his place on this little earth. That's all behind me. So the Third Symphony is not about war, it's not a Dies Irae.¹

I wish for us to stop looking back at what passed and what should remain in the past. I would like us to be interested in what is today, what could be tomorrow, because what is past, what is finished cannot be corrected. I terribly dislike returning to the past because the past is not that interesting. What could be interesting in wars, illnesses, persecutions? Here [in the USA] you have a good life, because on one side you have water, on the other side you have water, on the top you have Canada, and you are safe. Nothing horrible can happen to you. You live as you want, you do what you want. You have everything. And us? On one side we have a "friend" and on the other side we have another "friend." And we are in the middle. What should we do? Let us leave these matters then and talk about music, this is a far more interesting subject for our conversation.²

“You know how it is between Poles and Germans”

Several themes arise from these comments by Górecki, which will serve to guide the analysis and discussion in this chapter. In the first quote, his account of loss and victimhood is initially matter-of-fact, and this undramatic frankness makes it all the more moving. Later, there are indications of resignation (“you know how it is...”), but then also an evasive, temporal distancing: “that’s all behind me” – *and not something I wish to think of*. The second quote takes this disassociation with the past even further: as an alternative to retrospective thinking, Górecki instead advocates a focus on the present and the promise of the future. Again, there is a similar self-effacement, and he ends, after a pointed political aside, with the familiar call

¹ Górecki quoted in Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 191.

² Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, “Conversation with USC Students,” trans. Maja Trochimczyk, *Polish Music Journal* 6 (2003), accessed 20 October 2016, <http://pmc.usc.edu/PMJ/issue/6.2.03/GoreckiStudents.html>.

to leave the banality of the everyday for the sublime realm of music – a vestige of Schopenhauerian Romanticism, perhaps, which was also present in Lutosławski's thinking.

Górecki's reluctance to dwell on the past could be contextualised in a number of ways. For one, his remarks might be reflective of the silence frequently erected as a response to trauma. A widely documented case, for instance, was the profound refusal by most survivors of the Holocaust to speak of their experiences.³ As we shall see later in this chapter, Górecki's difficult early life during the War and Soviet Occupation offers some justification for a reading along similar lines. Likewise, an analysis derived from Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (concerning revision, misreading, and strong fathers) may offer some insight into his creative interactions with the past. But, then again, maybe Górecki's evasiveness was simply pragmatic, the product of interviews where his attention was focused instead on the present, with otherwise more immediate issues closer at hand (an upcoming premiere, or an award acceptance).⁴ Perhaps he genuinely preferred not discuss such personal matters, since he was, after all, a very private person.⁵

Whichever the case may be, despite Górecki's comments, any survey of his music reveals a rather more active engagement with the past (both his own and Poland's more generally) than these quotes suggest. Obvious examples are his pieces which are grounded in an idiom of specifically Polish 'past-ness,' such as *Three Pieces in Old Style* (1963), and *Muzyka staropolska* (Old Polish Music), Op. 24 (1969), as well as the overt quotations of Chopin and a Silesian folk song in the Symphony No. 3, the "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs." Similarly, several other of his works invoke aspects of the past – albeit more

³ For a more detailed description of this phenomenon, as well as other specific instances in a Soviet context, see Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5–6.

⁴ The second quote, in particular, could be read this way, the result of a "town-hall" style Q&A session in the midst of a Californian tour with several other engagements.

⁵ In contrast to Lutosławski, who published and spoke extensively in a number of forums, only a smattering of such documents by Górecki are in circulation, and a tiny minority of these are in English.

obliquely – whether through instrumentation (the use of a harpsichord in Symphony No. 1 and indeed in his Harpsichord Concerto itself), form and genre (his four Symphonies), or subject matter, such as his numerous Marian songs (devotionals to the Virgin Mary). In the broadest sense, these are all instances of anachronism – the direct and self-conscious confrontation of two different period-styles through some reference to the past, where the distance between old and new is emphasised through their juxtaposition.⁶ When we hear the spindly metallic pluck of the harpsichord emerge from the serial, pointillistic mass of his Symphony No. 1, or the hushed, drawn-out quotation (in the identical pitches and register) of Chopin’s Mazurka Op. 17 No. 4 in the Symphony No. 3, we are prompted to consider such questions as ‘why is this here?’ and ‘what purpose does this serve?.’⁷ Several avenues of inquiry suggest possible routes forward, depending on whether we wish to pursue meaning in musical, political, social, or personal realms, or in some hybrid combination. In many of Górecki’s pieces, anachronism is threaded through the very fabric of the work itself, and these questions become fundamental to any line of investigation undertaken.

So, how can we reconcile Górecki claiming one thing – a lack of interest in the past and past events – while demonstrating the contrary in his work? This discussion of ‘past-ness’ and anachronism in Górecki’s music will drive the bulk of this chapter, and I will consider it not only in relation to his public comments, but also against the backdrop of broader musical currents circulating in the aftermath of the Second World War, as described by Maria Cizmic, Margarita Mazo, Martha Hyde, and Lisa Jakelski. Here I will argue that while Górecki’s employment of ‘past-ness’ – especially in his Symphony No. 1, “1959,” Op. 14 (1959) – may be most readily identified with the neoclassicist impulse which was

⁶ Martha Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 18 (1996): 200.

⁷ For more discussion of the Chopin quotation in the Symphony No. 3, see Cizmic, *Performing Pain*, 146–147, and Adrian Thomas, *Górecki* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 92–93.

prevalent in post-war Poland, it is better understood as an engagement with what Soviet composer Alfred Schnittke would later call a “documentary feeling,” which has been explored by Margarita Mazo in the context of Russia and the Soviet Union’s musical climate in the 1960s.⁸ As Mazo explains, this “documentary feeling” in music was driven by the push toward authenticity and hard truth – hence “documentary” – which emerged as a response to the social repression, false propaganda, and isolation of the Soviet regime.⁹ The movement resulted in a referential and highly intertextual idiom guided by a close consideration of the relationship between past and present, as artists also attempted to “reclaim [their] right to belong to and participate in the world [of] artistic tradition from which the Soviet artists were artificially excluded.”¹⁰

This documentary approach suggests a somewhat different perspective to neoclassicism, and in the context of this study a significant factor lies in their differing treatments of anachronism’s social implications. In neoclassicism, anachronism serves primarily to link a piece with other pieces, music to other musics, Stravinsky to “Pergolesi” as in *Pulcinella*, or Schoenberg to Handel as in the Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra (1933). The linkage takes place on a purely musical, technical level, which may occur for inspiration, homage, or even entertainment. Schoenberg expressed a thinly-veiled glee with himself, for example, when describing the procedure of his Cello Concerto after eighteenth-century Viennese composer Georg Matthias Monn in a letter to its dedicatee Pablo Casals:

Just as Mozart did with Handel’s *Messiah*, I have got rid of whole handfuls of sequences (‘rosalias,’ ‘shoemaker’s patches’) [*Rosalien*, “*Schusterflecke*”] replacing

⁸ Quoted in Margarita Mazo, “The Present and the Unpredictable Past: Music and Musical Life of St. Petersburg and Moscow Since the 1960s,” *International Journal of Musicology* 5 (1996): 376. From Claire Polin, “Interviews with Soviet Composers,” *Tempo* 151 (1984): 12. This “documentary feeling” is a forerunner to Schnittke’s more widely known polystylism of the 1970s. See also Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 302–311.

⁹ Similarly, Anne Shreffler identifies a “belief in the supremacy of the methodologies of hard science” as a “cornerstone” compositional value during the Cold War. See Shreffler, “Ideologies of Serialism: Stravinsky’s *Threni* and the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” in *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity: Essays*, ed. Karol Berger and Anthony Newcomb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 217.

¹⁰ Mazo, “Unpredictable Past,” 384.

them with real substance. [...] In harmony I have sometimes gone a little (and sometimes rather more) beyond the limits of that style. But nowhere does it go much further than Brahms, and anyway there are no dissonances other than those understood by the older theory of harmony; and it is nowhere atonal!¹¹

In Mazo's "documentary feeling," on the other hand, anachronism represents (re)connection, discourse, and commentary. It is imbued with a social purpose, and it offers a framework in which to connect music with a sense of time, place, spirit, and *reality* (as in the non-fictional verisimilitude of a documentary film). Grounded specifically against the oppression of the Soviet regime, Mazo conceives of it as a dialogue between self and other,¹² present and past, in which the "argument of one composer was supported by a composition of another."¹³ In the Soviet Union, as Mazo writes,

at the time when the people's own past became unpredictable [...] as facts and values of their past were increasingly documented as false, a kaleidoscope of references to the arts of the whole world, past and present, helped to redefine their values, reconstruct their self-identity, and find a new sense of belonging and continuity.¹⁴

Mazo's "documentary feeling" thus involves self-consciousness and self-awareness on the part of the composer, and can also be seen as a form of criticism, an evaluation and appraisal of the past through the medium of music. In addition to offering this 'real-world' framework, Mazo's theory is an appealing alternative for another reason: her theory arose to describe a social and political climate much closer to the Poland of Górecki's time than to the bourgeois circumstances in the 1920s that gave birth to neoclassicism. Many of Mazo's descriptions of Russia's cultural psyche, such as its high value placed on artistic expression, can be reproduced with equal aptness for Poland.¹⁵ While this point may be of questionable

¹¹ Quoted in Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 271. For a slightly different translation, see Egbert M. Ennulat, *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: A collection of translated and annotated letters exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1991), 163. Charles Ives also had some fun with the mishmash of quotation in his quodlibets; see Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 414.

¹² Mazo's theory draws heavily on the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. See Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 383.

¹³ Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 384.

¹⁴ Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 385.

¹⁵ See Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 373.

importance for some, such as those with no objection to a lack of synchronism between analytical method and object analysed, there remains a certain value to this closeness.¹⁶ I must stress, however, that neoclassicism and Mazo's "documentary feeling" are not binary opposites. Instead, they are parallel, complimentary, and reciprocal; they are, in effect, two culturally and sociologically distinct interpretations of a similar phenomenon, and much overlap exists between them. Similarly, I hope that emphasising the parallels between Poland and Russia will not efface the very real differences between them, and the reality remains that they each faced their own unique problems and circumstances in the post-war era.

After a more thorough discussion of what I take to be the distinctions between neoclassical and documentary approaches, I will briefly summarise Górecki's early life and his experiences during and after the Second World War. I would particularly like to draw attention to Górecki's self-professed musical influences, and the high value he placed on those from the Viennese classical tradition. The second half of this chapter will then present an analysis of Górecki's Symphony No. 1, identifying and unpacking the numerous anachronisms embedded within it. Here I will suggest an interpretation of these features as a socio-historical engagement with Górecki's circumstances in post-war Poland along the lines of Mazo's "documentary feeling," rather than the technical plundering of materials of the past offered by a neoclassical reading. In turn, by positioning the Symphony as a work of documentation – which is reinforced, for example, by its subtitle "1959" – other aspects of the music can be understood more readily as commentary or criticism, such as the organisation and structure of the twelve-note chords which make up the first movement.

¹⁶ In this vein, a large body of research demonstrates that twentieth-century analytical techniques yield fruitful insights when applied eighteenth-century repertoires. See, for example, John Clough, "Aspects of Diatonic Sets," *Journal of Music Theory* 23 (1979): 45–61; and Henry Burnett and Shaugn O'Donnell, "Linear Ordering of the Chromatic Aggregate in Classical Symphonic Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18 (1996): 22–50.

Anachronism: Neoclassical or Documentary?

The most important form of influence is that which provokes the most original and most personal work.
– Charles Rosen¹⁷

The past, and how to deal with it, is the spectre which haunts modern music. This is true not only for the composition, production and performance of such music, but for the writing of its history too. From the ‘breakthrough’ of *fin-de-siècle* modernism to the interwar neoclassicism of Berlin and Paris, the supposed *tabula rasa* of the post-war avant-garde and the vast heterogeneity of the Cold War and beyond, all ‘serious’ music since the late-nineteenth century has been occupied to varying degrees with its own place in history, and its relationship with what came before. This music was forced to carve out its own space amongst an increasingly standardised canon from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, forced to exist in the bind which pitted recognisability against individuality. In his article “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” Peter Burkholder argued that modernism and modern music are better defined not as a series of novel styles and progressive techniques, but as a shared movement united through a concern with the past:

What is most important about the music of the past hundred years is not its innovations but its air of crisis, and that crisis has to do primarily with the relationship of new music to past music, the music of the concert tradition. I wish to define “modern music” as music written by composers obsessed with the musical past and with their place in music history, who seek to *emulate the music of those we call the classical masters,* measuring the value of their own music by the standards of the past. “Modern” is an apt term for this music, for both composers and listeners conceive of it in relation to the music of the past and are self-conscious about its modernity [emphasis mine].¹⁸

This “emulation” of which Burkholder speaks most commonly manifests itself as instances of borrowing, allusion, and reference to past music – although there are also other,

¹⁷ Charles Rosen, “Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration,” *19th-Century Music* 4 (1980): 88.

¹⁸ Peter Burkholder, “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” *19th-Century Music* 8 (1984): 76–77.

more nebulous ways in which it can be displayed.¹⁹ Lutosławski's appropriation of the psychological aspects of Beethovenian form, addressed in the previous chapter, would fall under this second category. At this junction, I would like to add one further clarification, since, as Burkholder has noted elsewhere, the use of existing music to build new music is just about as old as the art itself.²⁰ It has been engrained in Western Art Music practices since probably the very beginning, and so there is nothing explicitly 'modern' about it. What is modern, rather paradoxically, is the ability to sound 'old.'

The distinction introduced in this chapter is between the uses of existing music which invoke – to modern ears – a sense of anachronism, and those which do not. This division is by nature highly subjective, greatly dependent on issues such as the general cultural and stylistic competence of a listener or the compositional idiom of the composer doing the borrowing (such as whether their work leans more to a tonal or post-tonal language). But while space does not permit a precise classification of the difference or the exact location of the threshold, I posit that it involves some triangulation between the date of the composition, the date of the material in some way being drawn upon, and the present day. The appropriation of (what was believed to be) Pergolesi in Stravinsky's ballet *Pulcinella* (1920), the concerto grosso in the first movement of Paul Hindemith's *Kammermusik No. 2*, Op. 36, No. 1 (1924), and the not-quite-Haydn of Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony No. 1, Op. 25 (1917) are all clearly anachronistic. Edvard Grieg's *Holberg Suite*, Op. 40 (1884), and Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* (1873) also are, though to a much lesser extent. By the time we get back to Beethoven's String Quartet in A major, Op. 18, No. 5 (1798–1800), which was modeled directly on Mozart's String Quartet in A major, K. 464 (1785), or

¹⁹ For instance, in positioning Brahms as "the single most important influence on twentieth-century classical music," Burkholder's criteria involves not the way later music *sounds*, but "how we think about it, how composers think about it, how music behaves, why it is written, and how composers measure their success." Burkholder, "Brahms," 75.

²⁰ Burkholder, "Musical Borrowing," 851–853.

indeed Mozart's reference to Handel's "And with His stripes we are healed" from the *Messiah* (1741) in the "Kyrie" of his *Requiem* (1791), or J. S. Bach's use of Palestrinian *stile antico* in his Mass in B minor (1748–9), however, any sense of anachronism to modern ears is largely lost.

As suggested by the dates clustered toward the end of the First World War in the first tranche of works listed above, these pieces belonged to the movement in European art music known as neoclassicism – an attempt by modern composers to “engage or reconstruct the past without sacrificing their own integrity in the history of styles.”²¹ Crucially, this self-conscious intent to be simultaneously modern and ‘classic,’ new *and* old, was what drove the neoclassicist impulse. According to Martha Hyde, it is for this reason that “we would not refer to a superb sonata in the style of Haydn or Mozart by a student in a model composition course as neoclassical,” since it does not “strive to put anachronism to work.” It does not, in other words, “recognise or engage the historical processes” which separate it from its model.²² But this is where things become muddled. While all forms of neoclassicism must invariably invoke some sense of anachronism, not every instance of anachronism in the twentieth century will be neoclassic. Parody, for example, is often seen to be antithetical to genuine neoclassicism, in that it mocks rather than venerates its source material.²³ In practice, however, this distinction is highly permeable. Further adding to the confusion, there is little agreement between scholars concerning neoclassicism's stylistic features, its origins, its goals, or even its main composers. According to Scott Messing,

the presence of neoclassicism in studies of early twentieth-century music was so rife that almost every major figure composing during the first three decades of this century was tied, loosely or umbilically, to this term; yet a collation of usages

²¹ Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses,” 200. As a twentieth-century counterexample, Charles Ives was a composer who drew extensively from existing music but is not generally understood as anachronistic or neoclassical. Burkholder identifies fourteen categories of borrowing in the practice of Ives, such as “paraphrase” or “collage,” but ties none of them explicitly with neoclassicism. See Burkholder, “Musical Borrowing,” 853–854.

²² Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses,” 201.

²³ This interpretation does not include “parody” used in the sense of a parody mass or cantata.

produced such a variety of meaning that the expression seemed to possess no syntactical weight whatsoever.²⁴

Neoclassicism was (and still is) spoken of with such little qualification that some, such as Milton Babbitt, have dismissed it as meaningless.²⁵ For these reasons, although the two are usually bundled together, neoclassicism and anachronism have experienced highly equivocal usage throughout the twentieth century, and remain difficult areas to theorise. Taruskin perhaps sums up the situation best when he asks of neoclassicism: “Can we define it, or can we only know it when we see it?”²⁶ Only recently, after close to a century of tendentious usage, are the meanings of the two terms beginning to stabilise.

Mazo’s Unpredictable Past

This is how the continuity between past and present was gradually wrecked; this is how the Russian past became unpredictable on all levels of societal, artistic and personal life.

– Margarita Mazo²⁷

References to the past initiated by anachronism – musical or otherwise – consciously perform an act of comparison between ‘then’ and ‘now.’ This process allows us to comprehend the position of the present with respect to the past, and discern any improvement or decline from what had come before. It would be difficult to avoid comparing, even subconsciously, Richard Strauss’s 1923 *Dance suite from keyboard pieces by Francois Couperin* to the early eighteenth-century originals. But what happens, however, if the past has no connection with the present, and even more dangerously, if the present bears no resemblance to the past? While today we take such notions of continuity for granted, in the Soviet Union under

²⁴ Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), xiii.

²⁵ Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses,” 202.

²⁶ Richard Taruskin, “Back to Whom: Neoclassicism as Ideology,” *19th-Century Music* 16 (1993): 287.

²⁷ Mazo, “Unpredictable Past,” 375.

Stalinism these connections were tenuous at best. As Margarita Mazo argues, this temporal continuum, or the “historical axis, past-present-future” was disrupted by the accession of Stalin and the imposition of socialist realism in the 1920s, which denied an entire generation access to a history unaltered by official policy. Socialist realism brought with it widespread censorship, propaganda, deportations, denunciations, and the adjustment of historical records such as photographs and personal documents. “Any information that was undesirable for the regime,” writes Mazo, “was withdrawn from the libraries and archives [...] as though by destroying the documents and taking away the information one can erase history.” From that point onward, the relationship between the past and the present became blurred; the past didn’t exist in its own right, but rather “only to the extent it could serve the official line.”²⁸ Living in the present was to be sandwiched between a false past and the promise of a false future, neither of which with any relationship to reality.

Following Stalin’s death in 1953 and the Soviet restructuring which resulted (along with later initiatives such as *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the 1980s), a fresh – and only newly possible – concern for the past emerged among writers, artists, and historians. As Stalinism receded in late 1950s/early 1960s, Soviet composers sought to re-establish links with the authentic (as opposed to State-sanctioned) national past that was previously denied to them, and through doing so searched for the truth of the present.²⁹ There was a reawakening of interest in what had come before, in the autochthonous and authentic, along with what connections they held to current circumstances. Mazo speaks of a sense of “assembly,” of piecing musical knowledge together through reference to a number of different sources – something which, as shown below, is an apt description for Górecki’s Symphony. Crucially, this process of reconnection also played a part in laying sturdy foundations for the future, and

²⁸ Mazo, “Unpredictable Past,” 375.

²⁹ Mariz Cizmic identifies Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in 1956 as a turning point, which inspired a particular concern for “past events that had been left out of official historical narratives.” See Cizmic, *Performing Pain*, 4.

so Mazo summarises the activities of the time as a “normalisation” of the past-present-future continuum, which permitted, for the first time in close to 40 years, any meaningful comparison between ‘then’ and ‘now.’³⁰

The music which arose from this political landscape demonstrated disparate forms of intertextuality. This ranged from simple citations and quotations (techniques, as mentioned, which had been already used extensively in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), to collage and the later *polystylism* of Schnittke in the 1970s, which developed out of his earlier “documentary” style. Schnittke’s description of the merits of his polystylism, in an essay first written around 1971 but only published in 1988, is rich with insight into its expressive potential:

But in spite of all the complications and possible dangers of the polystylistic method, its merits are now obvious. It widens the range of expressive possibilities, it allows for the integration of “low” and “high” styles, of the “banal” and the “recherché” – that is, *it creates a wider musical world* and a general democratisation of style. In it we find the *documentary objectivity of musical reality*, presented not just as something reflected individually but as an actual quotation (in the third part of Berio’s symphony we hear an *ominous apocalyptic reminder of our generation’s responsibility for the fate of the world*, expressed by means of a collage of quotations, of *musical “documents” from various ages* – reminding one of cinema advertising in the 1970s). And finally it creates new possibilities for the musical dramatisation of “eternal” questions – of war and peace, life and death [emphasis mine].³¹

It is evident that Schnittke conceived of anachronism in a very different way to neoclassicism, and here he articulated several issues which I will return to with Górecki. Although the political situation in Poland never quite reached the nadir of the Soviet Union’s, and the past was not suppressed so completely, many of Mazo’s general observations concerning Russia can be translated across with ease. Compare the following statements, for example, with the historical events discussed in Chapter 2:

From the time of the Tatar-Mongolian occupation eight centuries ago, through the reign of the Russian Czars, up to and including the Soviet regime, Russian artists

³⁰ Mazo, “Unpredictable Past,” 375.

³¹ Alfred Schnittke, “Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music” [c. 1971], in *A Schnittke Reader*, ed. Alexander Ivashkin, trans. John Goodliffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 90.

lived, and often flourished, under conditions of manipulative political, religious, and social repression unimaginable by Western artists. Much too often in Russian history, the proscription of free speech left arts as the only permissible means to express real concerns and thoughts. [...] In the former Soviet Union, moreover, the arts often became a substitution for real life itself.³²

For Górecki and Poland as a whole, the late 50s and early 60s were the first moments of reprieve since the outbreak of war in 1939. This period, known as the Polish Thaw, was the first opportunity to take stock of the advent of Communism, as well as the wider repercussions of the Second World War itself and of the destruction of the Second Republic. It was a time of reflection and of consolidation, as society was forced to come to terms with the atrocities of the recent past – not just as victims, but in some cases even as collaborators and perpetrators. Conversely (though *not* paradoxically) it was also a time of great experimentation, a testing-of-the-waters and a charting-out of what was tolerated by the new regime. Gazes were turned to both the past and the future, and the present was the lens through which both were viewed.

Although Górecki's Symphony No. 1 slightly pre-dates the music described by Mazo and Schnittke,³³ I argue that reading his music as containing a similar documentary impulse is valuable in two key respects. First, as stated earlier, it is a compelling alternative to neoclassicism, which has dominated most critical discussions of anachronism from the second half of the twentieth century onward. Writing in 1965, Stefan Jarocinski, for example, opened his article "Polish Music after World War II" with the statement that: "The two factors that have had the greatest impact on modern Polish music are neo-Classicism and the works of Szymanowski."³⁴ Second, this documentary interpretation offers a framework

³² Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 373.

³³ In general, Poland experienced a Thaw both sooner and to a greater extent than any that occurred in Russia, so it is understandable that Polish composers began dealing with this process of reconnection slightly earlier. Mazo writes of Russian music: "If in the 1970s the goal was to catch up with the 20th century and be on a par with the arts in the West, then the goal of the 1980s can be said to strive to create their own free and experimental art"; Poland's progression through these stages was a decade sooner, due in no small part to the Warsaw Autumn. Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 387.

³⁴ Stefan Jarocinski, "Polish Music after World War II," *Musical Quarterly* 51 (1965): 244.

through which to explore Górecki's relationship with the Second World War, Germany, and German music of the past. As suggested by the epigraphs heading this chapter, Górecki's public remarks on these topics are evasive, and other than some comments regarding his difficulty in composing a work in commemoration of the Holocaust (pre-dating Symphony No. 3), it is difficult to discern what his feelings were on such matters.³⁵ By reading Symphony No. 1 as a documentary object enacting some form of social commentary, however, several aspects of this relationship become much clearer.

A precursor to this interpretation of a socially-grounded anachronism can be found in the tropes of musical nostalgia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In her article on Chopin's use of the *Kujawiak* dance topic, Halina Goldberg, for example, draws on nineteenth-century sources to interpret Chopin's "simultaneous presentation of temporally distinct musical languages" in a number of his Mazurkas – such as "the temporally distant language of a chorale against the presentness of the mazurka rhythms" – as symbolic of his physical dislocation from Poland, and of his nostalgia for his homeland.³⁶ The poignancy of these gestures, Goldberg argues, is heightened by the impossibility the return they desire. Likewise, the case of Richard Strauss, a living dinosaur by the mid-twentieth century, offers a similar situation. As suggested by certain documents and speeches made during his time in the Third Reich, Strauss (and his music) appeared to genuinely regard the future of German

³⁵ The interesting case of Górecki's Auschwitz Mass, or as he tentatively called it, "The Barbaric Mass," is explored in David Drew's 1989 republishing of and commentary on a 1968 interview of the composer by Tadeusz Marek: see Tadeusz Marek and David Drew, "Górecki in Interview (1968) – And 20 Years After," *Tempo* 168 (1989): 25–29. For a substantial period during the 1960s, Górecki intended to write a Mass in response to the tragedy of Auschwitz, and spent upwards of eight years searching for appropriate texts. In the interview with Marek, he said that "This work has been germinating in my mind for years, troubling me, yet clamouring for its realisation. I want to write it, I want to be capable of writing it – and that unfortunately is all I can say about it just now" (p. 26). This work did not, however, ultimately come to fruition, and Górecki at one point "finally confessed to his friend that the notebooks he had filled with texts and fragments of texts for his Auschwitz Mass had finally overwhelmed him with a sense of the 'impossibility,' at least for the time being, of finding for such material a music and form appropriate to it" (p. 27). It is very difficult to clarify how much – if any – of this supposed Auschwitz Mass became part of the Symphony No. 3, however given the similarity of subject matter there is at least a possibility that the earlier work was of some influence.

³⁶ Halina Goldberg, "Nationalizing the *Kujawiak* and Constructions of Nostalgia in Chopin's Mazurkas," *19th-Century Music* 39 (2016): 240.

music as “a return to the conditions of the end of the nineteenth century.”³⁷ The future, in his eyes, lay only in the past. The seemingly out-dated quality of his music can therefore be understood as a reflection of his desire to reinstate the socio-cultural structures of the pre-1914, Wilhelminian German state, when his position as the pre-eminent modernist composer was unassailable. But Strauss is very much an outlier in this respect, for it would be difficult to argue that Stravinsky’s appropriation of Pergolesi and others, or Górecki’s Harpsichord Concerto (1980), were linked with any desire to return to the early eighteenth century.

“Beethoven was for me almost like a monument”

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was born in 1933 in the outskirts of the village of Czernica, in the Polish region of Silesia. The region remains a major coal-mining and steel-producing area of Poland, and at that time was one of the most polluted in Europe. Górecki’s early life was marked by a series of tragedies, beginning with the death of his mother, Otylia, on his second birthday. This event would have a profound impact on the young boy. In 1937, he dislocated his hip while playing outside, but the injury was inadequately diagnosed, and remained mistreated for over two years. Górecki was nearly six years old before he received proper care, undergoing four operations in Bytom (near Katowice), but was still left with a heavy limp for life.³⁸ Bernard Jacobson traces further ailments:

Next came tuberculosis, and again, medicines being hard to come by during the German occupation, treatment was long-drawn-out, arduous, and often wrong. Then, in the mid-1950s, an infection in Górecki’s fingers led one doctor to advocate amputation, but the young composer-pianist escaped with two more operations instead, though a tumour in his skull was yet another result of all the medicaments he had been forced to take.³⁹

³⁷ Michael Walter, “Strauss in the Third Reich,” trans. Jürgen Thym, in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, ed. Charles Youmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 234.

³⁸ Thomas, *Górecki*, xv. See also Howard, “Motherhood,” 134.

³⁹ Jacobson, *Polish Renaissance*, 174.

Adrian Thomas, in his monograph on Górecki, also notes a kidney operation in 1958, and much later, a further hip operation in 1982.⁴⁰ Such an unhappy succession of illnesses and misadventures have led commentators to posit a connection between them and his music, and this fundamental subtext of suffering has shaped much of Górecki's reception.⁴¹ In some cases Górecki fuelled this reading himself, and claimed, for example, to have often "talked with death."⁴² Nonetheless, in spite of the allure that these interpretations hold, it is important not to essentialise Górecki's works as pathologically driven by victimhood.⁴³

Despite Górecki's physical setbacks in his early life, he pursued the study of music with singular concentration. After finishing secondary school in 1951 and facing rejection from the various Schools of Music in the region (where he was considered "too untutored and too old"⁴⁴), he enrolled instead in an open-age music course in nearby Rybnik, while also taking on full-time work as a primary school teacher. In 1952, he won a place in a teacher-training course, where he received tuition on the piano, clarinet, and violin, as well as in subjects such as theory, instrumentation, and folklore. Thomas describes Górecki's schedule from this period, when he juggled work as a primary school teacher with his own studies:

On a typical weekday, after a full day's teaching, he would take the train to Rybnik for several hours' tuition, coming home in the evening to do more studying and composing. And when he started going to orchestral concerts in Katowice, two hours away by train, he would use the journey to study Beethoven symphonies or analyse some Bach. He often missed the last connecting train home and would then spend the night composing or sleeping on the table in the waiting-room at Rybnik before returning home at 5:30am, just in time to leave again for his job at the primary school.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Górecki*, xv, n. 3.

⁴¹ Howard, "Motherhood," 134.

⁴² Jacobson, *Polish Renaissance*, 191.

⁴³ For an example of such a publication which treads uncomfortably close to this reading of pathological victimhood (though for Polish music in general rather than Górecki in particular) see Charles Bodman Rae, "The Polish musical psyche: From the Second Republic into the Third," in *Polish Music Since 1945*, ed. Eva Mantzourani (Kraków: Music Iagellonia, 2013), 15–27.

⁴⁴ Thomas, *Górecki*, xvi.

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Górecki*, xvi–xvii.

Górecki's early musical diet is fascinating, not least due to the unorthodox methods through which he built up his collection of scores: the first that he acquired was Beethoven's Ninth in his mid-teens, for which he swapped a ping-pong racket.⁴⁶ To this he soon added Szymanowski's Mazurkas and Chopin's Impromptus – bought this time with his own money – as well as Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Chopin's Mazurkas, and a collection of Polish folksongs by Adolf Chybiński, the musicologist whose documentation of Polish Highland music greatly influenced Szymanowski. Thomas calls these preferences a “twin track of classics and Polish music,” as Górecki steeped himself in both Poland's musical heritage and the Western canon.⁴⁷ In a Dutch documentary from 1993, he made his listening preferences clear: “I listen to the radio a lot. But not contemporary music. I still find so many new things in Mozart, and Schubert – new things that interest me, that I need, that give me answers to questions. I don't find that in contemporary music.”⁴⁸ Similarly, when asked in 1997 about his favourite composers by a group of students from the University of Southern California (USC), Górecki reeled off a comprehensive list and commentary:

Those that were my favourites, are now, and will remain so – it is hard for me to name just one. I can't name two either. I should certainly start with Beethoven, then Chopin. Actually, Chopin was not so interesting for me at first, because I was then a very young boy, 14 or 15 years old. But Beethoven was for me almost like a monument, a larger-than-life figure. Now it is hard to imagine life without Mozart, he is one of the greatest geniuses. However, above him, just a tiny little bit above him, is Chopin. After that come Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Haydn, Wagner, and Schubert. [...] It is hard to imagine a day without thinking about or playing Bach, but also without Stravinsky and Szymanowski. With the latter I have been connected since the very beginning, from the very first moment of my way to music. [...] I also like other composers very much: Dvořák, Puccini – he wrote great operas, he really composed fantastic operas – Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, and Ives. Of course, Ives.⁴⁹

Other than perhaps Ives, Górecki's catalogue contained nearly all the heavy-hitters in the Western (read: Germanocentric) Classical Canon – he even mentioned Beethoven and

⁴⁶ Thomas, *Górecki*, xvii.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Górecki*, xvii.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Jacobson, *Polish Renaissance*, 190.

⁴⁹ Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, “Conversation with USC Students,” accessed 20 November 2016.

Wagner twice. The sheer number of composers cited in the USC conversation, along with a certain eclecticism in the selection, suggests that Górecki's wide-ranging taste developed without discrimination or prejudice: he simply tried to imbibe as much music as possible, from whatever available source. This mentality of 'catching-up' was widespread in Poland in the 1950s and 60s, and is by no means limited to Górecki.⁵⁰ Unlike Lutosławski, however, he never attempted to explain the connections or links between his music and that of the past. Górecki's mention of Strauss in the first epigraph to this chapter (on page 110) is also worth raising at this point, considering Strauss's activities during Germany's period of National Socialism.⁵¹ For Górecki, it appeared that Strauss – along with Bach and Schubert – was a German whose musical greatness transcended the very fact of his Germanness, as well as the historic animosity between that country and Poland. The placement of this comment right after references to Dachau and Auschwitz is jarring, but also a testament to Górecki's esteem of Strauss – or at least of Strauss *qua* composer.⁵²

In 1955 Górecki was accepted into the Higher School of Music in Katowice, where he studied composition with Bolesław Szabelski (1896–1979), a former student of Szymanowski. His first compositions from this period were influenced by folk-music and Bartók, as well as the neoclassicist leanings of the elder Polish generation such as Bacewicz and Kazimierz Serocki (1922–1981), who had both studied in Paris with Boulanger. Thomas identifies in these early works of Górecki's "twists and turns introduced into fairly four-

⁵⁰ Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," *The Journal of Musicology* 26 (2009): 210.

⁵¹ See Walter, "Strauss in the Third Reich," 226–241.

⁵² This is also in line with comments made by Alex Ross about the perception of Strauss among other twentieth-century composers, although specific reference to Górecki is not made. For Ross, outside of whatever individual responses may be, regard for Strauss was also linked very much with which generation the composer belonged to, and that "composers born in, say, 1935 or 1945 no longer displayed the aversion towards Strauss's sumptuous orchestration that seemed automatic among their elders. [...] Latter-day American composers such as John Corigliano, David Del Tredici, John Adams, and Aaron Jay Kernis display a quite different mindset; they often take the attitude that the capabilities of the late-Romantic orchestra are, in a sense, to be enjoyed to the max, and with them Strauss's orchestration once again becomes a plausible if not dominant model." Alex Ross, "Strauss's place in the twentieth century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, 211.

square rhythmic and metric patterns, uncomplicated formal structures, [...] a harmonic language that seeks consistency less in the diatonic triad than in perfect intervals, tritones, and chromatic ostinatos.”⁵³ Following his attendance at the inaugural Warsaw Autumn Festival in late 1956, however, Górecki’s music began a radical stylistic shift away from folk neoclassicism.⁵⁴ Spurred on by his exposure to the avant-garde works of the Festival, Górecki’s compositions from the Sonata for Two Violins, Op. 10 (1957) onward show a marked investment in dodecaphonic and serial techniques. His reputation continued to grow through this period, and in February 1958 Górecki was given the distinction of a concert in Katowice consisting entirely of his music. Later that year he was commissioned to write a piece for the second Warsaw Autumn Festival (there had been no festival in 1957), for which he produced *Epitafium*, Op. 12 for chorus and ensemble. Jakelski suggests that his rapid development in compositional style was also facilitated by his age – he was too young to have been properly affected by *socrealizm* – and by his location in Silesia, away from the more “closely scrutinised” urban centres of Warsaw and Kraków where the arts were perhaps more closely vetted by authorities. Compared with Lutosławski’s experiences, for example, Górecki was “unencumbered by socialist realist baggage,” and “among those most poised to leap to the forefront of Poland’s emerging group of adventurous young composers.”⁵⁵ His Symphony No. 1, Op. 14, completed in 1959, would cement this position even further.

Symphony No. 1, “1959”

Scored for strings and a large, extended percussion section (including harpsichord and piano), Górecki’s Symphony No. 1, Op. 14 was premiered on 14 September 1959 at the 3rd Warsaw

⁵³ Thomas, *Górecki*, 1.

⁵⁴ A full program and schedule of the performances in the 1956 Festival can be found in Cindy Bylander, “The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, 1956–1961: Its goals, structures, programs, and people” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1989), 553–555.

⁵⁵ Jakelski, “*Scontri*,” 212.

Autumn Festival.⁵⁶ It is dedicated to his teacher, Szabelski, and subtitled for the year of its composition. When asked about the significance of this date, whether it held any special meaning, Górecki was characteristically opaque: “It is everything together: very small things, and various large things. A caesura. With music school, with Szabelski, with history, with politics, with my own life. Much was *changing* in 1959. It was a good time, a fine time.”⁵⁷ We are certain, at least, of one of these “large things”: 1959 was also the year that Górecki married Jadwiga Rurańska.

On a surface level – as laid out, perhaps, in a concert programme – Górecki’s Symphony bears some resemblance to a ‘classical’ Austro-German symphony: it is in four movements, the main argument dwells in the first of these, and it is approximately 20 minutes long. But here the similarities end: there is no sonata form in sight, the idiom is atonal, pointillistic, and at times serialised, there are no winds or brass (perhaps an anti-anti-romantic response to a wind-saturated half-century), and the movements each carry separate titles: “Inwokacja” (Invocation), “Antyfona” (Antiphon), “Chorał” (Chorale), and “Lauda” (which, according to *Grove*, was the “principal genre of non-liturgical religious song in Italy during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance,” and linked with praise in the highest sense).⁵⁸ These are ‘old’ titles, replete with connotations of spirituality, ritual, and antiquity, and Górecki had already used two of them, “Chorał” and “Antyphona,” in 1958’s *Epitafium*. This atmosphere is heightened by the inclusion of the harpsichord, which is featured in the “Antyfona” movement.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Although Górecki had completed the work in full, the 1959 premiere omitted the second movement. The complete premiere came in July 1963 at Darmstadt.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Marek and Drew, “Górecki in Interview,” 29. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁸ Blake Wilson, “Lauda,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 2 October 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

⁵⁹ Interestingly, another Polish work of the time also featured the harpsichord: Bogusław Schaeffer’s *Tertium datur* (1958). Schaeffer’s work is subtitled “A Composer’s Treatise for Harpsichord and Instruments,” and according to Thomas “mixes conventional and graphic notation and conventional and experimental musical gestures.” It is unclear to what extent the works are related – Schaeffer’s was composed in 1958 in nearby Kraków, but was only premiered at the Warsaw Autumn in 1960. See Thomas, *Polish Music*, 102–103.

Already, perhaps, some anachronistic qualities may be apparent, where new and old collide. An instrumental, four-movement symphony written in 1959; movement titles reminiscent of a pre-common-practice sacred choral tradition; the archaic sounds of a harpsichord jammed between twelve-note string chords, along with a large and prominent Varèse-style percussion battery. I believe that these features suggest a resonance with Mazo's continuum of "past-present-future," and that a documentary concern is at work in Górecki's piece. Thomas also notices a similar historicist interest, detecting what he calls an "alternative Górecki" in the late 1950s and 60s, when the composer produced works "openly based on Polish Renaissance compositions at the very time that he was at the height of his experimental period." This move of "referring, however obliquely, to old musical traditions in Poland at this time," writes Thomas, "was both unusual and, with regard to church music, something of a finger in the eye of the state authorities."⁶⁰

Figure 4.1 (overleaf) shows the spatial organisation of the musicians on the stage in the Symphony, illustrating the highly irregular (although symmetrical) arrangements explored by Górecki at the time. This fragmented image of a string orchestra stratifies the ensemble into three arching belts: a vast line of percussion at the back; then strings – the violins as a core mass in the centre flanked on either side by double-basses, with the violas and celli on the outer edges; and an inner trio of harp, vibraphone, and harpsichord.⁶¹ This scan, from the published score, appears to contain a typo, and the piano-shaped object on the far stage-right is labelled "cc" rather than "pf."

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Górecki*, 58.

⁶¹ For more examples of Górecki's occupation with symmetry, including in areas of pitch, structure, and notation, see Danuta Mirka, "Górecki's Musica geometrica," *Musical Quarterly* 87 (2004): 305–332. See also Jakelski's discussion of the spatial dispersion of instruments in Górecki's 1960 orchestral piece *Scontri*, which calls for a much larger ensemble and an exceptionally more elaborate stage design. Interestingly, following the premiere of *Scontri* at the 1960 Warsaw Autumn, this spatialisation was understood by domestic critics "as a characteristic particular to the Polish avant-garde." Jakelski, "*Scontri*," 219–220.

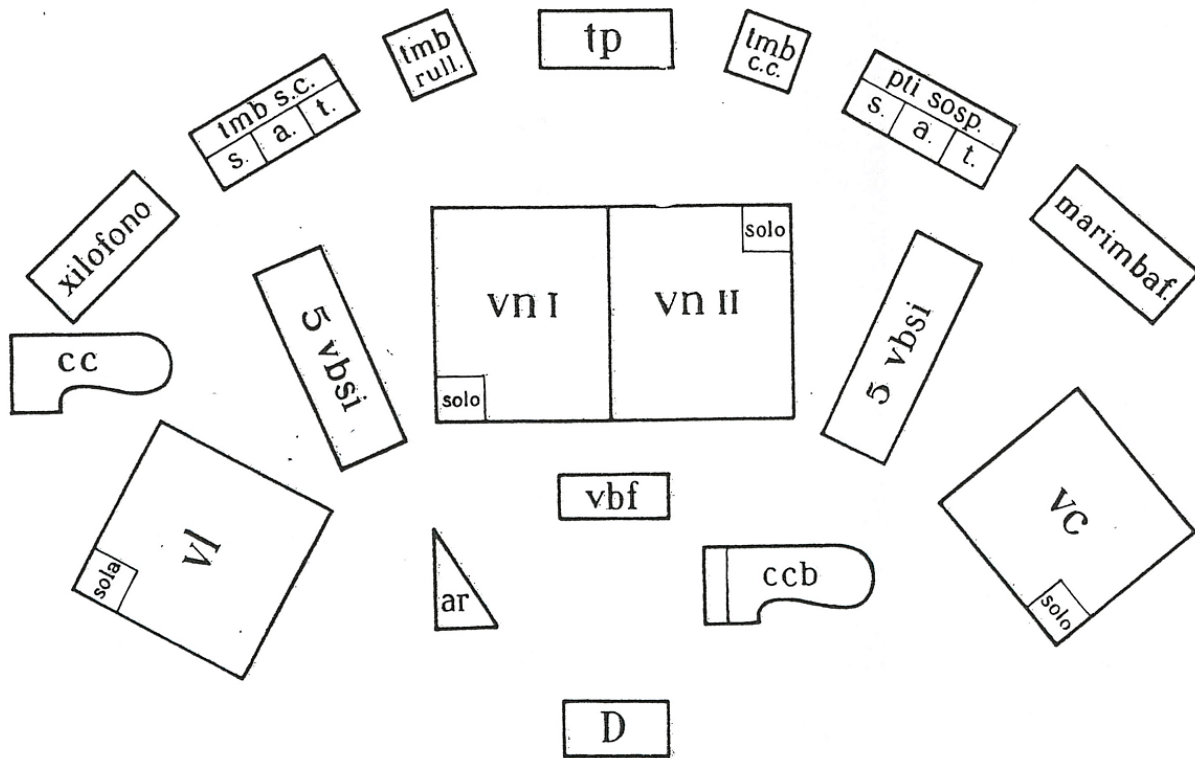


Figure 4.1: Onstage arrangement of musicians in Górecki's *Symphony No. 1*

Symphonic Concerns

Just as absolute music contained extra-musical implications for Lutosławski, the symphony in the twentieth century was laden with associations. Daniel Grimley, for example, writes that “the symphony is anything but a neutral genre, and it carries into the twentieth century perhaps the greatest ideological baggage of any large-scale musical form.”⁶² For Poland in particular, the genre had experienced a tumultuous reception in the early years of socialist realism, where several works, such as Zbigniew Turski's *Symphony No. 2, “Olympic”* (1948), Lutosławski's *Symphony No. 1* (1947), and Andrzej Panufnik's *Sinfonia Rustica* (1948) were banned, largely for being incompatible with the socially useful image of a symphony expected by the regime.⁶³ Regardless of the variations between different

⁶² Daniel Grimley, “*Symphony/antiphony: formal strategies in the twentieth-century symphony,*” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, 285.

⁶³ Turski's work, the “Olympic” *Symphony*, was particularly targeted by critics at the 1949 Łagów conference. Włodzimierz Sokorski, the Polish Deputy Minister of Culture and socialist realism advocate, slammed the work as “a piece which in its content is incompatible with the spirit of our time,” while Zofia Lissa wrote that “this

composers and nationalities, however, it is true above all that in a century ravaged by two World Wars, the symphony represented “a musical institution whose nineteenth-century associations of community, unity and synthesis [seemed] unrealistically idealistic and unattainable.”⁶⁴ And so new meanings and new paths were (*had to be*) forged, since symphonies – in various guises – were still being written.⁶⁵ The following discussion will consider how Górecki’s Symphony can be understood against this context, and what the implications are of the documentary sense of time and place within the work.

For Grimley, a symphony is fundamentally concerned with “the musical representation of time and space,” which he derives from its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century etymology: *sounding together*. Particular to the twentieth-century symphony, then, is “the extent to which these categories of time and space have become increasingly contested and contingent,” tendencies which manifest themselves in musical characteristics that are fragmented, disparate, disjunct and even incoherent.⁶⁶ These features are certainly present in Górecki’s Symphony, a work so technically uncompromising that the second movement, “Antyfonya,” was omitted from the premiere performance due to its extreme technical difficulty for the musicians.⁶⁷ But what are the implications of such a gritty, atonal toughness? To what end are they employed?

Symphony is incapable of ‘mobilising’ our man.” See Thomas, *Polish Music*, 47. Interestingly, this led to something of a regression in Polish symphonic composition in the 1950s, where classical forms reasserted themselves and elements such as fugues were often present. Thomas, *Polish Music*, 88.

⁶⁴ Grimley, “*Symphony/antiphony*,” 285. Here Grimley cites the sentiments of Pierre Boulez, from his essay “Orchestras, Concert Halls, Repertory, Audiences,” in *Orientalisms*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 467–470.

⁶⁵ For an overview of symphonic output in the twentieth century, see David Fanning, “The symphony since Mahler: national and international trends,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, 96–130. Addressing the remarkable resilience of the symphony in the face of numerous and repeated proclamations of its death, Fanning ends his chapter with a paraphrase of Mahler’s, which was reportedly uttered in conversation with Brahms: “the urge to compose symphonies and to listen to them is as unstoppable as the flow of water to the sea” (p. 128).

⁶⁶ Grimley, “*Symphony/antiphony*,” 285.

⁶⁷ Thomas reproduces an excerpt of the movement in *Górecki*, 20–21.

As an example, consider first what is understood by a chorale. Immediate associations are of a four-part vocal setting; a homophonic and largely homorhythmic texture; possibly as a hymn or in some sacred context. Closely behind, we may think of J. S. Bach, and perhaps even first-year harmony exercises. Górecki's "Choral," the third movement of the Symphony, is precisely none of these things. Example 4.1 reproduces in short score the pitches and rhythms of the string parts in the opening of the "Choral" (though it does little justice to the

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Snare Drum, Violin I, Violin II, and Contrabass. The second system includes Snare Drum, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 58. Dynamics range from *mp* to *pppp*. Performance instructions include *con sord.*, *pizz.*, and *sul pont.*

Example 4.1: Excerpt of "Choral" from Górecki's Symphony No. 1, bars 1–9

unique look of Polish scores at the time, where the staves of instruments resting – even for a single bar – are replaced with empty space). The excerpt shows the rhythmically complex and highly fragmented string writing of the “Chorał,” filled with hushed gestures and wide, disjunct leaps. The movement unfolds in a vaguely ternary form, and this Webernesque string texture returns after a brief interruption of a duet between the piano and violas. There the violas pulse on long notes *molto sul ponticello*, alternating between C3 and D4, while the piano moves through the prime row of the Symphony (taken from the first movement, and discussed in more detail below) in short jabs at the registral extremes of the instrument. What sense of chorale can be found in this music? I believe that this exchange between old (the title) and new (the musical language) holds the key to interpreting this section, as the listener is left to make sense of something that is a chorale in name only.

In the opening chapter of his 1953 anti-Stalinist work *The Captive Mind*, the Polish author Czesław Miłosz discusses the novel *Insatiability* (1932) by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz – a writer and painter who was close friends with Szymanowski.⁶⁸ Borrowing from Witkiewicz the idea of the “Murti-Bing pill,”⁶⁹ Miłosz uses the pill as a metaphor for socialist realism; users become “serene and happy,” and “impervious to any metaphysical concerns” when they swallow the pill, peddled by one of the hawkers spread throughout the city. As Miłosz writes:

The heroes of the novel, once tormented by philosophical “insatiety,” now entered the service of the new society. Instead of writing the dissonant music of former days, they composed marches and odes. Instead of painting abstractions as before, they turned out socially useful pictures. But since they could not rid themselves completely of their former personalities, they became schizophrenics.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* [1953], trans. Jane Zielonko (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 4–5.

⁶⁹ Murti-Bing is a fictional Mongolian philosopher in Witkiewicz’s novel, who, according to Miłosz “had succeeded in producing an organic means of transporting a ‘philosophy of life.’ This ‘philosophy of life’ [...] constituted the strength of the Sino-Mongolian army.” Miłosz, *Captive Mind*, 4. Cf. the drug “soma” in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, which was written about twenty years earlier.

⁷⁰ Miłosz, *Captive Mind*, 5.

Miłosz also speaks of what he terms “Ketman” – the defence of one’s inner thoughts and feelings through the outward profession of the opposite – learned and engrained as a method of survival in a totalitarian society.⁷¹ It is this subconscious/*unconscious* sense of contradiction which Miłosz depicts with these images – understood perhaps more widely as the Orwellian “doublethink” – that Górecki’s work parallels here. Confronted by a non-chorale in a non-symphony, the listener is forced to undergo this doublethink themselves, and question the relationship between thought and deed; name and content. We are reminded that although socialist realism in Polish music was rescinded in 1956, it still persisted in other aspects of Polish life (Miłosz’s works remained banned, for example, due to his defection to the West), and that there remained a substantial divide between private and public realms.

Harpichord Cadenza

A more pronounced collision between past and present occurs in the second movement, “Antyfona,” with the appearance of the harpsichord – the only point in which it is employed in the Symphony. The harpsichord enters with a cadenza-like solo about three-quarters of the way through the movement, following a pointillistic climax dominated by mallet percussion. Immediately preceding it, the texture is briefly stabilised by a series of repeated string chords, marked *sempre ffff*, and several stabs by the xylophone, marimbaphone, vibraphone, and piano on major-7th dyads, also marked *ffff*. The ensemble then cuts out suddenly, leaving the harpsichord to spin its brief solo, unaccompanied apart from two interjections from the strings. A reduction of the score is shown in Example 4.2, across the following two pages.

⁷¹ Miłosz, *Captive Mind*, 54–81. “It is hard to define the type of relationship that prevails between people in the East otherwise than as acting, with the exception that one does not perform on a theatre stage but in the street, office, factory, meeting hall, or even the room one lives in” (p. 54). Miłosz derives the name “Ketman” from a description in Arthur de Gobineau’s *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia*, and identifies several subgroups: “National Ketman,” “The Ketman of Revolutionary Purity,” “Aesthetic Ketman,” “Professional Ketman,” “Metaphysical Ketman,” and so forth.

13 $\text{♩} = 160$

$\text{♩} = 120$

The score consists of ten staves. The top three staves (Xylophone, Marimbaphone, Vibraphone) have a tempo of $\text{♩} = 120$ and play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamics *ff* and *fff*. The Piano part has a tempo of $\text{♩} = 160$ and plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamics *fff*. The Harpsichord part has a tempo of $\text{♩} = 160$ and features a cadenza with a triplet and a quintuplet, with dynamics *fff*. The Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts have a tempo of $\text{♩} = 120$ and play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamics *ff* and *fff sempre*.

Example 4.2: Harpsichord cadenza in “Antyfona,” Rehearsal Figures 13–15 (continued overleaf)

14

Hpsd. *mp* *fff* *fff* *fff*

Vln. I *mp* *tutti*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *p*

Cb. *ppp*

Pno. *fff*

Hpsd. *mp* *fff* 5:4

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb. *fff*

Example 4.2: (cont.)

Two features of this harpsichord cadenza are striking. First, the instrument is incredibly quiet – feeble, even – compared with the cacophony just moments before. It is a soft instrument in the first place, and Górecki makes no indications in the score regarding amplification. Furthermore, its dynamic markings (*fff* with the occasional *mp*) are almost entirely nominal, given the limited dynamic variation available from the instrument’s mechanism. The marked drop in sound across the cadenza does just that – *marks* it as something special and important, foregrounding it even more. Second, the auditory image of a ‘harpsichord cadenza’ inevitably draws an association with the first movement of J. S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, which is unlikely a mere coincidence given Górecki’s professed admiration for Bach (“It is hard to imagine a day without thinking about or playing Bach”⁷²). What is certain, however, is that in this abstracted sound-world of disjunct semitones and jagged phrases, the colour and atmosphere of the harpsichord – and the music of the past it stands as a proxy for – comes off second-best in the encounter. It is an egregious appearance, cut off abruptly after some eleven bars. Other than one further gesture, consisting of three more 32nd-notes and a single crotchet chord now mixed in with a jumble of toms, xylophone, vibraphone, harp and solo violin between rehearsal figures 15 and 16, the harpsichord does not return anywhere in the work.

As I hear this passage, I do not believe that the gesture is in any way parodic – although admittedly there may be something inadvertently humorous about the harpsichord’s frailty. Rather, I understand the entry of the harpsichord as a genuine summoning of the past, even a consultation of it (suggested by the spotlight of its solo), but also ultimately a vetoing; it is something that must be discarded as a way forward. This is emphasised both by its metaphorical banishment, not returning again for the rest of the work, and also by its placement front-and-centre on the stage in performance (refer to Fig. 4.1). Crucially, the

⁷² Górecki, “Conversation with USC Students,” accessed 30 November 2016.

physical distance between piano and harpsichord, as well as the temporal proximity of their musical material, suggests that a unique player is required for each. The visual impact of so large an instrument (along with its player) silent for so long is understandable, and the harpsichord's bulky physical presence accentuates its auditory absence. Recalling Górecki's statement regarding the subtitle of the Symphony ("A caesura. With music school, with Szabelski, with history, with politics, with my own life"⁷³), this solo/cadenza functions as the history which Górecki was deliberately breaking away from, and as a direct and documentary engagement with his here-and-now.

Through his Symphony No. 1, Górecki subverts the abstract idea of a 'symphony' itself by the incongruity between external (title, movement divisions, and so on), and internal (instrumentation, structure, formal design) features. Arguably, there is nothing explicitly 'symphonic' about Symphony No. 1 at all, and instead it aligns much closer with Grimley's qualities of fragmentation, disjunction, and even incoherence, forming a link with the other works he discusses, such as Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968), Elliott Carter's *Symphony of Three Orchestras* (1976), and Danish composer Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's *Symphony, Antiphony* (1977).⁷⁴ More important, however, is that specific to the Soviet sphere, Symphony No. 1 can be understood as a pointed riposte toward the elevated status that the more traditional symphonic form held under socialist realism. According to Mazo, the genre belonged on the 'correct' side of this aesthetic debate, which consisted of a "precise classification into good or bad heroes, high and low genres and indisputable styles." Górecki's Symphony disrupts these binary divisions through the mismatch of title and musical idiom in the individual movements, and through the dialogue with the past performed by the harpsichord's cadenza. Recognised in this context, these

⁷³ Quoted in Marek and Drew, "Górecki in Interview," 29.

⁷⁴ Grimley, "*Symphony/antiphony*," 287. We might also add Webern's *Symphony*, Op. 21 to this list.

anachronisms are markedly different to those used in the neoclassicism of Stravinsky or Hindemith, and point instead toward some documentary feeling grounded in reality. This break from a Soviet legacy also links Górecki's Symphony to later works such as Schnittke's own Symphony No. 1, which at one point was subtitled "Anti-Symphony."⁷⁵

Finally, recalling the sense of "assembly" that Mazo links with a documentary concern, there are two other aspects of the Symphony which signal an investment in the past-present-future continuum. These are moments in the music which, while not expressly anachronistic, still conjure a feeling of intertextual, historical engagement, which Thomas calls "subliminal external references."⁷⁶ The first of these is the duet between piano and violas in the middle of the "Chorał" movement, which I alluded to earlier. Example 4.3a (overleaf) illustrates the first portion of this passage, where the violas oscillate between D₄ and C₃, and the piano stabs out single, widely-spaced *ffff* notes from the first movement's P₃ (this tone-row will be more extensively addressed in the discussion of "Antyfona" below). Thomas unearths something very interesting, however: this repeated D-C movement in the violas is a conscious reference to the opening notes of the early medieval hymn "Bogurodzica," which holds the distinction of being Poland's oldest notated music (Example 4.3b, also overleaf).⁷⁷ The connection is oblique indeed, especially given the octave displacement of the viola's second note, and would stretch credulity were it not for Thomas's

⁷⁵ Mazo, "Unpredictable Past," 385.

⁷⁶ Thomas, *Górecki*, 19. Note that this use of "external" differs from mine in the previous paragraph – hence intertextual might be more appropriate in this situation.

⁷⁷ Maja Trochimczyk interprets "Bogurodzica" as a source for the oft-noted 'turn' motif which recurs in a number of Górecki's works, most famously as the opening theme of the Third Symphony. (A table noting several instances of this motif can be found in Thomas, *Górecki*, 87–88.) I believe, however, that this is quite a reach, as the contour Trochimczyk quotes – D-E-F-E – is only marginally present in the hymn, and a great many other notes need to be ignored to arrive at it. See Maja Trochimczyk, "Mater Dolorosa and Maternal Love in the Music of Henryk Górecki," *Polish Music Journal* 6 (2003), accessed 30 November 2016, <http://pmc.usc.edu/PMJ/issue/6.2.03/Trochimczykmater.htm>, especially n. 6. Thomas's account is far more convincing: this turn is an exceptionally common trope of Polish folk music, and its use by Górecki is also a semi-conscious reference to Szymanowski's *Stabat mater*; see Thomas, *Górecki*, 84–86.

discovery that these seven notes of the hymn are transcribed on one of the few surviving pages of the Symphony's sketches.⁷⁸

(a)

Musical score for Piano and Viola. The Piano part is in treble clef, starting with a first-measure rest, followed by a series of notes marked *fff sempre*. A bracket above the notes is labeled "[P₃ from first movt.]" and "8^{va}". The Viola part is in alto clef, starting with a first-measure rest, followed by notes marked *pp sempre* and *molto sul pont. sempre*. A *Ped. sempre* marking is present below the staff.

Musical score for Piano and Viola. The Piano part is in treble clef, featuring a triplet of notes in the first measure and a series of notes marked *fff sempre*. An *8^{va}* marking is present above the staff. The Viola part is in alto clef, featuring a series of notes marked *pp sempre* and *molto sul pont. sempre*. A *Ped. sempre* marking is present below the staff.

(b)

Musical score for the "Bogurodzica" hymn opening melody. The melody is written in treble clef and consists of seven notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The notes are: Bo- gu- ro-dzi - - - ca

Example 4.3: (a) Piano and viola duet in "Choral"; (b) "Bogurodzica" hymn opening melody (after Thomas, Górecki, 9)

While this reference is almost totally obscured in the resulting music, it does, however, point to Górecki's fascination with old Polish music in the manner of Mazo's "unpredictable past." Furthermore, by contrasting this reference to antiquity with a bald statement of a twelve-tone row (the twentieth century's *enfant terrible* turned avant-garde orthodoxy), there is a clear

⁷⁸ Thomas, *Górecki*, 19, n. 13.

precursor to Schittke's clash between "musical 'documents' from various ages."⁷⁹ In a final, tantalising resonance with previous discussions, "Bogurodzica" was used as a battle hymn in the fifteenth century, and apparently sung by Polish knights on the eve of the Battle of Grunwald.⁸⁰

The second of Górecki's "subliminal external references" occurs right at the end of the Symphony, in the closing gesture by the strings. The final notes of the violins are a sustained open fifth, A-E, whispered in *pppp*. In an unpublished conversation with Thomas in 1984, Górecki claimed that it was an allusion to the Highland folk-music of Poland's *Górale* community, which had fascinated the composer since a 1958 visit to the Tatra Mountains.⁸¹ But there is also something purer, something more primal about this ending, a softly radiant consonance which closes the thorny, tersely atonal work. It recalls, for example, the Pythagorean clarity of the sunrise in Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, or the final glow of Mozart's "Kyrie" from the *Requiem*. In a further intertextual link specific to Górecki, the A-E fifth is also the exact interval which begins the second movement of his Symphony No. 3.⁸² Using as its libretto the message written by an 18-year-old prisoner in a Gestapo cell in Zakopane (*O Mamo nie płacz nie – Niebios Przepczysta Królowo Ty zawsze wspieraj mnie*: "Oh Mama do not cry – Immaculate Queen of Heaven support me always"), the movement is the Third Symphony's most serene and also its most devastating.

In Symphony No. 1, the open fifth stands in stark relief against the events preceding it: an extended, cacophonous percussion cadenza just moments before, marked *tutti ffff* *massima forza*, and a tightly bunched twelve-note string cluster (G3–F#4) – though one

⁷⁹ Schnittke, "Polystylistic Tendencies," 90.

⁸⁰ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 287.

⁸¹ Thomas, *Górecki*, 19, 22.

⁸² Thomas, *Górecki*, 91. Thomas notes that Górecki also intended to evoke a highland character there, but rather than pure folklore as such, the "bright open air of the mountains."

which itself is constructed with interlocked fifths (Example 4.4, over the next two pages). This transition from string cluster to perfect fifth in the work's conclusion is richly suggestive: closedness to openness, discord to agreement, and new back to ancient. Just as with the reference to "Bogurodzica," there is a connection here with a pre-modern, deeply-rooted sense of Polishness embedded within the Symphony's modernist idiom. The thread

24 ♩ = 58

Snare Drum

mf *mp*

tutti molto sul. pont. e non vibrato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pp *sempre*

Example 4.4: Final bars of Górecki's Symphony No. 1, showing twelve-note cluster in strings (continued overleaf)

25

The musical score for Example 4.4 (cont.) consists of five staves. The top staff is for S. D. (Soprano/Drum) with a treble clef and a wavy line above the first measure. It starts with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic. The second staff is for Cym. (Cymbal) with a treble clef, showing a *ppp* dynamic in the final measure. The third staff is for Vln. I (Violin I) with a treble clef, featuring a *pp* dynamic and a *sul pont.* marking. The fourth staff is for Vln. II (Violin II) with a treble clef, featuring a *pppp* dynamic. The fifth staff is for Cb. (Cello) with a bass clef, featuring a *pp* dynamic and a *sul pont.* marking. The score is divided into measures with time signatures of 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4.

Example 4.4: (cont.)

stretching back to Poland's folk tradition also links Górecki with Szymanowski and Chopin, and so Górecki's sense of presentness in the work ultimately closes with an echo of the past. The listener is made acutely aware of the distance between Górecki's then-and-now, and the vast gulf which separates twelve-tone cluster and fifth, "Bogurodzica" and twelve-tone row. Already in 1960, some Polish commentators had noted this documentary quality in Górecki's music, this keen awareness of reality. The critic Bohdan Pocij, writing in *Ruch Muzyczny*, understood Górecki as "the most contemporary" of Poland's budding avant-garde: "He strongly feels the feverish, accelerated rhythm of the age, the pulsing of a great anxiety, and the 'cosmic catastrophe' of modernity."⁸³

⁸³ Quoted in Jakelski, "Scontri," 213.

“Inwokacja”

Understanding the anachronisms of Górecki’s Symphony No. 1 as reflective of a documentary concern of the year 1959 – a response to *socrealizm*, a caesura with the past, a meditation on the future – is also useful in analysing aspects of the work which may otherwise appear less amenable to interpretation. In light of this documentary reading, the final section will present an analysis of the first movement, “Inwokacja,” focusing on the pitch material of the twelve-note chords around which it is structured. The movement begins with the thunderous clash of cymbals and snare drum, marked *ffff*, which gives way to a crushing series of string chords, played in rhythmic unison by the tutti ensemble. The strings play through a cycle of twelve different chords, with some repeated several times in a rapidly changing rhythmic pattern. This series of chords – or rather, what becomes a calculated variation of them – is played a total of four times, with a percussion interlude between each set. Percussion and strings join together in the fourth group of chords, lending it a sense of culmination which is heightened by the marking *sempre ffff*. Górecki is working here with roughly-hewn blocks of sound and texture, strongly determined by pre-compositional choices.

The pitch material of “Inwokacja” is derived almost entirely from a single tone-row, which is played by the higher of the Violin I divisi in the first set of chords. This row is notated in Figure 4.2, which I will designate as P_3 .



Figure 4.2: Tone-row of “Inwokacja,” P_3 , as played by Violin I

This is an all-combinatorial row, built from the D-type all-combinatorial hexachord [012678]. As far as I can tell, however, Górecki does not utilise any of these associated properties in the Symphony.

Extrapolating this row into a matrix produces the following (Figure 4.3):⁸⁴

	I₃	I₁₀	I₂	I₄	I₉	I₈	I₁	I₇	I₆	I₅	I₀	I₁₁	
P₃	E \flat	B \flat	D	E	A	G \sharp	C \sharp	G	F \sharp	F	C	B	R₃
P₈	G \sharp	E \flat	G	A	D	C \sharp	F \sharp	C	B	B \flat	F	E	R₈
P₄	E	B	E \flat	F	B \flat	A	D	G \sharp	G	F \sharp	C \sharp	C	R₄
P₂	D	A	C \sharp	E \flat	G \sharp	G	C	F \sharp	F	E	B	B \flat	R₂
P₉	A	E	G \sharp	B \flat	E \flat	D	G	C \sharp	C	B	F \sharp	F	R₉
P₁₀	B \flat	F	A	B	E	E \flat	G \sharp	D	C \sharp	C	G	F \sharp	R₁₀
P₅	F	C	E	F \sharp	B	B \flat	E \flat	A	G \sharp	G	D	C \sharp	R₅
P₁₁	B	F \sharp	B \flat	C	F	E	A	E \flat	D	C \sharp	G \sharp	G	R₁₁
P₀	C	G	B	C \sharp	F \sharp	F	B \flat	E	E \flat	D	A	G \sharp	R₀
P₁	C \sharp	G \sharp	C	D	G	F \sharp	B	F	E	E \flat	B \flat	A	R₁
P₆	F \sharp	C \sharp	F	G	C	B	E	B \flat	A	G \sharp	E \flat	D	R₆
P₇	G	D	F \sharp	G \sharp	C \sharp	C	F	B	B \flat	A	E	E \flat	R₇
	RI₃	RI₁₀	RI₂	R₄	RI₉	RI₈	RI₁	RI₇	RI₆	RI₅	RI₀	RI₁₁	

Figure 4.3: Row-matrix of the tone-row in “Inwokacja”

Comparing the opening of Górecki’s Symphony (Example 4.5, over the following two pages) with this row-matrix, several things quickly become clear. In the first set of chords, played by divisi strings so that there are twelve separate staves, the score-order organisation of the instruments is arranged according to the inverted form of P₃ (that is, I₃), the leftmost column of the matrix. Thus, as the higher Violin I begins the prime row on an E \flat , the lower Violin I plays an A \flat (G \sharp), the higher Violin II plays an E, the lower Violin II plays a D, and so forth. This score-order does not reflect registral ordering, however, and there are several points of overlap between instruments, as in the lower part of Violin II divisi and the highest Viola part. As the higher Violin I part moves through the row horizontally, Górecki’s

⁸⁴ Regarding the row’s all-combinatorial properties: the *first* hexachord of P₃, [D, E \flat , E, G \sharp , A, B \flat] can be found as the *second* hexachord of P₀, P₆, I₀, I₆, (R₃), R₉, RI₃, and RI₉.

organisation of the instruments results in the row being sounded simultaneously in a vertical array for every step. The effect is unusual and arresting; the overwhelming feeling is that

The musical score is arranged in a vertical format. At the top, the tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 120$. The percussion section includes Snare Drum, Cymbals (a. and t.), and a section labeled 's.'. The string section includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score begins in 2/4 time and transitions to 4/4 time. The dynamic marking *fff* is used for the percussion, and *ff sempre* is used for the strings. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

Example 4.5: Opening of movement 1, "Inwokacja" (continued overleaf)

1

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

G. P.

♩ = 60

S. D.

mp < *mf*

p ————— *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *ffff*

Example 4.5: (cont.)

despite the changing notes and differing voicings (tightly bunched vs. widely spaced), the same chord is repeated again and again.

For the rest of the movement, the three remaining sets of chords follow this pattern, proceeding along different outside edges of the row-matrix. This interaction between horizontal and vertical elements can be visualised in Figure 4.4, which highlights the direction of the higher Violin I part against vertical ordering in each set. In each iteration of the matrix, the horizontal movement of the Violin I part is shaded in blue and moves in the direction of the arrow, while the vertical ‘score’ array (descending according to the arrow from highest to lowest *in the score*) is shaded in red. The note at each corner of the matrix is shaded purple, as it belongs to both rows. For example, in the second set of chords, the higher

Violin I part plays I_{11} , while the starting pitches of the ensemble are arranging according to R_3 . In this set, every I-form of the row is sounded against one another; in the third set, the ensemble moves through every R-form; in the final set, every RI-form.

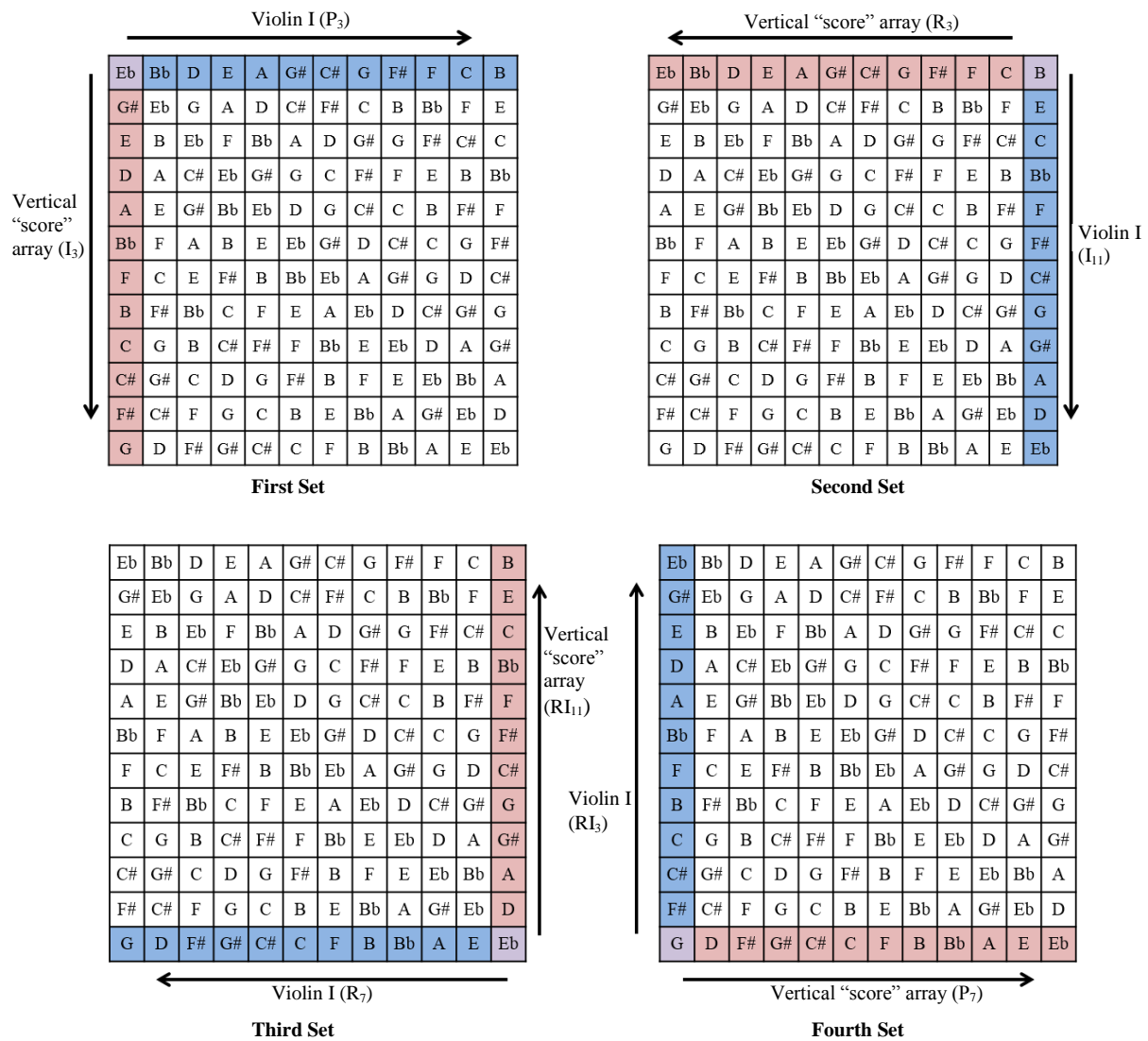


Figure 4.4: Structure of twelve-note chords in "Inwokacja"

This direct correlation between process and musical result raises several questions. To my eyes and ears, the procedure used here by Górecki appears quite cursory, surface-level, even facile.⁸⁵ The arrangement of four sets of material, each moving along consecutive edges of the twelve-tone-matrix, speaks to me of a certain disregard for Second Viennese School

⁸⁵ Górecki apparently wrote this movement in a single night, triggered by hearing a performance of a tutti passage in one of Tchaikovsky's symphonies. While Górecki could not recall which symphony in particular, Adrian Thomas speculates that it was from the finale of the Fourth. Thomas, *Górecki*, 22, n. 15.

dodecaphonic practice. In contrast to Lutosławski, who used a twelve-tone row extensively and elegantly throughout *Musique funèbre*, Górecki's deployment appears quite different.⁸⁶ Considering the post-Thaw serialist vogue in Poland, Górecki's 'facile' use of the system suggests that it may have been another thing which he sought to break away from, another feature of the Symphony's "caesura."⁸⁷ The twelve-note chords and use of a tone-row acknowledge the broader importance of serialism, but also ultimately deny its relevance for his personal practice. This commentary occurs in real time, as the Symphony unfolds, and other aspects of the composition would seem to support this: his language is quite freely atonal, and while some passages are texturally reminiscent of Webern, there is little regard for keeping the series established in the opening as a central component of the work (other than its reappearance in the piano in the "Chorał").⁸⁸ Rather, there is a strong fixation on intervallic structures such as tritones and clustered semitones, which Górecki prioritises over serial organisation (as in the pitch content of the harpsichord cadenza, or the oscillation between G and A \flat which interrupts the progression of the second set of chords just after Rehearsal Figure 2 in "Inwokacja"). Furthermore, there is a foregrounding of textural, timbral, and colouristic properties in Symphony No. 1, a focus on the *sound* itself (rather than on an ordered succession of intervals as in dodecaphony), which foreshadowed the Sonorism of Polish compositions in the 1960s. Dodecaphony is a feature of the past out of which Górecki constructs his own "documentary feeling," but, much like the harpsichord, we see that it is of little use as a way forward.

⁸⁶ As Martina Homma documents, some 200 pages of Lutosławski's sketches concerning twelve-tone rows can be found in the Sacher Foundation in Basel. See Martina Homma, "Lutosławski's Studies in Twelve-Tone Rows," in *Lutosławski Studies*, ed. Zbigniew Skowron (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 198.

⁸⁷ Thomas, *Polish Music*, 93.

⁸⁸ Thomas identifies a similar quality in another of Górecki's pieces from 1959, *Five Pieces* for two pianos, Op. 13 (while Symphony No. 1 has the later opus number – 14 – it was actually the first to be finished and performed). See Thomas, *Polish Music*, 107; and Thomas, *Górecki*, 18.

Several other commentators, such as Rappoport-Gelfand, Thomas, and Jakelski, have also noted this particular focus on timbre in Górecki's works of the late 1950s and early 60s. Each author in their own way positions it as a subversion of serialist practice, which – as suggested by its dismissal in the Symphony – was an increasingly minimal feature in Górecki's compositions from the 60s onward. As Rappoport-Gelfand writes, “He abandons the obligatory “rules” of serial composition; the twelve-tone series, as means of organizing dodecaphonic serialism, appears as an impulse to form the theme in a new, sonoric quality.”⁸⁹ Similarly, when describing *Monologhi*, Op. 16 (1960), Thomas notes that Górecki “is typically happy to modify his carefully mapped-out pre-compositional plan in order to admit intuitive use of material. [...] *Monologhi* displays an overwhelming sense of creative impatience and of a composer with a desire to break the serialist mould.”⁹⁰

Of the three, Jakelski is the most cogent in her description of the anti-serialist implications of Górecki's sonorism. In her discussion of *Scontri*, Jakelski identifies a similar verticalisation of a tone-row as in Symphony No. 1, although on a much larger scale. In *Scontri*, the brass play a verticalisation of the prime row hocketed with a verticalised *retrograde* of the row in the woodwind, which together form a rhythmic palindrome. “Yet because they are verticalised throughout,” writes Jakelski, “the twelve-note rows are not heard here as rows, but as bands of shifting harmonic colour, twelve-note chords whose shades come not only from the various intervallic arrangements of the pitches they contain, but also from the contrasting timbres of the instrumental families used to play them.” She goes on to build on the pronouncements of Bohdan Pociiej (who was quoted on page 144), claiming that

Polish music in 1960 challenged serialism itself by undermining the basic building blocks of serialist technique – defined pitches and intervals – through their emphasis

⁸⁹ Lidia Rappoport-Gelfand, “Sonorism: Problems of style and form in modern Polish music,” trans. Jennifer M. Goheen, *Journal of Musicological Research* 4 (1983): 402.

⁹⁰ Thomas, *Polish Music*, 109.

on sound masses. Whereas serialism is static, Pocij explained, owing to its fundamental process of filling in the twelve-tone chromatic with “sonic-intervallic constellations,” the music of the Polish avant-gardists, Górecki and Krzysztof Penderecki in particular, was active in that it moved clouds of sounds through space.⁹¹

Jakelski’s sources demonstrate that this sonorism was also interpreted as a uniquely Polish phenomenon, a musical reflection of Poland’s physical position between East and West, where it was influenced by both but fiercely unique in its own right.

The ways in which references to the past can be used as a consideration of the present are many and varied, and this discussion of Górecki’s Symphony is merely one possible entry-point to this issue. As I have shown, however, reading the anachronisms of the work as grounded in a “documentary feeling” offers an interpretive framework for understanding both Górecki’s public allegiances to the Western/German Canon, as well as his somewhat ambivalent relationship with Schoenbergian serialism. Just as with Lutosławski, it is difficult to conclusively isolate any aspect of the music as a direct response to the German occupation, but it is apparent that Górecki engaged with these issues on his own terms.

⁹¹ Jakelski, “*Scontri*,” 215.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the relationship between Polish composers and German music against both the legacy of the Second World War and centuries of historical ill-will. The motivation for this study has been to move away from the dominant post-war narrative of Polish-Russian relations, to address a bi-lateral dynamic largely unconsidered. In the early, historical sections, Germany casts a large shadow over Poland's culture, for political reasons as much as for aesthetic ones. Events such as the Battle of Grunwald and the Three Partitions were prominent issues in the Polish national discourse, and had wide-ranging implications for its art and literature. As Norman Davies summarised, two themes dominated the period of statelessness following the Partitions: "the preservation of national identity, and the restoration of national independence."¹ This nationalistic fervour was often problematic, however, and both Chopin and Szymanowski struggled against an artistic climate which demanded fealty to the Polish cause when this was only a peripheral motivation for their compositions. Nonetheless, a strong concern across the nineteenth century was the development of a truly Polish musical idiom, distinct from the neighbouring forces of Germany and Russia.

In the music of the mid-twentieth century, stylistic allegiances, such as a commitment (or not) to modernism, began to overtake the importance of national distinctions between composers. What emerges in their respective chapters is that Lutosławski and Górecki placed extremely high value on Bach's music, as well as on Viennese Classicism. They shared an unreserved admiration and respect for these repertoires: Lutosławski called Bach's cantatas "A fathomless reservoir of music," while Górecki found "so many new things in Mozart, and

¹ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, revised edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 153

Schubert – new things that interest me, that I need, that give me answers to questions.”² This music was sufficiently removed from Lutosławski and Górecki’s own time, and so embedded in the history of the art-music tradition they were both committed to, that to deny its influence was impossible. For Lutosławski, frequent references to the structural techniques of these repertoires also helped to legitimate his own compositional techniques, and he consistently tried to demonstrate his connections to Haydn and Beethoven. Furthermore, both composers mentioned such music’s transcendental qualities, and its power as an escape from everyday banality. It was sublime, almost spiritual, and unsullied by subsequent conflicts and politics. Its greatness, in short, overcame any Germanness, and even the Second World War could not change this.

The pair were less enamoured, however, with Schoenberg and serialism, even though some aspects of the twelve-tone technique played significant roles in their respective work. Lutosławski declared on several occasions (facetiously, I believe) that his music had nothing in common with dodecaphony, and Górecki freely appropriated certain serial principles while discarding others, focusing instead on timbral blocks and later moving away from serialism completely. While there were possibly some national factors at play here, this was far from being a dominant or essential motivation in either composer’s artistic practice. Whatever the case, it is difficult to disentangle concerns of Germanness from the concurrent issues faced in the post-war period, ranging from questions of professional and artistic integrity to the negotiation of competing modernist aesthetics. In this sense, we are reminded of Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter’s assessments of nineteenth-century German music, which I quoted on page 68. More broadly, both composers expressed reservations about contemporary music in general, and much preferred – with a characteristic Polish

² Irena Nikolska, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski (1987–92)*, trans. Valeri Terokhin (Stockholm: Melos: En Musiktidskrift, 1993), 80; Górecki quoted in Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 190.

stubbornness – to press forward with their heads down. As Lutosławski put it, “I am far from being eager for coming into contact with what is being produced by my contemporaries [...] listening to other composer’s music hampers my work.”³ Their music, as much as possible, was for themselves, and external factors were secondary.

To answer the question I posed at the beginning, then, the German occupation of Poland had very little direct bearing on the music of either Lutosławski or Górecki. Neither of them wrote any music which can be understood as a response to their experiences between 1939 and 1945, nor would it be justifiable to suggest that their perception of German culture changed significantly due to the Second World War. We do not find, for example, any reaction approaching that of the Israeli boycott of Wagner.⁴ But it is clear, however, that in a more generalised sense, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – the “wrestling with the past” – remained an important issue after the war. Similarly, I believe that exploring artistic responses to the German musical tradition has a wider significance outside of Poland (or indeed, Israel), considering that the rise and spread of Nazism had tremendous global implications. While Poland is a unique and extreme example, after the war nearly every nation was forced to re-evaluate the cultural influence of Germany to some extent. Even if the responses to German music by Lutosławski or Górecki were not exceptionally unique or profound (Bach and Beethoven as incontestable masters, Schoenberg as more polemical), they still offer potent evidence of the high value placed on Western Art Music in the highly contested post-war period.

In closing, I would like to address some aspects of this study which remained on the ‘cutting room floor,’ and which consequently offer possible paths for future investigation.

³ Nikolska, *Conversations*, 79.

⁴ See Na’ama Sheffi, *The Ring of Myths: The Israelis, Wagner and the Nazis*, trans. Martha Grenzeback (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2001).

The reader would likely have noticed, for example, that Lutosławski and Górecki appear as independent agents, and that their stories rarely overlap. While certain themes are common to both narratives – *socrealizm*, the Warsaw Autumn Festival, etc. – there is surprisingly little interaction between two of Poland’s major post-war composers. For the most part, this is a correct assessment. Lutosławski was almost 20 years Górecki’s senior, and lived most of his life in Warsaw. Górecki, by contrast, remained in the southern region of Silesia, in the city of Katowice. Even the possible teacher-student relationship suggested by their age-gap was impossible, for Lutosławski was never attached to any institution, nor did he teach privately. Their paths crossed occasionally, as undoubtedly at the Warsaw Autumn, but there is little evidence of a sustained friendship.⁵ Despite this lack of direct personal connection, however, it would be instructive to undertake a closer comparison between the two, to survey how their age and location changed their experiences of the war and its aftermath.⁶ Lutosławski was 32 when the war ended, while Górecki was not yet 12 – what does this difference in perspective reveal? Bernard Jacobson, in his study *A Polish Renaissance* (1996), offers a blueprint for such an investigation by organising the composers Panufnik, Lutosławski, Penderecki, and Górecki into two pairs. Jacobson presents a chapter each on Panufnik and Lutosławski, followed by chapter of comparison; then Penderecki and Górecki, also followed by a comparison. In this model, however, the gap across the two generations receives only a cursory glance, and Jacobson emphasises differences rather continuities.⁷

⁵ Lutosławski made reference to Górecki’s *Scontri* in a 1967 lecture at Darmstadt, but this appears a one-off occurrence. See Lutosławski, “Notes on the Construction of Large-Scale Forms,” in *Lutosławski on Music*, ed. and trans. Zbigniew Skowron (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 3. Cross references in the major monographs are also scant, but Adrian Thomas notes that Lutosławski attended Górecki’s 1958 concert in Katowice (which I mentioned on p. 128), where he praised the Sonata for Two Violins. See Adrian Thomas, *Górecki* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16. Conversely, however, Charles Bodman Rae’s expansive *The Music of Lutosławski* makes no mention of Górecki at all.

⁶ Lisa Jakelski goes some way toward this, and I quoted her on p. 128. See Lisa Jakelski, “Górecki’s *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland,” *The Journal of Musicology* 26 (2009): 212.

⁷ Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996).

From a different angle, this project was originally conceived with a much greater emphasis on the instability of memory, and how choices for memorialisation can affect identity. In her book *Stasiland* (2002), Anna Funder investigates the prevalence of these issues in Germany after the re-unification, where some tried to erase the legacy of the GDR while others fought just as hard to commemorate it. The Third Reich was also often caught up in this negotiation, and when Hitler's bunker was uncovered by building works,

No-one could decide about that either – a memorial could become a shrine for neo-Nazis, but to erase it altogether might signal forgetting or denial. In the end, the bunker was reburied just as it was. The mayor said, perhaps in another fifty years people would be able to decide what to do. To remember or forget – which is healthier? To demolish it or fence it off? To dig it up, or leave it lie in the ground?⁸

It quickly became apparent that to pursue such questions in the realm of music – with two dead composers – would be impractical, or at least turn into a project much larger and very different than what I intended. But I am still fascinated by these problems of public commemoration (something all artworks engage with to some degree), and hope to explore this dimension in future work. A cursory glance at the quotes from Lutosławski and Górecki throughout this thesis would suggest that, perhaps, they too preferred to leave their memories of the occupation buried.

Similarly, the perspectives presented here are a frozen snapshot from the late 50s, and do not take into account any possibility for the change or alteration of memories across time. This is also complicated by the fact that I concentrated solely on compositions from 1958 and 1959, but drew freely from interviews and writings produced decades later. In his ethnographic study of Australia's returned servicemen from the First World War, Alistair Thomson's *Anzac Memories* (1994) foregrounds this interaction of memory and identity across time, focusing on the creation of what he calls "memory biographies."⁹ Thomson

⁸ Anna Funder, *Stasiland* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2002), 51–52.

⁹ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11–12.

traces how the subsequent experiences of Anzacs changed their reflections on their experiences of war, and how this was negotiated across a mix of public and private arenas. From this perspective, memories are in a constant state of flux, depending on the current position of the individual:

The stories that we remember will not be exact representations of our past, but will draw upon aspects of that past and mould them to fit current identities and aspirations. Thus our identities shape remembering; who we think we are now and what we want to become affects what we think we have been. Memories are ‘significant pasts’ that we compose to make a more comfortable sense of our life over time, and in which past and current identities are brought more into line.¹⁰

Such an approach is a useful means of understanding Lutosławski’s reflection of his wartime years performing in Warsaw cafes as “quite good practice,”¹¹ when the reality was undoubtedly much darker. For Górecki, likewise, we can observe the gulf between his obsession with composing an ultimately unrealised “Barbaric Mass” on Auschwitz in the 60s (detailed on page 123, note 35), and his declaration, much later, for such issues to be “all behind me.”¹²

Faced with our own time of uncertainty and a burgeoning “unpredictable past,” Lutosławski’s words ring truer than ever:

I must say that to live in the world of sounds is happiness. This world is detached from politics, from all the troubles of current events. Only occasionally does one return to the routine of everyday life, with its disturbing atmosphere – one returns to it, only to leave it again for the world of music.¹³

¹⁰ Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, 10.

¹¹ Bálint András Varga, *Lutosławski Profile*, trans. Stephen Walsh [?] (London: Chester Music, 1976) 8.

¹² Górecki quoted in Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 191.

¹³ Irena Nikolska, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski (1987–92)*, trans. Valeri Terokhin (Stockholm: Melos: En Musiktidskrift, 1993), 150.

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