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Near the Center of the Labyrinth: Krzysztof Penderecki in the New Millenium

Five years ago the book, *Labyrinth of Time*, was published by Hinshaw Music in the United States.¹ It is a collection of five essays, addresses given by Krzysztof Penderecki on occasions similar to this one. All five are reflections on the condition of the artist at the end of the century. Concurrently, of course, they are also reflections on the 'condition' of one particular artist – Krzysztof Penderecki.

The choice of title for the book is of interest. The labyrinth has existed in human history for over 3000 years, and evidence of its use has been found all over the globe, from North and South America to Iceland, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia, India, Asia and the African continent. It has appeared on pottery shards and pieces of jewelry. It has been carved or painted on rock walls, laid out with stones on the ground, and it has even 'grown' on a pumpkin. It appears as a mosaic in floors of villas, private homes and cathedrals (most notably Chartres and Reims, dating from the 13th Century). And – it has a special place at the home of Krzysztof Penderecki, who has planted a labyrinth in his garden.

In the western world since medieval times, the labyrinth has been a means of reflection and meditation – a ceremonial and spiritual pathway leading to a sacred center, and then a return to the place of origin. A labyrinth is not a maze. There are no dead ends, no puzzles or 'road blocks', but the path is twisted and lengthy. The center of the labyrinth as well as the entire path are always in full view, so the traveler is surrounded by the past while moving toward the future, with the ability to draw strength, discoveries and understanding from the past while moving into the future. The center is not the final goal, for there is the return journey – sometimes retracing the original path, or sometimes moving along a new path, and always resulting in

¹Krzysztof Penderecki, Labyrinth of Time: Five Addresses for the End of the Millenium, edited by Ray Robinson, Chapel Hill 1998.

a return to the 'outside'. But the traveler emerges from the labyrinth renewed and in some ways changed.

What an appropriate symbol for the musical path traversed by Krzysztof Penderecki. He has offered the symbol of a labyrinth time and again, not only in the title and contents of the aforementioned book, but in many interviews and in *Itinerarium*, the exhibition of his work at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Kraków in 1998. If I may quote him from the beginning of the commemorative catalogue of that exhibition, in an introduction titled *In the Labyrinth*:

"I practice various musical forms looking in them for the answer to pervading questions and doubts. Search for order and harmony is associated with the feeling of collapse and apocalypses. The external world often invades brutally my internal life. It makes me compose such pieces as: 'Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima', 'Dies irae', or 'Polish Requiem'.

I am very glad to turn to a pure musical form not contaminated by externality. I wander and roam entering my symbolic labyrinth. Only a roundabout way may lead you to fulfillment.

I have also built a labyrinth in my garden $[\ldots]$. And I feel safe in it. I can go back and find new ways. I leave my labyrinth unwillingly. And here $[\ldots]$ my most favourable music is created: symphonies taking years to write and chamber music, or my 'musica domestica'. I escape here into intimacy, the world close to silence. And it seems to me that I am getting close to the essence of music."²

From his early experimental works in the late 1950s through a period of complex polyphony combined with avant-garde techniques leading to the mid-1970s, and continually from the last quarter of the century of growth into the present synthesis of styles and techniques, Penderecki has never reached a 'dead end' path and then turned to something completely new. The path he has taken – and created – has had numerous twists and turns, but it has consistently carried the past toward the future. New works have always in some way reflected past experience while probing and searching for new means of expressing an inner idea. His path has at times turned more toward the past, at other times to the future, or it has remained for a period of time in one place. It has been a path of continual synthesis, most apparently so during the last decade.

²Krzysztof Penderecki/Ryszard Stanisławski [...], *Itinerarium*, Kraków 1998, p. 8.

Perhaps the most recent turn leading toward the center of his musical labyrinth, to put it in his terms "the essence of music," was taken in the composition of *Credo*. In support of that supposition, a 'synthesis' of recent articles about and commentary by the composer is offered by mapping his works on a labyrinth as a possible model.

Using the labyrinth as a guide for observing Krzysztof Penderecki's musical journey offers an elasticity and freedom from categorization which more nearly approximates what has happened in the development and metamorphosis of his language. The structure of a labyrinth does not offer only a sequence of events, though it certainly includes sequential experiences. It is also not formed as a 'superset' of experiences or expressions, though such may be a part of the labyrinth. It is perhaps most appropriate to paraphrase a structuralist comment in utilizing the labyrinth – that 'the whole [body of Penderecki's works to date] is equal to more than the sum of its parts [perceived style periods]'.

The first two figures following this essay offer a numbered list of Penderecki's works up to the Piano Concerto of 2002 and a diagram of the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth upon which that list of works has been mapped. Not all one hundred works appear on the labyrinth. Only those works which have been identified by the authors listed in the bibliography as being pivotal in the development of his musical language appear, as well as a few large and important works which were written during a period of considerable activity without distinct change in the employment of musical materials. The third figure is a listing drawn from the first volume of *Studies in Penderecki*, showing various groupings of Penderecki's works into different periods of activity.

After the initial entry to the labyrinth and composition of the early works, identified as the time of preparation, or 'prelude' (to quote Dr. Ray Robinson),³ the search for a new means of expression propelled Krzysztof Penderecki into a path of experimentation with sound and time, a path marked particularly by the composition of *Threnody* (No. 14 on the list) which then reached a major 'twist' in direction at the time of *Flourescences* (No. 20). Some important musical elements

³Ray Robinson (ed.), Studies in Penderecki, vol. I, Princeton, NJ, 1998, pp. 65ff.

which were 'discovered' during this early part of his journey and which remain as characteristics of his language are:

- 1. control of rhythmic events by means of 'macrorhythmic' blocks of time within which aleatoric 'microrhythmic' events occur;
- 2. alternation of traditional metered notation with non-metrical events;
- 3. use of dense, often microtonal clusters.⁴

The turn around *Fluorescences* was distinct and bold. The next work, *Stabat Mater* (No. 21), is embedded in and surrounded by the works of the previous five years on the labyrinth map. It exhibited a distinct look to the past, particularly to 16^{th} Century polyphonic writing, and it pointed toward the composition of a great work of synthesis, the *Passion According to St. Luke* (No. 27).

The next few years and the consequent turns on the path continued to develop and refine the language of the St. Luke Passion, leading through De natura sonoris, both I and II (Nos. 28, 35), to the first opera, The Devils of Loudun (No. 33), then to Utrenja I and II (Nos. 34, 37), the Partita (No. 40), a First Concerto (for cello) (No. 41), the First Symphony (No. 44), and then to the Magnificat (No. 47). Some primary characteristics of this first path of synthesis which maintain to the present are:

- 1. a mixture of free atonality with pitch-centered emphasis, particularly at important structural points (i.e. ending large, primarily atonal sections with major triads);
- 2. alternation of cluster-dominated textures with polyphonic textures and melodic writing incorporating microtones with chromatic, very dramatic interval leaps;
- 3. melodic lines often begin with small intervals and grow to large leaps to the extremes of registers; there is some use of serially organized melodies but without applying serial composition techniques;

⁴Ann Gebuhr, *Stylistic Elements in Selected Works of Krzysztof Penderecki*, unpublished Masters Thesis, Music Theory, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1970.

- 4. use of 'source materials' embedded in melodic writing (*b-a-c-h* and *Aus tiefer Not* are two recurring motives);
- 5. use of liturgical religious texts 'troped' with other sacred texts.

The veritable explosion of composition during these eleven years is distinctly marked by a new focus, one which was a rediscovery and reclaiming of an important part of Penderecki's early life experience evidenced by an increasingly prevalent expression of liturgical and other religious texts. This reclaiming of his early faith experience was not accomplished overnight, but over several years and through the process of composition. To quote Krzysztof Penderecki, "I think I found God back through my music."⁵ Since the *Stabat Mater*, he notes, he has written more religious music than any 20th-Century composer other than Messiaen.

He has also, from the *St. Luke Passion* on, incorporated a universal awareness into his work, addressing the human condition over and over again, not as a preacher, teacher, or observer, but as a participant. This too can be observed as part of a labyrinth experience more easily than being a sudden 'return' in a chain of events model. As St. Thomas Aquinas said centuries ago, "To be aware of what is going on, one must feel the presence of the past, the presence of the present, and the presence of the future."⁶

After the completion of the *Magnificat*, another important turn was taken. Moving away from complex polyphony and exhibiting a further synthesis of the past with the present, *The Awakening of Jacob* (No. 48) and the first Violin Concerto (No. 49) lead to what has been called 'neo-Romanticism'. *Paradise Lost* (No. 50), the second opera, and the Second Symphony (No. 53) are quickly followed by two important sacred works (Nos. 55, 56), the *Te Deum* and the *Lacrimosa*. These works are 'neo-Romantic' in expression and in certain manners of creating line and texture, but the language is distinctly Krzysztof Penderecki's. It is a synthesis of the language of the *St. Luke Passion* to the *Magnificat* with techniques, forms

 $^{^5\}mathrm{Krzysztof}$ Penderecki, Seven Gates of Jerusalem, ARTHAUS MUSIK DVD, 100

⁰⁰⁹ Kinowelt Home Entertainment GmbH, © Reiner Moritz Associates 2000. ⁶Cited after Don Campbell, *Master Teacher: Nadia Boulanger*, Washington, DC, 1984, p. 79.

and textures from the 19th and early 20th Centuries. He mentions Bruckner, Mahler, Bartók and Stravinsky in particular as composers whose works were important to him.⁷ Characteristics of this new synthesis which remained in his language are:

- 1. a unique non-tertian melodic construction which exists in a pitchcentered texture; primary melodic intervals are those traditionally identified as 'dissonant' (i. e. m2, M2, tritone, or IC 1, 2, 6)⁸ and melodic gestures continue past practice (see the *Adagietto* from *Paradise Lost*, for example);
- 2. vertical sonorities result from polyphonic textures, echoing the predominant use of IC 1, 2, and 6 but incorporating more frequent use of tertian sonorities;
- 3. pitch centers are more prevalent, but non-hierarchical.

Two pivotal works which were completed two years apart follow the Second Cello Concerto (No. 59) and the Viola Concerto I (No. 60). The *Polish Requiem* (No. 62) of 1984 is perhaps the most nationalistic and summative work to that point. Then, mapped on the opposite side of the labyrinth, on the same plane as his first opera (No. 33) and the *St. Luke Passion* (No. 27), and intersected by *Anaklasis* (No. 12) to *Threnody* (No. 14), *The Black Mask* (No. 63) appears. In fact, from the mapping point of *The Black Mask*, looking through the center and with 180° vision, all of the composer's works to that date lie in view of this opera. Wolfram Schwinger, in his biography of Krzysztof Penderecki, writes:

"The breathlessness of the music, felt almost physically $[\dots]$ creates tension from its heterogeneous materials, its huge contrasts of style, including quotations from Penderecki and others, which nevertheless uplift one another, the constant interchange of easy conversational tone, urgent locomotive rhythm, violent noise-level, and gripping sublimity of melodic declamation."⁹

⁷Penderecki, *Labyrinth of Time*, pp. 60 and 77.

 $^{^8\}mathrm{IC}$ 1,2,6 refer to interval classes: IC 1 includes the minor second and its inversion, the major seventh; IC 2 includes the major second and its inversion the minor seventh; IC 6 includes the tritone.

⁹Wolfram Schwinger, Krzysztof Penderecki: His Life and Work, translated by William Mann, London 1989, p. 267.

Wolfram Schwinger also refers to an article by Heinz Josef Herbort in which he described:

"[...] how Penderecki's old cluster-effects, after years of reversion to quasi-tonality, are now reappearing as conflations of sound derived from a new harmonic method which suggests simultaneous, vertical possibilities that allow the quotations of old music."¹⁰

The Black Mask serves to propel the journey into another time of intense synthesis and composition coupled with a desire to focus on 'musica domestica', chamber music. This path toward chamber music is for Krzysztof Penderecki the path toward the center – "the essence of music." However, that path has been wonderfully enriched by several large works including an opera buffa (No. 72), two symphonies (Nos. 76, 85), two concerti (Nos. 77, 78) and two large choral/orchestral commissions – the seventh symphony (No. 88) and the Credo (No. 93).

This most recent path does not introduce new compositional techniques, though there has been the development of a wonderful new percussion instrument – the "Boobam." Instead, the process of synthesis continues as a refinement of techniques and a continued blend of styles into a unified language which incorporates the old with the new. There is also a trend toward simplification of textures, most probably as a result of the desire to concentrate more on chamber music than on large ensemble works.

The *Credo* may be viewed as the work representing Krzysztof Penderecki's position near the center of his labyrinth of time. The *Credo* exhibits all that has been discovered, developed, synthesized and used from the beginning of his work up to 4 July 1998. And it is offered to the listener in a fashion that invites reminiscence, moving from the most lyrical, tonal and tertian environment at the beginning of the work toward music which is reminiscent of his first exploratory, avant-garde path. There are also sections in the work that exhibit the delicacy and intensity of chamber music which are juxtaposed with full orchestral, solo, and choral textures. As well, the 'source' motives mentioned earlier, all of which appear in the *St. Luke Passion*, play

¹⁰Ibid., p. 269.

1.	1953	Sonata	Violin/Piano
2.	1955	Cisza	Voice/Piano
3.		Niebo w nocy	Voice/Piano
4.	1956	3 Miniatures	Clarinet/Piano
5.	1957	Oddech nocy	Voice/Piano
6.		Prośba o wyspy szczęśliwe	Voice/Piano
7.	1958	Epitaphium Artur Malawski	String Orch./Timpani
8.		Psalms of David	Choir/Strings/Perc.
9.		Emanations	2 String Orch.
10.	1959	Strophes	Sop./Speaker/10 Instr.
11.		Miniatures	Violin/Piano
	1960	Anaklasis	String Orch./Perc.
13.		Dimensions of Time and Silence	Choir/Strings/Perc.
14.		Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima	52 Strings
14. 15.		String Quartet No. 1	String Quartet
16.	1961		Flute/Chamber Orch.
17.	1301	Psalmus 1961	Tape
$\frac{17}{18}$		Polymorphia	48 Strings
	1962		String Orch./Tape
	1902		String Orch./ Tape
20. 21.		Fluorescences	Symphony Orch. 3 Choirs a cappella
21.	1000	Stabat Mater	
	1963	The Death Brigade	Tape
23.	1001	Drei Stücke im alten Stil	String Orch.
24.	1964		2 Choirs/Orch.
		Universitatis Iagellonicae sescentos	
		abhinc annos fundatae	
25.		Sonata	Violoncello/Orch.
	1965	Capriccio	Oboe/11 Strings
27.	1966	Passio e mors Domini nostri Jesu	Solos/Narrator/Choir/Orch.
		Christi secundum Lucam	
28.	1005	De natura sonoris No. 1.	Symphony Orch.
	1967	Pittsburgh Overture	Wind Orch./Timpani
30.		Capriccio	Flute/Orch.
31.	1968	Capriccio for Siegfried Palm	Solo Violoncello
32.		String Quartet No. 2	
33.		The Devils of Loudun	Opera/3 Acts
34.	1970	Utrenja I	Solos/2 Choirs/Orch.
35.		De natura sonoris No. 2	Symphony Orch.
36.		Cosmogony	Solos/Choir/Orch.
37.	1971	Utrenja II	Solos/2 Choirs/Orch.
38.		Prelude	Wind Orch.
39.		Actions	Jazz Ensemble
40.	1972	Partita	Harpsichord/E.Guitar/Harp
			/Double Bass/Orch.
41.		Concerto No. 1	Violoncello/Orch.
42.		Ecloga VIII	6 Male Voices
43.		Ekecheiria	Tape
44.	1973	Symphony No. I	Symphony Orch.
45.		Intermezzo	14 Strings
46.	1	Canticum Canticorum Salomonis	Choir/Chamber Orch.
47.	1974	Magnificat	Bass/7-part Male
			voices 2 Choirs/Orch.
48.		The Awakening of Jacob	Symphony Orch.
49.	1976	Concerto No. 1	Violin/Orch.
50.		Paradise Lost – sacra rappresentazione	
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51.	1979	Adagietto (Paradise Lost)	Orchestra	
52.			Choir/Orch.	
53.	1980	Symphony No. 2	Symphony Orch.	
54.		Capriccio	Tuba Solo	
55.		Te Deum	Solos/Choir/Orch.	
56.		Lacrimosa	Sop./Choir/Orch.	
57.	1981	Agnus Dei	A cappella Choir	
58.		Czyś ty snem była	Baritone/Piano	
59.	1982	Concerto No. 2	Violoncello/Orch.	
60.	1983	Concerto	Viola/Orch.	
61.	1984	Cadenza	Viola Solo	
62.		Polish Requiem Solos/Choir/Or		
63.	1986	Die schwarze Maske	Opera/1 Act	
64.		Per Slava	Violoncello Solo	
65.		Cherubim Song	A cappella Choir	
66.	1987	Prelude	Clarinet Solo	
67.		Veni Creator	A cappella Choir	
68.	1988	Der unterbrochene Gedanke	String Quartet	
69.		Passacaglia and Rondo	Symphony Orch.	
70.		7 Scenes and Finale	Mezzosop./Choir/Orch.	
		(Black Mask)	-, ,	
71.	1989	Adagio (Symphony No. 4)	Symphony Orch.	
72.	1990	Ubu Rex	Opera buffa	
73.	1991	String Trio	Violin/Viola/Violoncello	
74.	1992	Sinfonietta	String Orch.	
75.		A cappella Men's Choir	Men's Choir	
76.		Symphony No. 5	Symphony Orch.	
77.		Concerto for Flute	Flute/Chamber Orch.	
78.		Concerto No. 2 'Metamorphosen'	Violin/Orch.	
79.	1993	Quartet	Clarinet/String Trio	
80.		Benedictus	A cappella Choir	
81.	1994	Agnus Dei (Polish Requiem)	String Orch.	
82.		Sinfonietta No. 2	Clarinet/Strings	
83.	1995	Divertimento	Solo Violoncello	
84.		Entrata	Brass Instruments	
85.		Symphony No. 3	Symphony Orch.	
86.		Burlesque Suite (Ubu Rex)	Wind Band	
87.		Agnus Dei	Solos/Choir/Orch.	
88.	1996	Symphony No. 7	Symphony Orch.	
89.		De Profundis (Symphony No. 7)	3 A cappella Choirs	
90.	1997		Choir/Winds	
91.		Hymne an den heiligen Adalbert	Choir/Winds	
92.		Serenade	String Orch.	
93.	1998	Credo	Solos/Choir/Orch.	
94.		De Profundis (Symphony No. 7)	String Orch.	
95.		Luzerner Fanfare	8 Trumpets/Perc.	
96.		Sonata No. 2	Violin/Piano	
97.	2000	Musik	Flutes/Marimba/Strings	
98.		Sextet	Violin/Viola/Violoncello/	
			Clarinet/Horn/Piano	
99.		Concerto Grosso	3 Violoncelli/Orch.	
100.	2002	Concerto	Piano/Orch.	

Figure No. 1: A List of Penderecki's Works to 2002

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important roles in the *Credo*. And finally, troping of the text of the Credo with other sacred texts, the use of nationalistic melodic materials, and, in fact, the setting of the universally used text of the Credo serve as further expressions of a universal statement.

Only Penderecki knows whether or not he has reached the center of his labyrinth. Since the premiere of *Credo* (which is the latest work with which this speaker is acquainted), there have been six chamber works including a Sonata for Violin and Piano (reflecting the earliest work listed) and a Piano Concerto. We are anticipating the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Symphonies. And hopefully many new chamber works! In any event, there is an exciting time ahead as Penderecki proceeds on his path and continues to share his knowledge, understanding and discoveries with the rest of us. He has written:

"It may be some consolation that the labyrinth – a metaphor of our existence – is always a blend of irrational elements, of the unpredictable, with the predictable, which we can control. Only error and the roundabout way lead to fulfillment."¹¹

Krzysztof Penderecki has surely served as a model of a labyrinthian traveler. His passion and intense quest for expressive fulfillment have been constant and true. Indeed, Krzysztof Penderecki's labyrinth has been a crucible of change, and one which has served him as a continual source of musical and spiritual replenishment. Through his work and by following the path of his labyrinth in sincerity and artistic integrity, he has enriched the world with beauty, challenge, richer understanding, and entertainment in the truest and deepest sense of the term. Thank you, Maestro, for enriching all of our lives.

¹¹Penderecki, Labyrinth of Time, p. 23.



Map of the Labyrinth – Penderecki's Works

Figure No. 2: The labyrinth that is embedded in the Cathedral of Chartres, $13^{\rm th}$ Century

Phase/ Period	Years	Works	Phase Title or Style Content
		Mieczysław Tomaszewski	
1	1958 - 1960	Psalms of David	Entry
2	1960 - 1966	Threnody	Trials and experiments
3	1965-1971	St. Luke Passion	Breakthrough and first synthesis
4	1971-1975	Magnificat	Intermediary years of sublimation
5	1976-1985	Paradise Lost	Dialogue with rediscovered past
6	1985-1993	The Black Mask	Threshold of new synthesis
		Ray Robinson	
		(Exemplar Works)	
1	1956-1959	Strophes	Search for a new musical language
2	1959-1967	Threnody	Experiments with instrumental
			sonorities (carried on to later works)
3	1962-1972	St. Luke Passion	Synthesis of sonority with tradition
4	1972-1974	Magnificat	Stylistic sophistication – new vocal
			sonorities, extreme polyphony
5	1975-1986	Violin Concerto No. I	Synchronization – expressive style
			(Romanticism) with modern style
6	1986-1998	Ubu Rex	Stabilization of the above
			synchronization
		Regina Chłopicka	
1	1951 - 1958	Sonata for Violin/Piano -to-	Preparation
		Psalms of David	
2	1958-1962	Emanations -to- Fluorescences	In search of individual language
3	1963 - 1974		In search of universal values
4	1974-1980	Paradise Lost -to- Symphony No. 2	Sphere of neo-Romanticism
5	1980-1984	Te Deum -to-	In search of national identity
-		Polish Requiem	
6	1984 - 1986	Black Mask	In search of limits of expression
7	1987 - 1992	Sinfonietta -to- Ubu Rex	In search of new areas of experience
8	1992 - 1998	Quartet for Clarinet/Violin	In search of classical beauty
		Concerto No. 2	
		Wolfram Schwinger	
1	1951-1962	Sonata for Violin/Piano -to- Fluorescences	Preludes to Explosions
2	1962 - 1976	Stabat Mater -to-	Consolidation
		Awakening of Jacob	
3	1976 - 1980	Violin Concerto No. 1 -to-	Retrospection
		Symphony No. 2	
4	1976-1998	Agnus Dei -to- 1998	Synthesis

Figure No. 3: A listing of Penderecki's creative periods consolidated from Studies in Penderecki, vol. I (1998), pp. $13{\text -}82^{12}$

¹²Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Penderecki's Dialogues and Games with Time and Place on Earth, in: Studies in Penderecki, vol. I, Princeton, NJ, 1998, pp. 13-32; Ray Robinson, Penderecki's Musical Pilgrimage, ibid., pp. 33-50; Regina Chłopicka, Stylistic Phases in the Work of Krzysztof Penderecki, ibid., pp. 51-64; Wolfram Schwinger, The Changes in Four Decades: The Stylistic Paths of Krzysztof Penderecki, ibid., pp. 65-82.