

# *The Poetics of* *Unism in Music*

**KRZYSZTOF SZWAJGIER**

Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, Kraków

Email: zbszwajg@cyf-kr.edu.pl

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## ABSTRACT

Zygmunt Krauze is the founder of a new current in art: unistic (unitary) music. He developed this concept in the first period of his artistic work, inspired by the unistic paintings of Władysław Strzemiński. Traces of this style are also detectable in Krauze's later post-unistic works. Unistic music is characterised by a paradoxical unity in diversity. Most of the composer's statements collected in this paper refer to specific features of unism in music. Other, more general comments concern the essence of music, the composer's personal stance, the creative process, the autonomy of the composer, the audience and the performers, etc. Two longer texts by Zygmunt Krauze have been quoted in full. One can be considered as a unistic manifesto, while the other is a kind of personal credo.

**Keywords:** Krauze, minimalism, creative process, Strzemiński, unism

*[...] I am happy to be separate and different. I believe one of the key requirements an artist needs to meet is to have individuality, to be separate from others, lonely and unique. I am not saying that I am such a person, but this is what I am aiming to become.*

Zygmunt Krauze<sup>1</sup>

In the sense popularised by Igor Stravinsky, musical poetics is the composer's own statement on "how the music is made".<sup>2</sup> Musical unism does call for such a declaration. It is a current important not only in Polish music, but also in the context of the wider musical scene. Naturally, the words and comments of Zygmunt Krauze himself as the founder of this trend are of the greatest relevance to this paper.

The period when Krauze made his debut as a composer was unique. Modernism was beginning to decline. The last decade of the supremacy of the avant-garde preceding the symbolic date of 1968, which marked a radical breakthrough, was characterised by symptoms of an aggravating crisis. The fast depletion of resources in the areas of musical material, technique, aesthetic and ideas led composers to adopt two opposed strategies: innovation or continuation. The continuators carried on exploring (among others) the fields of electroacoustic, spatial, sonoristic and conceptual music. The innovators focused on musical depth: on simplicity, naturalness and elementary qualities. This was the trend later referred to as minimal music, of which unism is one of the manifestations. Zygmunt Krauze's most representative unistic (unitary) works are:

*Five Unistic Pieces* for piano (1963)  
*Triptych* for piano (1964)  
*Esquisse* for piano (1967)  
*Polychromy* for clarinet, trombone, piano and cello (1968)  
*Spatial Music No. 1* for 6 tapes (1968)  
*Piece for Orchestra No. 1* (1969)  
*Spatial Music No. 2* for 2 tapes (1970)  
*String Quartet No. 2* (1970)  
*Piece for Orchestra No. 2* (1970)  
*Voices* for ensemble (1968-1972)

Zygmunt Krauze did not formulate a theory to explain his method of composition. He is not one of the "writer" composers such as Cage, Stockhausen, Varèse, Boulez, Messiaen, Xenakis, Pierre Schaeffer, Bogusław Schaeffer, and many others. He rather seems to count on non-verbal intuitive understanding of his ideas by the audience. Nevertheless, he willingly explains his intentions in numerous interviews, lectures, papers, discussions, letters, as well as commentaries printed in scores, LP covers and CD booklets, concert programmes, radio and television broadcasts. Selected fragments of these statements are quoted below.

## UNISM: THE UNITY OF DIVERSITY

*My first significant experience as an artist was the encounter with the art of Władysław Strzemiński. It gave the definitive impulse to my work, my thinking and my music.*

Zygmunt Krauze<sup>3</sup>

The characteristic features of unism in music are the complete opposite of the Second Avant-Garde dogmas, which were based on change, contrast, ephemeral phenomena, radically dissonant harmonies, perceptive tension, absolute predetermination or – conversely – the indeterminacy of sound parameters. Unistic music is stable, devoid of contrasts, continuous, natural, and based on the free distribution of sounds around pitch axes within narrow textural "belts".

Other types of minimal music in Poland,<sup>4</sup> apart from Zygmunt Krauze's unism, were developed by: Tomasz Sikorski (1939–1988), Zbigniew Rudziński (1935), Zygmunt Konieczny (1937), Henryk Mikołaj Górecki

<sup>1</sup> K. Kolinek, (2012). Zygmunt Krauze – „kompozytor osobny” [Zygmunt Krauze – “A Separate Composer”], *Meakultura*: <http://meakultura.pl/wywiady/zygmunt-krauze-kompozytor-osobny-399> (accessed on: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

<sup>2</sup> I. Stravinsky, (1970). *Poetyka muzyczna* [Musical Poetics], *Res Facta*. No. 4, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze. Między intelektem, fantazją, powinnością i zabawą* [Zygmunt Krauze. Between Intellect, Fantasy, Duty and Play]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Miklaszewska, (2003). *Minimalizm w muzyce polskiej* [Minimalism in Polish Music]. Kraków: Musica Iagellonica.

(1933–2010), and Wojciech Kilar (1932–2013). Krauze belongs to a generation of composers born in the mid- and late 1930s, many of whom – e.g. La Monte Young (1935), Terry Riley (1935), Steve Reich (1936), Philip Glass (1937) – opted for minimal music. The concept of unistic music is parallel to, and in fact precedes the analogous developments in minimalism. Zygmunt Krauze's unism has proved important not only in relation to the achievements of other Polish composers, but to the global transformations in music in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The appearance of unistic works, in many respects anticipating the later wave of minimalist music, confirms the concept that parallel developments may appear in art independently of any contacts between artists.

Zygmunt Krauze was born in Warsaw (on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1938), but spent his childhood and youth in Łódź. This fact is important to the origin of unistic music. It was in Łódź that Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952), the inventor of unistic painting, worked and taught. A war invalid, in the late 1940s he was condemned by the communists as a “formalist” together with his wife, the sculptor Katarzyna Kobro. Left with nothing to live on, they both died prematurely.

Krauze had in a sense long been ready for his unistic initiation. This young pianist inclining toward composition absorbed changes and novelties that reached the communist camp from the outside world during the political thaw of the mid-1950s. This influence fell on a fertile soil, feeding on those qualities of his personality that later manifested themselves as his “separateness”, faithfulness, and distance from popular attitudes and trends.

My musical consciousness was born out of rebellion and the rejection of what I listened to and played, rather than out of imitation. Still, rejection by itself does not tell you what to do and how to compose. I was receptive to new stimuli and ideas. In 1957, when I visited the posthumous exhibition of Władysław Strzemiński's paintings, I was ready for a moment of illumination. Suddenly I realised how I should compose and what direction I should take.<sup>5</sup>

#### The composer adds:

In 1956, as a secondary music school student, I went to Strzemiński's posthumous exhibition. This moment decided about my future. First of all, I realised I would become a composer, and I also found out how I should go about writing my music. It was Strzemiński – not Stravinsky, not Bach or any other composer – who showed me the direction, the way to compose. Why Strzemiński? First and foremost, because he proved to be a good teacher of musical form for me as a composer. At the conservatory I learnt nothing new or interesting about this subject. I learnt about form from Strzemiński. [...] For the purposes

of my music, I interpreted the theory of unism in such a way that form is as monolithic as possible and devoid of contrasts. It was such a period in Polish music when the main trend consisted in what I called *a chain of attractions* – all the time something new is happening, and the listener is bombarded with new musical events and sound concepts. I did not like it and did not feel like using this method. This may have been one of the reasons why I so eagerly adopted the ideas from Strzemiński's paintings and writings for myself and my music that they in fact became my own.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1930s Strzemiński painted a series of more than a dozen *Unistic Compositions*, whose theoretical foundations he described in his programmatic text *Unism in Painting*.<sup>7</sup> Strzemiński wrote:

A dualist concept should be replaced by a unistic one. In place of dramatic pathos and outbursts of emotion, of extreme forces – we will have a painting, as organic as nature itself [...]. Each square centimetre of the painting possesses equal value and plays an equally important role in the overall makeup of the work. Emphasising some parts while simultaneously overlooking others has no justification. The surface of the painting is uniform, so the intensity of form should also be distributed equally.<sup>8</sup>

Filling the whole surface of the canvas evenly with uncontrasted colours or minuscule patterns results in a unified abstract whole. One can observe deep similarities between the textures of Strzemiński's *Unistic Compositions* and of Krauze's musical works. As a result, unistic music becomes a textural monolith formed out of a limited number of simplest constituent parts. Numerous guidelines predefining unistic music can be found in performance notes and author's commentaries to individual works, where the principles of unism are presented as notes for performers. These can generally be summarised as the postulate of external unity of form and internal lability of components. Most of the composer's comments concern the continuity of sound:

Unity, unity. This has always been close to my heart, and even a composition whose structure and technique of sound combination are foreign to me, can still appeal to me if it has a homogeneous form. Only then can it become convincing as a great work of art.<sup>9</sup>

The form of each of the four parts is based on the principle of continuity rather than contrast.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, (1994). *Unizm w muzyce. Doświadczenia kompozytora [Unism in Music. A Composer's Experience]*. In: *Władysław Strzemiński 1893–1952. Materiały z sesji [Proceedings of a Research Session]*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> W. Strzemiński, (1994). *Unizm w malarstwie [Unism in Painting]*, [«Biblioteka Praesens» No. 3, Warsaw 1928]. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach [On the Influences]*, *Glissando*. No. 7, p. 83.

The key musical ideas are submitted to transformations and variations, which results in a homogeneous musical structure.<sup>10</sup>

The whole sound material should be performed *legatissimo sempre* [...] <sup>11</sup>

All the sound material should be performed *legatissimo sempre*. [...] After the deepest possible breath has been taken in the wind instruments, the break for breathing in air ought to be as short as possible. Instrumentalists should avoid taking this break at the same time. Within the same section a simultaneous break of this kind is impermissible.<sup>12</sup>

The whole piece is played *legato sempre*, which means that all the notes are sustained and merge smoothly with those that follow.<sup>13</sup>

The whole sound material should be performed *legatissimo sempre*. In the wind section, the break for taking a breath may be taken at any moment, but simultaneous breaks in many instruments ought to be avoided.<sup>14</sup>

All the sound material should be performed *legatissimo sempre*. For instruments with short sound (such as the harp, the harpsichord, etc.), the sound ought to be prolonged by irregular repetition. Breathing in the wind section may occur at any place, but several instrumentalists should not take a break at the same time.<sup>15</sup>

Equally important is the uniformity of dynamics, colour, articulation, register (between instruments) and volume (low – in most cases):

[...] on one dynamic level and *pianissimo possibile*. [...] The dynamics ought to be as similar as possible in all the instruments.<sup>16</sup>

The instrumentalists from all the groups ought to sit close to one another. [...] The whole piece should be played as quietly as possible, in dynamics ranging from *pianissimo possibile* to *mezzo piano*. [...] Any dynamic contrasts in individual instrument parts are out of place. The dynamic level of the whole orchestra ought to be the same as far as possible.<sup>17</sup>

The presented music is uniform and devoid of contrasts. All the impulses, changes and movement necessary to keep the music going take place without contrasts.<sup>18</sup>

The dynamics ought to be absolutely on the same level throughout the duration of the piece. No instrument should stand out. In order to attain the adequate proportions, mutes need to be used, while the quietest instruments ought to be electrically amplified.<sup>19</sup>

The monolithic texture of a unistic composition at the same time becomes its form, which takes the shape of one- or multi-module objects presented as fragments of perpetual music – even though they are cut out of the potentially infinite continuum of musical time and separated from it by “cutting edges” or silences. Form is conceived here not only in temporal categories (as potentially infinite), but also spatially as a construction. The indirect influence of the constructivist roots of Strzemiński’s unism is also evident in unistic musical works. Their formal boundaries are metaphorically described (in the quotations below) as, respectively: a frame, a façade, or a ribbon:

All the instruments begin and end each section simultaneously.<sup>20</sup>

The work should begin and end with a 20-second section of absolute silence.<sup>21</sup>

The musical work and architecture form an integral whole and can only exist in their mutual interrelation. Architecture, like the instrument, is a necessary condition for the performance of the work.<sup>22</sup>

The form has no beginning and no end. The performance may be interrupted at any moment and it will not change its fundamental qualities.<sup>23</sup>

Unistic music is characterised by a special type of indeterminacy, quite different from the practice of aleatory music. It depends on prescribing specific degrees of freedom in open forms and in spatial compositions, on the irregularity and asynchronicity of temporal events, on the free development of pitch sequences within a narrow ambitus centred on a selected pitch axis. These elements of freedom endow unistic

**10** Idem, (1997). *II Koncert fortepianowy [Piano Concerto No. 2]*, programme book of the 40<sup>th</sup> “Warsaw Autumn” International Festival of Contemporary Music, p. 250 (English version), pp. 262–263 (Polish version).

**11** Idem, (1971). *Polichromia [Polychromy]*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**12** Idem, (1973). *Piece for Orchestra No.1*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**13** Idem, (1977). *II Kwartet smyczkowy [String Quartet No. 2]*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**14** Idem, (1975). *Piece for Orchestra No.2*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**15** Idem, (1976). *Voices*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**16** Idem, (1971). *Polichromia*, op. cit.

**17** Idem, (1973). *Piece for Orchestra No.1*, op. cit.

**18** Idem, (1970). *Kompozycja przestrzenno-muzyczna Nr 2 [Spatial Music No. 2]*, exhibition catalogue. Warsaw: Galeria Współczesna.

**19** Idem, (1976). *Voices*, op. cit.

**20** Idem, (1971). *Polichromia*, op. cit.

**21** Idem, (1973). *Piece for Orchestra No.1*, op. cit.

**22** Idem, (1968). *Kompozycja przestrzenno-muzyczna Nr 1 [Spatial Music No. 1]*, exhibition catalogue. Warsaw: Galeria Współczesna.

**23** Idem, (1970). *Kompozycja przestrzenno-muzyczna Nr 2*, op. cit.

music with a certain internal lability, which provides a counterbalance for the uniformity of formal modules.

The score consists of a central sheet and two folding flaps. Folding one of the flaps singles out for performance the right- or the left-hand section of the central sheet. During performance the flaps ought to be folded and unfolded in turns, so that the individual sections are performed in various combinations: each of the flaps with an appropriate section of the central sheets, as well as the two flaps together.<sup>24</sup>

Each instrumentalist performs his or her part independently from the others, following first and foremost the position of notes in relation to the vertical lines. Only a slight shift (of 1–1.5 sec.) between the different instrumental parts within the groups and between the groups is permissible. A rigorous treatment of rhythm ought to be avoided. The dominant manner of performance is *rubato*.<sup>25</sup>

Rhythm should not be interpreted rigorously.<sup>26</sup>

Intonation on the different instruments should not be identical.<sup>27</sup>

Concerning the composition technique itself, Krauze gives us little information. We know that apart from various types of improvisation he also applied very strict procedures.<sup>28</sup> The reasons for using a narrow range of pitches in unistic music are empirical:

I always had a few music notes on a sheet of manuscript paper placed on the music desk of my piano, and I used every free moment to play those few notes in various configurations, listen to them and check their impact. This took me many months. I kept playing until I was sure that I had found the right course to follow. The very action of repeating and transforming the same notes over and over again made this material intimately familiar and genuinely my own, rooted deep inside me. From that moment on I already had no need to think about notes. When composing, I had all this collection of notes inside my mind and it just unfolded without absorbing my attention. The act of writing the music now took place intuitively and subconsciously.<sup>29</sup>

I normally use selected dominant central points as my central tones, while the other intervals are dependent on these central tones.<sup>30</sup>

Using similar motifs and elements is my way of building the material. These are my building blocks, my material. I use them to build various pieces, different forms, different types of expression – but the material, the cell out of which the music develops – is just one (and uniform).<sup>31</sup>

Those motifs, cells, building blocks, are so deeply rooted in the composer's personality that they have become his second nature. Krauze has frequently attempted to depart from the unistic "note", but it proved difficult to achieve.

Some of these motifs, these building blocks, are indeed a kind of obsession. But I want to stress that I have tried to overcome this obsession and do without it. However, when I start to write my music down, after all the preliminary stages have been completed and I have to take specific decisions – it is as if I was returning again and again to those motifs, to that material, since it appears to me that this is the only way to write music which can be close to my heart and which I can call my own.<sup>32</sup>

Why do I speak about motifs? It is because, when one looks at my music up to this date, that is, till 1997 (already almost thirty years of work), the majority of them are based on motifs similar to the one I used in *Polychromy*. This is what it looks like. I have a kind of need, which is also a limitation, to use this motif over and over again. As if I could not do it any other way... I cannot get away from it, however much I may try.<sup>33</sup>

One of Zygmunt Krauze's texts can be considered as a unistic manifesto. It was printed as a commentary for *Piece for Orchestra No.1* (1968) and is often quoted by the composer also in the context of other works:

I require peace and organisation in my music. Its sound should be individual enough to distinguish it from the chaos of other music and other sounds. In my view, the performance of a musical work has a time-organising function. From the chaos of human activity and the chaos of sounds that surround us, a musical work selects a section with a well-defined structure.

I accomplish these objectives in my music by using form devoid of contrasts and as unified as possible. All the impulses, changes and movement necessary to keep the music going take place without contrasts and without introducing new elements. What the listener encounters in the first seconds of the piece – will continue until the end. The entire sound scale is introduced in the opening section, and nothing new or foreign will appear in the course of the piece. There will be no surprises.

I prefer to let the listener focus on individual details and fragments rather than being attacked by a long string of attraction, changes and surprises. My music is discreet. It does not impose itself on the listeners. Instead, it leaves the active part to them: they only concentrate on those fragments and details that suit them best, and they make those choices by themselves, since it is easy to get to know this music, and the audience knows what to expect. The audience also knows that if

**24** Idem, (1975). *Tryptyk*, a score. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

**25** Idem, (1973). *Piece for Orchestra No. 1*, op. cit.

**26** Idem, (1975). *Piece for Orchestra No.2*, op. cit.

**27** Idem, (1976). *Voices*, op. cit.

**28** Cf. K. Szwejgiel, (2008) *Obrazy dźwiękowe muzyki unistycznej. Inspiracja malarska w twórczości Zygmunta Krauze* [Sound Images in Unistic Music. Paintings as an Inspiration in the Works of Zygmunt Krauze], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej.

**29** From a recording of a conversation with the composer (5.12.2002).

**30** *Riminiaterforum. Seminari e incontri musicali 1978-1980*, C. Colombati, G. Borghetto (Eds.), Modena: Ater, p. 86.

**31** K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 54.

**32** *Ibid.*, p. 54.

**33** *Ibid.*, p. 55.



a given fragment has disappeared for a while, it will certainly come back.

This form, devoid of contrasts, does not in fact have a beginning or an end. The performance may be interrupted at any moment and it will not change its fundamental qualities. It can also continue for any amount of time. This kind of music creates the possibility of a different kind of perception. Ideally, the music would last forever, and the listener would just come and go at any time that he or she finds suitable.<sup>34</sup>

## MUSIC, COMPOSITION, PERFORMANCE

Statements on other subjects complement the artistic portrait of the composer:

### *Music*

I have been heart and soul dedicated to music since my childhood. Throughout my life, at school and out of school, as well as in my later independent adult life I have focussed on music, both as a performer – which, I should stress it, takes a lot of time and demands many sacrifices, and as a composer – which also absorbs your thoughts and person entirely.<sup>35</sup>

To sit by the piano at the age of six and press the sustain pedal fast and energetically – experiencing the effect of a storm, incredibly loud, like the rumble of thunder. Delighting in sound – this was my first impression associated with instrumental sound that I could produce and form by myself.<sup>36</sup>

Music can replace everything, and express much more than any other language – in particular, more than the spoken and written language can express.<sup>37</sup>

### *Composing*

The composer writes a piece of music to free himself from the questions he asks himself, the tasks he has set for himself, and to finally close a certain chapter of his life. Then he usually yields to another temptation, completes another piece of music – and in this way the poor audience is exposed to an incredibly abundant crop of new works.<sup>38</sup>

It sometimes happens that a piece begins in the composer's head, as a flash of inspiration. Usually it's just one second in which he catches a glimpse of the idea, and soon afterwards there comes its... application or development. And I have the complete outline of a musical form.<sup>39</sup>

I normally revise a completed work, make corrections and introduce minor alterations after the first rehearsal, sometimes – after the first performance. But I don't change... the work as such. There are no works, whether old or most recent, that I would like to change.<sup>40</sup> [...] what convinces me most in music is the iron logic of construction, because this is what creates beauty.<sup>41</sup>

### *Being Natural*

Both in life and in music I generally take what I call a natural attitude. For me this means that I never try to force anything, to do too much, too fast, too well [...].<sup>42</sup>

[...] intuition tells me which way to go. I have an unerring instinct, like a dog, and I always choose the right solutions. Naturally and without effort, I find out what suits me best. I even do not know how it works; it just happens, and I feel free and happy with my way of working things out.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Titles*

I sometimes choose my titles at once, in the beginning, when I have an idea for the work, and then the music is much easier to write and it's simply better. Or I try hard to invent a title, and it's difficult, and work on such a piece gives me more problems. It is true that I attach much importance to titles, because I think that the idea of a piece, its character and the way of thinking is often contained in the title itself, in just one or two words.<sup>44</sup>

### *Composer Autonomy*

Sergey Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives* – surprising harmonies fleeing somewhere up high, glass-like sounds with the freshness of a crystal. Then – my attempts to imitate it, pitiful trivialisation of the original. I soon realised that there is no worse approach to composition than imitating others.<sup>45</sup>

Generally it was not the works of other composers, not music, but the plastic arts that offered me inspiration. This is where I learned the most.<sup>46</sup>

[...] all our life and activity is just one long sequence of dependencies, of some people dominating others, some ideas dominating others, of painful humiliations, short-lived successes, hesitation, frequent choices and rejections [...].<sup>47</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Z. Krauze, (1970). Piece for Orchestra No. 1, a commentary printed in the programme book of the "Warsaw Autumn" International Festival of Contemporary Music, pp. 13–14 (French version), pp. 12–13 (Polish version).

<sup>35</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>39</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, (2001). *Zygmunt Krauze*, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>47</sup> Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 81.

I cannot say how many small things, words and situations have (or have not) got impact on my musical decisions. I am certainly not going to reveal all of them. Especially those that I am most fond of and pay most attention to.<sup>48</sup>

Why should I give to another composer so many of my ideas, so much of my imagination? Is it fair if I create all the sound of the composition myself, which the composer did not even plan? All the same, I still played many pieces from graphic notation at that time, in fact creating my own works under the names of other composers. I did it because I felt that it developed my musical imagination a lot, and I derived enormous pleasure from that process, the generous pleasure of giving to others.

Each composer looks for his or her “own special note”. It could be just a few sounds, a harmonic combination, a way of building the form, an individual orchestral colour, or many other things which are hard to express in words. Each composer aims first to define this “special note”, and then – to present it in the best possible manner. For me, this “special note” of my own is something crucial. It provides a link between different works, composed in different periods, ensuring unity. I am convinced that I have found such a “note.”<sup>49</sup>

## Performing

I believe that a composer must also be a performer. A composer ought to perform on stage. These two experiences sum up and mutually stimulate each other, giving strength to the artist.<sup>50</sup>

A composer must at the same time be a performer (on any kind of instrument), or a conductor. One should be able to experience how the music comes into being and is interpreted on the stage, not at one's home or study, but in confrontation with the audience. This allows the composer to see his work and his music in a different perspective. And it provides energy for more work.<sup>51</sup>

There is an instrument – one, the piano – that has a share in my musical decisions, through its sound, mechanics and touch. Everyday contact with the piano nearly throughout my life has turned into a habit, a discipline. It has formed my musical ear and helped me in difficult moments. Most of all, it has given me an enormous amount of satisfaction and joy. I frequently think of a new work sitting by the piano, checking the combinations of sounds and chords, and playing the fragments that I had formed in my mind. The sound and construction of the piano, my own ease in using the keyboard – all this has an impact on my decisions as a composer.<sup>52</sup>

We played Cornelius Cardew's *Great Digest* with Cornelius, David Bedford and John Tilbury. I blew into the bottles and performed on the piano case (mostly rubbing the piano with a rosined hand, which resulted in a creaking sound). We were delighted with our

improvisation, in fact – with ourselves, with the discovery that we could combine our musical effort and really become one whole.<sup>53</sup>

## Listener Autonomy

In the recommended spatial situation, the music should continue without breaks, and the listener comes and goes at any moment he or she finds suitable.<sup>54</sup>

The composition consists of several different sound layers, each played back from a separate loudspeaker placed in an acoustically insulated booth. The listener wanders through a number of booths, combining the various sound layers into a whole. The sequence of musical transformations in this piece does not unfold in time, in front of a passively seated listener, as it normally happens in a concert hall. The listeners can influence the development of the music, depending on the routes they select and the duration of their stay in the specially designed space.<sup>55</sup>

A Labyrinth.

On your way, you will encounter seven sources of sound.

The music is waiting for you.

You yourself create your own version of the piece.

It depends on the route you take.

It depends on the time of your stay in the Labyrinth.

You can return to every source of sound again.

You can stop between two or three sources of sound and listen to them alternately.

You decide.

You listen to music transmitted simultaneously to seven cells in an architectonic space.

The music in each of those seven cells is a bit different.

The music in each of them is independent.

This is why you are invited to walk through the Labyrinth.

You can enter the architectonic space at any time and stay for as long as you wish.<sup>56</sup>

## THE CREDO

*Władysław Strzemiński, his paintings and his theory of unism have been the most inspiring artistic concept in my artistic life. A utopia that cannot be quite fulfilled, and this could be the reason for its continuing attraction.*

Zygmunt Krauze<sup>57</sup>

The final section of Zygmunt Krauze's text *On the Influences* presents a summary of his attitude to his own music and the place of unism in that music:

**53** *Ibid.*.

**54** Idem, (1970). *Kompozycja przestrzenno-muzyczna Nr 2*, op. cit.

**55** Idem, (1968). *Kompozycja przestrzenno-muzyczna Nr 1*, op. cit.

**56** Z. Krauze, (1988). *Rzeka podziemna* [Underground River], programme book of the 21<sup>st</sup> “Warsaw Autumn” International Festival of Contemporary Music, pp. 199–202 (English version), pp. 199–201 (Polish version).

**57** Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 83.

**48** *Ibid.*.

**49** Z. Krauze, (1991). Booklet essay for the CD *Zygmunt Krauze* in the series *Polish Contemporary Music*.

**50** Zygmunt Krauze, an interview conducted by Daniel Cichy, <http://www.zygmuntkrauze.com/pl/biografia/media/91-samotny-moge-byc-wszedzie.html> (accessed on: 20th September 2015).

**51** K. Kolinek, (2012). *Zygmunt Krauze – „kompozytor osobny”*, op.cit.

**52** Z. Krauze, (2005). *O wpływach*, op. cit., p. 83.

My musical consciousness was born out of rebellion and the rejection of what I listened to and played, rather than out of imitation. Still, rejection by itself does not tell you what to do and how to compose. I was receptive to new stimuli and ideas. In 1957, when I visited the posthumous exhibition of Władysław Strzemiński's paintings, I was ready for a moment of illumination. Suddenly I realised how I should compose and what direction I should take. Since that time, Strzemiński's idea of unism has become for me the central principle of building musical form. What is more, uniformity, lack of conflicting elements and rigorous construction appealed to me in the emotional sense. I felt it was simply my own way. The idea of unism also made it possible for me to create works different from the mainstream music of that period. This idea showed me how to compose, how to follow my own original path, and write music that agreed with my personal type of sensitivity.

But this idyll only lasted for less than seven years. It soon turned out that I was in a dead-end alley, a *cul-de-sac*. And this was when I finally faced the question: where was my own music? How should I compose it?

I tried to develop and broaden the expressive scope of my music. I tried to depart from unism, to oppose it and write music quite independent of that trend.

I used quotations from folk music and rarely heard folk instruments in my works. I also composed pieces that drew on elements of popular music.

I improvised – also with my friends and partners from Music Workshop ensemble. It was a form of free composition.

I collaborated with architects on spatial-musical projects. I used synthetic sounds.

I plunged into the current of expressive music that depended also on personal experience and on what was going on in the world.

I composed for the theatre and wrote operas.

But I have never completely abandoned the idea of unism. Even though I deliberately tried to. All my works have some features, some fragments that bear the mark of unism. This is a triumph of the idea, and of faithfulness.<sup>58</sup>

## AFTER UNISM

The strictly unistic works of Zygmunt Krauze are only a fragment of his extensive output. His later works – chamber and solo, orchestral and concert music, operas, etc. – derive from other sources, though elements of unism are still present in them to a varying extent even today.

The boundary between Zygmunt Krauze's unistic works and his other music is fluid and cannot be established once and for all. There are several reasons for this situation. The most important of these is the constant evolution of Krauze's musical language and style. His own understanding of unism in music also underwent transformations, which is evident in his successive works. Not only his search for the best ways to express unistic ideas, but also his departure from unism, which began in the 1970s – was a gradual process. The diversity of genres he has worked in, of music material and formal solutions,

justifies such attempts at summing up his own artistic development as the one quoted below:

Many years ago, during my lectures at the Summer Courses in Darmstadt, I was asked to characterise my own output of compositions. At that time, I divided them into three groups: “**unistic music**” inspired by the theory and paintings of Władysław Strzemiński (1843–1952), “**music created out of other music**” – unistic forms, but composed out of other types of sound materials, such as folklore (*Aus aller Welt stammende*), as well as “**spatial music**”, that is, works composed for specially designed architectural spaces or performed in many rooms at the same time and listened to while moving between the rooms. The Darmstadt list did not include the fourth category, since at that time I had not composed any such works yet. Today I would call this group “**a return to the roots**” (*Tableau Vivant, Parisian Symphony, Quatuor pour la naissance*). What I call “roots” in this case is my own personal need to write music, without any masks, with utmost sincerity.<sup>59</sup>

The composer still has a sentiment for the unistic style. For the centenary of Władysław Strzemiński's birth he wrote a homage to the founder of unism – a *Piano Quintet*, which contains several transformed quotations from the material of *Polychromy* – the fundamental and most condensed (in terms of musical means) example of unistic music. But unism has long ceased to be an obsession for the composer. It has become a natural ingredient of his artistic personality, present even when it is not recalled, and sometimes still making itself heard – in remote variants – as a distant echo of technical principles from his past. It is now one of the many components of Zygmunt Krauze's invariably “separate” style of composition.

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**Krzysztof Szwajgier**; PhD, habilitation degree; Music theorist, composer, on the faculty of the Intermedia Department of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Author of books on composition systems and techniques, musical works, the avant-garde, postmodernism, minimalism, jazz, theatre, multimedia, aesthetics,

semiology, and axiology. Author of the opera *Barefoot* based on Gombrowicz's *Ferdynand* (1983), orchestral, choral and chamber works, as well as music for more than a hundred theatrical productions. Member of the Polish Society of Aesthetics and of the Programme Board of the "Warsaw Autumn" International Festival of Contemporary Music.