

# *Paweł Szymański's* *Self-Analyses* *Reread*

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## ABSTRACT

The article is an attempt to present important categories of composer Paweł Szymański's musical language, based on his self-analytical statements, which were in major part answers to musicologists' questions. Luciano Berio pointed out why the situation of a composer who would like to address questions about his or her music is difficult – a lack of necessary detachment would be one of the reasons. A musicologist, on the other hand, is tempted to construct their own supposedly objective analytical view of a composer's musical language. The dialogistic approach proposed by anthropological musicology may be a solution to these dilemmas. Other main topics mentioned in the article are related to the role of meta-concepts in Szymański's musical language.

**Keywords:** Luciano Berio, Paweł Szymański, music, visual arts, intertextual.

*Performers, listeners and indeed composers undergo a sort of alchemical transformation in which recognition, knowledge and conceptual associations – all fruits of their relationship with Texts – are spontaneously transformed into a living entity, a "being" which transcends and sublimates technical realities.*

Luciano Berio, *Remembering the Future*

Fascination with a musical work of art often becomes a transformative experience. The impression of it can engage not solely our rational and emotional spheres, but can transport us – at times uncontrollably and unconsciously – into the realm of spirituality. Such a state of captivation induces us to analyse, to uncover the underlying construction of an enthralling artistic work, to find answers when beset by the question: "How was it done?" Thus, though it is often motivated by such deep aesthetic experience, the inclination to dissect constitutes the pivotal force in a musicologist's rational dimension. The need to comprehend leads to choosing the solitary path of intense study, an experiment carried out on one's self, which can continue until the limits of individual perception are reached. However, these essentially rational efforts usually collide with the mystery inherent in a work of art. Invariably, the subject of cerebral cognition evades us and, while trying to get to know a work of art, one becomes ever more aware of cognitive limits. For a musicologist, this awareness, combined with a desire to know the reality beyond the comparatively narrow scope of our own perception and analysis, makes the need to hear the composer's voice and to dialogue with him or her so crucial.

In her inspiring introduction to the conference on musical language, Professor Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek pointed out that contemporary anthropology indicates clearly that the imposition of a conceptual

design foreign to observed phenomena may constitute an artificial procedure, taking us away from a deeper understanding of such phenomena rather than bringing us closer to them. This discrepancy between the object and its description has been noted by Marshall Sahlins, for example, who wrote in 1985: "Objects of reference are at once more particular and more general than the expressions used to designate them."<sup>1</sup> Culture itself, on the other hand, was considered "the imposition of an arbitrary framework of symbolic meaning upon reality."<sup>2</sup> As Tim Ingold explained, this approach stems from an "imagined separation between the observer and the world, such that the observer has to reconstruct the world, in the mind, prior to any meaningful engagement with it."<sup>3</sup>

**1** This quotation from Marshall Sahlins opened Marilyn Strathern's tellingly entitled text "Shifting Contexts" (the foreword to an essay collection). Strathern developed her ideas further: "Euro-Americans might define knowledge as the transformation of already existing awareness. It is the outcome of practising the facility to turn one kind of perception into another, and thus to effect and perceive transformative process at the same time. Anthropologists routinely recontextualise their subject matter thus – move deliberately from one intellectual framework to another: from evolution to function, from structure to process, from representation to evocation. In fact, they may hope in doing so to capture differences between the cultural milieux they are aware they inhabit. This kind of shifting is instrumental to the perception of new significances. [...] But there is a more fundamental predisposition, which lies in that very suppleness that encourages frame-switching in intellectual terms. Academically produced knowledge makes a specialism of such intellect, creates an expertise out of finding new frames, out of transforming itself through discovery, invention and redescription, out of new conceptual epochs. [...] The very expertise that academics (Euro-American ones at least) most defend against the market, making knowledge, makes not just transformation but displacement part of its own internal processes." M. Strathern, (1995). *Shifting Contexts*. In: M. Strathern (Ed.), *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge, p. 6.

**2** C. Geertz, (1964). The transition to humanity. In S. Tax (Ed.), *Horizons of Anthropology*. Chicago: Aldine, p. 39. Quoted after T. Ingold, (1995). Building, Dwelling, Living. In: M. Strathern, (Ed.), *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge, p. 66.

**3** He further explains: "Reality, that which is imposed upon, is envisioned here as an external world of nature, a source of raw materials and sensations for diverse projects of cultural construction. Following from this, a distinction is commonly made between the »real« environment that is given independently of the senses, and the »perceived« environment as it is reconstructed in the mind through the ordering of sense data in terms of acquired, cognitive schemata. Other conventional oppositions that encode the same distinction are between »etic« and »emic«, and between »operational« and »cognised«." *Ibid.*

The musical language of our epoch is extremely individualized; the composer does not adopt existing normative and formal determinants, but rather creates his or her own syntactic rules and aesthetic premises, which are naturally closely interrelated. Though the latter are more stable, the composer often seeks a thorough renewal and transformation of his or her language, which can undergo profound changes, as in the cases of Stravinsky and Stockhausen.<sup>4</sup> These diachronic changes makes the apprehension of such a composer's musical language more challenging. It seems certain, though, that any analysis of technical aspects of such a language separated from its aesthetic aspects hinders even further the understanding of the deep meaning of such a musical idiolect.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, it seems that knowledge of composers' self-analytical statements can bring us much closer to the comprehension of a musical work of art than can the most virtuosic, intellectually unleashed analysis of our own. Both approaches have the potential to lead us astray, undoubtedly, and we may be condemned to wander in the wilderness, as indeed we learn from the history of musicology and from other disciplines. Such failures are most obvious and inevitable either when the analysis is too ideologically biased or too simple-minded and contains errors, or when a composer deliberately gives erroneous information about the work, which comes from a need to manipulate the recipient. Controversial as this hypothesis may be, it is not directed towards surrendering the autonomy of research. Autonomous analysis is, however, just a preliminary step; a careful examination of the composer's self-analytical statements provides crucial information to support and/or modify this research.

These considerations may sound naive and self-explanatory, especially in light of several decades of ethnomusicological theories which have contended with these challenging paradoxes. In 1981, for example, Jean-Jacques Nattiez analysed a similar type of relation existing between the autochthonous musical discourse and the discourse of a scholar. As Professor Żerańska-Kominek has written, Nattiez understood this relation as a dialogue, stating that the most thorough knowledge about music is a result of interaction between sources

we have at our disposal: words, practice and works.<sup>6</sup> He also quoted Clifford Geertz, who had stated that our goal is not to become autochthons; what we seek is a conversation with them, as the semiotic approach to culture is supposed to help us access their conceptual world.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, a composer of the European-American world is not an "autochthon" – however, his or her idiolect constitutes a conceptual world in itself; thus to transfer this dialogistic approach to the realm of research on musical language can only prove beneficial to that research.

### CHALLENGES OF COMPOSERS' SELF-ANALYSES

Composers often perceive self-analytical procedures as an ontologically problematic endeavour. Luciano Berio found his answer to explain the challenge which composers face when asked to describe their musical language:

Perhaps the difficulties composers encounter when they talk about texts arise from their feeling that they themselves are a musical Text; that they live inside a text and therefore are lacking the detachment necessary to explore, with some objectivity, the nature of the relation they entertain with themselves as text.<sup>8</sup>

Paweł Szymański, eminent Polish composer of the generation born in the 1950s, has distanced himself from this type of self-analysis on several occasions. Szymański has usually emphasized the fact that his task has been to write the music itself. This was expressed most succinctly in 1992, in an interview first published in a Danish music journal: "My role is simply to set black

<sup>4</sup> A similarly internal need for renewal and transformation of musical language was expressed by composers Zbigniew Bargielski and Zygmunt Krauze during the conference on this topic.

<sup>5</sup> In his paper presented at the conference, composer Rafał Augustyn used the linguistic term "idiolect" convincingly to denote a highly individualised personal musical language.

<sup>6</sup> J.-J. Nattiez, (1981). *Paroles d'informateurs et propos de musiciens; quelques remarques sur la place du discours dans la connaissance de la musique*, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*. Vol. 13, pp. 48–59. Quoted after: S. Żerańska-Kominek, *Muzyka w kulturze. Wprowadzenie do etnomuzykologii* [Music in Culture. Introduction to Ethnomusicology], Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 1995, p. 178. See also: eadem, (2000). *Antropologiczne ujęcie analizy muzycznej* [Musical Analysis in the Anthropological Perspective], *Muzyka*. No. 4, pp. 113–131.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> L. Berio, (2006). *Remembering the Future. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures Series*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Quoted after: B. Quaglia, (2010). *Transformation and Becoming Other in the Music and Poetics of Luciano Berio*. In: B. Hulse, N. Nesbitt (Eds.), *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*. Farnham: Ashgate, p. 232.

dots on a piece of paper.”<sup>9</sup> Despite such declarations, the composer's lack of interest in describing his creative motivations, their aesthetic premises and solutions found in his musical language, has not been that all-embracing. A few self-analytical statements have been published over a time-span of three decades, beginning with his renowned, laconic formula regarding the listener and the understanding of music, when he was just twenty-five years old:

I have nothing to communicate to a possible listener of my music, except for the music itself. I am not demanding from the listener to find in my music whatever I would like it to contain, and which I perhaps did not manage to comprise in; on the other hand, I am not assisting him to trace in this music what he cannot find himself. Such a position is honest in my opinion. [...] Music is often wrapped in authors' commentaries; frequently verbally impressive and nonsensical in fact (*vide* “Warsaw Autumn” programme books), as up to now, very few issues regarding music yield to a description which would make sense [...]. Music (in its pure form) is (perhaps) more difficult in its perception than other arts, because it is abstract. (The housekeeper of one of my fellow musicians after having listened to a sonata by Scarlatti said: “It's nice, but what are the words to it?”).<sup>10</sup>

Several years later, in “Self-Reflection”, published in 1986, the composer spoke with similar reserve about his unwillingness to give such explanations in order for listeners to be able to understand the music:

[...] I decided to talk about my way of writing only with a certain reluctance. I allow myself to do it only among those who are professionally involved in studying or writing music. When the composer tells the listener how his music should be perceived – the situation is not really fair. When music is not understood by the listener, it can be blamed either on the insufficiency of his perceptive abilities, or it might be the fault of the composer's incompetence. In the latter case, if the author is to explain to the listener what this music is about, this is not quite fair. Therefore, if any of you encounter any of my works one day, please forget what I was speaking about today.<sup>11</sup>

The subjective selection of Szymański's statements contained in the present article does not aim to present an exhaustive image of his musical language; neither is

it dealing with details of his compositional technique.<sup>12</sup> Only those statements have been chosen which refer to fundamental topics and characteristic features related to the composer's musical language.

### PAWEŁ SZYMAŃSKI'S SELF-ANALYSIS AND THE TWO-LAYERED CONCEPT OF MUSIC

One of the most important statements explaining the syntactic and aesthetic aspects of Szymański's music are found in a conversation with the composer led by Mieczysław Kominek, published in Kominek's music journal *Studio* in September 1996, titled none other than “Where Is the Soul Found?” Asked by the musicologist about his concept of “two-layered” music, the composer emphasized his doubts about self-analysis, then eventually elucidated the aesthetic principle fundamental to his technical solutions:

I do not know whether it is expedient to speak about it in too much detail and to subject myself to self-analysis. I can say that I was fascinated at the time by the idea of a two-level understanding of music. Music in its physical layer, when it is realized in performance, would be a reflection of something that does not exist, it would suggest that there exists some deeper layer. In other words, translating it into compositional technique: I am interested in creating music in such a way that some simple musical structures are being transformed, which allows for the listener to guess at a layer running parallel to what is heard, and from which that which one can hear had been generated. [...] The distinction between the starting point towards transformation and the transformation itself constitutes a factor increasing tension.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most important of such features is a particular quality of Szymański's music, described

<sup>9</sup> P. Szymański, (1992/1993). Mellem tradition og fornyelse. Interview med den polske komponist Paweł Szymański, *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift*. No. 3; reprinted in English translation as: P. Szymański (2000). Between Tradition and Renewal. In: A. Beyer, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time*. Farnham: Ashgate 2000, p. 264.

<sup>10</sup> P. Szymański, (1979). Nowe pokolenie kompozytorów polskich o sobie [The New Generation of Polish Composers about Themselves], *Ruch Muzyczny*. No. 8, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> P. Szymański, (1986). Autorefleksja [Self-Reflection]. In: L. Polony (Ed.), *Przemiany techniki dźwiękowej, stylu i estetyki w polskiej muzyce lat siedemdziesiątych siedemdziesiątych* [Changes of Technique, Style and Aesthetic in Polish Music of the 1970s]. Kraków: Academy of Music in Kraków and Musicologists' Section of the Polish Composers' Union, pp. 291–299.

<sup>12</sup> These aspects have been analysed by several authors; see: W. Kostka, (2014). *Dwie etiudy na fortepian* Pawła Szymańskiego. Dwupoziomowość a problem parodii [Paweł Szymański's *Two Studies for Piano*. Two-Level Structure and the Question of Parody], *Res Facta Nova*. No. 15, pp. 83–95; K. Naliwajek-Mazurek, (2001). Modele struktury muzycznej w *Bagatelle für A. W. Pawła Szymańskiego* [Models of Musical Structure in Paweł Szymański's *Bagatelle für A.W.*], *Muzyka* No. 1, pp. 61–84; K. Naliwajek-Mazurek, (2004). *Partita IV* Pawła Szymańskiego i jego “utopia podwójności muzyki” [Paweł Szymański's *Partita IV* and His “Utopia of Double Nature in Music”]. *Przegląd Muzyczny*. No. 4, pp. 109–145; K. Naliwajek-Mazurek, (2013). Paweł Szymański and the Multiple Narrative in Music. In: Eva Mantzourani (Ed.), *Polish Music since 1945*. Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2013, pp. 129–139; K. Naliwajek-Mazurek, (2014). *Qudsja Zaher* – traktat na styku archeologii, historii i krytyki współczesności [Qudsja Zaher – A Treatise on Archeology, History and Criticism of Modernity], *Res Facta Nova*. No. 15, pp. 51–69.

<sup>13</sup> P. Szymański, (1996). Gdzie się mieści dusza? [Where Does the Soul Reside?] Conversation with M. Kominek, *Studio*. No. 9, p. 8.

by the composer, in an interview for a radio essay *Religio e conventio* (1993), devoted to his chef-d'oeuvre: *Miserere* for voices and instrumental ensemble, of the same year:<sup>14</sup>

All these layers – vibraphone, harp – are derived from the same contrapuntal-harmonic structure. And my intention, that which I was trying to solve on a technical plane, was just to give the impression that something is at the same time physically standing still (which is physically evident, because these individual vocal lines always stay in one place) and changing its position, and moving. This effect – if anything of it is present in the piece – is made possible thanks to certain harmonic procedures.<sup>15</sup>

The way in which it was made was thus described by the composer:

This is done so that if you removed these chant verses, it would turn out that all this music forms a consistent, indivisible whole; a harmonic structure, which consistently modulates round the whole circle of fifths. But it has its own segments that do not coincide with those segments that have been allocated to segments of text.

So this constitutes a certain game, and the manipulation has been done here in such a way that the music stops whenever a D appears in it (strictly speaking, before this pitch appears), just at this moment a chant verse is introduced, which ends on D, from which begins the subsequent course of the music. This makes it seem as if these chant sequences were organically incorporated in the whole of it, even though they are a completely foreign body and divide this musical continuum in rather odd pieces.<sup>16</sup>

## TRANSFORMATIONS AND HISTORY

The composer's intentions regarding reconstructing, transforming and deforming objects drawn from the past are directed toward encouraging another way of listening "across history."

The traditional elements in my music are not difficult to see even though I often try to hide them, like, for example, in "Two Pieces for String Quartet." I admit that baroque music generally influences my music. My hope is that my musical reconstructions, transformations, or deformations, if you like, are audible in the sense that the historically-conscious listener, so to speak, can listen backwards and forwards in history at the same time.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Miserere* was composed by Szymański on commission from Polish Radio Channel Two. Andrzej Chłopecki (1950–2012), the distinguished Polish musicologist and music critic, was instrumental in this important commission. The radio essay Chłopecki realized masterfully combines the voice of the composer with his music, as well as commentaries by the musicologists Prof. Michał Bristiger and Chłopecki.

<sup>15</sup> A. Chłopecki, (26 August 1993). *Religio e conventio*, radio essay, Polish Radio Second Programme.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> P. Szymański, (2000). *Between Tradition and Renewal*, op. cit., p. 261.

## SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The links between Szymański's music and the visual arts are intense. However, what connects his works so strongly with certain artists, is not just the matter of inspiration, but of meta-conceptual abstract ideas. This was also clearly explained by the composer:

I can point to two sources of inspiration that are certainly important. One of them is the sphere of abstract concepts. I mean the entire sphere, which has a formal reference to the very different areas of reality, life, the arts, various fields of art, but which is detached from reality as such or from the matter of individual species and individual art disciplines. Therefore, I think that in my music, and perhaps it is generally so, that in music and at some level of abstraction, you can discern similar mechanisms, which are important both for music and painting, literature and other disciplines of art. This means that the abstract sphere constitutes a source of inspiration. To cite a very childish example, if I am inspired, for example, by the problem of the least common multiple, we can say that it is an abstract mechanism that can trigger any artistic action in very different disciplines, including music. Of course, this example is simplistic, but this is what I mean by the domain of abstract concepts.

The second source of inspiration, although I've always thought that it is not of fundamental importance, but at the same time I cannot deny that it exists, is the music itself. Because of various reasons, which I mentioned several times but there's no reason for me to talk about this always and on every occasion, my music has many references to music coming from external sources, from historical stylistic conventions. In this sense, one can say that music is my inspiration to write music.<sup>18</sup>

## ABSTRACT IDEAS: REPETITIVENESS AND OPERA

One such abstract concept which constitutes a crucial component of the composer's musical language is repetitiveness, also combined with constant modification. This method of structuring a musical work is an intrinsic principle across the musical output of Paweł Szymański; on a microscale, in heterophonic textures, and on the scale of macroform. In a recent discussion about his opera *Qudsja Zaher* (2005; premiered in 2013) the composer named this quality of his musical language, pointing out that it is a metacultural principle, present in visual arts among others:

The whole opera is in fact a reprise form, in which – more or less literally – various elements are repeated. The two lamentations of Qudsja or her last fragment, which is a reprise of the sequence on eternity from Act I, only without the choir. In the first act, this sequence sounds twice, the first time the chorus sings, then when it is repeated, the chorus sings together with Qudsja, in both cases with an almost identical text.

<sup>18</sup> P. Szymański, (2006). Conversation with K. Naliwajek-Mazurek. In: A. Chłopecki, K. Naliwajek-Mazurek (Eds.), *Festiwal muzyki Pawła Szymańskiego [Festival of Paweł Szymański's Music]* (programme book). Warsaw: Polish Audiovisual Publishers, pp. 12–15.



Everything is done in returns. This form conformed to my expectations, I like reprise forms, I do not feel disgusted by repetitions. Repetition is a very basic, cross-cultural means of expression, appearing in different fields – also in various forms of literature, visual arts, in rites, not to mention the fact that in nature one can observe it with the naked eye. I wanted to create a stage work based on the reprise form, which is why it was necessary to build the libretto properly.<sup>19</sup>

## VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC

It is striking that composers are drawn to and inspired by visual arts to such an extent. Among contemporary Polish composers, Zygmunt Krauze seems to be perhaps the most influenced by this artistic world. Referring to the artist Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952), he said during the conference on musical language: “Strzemiński taught me what I wasn’t taught during my composition studies.” Krauze’s student, composer Marcin Stańczyk, followed in his path. For Szymański, other tropes are essential: along with melancholic Hopper paintings and Duchamp’s surrealist experiments, there is constructivism. He said in an unpublished conversation in 1998:

[...] When I said that I quite easily agree with postmodernism, I said it with a sneer, because the definition of postmodernism probably does not exist and everyone understands what he pleases with this term and in this sense I feel comfortable if someone qualifies me in this area, which is so broad that it is practically difficult to grasp, and the term itself has a rather neutral connotation. But when you write music, one thinks more in technical terms. And here I feel stronger. Anyway I have in fact always considered myself a constructivist, because at least I know more or less what it means, and it is this aspect of art that has always interested me. At the same time there are of course various elements involved, which are taken as a material or as a pretext from other techniques or from other stylistic areas. And here arises the problem of tonality, of course, someone else’s tonality, so in this broad sense – for example, modality, where I refer broadly to the music of the Renaissance – modality is in this sense a kind of tonality. What happens at this point – and this is probably among goal-oriented actions and it represents a certain concept – to manipulation, distortion of syntax.<sup>20</sup>

Szymański also explained the crucial term with which he denoted his musical style and language (along with his fellow composer Sławomir Krupowicz):

In visual art one of the principles of surrealism is to use real elements, but in a broken syntax, for example, in the form of a dream-like representation. It is the same in my music: I use some traditional

basic forms and structures, but I break the rules consciously. “Surconventionalism” – at least for Krupowicz and me – applies to music that related to tradition, but at the same time breaks with it.<sup>21</sup>

## KEY CONCEPTS: BEAUTY AND METAPHYSICS

Two more ideas important for the composer are metaphysics and beauty. Although in the journal *Dysonanse* in 1997, the composer included “beauty” in his quizzical catalogue of “superstitions,” in the earlier interview for the *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* quoted above, he said:

It is very difficult to define what lies in the word “beauty”. What is beautiful and what is ugly? Not every single detail in a painting by Rembrandt is beautiful but the paintings as a whole *are*. I can say that it has never been my intention to write ugly music. On the other hand, it is my intention to make more than “pretty sounds.”<sup>22</sup>

And in the conversation in *Studio*, entitled “Where Is the Soul Found?” the composer made another strikingly sincere (or so it seems) statement: “It is difficult to speak about it, but the ultimate goal of art is metaphysics itself”. He emphasizes, though, that “the metaphysics of music cannot stem from its creator’s biography nor from the text of vocal pieces;” if it can be found, it is only in music itself, although “to ask for its place is like asking where in humans the soul can be found. And yet, it is there.”<sup>23</sup>

## BACH AND SZYMAŃSKI

The role of Bach’s music has been confirmed by Szymański on several occasions. He said: “I admit that baroque music generally influences my music.”<sup>24</sup> His precomposed models of musical structure often refer strongly to Bach’s idiom. To show how this fascination is linked to cross-cultural abstract ideas, another quotation:

To conclude, let me mention the influence of Bach’s music on my work. His rationality, his mathematical order and the strictness of his rules probably have much to do with this, though not directly. As far I can observe, hearing his music influences my feelings, yet despite or perhaps because of this, the flow of his sounds has an inspiring effect, evoking particular images or flashes of inspiration, and also, more generally, stimulating an unquenchable desire for expression. His music, more than that any other classical or modern composer’s, reveals

19 *Ibid.*

20 P. Szymański, (1999). Unpublished conversation with Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek from 1998. In: K. Naliwajek-Mazurek, *Model struktury muzycznej i jego realizacje w utworach instrumentalnych Pawła Szymańskiego* [Model of Musical Structure and Its Implementations in Paweł Szymański’s Instrumental Works], M. A. thesis under supervision of Prof. M. Gołąb, University of Warsaw Institute of Musicology.

21 P. Szymański, (2000). *Between Tradition and Renewal*, op. cit., p. 261.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p. 261.

something self-evident to me, something I expected without being aware of it, just as one sometimes “recognizes” a landscape that one sees for the first time. In the middle of a sterile period, I am sometimes filled with a vague feeling of expectancy and sudden hope during a concert. The desire for creativity precedes the desire to create something specific, and is the spark to set the process of expression in motion. In my periods of weakness and spiritual emptiness and lethargy, I reach out to Bach's music to revive and fire my desire for creativity.<sup>25</sup>

And yet another, which speaks about the rhythmic repetition of motifs as a means of organization:

That general elements such as rhythm and repetition play an important role both for the ears in music and for the eyes in the division of the plane also indicates some relationship between them. I have often noticed that “counting the beat” does not become possible only with the static figures on the plane, but begins before this when, drawing on paper or engraving in wood, the hand makes repeated rhythmic movements as in a dance, which the artist feels the urge to emphasise with his voice, by singing. More particularly, it seems that musical canons incorporate concepts such as augmentation, diminution, retrogression and even mirroring. These are visually indicated in the score in a way directly comparable with figures in the regular division of a plane.<sup>26</sup>

It may come as a surprise, but the two preceding quotations are not by Paweł Szymański. They are taken from a text written on the regular division of a plane by Maurits Cornelis Escher in 1957 – the artist to whom Szymański dedicated one of his paradoxical pieces: *A Kaleidoscope for M.C.E.* for cello (also in a version for violin, 1989). M.C. Escher – for his part – related his ideas to music and found strong parallels between the two arts, regarding rhythmic organization:

Just as music has different types of rhythmic organization, indicated by two, three, four and six beats to the bar, the division of a plane can be composed using two-, three-, four-, and sixfold rotation points, each representing a particular method of rhythmic repetition of the motifs on the plane.

It seems an indisputable fact that 5/4 time is less popular with the average music-lover than the other time signatures mentioned above. I believe that it was not used at all until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and then only sporadically compared with the old, tried and tested time signatures. It would be going too far to suggest a direct analogy with the absence of a fivefold rotation point on the flat plane – which is only possible on a spherical surface – but it is worth remarking on as a curious coincidence.<sup>27</sup>

## MUSICAL LANGUAGE AS INTERTEXTUAL DIALOGUING?

Paweł Szymański's interest in abstract ideas which trigger artistic procedures in different arts seems to be very close to Berio's “conceptual associations” treated as one of the components of the alchemical process of transformation “into a living entity, a »being« which transcends and sublimates technical realities.” A true work of art is such a living entity, transcending the limitations of *techné* understood as artistic craftsmanship. Can it escape the space delineated by an individual musical language? To what extent it has to be defined by typical features of such language? The role of meta-concepts in Szymański's musical language supports Luciano Berio's formula of a composer's poetics as an intertextual existence. This seems to be even more applicable to such artistic quests which are not interdisciplinary in the technological outcome but express these abstract ideas with their own aesthetic means, such as Szymański's music. Bruce Quaglia wrote that

[...] those individual qualities that Berio calls a composer's poetics elude logical description, are specific to the composer, and are primarily identifiable by their intensities and affects. It is the identifiable residue of a composer's way of (musically) being in the world, and it must be understood as a creative, productive force in all contexts in which it appears.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, following the path – no more lonely, then – of Quaglia's argumentation, to his open-ended questions such as “What is Poetics?” or “What is Analysis?” one might add “What is Musical Language?” Can one find it at the crossroads of a composer's poetics and (self-) analysis? Thus, could all the concepts and even more technical details regarding Paweł Szymański's musical world, enumerated above, be considered elements in a kaleidoscopic image reflecting the complexity of this composer's musical language as part of metatextual creation?<sup>29</sup>

**25** M.C. Escher, (1958). *Regelmatige vlakverdeling*. Text written in 1957, published in 1958 by De Roos Foundation in Utrecht. Text quoted after English translation, *The Regular Division of the Plane*. In: F.H. Bool, J.R. Kist, J.L. Locher, F. Wierda (1984), *M.C. Escher, His Life and Complete Graphic Work*. New York: Abradale Press, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., p. 172.

**26** *Ibid.*

**27** *Ibid.*, p. 170.

**28** B. Quaglia, (2010). *Transformation and Becoming Other in the Music and Poetics of Luciano Berio*, op. cit., p. 231. On p. 230 the author stressed that “poetics in Berio's hands become [...] elusive process by which the modern composer brings new works into being”.

**29** This topic cannot be exhausted here; it will be examined further. I would like to extend my thanks to Anna Jordan-Szymańska for her help and to Alan Lockwood for reviewing the script.

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