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20TH-CENTURY POLISH MUSIC FOR CLARINET

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Mariusz BARSZCZ | clarinet

Piotr SACIUK | piano

Jacek MICHALAK | accordion

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Kazimierz SEROCKI (1922-1981):
Dance for clarinet and piano (1954)

A powerhouse of energy that has its roots in an exuberant 'oberek' – this seems to be a fitting description of the clarinet version of the third movement of the Sonatina for trombone and piano, written in 1954 for Juliusz Pietrachowicz. In contrast to its 'brass' colleague, however, the clarinet, an instrument which has a brighter sound and is no stranger to a folk band, is in a constantly dazzling dialogue with the piano, whose part is characterised by tart, dissonant harmonies. Ripe with humour, this is a miniature reminiscent of a folk dance, tailored according to well-tested neo-classical principles, which had their rich tradition in 20th-century music, irrespective of the political system at a given time. Composers have always looked to folk music for their inspiration. If they do it out of a genuine, heartfelt need, the results are excellent. This is the case with Serocki's little masterpiece, the composer's last work directly inspired by Polish folklore. Every now and then the listener is taken by surprise by fast developing phrases, in which the triple metre suddenly break into duple metre. It's difficult to dance to this music. It also calls for a true master to perform it.

Stefan KISIELEWSKI (1911-1991):
Intermezzo for clarinet and piano (1951)

Instead of using folk music as inspiration, in line with the dogma of socialist realism, the ever-contrary Kisielewski came up with a more universal, neo-classical idiom, following the conventions adopted during his pre-war studies with Kazimierz Sikorski. He made use of them at the difficult period of the early 1950s because they offered a chance to write music of high quality. The Intermezzo is a good example, intriguing listeners with its motoric drive, piquancy, attractive sound and formal clarity.

Kisielewski does not allow listeners even a moment's rest. Furthermore, the title is deceptive as the piece is rather a forward-moving toccata or musical *perpetuum mobile* than an intermezzo.

Witold LUTOSLAWSKI (1913-1994):
Dance preludes for clarinet and piano (1954)

This suite of miniatures, completed on 21 December 1954, is regarded as the composer's farewell to folk-inspired trends. The work's original version, for clarinet and piano, was premiered on 15 February 1955 in Warsaw by Sergiusz Nadgryzowski (piano) and Ludwik Kurkiewicz (clarinet). The latter enjoyed a high reputation as an excellent chamber musician who partnered many outstanding instrumentalists and vocalists of the time. The composer also arranged the piece for clarinet and chamber orchestra and for nine instruments with the clarinet assigned the main part.

In the Baroque period, the prelude was known as an introduction. Fondly cultivated by the Romantics, it was developed in the twentieth century as a piece which communicated first and foremost the emotions of the moment, being a reminiscence of the state of the composer's soul, a dream or recollection of an event. By describing his miniatures as 'dance' preludes, Lutosławski left no doubt as to his source of inspiration. The first (*Allegro molto*), third (*Allegro giocoso*) and fifth miniature (*Allegro molto*) directly refer to the dance, even though it is hardly possible to start dancing given their metre and the fact that it suddenly switches from triple to duple (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/4). Yet, they all burst with energy and vitality and delight listeners with extraordinary metro-rhythmic ideas which call for skills of the highest calibre from the performers. One can conjure here a vision of frantic country pageantry with the girls chased by their admirers. The clarinet and piano communicate such an image in a symbolic, very refined way. The metrically stable miniatures – the second (*Andantino* in 9/8 and 6/8) and the fourth (*Andante* in 6/8), with their mood of reflection and reverie – constitute a counterbalance to the vivacious parts of the cycle.

Krzysztof PENDERECKI (*1933):
Three miniatures for clarinet and piano (1956)

This is Penderecki's last work written during his studies with Artur Malawski at the State Higher School of Music in Kraków. Malawski did not shun folk inspirations in his music and most probably expected his students to be well-versed in this field. While perfecting his skills on the basis of neo-classical patterns, the young Penderecki, perhaps subconsciously, adopted a convention which in a more distinct shape is present in the works by Serocki and Lutosławski featured on this CD. This is true of the outer movements of the triptych which are energetic and playful. The middle

part is far more colouristic, a harbinger of the sonoristic period. The work was premiered on 7 November 1958 in Kraków, at a concert of the Polish Composers' Union, with Władysław Kosieradzki and Zbigniew Jeżewski as the soloists.

Piotr PERKOWSKI (1901-1990):

Sonata for clarinet and piano (1954-1955)

Rooted in the past, this is the most serious piece on this CD, written with a solemn sense of responsibility for every motif, theme and phrase, exhibiting solid craftsmanship and the composer's developed skills in harmony, counterpoint and form.

All this is anchored in well-tested procedures and is therefore lucid and logical, without any attempt to hypnotise listeners with metro-rhythmic devices, as was the case with Lutosławski's *Dance Preludes*. While the first theme of the first movement (*Prelude*), which evokes associations with the Baroque, is introduced by the piano, the clarinet takes it up on its first entry. The *Prelude* is an introduction to the capricious second movement (*Humoresque*), which is in contrast to the third (*Aria*). In the *Finale*, unlike in the first movement, it is the piano which takes a supportive role. It is not trying to be a melodic instrument, leaving the privilege of 'singing' to the wind instrument.

The score came from the hand of a representative of a sizeable group of Polish composers who prior to World War Two made pilgrimages to the French capital, in order to build a solid craftsmanship in that bastion of neo-classicism, to soak in French lightness, wit and the ability to draw on tradition in a way that much room was left for fun and conjuring with sound. However, in composing his *Sonata for clarinet and piano*, Perkowski was inspired by German rather than French Baroque traditions. Could he have forgotten that in 1926, at the age of 25, he was a co-founder, together with Stanisław Wiechowicz and Feliks Łabuński, of the Association of Young Polish Musicians in Paris? Did the wild years of his youth go completely out of his head?

Jerzy BAUER (*1936):

Toccata for clarinet and piano (1967)

Written in 1967, this short, succinct and brilliant miniature, has no trace of the pomp that is a hallmark of the great toccatas by the masters of Baroque music. The piece was premiered in 1969, by Zdzisław Kulak and Rajmund Ambroziak, during the Artistic Spring in Łódź. It is a spectacular opening piece for a recital or an excellent encore.

Józef ŚWIDER (1930-2014):

Capriccio for clarinet and piano (1962)

Even though given a modest title, the piece is more than a capriccio, which for Romantic composers was usually an exploration of a single, distinct idea. Here, the meditative sections are interwoven in a constant narration with more lively, vigorous fragments. After *Lento: Tempo rubato e capriccioso*, with its atmosphere of reverie, come *Vivo*, with lively parts for both instruments, and the central *Adagio – lugubre*, solemn in character. In line with the principle of symmetry, they are instantly followed by *Più vivo*, and the final *Lento: Tempo I*, which refers in its character to the opening section.

The piece was dedicated to Andrzej Janicki, an excellent clarinetist who was associated with the Great Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice and the city's Karol Szymanowski Music Academy.

Bronisław Kazimierz PRZYBYLSKI (1941-2011):

Saggio di sounare for solo clarinet (1964)

To confront the musical matter for a solo melodic instrument is always a challenge for both the composer and performer. What should be done to ensure that the piece is not merely a catalogue of the instrument's capabilities relating to technique, sound and expression? Przybylski clearly had a good recipe because the piece draws listeners into the narration of the miniature, from its meditative beginning to a virtuoso, spectacular conclusion.

Andrzej DOBROWOLSKI (1921-1990):

Music for magnetic tape and solo bass clarinet (1980)

The work begins in a mysterious way, with electronically-generated pulses, hollow, very regular, slower than a healthy man's heartbeat. This is the preparation for the entry of the clarinet in high register, forthright and somewhat provocative in its penetrating, bright timbre. This outburst of the solo instrument, followed, this time in a reverse order, by the regular pulse of tape sounds, will return later on, towards the end of the piece. In the central section the sounds of the clarinet and tape examine and listen to one another, gradually accelerating the narrative pace.

Dobrowolski penned the composition in 1980 at the Institut für Elektronische Musik of the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Graz, where he lectured from 1976. He wrote it for the excellent clarinetist Harry Sparnaay, who was also the soloist at the work's Polish premiere during the Warsaw Autumn Festival in 1985.

Andrzej Dobrowolski was among the legendary figures working closely with the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio in the first fifteen years or so of its existence. *Music for magnetic tape and solo bass clarinet* (1980) belongs to his lesser known compositions.

Andrzej KRZANOWSKI (1951-1990):

Trifle for accordion and bass clarinet (1983)

The year 1983 hardly inspired optimism in Poland and this is perhaps why Krzanowski's piece from that time can be interpreted as a reflection of his inner paralysis. He already had to his credit numerous successes in Poland and abroad. Several years earlier he made his debut alongside other representatives of his generation, capturing public attention during the 'Young Musicians for a Young City' festivals in Stalowa Wola. An excellent accordionist himself, he wrote many pieces for his beloved instrument, many of which are true gems in the accordion repertoire.

Trifle for accordion and bass clarinet was written for the Dutch accordionist Astrid in't Veld, who gave its premiere in Rockanje, the Netherlands, in 1985. The bass clarinet part was performed by Henri Bok. The first section of the piece is notable for a mysteriously meandering melody performed by the clarinet against a backdrop of a quasi-electronic, very frugal accordion part. The second section, twice as long as the first, is opened, in a no less restrained manner, by the accordion, soon joined by the clarinet, solely to add some colour to the structure of the piece and remain in a subdued dialogue with the accordion till the end. The English title, suggesting something small and of little significance, finds its reflection in the composer's extremely austere use of the expressive capabilities of both instruments.

Krzysztof KNITTEL (*1947):

Points/Lines for clarinet, tapes and slides (1973)

The work represents the earliest period in Knittel's career and is among a group of compositions which mark the beginning of his adventure with the electronic medium, that would be consistently developed in later decades. The electronic layer of the piece, realised at the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio with assistance from Bohdan Mazurek, is made up of three planes, of three tapes created on the basis of different technological principles. In the composer's own words, the first of them uses simple tones created by the generator, the second is based on 48 pure tones modified in terms of pitch and dynamics according to graphic charts, whereas the third was created on the basis of purely intuitive transformation of rustle effects pre-recorded on the clarinet.

The work had its premiere on 23 April 1974 in Warsaw at a concert of the KEW group of composers, which was formed by Krzysztof Knittel, Elżbieta Sikora and Wojciech Michniewski. In 1975 it was performed at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, marking Knittel's debut at the event. The solo part was performed by Paweł Pacanowski. The piece begins innocently, with the singing of birds. Then comes an entry of electronically-generated sounds, after which the clarinet begins a dialogue with the electronic layer. The music becomes ever more distinctive, disturbing on the one hand and jocular and grotesque on the other.

Marek Zwyrzykowski

Mariusz BARSZCZ, clarinetist and teacher, was born in Kielce in 1971. He studied with Piotr Niećko at the State Music School in his native town and with Ryszard Ryczel at the Music Academy in Łódź, from which he graduated with distinction in 1996. In 1994-2000 he developed his skills with Alojzy Szulc in Warsaw. He held a grant from the Minister of Culture and Art (1994/1995). In 2007 he completed postgraduate studies in arts management at the Warsaw School of Economics. He participated in the International Clarinet Courses in Jastrzębie Zdrój (2005) and at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw in 2011, where he studied under the guidance of Florent Héau. In 2012 he gained

a doctorate in music from the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź.

He won First Prize and the Grand Prix at the National Clarinet Festival in Piotrków Trybunalski (the category of clarinet chamber ensembles) and an honourable mention in the soloists' category (1995). His honours also include the Bronze Medal for Long Service from the President of Poland (2011). He has performed at numerous national and international festivals including those organized by Jeunesses Musicales, the Świętokrzyski Music Festival in Kielce, the Krystyna Jamroz International Music Festival in Busko-Zdrój, the 25th 'Musica Polonica Nova' Festival in Wrocław, Warsaw Guitar Meetings and the 'Kolory Polski' (Colours of Poland) in 2012. He has made many CD, radio and television recordings.

He is a member of the Świętokrzyski Wind Quintet, the Kielce Trio, the Animato chamber ensemble (specializing in the performance of salon music, Alla Vienna (which performs music of various periods, styles and genres in an innovative way), and Brillante Duo (with the accordionist Jacek Michalak, exploring new, interesting sounds in chamber music). Since 1996 he has been a soloist of the Oskar Kolberg Symphony Orchestra in Kielce, where he served as a member of the board for several terms.

He has taken part in the orchestra's tours of the Benelux countries, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and France. In 2004-2006, together with the Oskar Kolberg Symphony Orchestra in Kielce, he worked closely with the composer Piotr Rubik in the performances and recordings of his popular oratorios: *Golgota Świętokrzyska*, *Tu es Petrus*, *Psałterz Wrześniowy*, two of which have received the Platinum Disc title.

He also pursues a teaching career as a member of faculty of the Ludomir Różycki State Music School in Kielce (since 1994) and of the Music Academy in Łódź, where since 2012 he has been in charge of a clarinet class and has lectured on the methodology of teaching wind instruments performance. He has received many awards for his achievements in teaching.

Piotr SACIUK studied piano performance with Zbigniew Lasocki at the Music Academy in Łódź and has been associated with his alma mater since 1978. In 1976 he completed a mastercourse class given by Guido Agosti at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. He gained an honours diploma from the Music Academy in Łódź in 1983. He held a grant from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) to study with Karl Heinz Kämmerling in Hanover. He is now a faculty member, soloist and chamber musician at his alma mater, from which he received a doctorate in piano performance in 1992. He performs regularly in Poland and abroad (Germany, Holland, Ukraine), often appearing with his father, the renowned bass singer Andrzej Saciuki. He twice received the award of the Rector of the Music Academy in Łódź for outstanding artistic standards and achievements in teaching. He has been working closely with the Choir Juvenales Cantore Lodziensis for several years.

Jacek MICHALAK – accordionist, music producer and arts manager – graduated from the Music Academy in Łódź, where he studied accordion with Jerzy Mądrawski and Bogdan Dowlasz, gaining an honours diploma in 1996. Even though he specializes in the performance of contemporary music, he does not shun other genres, having a special affinity for chamber music. He has made numerous recordings for radio, television and film. He is a member of the theatrical group 'Teatr na Wagance'. He is also active as a cultural animateur, as a member of the Artistic Council of the 'Gaude Mater' International Festival of Sacred Music in Częstochowa and the 'Legnica Cantat' National Choral Tournament. In 2009 he took up the post of director of the Bela Bartók International Competition for Young Pianists in Warsaw. He is regularly invited to sit on the juries of music competitions across Poland. In 2003 he received the honorary citizenship of the town of Połczyn-Zdrój.