

“I Am a Manufacturer of Impressions.”

*The Musical Language of
Zbigniew Bargielski –
A Self-Reflection*

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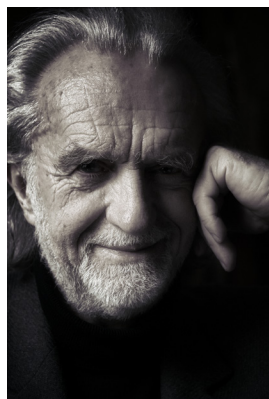
ABSTRACT

The collection of statements by Zbigniew Bargielski (born in 1937) describing his own oeuvre consists of texts in various forms. These include: the composer's commentaries on his works printed in concert programmes accompanying the world premieres of his compositions; short notes in the scores; occasional reviews of compositions; the rare interviews where an open discussion of problems related to his music inspired the composer to comment; and the composer's personal notes from different periods of his artistic activity. Valuable reference material also includes speeches by Zbigniew Bargielski recorded on audio and video devices, e.g. event documentation.

Zbigniew Bargielski's self-commentaries deal with various aspects of musical language: structure, morphology, syntax, phonology, expression and meaning – the latter mentioned specifically in the context of the artist–audience relationship.

Additionally, self-reflection includes the definition of aesthetic preferences and the composer's artistic "worldview" which determines the choice of ideas and the means of their musical implementation. Moreover, Bargielski considers the possibility of a "transmission" – via musical gestures – of the sphere of his own experiences. In his notes from the recent months, he attempts to describe the transformations of his own musical language, which is of special importance considering the almost sixty-year-long period of his artistic work.

Keywords: Zbigniew Bargielski, block form, centric system



Zbigniew Bargielski in 2012 (photo by M. Gumieła).

We do not wish to and, if possible, should not remain under the influence of the conviction of the end of our presence here, approaching ever since our conception. Once created, it would be absurd to annihilate us once and for all. [...] After all, there must be some regularity, logic and goal to our existence, a hope that our time on the human stage has more than a merely existential dimension. We look for the reasons and the consequences of our life, hoping that such a discovery may help us understand the meaning of our birth, life and passing away, of our departure.¹

¹ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer. See also: Z. Bargielski, (2004). *Czas teraźniejszy* [The Present Time]. In: A. Gronau-Osińska (Ed.), *Ekspresja formy – ekspresja treści* [Expression of Form – Expression of Content]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, p. 313.

INTRODUCTION

The collection of statements by Zbigniew Bargielski (born in 1937) describing his own oeuvre consists of texts in various forms.² These include: the composer's commentaries on his own works printed in concert programmes accompanying the world premieres of his compositions; short notes in the scores; occasional reviews of compositions; the rare interviews³ where an open discussion of problems related to his music inspired the composer to comment; and the composer's personal notes from different periods of his artistic activity, also those penned in the most recent period (between January and October 2015). Valuable reference material also includes speeches by Zbigniew Bargielski recorded on audio and video devices, event documentation, e.g. celebrations of the composer's birthday.⁴ Zbigniew Bargielski's self-commentaries deal with various aspects of musical language: structure, morphology, syntax, phonology, expression and meaning – the latter mentioned specifically in the context of the artist–audience relationship.

Additionally, self-reflection includes the definition of aesthetic preferences and the composer's artistic "worldview" which – as the direct source of his musical language and its qualities – determines the choice of ideas and the means of their musical implementation. Moreover, Bargielski considers the possibility of a "transmission" – via musical gestures – of the sphere of his own experiences. In his notes from the recent months, he attempts to describe the transformations of his own musical language, assigning distinctive characteristics to selected stages of his output, which is of special importance considering the almost sixty-year-long period of his artistic work.

² Some of them have been published. Cf. V. Przech, A. Ledzińska, (2012). *Zbigniew Bargielski. Katalog tematyczny utworów* [Zbigniew Bargielski. A Thematic Catalogue of Works], Bydgoszcz-Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Muzycznego Fryderyka Chopina – Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej im. F. Nowowiejskiego, pp. 336–342.

³ Published in magazines (see *ibid.*) or recorded by radio stations (incl. Polish Radio Channel 2).

⁴ For example the celebrations of the composer's 70th and 75th birthday organised by the Faculty of Composition, Theory of Music and Sound Engineering of the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, Poland (2007, 2012) where, as of 2002, Zbigniew Bargielski has taught composition as well as being the head of the Department of Theory of Music and Composition at the Faculty of Composition, Theory of Music and Sound Engineering.

THE ARTISTIC STANCE, THE AESTHETIC PREFERENCES

I have always been (as it has turned out!) an advocate of expression (aesthetics) of the "Romance" type, one that has been able to arm itself in such attributes as: clarity and purity of idea, concision, reconciliation of sensual character with intellectual roots, expression dominated by self-control and a breath of certain nonchalance, as well as elegance...⁵

The adopted artistic stance is evident in the following observable features of musical language:

- * complete departure from those artistic tendencies that emphasise scientific thinking in art⁶;
- * precision, logic and clarity of structure;
- * clear-cut emotional character;
- * echoes of the French *serenité*;
- * elements of the aesthetic of postmodernism⁷ (intertextuality, the idea of a "play").

Let me quote at this point a comment by Tadeusz Andrzej Zieliński who, in a letter to the composer of 29th September 2005, compiled a list of aesthetic priorities (distinctive features) of Bargielski's music:

Your music IS DISTINGUISHED [emphasis T.A. Zieliński] today not only by the exceptional beauty of the sound (charming "to the ear"), but also by the expression, with its strongly atmospheric absorbing and hypnotising mood, great subtlety and culture, not to mention the elegance of the *metiér*. It is also close to my heart owing to the role of intervals and harmonies, carefully handpicked and selected, as if to contradict the indifference of the masses of sound that frequently shape the image of contemporary scores.⁸

MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THE ACT OF COMMUNICATION

For Zbigniew Bargielski, music is, simultaneously, a form of communication and the message itself. The composer identifies himself with the thesis "...that

music shows a certain similarity to »emotional life«⁹ (a reference to natural expression), while the elements of musical organisation may be seen as signs of certain states of mind or be used to designate specific emotional states.¹⁰

MUSIC AS A SIGN (EXPRESSION) OF EMOTION¹¹

[The 1990s] Naturally, we would be "monsters", as Huxley said, if nothing penetrated our musical world from "the outside". However, whatever comes from the outside, fails to find a direct, "mirror" reflection in the art. At any rate, it does not have to. Whatever comes from "the outside" inspires reflections and moods, which, by way of unfathomable, as it seems, transformations, carry us to the land of illusion, or, at most, allusions. And nothing more.¹²

[29th October 2015:] The driving force is the state (created inside us or appearing unexpectedly) of peculiar susceptibility, a predisposition to create. This state activates the process of **transmission of feelings and moods** [emphasis V.P.] using appropriately selected musical means – the so-called means of musical expression.¹³

[In July 2015:] A composition, it seems to me, need not be a reproduction of the emotional sphere of the author; it does not have to count on the audience asking the eternal question: "What did the author intend to say?" On the other hand, however, music should reflect and stimulate human feelings [Monteverdi's postulate – V.P.] or, as Susan Langer claims, "Music is the knowledge of what happens to feelings."¹⁴

[In July/August 2015:] A composition should be suspended on the thread connecting the mind with the sphere of emotions and their realisations. I could add that my own thread connecting me as a composer to me as the listener is neither constant in its structure nor durable. At times it exhibits symptoms of atrophy.¹⁵

[In the year 1971:] As a psychological phenomenon, music does not possess any "specific" features, distinguishing it from other areas of life in which we encounter emotional tension. (Emotional tension is the common feature of most events visibly engaging our consciousness.)¹⁶

[In January 2015:] When I wonder, looking back at the large number of compositions already created, what the proper measure for self-

⁵ Compiled in July 2015 from personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁶ Let us add: despite the composer's long contact with German-language culture due to his long-time residence in Austria.

⁷ The first, though – as the composer himself claims – unconscious signal of the aesthetic of post-modernism is to be found in *Trigonalia* for guitar, accordion, percussion and chamber orchestra from 1994 (the presence in the piece of a different fragment, inconsistent with its context).

⁸ T.A. Zieliński, from his letter to Z. Bargielski: Warsaw, 29th September 2005. See also: M. Kominek, (2006). Podstawową jednostką muzyki jest utwór [z T.A. Zielińskim rozmawia M. Kominek][The Composition is the Fundamental Unit of Music: M. Kominek Talks to T.A. Zieliński], *Ruch Muzyczny*. No. 17, pp. 8–12.

⁹ See: K. Gućzalski, (1999). *Znaczenie muzyki. Znaczenie w muzyce* [The Meaning of Music. Meaning in Music], Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, pp. 324–235.

¹⁰ See: L.B. Meyer, (1974). *Emocja i znaczenie w muzyce* [Emotion and Meaning in Music], transl. by A. Buchner, K. Berger, Kraków: PWM Edition, p. 314.

¹¹ M. Budd, (2014). *Muzyka i emocje* [Music and the Emotions], transl. by R. Kasperowicz, Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, pp. 198 and ff.

¹² From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Z. Bargielski, (1971). *Pytania i odpowiedzi* [Questions and Answers], *Res Facta*. No. 5, p. 130.

assessment of these works could be, I arrive at the conclusion that I would give higher grades to those (of course, evaluating subjectively) with a higher degree of expression or sensual tension. A lower rank – to those inspired by a structural concept, instead of **a desire to project sensual and emotional states**.¹⁷ [emphasis – V.P.]

It is not hard to notice that Zbigniew Bargielski's views – as presented above – clearly correspond to the theories of such thinkers as Leonard B. Meyer, Deryck Cooke, Susan Langer and Peter Kivy: Experiences conveyed by music include moods, feelings and emotions. Accordingly, a composer is someone who transforms his or her emotions into the sounds of music which, in turn, are represented as structures written down in the score.¹⁸

VERBALIZED EXPRESSION – THE LANGUAGE OF COMPOSITION TITLES

L'espace attrapé (Space Entrapped), Versunkene Flamme (A Sunk Flame), Tanz am Rande des Lichtes (Dance on the Edge of Light), Gemalte Wolken (Painted Clouds), Vergessene-Gefundene (Lost-Found), Le cristal flamboyant (Burning Crystal), Zmyslenia i dziwostany (Fictions and Strange States), Stilleben mit Rose (Still Life with a Rose), Klatka dla motyli (Butterfly Cage), Schattenkreis (Circle of Shadows), Sonnenlieder (Songs of Suns), Garten der Leidenschaften (Garden of Passions), Das schöne Zimmer (A Beautiful Room), Schizofonia (Schizophrenia)...

This sphere of Zbigniew Bargielski's creation attracts the listener and enlivens the perception of music... The ability to play with words, a poetic sense of vocabulary, the language of metaphors, philosophical reflection, defiance, a tendency to provoke – all of these features justify calling Zbigniew Bargielski "a champion of titles".¹⁹

When asked about the meaning of his titles Zbigniew Bargielski emphasises that they do not play any programmatic and descriptive functions but are a kind of "play" with his audience:

[in 2006:] It is my gesture towards the listeners, inspiring their imagination and stimulating perception. By introducing such titles, mostly of surrealist character, sometimes juxtaposing mutually exclusive notions, I attract the audience's attention, but I do not

point to a specific path they are supposed to take in their perception of the work. [...] Besides, I let the audience think about the title, its meaning, its possible relation to the music they are about to listen to. It is something like greasing the engine before starting it.²⁰

THE COMPOSER – AUDIENCE RELATION. ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF PERCEPTION

[In c. 2000:] A composer should take into account the trivial fact that his final product in the end requires an audience, regardless of whether the said audience will be an ideal consumer, i.e. one that will fully receive the range of signals sent by the composer, or will prove one to whom those signals will sometimes be too much of a challenge. Efficient control over the signals may, to a significant extent, make the luxury of having an ideal audience more probable – which is something that, as a matter of fact, every author dreams of. Indeed, no matter if we openly admit it or not, we are not indifferent to the acceptance or, possibly, the rejection of our **message**.²¹ [emphasis – V.P.]

[In c. 2000:] Sending signals is a question of intuition and efficiency. A test of our creative confidence (and, in a way, effectiveness) is the knowledge of the functioning of psychological stimuli, the ability of practically conveying them with the help of technological tools, and the skill of foreseeing reactions to such stimuli.²²

[The 1980s] If, in my *Violin Concerto*, anyone hears the struggle of the individual against violent oppression, then this very fact does not exclude someone else hearing an erotic struggle in it [...] Finding for yourself in a piece what seems to be the only interpretation, an extra-musical one, is not the audience's fault. It may even constitute their achievement, if this is the only manner they can "understand" the work. However, it is the task of the audience, not of the composer. Here lies the most exciting moment of interpreting the works of musical art.²³

[a note from 22nd November 1981:] **Art is the ability to create impressions** [emphasis – V.P.] according to the rules of making impressions. **I am a manufacturer of impressions**.²⁴ [emphasis – V.P.]

Zbigniew Bargielski, when answering the question whether he intended to "...move, please or, perhaps, teach..." through his compositional efforts, replied:

[25th September 2015:] only to move... I am not familiar with the audience's preferences, I do not know what can please or discourage

¹⁷ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

¹⁸ See: D. Cooke, (1959). *The Language of Music*, p. 200. As quoted in: M. Budd, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁹ Dorota Szwarcman's term (eadem), (1988). *Musica Polonica Nova*, *Ruch Muzyczny*. No. 8, p. 7.

²⁰ V. Przech, (2006). *Ptāk ze snów* [Zbigniew Bargielski odpowiada na pytania Violetty Przech] [A Bird from Dreams. Zbigniew Bargielski Answers Questions from Violetta Przech], *Ruch Muzyczny*. No. 16, p. 12.

²¹ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* A similar view was held by Witold Lutosławski: "I understand the process of composing as creating complexes of particular psychological impressions in my audience"; idem, (1999). *Postscriptum. Wybór i opracowanie tekstów*: Danuta Gwizdalanka, Krzysztof Meyer. Warsaw: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich.

them... To teach? No, I do not teach sensitivity (to sound, to acoustic phenomena). You either have it, or you don't...²⁵ [in 1971:] [...] the objective of music is to evoke emotional tension in people susceptible to such "provocations". If we are to talk of other objectives of music, one ought to underscore its cognitive quality. This quality, however, is of secondary significance.²⁶

Commenting on the composer's statement, it is worth noticing that in Zbigniew Bargielski's output there is also present the third element of the rhetorical triad: music for pleasure, written "tongue in cheek" (e.g. *Panopticum* for piano four hands from 1987²⁷, *Holzknichtanz* for chamber ensemble from 1989, and *String Quartet No. 5* from 2001). Without a doubt, these pieces are proof of the versatile imagination of the composer, apparently unafraid of making a musical joke and treating music as part of the "play" in its various forms. The presence of this type of phenomena may be interpreted in the context of the influence of the aesthetic of postmodernism. Let us recall a statement by Andrzej Chłopecki: "The composer does not shy away from playing with conventions, at times adding the note of a postmodernist to his main modernist aesthetic."²⁸

STYLISTIC STRATEGIES (TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS)

Rules of Writing – The Pre-Composition Stage

[The 1990s] The first stage is to realise what the piece is about to become, what it is to represent. Not necessarily in its formal shape, but certainly in the expressive one. I have to admit this problem is critical as to the future form. The second stage is to imagine the general distribution of tensions, or alternatively – of "repose". It is the critical stage for the drama. Here the sketches of form are created, the shapes of segments, their placement in relation to one another and to the total length of the composition. At this point, the writing of the piece, in its intentional mode of existence, is complete.²⁹

The third stage – when the dramatic structure has already been created, it is time to fill the segments with the musical matter (I do not use the word "content" here due to an overly persistent association with some rather undefined, and yet perceptible "topical"

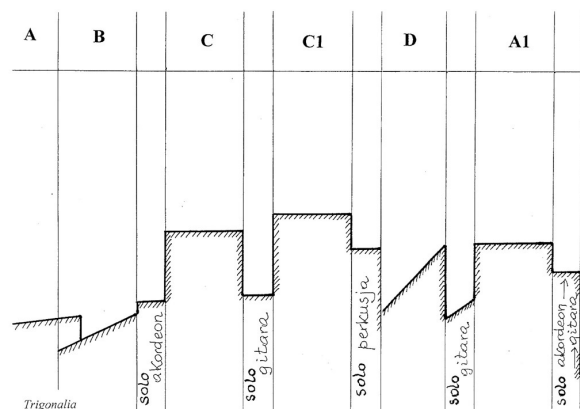


Fig. 1. Pre-composition schedule: *Trigonalia* (1994): order of segments of form, energy process (tension chart), placement of solo instruments (guitar, accordion, percussion).

tendency). At this point the author attempts to reconcile his own image of the work with the picture of the work about to be perceived by the potential audience. He becomes a kind of promoter and, simultaneously, a critic of the work in progress. In a truly Bergsonian manner, intuition carries us inside, while the intellect comprehends the whole thing from the outside. By building a structure of segments corresponding with his intentions, the author, as always, hopes that this time he will be able to achieve unity of concept and perception.³⁰

Which means, as Malcolm Budd explains, that the author of the work has handed it over to a given audience... The composer may, therefore, create something he intended to sound in its own special way and should be listened to by the audience also in some particular way. Should his intentions be fulfilled, the audience will understand the work and participate in such an experience as designed by the composer.³¹

Zbigniew Bargielski supports this model of communication with the audience.

The Logos of the Form – Block Form³²: Segmentation-Variable and Additive

Musical form is, for Bargielski, one of the priorities in the theory of music and the composer's key objective:

[In 2006:] I have noticed that the problem of form in most recent music is somewhat neglected. Of course, composers still use traditional forms or adhere to new approaches in which the concept of form is frequently omitted or *a priori* excluded. [...] when I listen to such pieces, I cannot (I am unable to?) discover anything significant, which in reception of music undoubtedly plays a huge, although not always fully realised role. I fail to recognize

²⁵ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

²⁶ Z. Bargielski, (1971). *Pytania i odpowiedzi*, op. cit., p. 130.

²⁷ Por. V. Przech, (2009). O zabawie fortepianem – konteksty twórczości fortepianowej Zbigniewa Bargielskiego [Playing with the Piano – the Contexts of Zbigniew Bargielski's Piano Music]. In: A. Nowak (ed.), *Dzieło muzyczne i jego konteksty* (5) [The Musical Work and Its Contexts (5)], Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, pp. 202–205.

²⁸ A. Chłopecki, (2011). Commentary for: Zbigniew Bargielski-String Quartets. CD ACCORD ACD 173-2, p. 24.

²⁹ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

³⁰ Ibid..

³¹ See: M. Budd, op. cit., p. 246.

³² The composer's own term.

their shape. [...] Authors do not always take into consideration the psychological aspect of the perception of the work. In numerous junctions of sound and noise combinations [...] they sometimes revel in their complications and lose sight of something substantial, i.e. the audience of their music.³³

The concept of the "block-and-repetition" form, similarly to the technique of centralisation referred to below, refers to ideas and strategies indirectly resulting from the author's leaning towards logical sequences, towards building coherent structures, and, simultaneously, is a sign of the desire to harmonise as fully as possible the intentions of the author with the perception of the audience – a desire resulting from the conviction that the method of presenting the work of art remains a key issue for the perception of contemporary language and should not be underestimated by composers.

The direct impulse inspiring the "block" form was the composer's visit to the Louvre³⁴ where his attention was drawn to the painting of *The Counterattack of Michelotto da Cotignola at the Battle of San Romano* by Paolo Uccello (c.1455). Upon closer inspection, the composer was amazed to realise the painting was but one of the three parts of one whole. The sum of the information and impressions received on that occasion contributed to a number of reflections, including some on the possibility of gradual exposition of a work of art, the possibility of controlling the perception of the audience so that they are able to get to know it piece by piece, participate in its becoming step by step, familiarize themselves with its components, recognize them in various constellations of sound textures, and understand their function in the relation between the part and the whole.

The first work to be contained within the block-and-repetition form was *Ein Zimmer* from 1973 – a composition for clarinet, trombone, cello, piano and speaker (using a fragment of one of Franz Kafka's letters to Milena Jesenská³⁵).

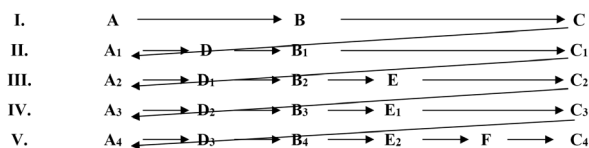


Fig. 2. *Ein Zimmer*. A letter diagram of the form.³⁶

As you can see, the work was constructed based on a specific type of multi-part segmental form. The chief rule of the organisation of the piece is its division into clearly differentiated segments, organised so that each one shows its own, aurally perceptible characteristics. Interestingly, the segments mentioned (A, B, C, D, E,...) do not appear in the work directly one after another, but rather they are exposed in a "characteristically" gradual way, according to a previously established sequence. Such a sequence takes into consideration two dimensions of the organisation of the work: paradigmatic (e.g. vertical representations of the segments: A, A-1, A-2..., B, B-1, B-2...), showing relations among the delineated components of the form (the presence of non-variant and variant segments suggests the influence of the variation form) as well as syntagmatic – containing information as to the rules governing the succession of basic segments and their variants in the work as well as the actual syntax (all elements of the form of the work – all "blocks" are not revealed until the last, fifth "distribution"). Notably, the predictability of events in this composition is disrupted by the introduction, in places hard to anticipate, of new segments, containing different material.

Later works by Zbigniew Bargielski represent various types of the block-and-repetition form all the way to its, so to speak, model implementation in *Brief an Milena*, from 2005, for soprano, violin and piano.³⁷

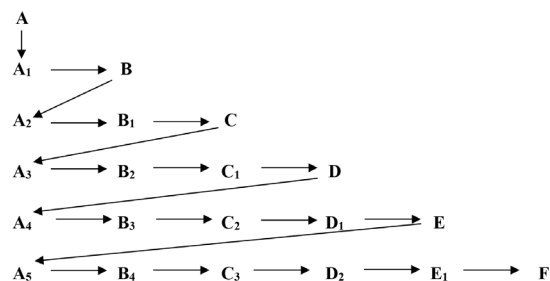


Fig. 3. *Brief an Milena*. A letter diagram of the form of the work.

The manner of constructing form suggested by Bargielski allows one to ascertain that, at the foundation of the strategy adapted by the composer, psychological laws of perception were taken into consideration, based on the mechanism of referring to what is known and what was preserved through reception at an earlier stage.

³³ See: V. Przech, (2006). *Ptāk ze snów*, op. cit., p. 11.

³⁴ It was probably in the year 1965 or 1966.

³⁵ F. Kafka, (1969). *Listy do Mileny* [Letters to Milena], translated by F. Konopka, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, p. 43. Letter from 3rd June 1920, Thursday, Merano.

³⁶ Arrows indicate the sequence of individual segments of form.

³⁷ What is interesting, in the work the composer utilises the same text by Kafka as in *Ein Zimmer* written 30 years earlier. See V. Przech, (2013). System centrowy i koncepcja formy Zbigniewa Bargielskiego [The Centric System and Zbigniew Bargielski's Concept of Form], *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny*. Vol. 11, pp. 205–209.

The Logos of the Form – Towards Monothematicism and Structural Dualism

In the most recent decade, Zbigniew Bargielski has significantly departed from the rule of the "block" form. Works have been written in which the composer overcomes the limits of self-discipline that he imposed on himself earlier. He has added new elements to the regular (idiomatic) ones. In *Non omnis...* for chamber ensemble (2010),³⁸ without giving up the segmental structure, he resigns from the complex diagram of the "block" form in order to operate with two ideas only – invariants which, in the course of form development, gradually attain the shape of the variants. The succession of segments is governed by the rule of exchangeability: $a^1, b^1, a^2, b^2, a^3, b^3, \dots$. In *Monodia dla Andrzeja* (*A Monody for Andrzej*) for string orchestra (2013/2015)³⁹ Bargielski offers a construction based on the formal paradigm of the canon. The causative element, the axis of the composition, a *cantus firmus* of sorts, is a simple, regularly formed melody,⁴⁰ in some of its features reminiscent of chant (psalmodic) singing.

In two different works (the piano quintet *Schizophonia* from 2012 and *Concerto for Piano, Percussion and Orchestra* from 2013) we are confronted with form based on the idea of structural dualism. However, as the composer points out, it does not signify a turn towards the dramatic construction of the sonata form. The compositions are hybrids of a kind, all representing a quite provoking – as a matter of fact – attempt at a "clash" of stylistically ambivalent elements in a single work, seemingly impossible to reconcile, and still – notably – forming a coherent whole.

[In December 2012:] *Schisma* – from the Greek word for split or division. And so it is in my composition, where, by operating with sound (Greek *phone* = sound), I create two different, contradictory worlds of sound. On the one hand, a string quartet presenting something close to the psalmodic world of cantilena, of gravity and dignity; on the other hand, the piano bringing in an element of unease and vibration; it gradually engulfs the whole field of activity, deforming the psalmodic chants of the quartet. Moreover, there

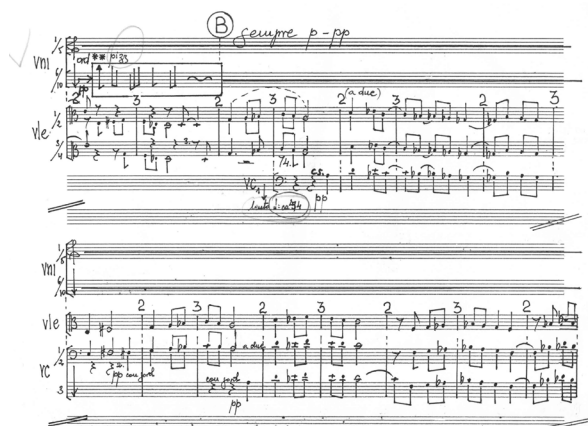


Fig. 4. *Monodia dla Andrzeja*. A fragment introducing the *cantus firmus*.

comes a reversal of roles: what used to be the domain of the piano is taken over by the quartet, while certain rudimentary elements of the "psalm" are picked up by the piano. Gradually, the area of musical activity becomes a conglomerate of both those elements; consequently, we move from methodical actions, logical and easy to follow, in the direction of what seems to be an uncontrolled "departure" from them, a change of the 'artistic' space into a schizophrenic play of pretence.⁴¹

In the above-mentioned *Concerto for Piano, Percussion and Symphony Orchestra*,⁴² not unlike in *Schizophonia*, behind the veil of abstraction of sonoric provenance (a reminiscence of the language of the avant-garde) there "hides" a familiar, blues-jazz "face" (its set of motifs resembling the 2nd *Prelude* by Gershwin), at first unrecognisable, revealed gradually, decoded in full in the finale of the work (could it be a strategy of musical camouflage?). In September 2013 Zbigniew Bargielski commented laconically: "The word *concerto* means a cooperation between the soloist and the orchestra. This part is, to a greater extent, merged with that of the orchestra, which plays the role of the accompanist."⁴³

The appearance in Bargielski's oeuvre of both *Schizophonia* and *Concerto for Piano, Percussion and Orchestra*, works with prominent piano parts, attests to a re-evaluation of his approach towards the possibility of

³⁸ See: V. Przech, A. Ledzińska, op. cit., p. 184.

³⁹ *Monodia dla Andrzeja* for string orchestra is the second version of the piece. The first version is for an extended line-up with wind instruments. The work is an epitaph for Andrzej Chłopecki, who died on 23rd September 2012 – a musicologist, a Polish Radio Programme 2 broadcaster, and a personal friend of Bargielski's. The world premiere took place on 7th October 2015 in Katowice: CORda Cracovia Orchestra, Maciej Koczur (conductor).

⁴⁰ The distinctive melody was composed by Z. Bargielski at the turn of 2007 and 2008 and used in several works: *Za horyzontem* (*Beyond the Horizon*) for choir, orchestra and tape (2008), *Misterium przestrzeni* (*Space Mystery*) for orchestra (2010), piano quintet *Schizophonia* (2012), and *Monodia dla Andrzeja* (for Andrzej Chłopecki) for string orchestra (2013/2014).

⁴¹ A note in the programme book of the 20th International Festival of Chamber Music (Katowice, 1st–16th December, 2012) for the concert on 1st December, 2012, performed by the Silesian Quartet and the pianist Roman Rabinovich.

⁴² The world premiere took place during the "Warsaw Autumn" International Festival of Contemporary Music on 25th September 2013 at the Witold Lutosławski Polish Radio Concert Studio, performed by Małgorzata Walentynowicz – piano, Jan Pilch – percussion, and Renato Rivolta – conductor.

⁴³ A note in the programme book of the 56th "Warsaw Autumn" International Festival of Contemporary Music in 2013, Polish version p. 262, English version p. 256.

using this instrument today. This task was undertaken by Bargielski, one may assume, without the complex of artistic legacy, liberated from the earlier conviction concerning the total exhaustion of the piano, as mentioned in the composer's note from 2007, revealing an interesting view of the issue:

[In November 2007:] I treat the piano as an instrument with no special place whatsoever in the rich musical collection. I shall go further: despite having played it since childhood, it inspires me to a significantly lesser extent than, for instance, the accordion. Perhaps the decisive issue is the total exhaustion of that source of sound, beautiful and moving in its expression as it is. On the one hand, I might get excited by the possibility of writing something along the lines of a piano concerto, but on the other, I do not really believe that without getting trivial it is possible to create a new vision and generate new impulses out of that wonderful three-legged animal. However, there does exist something lighter: a play, a trifle, a hall of mirrors reflecting the dignified face of the fat man. Not refined games, but a jump rope of a non-problematic treatment of the issue. Acting out the pathos not in buskins, but in sneakers. A tongue-in-cheek approach to the bloated instrument responsible for the audience's emotions and the martyrdom of the younglings enamoured of music, practicing scales and passages. [...] To rescue and continue the procedure of composing for piano one needs to take up [...] conscious "anti-action" reflecting, as if in a hall of mirrors, all the hitherto achievements in writing for the instrument.⁴⁴

This postulate was turned into reality by Zbigniew Bargielski in a number of piano pieces: with an especially exemplary effect – in the previously mentioned⁴⁵ *Panopticum* for piano four hands (1987). Musical sense of humour (*scherzo-musicale* – in accordance with the plan of the author of the piece), a play of conventions, intertextuality (Bargielski quotes fragments of fifteen pieces, well-known from the history of music), instrumental theatre with elements of parody, grotesque, irony – this is the musical language of this composition.⁴⁶

The Tonal logos or About the "Centric System"⁴⁷ (Centralising Technique)

[The 1970s:] There was once a time when I began to examine the correlations between sounds, the meaning of the selected sounds that form something like the axis of different passages, as well as those which complement them. With the latter in the background, the role of the distinguished, central sounds becomes especially significant. After many careful considerations and practical tests, I came up (for my own private use) with the so-called centric theory, defining [...] relations between sounds, dividing them into primary (central) and secondary (neutral). [...] Balancing their proportions,

assigning proper instruments to them, etc., all of this is supposed to assist in isolating particular centres which could replace the tonality of the past; they are, however, devoid of the correlations formed by the major-minor system. These centres are the points of support for various sound structures – for the audience.⁴⁸

Thus, at the centre of Bargielski's focus one finds the sound at its most basic function and meaning: as an acoustic or perceptual phenomenon. On the one hand, the "system" appeared as the composer's reaction to the phenomenon of entropy, widespread in European culture, understood by him as disorientation, chaos, indefiniteness, lack of standards, of any universally accepted convention. On the other hand, it allowed the artist to find his own way of development, agreeing with his aesthetic inclinations and sensitivity, which he follows to this day. The first work based on the centralisation (centric) technique was *Rosengarten* for baritone or alto and bass clarinet from 1971. A few years later, with unique consistency and an increased sophistication⁴⁹, Bargielski implemented the technique in his *Concerto for Percussion* (1975) and *String Quartet No. 1 "Alpine"* (1976).



Fig. 5. *String Quartet No. 1 "Alpine"*. Initial fragment (central sound: E-flat). ((c) Copyright 1976 by PWM Edition (Kraków). Reproduced by kind permission of PWM Edition).

Zbigniew Bargielski's concept undoubtedly enriches the spectrum of phenomena connected with acoustic centralization in new music, and may be interpreted as a sign of *quasi*-tonal thinking, in the wider (universal) sense of the concept of tonality (as meta-tonality) that encompasses different composers' more or less individualised ideas.

The objects of Zbigniew Bargielski's self-reflection, apart from the form and technique of acoustic centralisation and the key questions of musical language, also include other elements of the musical work as well as the ways in which they function in the work.

⁴⁴ From the composer's statement presented at the request of the author of the article in November 2007.

⁴⁵ See above.

⁴⁶ Cf. V. Przech, (2009). *O zabawie fortepianem...*, op. cit., pp. 200–201.

⁴⁷ The composer's own term.

⁴⁸ *Ptak ze snów...*, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴⁹ See V. Przech, (2013). *System centrowy...*, op. cit., pp. 200–204 where elements of the technique in *String Quartet No. 1* were characterised.

Melody

[In January 2015:] When I go back in time to the ancient years of my relations with music, I recall that I was always greatly impressed by simplicity of solutions, and, most of all, by linear simplicity. The leading role, naturally, was played by melody, and then by rhythm (or, perhaps, the other way round...)⁵⁰

[In October 2015:] Melody is worth the sacrifice... the sacrifice of criticism that you are one or maybe two centuries late. Are we already so "rearranged" by time, intellectually stimulated, overwhelmed by acoustic hyperconstructions – that we lack space for what is the simplest (no to say "primeval")? I have discovered not so much a new sense of melody, its new significance (that would be an overinterpretation) as a new context for its use.⁵¹

Examples of a traditionally (especially in terms of its form) formed melody in a new, surprising musical context come from the previously mentioned compositions: *Schizophrenia*, *Concerto for Piano, Percussion and Orchestra*, as well as the earlier pieces *Misterium przestrzeni* (*Space Mystery*) for orchestra (2010) and *Za horyzontem* (*Beyond the Horizon*) for choir and orchestra (2008).

Speaking of melody, the composer points to the various ways of operating with the element. He draws our attention, among others, to "limiting the tendency to traditional linear melodic projection" for the sake of operating with small melodic particles, sometimes rudimentary, dispersed (scattered) in the sound field of the performing forces (*Space Mystery*). Another aspect of the treatment of melody is related to ornamentation – ornamental counterpoint to the melody resembling the techniques that prevailed in the early Baroque (Monteverdi, e.g. *The Second Book of Madrigals*). The composer speaks of "melodic weaving" in which the basic melody is maintained and "interwoven" with other sounds in the polyphonic combination of voices. An example of such texture is *Monodia dla Andrzeja*.

Vertical Solutions (Harmony)

[In January 2015:] These were of lesser significance; perhaps this element was too typical, replicated once too often (the major-minor tonality). My approach to learning both harmony and counterpoint (secondary school and university) was decidedly negative, e.g. the rules, or rather the *a priori* approach to them, made me rebel against them. I believed that in art one should not impose limits resulting from decisions made without (or not resulting from) my involvement. Let me add, however, that such an approach did not stop me from a positive reception of works of art based on those very rules... As if that was not enough, I could say that listening to the so-called masterpieces I could not help feeling that, should I ever

incorporate these rules, I would never be able to complete the task; I was just one step from developing serious complexes...⁵²

The harmonic element in Bargielski's works results on the one hand from the interaction between lines (voices) and, on the other, from an intuitive approach to chord morphology and its consequences.

Texture or the "Image of Sound"⁵³: Polyphony (Linearism) and Other Solutions

[in January 2015:] Bach-style polyphony used to hurt my ears. I was emotionally indifferent in relation to polyphonic phenomena. The only solution of the type I introduced consciously was in the orchestral composition *Sinfonia* from 1957.⁵⁴

[in October 2015:] I often think linearly, however, my "lines" are non-thematic, neutral. By stratifying them, I induce an increase in tension (emotion) along the whole spectrum, similarly to the way Ligeti does it.⁵⁵

What the two composers have in common (although they achieve rather dissimilar sound results) is a similar approach not necessarily to polyphony, but to "poly-linearism".

From among various textural "gimmicks", the composer identifies especially those applied in works with orchestra [text from October 2015]:

- * I operate with "blocks" (which seems to be the best term), the sound of which I arrive at using homogenous instruments (e.g. woodwind, brass, percussion, strings). May I add that frequently they are symbols, transmitters of "integrated" musical thoughts;
- * it is possible simultaneously to introduce several (two, sometimes three) instrumentally and texturally homogenous "blocks". Their characteristics are complemented by the choice of definite pitches, tempo of the passage, dynamics, articulation, etc.;
- * at times there is a "clash" or "struggle" between two "blocks", based on the principle of contrasting micro-textures evoking the impression of expressive opposites;
- * I also use the idea of saturating textures on the micro- and macro-scale in order to make a choice between one and the other and assign the leading role in the composition to it;
- * individual textural configurations actually influence the dramatic structure of the piece, participating in its formation.⁵⁶

Sonorism and Aleatoricism

[In October 2015:] An additional element is **sonorism** [emphasis – V.P.], evident in my works mostly in the choice of the lineup, instrumentation, particular sound formations, not so much

⁵⁰ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid..

⁵³ The composer's own term.

⁵⁴ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁵⁵ Ibid..

⁵⁶ Ibid..

The image shows a page from a musical score for 'Violin Concerto' (1976). It features a complex arrangement of staves for various instruments including flutes (fl), oboes (ob), clarinets (cl), bassoons (fg), saxophones (sxf), and others. The notation is dense, with many notes and rests, illustrating a 'polygenous texture' where different groups of instruments perform separate motifs simultaneously.

Fig. 6. *Violin Concerto* (1976). Polygenous texture (a juxtaposition of heterogeneous instrumental groups performing separate sets of motifs). ((c) Copyright 1982 by PWM Edition (Kraków). Reproduced by kind permission of PWM Edition).

searching for new timbres as for their configurations⁵⁷ (*Non omnis...*, *Das schöne Zimmer*⁵⁸).⁵⁹

Nevertheless, sonoristic elements in Bargielski's works do not constitute an autonomous quality, but rather are a tool to create the mood and dramatic structure of the composition. The sensory sensitivity typical of Bargielski facilitates shaping mood and drama by changing the quality of timbre and colouring, frequently redefining and sublimating its states.

This feature of Bargielski's music was very aptly commented upon by T.A. Zieliński in his letter to the composer from 29th November 2005:

57 Nevertheless, the composer does not avoid refined instrumentation, a significant example of which is the inclusion of a musical saw in the line-up of *Das schöne Zimmer*.

58 A composition for mezzo-soprano, baritone and instrumental ensemble written in 2011, using the same work by Franz Kafka as the earlier *Ein Zimmer* (1973) and *Letter to Milena* (2005).

59 From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

The image shows another page from the 'Violin Concerto' (1976) score. This page focuses on a 'homogenous instrumental group' (woodwind and saxophone). It shows staves for flutes (fl), oboes (ob), clarinets (cl), bassoons (fg), and saxophones (sxf). The notation is designed to contrast short and long sounds, with various dynamic markings and articulations.

Fig. 7. *Violin Concerto* (1976). Contrasting short and long sounds as part of a homogenous instrumental group (woodwind and saxophone). ((c) Copyright 1982 by PWM Edition (Kraków). Reproduced by kind permission of PWM Edition).

[...] What also strikes me in your music is the beauty of the delicate, murmuring colours, its examples in *Trigonalia*⁶⁰, *Brucker-Spiele*⁶¹ or *A Valley*....⁶² In the subtlety [...] of feeling, timbre and diversity you excel [...] the ideas of Penderecki, Sierocki, Kotoński and of everyone in the sonorist crowd in general. Your works are "painterly fantasies" of a kind. Indeed it is no accident that they bear titles as if borrowed from surrealist painters. This painterly quality is very subtle and refined. However, it also contains poetry in the lyrical sense [...].⁶³

[in October 2015:] **Aleatoricism** [emphasis – V.P.] is among my favourite technical tricks, facilitating the introduction of the element of diverse performer interpretation and protecting the music from the "petrification" of traditionally functioning configurations... Woe

60 *Trigonalia* for guitar, accordion, percussion and chamber orchestra (1994).

61 *Brucker-Spiele*, alternatively entitled *Hierophany I*, for 5 percussionists (1996).

62 There exist three works by Bargielski with titles starting with the word *Dolina* (*A Valley*): *Tal der bleichen Knochen* for instrumental ensemble and percussion (1977), a version of the same: *Dolina bielejących kości* (*A Valley of Bare Bones*) for improvised piano, instrumental ensemble and percussion (1993) as well as one more version: *Dolina tęczyowych dzwonów* (*The Valley of Rainbow Bells*) for piano and tape (2008).

63 T.A. Zieliński, from his letter to Z. Bargielski: Warsaw, 29th November 2005.

is me, however, should it fall into the hands of a performer of little courage, one not self-reliant or sometimes "poisoned" by traditional mentality, or one with underdeveloped imagination. My early works may constitute a threat to them, e.g. *Les desinvoltures*,⁶⁴ where even the so-called musicality may not overcome the habits of the past. Aleatoricism has three fathers: the composer – creator of the concept, of the ideas included (printed) in the score; the performer, i.e. a "creatively" active animator; and, in the case of group performance, an active ensemble director.⁶⁵

Bargielski's approach to aleatoricism reminds one of Lutosławski's stance. Most of all, it results from pragmatism, less frequently – from ideas, as in Cage, "designed" to generate an extremely multi-faceted or multi-variant interpretations of the work (to the point where the work may lose its separate identity).

The Intermediary Sound⁶⁶, or on Combining Arts: Music and the Word

The composer's interest in lyrical-musical relations finds its expression in cycles of songs as well as in two of his greatest vocal-instrumental works: the quasi-mass *Sonnenlieder* (1983) and the oratorio *Im Niemandsland*⁶⁷ (1989), in which, apart from the lyrical-musical component, Bargielski explored the problem of spatiality as the source of expression. The selection of lyrical texts in the songs reveals a wide range of poetic inspirations.⁶⁸ The composer has reached for the poetry of Kazimierz Wierzyński (the cycle of songs *Sen mara*), Alicja Patey-Grabowska (*Adam i Ewa, Akt strzelisty, Cztery pieśni miłosne*), Teresa Tomszewska (the cycle of songs *Noc-Dzień*) and the writings of Franz Kafka (*Ein Zimmer, Brief an Milena, Das schöne Zimmer*). It is not difficult to discern a common denominator here! In each case we remain in an aura of existentialism not far removed from Jaspers' boundary situations.

Let us quote two characteristic statements by Bargielski which uncover an intentional element in his treatment of the relationship between words and music:

[In 2014:] If I decide to use the word in music, I treat it as a pretext for lyrical-musical play.⁶⁹

[In 2010:] One can create a state in which the double-sided nature of two elements, the music and the word, becomes eradicated. Once the dichotomy disappears, a "oneness" can be born in which both elements would become a single sequence of creative thought.⁷⁰

Whereas the former statement seems fairly casual, the latter delineates quite clearly the objective of compositional efforts: the word and the music as "oneness", a single sequence of creative thought. Using appropriate strategies belonging to various levels of musical poetics, the composer achieves this goal. In his compositions, the dominant relations between word and music include: equality, equivalence, complementarity, alignment, and, finally, organic compatibility of the lyrical and musical layers (adopting Mieczysław Tomaszewski's terminology⁷¹). The word constitutes the starting point (inspiration), while the music, as the medium, takes over the "extra-systematic" meaning of the word.

The method of combining word and music in *Ein Zimmer* can be seen as an exception. Here, an abstract musical text, evoking the mood of Kafka's letter, gradually replaces the lyrical text in the musical passage, making it less audible, almost non-existent.

Zbigniew Bargielski's output also comprises theatrical musical forms, including opera⁷²:

[In 1971:] The opera, in the modern understanding of the phenomenon, is an undertaking that brings together, based on complete equality, music, fine arts and acting. Acting and fine arts as elements of an operatic performance have up till been concealed in the background. Now, thanks to bolder exposition, they should build a bridge between new music and the audience, without which one may imagine a concert of "experimental music", but not an opera performance. [...] [O]nly the element of a "show" may save the opera from becoming obsolete. Fighting for its existence, one must realise that the genre has to evolve. [...] We must find a new

64 A piece from 1964 for three instrumental groups.

65 From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

66 Cf. V. Przech, (2014). The Intermediary Sound. On Visual Art as Inspiration for Zbigniew Bargielski's Works. In: A. Granat-Janki (Ed.), *Musical Analysis. Historia-Theoria-Praxis*, t. 3. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, pp. 209–226.

67 The second part of *Im Niemandsland* was performed for the first time in Poland on 28th April 2012 in Wrocław as part of the "Musica Polonica Nova" Festival of Polish Contemporary Music. *Sonnenlieder*, on the other hand, has not yet seen its Polish performance, while the world premieres of both these works – successful ones for that matter – took place in Austria (1983 and 1994).

68 In 2014, the only composition so far setting Zbigniew Bargielski's own poetry was written. This work for baritone, bass clarinet and percussion took over the title of the poetic work *Otwartym oknem nocy...* (*The Open Window of the Night...*).

69 The author's commentary in the manuscript of *Otwartym oknem nocy...* (see: footnote 68).

70 From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer. See also: V. Przech. (2012). Kategoria liryzmu w cyklu pieśni Noc-Dzień Zbigniewa Bargielskiego [The Category of Lyricism in the Cycle Night-Day by Zbigniew Bargielski]. In: A. Nowak (Ed.) *Dzieło muzyczne jako znak* (8) [*The Musical Work As a Sign* (8)]. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, pp. 235–244.

71 See: M. Tomaszewski, (2003). *Muzyka w dialogu ze słowem* [*Music in a Dialogue with the Word*]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej.

72 Zbigniew Bargielski is the author of several operas, see: V. Przech, A. Ledzińska, op. cit., pp. 300–309.

form of operatic performance. Could it possibly be a synthesis [...] modelled on ancient classical theatre? Perhaps. [...] The chance for the opera theatre lies in drawing the audience to musical, artistic and literary subjects, all at once. [...] The literary text [...] should replace the current nonsense and kitsch, [...] eliminate the pathos and falsehood from the lyrical content on the operatic stage [...]. The objective of the opera is [...] "transmission" of music via different elements of the performance. If this is not achieved, one can spare themselves the inept, eclectic efforts at "reproducing" music on stage.⁷³

[In 2012:] I refer to my contemporary view of the opera and the text in which it would be justified for the latter to be sung, not spoken.⁷⁴

A practical realisation of the composer's reflections of 1971 can be found as early as in 1964, in *The Little Prince* based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novel, the composer's first theatrical work. In the author's self-commentary on this composition we read the following:

[In 1970:] It must be said that *The Little Prince* is not an opera adhering to the conventions of yesterday. What is more, browsing through the score of the work, and looking for traditional operatic elements out of habit, we have to arrive at the conclusion that *The Little Prince* is not an opera at all; it is rather a "musical tale" in which the music does not dominate over the text. Conversely, it is the literary text that determines the roles of the instruments and assigns multiple functions to them in the course of the work. It may be said that today the word is not the pretext for presenting the music; it is not a pretext because it plays the primary role, greater than what anyone could expect, taking into consideration the current attitude of composers to literary material. Therefore, it would be a mistake to speak of the "musical origin of the work." I can frankly admit that it was Exupéry's text, not the musical ideas contained in the piece, that became a stimulus for artistic effort.⁷⁵

The Intermediary Sound, or On Combining Arts: Music and the Visual Arts: towards Electronic Music

Out of the inspiration of fine arts (especially graphic arts) comes an important and particularly interesting tendency in Bargielski's electronic music, represented by several works, among others by: *Muzyka linii nieskończonych* (*Music of Infinite Lines*) (1992), a musical interpretation of *Linie nieskończone* (*Infinite Lines*) by Wacław Szpakowski; *A.S.K. Autoportret* (*A.S.K., A Self-Portrait*) (2004), a work that turns out to have been inspired by the text-painting from the cycle of *Pisaniny* (*Scribbles*) by Anna Szpakowska-Kujawska; *Mutacje '92*

(*Mutations '92*), a musical version of the graphic image of metal mesh by Wojciech Krzywobłocki; as well as multimedia projects produced in cooperation with the graphic artist Tadeusz Mysłowski, including *Shrine for An Anonymous Victim* of 1999 (for the State Museum in Majdanek) or *Light-Cross* of 2000.

The composer turns to electronic music with certain reserve. The "intervention" of this method is treated by him as a result of the inevitable technological progress which may (but does not have to!) lead to attaining new, interesting acoustic qualities in the field of music:

[In October 2015:] The "old" instrumental baggage may perfectly "cooperate" with electronics [Zbigniew Bargielski underlines]. However, imagination needs to be "expanded" in order not to be seduced by trifles (*Misterium przestrzeni*⁷⁶). Or, meaningfully, in appropriate form, to "rampage" the electronics itself (*Light Cross*).⁷⁷

In the case of *Light Cross*⁷⁸, the visual object constituting the source of inspiration and the point of reference was a project by Tadeusz Mysłowski in the form of a monumental (multi-storey) structure of an even-armed cross⁷⁹ made of metal, illuminated by burning torches, built in open space.

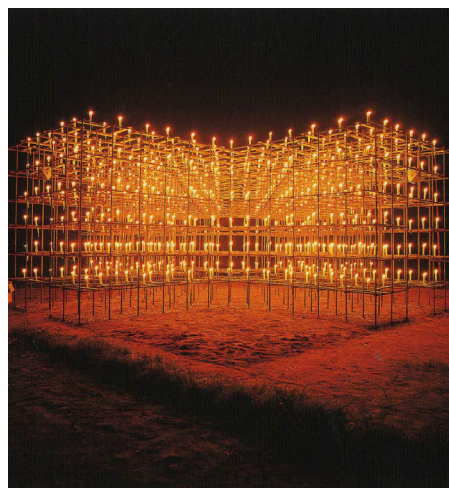


Fig. 8. Tadeusz Mysłowski. *Light Cross* - An Installation.

⁷⁶ This piece of music was quoted by the composer himself as an example of the co-existence of traditional instrumentation and electronics parallel to the orchestral ensemble performance.

⁷⁷ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁷⁸ The multimedia composition *Light Cross* by Mysłowski and Bargielski was a commission from the *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2000* in Japan and it was there, in September 2000, that its premiere took place.

⁷⁹ The cross, according to the author, is not supposed to evoke Christian religious associations.

⁷³ Reflections on the new understanding of the opera come from the 1960s and were published in 1971 in: Z. Bargielski, (1971). *Pytania i odpowiedzi*, op. cit., pp. 133–134.

⁷⁴ The composer's statement in: V. Przech, A. Ledzińska, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷⁵ Z. Bargielski, (19.11.1970). Self-commentary printed in the programme of the premiere spectacle. Warsaw: Teatr Wielki, p. 5.

In the author's commentary on this music, Zbigniew Bargielski defines the source of inspiration and reveals the compositional technique that formed the "monument in sound":

I wrote Light Cross inspired by an object created by Tadeusz Mysłowski. It seems to me that its structure comprises two elements: a permanent one – a structure in the form of the cross, partially framed by the "platform" of stable material, and a spherical, undulating one, glittering with hundreds of lights. I transferred both these elements into the world of music. The permanent element is presented by twelve simple chords in a low register, each lasting around 2'20". The spherical element is represented by various, fairly short individual sounds of high-pitched instruments⁸⁰; they are the sound image of flickering lights.⁸¹

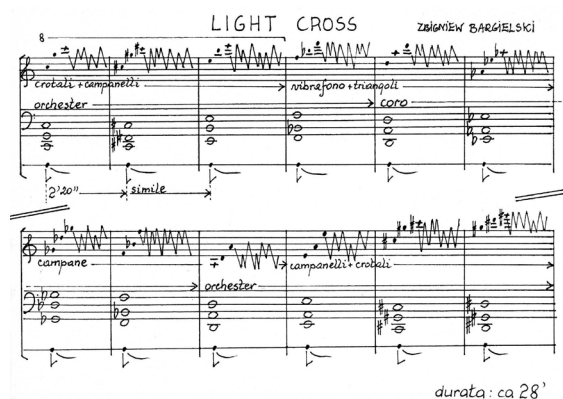


Fig. 9. *Light Cross*. Sketch of the Composition.

STAGES OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITY: TRANSFORMATIONS OF MUSICAL LANGUAGE

[In January 2015:] As I look at this problem from the perspective of at least 50 years, I do not see the "authoritarian rule" of particular tendencies, but I notice the multi-stage nature of views on the "metier", on style and its transformations...

1st stage ("imitation") – referring to the material available at that time (Chopin, Paderewski, Szymanowski – no foreign music...). Moreover, there were political determinants... from the point of view of a composer it was important to test the imitated musical material using advanced piano playing skills.⁸² The only (known to me back then) pieces with "full ensemble" (belonging to "contemporary" Polish music) were *Wierchy* by Malawski and *Piano Concerto No. 1* by Kilar.

2nd stage ("development and quest") – "my own" conscious implementation of "bookish" knowledge, which, interestingly, was not school knowledge (although I had learnt harmony and counterpoint at the music school in Lublin). Discovering chamber and symphonic works: Szymanowski's *Violin Concerto No. 1*, Lutosławski's *Tryptyk śląski* (*Silesian Triptych*) and *Concerto for Orchestra*, studying scores of Beethoven's symphonies. Attempts at orchestral compositions: *Suita kolędowa* (*Christmas Carol Suite*) (1956), *Sinfonia* (1957). When, years later, I look through those compositions, it seemed to me, for example, that *Sinfonia* was distinctly a liberation from the post-romantic model. As if that was not enough, it defined a minor personal route by aesthetically approaching liberally treated counterpoint based on equally liberally treated harmony, detached from the tonal patterns of the major-minor system which, in turn, brings about the effect of suspension between the styles of Honegger and Hindemith. The *Piano Sonata* (lost), written at that time, resembles Bartók to a certain extent.⁸³

The first two stages of artistic activity, as described by Zbigniew Bargielski, go back to the year 1957 and are connected with his early successful compositional attempts.⁸⁴ Apart from the works from that period mentioned by the author, one should add *Neosonatina* for violin and piano (1956) and *7 Studies* for piano (1957) while the group of composers whose output fascinated Bargielski at the beginning of his compositional path, apart from the ones already mentioned, included: Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, and Liszt.

The later stages were described by the composer as follows:

[in January 2015:] **3rd stage** ("crisis") – the period of university studies (except for the diploma year). A break in the natural artistic development, naturally awoken creativity. Luckily after a couple of years I got over this crisis resulting from implementing a "therapy" or, even better, "shock therapy". It seems that this method was used unconsciously, without even expecting the patient to survive the operation. The "shock therapy" or disqualifying my earlier achievements, is not always (although it might be) a way leading on the "correct" path of the development of artistic personality. In my case the "gene" (I use this word consciously) of creativity prevailed. When the "musical path" failed, the "literary path" took priority⁸⁵ (writing poetry, a whodunit, and volunteer work).⁸⁶

⁸³ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁸⁴ The fact that the 20-year-old composer achieved recognition in the musical circles of Lublin is confirmed by the 1956 premiere performance at Lublin Philharmonic of his symphonic work *Suita kolędowa* (*Christmas Carol Suite*). Two years later (1958) Bargielski was admitted to the composition class at the State Higher School Of Music (the PWSM) in Warsaw without the entrance exam formalities.

⁸⁵ "The literary path" has been followed by the composer to this day. He has penned around 100 poems to date.

⁸⁶ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁸⁰ The term "high-pitched instruments" used by the composer refers to virtual instrumentation, since the sound layer of the work was produced in full in the studio in Bruck an der Mur in Austria.

⁸¹ V. Przech, A. Ledzińska, op. cit. p. 316.

⁸² Education at the music school in Lublin (secondary music school diploma in the piano class in 1957 in Kielce).

Studying music at Warsaw's State Higher School of Music in the years 1958–1963⁸⁷, Bargielski was going through a period of serious creative crisis caused by circumstances unfavourable to his development. On the one hand this was because of poor communication with Piotr Perkowski, his composition professor, who represented a radically different aesthetic attitude and refused to accept his student's stance. On the other hand – the composer's public activity in Polish Students' Association, and his speech on behalf of the students at the opening of the academic year 1962/63, was deemed inappropriate, which led to his expulsion from the academy. These events cast a distinct "shadow of a doubt", which exerted influence for several years, holding Bargielski in a state of uncertainty as to own skills as a composer. Only a small number of aesthetically and stylistically diverse compositions were created at that time (among others – the neo-Classicist *Sonatina* for piano in 1959, and the avant-garde oriented *Les desinvoltures* for chamber ensemble in 1964).

[in January 2015:] 4th stage ("quest for the »reorganization« of fundamental principles") – the centric system, and, later on, the "block form". Reflections on the phenomenon of sound and drawing conclusions was central to this process (curiously enough, I came across similar reflections in Ligeti⁸⁸). There was an accompanying parallel line of thought about the perception of acoustic phenomena, purely physical, not just a concept "in and unto itself".⁸⁹

At this point the composer interrupts the characterisation of his own creative path. In an attempt to continue this description, I will base on the concept of *Work in Progress*.⁹⁰

5th stage ("breakthrough") – the breakthrough started with Bargielski being awarded the 1st Prize in the Polish Composers' Union Warsaw Youth Circle Composers' Competition in Warsaw in 1965 for his piece *Parady* (*Parades*) for symphony orchestra (a diploma composition written to complete his composition studies with Bolesław Szabelski in 1964). Most of all, however,

as the composer emphasised, the end of the crisis should be connected with the composer meeting Nadia Boulanger,⁹¹ "with her charisma, her humanity... thanks to Nadia [the composer reminisces – V.P.] I regained an appropriate, namely – inward, attitude toward the object of my interest, of my passion."

6th stage ("unveiling his very own face") – concurrent with the period of emigration to Austria (the years 1967–2002, with breaks). Directly following his Paris scholarship, Zbigniew Bargielski moved to Klagenfurt, Austria, where his wife, a violinist, found steady employment at the local symphony orchestra via Pagart management agency. His stay in Austria, despite the composer never obtaining employment that would match his education and aspirations, brought him acceptance and high regard in the local musical circles, the results of which included the composer's membership in the Austrian Composers' Society (Österreichischer Komponistenbund). More importantly, Austria saw the most crucial aesthetic and stylistic redefinition in the field of his musical work (arriving at the "centric system" and the original concept of the "block-repetition" form). It was also there that works considered to be of utmost importance to his output were written and had their successful world premieres: the quasi-mass *Sonnenlieder* and the quasi-oratorio *Im Niemandsland* – two excellent vocal-instrumental works characterised by immense power of expression.

7th stage ("towards the apogee") – dating this stage is quite arbitrary (just as in the case of those directly following). Indeed, it does not result from chronological criteria but from stylistic and aesthetic premises as well as the generic weight of the works it is represented by. This stage is distinguished by the creation of the previously mentioned oratorio *Im Niemandsland*⁹², a work definitely standing out in the compositional output of Zbigniew Bargielski, revealing a fully independent artist, at the stage of "climactic" creative activity. In *Im Niemandsland*, a verbal and musical, philosophical and poetic "mystery play", he takes up grand topics, and asks questions about the ultimate things. The lyrical layer of the composition comprises biblical texts: two psalms on contrasted topics: Psalm 23 (*The Good Shepherd*) and Psalm 137 (*Lament of the Exiles*). The texts of the psalms constitute the basic, but not the sole source of text for the piece. The content of the psalms selected by Bargielski became an inspiration

⁸⁷ Bargielski obtained his diploma in composition on 17th April 1964 from Bolesław Szabelski's composition class at the State Higher School of Music in Katowice in the academic year 1963/1964.

⁸⁸ A few years ago, having read an (unidentified) article containing a quotation from Ligeti, Zbigniew Bargielski concluded to his surprise that Ligeti's thoughts on the nature of sound as an acoustic phenomenon were almost identical to his own.

⁸⁹ From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

⁹⁰ See e.g. M. Tomaszewski, (2011). *12 spojrzeń na muzykę polską wieku apokalipsy i nadziei. Studia, szkice interpretacje* [12 Perspectives on Polish Music in the Age of the Apocalypse and Hope. Studies-Sketches-Interpretations]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, pp. 23–34.

⁹¹ The year-long composer scholarship (1966/67) to study under Nadia Boulanger in Paris was a competition prize.

⁹² See: V. Przech, (2013). Zbigniew Bargielski's Oratorio "Im Niemandsland": In Search of the Meanings. In: T. Malecka, M. Pawłowska (eds.), *Music: Function and Value. Proceedings of the 11th International Congress on Musical Signification*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej, pp. 662–672.

for the contemporary Austrian poet Markus Jaroschka, who wrote two different poetic works: *Preisungslied* and *Klagelied*, which supplied Bargielski with a contemporary commentary and interpretation of the Old Testament psalms chosen for his oratorio. The musical organisation of the work was dominated by the idea of contrast, of antithesis, inspired by the character of the lyrical texts. The states of suffering and doubt, yearning and hope, search and fulfilment, became the metaphysical canvas for Bargielski's compositions. The rule of contrast determines almost all levels of musical organisation, attaining, in the context of the verbal message, a symbolic dimension, and determining the "spirituality" of the work.

8th stage ("flirting with post-modernism") – music as a "game". The presence of specific postmodernist gimmicks in Bargielski's music is not, however, a result of the will to surrender or consciously join the line of such an aesthetic. It is also hard straightforwardly to define the type of postmodernism we might be dealing with in the case of some of Bargielski's works (otherwise incredibly captivating, as in the already mentioned *Panopticum* or *String Quartet No. 5*). In fact, it is at the same time historical (due to the exploitation of the elements of various styles representing various periods in the history of music), dialectic and dialectal ("clashing" various musical dialects), anarchical (combining "everything with everything"), and, last but not least, syntactic postmodernism (referring to one tradition or another in order to build a new, original musical language).⁹³ Nevertheless, irrespective of the dilemmas accompanying the categorisation of phenomena, in all these compositions there are voices from "the other side" of the artist's personality, less frequently manifested in his musical language: a sense of humour, a discreetly mocking tone, defiance with a hint of irony, or, sometimes, even sarcasm.

9th stage ("towards unknown shores") – from the year 2006 onward. The works composed over the last decade seem to express the composer's yearning for something different, something fresh. Bargielski remains an author forever creatively anxious: unfulfilled after finishing each piece and soon seeking satisfaction in a new one; refusing to surrender to the routine. He offers new solutions in terms of composition form, treats the centric technique

less rigorously (and more intuitively) than before, expands the range of his inspirations with jazz music on the one hand and elements of early Baroque style on the other, inclines without remorse towards melody and writes for the piano without complexes, making one wonder as usual about his sensual sensitivity to tone, to sound, to pitch, to nuance... Enchanting us with refined forms of lyricism, engaging with a wealth of emotions...

An analysis of these relations invites a suggestion that the line of the composer's artistic development, from the moment when he overcame the crisis of his student years, has clearly been an ascending one. Bargielski has avoided the stage defined by Mieczysław Tomaszewski as fixation⁹⁴, or ceasing to develop at a certain point. While preserving the constant (personal-idiomatic) elements responsible for the distinctive character of his style, Bargielski creatively modifies (changes) his musical language. Intuition, fantasy and discipline are the triad of features defining the creative effort of Zbigniew Bargielski.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

From Himself to Himself. On Creating.

[1st March 2012:] Creation is a stage where a spectacle fulfilling our longing for the intangible or even the unimaginable is about to be performed; our desire to live through something we never tried before, for rapture, for departure, for suspension; a moment of withdrawal, forgetting of images and recalling them, falling back on them and, at the same time, of departure from what is known, recognized, and experienced. However, in order for us to live through it all, we rely on the author who has to experience all those similar illuminations, revelations, and recollections. Consciously (i.e. through the art of imagination and technique of expression) and instinctively (i.e. thanks to the deepest of secrets and the phenomenon of art). The composer must be an illusionist and a mystic at once, an embodiment of courage in presenting what has been done and, simultaneously, a fearful, solitary discoverer of the foreseen. The struggle, the battle between these two elements is the most spectacular manifestation of creativity. Of the longing to express the unexpressed.⁹⁵

[In June 2012:] I will probably not have enough time to achieve what I would like to achieve. Not quantitatively, of course, but aesthetically, in the sense of inner growth.⁹⁶

93 According to the categorisation suggested by Dorota Krawczyk; eadem, (2005). *Język i gra, czyli o muzyce postmodernistycznej* [Language and a Game, or on Postmodernist Music], *Muzyka*. No. 2, pp. 90–101.

94 Cf. M. Tomaszewski, (2011). *12 spojrzeń...*, op. cit., p. 27.

95 From personal notes made available to the author of the article by the composer.

96 *Ibid.*



Zbigniew Bargielski in 2012 (photo by M. Gumieła).

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