

The Warsaw
Autumn
International
Festival of
Contemporary
Music

*Transformations of Programming
Policies*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper surveys the history of the Warsaw Autumn festival focusing on changes in the Festival programming. I discuss the circumstances of organising a cyclic contemporary music festival of international status in Poland. I point out the relations between programming policies and the current political situation, which in the early years of the Festival forced organisers to maintain balance between Western and Soviet music as well as the music from the so-called “people’s democracies” (i.e. the Soviet bloc). Initial strong emphasis on the presentation of 20th-century classics was gradually replaced by an attempt to reflect different tendencies and new phenomena, also those combining music with other arts. Despite changes and adjustments in the programming policy, the central aim of the Festival’s founders – that of presenting contemporary music in all its diversity, without overdue emphasis on any particular trend – has consistently been pursued. The idea of introducing leitmotifs, different for each Festival edition (such as: music involving human voice, mainly electronic, etc.) – is not inconsistent with this general aim since the selected works represent different aesthetics, and the “main theme” is not the only topic of any given edition of the Warsaw Autumn.

Keywords: 20th-century classics, socialist realism, avant-garde, serialism, Polish school of composition, sonorism, experimental music, New Romanticism, spectralism, leitmotifs of Festival editions, Little Warsaw Autumn

The opposed terms “ars antiqua” – “ars nova” possess, apart from the historical, also a symbolic dimension. They point to the cyclic alternation of periods of redefinition and revision in the fields of aesthetics, artistic technique and the concept of art. The great breakthroughs that took place at the turn of the 13th and then the turn of the 16th century – did not significantly change the role of music in the society and its *status quo* – unlike the transformations that occurred in the 20th century, in the period of historical upheavals on an unprecedented scale. This thought was expressed – not without nostalgia – by Nicolaus Harnoncourt, who, though focusing on early music interpretation, presents a comprehensive view of our culture:

(...) as long as music was an essential part of life, it could emanate only from the contemporary world. It was the living language for something which could not be said in words; it could be understood only by contemporary human beings. (...) Since music is no longer found at the center of our lives, all this has changed: now that it is regarded as an ornament, it is felt that music should first and foremost be “beautiful.” Under no circumstances should it be allowed to disturb or startle us. The music of the present cannot fulfill this requirement because at the very least, like all art, it reflects the spiritual and intellectual situation of its time, and this is true of our present time as well. (...) This has resulted in the paradoxical

situation that people have turned away from contemporary art because it is disturbing, perhaps necessarily so. Rather than confrontation, we sought only beauty, to help us to overcome the banality of everyday life.¹

The situation of growing conflict between the bourgeois establishment (as the main addressee of broadly conceived art in the early 20th century) and the artists (whose uncompromising attitudes led them to question and disrupt the canonical rules accepted by the audience and by most critics) – led to certain critical situations which marked the beginning of a new era in European culture. In the history of music, one such symbolic date is 1913, when two events invited more than a whiff of scandal: the premiere of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* on 29th May at the Parisian Théâtre de Champs-Élysées, and the concert held on 31st March at the Viennese Musikvereinsaal, featuring the following programme: Alban Berg’s *5 Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtskartentexten von Peter Altenberg* Op. 4, Anton Webern’s *6 Stücke für Orchester* Op.6, Alexander von Zemlinsky’s *4 Orchesterlieder nach Gedichten von Maeterlinck*, and Arnold Schönberg’s *Kammersymphonie E-dur* Op.9. The latter concert was brutally interrupted. In his publication *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, Modris Ekstein sees Stravinsky’s work as a catalyst of the civilizational change that took place in the new century, when the *belle époque* had ended. As for the other, Viennese concert, Maciej Gołąb in his *Musical Modernism in the Twentieth Century: Between Continuation, Innovation and Change of Phonosystem* discusses that event in sociological and aesthetic categories, as a social-artistic phenomenon of the audience rejecting advanced musical complexity for which the people were perceptively not prepared in any way, and which failed to respect the contemporary listeners’ horizon of auditory experience.²

The conflict between the conservative audience and the artistic avant-garde called for the creation of enclaves of mutual understanding; of events that could occasion exchange of ideas and the presentation of new trends in art. Hence the concept of a worldwide association

¹ Nicolaus Harnoncourt: *Musik als Klangrede*, English transl.: *Baroque Music Today: Music As Speech*, Amadeus Press, Portland, Oregon 1988, paperback ed. 1995, pp. 15-17

² Maciej Gołąb: *Musical Modernism in the Twentieth Century: Between Continuation, Innovation and Change of Phonosystem*, Wrocław 2011, p.112

promoting contemporary music, whose predecessors were Alfredo Casella's Società Italiana di Musica Moderna (est. 1917) and Arnold Schönberg's Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (est. 1918). The international society (ISCM / SIMC) was founded, as we know, in 1922, with seat in London. National ISCM sections were established in the years that followed. The Polish section began its activity in 1924; its first president was Karol Szymanowski. The Society's most important task was the organisation of the World New Music Days, held every year in a different city. In Poland, the ISCM festival was held for the first time in April 1939. The political situation made it impossible to carry out many of the Festival projects in full. Under the pressure of Hitler's propaganda, many musicians called off their performances in Warsaw. Among those cancelled events, there was the European premiere of Anton Webern's *String Quartet* Op. 28. All the same, the Warsaw Festival left a permanent mark in the collective memory of the Polish music circles, and there were plans to continue organising similar encounters with the modernist music world. This, however, proved impossible in the first decade after WWII. Europe was split by the Iron Curtain, and in the Soviet zone of influence the obligatory doctrine was that of socialist realism, firmly imposed on organisers of artistic events. In Poland, only a few festivals of Polish music were held. Especially two of them – those of 1951 and 1955 – are worth mentioning. Apart from the canon of symphonic and chamber music works by composers representing different generations, they presented music that aimed to meet the needs and expectations “of the mass audience, for the most part still poorly prepared,”³ as Tadeusz Marek enigmatically observed in the concert guide of the 1955 Festival. That 2nd Festival of Polish Music was held already after Stalin's death, when the political thaw was becoming evident both in the Soviet Union and in Poland. The programme note does not even mention socialist realism; instead, we have the thesis that innovation inspired “particularly vivid interest, as well as polemics and judgments – the latter not always unanimous or adequate, since the necessary perspective and distance are still lacking.”⁴ Among the Festival's participants, there were two young composers: Tadeusz Baird and Kazimierz Serocki, who in 1954-55 (together with Andrzej Panufnik) held the posts of vice-presidents of the Polish Composers' Union. It is to these

very composers (who stayed in Poland while Panufnik escaped to the West) that we usually attribute the idea of organising an international festival of contemporary music that was to host composers and performers from both Eastern and Western Europe (the music of other continents was still beyond the cognitive horizon of that time and would be incorporated only later). During the 8th General Assembly of the Polish Composers' Union (PCU, Polish: ZKP), held on 4th-6th June 1955, Baird and Serocki put forward a proposal (accepted by a majority vote) which entrusted the PCU Managing Board with the task of petitioning “the state institutions” for permission to hold regular festivals called “The Warsaw Music Autumn”. We know, however, that the idea of going beyond the Polish environment with presentations of contemporary music in Poland had in fact many fathers and had already been evolving for several years, first and foremost among the composers – members of the PCU. The sense of artistic exhaustion and isolation from Western music life had become universal. Only skimpy information reached Poland concerning new phenomena and the music performed in the West. When the state's cultural policies began to change, the idea of establishing regular contacts with various centres of musical culture abroad was considered more and more seriously. But, naturally, any such initiative required the permission of state authorities. In her fundamental monograph on the first contemporary music festivals held in Warsaw, Cindy Bylander quotes her interview (recorded in 1986) with Kazimierz Sikorski, president of the PCU in 1954-59, who – after meetings of the Presidium of the PCU's Managing Board – took part in all the talks at the Ministry of Culture and Art, and not only there... In the autumn of 1954, he was invited to meet Bolesław Bierut, the then President of Poland. During that brief conversation, he presented to the President the idea of holding an international festival of contemporary music in Poland. Bierut replied: “It's interesting, such a comparison between East and West. They can show what they have and we can show what we have.”⁵ This approving response led to a permission from the Ministry of Culture and Art to begin work on the organisation of the Festival, but it also in a way defined the programmatic aims. It was clear to everyone that the communist party had the final say on the form and nature of every project. What the new political authorities were clearly attracted to was the confrontational character of

³ Tadeusz Marek: *Na progu II Festiwalu Muzyki Polskiej*, Warszawa 1955, p.9

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Cindy Bylander: *The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music 1956-1961. Its goals, structures, programs and people*, The Ohio State University 1989, pp.92-93

the project suggested by Bierut's words. In order to temper this confrontational tone, the new PCU Managing Board took care precisely to define the aims and message of the Festival. An outline of the programme was prepared on 10th May 1955 at a meeting attended by Karol Kuryluk, who had replaced Włodzimierz Sokorski as Minister of Culture and Art. The aims that the Festival was to pursue were listed in six points:

1. To promote Polish music.
2. to become familiar with contemporary works from other countries;
3. to present performances by the best symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles;
4. to serve as an object lesson on how to play for Polish conductors and members of symphony or chamber ensembles;
5. to establish contacts between Polish and foreign composers (exchange of opinions on contemporary music composition);
6. to turn Warsaw into a centre of musical culture known all over the world.⁶

The next step was to mutually agree on the list of performers. Naturally, a balance was struck between the numbers of ensembles and soloists invited from both sides of the still functioning Iron Curtain. The final list of foreign orchestras was as follows; The USSR State Symphony Orchestra of Moscow, Brno State Philharmonic, Bucharest State Philharmonic, Wiener Symphoniker (Vienna), and the Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion et Télévision Française (Paris). Chamber ensembles: V. Tátrai Quartet from Budapest and J. Parrenin Quartet from Paris. Soloists who accepted the invitation: pianist Alfred Brendel, flutist Hynek Kašlik, violinists David Oistrakh and Zlatko Topolski, and bassoonist René Plessier. Foreign conductors: Michael Gielen, George Georgescu, Břetislav Bakala, Constantin Ivanov, Mircea Basarab, Jean Martinon, and Nikolai Anosov. Three Polish orchestras took part in the 1st Festival: Warsaw Philharmonic, and two others (the State Silesian Philharmonic and the Great Symphony Orchestra of the Polish Radio) based in a city whose name, after Stalin's death, was changed from the historical Katowice to Stalinogród. The Polish Radio Orchestra and Choir from Cracow were also invited. The performers included top Polish soloists, eminent Polish conductors (Bohdan

Wodiczko, Karol Stryja, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Jan Krenz, Stanisław Wisłocki) and choirmasters (Tadeusz Dobrzański and Alojzy Kluczniok). It was decided that each foreign orchestra or ensemble had to perform at least one Polish piece, and such a presentation of Polish music should last c. 30 minutes. Foreign ensembles were also provided with lists and repositories of Polish compositions – different for performers from the West and those from the East. What proved problematic was the definition of the term “contemporary music”. Cindy Bylander reminds us how during one of the meetings Tadeusz Baird postulated that only works written within the last year be performed during each edition of the Festival. This postulate never became a formal proposal, though, and during debates that preceded the first festival edition the term “contemporary” was applied to the entire 20th century. This standpoint was represented, among others, by Jerzy Jasioński – secretary general of the Organising Committee. Kazimierz Sikorski, President of the PCU, wrote in a letter to the invited musicians that the festival would provide a survey of the world's greatest achievements in the field of contemporary music. Cindy Bylander observed that the phrase “the most world achievements”⁷ used in that letter – is extremely subjective in character. However, for the organisers of the first Polish contemporary music festival held after years of the domination of socialist-realist doctrine – this vagueness or indeterminacy was something desirable, because it did not impose limits of style and left space for the freedom of choice. The organisers had few European models to imitate. From the late 1940s, Polish artists had not taken part in the festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music. About Donaueschingen Days of Contemporary Music everybody knew that the festival focused first and foremost on the post-Webern trends. The Czech festival, Pražské Jaro, followed a much wider musical formula, though it could serve as a model of organisation. Limiting the repertoire to 20th-century music turned out to be too vague and enigmatic, especially during negotiations with the orchestras. Encouraged by the organisers' openness, the Viennese orchestra included in their programme... Johannes Brahms's *Symphony No. 4*, the USSR State Symphony Orchestra performed Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*, and the Romanian symphony orchestra came up with a late-19th-century hit: Richard Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*. Though these elements of the programme now merely sound anecdotal, they do illustrate the difficulty of the process

⁶ Lech Dzierżanowski : *Jak to się zaczęło?* Ruch Muzyczny Nos. 18/19, 16th September 2007, p.13

⁷ Cindy Bylander: *op.cit.* p.108

in which the idea of the festival was forged. The difficulty depended from the very beginning on a kind of game with the all-powerful censors. When Grażyna Bacewicz withdrew her *Violin Concerto No. 4* from the programme of the inaugural concert, Bohdan Wodiczko suggested replacing it with Olivier Messiaen's *Les Offrandes oubliées*, which he had already twice conducted in Poland. The censors objected to the title, which referred to the religious topic of Messiaen's poem printed in the score as a motto. Also the subtitle *symphonic meditation* seemed precarious to them. Therefore the composition was performed as *A Symphonic Fragment*, though the composer's biographical note printed in the programme book did quote the real title in the list of compositions.

Despite all the difficulties and obstacles, the 1st International Festival of Contemporary Music held on 10th-21st October 1956 in Warsaw was hailed by the music circles as a success, since it restored hope that Poland would once again actively participate in European culture. The programme note, signed by the Polish Composers' Union, referred to the ISCM Festival in 1939, describing the 1956 Festival as a continuation of that prewar tradition, interrupted by the tragic events of WWII and the situation in the postwar years. Andrzej Chłopecki called this reference to a festival held under the prewar Sanation regime "an ideological sensation."⁸ Of symbolic significance were also the performances of two works by Karol Szymanowski – *Stabat Mater* at the inauguration and *Symphony No. 3* during the final concert.

From the programmatic point of view, this festival partly "cleared the backlog". *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky was played in Poland for the first time, along with several other works by that "classic of modernity". Focus on 20th-century classics became the Festival's trademark. The programme featured works by Béla Bartók, Arthur Honegger, André Jolivet, Benjamin Britten, Henri Dutilleul, Leoš Janáček, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Olivier Messiaen, George Enescu, Maurice Ravel, Darius Milhaud, Aram Khachaturian, Bohuslav Martinů, and Nikolai Myaskovsky, among others. The Festival programme also included Arnold Schönberg's *Piano Concerto* and Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite* – the only compositions that familiarised the Polish audience with the then little-known twelve-note technique. Many Polish works premiered during the 2nd

Festival of Polish Music were now performed again and juxtaposed with pieces by composers from other countries. Presentations of music by such mature artists as Artur Malawski, Kazimierz Sikorski, Stanisław Wiechowicz, Tadeusz Szeligowski, Bolesław Szabelski, Zbigniew Turski, Stefan Mycielski, Piotr Perkowski, Stefan Kisielewski, Grażyna Bacewicz, and Witold Lutosławski were complemented by pieces written by the Festival initiators: Tadeusz Baird and Kazimierz Serocki, as well as Andrzej Dobrowolski, Wojciech Kilar, and Stanisław Skrowaczewski. Compositions by Michał Spisak and Antoni Szałowski – two Polish composers permanently residing in France, but not objected to by the censorship – were also performed. Most of the works represented the neo-Classical style, which Polish composers accepted as their model for a very long time.

The Festival was widely commented in the press. Extreme views which questioned the sense of organising such events in the future were also voiced. Ludwik Erhardt – a young but already well-recognised music critic – listed and rationally discussed the weak points in the repertoire. He complained about the lack of clear programming criteria, as well as the omission of such contemporary trends as electronic music, *musique concrète*, dodecaphony (though represented by the two works of Schönberg and Berg), as well as the random selection of 20th-century classics. Indeed, as many as six pieces by Stravinsky were performed – four from the Russian period and two later ones; Honegger's *Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3* as well as *Pacific 231*; Bartók's important compositions – *String Quartet No. 5* and *Concerto for Orchestra*. Hindemith was missing from the programme, which Erhardt criticised. Another mistake was the parity principle, which obliged foreign ensembles to perform at least one piece from the country of the organiser. The absence of jazz – which the young Polish critic found regrettable – was soon compensated by the organisation of the annual Jazz Jamboree festival.⁹

The 2nd International Festival was held in 1958, and from that moment on the Festival became an annual event. By analogy to the "Prague Spring", the Polish event was named "The Warsaw Autumn" (hereinafter abbreviated to WA). The character of that event changed from one year to another. The mapping of territories previously unknown to Polish audiences was gradually replaced by presentations of the works of composers

⁸ Andrzej Chłopecki : *Karol Szymanowski i Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Muzyki Współczesnej 1923-1939*, Ruch Muzyczny No. 26, 23rd December 2007, p.8

⁹ Cf. Ludwik Erhardt: *Z notatnika recenzenta koncertowego*, *Express Wieczorny* 20th Oct. 1956, quoted after: Ludwik Erhardt: *Kiedy byłem młody i bezczelny*, Ruch Muzyczny No. 18/19, 16th Sept. 2007, p.14

from both sides of the "iron curtain". Various diplomatic and artistic strategies were used to minimise the political and strictly confrontational aspect of the Festival. This was made possible by political transformations in Poland after 1956, by the partial liberalisation of the communist system, and the accession to power of Władysław Gomułka. The Warsaw Autumn was the Eastern bloc's only contemporary music festival, and it soon came to be considered as a platform for the exchange of experiences, for the meetings of musicians from different parts of the world. A remedy for the random and chaotic aspects of the programme of the 1st Festival was sought in the form of attempts to distinguish trends characteristic of contemporary art. Nevertheless, the desire to "catch up with Europe" meant that Western music began to predominate over that of the Soviet bloc, which was promptly observed by the commentators of WA 1958 and naturally criticised in the Soviet press.¹⁰ The polemic between journalists from both camps of the still divided Europe was to continue for many more years. The 2nd edition of the Warsaw Autumn was also the first to feature stage works: by Benjamin Britten (*Peter Grimes*), Tadeusz Szeligowski (*Krakatuk*) and Maurice Ravel (*Daphnis et Chloé*); other dramatic forms were presented in the form of symphonic suites (Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin*, Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*). Much space was dedicated again to 20th-century classics. One of the chamber music concerts featured *Kleine Kammermusik* Op.24 No. 2 by the previously omitted Hindemith.

This 2nd WA edition also brought the first harbingers of the genuine avant-garde. Conservative listeners were shocked by David Tudor's piano recital of works by Stockhausen, Boulez, Christian Wolff, and – directly preceding this recital – a presentation of "electron music" conducted by Stockhausen in person and including his own compositions (the famous *Gesang der Jünglinge*, still considered as one of the key works in that genre) as well as pieces by John Cage, Luciano Berio, György Ligeti, Henri Pousseur, Herbert Eimert, and Bruno Maderna.¹¹

The coexistence of 20th-century classics and the more and more amply represented avant-garde became a distinguishing feature of the following editions of the Warsaw Autumn. Stockhausen came to Warsaw at the invitation of a group of Polish composers who in 1957 had

obtained permission to attend the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt (Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik). These included, among others: Andrzej Dobrowolski, Włodzimierz Kotoński, and Kazimierz Serocki. In the 1950s and the early 1960s serialism was treated in Darmstadt almost like a dogma; according to the gurus of those meetings, serial music was the only trend that could legitimately represent modernity.

Many believed at that time, and Stockhausen propagated this thesis, that the following half a century would belong to serial music exclusively, while all the other trends would be forgotten.¹²

This kind of strong aesthetic pressure provokes questions about the impact of serialist aesthetics on the young Polish composers, who genuinely desired to leave behind once and for all the phantoms of the still recent socialist-realist past. Every novelty seeping through from the previously inaccessible West was tempting. To many Polish composers, however, serialism was not a complete novelty at all. The technique had already been applied before the war by Józef Koffler (but the music of that composer, who perished in 1944, only began to be performed at the Warsaw Autumn from 1964 onward). Another Lvov-based artist, Tadeusz Majerski, already in 1934-1938 wrote works "that can be seen as proof of the assimilation of the technical tools of the 1st Avant-Garde."¹³ The dodecaphonic "diaspora" in Poland¹⁴ also included Konstanty Regamey (a Swiss citizen associated with Poland for many years), Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (Koffler's student, living in Poland till the late 1940s), Roman Palester, and Kazimierz Serocki (who came in contact with the twelve-note technique during his studies in Paris on an annual scholarship, 1947-48). Serocki's explorations in this field are reflected in, among others, his *Suite of Preludes* for piano of 1952.

Since contact with the European avant-garde was made impossible in the socialist-realist era, the current partial lifting of the "iron curtain" proved of great importance:

¹² Włodzimierz Kotoński, in: Małgorzata Gąsiorowska: *Rozmowy z Włodzimierzem Kotońskim*, Warsaw Autumn 2010, p.30

¹³ Iwona Lindstedt: *Dodekafornia i serializm w twórczości kompozytorów polskich XX wieku*. Studia et Dissertationes Instituti Musicologiae Universitatis Varsoviensis, Polihymnia 2001, p.55

¹⁴ Iwona Lindstedt, *op.cit.*, p.5

¹⁰ Cf. Lisa Jakelski: *Making New Music In Cold War Poland. The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956-1968*, University of California Press 2017, p.43

¹¹ Dorota Szwarcman: *Czas Warszawskich Jesieni. O muzyce polskiej 1945-2007*, Stentor 2007, pp.27-28

The years 1956-1958 proved a breakthrough. The arrival of Luigi Nono played a major role; I must say I owe very much to him. He brought a breath of fresh air and opened our minds to something quite new (...) *Il canto sospeso* was performed here at Florianka [Cracow's auditorium – note by MG]. But what probably made the greatest impression on me was Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*. It was astonishing, like the discovery of a completely different world, and it made me change my views on the entire reality of music (...). There was immense fascination with everything new; not – as some said later – owing to the pressure of (particularly German) avant-garde, but out of authentic fascination and interest. Not because of pressure, but out of an internal need – we began to see novelty as a value.¹⁵

1958 was a crucial date in postwar Polish music. The 2nd International Festival of Contemporary Music was already held under the name of the Warsaw Autumn.

That year came to be considered as the birth date of the Polish avant-garde in music. It was then that one of the two (apart from Kilar) leading representatives of that avant-garde – Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, one of Poland's greatest composers of our time – made his appearance. Admittedly, his *Epitaph* had more of Webern in it than of Górecki's individual style – but it did demonstrate the talent of that Silesian composer.¹⁶

The same WA 1958 presented a wide panorama of Polish music, from the “classics” (Bacewicz, Malawski, Palester, Perkowski, Kazimierz Sikorski, Spisak, the already mentioned Szeligowski, Szabelski, Turski) to those who embraced “novelty as a value” (if I may recall again the words of Zbigniew Bujarski, then still a young composition student). Novelty did not mean a thoughtless submission to the “terror of the avant-garde”. Rather, it encouraged artists to look for their own paths of development among the wealth of new ideas offered not only by the Darmstadt courses, but also e.g. by the Donaueschingen Days of Contemporary Music, the Venice Biennale, and by the Domaine Musical concerts in Paris.

In the output of Witold Lutosławski, the *Musique funèbre* – performed at WA 1958 several months after its premiere in Katowice – proved a turning point. Quite independently from the Darmstadt school, the composer organised the twelve-note material into a dramatic form of immense power of expression. Tadeusz Baird revealed the expressionist roots of his music in

his *Cassazione per orchestra* (performed already at the 1956 Festival) as well as in later works, such as *The Four Essays*, presented in 1958. Performances of compositions by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Krzysztof Penderecki were greeted as major events at the following editions of the Warsaw Autumn. The two composers, representing different aesthetics, were hailed as pillars of the young Polish music. Each of Górecki's works – the *Symphony No. 1 “1959”* (still incomplete – only movements I, II and IV were performed in 1959), and especially his *Scontri* for orchestra (presented in 1960) – provoked a veritable storm of conflicting opinions. What attracted the critics' attention was not so much the way Górecki used the serial technique as the “stunning fusion of futurist energy and nervous repose”¹⁷ in a work that made use of a rich selection of winds, strings and percussion. The composer himself described his piece in terms of sound complexes and streaks, stressing the importance of sound colour as a constitutive elements. The title was seen as a polemic with Luigi Nono's *Incontri* and a sign of political rebellion. Reviewers in the Eastern bloc, where socialist realism was still the obligatory doctrine, tore this composition to pieces. The first works of Krzysztof Penderecki met with a similar reception. He took the concert stages by storm after winning the three main awards in the 2nd PCU Competition for Young Composers in 1959. The innovative sound and articulation characterising such works as *Dimensions of Time and Silence* (WA 1960), *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* for 52 string instruments (WA 1961), *String Quartet No. 1* (WA 1962) and *Polymorphia* for 48 string instruments (WA 1963) – were presented side by side with works drawing on the archetypal texts of the world culture: *Strophes* for soprano, speaker and 10 instruments (WA 1959), and *Stabat Mater* for three unaccompanied choirs (WA 1964). No less exciting were the premieres of works by Wojciech Kilar: *Riff 62* (WA 1962) and *Générique* (WA 1963), in which the composer resolutely rejected the restrictions of neo-Classicism. *Les Sons* – the title of an orchestral work by Witold Szalonek performed at the 1965 Warsaw Autumn – not only signalled the key focus of this particular piece, but also pointed at a new direction that Polish composers would follow for several generations. Also the “senior” composers demonstrated spectacular turnabouts: Grażyna Bacewicz first and foremost in her partly dodecaphonic *String Quartet No. 6* (WA 1960), and Bolesław Szabelski in *Aphorisms “9”*

¹⁵ Zbigniew Bujarski: a statement made during the final panel discussion of the scientific conference *Muzyka polska 1945-1995* [Polish Music 1945-1995], in: *Muzyka polska 1945-1995*, Akademia Muzyczna, Kraków 1996, pp.385-386

¹⁶ Tadeusz Kaczyński, in: Tadeusz Kaczyński, Andrzej Zborski: *Warszawska Jesień*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne 1983, p. 6

¹⁷ Adrian Thomas: *Górecki*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.30

and the dodecaphonic *Poems* for piano and orchestra (WA 1961). This, as well as the sound experiments undertaken by the young generation, led many to see Polish music as a separate trend, nearly as a unified “school”. Its trademarks were: independence of the main Western trends – particularly of the Darmstadt serialism – and the focus on sound as the main constitutive element of the music work.

This purely sound-centred technique became the most important contribution of Polish music to the development of the modern musical language in the 1960s. (...) it was noticed by Western observers and described as a separate phenomenon, alternative to other parallel avant-garde ideas, and referred to as the “Polish school of composition”.¹⁸

Separate as this trend undoubtedly was, one should note the influence of such composers as John Cage, György Ligeti, Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen on Polish music. In fact, the notion of a “Polish school” is disputable.

It was most likely created by musicologists or by the critics, but it had no equivalent in actual artistic reality. The idea of a “school” is associated with a specific teacher or centre, or with an artistic personality so powerful that it “compels” others – in an ideological if not a technical sense. Though, admittedly, there were clearly delineated individualities.¹⁹

The Organising Committees of the successive Warsaw Autumn editions incorporated the works of “Polish school” representatives in the Festival programmes with full support and enthusiasm, but they also strove to maintain a balance – in agreement with the Festival’s chief principles, which were unanimously accepted and confirmed every year. For many years, these aims and principles remained unchanged, as we can read in the programme book of the 4th edition of the WA (1960):

the Warsaw Autumn Festival of Contemporary Music possesses a somewhat different character from other festivals of this type. It is to present – in as comprehensive a manner as possible – the musical creativity of our times, taking into consideration the situation of the Polish listener and of the Polish world of composition. In its programmes the compositions from recent years and the works of contemporary classics hitherto absent from Polish concert halls appear side by side. Recent musical compositions are represented

in their wide stylistic range, from traditional works by composers of the older generation to the controversial experimental attempts of a group of the youngest composers.²⁰

From 1958 onward, concerts of experimental music became a regular feature of the Festival. The special guest of the Festival’s 2nd edition was Karlheinz Stockhausen, who played back from tapes the achievements of Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne’s Studio of Electronic Music. The second part of this concert consisted of a piano recital by David Tudor, who performed, among others, John Cage’s *Music of Changes* and Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI*. In the following year the Festival organisers invited Pierre Schaeffer, whose studio of *musique concrete* (the Groupe de Recherches Musicales at ORTF Paris) stood in opposition to the Cologne group. But already in 1960 the lecture entitled “Sound Experiments in New Music” was delivered by Józef Patkowski, who in 1959 had created at Polish Radio Europe’s fourth experimental music studio after Paris, Cologne and Milan. The Studio produced much film and radio music, but also works like the one played back by Józef Patkowski during his 1960 presentation – Włodzimierz Kotoński *Study for One Cymbal Stroke*, which was Poland’s first autonomous composition for tape. The composers who created their music in the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio included Andrzej Dobrowolski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bogusław Schäffer (now spelled as Schaeffer), Tomasz Sikorski, Zbigniew Wiszniewski, and later – also the sound engineer Eugeniusz Rudnik and sound producer Bohdan Mazurek. Experimental music was the subject of separate Warsaw Autumn concerts, dedicated to the achievements of a growing number of artistic centres: the Studio di Fonologia Musicale RAI, Milano (1962); the Studio for Experimental Music of University of Illinois, Urbana; the NHK Japanese Radio Studio in Tokyo (1969). The tape layer also began to play a major role in works written for traditional instruments. The programme of a memorable concert held in 1965 comprised Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Kontakte* for tape, piano and percussion as well as Edgar Varèse’s *Déserts* for instrumental ensemble and tape, featuring Aloys Kontarsky on the piano, Christopher Caskel on percussion and the Poznań Philharmonic Instrumental Ensemble under Andrzej Markowski.

18 Iwona Lindstedt: *Sonorystyka w twórczości kompozytorów polskich XX wieku*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2010, pp. 9, 11

19 Włodzimierz Kotoński, in: Małgorzata Gąsiorowska: *Rozmowy z Włodzimierzem Kotońskim*, op.cit. p.26

20 4th Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music. Warsaw 17th-25th September 1960. The Organising Committee of the 4th Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music 1960, p.3. Quoted with minor textual amendments after: Cindy Bylander, op. cit. p. 306.

Until 1971 (with a few exceptions), two Warsaw Autumn concerts were held every day – one at 5 pm, the other at 8 pm. On Sundays there was also a concert at 12 noon. At 5 pm the programme usually consisted of chamber music, at 8 pm – of symphonic works, though this was by no means the rule. Originally all the concerts were held in both of Warsaw Philharmonic halls, while opera and ballet spectacles were staged in Roma Theatre. From 1963, the Dramatyczny Theatre at Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science also hosted Warsaw Autumn productions – those that did not fit a strict definition of opera or ballet. In 1963 choreographies for chamber music works (Karol Szymanowski's *Myths and Masks*, Sergei Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*, Arnold Schönberg's *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke* and Anton Webern's *Variationen* for piano, among others) were staged there. In 1964, the Warsaw Autumn hosted the Merce Cunningham and Dance Company of New York, which presented at the Dramatyczny Theatre choreographic compositions to music by John Cage – one of the distinctive points of this highly varied Festival edition.

The Warsaw Autumn was on the winning streak throughout the 1960s. "Clearing the backlog" meant, in accordance with the declarations, that works rarely or never presented in Poland now appeared in the Warsaw Autumn programme. Special attention was paid to the music of Karol Szymanowski – the "father" of Polish contemporary music. Two of his symphonies were performed at the Festival as many as three times (III – *Song of Night* in 1956, 1959 and 1962; IV – *Sinfonie concertante* in 1959, 1962 and 1966). Both of his violin concertos, both quartets as well as songs were presented. Another particularly honoured classic was Igor Stravinsky, who featured in the programmes of nearly every WA edition, in highly varied repertoire from chamber music to ballets. The other side of contemporary Russian music was represented by Dmitri Shostakovich, from whose output the WA mostly focused on string quartets and symphonies, also presenting (in 1965) the opera *Katerina Izmailova*.

The highlight of the 1964 edition was the appearance of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which played music by the American classics with its characteristic serialist and jazz influences (Gunther Schuller, Walter Piston, Aaron Copland, as well as Paul Hindemith and his *Pittsburgh Symphony*).

For geographic and political balance, the Warsaw Autumn also hosted Rudolf Barshai and his orchestra (then still known as Moscow Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra), who presented, among others, a phenomenal orchestration of Sergei Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives* and – for the sake of aesthetic balance this time – the avant-garde

Ensemble Instrumental de Musique Contemporaine of Paris under Constantin Simonovic and the Musica Viva Pragensis.²¹

The latter ensemble was thus characterised by Lisa Jakelski:

Established at the Prague Conservatory in 1961, Musica Viva Pragensis (...) likewise testified to the appeal (and circulation) of avant-garde ideals across Cold War boundaries.²²

The censors afforded some limited freedom to the Warsaw Autumn programmers, which meant that from time to time the Festival also managed to present works by those composers who escaped the "better side of the globe." 1958 saw a performance of *Symphony No. 4* by Roman Palester – at that time already working for the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe, and in 1965 an orchestra from Helsinki was allowed to play – side by side with music by Sibelius (!), Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar and Einojuhani Rautavaara – also *Apparitions* by György Ligeti, who had left Hungary after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. As Lisa Jakelsky observed in her book, this meeting point of two worlds, which – according to Polish communist politicians – was originally meant as a platform for confrontation proving the superiority of music from the "people's democracies" – in the long run caused an erosion of the system, which – especially in the domain of culture – revealed in full the absurdity of its tenets. The role and importance of the Warsaw Autumn in breaking down the artificial barriers can hardly be overestimated. The musicians met at the Festival, exchanged experiences, and in later years – also established collaborations. Naturally, this was also reflected in their music. It would be difficult to list all the phenomena, such as the appearance of progressively younger generations at the Warsaw Autumn, but also the continued coexistence of many trends: conservative (represented e.g. by Georgy Sviridov's cantata *The Songs of Kursk* for choir and orchestra, performed at WA 1966) and progressive (exemplified at the same edition of the Festival by Pierre Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître*). Also in the same year, the State Higher School of Music (now the F. Chopin University) in Warsaw made its the concert hall available as one of the Festival venues. At 5 pm that concert hall housed the "relatively well-behaved" chamber music, while the concert at 10 pm

²¹ Krzysztof Baculewski: „Warszawska Jesień”. *Kalendarium subiektywne pięćdziesięciu festiwali*; *Warszawska Jesień 2007*, p.16

²² Lisa Jakelsky, *op.cit.*, p.110

was dedicated to the avant-garde – to mention only the memorable performances of Bogusław Schaeffer's *TIS MW 2* by Cracow's MW2 and of Jan Bark and Folke Rabe's instrumental theatre, music by Cornelius Cardew and others performed by Stockholm's Kultrkvartetten and numerous other musicians, including Zygmunt Krauze and John Tilbury (who would also collaborate many times in the future). The same year 1966 saw the WA presentation of another (after the opera *Il Prigioniero* – 1963 and *Canti di prigionia* – 1960) important piece by Luigi Dallapiccola – *Canti di liberazione*. For Polish music, 1966 proved to be a kind of breakthrough. A large number of Polish compositions were presented at the WA in that year, including Grażyna Bacewicz's *Contradizione*, Augustyn Bloch's *Dialoghi* for violin and orchestra, Tomasz Sikorski's *Sequenza I* for orchestra, and Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's *Refrain*. The Grand Theatre staged Tadeusz Baird's music drama *Tomorrow* after a novelette by Joseph Conrad. But the key catalyst of change was the first Polish performance of Krzysztof Penderecki's *St Luke Passion*, with soloists Dorothy Dorow, Andrzej Hiolski, Bernard Ładysz, actor Leszek Herdegen, Cracow Philharmonic Choirs and Orchestra under Henryk Czyż. The idea of “the twilight of the avant-garde” became a leitmotif of reviews and debates; the avant-garde was still understood at that time mainly as innovations in the sphere of sound and types of expression.

Another caesura – this time a political one – was provided by the year 1968. In that year, the Warsaw Autumn was held jointly with the International Society for Contemporary Music World Music Days, organised each year by a different host country. As in 1939, also this time politics contributed to a partial failure of the event. The invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies on Czechoslovakia led many artists to refuse participation in protest.

The beginning of the new decade – the 1970s – was thus characterised by Tadeusz Kaczyński:

The concerts of the 14th Warsaw Autumn provided a platform for the manifestation of a new aesthetics, aimed against the ideals of the 60s' avant-garde. The previous quest for the maximum possible individualisation of musical language has been replaced by anonymity, the complexity of musical textures – by maximum reduction, mobility – by stasis, dynamism – by calm, monumentality – by miniature forms, maximalism – by minimalism. This new trend was represented by Morton Feldman, John White, Howard Skempton, Cornelius Cardew, and among Polish composers – by Tomasz Sikorski and Zygmunt Krauze. Collective composition was represented by two Swedish instrumental theatre ensembles: Bel Canto-Kören and Kultrkvartetten.²³

The “Warsztat Muzyczny” (“Music Workshop”) ensemble appeared at successive festivals from 1968 onward in its familiar line-up of four musicians, presenting extremely varied Polish and foreign repertoire, frequently in the form of joint projects with the American pianist John Tilbury and with other artists. The crowning point of Zygmunt Krauze's (the Workshop's founder and artistic director) global artistic activity was a project entitled *Enkyklopaideia* – a collection of brief pieces written for the Music Workshop by such composers as, among others, Louis Andriessen, Morton Feldman, Luc Ferrari, Vinko Globokar, Mauricio Kagel, Arne Nordheim, Per Nørgård, and Aurel Stroe. This succession of compositions, performed one after another, represented an engaging kaleidoscope of styles that suggested that the widely foretold “twilight of the avant-garde,” though evident, was not a universal phenomenon. Of special interest to the initiates was a piece by... Gala Varvarin. Under this name [of the composer's wife – translator's note] the organisers smuggled into the programme a work by the Soviet dissident Edison Denisov, another of whose compositions had been deleted from the programme at explicit orders from authorities beyond and above the Repertoire Committee. Instead, the WA audience was treated to Tikhon Khrennikov's *Piano Concerto No. 2* in the composer's own interpretation. Despite such incidents, however, in the 1970s one could observe a distinct “avant-gardisation” of ensembles from the communist bloc countries. Apart from the already known *Musica Viva Pragensis*, which returned to the Warsaw Autumn in 1971, the Festival also hosted the *Budapesti Kamarazüttes* (1972, with music by György Kurtág, György Ligeti, and others) and *Ars Nova* from Cluj (Romania) in the same year. In 1978 *Musica Nova* Bucharest performed Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* at St Hyacinth's Church. Another piece by Messiaen – *La Transfiguration de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* – was also presented at the same church. The 1978 concert by Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra with violinists Tatiana Grindenko and Gidon Kremer, featuring pieces by Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt (then still as Soviet citizens) and Bronius Kutavičius – caused a genuine sensation.

Since 1971, there has been a marked tendency in the Warsaw Autumn programmes each year to distinguish one composer, whose works were presented at several different concerts. For instance, in 1971 the final concert was dedicated to the music of Olivier Messiaen, frequently performed at the Warsaw Autumn. In 1989, Giacinto Scelsi was selected as the protagonist of the Festival, in 1990 – George Crumb, in 2016 – Salvatore Sciarrino.

23 Tadeusz Kaczyński, *op.cit.* p.10

In the 1970s the contemporary classics were still present in the programmes, though less space was dedicated to them than before. The audience had a chance to recall, among others, Witold Lutosławski's *Symphony No. 1* (in 1972; his 2nd was performed in 1967). In 1971 Das Kölner Ensemble presented Berg's *Lulu* and Schönberg's chamber pieces, as well as *Acustice II* by Mauricio Kagel – a composer already familiar to the audience of the previous Festival editions. One of the highlights of WA 1972 was the concert by Les Percussions de Strasbourg, featuring works by Edgar Varèse, Jean Barraqué, André Boucourechliev, and Kazimierz Serocki. The ensemble returned to the Warsaw Autumn in 1975 with Iannis Xenakis' *Persephassa*. In 1973, the Warsaw Autumn opened with two symphonies: Krzysztof Penderecki's 1st, and Dmitri Shostakovich's vocal-instrumental 14th. The successive Festival programmes presented a kaleidoscope of trends, tendencies and phenomena, with a growing participation of the multimedia. One of the key festival events in 1974 was Collegium Vocale Köln's night concert at Warsaw's State Higher School of Music, when Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Stimmung* put the audience into a trance. The very next day, a 12-hour piano marathon was held, with Eric Satie's *Vexations* performed by several pianists (his music also featured in another concert programme). These were events that left a mark in the collective memory – the “sensations” that added colour to the image of the Festival. An overview of the successive WA programmes in the 1970s proves that the Repertoire Committee – consisting of eminent composers, then working already without ministerial supervision – took care to present the widest possible spectrum of tendencies, trends and aesthetics that had appeared in music in the recent years. The change of the aesthetic paradigm was also clearly visible (and audible) – especially in the area of Polish music, whose new generation now entered the stage, while the older generation was evidently moving away from the progressive ideas of the avant-garde.

The universally accepted principle of maximum programme diversity led – for the first time – to a point where not only the aesthetic, but even the physiological limits of audience perception had been exceeded. This must have had much impact on the reception of the avant-garde works.²⁴

24 Krzysztof Szwejgier: *Muzyka naturalna – marzenie i fakt*, in: *Przemiany techniki dźwiękowej, stylu i estetyki w polskiej muzyce lat 70-tych*, Kraków 1986, p.38

1977 saw the Festival debut of Eugeniusz Knapik – a representative of a generation of composers whose aesthetics was labelled as “the New Romanticism”. While not excluding novelty, it was open to a dialogue with the past and to artistic syntheses. Another 1977 debut was that of Krzysztof Knittel, whose artistic stance – though rather different from the “New Romantics” – was also far removed from the hermeticism of the avant-garde. The beginning of the next decade was marked by the debuts of Aleksander Lason and Andrzej Krzanowski. At the same time, in the music of Krzysztof Penderecki and that of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (representing different approaches) – such elements as non-musical message and links to tradition (mainly the religious music tradition of all ages) gained significance, apart from expressive qualities. The turning point in the reception of these new tendencies was the performance in 1977 of H.M. Górecki's *Symphony No. 3 “Symphony of Sorrowful Songs”* for soprano and orchestra, which provoked extreme critical reactions – from downright rejection to unfeigned admiration. It took 15 years for this composition to achieve full recognition and acceptance. The same trend of withdrawal from the avant-garde is represented by the *Sinfonia sacra* of Andrzej Panufnik (WA 1978) – a composer whom the weakened 1970s regime in Poland allowed to restore to concert programmes, lifting the censorship ban on his name and works. The ban was also removed in the case of Roman Palester. Attempts were made to link the music of Polish composers to trends in Western Europe or the United States. The music of Tomasz Sikorski was thus associated with the minimalist aesthetics, though critics stressed the distinct character of his works, different from e.g. the output of Steve Reich (whose WA debut, the highly original *Clapping Music*, was presented by the Music Workshop in 1977).

The stylistic and formal diversity of the Warsaw Autumn in the 1970s was enhanced by opera and ballet spectacles. Apart from the already mentioned *Lulu* by Berg, Warsaw's Grand Theatre presented Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* (both productions by Deutsche Oper am Rhein). In 1975, the Státni Divadlo of Brno performed Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *From the House of the Dead*. In 1976 the Moscow Chamber Opera under the baton of Gennady Rozhdestvensky staged Shostakovich's *The Nose* at the Roma Theatre. In 1979 the Warsaw Autumn presented the Stuttgart version of Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*, in 1974 – two Polish ballets: Romuald Twardowski's *The Sculptures of Master Peter* and

Augustyn Bloch's *Very Sleeping Beauty*. In 1973 the Grand Theatre produced Grażyna Bacewicz's last, unfinished work – the ballet *Le désir* after Pablo Picasso's play *Le désir attrapé par la queue* (*Desire Caught by the Tail*), performed during the same night with Alexander Mosolov's *The Iron Foundry*. The Warsaw Autumn now also had its stars. In the 1970s, such status was achieved by the harpsichordist Elżbieta Chojnacka, the singers Halina Łukomska, Cathy Berberian and Roswitha Trexler. Apart from these most famous and popular artists, the Festival hosted musicians representing all styles and performance techniques, from traditional to the avant-garde.

The inaugural concert of WA 1979 featured *Pianophonie* for piano, electronic sound transformation and orchestra by Kazimierz Serocki, which would soon prove to be the last composition by this one of the Festival founders. Kazimierz Serocki died on 9th March 1981, Tadeusz Baird – also suddenly, on 2nd September in the same year. The Festival continued without them. The programme book of WA 1981 printed Tadeusz Baird's essay entitled *Początki "Warszawskiej Jesieni"* [*The Beginnings of the Warsaw Autumn*], which ends with a rhetorical question echoing the comments made earlier in this overview – namely, why most of the music written in our own times requires "special treatment" and cannot simply be presented during the regular concert seasons. The composer attempts to reply to this question, arguing that the division into "high" and "popular" art is clear and inviolable. The future, with its alternative trends far removed from standard productions for the mass audience, was to undermine this strict division, however, and it also changed the image of the Warsaw Autumn. Before it happened, however, politics interfered in the history of that major cultural event again. Even though the communist authorities exerted much pressure on the organisers to hold another edition of the Festival, which was supposed to help legitimise their actions after the introduction of the martial law in Poland on 13th December 1981. However, out of solidarity with other artistic environments, the Polish Composers' Union firmly refused, and that year there was no Warsaw Autumn.

The next stage in the history of the Festival began in 1983. By that time one could observe symptoms of a certain crisis, caused not only by external factors, but also – by the exhaustion of the Festival's basic formula. The Warsaw Autumn was no longer the only platform for meetings of musicians from the East and the West; nearly all the 20th-century classics had already been presented, and the avant-garde no longer produced the special effects

that had provided the season's attraction (even if some of those ideas were not convincing artistically, and their attraction could be superficial). All the same, the Festival, programmed by the constantly changing Repertoire Committee, continued to follow the same patterns, still providing many remarkable artistic experiences and gradually filling in the gaps in the image of 20th-century music with new or older works. Already from 1981, thanks to the Parisian Ensemble de L'Itinéraire, the WA audience came in contact with the music of Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail – representatives of a new direction known as spectralism, which would return in the future in many guises, e.g. in the original works of Kaija Saariaho. The classics of the avant-garde also continued to be presented, though there were more and more works from outside the avant-garde circles, such as Sofia Gubaidulina's *Offertorium. Violin Concerto* and music representing different varieties of neo-Classicism, including a retrospective survey of the music of Elliot Carter in 1986.

Apart from the "classics" of Polish contemporary music – Lutosławski, Penderecki, Górecki, and Kilar – the Warsaw Autumn featured more and more composers of the younger generations, such as Krzysztof Meyer, Marta Ptaszyńska, Elżbieta Sikora, Zbigniew Bargielski, Zbigniew Bujarski, Marek Stachowski, Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, Rafał Augustyn, Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil, Krzysztof Baculewski, Lidia Zielińska, Stanisław Krupowicz, Tadeusz Wielecki, Jerzy Kornowicz, Hanna Kulenty, and Paweł Mykietyn. They co-created the new image of Polish music with the so-called "Stalowa Wola Generation"²⁵: Eugeniusz Knapik, Andrzej Krzanowski, Aleksander Lasoń, and Paweł Szymański. A special event in 1990 was the visit to Poland – after more than 30 years in emigration – of Andrzej Panufnik, to whom two complete concerts were dedicated, while individual pieces by this composer also featured in other WA concert programmes. Another sensation was the 1999 Polish premiere of Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* – 31 years after its American first performance.

The 1990s were a time of transformation for the Warsaw Autumn. The change of political-economic system in Poland created both chances and dangers for cultural activity. Though the Ministry of Culture remained the main Festival patron, other sources of funding began to appear. Late in the decade, this list of sponsors was already

²⁵ The Festival "Young Musicians to the Young City" was organised and directed in Stalowa Wola in 1975-1980 by Krzysztof Droba of the Academy of Music in Cracow.

long. The Festival programmes developed in several directions. On the one hand, retrospective presentations and single-composer concerts were organised – for artists frequently representing the opposite poles of musical aesthetics (Stockhausen and Kilar in 1992, Per Nørgård in 1993, and in 1994 a number of concerts were dedicated to Witold Lutosławski, who had died on 7th February that year). On the other hand, the programmers sought out works that would provoke lively reactions, such as Giya Kancheli's *A Life Without Christmas* (WA 1995), Elżbieta Sikora's opera *The Heart Extractor* (WA 1995), Heiner Goebbels' *Die Befreiung des Prometheus* and selections from Eugeniusz Knapik's opera *La libertà chiama la libertà*. Apart from those already familiar, the Festival invited new ensembles: the German Musikfabrik, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Cikada Ensemble from Norway, and Zephir Ensemble from Italy. 1995 saw an important organisational change: A Festival Director would henceforth be appointed in a competition. The Director has wider prerogatives than previously the head of the Repertoire Committee, though the most important decisions are still taken collectively. The post of WA director has been held by Krzysztof Knittel (1995-1998), then Tadeusz Wielecki (1999-2016), and since 2017 – by Jerzy Kornowicz. The 40th Warsaw Autumn in 1997 began with a commemoration of the Festival initiators: Tadeusz Baird (*Symphony No. 3*) and Kazimierz Serocki (*Episodes* for strings and three percussion groups), while Jan Krenz – the third member of “Group ‘49”²⁶ – conducted a concert featuring Lutosławski's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* and Messiaen's *Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. Krzysztof Knittel's introduction to the programme book announced joint projects by ensembles from France, Germany and Poland, including the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio and the Institut International de Musique Électroacoustique of Bourges. The Polish Camerata Silesia choir and the Münchener Kammerorchester jointly performed Stanisław Krupowicz's *Christmas Oratorio*. This international cooperation intensified in the years that followed. Another refreshing element were the commissions for new works. In the same year, the Warsaw Autumn decided to develop the tradition of fringe events, which had already been held before

(e.g. in 1981 – electroacoustic music concerts, a production of Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* by Poznań's Grand Theatre at the Church of All Saints, and Friedrich Schenker's *Kammerspiel II – Missa nigra* at the Mały Theatre). Many fringe events have been co-organised by PWM Edition, which focuses on marking anniversaries related to Polish composers. There are also fringe events of a different character, as in the case of the Spanish artist Llorenç Barber's concert *Vox Clamans* for church bells, for which the bells of Warsaw old Town's numerous churches were employed in 1997.

Apart from “playing with space”, another regular feature of the Warsaw Autumn, especially in the 21st century, have been sound and video installations – which can be visited, viewed and contemplated throughout the duration of the Festival. They are fringe events, but they also penetrate into the Festival's programme core from time to time, becoming the subject of numerous debates. Works in which sound (especially the traditional acoustic instrumental sound) are not the only ingredient – provoked many polemics in the past, not only among critics, but also – members of the Repertoire Committee. During one of the out-of-Warsaw sessions of that Committee, held in Łomna in 2007, Andrzej Chłopecki tried to refute the criticism levelled at the Festival by young commentators who claimed that the Warsaw Autumn only promoted “academic” music produced by music academy graduates which – according to those critics – is usually more conservative, and that the rich and varied world of alternative music was overlooked altogether. Chłopecki warned those present against the “terror of anti-academism”, just as in the past defences had been put up against the “terror of the avant-garde”, which tolerated no other trend apart from serialism. In this context, Chłopecki claimed, “every piece without electronics or video becomes suspect.”²⁷ In order to maintain the aesthetic pluralism that the Warsaw Autumn had always prided itself on, and at the same time avoid chaos in the Festival programmes – the organisers came up with the idea of thematic editions of the Festivals. At first, they focused on specific geographic regions. In 1998, it was the European North. Music by Scandinavian composers was performed; a live internet link with Helsinki and Oslo was established, which made possible simultaneous audiovisual actions in all the three

²⁶ “Group 49” was formed by Tadeusz Baird, Jan Krenz and Kazimierz Serocki during the Composers' Assembly in Łagów Lubuski in 1949 – the meeting where socialist realism was officially declared as the binding doctrine. The members of the Group declared that they would write music accessible to a wide audience, but without giving up elements of the modern sound language.

²⁷ *Andrzeja Chłopeckiego refleksje wokół festiwalu „Warszawska Jesień 2010, Łomna 6th-7th November 2010. Recorded on a CD attached to: Warszawska Jesień w tekstach Andrzeja Chłopeckiego, Warsaw 2013*

centres, making use of both acoustic instruments and computer-generated sounds and images. Other editions concentrated on other regions. WA 2008 was dominated by Iberian culture, complemented by presentations of Stockhausen's great cycles (including excerpts from *Klang* and *Licht*). There were also festival editions focusing on a specific concept or question, such as the 2009 Festival dedicated largely to electronic music. The keyboard – alone and with electronics – was the leitmotif of the 2010 edition, while in 2012 the topic of “voice” was explained by Tadeusz Wielecki as “speech, song, image, action and ritual.” In 2016 this topic was continued with an edition dedicated to the opera and various other stage forms, from Salvatore Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici* to Olga Neuwirth's *Lost Highway* to Paweł Mykietyn's *The Magic Mountain*. There was also a WA edition that elaborated on fundamental musical concepts epitomised by the coinage “dynamistatics” (2015) and another one devoted to unconventional and old instruments (2014). The topic that proved most controversial was that of “committed” or “involved music”, that is, one in which the composers express their views and opinions on important political, social and moral issues (2011). The risk of the Festival's ideologisation has fortunately been avoided – even at the cost of creating formidable psychological obstacles in periods when ideologically involved art was a priority for the state authorities.

All these varied projects made it possible for a new generation of artists to enter the Warsaw Autumn stages. Among Polish composers, one should mention Agata Zubel, Aleksandra Gryka, Dobromiła Jaskot, Cezary Duchnowski, Tomasz Praszczalek, Marcin Bortnowski, Wojciech Ziemowit Zych, Artur Zagajewski, Paweł Hendrich, Wojciech Blecharz, Andrzej Kwieciński, and many others. At the same time, the backlog continued to be cleared as in the previous years. 2004 saw the WA debut of Jonathan Harvey and the performance of the last of the operas commissioned as part of *The Land of Ulro* cycle. After the contributions by Martijn Padding (2001) and Osvaldas Balakauskas (2002), the third part of the cycle to a libretto after William Blake was a computer opera by Stanisław Krupowicz.

Warsaw Autumn's new programme features are frequently presented in new spaces: Na Woli Theatre, Ochota Sports Hall, the Warsaw Stock Exchange Centre in Książęca St., the Warsaw Olympic Centre in Żoliborz District, the Highest Voltage Hall at the Institute of Power Engineering, and – perhaps most importantly – venues on the right-hand side of the Vistula, in Praga District: Reed Factory Artistic Centre in Otwocka Street

and Koneser Warsaw Vodka Factory in Ząbkowska Street. Krzysztof Baculewski, a member of the WA Repertoire Committee, thus commented on this phenomenon:

This is also related to the gradual loss of interest, both on the part of listeners and composers, in traditional symphonic concerts, and at the same time a strong tendency to locate high culture events on the other side of the Vistula.²⁸

Apart from meetings with composers – which have become a permanent feature of the Festival – one should also note another, extremely important initiative: the Little Warsaw Autumn, held since 2000 for the youngest Festival audience, parallel to the main Warsaw Autumn current. These spectacles, workshops and games introduce children in an accessible manner to musical problems and frequently encourage them to take active part in the Festival events.

It would be impossible to comment on all the events and present the entire vast history of the 60 editions of the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music in this kind of a brief survey. I had to omit many concerts and names. My aim has been to present an overview of the evolution that has taken place in the Festival programmes as a response to all kinds of new phenomena in culture, which the Festival has striven to represent as comprehensively and as objectively as possible.

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²⁸ Krzysztof Baculewski, *op.cit.* p.60

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