

The Changing Seasons of the Warsaw Autumn:
Contemporary Music in Poland, 1960-1990

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Music
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

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Fall 2009

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Abstract

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Cold War cultural contests relied on binary divisions that pitted Soviet-backed socialist realism against works by the Western avant-garde. The clear-cut nature of these categories makes it tempting to view all musical styles from this period from either a Soviet or an American perspective. Socialist-era Poland, however, offers an alternative point of view. Rather than simply invert the traditional Cold War dichotomies, Polish musical life unsettled the opposition by asking how avant-garde music might be championed within a socialist framework. The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music provided one response to this question: inaugurated in 1956, it was the most visible manifestation of Polish state support for musical avant-gardism. Through detailing the administrative workings of the festival's organization and analyzing its public outcomes, this study documents the acts of negotiation that made the Warsaw Autumn possible. The first chapter chronicles disputes about compositional freedom and socialist cultural policy that erupted among Polish critics and composers after the 1960

festival premiere of Henryk Górecki's *Scontri (Collisions)* for Orchestra, op. 17. The second examines the Warsaw Autumn as a site for cultural exchange during the early 1960s, a time when access to information was entangled with the exercise of political power. Chapter Three follows Polish composition from the festival out into the world, where works by Polish composers became exportable goods that could travel between the socialist and capitalist camps of a divided Europe. The last chapter views festival repertoire in the 1970s as a form of historiography that challenged binary terms of engagement by providing a means to imagine Poland as part of an integrated international community. The study ends by considering what meanings the Warsaw Autumn could continue to generate after the Cold War and its politics had been consigned to history.

To Steven
(with love and gratitude)

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Introduction

“Come to Poland,” music critic Zygmunt Mycielski counseled his readers in 1965. “See how things look in Warsaw, and how they look when you are seeing them from Warsaw. After all, everyone knows that a piece of art changes when you move it from place to place. Boulez, Stockhausen, and Lutosławski are one thing in the Salle Pleyel, and something else here. They are one thing in London and another in Leningrad.”¹ It was clear that geography was on the Polish critic’s mind. Yet it was geography of a particular sort—one divided between East and West, within which music could circulate, picking up new meanings along the way. That Mycielski framed his exhortation this way points to the importance of place to the reception of postwar music, even for composers whose overt aesthetic stance denied any connection between their works and the world at large.

This dissertation accepts Mycielski’s injunction to view twentieth-century music from a Varsovian perspective. My focus is the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, the most visible manifestation of Polish state support for musical modernism. Founded to counteract Poland’s musical isolation during the Stalinist era, the festival became one of the most important institutions for new music performance in postwar Europe, and it remains one of the most vibrant Polish cultural events.

Since its first installment in 1956, the Warsaw Autumn has concentrated broader currents in Polish musical life. Its concerts have engaged with issues of national identity, the relationship of music to power, and the historiography of twentieth-century composition, to name only a few of the most persistent. It is a microcosm that gives

¹ Zygmunt Mycielski, “Do przyjaciół,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 9/21 (1965): 13.

access to the macrocosm of cultural politics in postwar Europe. Festivals, as planned and purposively coordinated series of events, are inevitably invested with symbolic meaning, and the Warsaw Autumn has been no different. Like the Salzburg Festival in Austria, part of the Warsaw Autumn's resonance derives from its role in creating a unique cultural identity.² It was also a belated addition to a wave of institutions—such as the Holland Festival and Darmstadt summer composition courses in West Germany—established as part of postwar reconstruction. Like them, the Warsaw Autumn was fraught at the outset with hopes for cultural revival.

Most importantly, however, the festival was born into a Cold War environment in which cultural display was a means of asserting cultural superiority. These contests were meaningful not because East and West were incomprehensible to one another, but quite the contrary: because they shared common values—even if each side expressed these values in opposing ways. As Boris Groys argues, the dominant aesthetic in both systems was defined through negation, whether this meant rejecting commercialism and mass culture, or resisting anything that was not part of the Soviet realm.³ Striving for internal purity was the common denominator that bridged East-West divisions.

Musically, the terms of engagement pitted Soviet-sponsored socialist realism against Western modernism, at that time usually in its serialist incarnation. Optimistic, accessible, yet enforced, the consonant harmonic language and programmatic narratives typifying socialist realist music were viewed in the West as a sign of coercion; the harsh

² Michael P. Steinberg, *Austria as Theater and Ideology: The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³ Boris Groys, "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores* ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 76-79.

sonorities and rigid structural processes of serialism—also enforced, albeit by another set of enforcers—were seen by cultural commissars in the East as empty formalism. Change the location and socialist realism is a key component in building a new and better society, while modernism is a preserver and defender of creative autonomy. Neither side of the Cold War cultural divide revealed its full meaning without the other. Dissonance and inscrutability were most resonant insofar as they were imagined in opposition to music that was more easily comprehended, as Martin Brody shows in his seminal examination of the cultural contexts informing Milton Babbitt’s theoretical writings.⁴ Binary divisions were also useful as resistance: Peter Schmelz demonstrates that the apparent reluctance of serialism to disclose its meanings was a source of its appeal to the Soviet Union’s “unofficial” group of young composers.⁵ As Danielle Fosler-Lussier suggests, “the division was real, but each side listened to what the other was saying.”⁶ As one of the first venues to bring music from East and West together on a regular basis, the Warsaw Autumn was one of the places where these messages could be heard most clearly.

It is tempting to view all possible musical styles from this period through the magnifying lens of Soviet versus American poles of power and political thought. Yet such an approach not only divides the globe too neatly; it also reinforces hierarchical conceptions of geopolitical influence in which control flows unidirectionally from center to periphery. Recent musicological work on East Germany has done much to destabilize this view. By tracing maneuvers to perform Bertold Brecht and Paul Dessau’s *Lucullus*

⁴ Martin Brody, “‘Music for the Masses’: Milton Babbitt’s Cold War Music Theory,” *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 161-92.

⁵ Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶ Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), xvi.

operas in 1951, Joy Calico has shown that East Germany had more leverage in managing its own cultural politics than previously imagined.⁷ Cultural life in the GDR was susceptible to competing influences, the internal-Soviet and external-Western. At the moment Calico describes, the urge to maintain an unsullied public image in the West trumped appeasing Eastern concerns. The friction between these competing concerns impelled the GDR to carve out a place between them. Calico's attention to the politics of place provides a model for my work on Poland, where it was just as vital to stake out a position between the era's great powers. Laura Silverberg's account of East German modernism counters cold-war stylistic stereotypes, for serialism was promoted in the mid-1960s by dedicated socialists and Party members.⁸ No simple equation, she cautions, can be drawn between compositional style and political conscience—a warning worth remembering when looking at musical life in Poland, where the avant-garde was part of official cultural life and thus could not straightforwardly signify dissidence.

Polish musical life was no analogue to East Germany, however. Although East German modernists were speaking from within the system, their efforts to portray serialism as compatible with socialist realist ideals hardly met with unqualified approval. Nor were Polish intellectuals and musicians beholden to Party influence as their counterparts to the west. Whereas East German composers had close ties with government authorities, members of the ZKP (Polish Composers' Union) sought to

⁷ Joy Calico, "The Trial, the condemnation, the cover-up: behind the scenes of Brecht/Dessau's *Lucullus* opera(s)," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 14/3 (2002), 313-42.

⁸ Laura Silverberg, "Between Dissonance and Dissidence: Socialist Modernism in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Musicology* 26/1 (2009), 44-84.

distance themselves from the Polish Ministry of Culture.⁹ Even so, Poland was unique within the Soviet bloc for encouraging modernist styles through official channels. Performed, printed, and disseminated through the mechanisms of state support, avant-garde works by Polish composers were actively promoted by their government in a complex social and institutional web. Polish composers' rapid disenchantment with serialism was just as noteworthy. By the early 1960s, many were developing new techniques that were as amenable to proponents of the Western European avant-garde as they were unpalatable to Eastern European cultural commissars. Polish musical life did not simply invert the traditional Cold War dichotomies, merely exchanging the trappings of socialist realism for cheap imitations of Western models. Rather, the Polish example unsettled the opposition by asking how modernist music might be championed within a socialist framework.

The Warsaw Autumn was one answer to this question. At home and abroad, the festival's aesthetic program became linked with the struggle for freedom. Yet its modernist leanings were neither monolithic nor unquestioningly accepted by Polish composers, musicologists, and critics. A self-described "festival of ideas," the Warsaw Autumn moved beyond the contests of cultural prowess characterizing much of Soviet-American engagement in the 1950s to become something else: an idiosyncratic portrait of twentieth-century composition, in which Polish composers responded to and participated in shaping music history through their repertoire choices for the Warsaw Autumn concerts and their own compositional strategies. Moreover, the festival was a site of

⁹ David Tompkins, "Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Poland and East Germany, 1948-1957," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2004).

mediation. At the Warsaw Autumn, music that could be construed on either side of the Cold War as antagonistic to audiences nevertheless spoke to its listeners, Polish and foreign alike, sparking adulation as well as ire, firing imaginations, and providing fodder for cultural negotiation. Thus the story of the Warsaw Autumn not only contributes to a more nuanced account of how the cultural Cold War played in its local contexts, but also enriches the picture of postwar modernism by showing how it was adopted—and then adapted—in a particular time and place.

Standard accounts of Polish music grant a central place to the Warsaw Autumn, but it has rarely been an object of sustained scholarly analysis; in Poland, the festival has been subject either to brief essayistic overviews or recalled episodically in memoirs.¹⁰ Cynthia Bylander was the first to study the Warsaw Autumn in depth: focusing on programming and other official decisions, she documents the institutional history of the festival during its first five years.¹¹ My aim in this study is to build on Bylander's work by taking a wider historical view, extending analysis into the 1980s to investigate how the Warsaw Autumn has changed over time. Moreover, I examine the festival simultaneously as institution and performance; that is, I move between a documentary study of how the festival was organized and an attention to its concerts as vivid but

¹⁰ See, for example, the delimited discussions in Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83-91; in Lydia Rappoport-Gelfand, *Musical Life in Poland: The Postwar Years 1945-1977* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1991), 44-45; and in Bernard Jacobson, *A Polish Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 85-86. Polish sources include: Danuta Gwizdalanka, "Warszawskie Jesienie' w cieniu polityki," in *Muzyka i Polityka* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1999), 228-245; Olgierd Pisarenko, "Warszawska Jesień," in *50 Lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, ed. Ludwik Erhardt (Warsaw: Związku Kompozytorów Polskich, 1995), 181-98; and a recent series of recollections by Krzysztof Droba, Olgierd Pisarenko, Krzysztof Baculewski, Andrzej Chłopecki, Tadeusz Wielecki, Krzysztof Szwałgier, Marta Szoka, and Wojciech Ziemowit Zych, "Pamiętam, była 'Jesień' . . ." in *Ruch Muzyczny* 51 (16 September 2007, Nr. 18/19): 16-31.

¹¹ Cynthia E. Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, 1956-1961: Its Goals, Structures, Programs, and People," (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1989).

ephemeral events, moments of music-making whose impact resonated beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the concerts themselves. I set institutional records, printed programs and promotional materials, press accounts, critical essays, interviews, and published memoirs in conversation, to provide a multi-faceted view of the Warsaw Autumn and its shifting relevance. The scope of my analysis expands and contracts by turns to account for the festival as both a domestic and an international phenomenon. This is not simply an investigation of Polish music in the late twentieth-century, but of contemporary music in Poland as it was preached and practiced at the Warsaw Autumn. By taking this approach, I hope to reveal connections between the local context and broader international scene.

Polish music has long suffered in the West by virtue of its remoteness; Adrian Thomas's recent survey is thus important for making a mysterious repertoire accessible to an Anglophone audience. Yet Thomas also exhibits some unconscious blinders when it comes to discussing the context in which postwar Polish music was composed and performed: once the pressures of the 1950s can safely be relegated to the past, he turns to an overview of musical style. Politics disappear—unless oppositional.¹² Thomas thereby reinforces a modernist view that composition can be viewed only on “its own” terms, and he also perpetuates a Western prejudice that values avant-garde music from the Soviet bloc insofar as it is part of a binary context of opposition and oppression. Such prejudices have a long history, as Timothy Rutherford-Johnson demonstrates in his study of the British reception of Polish and Hungarian music. From a British perspective, compositions by Penderecki and his cohorts were irredeemably other—emotional,

¹² Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 113-282.

superficial, and penned in by a notion of “sonorism” that, in British discourse, became a charge of irrationality and incoherence.¹³

These characterizations will be depressingly familiar to students of Russian music.¹⁴ But unlike nineteenth-century Russia—on the receiving end of Western prejudice, while master of an empire of its own—postwar Poland was in a double bind. Even though there certainly was room for Poland to maneuver, it still remained subject to Soviet power. Eastern Europe, in turn, was subordinate to a West that set the terms when it came to determining aesthetic progress. This otherness, however, could also be productive: the attitudes binding perceptions of Polish music in Britain could be an enabling resource in Poland, where commentators deployed a discourse of national specificity to seek distance from both East and West.

The development of this discourse is the subject of my first chapter. The early Warsaw Autumns took place during a period of regime change that installed Władysław Gomułka as First Party Secretary and a political thaw that opened Polish cultural life to the West. At first, musicians responded enthusiastically to the compositional techniques that had once been denied them, but by 1960, composers, critics, and musicologists were debating the seeming paradox of their government’s support for avant-garde aesthetics. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki’s *Scontri (Collisions)* for Orchestra, op. 17, was a flashpoint of controversy at its Warsaw Autumn premiere in 1960, for the questions it raised about compositional technique and professional opportunity spoke to a growing anxiety that

¹³ Timothy Rutherford-Johnson, “New Music from Poland and Hungary: From Reception to Analysis,” (Ph.D. diss., Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2008), 63-94.

¹⁴ Richard Taruskin, “Others: A Mythology and a Demurrer (By Way of Preface),” in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi-xxxii.

Poland's post-1956 cultural liberalizations had simply substituted one aesthetic dogma for another. Contrary to conventional cold-war wisdom, avant-garde music did not necessarily spell liberation in Poland: for critics discomfited by experimentation, and composers passed over for promotion in the new cultural environment, the modernism hailed in the West as a sign of freedom was experienced as anything but free. One aim of the avant-garde's adherents, then, was to defend the expansion of possibilities for some as they contracted for others.

I trace the stages of debate from *Scontri's* critical reception, to arguments at the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly, and finally to a discussion on contemporary music published in *Ruch Muzyczny (Musical Movement)*, the leading Polish music journal. Throughout these exchanges, moves to justify official support of avant-gardism were part of a larger strategy to negotiate a place for Poland among the opposing powers of the Cold War—one that would be as distinct culturally as it was politically. The amenability of music in particular to such critical moves, paired with the growing international prestige of Polish composers and the Warsaw Autumn Festival, suggests why music was spared the re-imposition of restrictive governmental oversight as Poland's thaw came to a close.

From contentions about avant-gardism, I turn in my second chapter to the workings of the Warsaw Autumn in the early 1960s. Bringing together music, ideas, and people, the festival was a node in an international network of cultural exchange at a moment when access to information was entangled with the exercise of political power. I approach the issue of information transfer from three perspectives: support of Eastern European modernists, the festival's self-presentation in promotional materials and

internal documents, and the role of listening behaviors in creating a dynamic concert-hall environment.

Vociferous Warsaw crowds flocked to festival performances, losing no opportunity to express their opinions about what they saw and heard. In the early 1960s, neighbors from the East increasingly joined them, as tourists from throughout the Soviet bloc were lured to Warsaw by its promise of the unusual, the new, and for many of these visitors, the still forbidden. The festival not only gave Eastern Europeans a chance to quell their curiosity about music from the West: by mid-decade, its concerts also began to feature regional avant-gardes whose embrace of modernism tacitly confirmed Western cultural dominance when it came to defining notions of musical progress. Cold War rhetoric was likewise productive when it came to crafting the festival's image, for the implications of musical style allowed organizers to shape a discourse about the Warsaw Autumn that highlighted its political neutrality, stylistic inclusiveness, and social utility. Audiences' experiences, I suggest, were influenced by efforts to sell the festival to Polish authorities, since characterizing the concerts as neutral paradoxically encouraged modes of listening that would be cognizant of broad geopolitical concerns. The Warsaw Autumn also affected the practices and perceptions of its listeners simply through arousing continual audience expectations to hear the new. But if the excitement of unrestrained public debate at the festival concerts proved to be renewable, ultimately the excitement of listening to avant-garde music was harder to sustain.

My third chapter follows Polish music from the festival out into the world. My focus is Krzysztof Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*, a work met by huge and excited crowds both in Poland and on the international concert circuit. I argue that its reception cannot be

understood apart from the competing contexts of religion, politics, post-war aesthetics, and economics first activated at its West German world premiere in early 1966 and still in play when the work was performed at the Warsaw Autumn later that same year. The first overtly religious piece by a composer from socialist Poland, the *St. Luke Passion* was performed well within the purview of official cultural life during a period when the Catholic Church and Party-state apparatus were competing to celebrate the Polish millennium. For Polish critics, the work's eclecticism—fusing tonal allusion, serialism, chant-like vocal lines, and a sonoristic sensitivity to timbre—rationalized the composer's earlier avant-garde techniques, a legitimizing power that extended to the musical institutions responsible for launching Penderecki's career in the first place.

Most importantly, the *St. Luke Passion* was capable of generating economic and cultural capital in the West, as well as creative authority and legitimacy in Poland. At the festival, pieces that were not exactly commodities in their home environment became goods that could travel, whereas composers had the chance to enter an international market for contemporary works. Polish music could traverse distances not easily surmounted by the physical movement of ordinary citizens or the flow of shoddily manufactured Polish goods into Western markets. Able to slip back and forth between the socialist and capitalist camps of cold-war Europe, the movement of the *St. Luke Passion* reveals the limits of current models of theorizing cultural production, and as such, the story of this work suggests how these models might be refined.

Networks of cultural exchange drew the two halves of Europe together and thus obscured the binary divisions governing a cold-war worldview. How the Warsaw Autumn continued to sustain and undermine Cold War culture during the 1970s is the

subject of my fourth chapter. This was a period of transformation and social upheaval in Poland: workers took to the streets, Edward Gierek came to power, and the collapse of the import-dependent economy laid the groundwork for a viable opposition. I interpret repertoire choices during this decade as a form of historiography, one that might articulate ideas about a shared European identity, modernity, and an imperfect present. Appeals to tradition did active work during festival performances: what composers were commemorated, and how, were a means to imagine musical life in Poland as part of an integrated international community.

Moves by Polish composers to reclaim folk music likewise countered cold-war terms of engagement that sanctified some musical techniques while demonizing others. Wojciech Kilar's *Krzesany* (*Sparkling Dance*, 1974), in particular, marked a departure from—and a questioning of—the avant-garde tendencies that had long dominated Warsaw Autumn programming. In this piece, Kilar evoked dance rhythms and melodies from Poland's southern Tatra Mountains in a way that was tuneful, straightforwardly illustrative, and audience-friendly—all traits that were obligatory in the early 1950s, but which now constituted a challenge to the festival's modernist status quo. I conclude that while folk music revivals contributed to the rise of postmodernism in Poland, they also posed a threat to the symbolic context that originally made the Warsaw Autumn meaningful.

My aim is not to reduce the Warsaw Autumn solely to the contours of the cultural Cold War. Yet geopolitical struggle was also an unshakeable part of the context that made the festival relevant, along with modernism and the persistence of nationalist ideals. While political and social changes in 1989 took away the barriers of the cold-war world,

they also took away the possibilities these constraints had engendered. I thus end by asking what the festival might mean without the framework of cold-war politics, which for so long had determined not only how its concerts could take place, but also how they were received.

Acknowledgments

As I come to the end of this project, it gives me great pleasure to think of the many individuals who have supported me along the way, and I would like to thank some of them here. I could not have completed my research in Poland without the generous assistance of director Mieczysław Kominek, Izabela Zymer, Beata Dźwigaj, and the librarians of the Polish Composers' Union Archive in Warsaw. The days I spent in their library—leafing through seemingly inexhaustible files, drinking cups of tea—were among the happiest of my research year abroad. Professor Zbigniew Skowron of Warsaw University was unfailingly patient during our meetings and always willing to share his encyclopedic knowledge of Polish music. I especially benefited from my conversations with Rafał Augustyn, Krzysztof Baculewski, Krzysztof Knittel, Włodzimierz Kotoński, Zygmunt Krauze, and Tadeusz Wielecki. Their first-hand knowledge of the Warsaw Autumn greatly enriched my understanding of the festival and the times in which it has taken place.

I am grateful to Lech Dzierżanowski for his help in locating materials at the Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, and to Jan Topolski and Wojciech Blecharz for their assistance in tracking down articles and scores. At the Polish Ministry of Culture, Jolanta Szopa answered my tapping on her window and found the documents I didn't know to ask for, but which were exactly the ones I needed. I thank Agnieszka Kordowicz, Joanna Mitko, and Jacek Konecki for granting me access to Warsaw Autumn recordings in the Polish Radio archive. Edyta Pawłowska, from the Polish Television's Press Clippings Archive, deserves thanks for scanning and sending me a wealth of newspaper reviews. I am grateful to Jan Malicki, director of Warsaw University's Center for Eastern European

Studies, for his help in arranging my research year in Poland. Without the kind assistance of librarians at the Warsaw University Library and the Polish National Library, my work would have been infinitely more difficult.

At Berkeley, Richard Taruskin has my deepest gratitude for his unswerving belief in me and in this project. I continue to be inspired by his ideas, integrity, and passionate curiosity, and I owe him more than I can express here for encouraging me to trust in my own voice. I will be forever grateful to Mary Ann Smart for her boundless imagination and selfless generosity, as well as for asking the right questions and for teaching me how to say what I mean. David Frick was always ready to share his Polish expertise, and I warmly thank him for offering a historian's perspective on my work.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, I could not have asked for a better set of weekly companions than the Fellows Group at the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities. Their comments helped me refine the thoughts on audiences and listening that I present in my second chapter. It was my pleasure to continue meeting with Amy Rust, Rebekah Tipping Compton, and Eleanor Johnson after the formal gatherings of the Fellows Group ended. I also learned much from Mark Keck-Szajbel, Michael Dean, and Sarah Cramsey, and I thank them and the other members of the *Krouzek* for welcoming a musicological interloper into their group.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the many friends and colleagues who gave me their support and advice during various stages of this project. My warmest thanks go to David Haas and Jeffrey Tucker, who were the first to nudge me in a musicological direction. I am grateful to Cindy Bylander for helping me track down Penderecki sources, and to Joy Calico for helping me to get to Poland during the summer of 2008. Peter Schmelz, Bill

Quillen, Andy Fry, and Gregory Bloch generously offered their comments on early drafts. Conversations with Arman Schwartz, Sean Curran, and Rebekah Ahrendt enabled me to hone my thoughts at critical stages. Josh Johnson kept me sane, whereas Frank Griffo kept me well. Much of my graduate school experience has been defined by my friendship with Jennifer Sheppard. I could not have made it through without her, and I hope only that I have been able to give her some of what she has given me.

Above all, I want to thank my family—Mom, Dad, Bro, and Sis—who weathered the highs and lows with patience and good humor. Their love and encouragement has kept me grounded throughout the writing process. And finally, to Steven—my darling, my best friend, my fellow adventurer, my love—you have supported me in ways too numerous to count, and for that, I will always be grateful. I dedicate this work to you.

List of Abbreviations

BWKZ	<i>Biuro Współpracy Kulturalnej z Zagranicą</i> (Bureau of Foreign Cultural Cooperation)
GUKPPiW	<i>Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk</i> (Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications, and Public Performances)
ISCM	International Society for Contemporary Music
NDR	<i>Norddeutscher Rundfunk</i> (North German Radio)
MKiDN	<i>Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego</i> (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage)
MKiS	<i>Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki</i> (Ministry of Culture and Art)
MSZ	<i>Ministerstwo Spraw Zewnętrznych</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
PWM	<i>Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne</i> (Polish Music Publishers)
PR	<i>Polskie Radio</i> (Polish Radio)
PRL	<i>Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa</i> (People's Republic of Poland)
PZPR	<i>Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza</i> (United Polish Workers' Party)
WAF	<i>Warszawska Jesień</i> (Warsaw Autumn Festival)
WDR	<i>Westdeutscher Rundfunk</i> (West German Radio)
ZKP	<i>Związek Kompozytorów Polskich</i> (Polish Composers' Union)

Chapter One

The Critical Collisions of Górecki's *Scontri*

In the heady months following the first Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, Witold Lutosławski (1913-94) hailed the advent of new musical possibilities in Poland. His address to the ZKP (Polish Composers' Union) on March 9, 1957 ebulliently summed up the effects of liberalizing cultural changes that had gradually slipped into Polish life in the years following Stalin's death, changes whose promise seemed fulfilled by Władysław Gomułka's new regime in 1956. Lutosławski opened his speech by proclaiming, "for the first time in a long while, our assembly is taking place in an atmosphere of true creative freedom," in which "no one is going to persecute anyone for so-called formalism, and no one is going to keep anyone from expressing their aesthetic opinions, regardless of what individual composers may stand for."¹ At last, it seemed, the Stalinist era in Polish music had come to a close.

The embrace of techniques first pioneered by the Western avant-garde, paired with official support for avant-garde aesthetics, made the Polish scene anomalous within the polarized environment of Cold War musical politics. The tolerance Lutosławski acclaimed, however, would soon be tested: composers and critics did not unquestioningly accept the new orientation of Polish musical life. The world premiere of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's *Scontri* (*Collisions*) for Orchestra, Op. 17 at the 1960 Warsaw Autumn would spark the first serious domestic controversy about contemporary music since the

¹ Witold Lutosławski, "Zagajenie dyskusji na walnym zjeździe Związku Kompozytorów Polskich," *Ruch Muzyczny* 1/1 (1957): 2-3. Reprinted as: Witold Lutosławski, "W atmosferze wolności," in *50 lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, ed. Ludwik Erhardt (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1995), 77-79. My translation is based, with slight modifications, on Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 92.

festival's inauguration in 1956. *Scontri* raised a host of questions about artistic autonomy, technical innovation, the relationship of composers to listeners, nationalism, and socialist realism. None of these questions was easily resolved, and by the end of 1960, they resurfaced in contentions that raged among composers at the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly and inflamed contributors to an exchange on contemporary music published in the journal *Ruch Muzyczny (Musical Movement)* between December 1960 and April 1961.

In its three phases, this dispute provides an object lesson in how Poland managed its Westward-leaning cultural life within the Soviet bloc, as Polish critics and composers sought to justify official support of avant-gardism in a fashion analogous to Poland's negotiation of a distinctive political identity amongst the opposing powers of the Cold War. Such moves were inescapable at Europe's geopolitical margins, as recent investigations by Joy Calico and Rachel Beckles-Willson demonstrate. Calico's examination of Bertold Brecht and Paul Dessau's *Lucullus* operas illuminates a process of mediation in the GDR, through which internal Soviet-bloc concerns were modified by the proximity of Western observers to East Berlin.² Beckles-Willson's work on Ligeti, Kurtág, and their milieux reveals the importance of rival discourses about music in shaping the experiences of composers and critics working within Hungary's socialist system.³ So it was in Poland as well, where avant-garde music elicited a range of complex reactions around 1960 that were manifested both in composition and in the

² Joy Calico, "The Trial, the condemnation, the cover-up: behind the scenes of Brecht/Dessau's *Lucullus* opera(s)," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 14/3 (2002), 313-342.

³ Rachel Beckles-Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

realm of written and spoken language. The stakes of these discourses were especially high, since Poland's exceptional musical openness to the outside world was traceable to a breakdown in political control that had momentarily rattled the nation's position in the Soviet bloc. To defend its nascent avant-garde and secure the continuance of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, it was crucial for the Polish musical establishment to find a place in between the competing extremes.

A Polish Road to Socialism

Cold War Poland was caught within a field of conflicting tensions, in which political reform and Western-oriented cultural life coexisted uneasily with continuing subservience to its Eastern neighbor. The new pluralism in Polish musical life during the mid-1950s accompanied a broader series of political and cultural shifts aimed to distance Warsaw from Moscow. These moves were a response to Khrushchev's "secret speech" of February 25, 1956. Although intended for an audience of Party faithful, Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin circulated widely in Poland through the diligence of printers and others who fashioned private duplicates of the document.⁴ Its impact in Polish society was immediate and seismic, unleashing a period of open questioning and social turbulence that culminated in the Poznań riots of June 1956. Instigated by economic concerns, the strikes quickly devolved into a manifestation of anti-Russian sentiment. Poland was chafing under the yoke of Soviet power.

⁴ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 76.

By exposing flaws in the Soviet system, Khrushchev had provided an opening for leaders such as Władysław Gomułka, who sought to diminish Soviet influence in Poland. Jailed during an earlier wave of Stalinist purges, Gomułka rose to power on a groundswell of popular support, becoming First Secretary of the PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party) on October 21, 1956. Chief among his initiatives was a "Polish road to socialism" that promised a degree of internal national sovereignty, including an independent Catholic Church, de-collectivization of farms, limited re-privatization of property, and the ouster of Soviet representatives from the Polish military.⁵

Poland, a vital link between the USSR and the GDR, was too important geopolitically to be allowed to stray far from socialist doctrine. Gomułka's ascent infuriated Khrushchev, who threatened Soviet military intervention. Within weeks, the bloody denouement of Hungary's 1956 revolution would prove that not all paths to socialism were equally permissible, especially when they threatened to lead away from the Soviet bloc altogether.⁶ Poland's apparent distance from the USSR fundamentally depended on Soviet approval: a loyal communist, Gomułka engineered expanded internal freedoms by guaranteeing that he would take no serious steps to abandon state socialism or shirk the bonds of the Warsaw Pact.

The course of cultural life in Gomułka's Poland demonstrated the limits of his reforms. The immediate artistic ramifications of his first months in power—stylistic liberality, decreased censorship, and increasingly permeable cultural borders between

⁵ Ibid., 96-104, 116-118.

⁶ Revolt in Hungary began on October 23, 1956, and Hungarian resistance continued until November 10th. For comparative studies of the 1956 events in Hungary and Poland, see Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33/2 (1998), 163-214; and Johanna Granville, "Reactions to the Events of 1956: New Findings from the Budapest and Warsaw Archives," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38/2 (2003), 261-90.

Poland and the West—widened hairline fissures that had begun forming in 1955. Among the first signs of change were Adam Ważyk’s grim poetic denunciations of the failures of Poland’s political system, along with the gloomy depictions of urban life that suffused the prose of Leopold Tyrmand and Marek Hłasko.⁷ These were soon accompanied by a post-1956 influx of books, films, and art from the West, tangible markers of Poland’s new openness to the outside world.

Gomułka’s reforms, however, turned out not to be far-reaching. He mistrusted cultural elites, particularly writers—whom he counted as instigators of the turbulent events in Hungary and Poland in 1956.⁸ According to Gomułka, intellectuals fomented social instability, and instability was precisely what Poland needed to avoid if it was to succeed in proving its loyalty to the Soviet bloc. He met growing Polish revisionism, flirting with ever-greater deviations from socialist orthodoxy, with reinvigorated censorship and personnel changes in the Party apparatus and mass media.

Poland’s cultural life began to refreeze in late 1957, scarcely one year after Gomułka’s supporters welcomed him into power. The student weekly *Po prostu* (*Frankly Speaking*) was liquidated in October for its outspoken radicalism; the more ideologically benign *Polityka* appeared as a counterweight. Liberal writers were denied permission to publish a new literary journal, *Europa*, whose very title betrayed an unseemly hunger for

⁷ Adam Ważyk, “Poemat dla dorosłych” [Poem for Adults], *Nowa Kultura* (August 19, 1955). On Tyrmand, see Jerzy Jarzębski, “The Destruction of the Center,” 163-78, and on Hłasko, see Henryk Dasko, “Place of Estrangement: Homelessness at Home in Three Postwar Polish Writers,” 151-62, both in *Framing the Polish Home: Postwar Cultural Constructions of Hearth, Nation, and Self*, ed. Bożena Shallcross (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002).

⁸ Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism*, 128.

integration with Western Europe.⁹ The PZPR Third Party Congress, held on March 10-19, 1959, signaled the final snuffing out of the hopes of 1956. The normalization of intra-Party relations and the interactions between state apparatus and society ushered in a period of stagnation known in Poland as the “little stabilization” (*mała stabilizacja*). In consolidating his power, Gomułka’s reformist regime implemented levels of repression that, according to some measures, were higher than those of the Stalinist era.¹⁰ Although Gomułka may have sought a “Polish road,” he did not seek to change Poland’s ultimate political destination.

How the Warsaw Autumn Came to Be

Yet the hardening of Polish cultural life was not uniform. Crackdowns in other fields arrived just as Polish composition was entering its most experimental phase, and the post-1956 policy of aesthetic pluralism continued to flourish in musical life.

The vagaries of socialist realism and avant-gardism in Poland reflected forces at work throughout the Soviet bloc, conditioned in the particular Polish context by the shifting relationships of composers to centralized Party control. During the late 1940s, Moscow was the undisputed center of regional power; its cultural policies invariably sparked chain reactions in the Soviet satellites. The catalyst for Polish socialist realism was a 1948 resolution on music published by the Central Committee of the Soviet

⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, trans. Jane Cave (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 285-294.

¹⁰ Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 30. Osa bases her assessment on data taken from: Charles L. Taylor, principal investigator, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators III: 1948-1982* ([computer file], 2nd ICPSR ed. Ann Arbor, Mich: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1985). She uses incidents of political sanction, which in the data set may range anywhere from journalistic censorship to execution of regime opponents, as an indicator of levels of repression.

Communist Party. Its full impact was felt in 1949, when MKiS (the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art) mounted a composers' conference at Łagów Lubuski to inaugurate socialist realism as official musical policy. Polish composers were encouraged to write mass songs, Soviet-style cantatas, operas, ballets, and pieces for children. They were urged to ensure their music's broad accessibility to the general public, eschew formalism, and put national concerns before personal ones. Zygmunt Mycielski (1907-87) encapsulated the aims of socialist realism by stressing that composers should create characteristically Polish works, with emotional content that would speak to society.¹¹

Though never as virulent as its Soviet incarnation, Polish socialist realism mimicked the Soviet institutional apparatus of prizes, competitions, listening sessions, and obligatory attacks on musical formalism. The years 1948-1951 marked the crest of party influence over musical life, in which directives from the Central Committee of the PZPR were filtered to composers through MKiS. Compositions by Lutosławski and Andrzej Panufnik (1914-91) were banned during this period, while they and their compatriots navigated the cultural environment by making arrangements of early Polish music and writing symphonic and chamber works less overtly decipherable than the vocal genres prized by Polish authorities.¹² But most composers did not reject socialist realism in principle when its tenets were introduced to Poland in 1949: folklore had long been venerated as a source of musical inspiration, and writing optimistic music was already

¹¹ Zygmunt Mycielski, "O zadaniach Związku Kompozytorów Polskich," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/14 (1949): 9-10.

¹² Lutosławski's First Symphony was banned one month after the Łagów composers' conference in 1949; Panufnik's *Sinfonia rustica* was banned in 1950. The first work to fall victim in the new cultural environment, however, had been the Second Symphony, "Olympic," (1948) by Zbigniew Turski (1908-79).

part of the culture of postwar reconstruction.¹³ As historian David Tompkins emphasizes, many composers willingly deployed their talents in the service of official cultural policy, Panufnik among them.¹⁴ Several chose politicized themes in projects they proposed for Ministry of Culture commissions, whereas the youthful enthusiasm of Kazimierz Serocki (1922-81), Tadeusz Baird (1928-81), and Jan Krenz (b. 1926) found expression in the “Grupa ’49,” established to propagate socialist realist musical aims among a new compositional generation.

The first Festival of Polish Music demonstrated the vast financial and logistical resources the PZPR was willing to devote to ensuring music’s partnership in constructing a new socialist society. The festival took place over a sprawling nine months from April to December 1951; hundreds of new compositions were commissioned for it.¹⁵ Its goals were didactic both for composers, who were encouraged to produce socialist realist works for the occasion, and for listeners, who were to be schooled by the festival concerts in the new compositional aesthetic. Although members of the ZKP strove to influence the repertoire, the ideological import of the festival meant that party and state institutions had the final word on what audiences could hear at its events.

Composers’ initial receptiveness to socialist realist theories turned to disillusionment when it became clear that socialist realism in practice was leading to the

¹³ Dorota Szwarzman, *Czas Warszawskich Jesieni—o muzyce polskiej 1945-2007* (Warsaw: Stentor, 2007), 11-12.

¹⁴ For an extensive account of reactions to socialist realism in the Polish Composers’ Union, see David Tompkins, “Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Poland and East Germany, 1948-1957” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2004), 120-204. Adrian Thomas has also sensitively described the onset and consequences of socialist realism in Poland. See his *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 40-79; and also “File 750: Composers, Politics, and the Festival of Polish Music (1951),” *Polish Music Journal*, 5/1 (Summer 2002): http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issues.html.

¹⁵ Tompkins, “Composing the Party Line,” 222-236.

suffocation of Polish musical life. This constriction was felt most keenly when it came to Poland's isolation from the broader European scene. Contact with the West, still possible (if not always financially feasible) for Polish composers in the years just after World War II, had become unattainable by the early 1950s. By 1953, composers in the ZKP began to bridle under ministerial control, voicing increasingly sharp criticisms of state-directed aesthetic policies while making increasingly pointed demands for their artistic autonomy. The organization of the second Festival of Polish Music reflected the collapse of official influence over the ZKP in the mid-1950s, for composers took the reins in planning the 250 festival performances that occurred from January to May 1955.¹⁶ To the chagrin of ideologically engaged musicologists in the ZKP, composers Baird and Serocki had become independent since their exploits in "Grupa '49." Along with their colleagues, they succeeded in putting together concert programs that departed from the hard-line socialist realism displayed at the first Festival of Polish Music in 1951. The experience these composers gained, and some of the organizational structures they created, set a precedent for the future Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music.

If socialist realism served to integrate Poland culturally into the Soviet bloc, its abandonment signaled that Polish music had begun to forge a separate path. One of the most visible manifestations of Poland's cultural de-Stalinization was the inauguration of the Warsaw Autumn in October 1956, coinciding with the wave of social turbulence that brought Władysław Gomułka to power. Established to offset years of isolation wrought by Nazi occupation and Stalinist-era directives, the festival became an annual showcase, sponsored by government patronage, in which avant-garde experiments by a budding

¹⁶ Ibid., 247-253.

generation of Polish composers formed a counterpoint to presentations of socialist realist music from Eastern Europe and some of the most esoteric offerings from the Western European avant-garde. Performances of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók at the Warsaw Autumn rehabilitated these composers, long absent from the Polish concert platform. The festival also welcomed luminaries such as David Tudor and featured music by Luciano Berio, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Pierre Boulez.¹⁷

Tadeusz Baird and Kazimierz Serocki are commonly cited as the institution's initiators in Warsaw Autumn lore, a convention that likely stems from the motion they proposed at the Eighth General Assembly of the ZKP in June 1955.¹⁸ Open discussion at the assembly had left no doubt that party control over the ZKP was in complete disarray. Not only had Zofia Lissa (1908-80), a communist musicologist and powerful proponent of socialist realism, come under attack, but Włodzimierz Sokorski (1908-99), Minister of Culture, had given a conciliatory speech offering the composers more artistic freedom.¹⁹ As this meeting came to a close, Baird stood before his colleagues to propose a festival of contemporary music that would happen annually, be organized along similar lines to the Prague Spring Festival in Czechoslovakia, and be called the Warsaw Autumn. It would consist of works written during the year prior to each festival, and its purpose would be to

¹⁷ Tudor visited the Warsaw Autumn in 1958, when he presented a recital of recent piano composition by Nilsson, Wolff, Cage, and Stockhausen. During the Warsaw Autumn 1956-1961, performances of Boulez's works included: *Livre pour quatuor* (1959), *Sonate No. 2* (1959), *Sonatine pour flute et piano* (1959), *Improvisation sur Mallarmé* (1960), and *Structures, livre I* for two pianos (1961). Early Warsaw Autumn performances of Berio were: *Perspectives* (1958), *Sequenza I* (1959), *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1960), and *Quartetto d'Archi* (1961). Stockhausen was represented by his *Klavierstück XI*, *Gesang der Jünglinge* (both in 1958), *Zeitmasse* (1960), and *Zyklus* (1961).

¹⁸ See, for example, the preface by Tadeusz Kaczyński in a 1983 commemorative volume on the Warsaw Autumn: Tadeusz Kaczyński and Andrzej Zborski, *Warszawska Jesień—Warsaw Autumn* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1983), 5-16. And also: Olgierd Pisarenko, "Warszawska Jesień," in *50 lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, 181.

¹⁹ Tompkins, "Composing the Party Line," 134.

compare Polish composition with music from other countries. The first festival was to take place in autumn 1956 and, Baird emphasized, the Ministry of Culture had already approved the project.²⁰ The motion passed nearly unanimously, and the recorded history of the Warsaw Autumn began.²¹

It could not have done so, however, without prior inveigling by members of the ZKP. In her account of the Warsaw Autumn's early years, Cynthia Bylander has traced the festival's origins to the summer of 1954, during the first trickles of Poland's Thaw.²² At that time Kazimierz Sikorski (1895-1986), recently elected president of the ZKP, chanced to speak with Bolesław Bierut, then First Secretary of the PZPR. Since early 1954, the presidium of the ZKP had been attempting to get MKiS to authorize the Warsaw Autumn, but to no avail.²³ In a 1986 interview with Bylander, Sikorski remembered his meeting with Bierut as decisive in bringing the festival to life:

I told him that we had this idea, that we wanted to establish an ongoing festival of contemporary music, not just from Poland, but from throughout the whole world. And he said, 'oh, that's interesting.' I didn't know him, and I didn't know what his reaction would be. I thought he might say, 'listen, you know, wait a couple of years, we still have time.' But he said, 'that's interesting,' and as he said, 'make it a comparison of East and West. Let them show what they have, and we can show them what we have.' Then he says, 'call me in two or three days and I'll give you an answer.' But not even two days passed before I received a phone call from the Ministry of Culture and Art saying that the Ministry was going to approve the project and that it would be the 'Warsaw Autumn.'²⁴

²⁰ Archiwum ZKP, 12/8.

²¹ Lech Dzierżanowski, "Jak to się zaczęło," *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 10.

²² Cynthia E. Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, 1956-1961: Its Goals, Structures, Programs, and People," (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1989), 92-93.

²³ Between 1954 and 1955, the presidium of the ZKP included Kazimierz Sikorski as president; Tadeusz Baird, Andrzej Panufnik, and Kazimierz Sikorski as vice-presidents; Andrzej Dobrowolski and Włodzimierz Kotoński as secretaries; and musicologist Stefan Jarociński as treasurer.

²⁴ My translation comes from a recently published transcription of Sikorski's account that appears in the following: Lech Dzierżanowski, "Jak to się zaczęło," 10. Bylander largely paraphrases Sikorski's reminiscence in her dissertation, providing only one direct quote: "it is interesting, such a comparison between East and West. They can show what they have, and we can show what we have," (transcribed: *to*

Head of the PZPR, Bierut was among Poland's prime ideological movers; his approval gave the Warsaw Autumn an unshakable institutional foundation. His terms also cast the festival concept immediately into the arena of Cold War cultural politics. Through recalling Bierut's words as an imperative, Sikorski's account intimates that the Warsaw Autumn's politicization initially resulted not from the shrewd mediation of the idea by members of the ZKP, but had sprung from within the party apparatus on whose sanction the festival depended. Whatever losses the PZPR may have suffered in engaging the ZKP's composers, Bierut's quick endorsement of the Warsaw Autumn suggests that music still had an ideological role to play in Poland during the mid-1950s. Throughout the decades that followed, non-party advocates of the Warsaw Autumn would in turn adopt the characterization of the festival as a space for East-West confrontation, employing this trope as a stratagem to shore up the institution's legitimacy if ever it seemed to be questioned by representatives of the state.

As composers worked with cultural officials between 1956 and 1961 to develop the festival's organizational structure, they were also negotiating what the ZKP's relationship to MKiS would be as Poland's Thaw came to a close.²⁵ The Warsaw Autumn's potentially delicate international politics gave the Ministry an incentive for keeping an eye on festival planning while at the same time limiting composers' direct

ciekawa, taka konfrontacja – wschód-zachód. One pokażą, co oni mają, a my pokażemy, co my mamy). In Dzierżanowski's article Sikorski's account of Bierut's words appears as the following: "to ciekawe . . . niech będzie taka konfrontacja Wschód-Zachód. Niech oni pokażą, co oni mają, a my im pokażemy, co my mamy." I chose the imperative in my translation of Bierut's remark based on the latter transcription.

²⁵ In my account of the early festival planning, I am revisiting territory that has been extensively covered by Bylander and Dzierżanowski. For an exhaustive discussion of how the festival's organizational structure was developed, including English translations of the MKiS statutes that determined the makeup of its planning committees, see Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 223-297. For an account of the festival's origins and planning for its first installation in 1956, see Dzierżanowski, "Jak to się zaczęło," 8-15.

control over performers and repertoire for the annual concerts. From its inception, festival planning was a joint endeavor of state agencies that all fell under the umbrella of MKiS. The ZKP spoke for the interests of composers, whose concern at the outset was being able to shape the festival's repertoire and aesthetic contours without the pressure of conforming to ideological orthodoxy. The Music Group (*Zespół do Spraw Muzyki*) represented MKiS and its objectives; it also acted as a go-between linking festival organizers with officials at higher levels in the Ministry. Two organizations, the BWKZ (Bureau of Foreign Cultural Cooperation) and PAGART, the Polish artistic agency, coordinated the appearances of foreign performers at the Warsaw Autumn. Although PAGART seems to have handled both repertoire issues and performers' financial terms during the festival's first years, by the 1960s its role had become almost solely logistical. Beyond agencies connected with MKiS, the MSZ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) also participated in festival planning by clearing musicians' and observers' travel to Poland.

A series of statutes between 1958 and 1959 delineated each of these agencies' roles.²⁶ That the Warsaw Autumn's organization was collective from the start had the benefit not only of decentralizing control but also of pooling resources, since knowledge of contemporary music was generally in short supply in Poland when the festival began. The main organizational body was the Festival Committee, responsible for solving logistical problems and determining the annual budget. ZKP members predominated, joined by representatives from other Polish musical institutions and state agencies vital in

²⁶ These included: "Projekt. Regulamin Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej," (from April 1958), "Zarządzenie Nr 39 Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 24 lutego 1959 r. w sprawie zorganizowania III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej," and "Zarządzenie Nr 214 Ministra Kultury i Sztuki z dnia 22 grudnia 1959 r. w sprawie międzynarodowych festiwali muzyki współczesnej w Polsce." The Polish versions of these documents are reprinted in Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 577-87.

bringing plans for the Warsaw Autumn to fruition, including the MSZ, the BWKZ, Polish Radio, the National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and the State Opera in Warsaw, and PAGART. In sum, the Festival Committee numbered at least sixteen people. A smaller body, the Repertoire Commission, began to function alongside the Committee in 1959. Originally consisting of Tadeusz Baird, Andrzej Dobrowolski (1921-90), Włodzimierz Kotoński (b. 1925), Witold Lutosławski, Kazimierz Serocki, and Józef Patkowski (1929-2005), the Repertoire Commission was the province of a handful of composers and musicologists, joined only rarely by state cultural officials as they devised the Warsaw Autumn concert programs.

Responsibility for festival planning fell to the ZKP by 1961 and has remained with the union ever since. However, the composers did not operate entirely unchecked after the early 1960s. Representatives of an array of institutions and agencies remained on the Festival Committee. PAGART and the BWKZ were still indispensable in arranging the appearances of foreign performers. The statutes of 1959 also ensured that MKiS would retain ultimate control over the allocation of financial resources to cover the annual Warsaw Autumn budget, and approval of each year's repertoire continued to be subject to the Minister of Culture's discretion. Bylander notes that members of the ZKP drew up most of the statute proposals themselves, thereby indicating the union's acceptance of a ministerial presence in Warsaw Autumn planning.²⁷ Such involvement indeed seems to have been a ZKP aim, for the second Festival of Polish Music in 1955 had exposed the pitfalls of leaving the organization of such an event primarily to the union: at the time, composers had complained that their involvement with mundane

²⁷ Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 294-95.

details of festival planning was a liability for their creative work.²⁸ In terms of the Warsaw Autumn, the Ministry's influence over the budget and repertoire were points of leverage that potentially could be used to dominate the composers. But chastened by the failure of socialist realism to take hold in Poland and by the political upheavals of 1956, the influence of MKiS on the Warsaw Autumn throughout its first decades was largely benign. As long as composers and musicologists—and journalists and critics—could successfully continue to manage the festival within Poland's specific geopolitical context, the Ministry of Culture would give Warsaw Autumn organizers little to fear.

Terms of Engagement

Even as other aspects of the Polish Thaw were beginning to wane by the late 1950s, the Warsaw Autumn ensured that Polish music was already looming large on the international scene. The avant-garde techniques of several composers were a pleasant surprise to Western music critics all too prone to dismiss works from socialist countries as propagandistic claptrap. Dazzled by the projection of an avant-garde sensibility in Warsaw, these writers described the arts in Poland as vanquishing the specter of socialist realism and thereby signifying a measure of Polish resistance to Soviet domination. Reporting on the 1958 Warsaw Autumn, Fred Prieberg exclaimed, "today it is possible in Poland to take up abstract painting, play jazz, write 12-tone music, make a surrealist

²⁸ Tompkins, "Composing the Party Line," 249, fn 108.

film—in general, to turn against the ideals of Soviet-sponsored ‘socialist realism’ in art.”²⁹

Everett Helm (1913-99), an early enabler of the Darmstadt summer courses for new music, echoed Prieberg by grounding his description of the Warsaw Autumn in the contrast he saw between Poland’s cultural leanings and its geographical location. “Here in a Communist country,” he wrote, “technically a satellite in the Soviet orbit, is a festival in which Western music and Western esthetic orientation predominate—where abstract painting and ‘radical’ music are cultivated almost as freely as if Warsaw were a suburb of Paris.”³⁰ The stakes of Cold War musical politics were baldly inscribed in Prieberg’s and Helm’s accounts of the Warsaw Autumn Festival and the music that was performed there. Drawing on the equation of hermetic difficulty with personal autonomy and individual choice, these commentators replicated the idea that to be aligned with the West meant, aesthetically at least, to be free.

Western commentary on the early Warsaw Autumn festivals suggests all too readily that musical avant-gardism was de rigueur among Polish composers, and that the artistic liberalities of Gomułka’s regime were a simple disavowal of the legacies of the early 1950s. Yet the liberalizations of the Polish Thaw sat uneasily within a Cold War binary that linked avant-gardism with artistic freedom and socialist realism with aesthetic coercion. The tensions between these aesthetic ideologies formed the context in which disputes about Górecki’s *Scontri* would later arise. Lech Terpiłowski (1930-2000), an observer at the *Scontri* premiere, assessed the contentions triggered by Górecki’s new

²⁹ Fred K. Prieberg, “Warsaw Autumn Festival Demonstrates Freedom of Polish Artists,” *Musical America* (12 November 1958): 38.

³⁰ Everett Helm, “Current Chronicle—Poland,” *The Musical Quarterly* 45 (1959): 111.

work as a welcome sign: “the critics have finally ceased traveling as a herd and writing purple prose, and, for the first time in many years, they are beginning to argue seriously!”³¹ It was becoming clearer to critics and composers alike what was at stake in the adoption of avant-gardism as part of official musical policy: Poland’s fraught position between East and West, the status of its composers in domestic and international musical life, and the regime’s seemingly paradoxical endorsement of an aesthetic at odds with the proclaimed mores of a socialist society.

The Shock of the New

Górecki exploded onto the Anglo-American scene in the early 1990s, when the luminous consonances of his Third Symphony (1976), seemingly ungrounded in any earthly fundament, entranced seasoned listeners of Western art music and enticed audiences whose tastes typically lay in other realms.³² The Third Symphony remains Górecki’s best known work. It gives little hint, however, that its composer began his career not as a “holy minimalist,” as Górecki has at times been rather dubiously dubbed, but as an avant-garde firebrand.³³

Through an accident of birth and geography, Górecki entered the late 1950s virtually unencumbered by socialist realist baggage. Born in 1933, he began his compositional studies at the Katowice Higher School of Music in 1955, when the most strenuous efforts at inculcating socialist realism among Polish composers had already

³¹ Lech Terpiłowski, “Granica zdrowego rozsądku,” *Głos pracy* (29 September 1960).

³² Luke B. Howard has charted the extraordinary reception of Górecki’s Third Symphony in the United States and Britain. See his “Motherhood, *Billboard*, and the Holocaust: Perceptions and Receptions of Górecki’s Symphony no. 3,” *Musical Quarterly* 82/1 (1998), 131-59.

³³ Adrian Thomas, for one, objects to the use of “holy minimalism” as a descriptor of Górecki’s works, particularly the Third Symphony. *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 264-66.

begun to subside. His location in the provinces of southwestern Poland further diffused the effects of socialist realist aesthetic policy, for the compulsion to write in an officially palatable style was less closely scrutinized there than it had been in the cultural centers of Warsaw and Kraków.³⁴ As the Thaw swelled into a deluge, Górecki was among those most poised to leap to the forefront of Poland's emerging avant-garde.

By 1960, Górecki's music had become synonymous with the new radicalism of several Polish composers. His *Epitafium* (*Epitaph*, 1958) for mixed choir and small instrumental ensemble sets Julian Tuwim's last poetic utterance in a laconic musical language that gestures toward Webernian serial techniques. His First Symphony, "1959," consists of four movements more thoroughly saturated with serial manipulation of pitch and duration. Both were singled out in the Polish musical press as among the most interesting and forward-looking compositions presented at the early Warsaw Autumn festivals. Their elevation hints that in late-1950s Poland, conceptions of avant-gardism were inextricable from notions of modernism. Whereas the emphasis on technical innovation in postwar serialism arguably aligned it more closely with the ideals of elite modernism than with Cage's iconoclastic experimentalism, in Poland, modernists and avant-gardists were yoked together under a single banner.³⁵ Even for organizers of the Warsaw Autumn, compositions by Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio, Cage, Nono, Xenakis,

³⁴ Adrian Thomas, *Górecki* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xvii-xviii.

³⁵ I use the terms "avant-gardism" and "modernism" as Peter Burger defines them in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Michael Nyman uses different terminology ("experimentalism" vs. "avant-gardism") to distinguish Cage from his counterparts in postwar Western Europe, but the basic thrust of his comparison is the same: radical rupture as opposed to the formal evolution of style. This was a distinction Cage seemed perfectly happy to exploit in his own writings. See Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and John Cage, "History of Experimental Music in the United States," in *Silence* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 67-75.

Kagel—indeed, practically all that was esoteric, atonal, and Western—fell into a single category: “avant-garde.”³⁶

As Górecki’s early works demonstrate, the route to a Polish avant-garde in the late 1950s led directly through serialism.³⁷ Bohdan Pociąg (b. 1933), one of Poland’s most ardent supporters of contemporary music, hailed the birth of a native avant-garde after the 1959 Warsaw Autumn, during the crest of Polish fascination with serial techniques. Górecki occupied a special place in Pociąg’s pantheon of budding avant-gardists. “Of the three composers who represent our avant-garde,” Pociąg wrote, “Górecki is the most contemporary [. . .] He strongly feels the feverish, accelerated rhythm of the age, the pulsing of a great anxiety, and the ‘cosmic catastrophe’ of modernity.”³⁸ By reflecting an uneasy, troubled present, Górecki departed from the optimistic reality supposedly conveyed by socialist realist compositions a decade before. But neither was his music identical with currents flowing into Poland from Western Europe. Casting the composer’s musical language as diverging from the Western avant-garde’s vaunted anti-subjectivity, Pociąg claimed that Górecki employed his serial techniques in the service of emotional expression. Wholly adhering to the aesthetic mandates of neither East nor West, Górecki had become a sign of Polish difference.

Górecki would stake out further territory for the Polish avant-garde at the 1960 Warsaw Autumn Festival. Like the works that preceded it, *Scontri* electrified critics

³⁶ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z posiedzenia tymczasowej Komisji Repertuarowej IV Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej /1960/ -- w dniu 23.XI.1959 r.

³⁷ For a thorough survey of Polish compositional responses to serialism, see Iwona Lindstedt, *Dodekafonia i serializm w twórczości kompozytorów polskich XX wieku* (Lublin, Poland: Polihymnia, 2001).

³⁸ Bohdan Pociąg, “Świt awangardy: na marginesie III Warszawskiej Jesieni,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/1 (1960): 9-10.

looking to the composer as a harbinger of the new.³⁹ Premiered by the Great Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Jan Krenz, the shock of *Scontri* was intensified by its contrast with the works that shared its concert program: Bartók's Second Piano Concerto and Stravinsky's deliberately antiquated *Oedipus Rex*.⁴⁰ Although virtually any work by Stravinsky would have sounded new to Polish audiences gathered at the first Warsaw Autumn in 1956, by 1960 musicologist Tadeusz A. Zieliński (b. 1931) reported that, "after Górecki's *Scontri*, Stravinsky sounded positively archaic."⁴¹ True to the early practices of the Polish avant-garde, Górecki used serial techniques throughout his new work to create successions of pitches, dynamics, and rhythmic durations. Serialism alone, however, no longer sufficed to demonstrate *Scontri*'s newness to commentators who had since imbibed compositions by Webern and Boulez. Instead, Górecki's timbrally-driven deployment of his rows, the semblance of electronic music generated by his acoustic forces, and the spatialization of his instrumental players combined to produce a work that was received by domestic critics as providing a Polish alternative to standard serial practice.

Scontri consists of a sequence of twenty-eight panels in which sound is stringently ordered, yet viscerally present, channeled into palindromes of rhythm and pitch, while also bursting forth in massive timbral waves that culminate in a passage of controlled chaos. To produce his effects, Górecki relies throughout on patterns of tension and release, oppositions of timbre, and fluctuations in the density of sound. Whereas *Scontri*'s

³⁹ Outside Poland, it is standard to refer to *Scontri* by its Italian title, and I have adopted this convention here. Thomas has suggested that Górecki chose the Italian title in response to Nono's *Incontri* (Meetings, 1955). *Górecki*, 29.

⁴⁰ For a detailed discussion of the repertoire selection for the 1960 festival, see Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 417-34.

⁴¹ Tadeusz A. Zieliński, "Korzyść z dystansu," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/1 (1961): 24.

sonic world was certainly unorthodox for many of its first listeners, these compositional strategies nevertheless appeal to earlier modes of musical expression, in which stark contrasts could become a vehicle of communication. Górecki's use of his primary series likewise betrays an urge to trade in broad oppositions. Whether building clusters or twelve-note chords, in *Scontri* he bypasses the niceties of serialist counterpoint and the linear presentation of intervals to privilege the interplay of vertical blocks of pitch.

In Górecki's hands, the matrix generated from *Scontri*'s primary series serves as a means to create rough-hewn, bluntly physical juxtapositions instead of a conduit for disembodied intellectual permutations. The work's seventh section demonstrates how the composer uses his primary series to produce collisions between opposing forces. As string clusters and walls of percussive sound fracture the instrumental texture at rehearsal number 7, the woodwinds and brass each present a complete statement of the twelve-tone matrix underlying the piece (Ex. 1.1). Starting in measure 2 of this section, the brass begins by playing a verticalization of the prime form of *Scontri*'s main series (reading upwards from the tuba, G, B, B-flat, A, G-sharp, C-sharp, D, F, E-flat, E, F-sharp, C), whereas the woodwinds perform the verticalized retrograde form of the row in each of its positions (reading backwards from the example's penultimate measure, and upwards from the contrabassoon). As the passage unfolds, Górecki thus presents the series and its mirror simultaneously. Moreover, the hocketing between woodwinds and brass constitutes a rhythmic palindrome whose center comes after the excerpt's twelfth measure. Yet because they are verticalized throughout, the 12-note rows are not heard here as rows, but as bands of shifting harmonic color, 12-note chords whose shades come

not only from the various intervallic arrangements of the pitches they contain, but also from the contrasting timbres of the instrumental families used to play them.⁴²

According to Pociąg, such an emphasis on timbre challenged serialism itself. He depicted the “new sonoristic discoveries” of Polish music in 1960, with its emphasis on sound masses, as undermining the basic building blocks of serialist technique, defined pitches and intervals. While in Pociąg’s estimation serialism is static, with its fundamental process as the filling-in of the twelve-tone chromatic with “sonic-intervallic constellations,” he asserted that the music of the Polish avant-gardists, Górecki and Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 1933) in particular, was active in that it moved clouds of sounds through space.⁴³ Zieliński made a similar point, noting that in *Scontri*, “defined pitch and the succession of intervals are no longer the most essential things here; more important is the sound itself, its color, volume, and dynamics as it oscillates from a powerful mass to a single tone sounding alone in the orchestra.”⁴⁴

Neither commentator viewed *Scontri*’s serial construction as its most vital aspect. Instead, Pociąg and Zieliński based their arguments on a concept of “sonoristics” that had recently been developed by Polish musicologist Józef Chomiński. Chomiński first used the term analytically as a means to discuss the structural function of timbre in twentieth-century composition. Sonoristics was as much a departure from serialist methods as it

⁴² For a more extended analysis of *Scontri*, see Thomas, *Górecki*, 29-38.

⁴³ Bohdan Pociąg, “Muzyka polska 1960: czyli o potrzebie kierunkach i granicach nowatorstwa” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/21 (1960): 2.

⁴⁴ Tadeusz A. Zieliński, “Muzyka polska na ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni,’” *Przegląd Kulturalny* no. 41 (6 October 1960): 7.

Example 1.1. Górecki, *Scontri*, op. 17, rehearsal number 7.

7 132
40

3 2 3

ffff >

fl^{pc}
fl
cl
fg
cfg

tr
cr
tn
tb

bg
timb
t-t
tmb

ffff *ffff* *ffff*

sul pont.
vn
vl
vc
vb
pppp

ord.
vn
vl
vc
vb
pppp

Example 1.1. (continued)

The score is divided into three measures by vertical dotted lines. Above the score, a bracket groups the first two measures with the number '2', and the third measure with the number '3'. A large arrow points to the right from the end of the third measure.

Woodwind Section:

- fl^{pc}**: Piccolo flute, first and second staves.
- fl**: Flute, first and second staves.
- pc**: Piccolo, first and second staves.
- cl**: Clarinet, first and second staves.
- b**: Bassoon, first and second staves.
- fg**: First and second oboes.
- cfg**: First and second cor Anglais.

String Section:

- tr**: Trumpet, first, second, third, and fourth staves.
- cr**: Cornet, first, second, third, and fourth staves.
- tn**: Trombone, first, second, and third staves.
- tb**: Tuba, first staff.

Percussion Section:

- bg**: Bass drum, first staff.
- timb**: Timpani, first and second staves.
- t-t**: Tom-toms, first and second staves.
- tmb**: Tambourine, first and second staves.

Violin and Viola Section:

- vn**: Violin, first and second staves.
- vl**: Viola, first and second staves.
- vc**: Violoncello, first and second staves.
- vb**: Violone, first and second staves.

Dynamic Markings:

- ffff**: Fortississimo, appearing in the percussion and string parts.
- mp**: Mezzo-piano, appearing in the string parts.
- ord.**: Ordine, appearing in the violin part.

Other Markings:

- sul pont.**: Sul ponticello, appearing in the violin part.
- 40"**: A large double quote symbol, appearing at the bottom right of the page.

was from common-practice tonality, for in place of an emphasis on defined pitch and harmony, Chomiński proposed focusing on articulation, texture, register, and the density of sound.⁴⁵ That sonoristics might mean something more national soon became clear: the next articles to employ the term discussed music by Chopin and Karol Szymanowski, the two heroes of Poland's compositional past.⁴⁶ By the mid-1960s, sonoristics had turned into sonorism, a stylistic marker used to identify the postwar Polish avant-garde.⁴⁷ Thus when Górecki's approach began to diverge from the serialist practices originating in Western Europe, a homegrown theory already existed to explicate his music while also marking it as an exemplar of a uniquely Polish compositional identity.

Yet if *Scontri*'s muscular contrasts departed from typical examples of postwar serialism, its sound linked it with another strain of music that had first come to Poland from abroad: electro-acoustic music found an echo in the timbres Górecki coaxed from his orchestral players. Stockhausen's 1958 presentation of *elektronische Musik* and Pierre Schaeffer's 1959 demonstration of *musique concrète* captivated Warsaw Autumn audiences, whereas the establishment of an electronic music studio at Polish Radio in 1957 was, like the festival, a sign of Poland's bid to rejoin contemporary European musical life. In *Scontri*, Zieliński heard the effects of exposure to electronically

⁴⁵ Józef Chomiński, "Z zagadnień techniki kompozytorskiej XX wieku" *Muzyka* 1/3 (1956), 31.

⁴⁶ Władysław Malinowski, "Problem sonorystyki w 'Mitach' Karola Szymanowskiego," *Muzyka* 2/4 (1957), 31-44; and Antoni Prosnak, "Zagadnienia sonorystyki na przykładzie etiud Chopina," *Muzyka* 3/1-2 (1958), 14-32.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Józef Chomiński, "Wkład kompozytorów polskich do rozwoju języka sonorystycznego," in *Polska współczesna kultura muzyczna*, ed. Elżbieta Dziękowska (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1968), 95-112. The literature on sonoristics and sonorism also includes: Lidia Rappoport, "Sonorism: Problems of Style and Form in Modern Music," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 4/3-4 (1983), 399-415; Hanna Kostrzewska, *Sonorystyka* (Poznań: Ars Nova, 1994); Danuta Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna, 1997); *Muzyka* 53/1 (2008) [special issue on sonoristics and sonorism]; Zbigniew Granat, "Sonoristics, sonorism," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

manipulated sound. “We never guessed an orchestra could sound that way,” he exclaimed. “Faint, very high, and whistling sounds in the strings, new effects in the percussion, and richly colored murmuring effects gave the illusion of electronic music and *musique concrète*.”⁴⁸ For journalist Lucjan Kydryński (1929-2006), *Scontri* was better than most actual examples of electronic music: he counted it as more successful than any of the electronic works he heard during that year’s Warsaw Autumn, including Cage’s *Fontana Mix*, Berio’s *Tema (Omaggio a Joyce)*, and the first electronic piece by a Polish composer, Włodzimierz Kotoński’s *Etiuda na jedno uderzenie w talerz (Study of One Cymbal Stroke, 1959)*.⁴⁹

Górecki engineered an acoustic analogue to electronic music both through his timbral palette and by sculpting musical space. *Scontri*’s spatial component thus straddled the boundary between postwar Western avant-gardism and new Polish composition. During the late 1950s, Western composers engaged with the manipulation of musical space in electronic music and in acoustic pieces like Stockhausen’s *Gruppen*, with its three spatially separated orchestras. Stockhausen’s famously spatial work intrigued a number of Polish composers: after his exposure to *Gruppen* at Darmstadt, for example, Kazimierz Serocki began to experiment with the spatial projection of collections of sounds and devised an unorthodox arrangement of the instrumentalists in his *Epizody (Episodes, 1959)* for strings and three groups of percussion.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Zieliński, “Muzyka polska na ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni,’” 7.

⁴⁹ Lucjan Kydryński, “Muzyczna Jesień jest potrzebna!,” *Przekrój* (2 October 1960): 7.

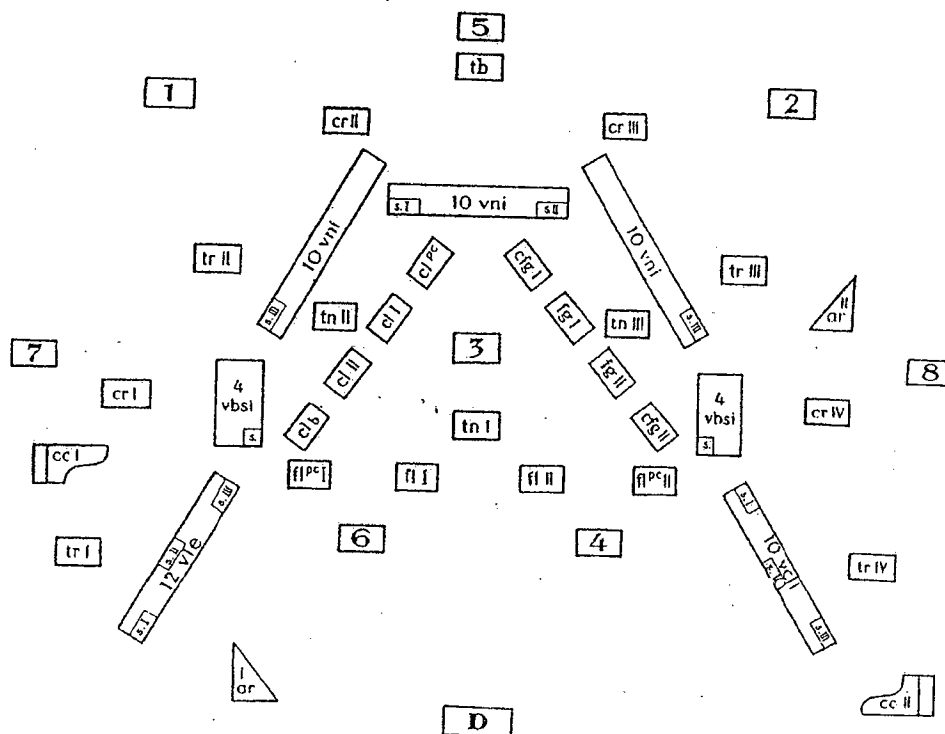
⁵⁰ Bylander, “The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music,” 196-200; Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 101-102.

Other Polish forays into spatialization did not leverage the sheer volume of sound that Górecki unleashed in *Scontri*. The work is scored for a tremendous orchestra, including fifty-two percussion instruments, in which the composer precisely dictates the placement of each player onstage (Ex. 1.2). Although Górecki's treatment of the orchestral families as discrete units throughout the work references long-standing practice, *Scontri's* visual aspect denies orchestral tradition. Górecki presents a shattered image of the ensemble: a woodwind complement of flutes, clarinets, and bassoons, as well as a trio of trombones, are enclosed by the strings, arranged in an atypical order placing the violins furthest from the conductor. Flanked by two pianos, harps, and the horns and trumpets, the ensemble is punctuated by a motley collection of bongos, bells, temple blocks, gongs, drums, horseshoes, and other percussion instruments played by eight performers, denoted by number in the score.

The result of Górecki's spatial dispersion of his players was to make sound tangible for listeners at the work's premiere. Leon Markiewicz (b. 1928), a musicologist whose interests center on early twentieth-century Polish music, gushed that *Scontri* was fascinating precisely because the composer's "magnificent framework of timbres, sonic complexes, and energy [. . .] took place in space, and flowed across the entire stage, giving sound yet another quality – plasticity."⁵¹ *Scontri's* spatialization not only served to make sound graspable almost as much by the eye as by the ear: for some of its adherents, it also made the work more demonstrably Polish. Along with emotionality, domestic critics claimed the movement of clouds of sound through space as a characteristic particular to the Polish avant-garde. In the disputes following *Scontri's* premiere,

⁵¹ Leon Markiewicz, "O zderzeniach radości i . . . katastrofizmie," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/21 (1960): 10.

Example 1.2. Górecki, *Scontri*, op. 17, orchestral layout and percussion forces.



BATTERIA: 8 esecutori

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
bongos: soprano alto	gran cassa molto profondo (giacente)	timbales: soprano alto	tom-toms: soprano alto	tom-toms: tenore basso	tamburo con corde: soprano alto	gran cassa chiaro (giacente)	tamburo con corde: tenore basso
bg ^{s.} a.	gc-pr	timb ^{s.} a.	t-t ^{s.} a.	t-t ^{t.} b.	tmb ^{s.} a. c.c.	gc-ch	tmb ^{t.} b. c.c.
campanelli	blocco cinese: soprano alto tenore	ferro di cavallo (sospesi) soprano alto tenore basso	campaniario: soprano alto tenore basso	ferro di cavallo: (giacenti) soprano alto tenore	vibrafono	5 tempel bloks	marimbafono
cmp ^{l.}	bl-ch ^{s.} a. t.	f-cav ^{s.} a. t. b.	cmpeco ^{s.} a. t. b.	f-cav ^{s.} a. t.	vbf	tpbl	mbf
tam tam: chiaro profondo	piatti: soprano (sospesi) tenore	piatti: alto (sospesi) basso			piatti: soprano II (sospesi) tenore II	piatti: alto II basso II	gongi: chiaro profondo
tmt ^{ch.} pr.	pti ^{s.} t.	pti ^{a.} b.			pti ^{s. II} t. II	pti ^{a. II} b. II	gng ^{ch.} pr.

questions such as what constituted a “Polish” work and the relationship of the nation’s young composers to the West would only increase in urgency.

With *Scontri*, Górecki presaged the Polish sonorism of the early 1960s. Its more immediate aftermath, however, was a debate as to whether Górecki had succeeded in coupling technical innovation with audience appeal. That such an issue was raised at all in the work’s domestic reception begins to illuminate the peculiar fate of musical avant-gardism in Cold War Poland. For intransigent modernists like Milton Babbitt, part of serialism’s attraction was the same scientific rigor that made these works inaccessible to uninitiated listeners.⁵² Inscrutability allowed serialist works to become viewed in Western aesthetics as repositories for a composer’s inner autonomy. Mark Carroll, for one, has located the power of the original serialist warhorse in its overtly jagged, technical idiom: he argues that the integrity of Boulez’s *Structures Ia* lay precisely in the work’s refusal to speak clearly to its initial audiences.⁵³ As Peter Schmelz has demonstrated, serialism’s apparent reluctance to disclose its meanings likewise became a source of its appeal for an “unofficial” group of young Soviet composers, to whom serial music “represented the protests of a generation.”⁵⁴

Yet in contrast to the Soviet Union, where socialist realist aesthetic policy endured, in post-1956 Poland serialist works and musical avant-gardism were a part of official cultural life. Pluralism in the Polish music world co-existed with the nation’s status as loyal to the Soviet bloc and bound by the Warsaw Pact. Moreover, musical

⁵² Milton Babbitt, “Who Cares if You Listen?” *High Fidelity* 8/2 (1958), 38-40, 126-127.

⁵³ Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). In particular see Chapter 8, “René Leibowitz and the Musician’s Conscience,” 116-131, and Chapter 10, “Serialism, Scientism, and the Post-War World View,” 141-164.

⁵⁴ Peter Schmelz, “Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2005): 143.

openness persisted in Poland despite stringencies in other creative fields. As a result, within its particular socio-political context, *Scontri* needed to speak: for the work's proponents, demonstrating connections between Górecki and his listeners would be tantamount to proving the relevance of the Polish avant-garde within a socialist society. The point of contention, then, was whether Górecki's music did in fact communicate, not whether such communication should necessarily be the goal of contemporary Polish composition, which was the prevailing assumption.

Markiewicz and Zieliński both claimed the composer was conveying something to his listeners, although they disagreed about precisely what this might be. Markiewicz heard order in *Scontri*, which for him proved its viability as a musical work. "Despite the surprises that come from the playing techniques and the instrumental effects," he argued, "it is hard not to perceive the logic in its successions when hearing the piece for the first time, and it is hard not to recognize that they contribute to what is typically called music."⁵⁵ Zieliński, in contrast, heard in *Scontri* the anxiety commonly construed as a hallmark of modernity. Asserting that Górecki's technical individuality was matched by the intensity of his expression, Zieliński pinpointed the work's merit in its searing emotionalism. Górecki, he enthused, "has created music loaded with dynamite, capable to the end of keeping the listener in a very high state of tension."⁵⁶ For its devotees *Scontri* was thus an apex of avant-gardism, but not one that was hermetic or abstractly experimental. Instead, the composition was aimed at an audience, who would respond to it on a mental, emotional, and even visceral level.

⁵⁵ Leon Markiewicz, "O zderzeniach radości i . . . katastrofizmie," 10.

⁵⁶ Zieliński, "Muzyka polska na 'Warszawskiej Jesieni,'" 7.

Scontri's opponents doubted that Górecki was communicating much beyond composerly belligerence. "If Górecki aimed to shock the public with *Scontri*," bristled Joachim Olkuśnik (1927-2008), himself a young composer, "he undoubtedly succeeded."⁵⁷ Critic Jerzy Waldorff (1910-99), a veteran observer of the Polish musical scene, went even further. Inverting Zieliński's paean to the surprise and fascination generated by Górecki's experiments with orchestral timbres, he wrote: "[*Scontri*] began normally enough for this kind of work: with a quiet, strangled, thin squeal made by the strings. But shortly thereafter all hell broke loose: amid the roar of the trombones, tubas, and horns, the percussion began to fire into the audience . . . the walls shook, the audience went deaf, and my jaw hit the floor. It never occurred to me that it was possible to use the orchestra to make such monstrous sounds."⁵⁸ Rather than communication, Waldorff perceived only assault. He fumed:

If a work has sheer ugliness as its aim (in music this means putting together the most ear-splitting sounds), it ceases to be a work of art and instead becomes a monstrosity. Henryk Górecki is a very talented composer; he proved that a year ago with his First Symphony. Nor does he have to defend experiments he feels are necessary. One may point out, however, that he is on a bad path of exploration. If he goes any further down this road, he will perhaps be able to increase the effects of his actions only by putting baskets of dead rats onstage and ordering them to be hurled into the audience during the performance of his next work.⁵⁹

For the critic, Górecki's music failed to rise above the sterile, antagonistic stance toward the audience generally attributed by socialist critics to the Western avant-garde.

⁵⁷ Joachim Olkuśnik, "O IV Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej i nowej muzyce polskiej," *Współczesność* 6/21 (1-15 November 1960): 13.

⁵⁸ Jerzy Waldorff, "Finał i refleksje," *Świat*, 10/40 (21 October 1960): 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* My translation is based, with some modifications, on Jan Patrick Lee, "Musical Life and Sociopolitical Change in Warsaw, Poland: 1944-1960," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1979), 526.

Waldorff, however, was not a knee-jerk conservative. He couched his poisonous evaluation of *Scontri* in an article that, overall, defended new music. At issue was what Polish composers sought to accomplish using avant-garde compositional techniques. Waldorff heard *Scontri* as sheer ugliness, devoid of the ethical purpose that, for him, would have justified Górecki's radical means. Olkuśnik similarly chastised the composer for expressing too little content. Sniffing that *Scontri* was "much ado about nothing," Olkuśnik asserted that the piece needed a more transparently programmatic title: "if the author of this work had just called it, for example, 'The Battle of Grunwald,' he may even have won over the many staunch conservatives who were offended by his techniques."⁶⁰ Marking the Polish defeat of Teutonic Knights in 1410, the Battle of Grunwald plays an important role in Polish national mythology. Such a title, Olkuśnik intimated, would have justified the harshness of Górecki's sounds by tying them to a suitably violent, nationalistic image from the past – one that had the added advantage of being anti-German. In the early 1960s, West German-Polish relations were tense: Poland's western borders were characterized as vulnerable to West German attack, which in turn necessitated Polish dependence on Soviet might. A more legible title would have saved Górecki's work from the danger of being construed as only so much formal play, and consequently integrated it more readily into a cultural environment that, despite the stylistic freedoms afforded its musicians, was still driven by socialist policy.

Monitoring compliance with such policies was not only the province of local officials. Poland's negotiations of a Westward-leaning musical life were inextricable from its negotiations with the Soviet Union, where the sympathies of Polish culture were

⁶⁰ Olkuśnik, "O IV Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej," 13.

a continual source of suspicion. The Warsaw Autumn's international character fundamentally implicated it in these tensions. Reactions to the annual concerts presented the broad splits of the cultural Cold War in a microcosm: as much as Western critics lauded the Warsaw Autumn's turn from socialist realism, Poland's immediate neighbors decried the ideological bias they heard in festival programming. Yury Keldysh's reservations, voiced in a review of the 1958 Warsaw Autumn, exemplified the official Soviet position:

Notwithstanding the presentation of a number of interesting and meaningful works at the festival, the general profile of the event prompts serious, justifiable objections . . . if a festival guest were to attempt, based on the works that were heard there, to compile an overview of the most important developments in contemporary music and the actual, real weight of these various trends, they would come up with a very one-sided picture that is far from the objective state of things.⁶¹

Keldysh's language was typical of Soviet journalism at the time, and similar criticisms of the festival remained standard for years thereafter.

Scontri's reception was likewise complicated by not being solely a domestic matter. Its premiere did little to dispel the qualms of Eastern European and Soviet commentators: universally reviled, Górecki's new work confirmed their worst fears about the direction of Polish composition. Soviet musicologist Leonid Entelis faulted the piece for destroying "the essence of music," turning it instead into "just some sort of acoustic phenomenon."⁶² Werner Wolf, writing in East Germany, complained that Górecki's piece was "capable of expressing only fear, terror, and a suffocating airlessness," and that "all

⁶¹ Excerpts from Keldysh's articles on the 1958 Warsaw Autumn Festival published in *Sovetskaya Muzyka* Nos. 1 and 2 (1959) were reprinted, in Polish translation, in *Program III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1959): 135-136.

⁶² "Sowietskaja Muzyka o 'Warszawskiej Jesieni'," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/7 (1961): 18.

individual qualities were completely lost in it.”⁶³ A Slovak critic grumbled that *Scontri* “rattled the nerves,” while noting that overall, the Warsaw Autumn 1960 had clearly illustrated the questionable predilections of Polish music: “during the festival, it became apparent that Polish composers are in close contact with centers of so-called contemporary music in Western Europe, and that they are attempting to follow in their footsteps.”⁶⁴

What was at stake in the broader reception of Górecki’s *Scontri*, then, was how one justified musical avant-gardism in Cold War Poland, both at home and among Poland’s immediate neighbors. For most of Górecki’s adherents, his avant-gardism and originality were their own defense. Markiewicz wrote that during the *Scontri* premiere, “some listeners laughed, while those who carefully follow the development of music had to concede, independent of their own aesthetic preferences, that the composer has unusual talent.”⁶⁵ He then praised Górecki’s “uncompromising stance” and the “unusual courage with which he expresses his ideas.”⁶⁶ For a fledgling avant-gardist in a Western mold, being perceived as confrontational, unwilling to compromise, and, indeed, achieving a *succès de scandale* were perhaps the most valuable tokens of all. But for *Scontri*’s detractors the work was indefensible, both meaningless and incapable of reaching listeners on an emotional level. For them, Górecki’s music was a call to arms.

Turf Wars

⁶³ “*Musik und Gesellschaft* o ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/3 (1961): 6.

⁶⁴ “*Slovenska Hudba* o ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/3 (1961): 22.

⁶⁵ Markiewicz, “O zderzeniach radości,” 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Such conflicts of critical opinion worried officials at the Ministry of Culture. Charged with monitoring the festival's development, its Music Group called a special meeting of the Cultural Council's Music Division on October 29, 1960. The sole topic of discussion was to be the most recent Warsaw Autumn. When it was established in early 1952, the Cultural Council (*Rada Kultury i Sztuki*) was a manifestation of a new phase in artistic policy, in which MKiS responded to growing hostility to its centralized control by seeking to influence cultural life at the level of its producers. The Cultural Council comprised officials and artists, both Party-affiliated and not; it was meant to serve as an advisory body to MKiS and involve independent artists more directly in ministerial decisions. According to Tompkins, the Council only intensified the dissolution of state control over cultural life during the mid-1950s. Rather than being persuaded to support MKiS and its goals, independent artists soon turned the Council into a forum for voicing their opposition to official policies. He concludes that the political and cultural upheavals of 1956 finally stripped the Council of much of its legitimacy.⁶⁷

The October 1960 meeting of the Cultural Council's Music Division suggests, however, that the institution still functioned in some way after 1956, whereas the continuing participation of composers such as Witold Lutosławski, Kazimierz Serocki, and Tadeusz Baird similarly intimates that the body had not completely lost its authority. The Council played its longstanding advisory role during the discussion in 1960. Citing the multiplicity of viewpoints on that year's Warsaw Autumn, Wiktor Weinbaum, director of the Ministry's Music Group, turned to the composers for their evaluation of that year's concerts. He asked: was the festival fulfilling its ideological-artistic

⁶⁷ Tompkins, "Composing the Party Line," 107-108.

objectives? Did all of the stylistic trends represented by ZKP members find a place on the festival programs?⁶⁸

The composers at the meeting, many of whom were active in planning the Warsaw Autumn, assured Weinbaum that the festival was indeed meeting its goals. As to its stylistic comprehensiveness, Lutosławski hedged his answer. He stated that the Warsaw Autumn was comprehensive in presenting the compositional trends that the Festival Committee felt had some vitality.⁶⁹ Kazimierz Serocki more forthrightly engaged the subtext of Weinbaum's question: the conviction, whispered behind closed doors, that the Warsaw Autumn was a worthwhile institution, but that it presented too much avant-garde music. He sought to counter this suspicion by appealing to statistics. Serocki explained that the organizers had divided the repertoire into three groups while planning that year's concerts: contemporary "classics" (indicating works that could be considered canonical twentieth-century compositions, along with pieces manifesting similar stylistic characteristics), moderate contemporary compositions (including dodecaphonic works), and a category for experimental music, on the fringes of the avant-garde. According to Serocki, the classics added up to 1029 minutes of music, 74% of the total program length in 1960. Moderate works comprised 253 minutes (or 18%) of the repertoire, whereas 103 minutes were devoted to the avant-garde, only 8% of the entire festival. The avant-garde

⁶⁸ Archiwum MkiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwali (47). Stenogram posiedzenia Sekcji Muzycznej Rady Kultury w sprawie IV Festiwalu "Warszawska Jesień" 1960 r., 2, 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 28.

could hardly be accused of domination, Serocki reasoned, when its proportions were so limited.⁷⁰

But the problem of avant-gardism in Polish musical life could hardly be explained away so easily. Matters came to a head at the end of the year, when the Eleventh General Assembly of the ZKP erupted in a heated verbal brawl about post-1956 changes in domestic musical life. The virulence of the discussion proved that the questions raised by *Scontri* had remained live issues. The problem of the young avant-garde would only become more urgent as the ZKP combatants left *Scontri* behind, to grapple with the increasingly wide-ranging avant-gardism that composers of Górecki's generation had come to represent, as well as with those composers' place within the broader scope of Polish musical activity.

The contentions turned out to be venomous, but the minutes of this meeting do not suggest they were staged. Unlike the 1949 conference at Łagów Lubuski, the 1960 General Assembly was not a gathering mounted expressly to introduce and enforce a particular artistic policy. Led by Witold Lutosławski, it was first and foremost a business meeting, meant to summarize recent ZKP activity, provide an open forum for discussion on topics concerning the union, and elect committees to carry out day-to-day organizational tasks. Similar meetings had taken place on a nearly annual basis since the ZKP had been reinstated in 1945. The 1960 gathering took place in Warsaw, in a limited, professional setting populated predominantly by ZKP members from throughout Poland. The composers were joined by a handful of representatives from the musical press, PWM (Polish Music Publishers) and the Ministry of Culture's Music Group. Historically low

⁷⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

levels of Party membership in the ZKP meant that while discussion at the Eleventh General Assembly would touch on some of the knottiest problems for composers employing avant-garde techniques within a socialist system – including questions of national identity, the legacies of socialist realism, and the relationship of musical style to professional opportunity – it would do so in an environment where few had professed their active Party involvement.⁷¹

Tadeusz Szeligowski (1896-1963) launched the opening salvo in an attack that would condemn young Polish avant-gardists for their overly cozy ties with the West and their apparent institutional advantages at home. Szeligowski was by then an august presence on the Polish scene. A professor of composition in Warsaw and Poznań, he had studied with Nadia Boulanger and Paul Dukas in Paris between the wars. He played an active institutional role in Polish musical life, helping to establish the ZKP in 1945 and serving as the union's head from 1951 to 1954. While not himself a member of the PZPR, he had been sympathetic to Party aims throughout the early 1950s.

Speaking in 1960, Szeligowski was aghast at the Polish embrace of compositional techniques originating in the Western European avant-garde. The danger of adopting these techniques, he contended, was not simply that Polish music would lose its national identity. By writing music in a Western European style, young Polish composers would

⁷¹ David Tompkins points out that although quite a few composers had sympathized with the party during the early 1950s, the ZKP counted approximately only 15 party members in its ranks during this time, out of a membership totaling approximately 100. PZPR membership thus accounted only for 12-16% of the ZKP between 1950 and 1954, a much smaller percentage than the composers' union in the GDR. Neither did the ZKP include party cells, a standard feature in other creative unions in Poland and throughout the Soviet bloc. Based on archival documents, Tompkins lists the following composers and musicologists as PZPR members in 1955: Józef Patkowski, Mieczysław Drobner, Eugeniusz Dziewulski, Jerzy Gert, Zygmunt Gross, Faustyn Kulczyki, Zofia Lissa, Stefania Łobaczewska, Stanisław Nawrot, Edward Olearczyk, Stefan Poradowski, Jerzy Sokorski, Augustyn Wiśniowski, and Michał Bristiger. Włodzimierz Kotoński was also mentioned as a candidate member for the PZPR in a letter sent from MKiS to the Cultural Division of the PZPR Central Committee. Tompkins, "Composing the Party Line," 123, fn. 9.

also inculcate Western European values, a process Szeligowski envisioned as leading first to “aestheticism,” a chilly elevation of form over content, and finally to barbarity. For Szeligowski, this bleak endpoint was inescapable, considering the source of the Western avant-garde. “The ‘West’ means West Germany and how they compose,” he explained. His resentment stemmed from memories of Nazi occupation: “I fear that country, from which great discrimination flows . . . in the psyche of that nation lies discrimination from the arts to race. We learned that the hard way.”⁷² In Szeligowski’s estimation, composers falling under the spell of Darmstadt were failing to heed the brutal lessons of the Second World War.

Szeligowski’s conception of musical identity was defensive, seeking to protect a Polish national style from outside influence. His position correlated to one half of an aesthetic quandary that arose at the end of the nineteenth century and which persisted for several decades in twentieth-century Poland: whether Polish composers should cultivate a strictly national style or if their music should strive instead to convey “universal values,” signifying in this context engagement with the music of Western Europe.⁷³

For younger composers, however, the threat came from further East, not West. Józef Patkowski rose to speak for the composers of his generation, endorsing their right to develop in an atmosphere open to international exchange. A young critic and musicologist, Patkowski founded the Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio, the first center for electronic music in Poland; in 1960, he had just served his first term as a

⁷² Archiwum ZKP. Stenogram z obrad XI walnego zgromadzenia członków ZKP w dniach 10 i 11 grudnia 1960 roku, 37-38.

⁷³ Zofia Helman, “The Dilemma of Twentieth-Century Polish Music: National Style or Universal Values,” in *After Chopin: Essays on Polish Music*, ed. Maja Trochimczyk (Los Angeles: Polish Music Center, 2000), 205-42.

member of the Warsaw Autumn Repertoire Commission. Patkowski opposed the subtext he heard in Szeligowski's speech: "the formation of an island separated from all external influences, depriving young composers of opportunities to compare their viewpoints, aspirations, and compositional techniques with what is happening elsewhere in the world."⁷⁴ He sought to defuse Darmstadt's dangerous aura by decoupling it from nationalism, suggesting in the process that the West German musical center posed no danger to susceptible young Poles. "Many of the most free-thinking musicians and theoreticians participate in Darmstadt," he argued. "No one dictates anything, it is possible to be very critical about the music produced there [. . .] I strongly protest against the identification of Darmstadt with the political penetration, in a certain sense, of German culture into our territory . . . nothing of the sort can be said in this regard."⁷⁵

Lutosławski agreed with his younger colleague: "those are not Germans, if one is talking about the summer courses at Darmstadt." Although not personally enamored with West Germany, the composer assessed travel to the avant-garde center as a necessary pilgrimage: "it is better to go to Darmstadt and find out there what is going on throughout the world, or at least in an enormous part of it, than to go nowhere at all."⁷⁶ Isolation, Lutosławski implied, was a bigger threat to contemporary Polish music than Westernization.

Nor did he view avant-garde musical means as tantamount to a betrayal of national ideals by Polish composers. Lutosławski shielded the Polish avant-garde by

⁷⁴ Archiwum ZKP. Stenogram z obrad XI walnego zgromadzenia członków ZKP w dniach 10 i 11 grudnia 1960 roku, 59.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 94-95.

firmly rooting their compositional techniques in the national soil. He admitted that after 1956, there was a period of experimentation with new techniques from the West in which the first efforts by Polish composers were more derivative than individual. He contended, however, that this period was relatively short, and that the “vitality of the young Polish composer’s psyche” had allowed them to find their own musical languages, and to “extract from themselves everything that is their own, that is specifically connected not only with the individual nature of each of them, but also with the specific Polish temperament.”⁷⁷ He stressed the point by calling the homegrown avant-garde a fundamentally Polish phenomenon. Lutosławski’s seemingly opportunistic characterizations—in which the Polish avant-garde was defensible because it was national, whereas the music produced at Darmstadt was defensible precisely because it was not national—speak to the tensions of Poland’s position in the Cold War world, in which Polish musical life was dependent on the West for information and hungry for its recognition, but nevertheless wary of a too-close identification with Western culture that could strain its relations with neighboring Soviet and Eastern European powers.

Throughout the ZKP General Assembly, intellectual sparring over the compatibility of Polishness with avant-gardism raged in counterpoint to a more practical concern: whether young avant-gardists had unfair institutional advantages that were working to the detriment of their more conservative colleagues. Piotr Perkowski (1901-90) took the ZKP to task for allowing some composers to languish for years as candidates or members of the young composers’ circle, while others, such as Penderecki (and Górecki too by this time), were granted full union membership ahead of their older

⁷⁷ Ibid., 94.

colleagues.⁷⁸ Like Szeligowski, Perkowski spoke from a position of long experience. Active in the Polish chapter of the ISCM during the 1930s, he was a co-founder and first president of the ZKP from 1945 to 1948 and had been a professor of composition in Warsaw since 1954. For Perkowski, the disparities he saw in union membership were just one symptom of a more pervasive favoritism. While he granted that, “if Penderecki or Górecki wanted to play on radiators tomorrow, they have the right to do so,” the ultimate goal of his appeal for tolerance was to defend the majority rights of conservatives.⁷⁹

Patkowski countered by characterizing the positions of the older generation, including Szeligowski and Perkowski, as driven less by a gimlet-eyed evaluation of the Polish scene than by indignation at the success of their younger counterparts.⁸⁰ Whereas Patkowski’s accusation of professional jealousy may have been ignoble, it was not unfounded. Members of the ZKP were competing for resources in a limited playing field, in which they jockeyed for performances and the publication of their works by PWM, then the lone producer of musical scores in Poland. Despite the post-1956 shift in aesthetic outlook, the means of institutional support for musical endeavors had remained constant. Through sponsoring competitions, funding commissions, and supporting musical institutions, the Polish government encouraged a new breed of avant-garde composer in much the same manner as it had promoted socialist realism, even though its tactics were considerably less heavy-handed than they had been in the early 1950s. The Ministry of Culture’s determination of the Warsaw Autumn’s pluralistic character reflected the regime’s sanction, as did official approval of the festival’s repertoire, subject

⁷⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

each year to finalization by the Ministry's Music Group. Such mechanisms of government patronage represented a key difference between the Polish avant-garde and its unofficial counterparts in East Germany and the Soviet Union.⁸¹

Within this context, the young avant-gardists indeed seemed to have an edge: with his *Psalms of David* (1958), *Emanations* (1958), and *Strophes* (1959), Penderecki swept the top three prizes of the Young Composers' Competition sponsored by the ZKP in 1959, while Górecki triumphed in this competition a year later with his *Monologhi*, Op. 16 (1960), a work manifesting the influence of Nono, Berio, and Boulez. The prize in both cases was a trip to Western Europe, an enticing prospect for budding composers in an environment ruled by tight controls on the foreign travel of ordinary citizens. Frequent performances at the Warsaw Autumn only opened the door wider for international recognition. Beyond its personal bitterness, then, Patkowski's barb spoke more broadly to the complicated relationship between style and prestige, and between power and technique, in Cold War Poland.

The connections between compositional technique and professional opportunity were more tangled for composers of the older generation, for whom the pressures of socialist realism had been real in a way that they never were for Górecki, Penderecki, and their contemporaries. Andrzej Dobrowolski, a composer active in the field of electronic music and a member of the Warsaw Autumn Repertoire Commission, alluded to this when comparing the fate of twelve-tone music in Poland before and after 1956. He remembered a listening session in 1952 at which works by Schoenberg and Berg were

⁸¹ As a point of comparison, see Laurie Silverberg, "Between Dissonance and Dissidence: Socialist Modernism in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Musicology* 26/1 (2009), 44-84.

played: “there were a few chamber works, which were sharply criticized. I stood up naively and said, ‘I don’t know. I don’t like it, but perhaps we don’t know how to listen to such things.’ An explosion of laughter was two professors’ response. Today, those professors are themselves using a new technique and are enthused about these musical means.”⁸² The metamorphosis of Dobrowolski’s professors was not an isolated phenomenon. Górecki’s composition teacher, Bolesław Szabelski (1896-1979), was among those who radically shifted his style after 1956: he first experimented with serialist techniques in his *Sonnets* (1958) for orchestra, and he later produced a string of works employing these devices.⁸³ During the first cracks of the Polish Thaw, Szeligowski himself flirted with the twelve-tone method and led evening listening sessions of formerly restricted music from the West.⁸⁴ But he never integrated the traits of postwar avant-gardism into his own style, which remained indebted to the French neoclassicism that had been au courant during the interwar years of his youth. As a composer who had occupied a prominent position during the Stalinist era, Szeligowski had a lot to lose in the cultural changes of 1956, and lose he did – although respected in Poland, he never had

⁸² Archiwum ZKP. Stenogram z obrad XI walnego zgromadzenia członków ZKP w dniach 10 i 11 grudnia 1960 roku, 78.

⁸³ Ludwik Erhardt, *Contemporary Music in Poland* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1966), 14. See also Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 116-120.

⁸⁴ *Biuletyn informacyjny Związku Kompozytorów Polskich* (No. 2, 1956): 7-8. The spring 1956 issue of the *ZKP Information Bulletin* announced that, due to Szeligowski’s initiative, a series of listening sessions (accompanied by lectures and discussions) had been taking place on Thursday evenings at the Higher School of Music in Warsaw. Intended specifically for the composers of the Young Composers’ Circle in the Warsaw branch of the ZKP, these sessions consisted of “little-known works of the most distinguished contemporary composers.” At the time of the announcement, the group had already heard Berg’s *Wozzeck* and Violin Concerto, Hindemith’s *Symphonic Metamorphoses*, Honegger’s *Jeanne d’Arc*, Schoenberg’s Chamber Symphony Op. 9, and Stravinsky’s *Apollon Musagete* and *Ebony Concerto*. Not only were two of the “contemporary” composers already dead, all of these compositions were written between 1908-1942. Only one of them, the Berg Violin Concerto, can properly be called an example of twelve-tone music.

the international career or domestic success won by older composers, including Lutosławski, who adapted to the new, a decline sealed by Szeligowski's death in 1963.

Rapid transformations in cultural policy meant that one of the central worries in the Polish music world after 1956 was whether one dogma, socialist realism, had just been exchanged for another, avant-gardism. Andrzej Cwojdzński (b. 1928), conductor and artistic director of the Lublin Philharmonic in the provinces of southeastern Poland, candidly addressed this fear when he opined that the dominance of the avant-garde was knocking the pens from other composers' hands: "as much as we speak about the right to experiment, there should also be tolerance of the right not to experiment. I know many young composers who recently have stopped composing altogether . . . they are saying they are not able to write like Penderecki or Górecki."⁸⁵ He then accused Polish musical institutions of one-sided patronage: "we encounter this intolerance at every step, as much in the selection of works for the Warsaw Autumn as for regular concerts, we encounter it in the newsletters sent from the Ministry [of Culture] to different orchestras, and, above all, we come up against it on competition juries."⁸⁶

After hearing Cwojdzński's words, Lutosławski took the floor to intervene. He shamed those present for forgetting the excesses of the early 1950s, expressing his disbelief at the turn the General Assembly had taken just a few years after the first exhilarating months of the Polish Thaw.⁸⁷ That composers themselves were voicing sentiments familiar from the speeches inaugurating Poland's Stalinist era seemed to him

⁸⁵ Archiwum ZKP. Stenogram z obrad XI walnego zgromadzenia członków ZKP w dniach 10 i 11 grudnia 1960 roku, 90.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 93.

to be unfathomable, a view that is understandable considering Lutosławski's attempts to remain independent from Party aims and directives throughout the period of socialist realism.⁸⁸ As Cwojdzinski's complaint illuminated, however, for those passed over for promotion in the new cultural environment, the avant-gardism hailed in the West as a sign of Polish freedom was experienced in Poland as anything but free.

To dispel anxieties that the Polish avant-garde was unduly benefiting from official endorsement, Lutosławski attempted to destabilize a one-sided picture of institutional support. Contrary to popular perception, he parried, avant-garde composers did not easily earn commissions from the Ministry of Culture; he claimed to know situations in which avant-garde works had been removed, by official decree, from the concert programs of Polish musicians traveling to Western Europe.⁸⁹ His intimations set the tone for a string of defenses of the avant-garde that culminated in accusations of personal malice. As the general discussion wound to a close, Andrzej Dobrowolski returned to the floor to imply that some of the young composers' worst enemies were among those gathered in the hall. He recalled that, "during a meeting at the Ministry, when doubts were being expressed in the presence of representatives from the Cultural Division of the Central Committee about the artistic value of our young colleagues' works and the content that such works can express, Perkowski cites his well-known statement about playing on pots and pans. Does that suffice? I think it does."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Adrian Thomas, however, has unearthed archival evidence indicating that Lutosławski's relationship to socialist realist policy had been more complicated in the early 1950s than the composer's later statements would lead one to suspect. See his "File 750," http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issues.html.

⁸⁹ Archiwum ZKP. Stenogram z obrad XI walnego zgromadzenia członków ZKP w dniach 10 i 11 grudnia 1960 roku, 96. Although other composers at the Assembly supported Lutosławski's assertion, I have not yet been able to confirm his claims in external documentary evidence.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

In the end, adherents of Polish avant-gardism at the ZKP meeting justified the expansion of opportunities for some young composers by hinting at the disadvantages these composers still faced. Conservatives may have felt oppressed by the changes wrought by the Thaw. But, their advocates argued, young avant-gardists were also unable to escape from the interplay of possibilities and constraints that continued to govern Poland's musical life. Whatever the realities of official patronage, the language avant-garde supporters used at the ZKP General Assembly in 1960 ultimately served to argue for composers' independence within the context of their institutional promotion. A rhetorical means had arisen to separate avant-gardists from the state, voiced by composers who themselves had sought to maintain their distance from the regime during the years of socialist realist policy.

A Socialist Avant-Garde?

With a published exchange on contemporary music, the journal *Ruch Muzyczny* ushered in the final stages of the debates about avant-gardism that had begun to grip the Polish music world after *Scontri*'s premiere. In their prefatory comments, the editors explained their decision to mount this discussion by pointing to recent disagreements about contemporary music, alluding to the clashes of critical opinion sparked by the 1960 Warsaw Autumn Festival.⁹¹ As the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange unfolded, a number of its articles also referenced the brouhaha at the Eleventh General Assembly of the ZKP, and the speeches by Tadeusz Szeligowski and Józef Patkowski were reprinted in full. Thus disputes about recent changes in Polish composition surfaced in a publication that itself

⁹¹ "Od redakcji," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/24 (1960): 8.

was a sign of post-1956 cultural reforms: after being liquidated during the Stalinist era for its advocacy of contemporary music, *Ruch Muzyczny* had returned to the Polish scene only in 1957.⁹²

Participants in the *Ruch Muzyczny* discussion returned to queries about the relationship between avant-garde composers and listeners first raised in the critical reception of Górecki's *Scontri*. The perennial question of Polishness, which formed a subtext to domestic critical reception of Górecki and buttressed Lutosławski's defense of the avant-garde at the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly, would likewise reappear in the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange. Just as Gomułka's promise of a "Polish road to socialism" strove to chart an alternative political path within the Soviet bloc, invocations of national musical sovereignty sought to justify Polish avant-gardism by claiming a space for it equidistant from East and West.

That conspicuous avant-gardism was enmeshed with Poland's rejection of Soviet cultural policy was a point not lost on critics observing transformations in Polish musical life. In the essay opening the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange, musicologist Ludwik Erhardt (b. 1934) claimed that the cultivation of avant-gardism through official sponsorship nurtured an aesthetic conformity no less pernicious than its predecessor, even if it seemed more ideologically benign in the post-1956 cultural environment. The title of his piece, "Turning the Screw," suggests that Erhardt was performing a conservative role at odds with his typical public persona. Throughout his career, Erhardt has tended to favor new music; as a young critic, for example, he indicted the repertoire of the first Warsaw

⁹² Thomas, *Polish Music Since Szymanowski*, 42-43. See also: Krzysztof Baculewski, *The History of Music in Poland, Vol. VII. The Contemporary Era, Part 1: 1939-1974*, trans. John Comber (Warsaw: Sutkowski Edition, 2006), 119-120.

Autumn Festival for not being modern enough.⁹³ But while his stance in the *Ruch Muzyczny* discussion on contemporary music may have been calculated precisely to ensure a contentious published debate, his terms were deadly serious. Erhardt denied the existence of artistic freedom in Poland, claiming that, “there cannot be talk of freedom in the conditions of dictatorship.” The dominance of the avant-garde, he contended, came less from its own strength than from an ability to overpower opponents with accusations of conservatism. These became charges of socialist realism in Poland, which resulted from “the use of this rather imprecise idea as a form of propaganda in its time.”⁹⁴ In a dangerous reversal, the earlier vilification of avant-gardism by committed socialist realists had, Erhardt protested, immunized the post-1956 avant-garde from critique.

At a time when other segments of Polish society had undergone limited reform, openness to musical avant-gardism became one signal among many of a reaction against the cultural and political policies of the early 1950s. Yet composers and critics diverged in the *Ruch Muzyczny* discussion over the extent to which avant-gardism should be promoted by the mechanisms of state support. Zygmunt Mycielski, for one, voiced his mistrust of the unnaturally large place the avant-garde had recently assumed in Polish composition, a position he attributed primarily to the influence of politics. A noted critic and composer, Mycielski had little love for avant-gardism, especially when avant-garde works were purely coloristic, abstractly experimental, and scornful of closed musical

⁹³ Ludwik Erhardt, “Wątpliwości,” *Express Wieczorny* (20 October 1956). Reprinted as “Kiedy byłem młody i bezczelny,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 14-15.

⁹⁴ Ludwik Erhardt, “Przykręcam śrubę,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/24 (1960): 8.

form.⁹⁵ Neither did he bear much affection for Poland's socialist system: although he had begun the 1950s as a party sympathizer, during the earliest fissures of the Thaw Mycielski had been among the first to criticize the isolation of Polish musical life, and he increasingly voiced his opposition to the regime throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁹⁶ Nevertheless he doubted in his contribution to the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange that experiments by fledgling avant-gardists should be accorded such ideological weight. "We are turning the avant-garde into a social question," he complained, "which no avant-garde ever was in its beginning."⁹⁷ He proposed instead that avant-garde music in Poland should exist on the outskirts of musical life, just as it did in England, France, Italy, and Canada. If Poland were truly following the Western example, Mycielski implied, the homegrown avant-garde would be free to be irrelevant.

Such hopes were wishful thinking at a time when the stakes of Cold War cultural politics had infused musical avant-gardism with unshakeable significance. Leon Markiewicz faulted Mycielski for ignoring the most glaring difference separating Poland from the West: its political system, and the practices of institutional support such a system required. Markiewicz claimed support of young avant-gardists to be at the heart of socialist Poland's cultural responsibilities.⁹⁸ It is no small indication of the ambiguities of Polish cultural policy that a compositional ethos so antithetical to socialist ideology could be construed as somehow compatible with it, for socialism was meant to alleviate the

⁹⁵ Urszula Maria Ciołkiewicz, "W poszukiwaniu integralności dzieła muzycznego. Głosy polskiej krytyki na tle dokonań kompozytorskich drugiej połowy XX wieku" (M.A. Thesis, Warsaw University, 2005), 26-37.

⁹⁶ For a sample of Mycielski's critique of Polish musical life in the mid-1950s, see his: "O twórczości muzycznej dziesięciolecia," *Muzyka* 6/7-8 (1955): 3-22.

⁹⁷ Zygmunt Mycielski, "Z nowym rokiem," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/1 (1961): 2.

⁹⁸ Leon Markiewicz, "Bronię terrorystów," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/6 (1961): 7.

conditions that would give rise to a politicized avant-garde. Moreover, what passed for avant-gardism in Cold War Poland had less to do with the radical anti-establishment attitudes that had previously motivated avant-garde musicians in early Soviet Russia and inspired a generation of poets in interwar Poland, and was more akin to a form of elite modernism that privileged the disengagement of artists from processes of social transformation.⁹⁹ But for Markiewicz, as for many in the arguments of 1960-61, the socialist cultivation of avant-garde music in Cold War Poland was far from an aberration, and was in fact compatible with progressive politics. He resolved the seeming paradox of official support in Poland for a Westward-leaning musical aesthetic by denying such a contradiction existed, a critical feint that resonated with the ambiguities of post-1956 Polish politics, in which moves towards cultural independence rubbed against the imperative of maintaining allegiance to the Soviet bloc.

No less than the argument that support for young composers was good socialist policy, appeals to the Polishness of the avant-garde became a way of normalizing the new aesthetic direction in domestic musical life. Polishness was useful as a critical concept in the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange precisely because it was indefinable, just as socialist realism had been. Early in 1960, Bohdan Pociąg noted that with the adoption of avant-garde techniques, particularly among the younger Polish composers, it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish any shared characteristics among them that might conceivably be called a “national style.” Neither the use of indigenous folk material nor clear ties to national traditions served any longer as a litmus test of musical Polishness.

⁹⁹ On Soviet musicians, see Richard Taruskin, “Safe Harbors,” in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1997), 81-98. On Polish poets, see Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation’s Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Grasping at theoretical and descriptive straws, Pociiej suggested “spontaneity, daring, passion, a sense of experimentation, instinct, or an intuition of modernity” as traits specific to Polish contemporary music.¹⁰⁰ The only intimation of a more concrete stylistic description came when Pociiej alluded to the grounding of new Polish music in serialism, a relationship he dismissed with prickly national chauvinism. While granting that serialism had been quickly adopted by Polish composers, Pociiej alleged that, “what is more important is that it *matured* on our soil.”¹⁰¹ No longer mere imitators of their Western counterparts, members of the Polish avant-garde were coming into their own.

A year later, Tadeusz A. Zieliński similarly claimed the uniqueness of Polish avant-gardism by using tactics already familiar from his reviews of Górecki’s *Scontri*. Zieliński argued in the ongoing *Ruch Muzyczny* debate that Polish composers kept “the aesthetic reaction of the listener in mind,” in contrast to Western avant-gardists wedded to “pure technical experimentation” and “a search for technique that ignores aesthetic experience.”¹⁰² By tethering contemporary Polish music to a loosely defined emotionalism, Zieliński managed to cast music as forbidding to the ear as any found in the West as, however paradoxically, oriented toward listeners rather than written for the composer’s sole satisfaction. Such a move was vital in staking a claim for Polish compositional independence from both East and West. That contemporary Polish music was emotional and communicative separated it from the Western avant-garde’s chilly pursuit of rationality; that this music was “avant-garde” at all detached it from the yoking

¹⁰⁰ Bohdan Pociiej, “Świt awangardy,” 10.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 24. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰² Tadeusz A. Zieliński, “Nowa sytuacja polskiej muzyki współczesnej,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/2 (1961): 4.

of progressive politics to rearguard aesthetics prevalent elsewhere in the official musical life of the bloc.

For many defendants in the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange, emotional expressivity not only rendered Polish avant-gardism distinctly national, it also guaranteed the viability of avant-garde music within a socialist political context. In an environment in which the audience could easily be equated with the masses when it came to cultural policy, foregrounding the bond between composer and listener emphasized the Polish avant-garde's relevance to society. It also protected composers from the charge of formalism, an accusation that was present in critiques of both the Polish and Western European avant-gardes in spirit, if not in name. A relic of Stalinist-era cultural policy, the charge of formalism was too explosive to be uttered outright in Poland during 1960-61. In his speech at the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly, as well as in the published version of his remarks, Tadeusz Szeligowski resorted to a less volatile epithet, "aestheticism." But the contours of the old foil to socialist realism, uncomfortably familiar to composers such as Lutosławski, emerged from his euphemistic rhetoric. By decrying "autonomous" art, denigrating the "aestheticizing" artist for seeking "shocks, terrors, and gloom," and arguing that "aestheticism . . . leads to a complete isolation from society," Szeligowski resurrected the tropes of antiformalist screeds in a new discursive guise.¹⁰³

The final commentators in the *Ruch Muzyczny* discussion, Norbert Karaśkiewicz and Monika Gorczycka (1935-62), answered these charges by linking expression, modernity, and audiences in an argument supporting the homegrown avant-garde's

¹⁰³ Tadeusz Szeligowski, "Niebezpieczeństwa estetyzmu: z przemówienia Tadeusza Szeligowskiego," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/2 (1961): 1.

relevance in Polish musical life. In the music of Górecki and Penderecki, as well as Lutosławski, Karaśkiewicz saw “the ambition to express one’s self and one’s time;” the modernity of this music was confirmed for him by its expressive valence, which he described as “close to today’s sensibility.”¹⁰⁴ Gorczycka clearly defined the music that would speak to the contemporary person by describing, for the first time in these debates, who she perceived this listener to be. The figure she presented was no optimistic new socialist person; rather, this listener was hypersensitive, afflicted with a volatile nervousness in which various emotional impulses and tremors followed one another in quick succession, without any discernible connection between them.¹⁰⁵ If Górecki was, as Bohdan Pocij asserted, the Polish composer who best understood the “cosmic catastrophe of modernity,” who, as Tadeusz A. Zieliński indicated in his review of *Scontri*, “created music loaded with dynamite,” Gorczycka justified the avant-gardism of the composer and his compatriots by finding the ideal recipients for their works in Polish contemporary society. Defenses first mounted in *Scontri*’s reception had grown to shield the Polish avant-garde as a whole.

A Polish Road to Avant-Gardism

In closing their chapter of the debates on the Polish avant-garde, the editors of *Ruch Muzyczny* circled back to the Warsaw Autumn Festival. They located the source of contentions about Poland’s newly avant-garde composers in the intellectual ferment triggered by four years of exposure to music from throughout the world, intimating that

¹⁰⁴ Norbert Karaśkiewicz, “Tradycja—nie tradycjonalizm,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/7 (1961): 17.

¹⁰⁵ Monika Gorczycka, “Przeciw mitom,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/8 (1961): 6-7.

the domestic disputes were continually interfacing with points of reference from afar.¹⁰⁶ Whether in the reception of *Scontri*, the quarrel at the ZKP, or the exchange in *Ruch Muzyczny*, composers and critics alike had indeed intertwined the question of Polish avant-gardism with its broader compositional relationship to the West, a connection that was being fostered most assiduously by the annual Warsaw Autumn concerts. As Maja Trochimczyk points out, the promotion of avant-garde music at the festival was inseparable from a public relations campaign meant to strengthen Poland's international standing: "for the government sponsors and censors, the absolute primacy of invention and the total originality of ideas mattered less than the 'progressive' character of the music, which was meant to prove – through its innovative features – that the avant-garde could flourish in a socialist country."¹⁰⁷ In the eyes of its official patrons, avant-garde music served to demonstrate Poland's cultural liberality to the outside world. Western approbation of Polish music in accounts of the Warsaw Autumn proved the success of Poland's post-1956 cultural policy in gaining distance from the socialist realism of the early 1950s.

Yet the contentions among Polish composers and critics in 1960-61 also proved that promoting avant-gardism in the Soviet bloc was no straightforward matter. Musical experimentation could not unambiguously signal freedom when it was experienced by some as tyranny and where its mediation vis-à-vis East and West was a constant necessity. Soviet and Eastern European condemnations of the Warsaw Autumn Festival

¹⁰⁶ "Od redakcji," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/8 (1961): 7.

¹⁰⁷ Maja Trochimczyk [formerly Maria Anna Harley], "The Polish School of Sonorism in its European Context," in *Crosscurrents and Counterpoints: Offerings in Honor of Bengt Hambraeus at 70*, ed. Per F. Broman, Nora A. Engebretsen, and Bo Alphonse (Göteborg, Sweden: University of Gothenburg, 1998), 72-73.

and recent Polish compositions, including Górecki's *Scontri*, guaranteed that avant-gardism in music would remain implicated in a complex web of international relations that stretched to encompass the culture, society, and politics of Poland and its neighbors.

The defense of Górecki's *Scontri*, and by extension the avant-gardism it represented, thus served a dual purpose in Poland around 1960: it was a means to reject the legacies of Stalinism while not entirely abandoning gestures of outward allegiance to socialist cultural policy. Consequently, it helped navigate the cultural environment both on the local Polish level and within the broader outlines of the pervasive Cold War context. Those shielding the young avant-garde's autonomy at the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly included several architects of the Warsaw Autumn, along with some of the composers most personally invested in maintaining their independence; they uttered their apologies during the meeting of a professional organization that had, by this point, largely wrested itself free from restraining state influence. Participants in the *Ruch Muzyczny* exchange, whose published medium potentially opened it to scrutiny from abroad, then went one step further. Through their critical moves, these proponents sought to mitigate the dangers avant-gardism posed to official ideology and thereby quell suspicions within the Soviet bloc. By positioning Poland's new compositional direction as uniquely national, as a realistic expression of Polish modernity, and as a socially integrated phenomenon, advocates of techniques entangled elsewhere with the discourse of aesthetic autonomy were able to appropriate the "progressive" position in discussions of Polish music, leaving behind typical characterizations of the artist's autonomy as a reactionary retreat from society.

It is important to remember that these maneuvers came at a time when other forums in Poland had already begun to succumb to increasing restrictions. In a 1994 conversation with musicologist Irina Nikolska, Lutosławski reminisced about the crackdowns in the arts that accompanied Gomułka's consolidation of power in the late 1950s, but which preceded the most radical period in Polish composition. "It was rumored that Khrushchev disapproved of permissiveness in our cultural life, and that Gomułka bound himself to put the country in order within two years," Lutosławski recalled. "He seems, however, to have coped with the task within a shorter span of time: in sum, the period of our relative freedom lasted no more than a year and a half."¹⁰⁸ The growing demands for orthodoxy voiced by Polish authorities, Lutosławski implied, had their roots in political necessity. He neglected to mention, however, that of all the arts, music continued to enjoy relatively uncontested official support in Poland throughout the late 1950s, early 1960s, and beyond. As Bylander has suggested, Polish authorities perhaps viewed musicians as more easily managed due to their small numbers.¹⁰⁹ Gomułka himself had pointed to writers, not composers, as a potentially treacherous wellspring of social instability. Moreover, the nearly instantaneous Western acclaim garnered by the Warsaw Autumn Festival, and the new Polish music that was performed there, had already reflected favorably on the policies of the regime.

But the justifications successively presented in *Scontri*'s critical reception, voiced on the floor of the Eleventh ZKP General Assembly, and imprinted on the pages of *Ruch Muzyczny* also served to insulate avant-garde music, and the musical institutions that

¹⁰⁸ Irina Nikolska, *Conversations with Witold Lutosławski* (Stockholm: Melos, 1994), 41.

¹⁰⁹ Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 540-41.

promoted it, from the constrictions reapplied to film, theater, and literature when Polish cultural life began to refreeze in 1957. Music's semantic slipperiness lent it more easily than other arts to the critical sleights of hand performed by critics and composers in these exchanges. Defenses of avant-garde music in Cold War Poland ultimately provided a means by which avant-gardism could be normalized, however contortedly, within a socialist environment. The "Polish road to socialism," with its potential for cultivating limited national differences, had created the foundations for a Polish avant-garde.

Chapter Two

The Open Window

Poland as a Bridge: West to East

In early 1963, *Perspectives of New Music* reported a curious phenomenon. Soviet observers at the most recent Warsaw Autumn had shown a keen interest in contemporary music. Elliott Carter (b. 1908), on the scene to hear a festival performance of his *Eight Etudes and a Fantasy* (1950), informed his readers that, along with the official Soviet delegation, scores of Moscow Conservatory students had descended on Warsaw for the 1962 concerts. There, students and official guests alike had absorbed and eagerly debated the new sounds they were hearing. Carter was bemused by the Soviets' apparent hunger for information. Although they may have spent whole concerts and press conferences scribbling voluminous notes on the festival proceedings, the Soviet observers' knowledge of twentieth-century music hardly seemed, to Carter, to mark them as alien in the Warsaw Autumn milieu. "In private talks with them," he noted, "it was impossible to fathom what motivated their special interest, since like everyone else, they seemed well-versed in the Viennese school and in the schools of music presented, and were eager, as we all were, to hear the new works."¹

Carter's interlocutors may well have evinced a thorough familiarity with twentieth-century compositional trends. For Soviet musicians outside the official orbit, however, the Warsaw Autumn was a revelation. Giya Kancheli's (b. 1935) memories of the 1962 festival point to the special resonance of the Warsaw Autumn for a group of

¹ Elliott Carter, "Letter From Europe," *Perspectives of New Music* 1/2 (Spring 1963), 203.

young Soviet composers who were on the fringes of official musical life in their home country. Kancheli was then a composition student whose curiosity had been piqued by tales of the avant-garde music that was being performed in Poland each September. With about twenty companions, Kancheli made his way to Warsaw in 1962; short of cash, the students lodged in a dormitory. Years later, he recalled the shock of seeing a trombonist come onstage, silently disassemble his instrument, and then exit. “There were many things we didn’t understand,” Kancheli explained. “At the time, we knew nothing about Cage or his 4’33”. This type of performance was a complete surprise for us, and so was the musical language used in many of the more conventional works.”² Just as instructive for the young composer and his peers was the liberal atmosphere that accompanied the festival’s variegated compositional roster. Kancheli stressed that, “already as a young, beginning composer I was aware of the significance of the Warsaw Autumn. Now, decades later, I am even more aware of how significant it was. Poland was a socialist country where people felt free to do things that were inadmissible in another socialist country, the Soviet Union.”³ At a time when information, and access to it, was entangled with the exercise of power, the openness of the Warsaw Autumn offered composers like Kancheli a taste of seemingly unbounded possibilities—as political as they were musical.

The politicized connotations of exchanging musical information were felt in festival planning as well as its reception during the Warsaw Autumn’s first decade. Construed by the Polish state as a means to play politics through music, the festival was

² Krzysztof Droba, “Spotkania z Giją Kancelim,” in *Duchowość Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej w muzyce końca XX wieku* ed. Krzysztof Droba, Teresa Malecka, and Krzysztof Szwejgier (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2004), 335.

³ Ibid.

deeply implicated in international cultural relations, especially among the nations of the Soviet bloc. Each year the Warsaw Autumn brought together musical works from various locales. But it also brought together people: performers, composers, musicologists, cultural officials, journalists, and audiences, all of whom contributed to the flow of information about contemporary music that took place at the festival concerts.

If they could manage to travel to Poland, visitors from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had the chance to experience Western modernity directly, for avant-garde works by Western composers took center stage at the Warsaw Autumn, alongside Polish compositions that re-imagined experimental techniques. The festival became a magnet for composers throughout the Soviet bloc, many of whom were already susceptible to the enticements of dissonant harmonies, unorthodox playing techniques, and challenges to the status quo of inherited musical forms and standard concert etiquette. That the Warsaw Autumn might have a region-wide impact occurred to at least one of the festival organizers: in 1962, the western press quoted Kazimierz Serocki as saying that “the Warsaw shock treatment may well start a chain reaction in the Soviet way of composing music.”⁴ Others interpreted the festival not as a force for change, but for regional stability; Carter, for one, called it a “safety valve for all the somewhat submerged advanced tendencies in iron-curtain countries.”⁵ Reviewers of the festival in its early years were most prone to describe the Warsaw Autumn as a unique point of East-West contact within an otherwise polarized field of Cold War tensions. Stefan Kisielewski (1911-91), a prominent cultural commentator and opposition figure, made this point in

⁴ Robert Naur, “Far-Out Autumn,” *New York Times* (30 September 1962).

⁵ Carter, “Letter from Europe,” 202.

1958 by conjuring the image of a bridge linking one place to another. “I think that the meaning of the festival goes far beyond the music itself,” he wrote. “It is a bridge between Webern and Shostakovich . . . and between an American string quartet and the Leningrad Philharmonic. Not only is this bridge artistic, it is also psychological, political, and historical.”⁶

The idea that Poland might act as a gateway to the West for other nations in the Soviet bloc was not unique to the project of the Warsaw Autumn in its first decade. During the late 1950s, Poland’s potential to serve as a go-between was integrated into a domestic conception of the nation’s diplomatic role. This assessment found its way to the *New York Times* in 1959, which quoted a Polish official as stating, “we Poles understand the West better than the Russians – because we are of the West. We can yet serve as a useful influence with our allies of the East, if the West only gives us a chance to prove it.”⁷ Similar interpretations have surfaced in Anglo-American interpretations of the Cold War era. Writing in the early 1960s, Canadian Richard Hiscocks structured his entire analysis of post-war Polish history around the notion that Poland could act as a conduit for greater cultural understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union. For the Soviet citizens referenced in Hiscock’s account, particularly young people in Moscow and Leningrad, following the Polish press, viewing Polish abstract art, and learning the Polish language were a way to access cultural developments in Western Europe. These

⁶ Stefan Kisielewski, article from *Tygodnik Powszechny* (12 October 1958), reprinted in *Program III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1959), 129.

⁷ John B. Oakes, “Visit to Four Capitals of Communism,” *New York Times* (26 July 1959).

interests were perhaps even more fashionable due to their tinge of official disapproval.⁸ More recently, art historian Susan E. Reid has underscored the role of Polish modernism in paving the way for experimentation in the Soviet visual arts. She points to the Polish display at the *Art of Socialist Countries* exhibition, which opened in Moscow at the end of 1958, as a vital element in Soviet de-Stalinization, one that offered its audiences “a rare opportunity, inconceivable before 1956, to glimpse something like Western modernity refracted in the Polish prism.”⁹ By exposing audiences to avant-garde music from Western Europe, Poland, and the United States, the Warsaw Autumn likewise contributed to regional de-Stalinization. The festival fit easily into a rhetoric that was predisposed to see Poland in the late 1950s and early 1960s in terms of its potential for cultural and political mediation.

Destination Warsaw

“Despite all the assurances of the foreign travel office,” Everett Helm, an American critic and cultural administrator, wrote in 1965, “a journey to Poland is still an adventure. . . . I asked myself constantly: why could I not experience this healthy dose of contemporary music in a more advanced country?”¹⁰ Arranging an international music festival in early 1960s Poland was indeed no easy task for the Warsaw Autumn’s

⁸ Richard Hiscocks, *Poland: Bridge for the Abyss? An Interpretation of Developments in Post-War Poland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 330.

⁹ Susan E. Reid, “The Exhibition *Art of Socialist Countries*, Moscow 1958-9, and the Contemporary Style of Painting,” in *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), 110.

¹⁰ Everett Helm, “Powrót do wielkiego świata—o międzynarodowym festiwalu muzyki współczesnej w Warszawie,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 69. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article that first appeared in a Swiss publication, *Die Weltwoche* (8 October 1965).

organizers. Encumbered by a labyrinthine bureaucracy, Warsaw was still undergoing massive post-war reconstruction. The city lacked adequate housing for its inhabitants, to say nothing of hotel space and facilities for large numbers of foreign guests.

Fortunately for Helm, the music he encountered at the Warsaw Autumn more than made up for his travel woes. This was just as fortunate for the composers involved in planning the festival and for the Polish cultural officials who were overseeing their activities. To succeed as an international phenomenon, the festival not only needed to have foreign repertoire on its concert programs; it also required the physical presence of representatives from beyond the delimited circles of Warsaw's musical life. Especially sought out were visitors like Helm, who had extensive connections with the foreign press and a propensity to publish sympathetic accounts of Poland's emerging contemporary music scene.¹¹ Glowing Western European and American reception became an asset in convincing Polish cultural officials of the festival's relevance to a broader world of contemporary music performance. Already in 1959, Wiktor Weinbaum, director of the Music Group at MKiS, began to extol the benefits of the Warsaw Autumn's favorable coverage in European publications.¹² Just a few years later, members of the Festival Committee interpreted swelling numbers of foreign visitors as further proof that their institution was becoming an undoubtedly international forum.¹³

¹¹ See, for example, the following articles by Helm: "Warsaw Autumn. East and West Meet at Polish Festival," *New York Times* (19 October 1958); "Autumn Music," *Musical America* (November 1961): 23-4; "Warschauer Herbst 1961—Die neue polnische Schule," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 122/11 (1961): 467-68.

¹² Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (42). Protokół z posiedzenia Sekcji Muzyki /VII/ Rady Kultury w dniu 9.X.1959 r., 3.

¹³ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1962 roku," 3.

In truth, listeners bearing foreign passports were an isolated presence compared to the sea of Poles that flooded Warsaw's concert halls during each year's Autumn. Yet throughout the early 1960s, travelers from abroad assumed an importance that overshadowed their actual numerical proportions, for they testified that Warsaw was becoming a center of East-West cultural exchange—one of the reasons for establishing the festival in the first place. Annual reports of the Festival Committee's activities dutifully tabulated levels of foreign musical tourism: in 1961, a busload of 46 musicians from Prague; entourages of 72 people from the Soviet Union, 3 from France, and 25 from Czechoslovakia in 1962.¹⁴ At the 1964 festival, 67 observers came from 7 socialist countries, 43 visitors were from 11 capitalist countries, and a group of 37 musicians and their younger colleagues traveled to Poland from Lithuania and Latvia.¹⁵ Two groups of composers, musicologists, and performers—one from Tallinn (30 people), the other from Novosibirsk (15 people)—journeyed to Warsaw in 1965, where they joined 73 other tourists from 8 socialist countries and 31 visitors from 13 capitalist countries.¹⁶ The festival hosted 127 observers from 24 nations in 1966.¹⁷ And so on.

What quickly becomes obvious from these tallies is that visitors from the Soviet bloc consistently outnumbered observers from Western Europe and the United States during the first half of the 1960s. The lure of forbidden fruit was a powerful incentive,

¹⁴ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued documents]. "Sprawozdanie z działalności Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień' w okresie V Warszawskiej Jesieni (1961 r.)," 3; "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1962 roku," 3.

¹⁵ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1964 roku," 4.

¹⁶ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie IX 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1965 roku," 5.

¹⁷ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie X 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1966 roku," 4.

one whose potency waned outside Eastern Europe. A cumbersome visa application process likewise discouraged Western travel to the Warsaw Autumn. But aware that some of their most vocal allies hailed from the West, the Festival Committee strove to ease these travelers' entry into Poland. By mid-decade, committee members reported that applying for a Polish visa in Western Europe had largely become a formality, as long as the request was made early enough; citizens of Austria and Scandinavian countries could obtain an entry visa at the Polish border.¹⁸ West Germans faced a more complicated process, in which their personal information had to be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who in turn sent their decisions to the Polish embassy in West Germany.¹⁹

In spite of these efforts, visitors from the socialist sphere continued to have fewer hurdles to entering Poland than their colleagues in the West—fewer hurdles, that is, if they could finagle permission to leave their home countries. Many Eastern European composers traveled to Warsaw on international cultural exchanges arranged by their local composers' unions or other music institutions.²⁰ Members of these official delegations were typically among those who were most inured to the ideological dangers of exposure to avant-garde music. Those whose fascination with Western European avant-gardism threatened to infiltrate their own compositional work experienced considerably greater difficulty in traversing the Polish border. “Unofficial” Soviet composers were often denied permission to travel to the Warsaw Autumn; although he was one of the most

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VIII ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1964 roku,” 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

internationally prominent members of this group during the 1960s, Edison Denisov (1929-96) paid for his first trip to the festival out of his own pocket.²¹ The unofficial composer had thus become one of the Warsaw Autumn's growing numbers of unofficial guests. Lacking formal invitations from the festival or any other cultural organization, these visitors went to Poland at their own cost; they were a feature of Warsaw Autumn audiences starting in the 1960s.

In contrast, officially invited observers had been part of the festival since the very beginning. The Festival Committee was willing to devote its financial resources to ensuring an international presence at the Warsaw Autumn's first installments; invited guests could expect their concert tickets and lodging to be covered by festival funds. As with many of the institution's logistical elements, the Committee's invitations were governed by concerns for geopolitical parity. In 1962, for example, there were resources to sponsor 60 guests total—half of them from the East, and the other from the West. The Festival Committee, MKiS, and BWKZ precisely delineated how the invitations were to be distributed within the Soviet bloc. Twelve invitations were destined for the Soviet Union, while the GDR and Czechoslovakia each received six; other socialist countries were to be granted one to three spots on that year's guest list.²²

Since the ultimate source of Warsaw Autumn funding was the Polish Ministry of Culture, the festival's year-to-year resources were subject to fluctuations in ministerial policy. A ruling from September 18, 1962 began to prohibit organizers of international

²¹ Peter Schmelz, "Listening, Memory, and the Thaw: Unofficial Music and Society in the Soviet Union, 1956-1974," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 42-43.

²² Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z przebiegu przygotowań do VI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień,'" 2.

events from inviting foreign guests to Poland at their own cost.²³ Although an established practice from prior festivals, financing the presence of foreign observers suddenly became an element that had to be negotiated. Poland's premier denied the Festival Committee's request to invite 14 observers to the 1963 Warsaw Autumn, despite intervention by the Minister of Culture, Tadeusz Galiński. Approval came only for the appearances of Nadia Boulanger and émigré composer Michał Spisak, along with two composers who were writing works especially for the festival that year; even this required a special visit to MKiS by Festival Committee members.²⁴ A year later, the Committee urged MKiS to circumvent this policy in the particular case of the Warsaw Autumn. Their rationale? The role of foreign festival guests in disseminating a positive image of Poland abroad. "Foreign observers and musical specialists are the most important promoters of the festivals," committee members wrote in their 1964 annual report. "We would like them to participate at the Festival Committee's cost. . . . The growing international interest in the Warsaw Autumn entitles us to this."²⁵ Starting in 1965, the Festival Committee was again allowed to invite foreign composers and observers to Warsaw, although never at the same levels as just a few years previously.²⁶

²³ Pismo okólne Nr. 88 Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 18 września 1962 roku.

²⁴ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' – 1963 roku. (Sprawozdanie Sekretarza Festiwalu)," 5.

²⁵ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1964 roku," 4.

²⁶ The Festival Committee received approval to invite 8 foreign guests in 1965; in 1966, they were granted permission to issue 10 official invitations. Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued documents]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie IX 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1965 roku," 5; "Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie X 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1966 roku," 4.

Yet the festival was only one of the Polish cultural institutions that invited foreign observers to the Warsaw Autumn each year. The ZKP sponsored visits, as did the Polish Radio; most frequently, these guests hailed from within the Soviet bloc. PWM likewise sent invitations to music publishers elsewhere in Eastern Europe.²⁷ The BWKZ kept its own lists of observers, divided, as ever, into groups from East and West. Prospective guests of the BWKZ included a mix of cultural officials, composers, conductors, and others of musical ilk—along with the directors of several Western European festivals of contemporary music.²⁸ Bringing composers, musicologists, and cultural officials to Warsaw integrated ministries of culture and composers' unions throughout the Soviet bloc. Contacts between publishers could facilitate the movement of music scores from one place to another. Links with the directors of Western European music festivals, on the other hand, integrated the Warsaw Autumn into continent-wide performance circuits that transcended Poland's immediate geopolitical location. The flow of information at the Warsaw Autumn was thus multidirectional during its first decade. At the local level, information flowed inward, toward Polish musicians and audiences. But it also moved outward: through reports by observers from far-flung locales, news of the Warsaw Autumn reached the broader musical world, in which the festival was aiming to achieve full status as a viable partner.

Along with people, printed materials were carriers of musical information to and from Poland. The most vital of these were the Warsaw Autumn program books,

²⁷ Archiwum ZKP, 11/32. Letter from PWM (Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne) to the Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, 8 August 1966.

²⁸ Archiwum ZKP, 11/32. List of the BWKZ's invited guests to the 1966 Warsaw Autumn Festival.

published at the time in Polish and French.²⁹ Since 1956, the books have played a fundamental role in the festival's self-presentation not only through reflecting its organizers' ambitions, but also by serving as a reminder of institutional history. The programs have culminated since the early 1960s in an index containing all the works played in previous years, along with the dates of their presentation and the names of the musicians who performed them. In the Festival Committee's eyes, the program books' ability to circulate data about twentieth-century music in general and Polish composition in particular warranted efforts to increase their reliability starting in 1961.³⁰ Commentary about the Warsaw Autumn was deemed just as worthy of dissemination. In 1961, 1964, and 1966—that is, when Warsaw began to become a destination for musical tourism—the festival produced three volumes of excerpts from its Polish and foreign press reviews. Like the program books, the review collections are polyvocal. Composers, performers, and musicologists contributed commentary to the programs, whereas the review books anthologized a variety of critical perspectives on the Warsaw Autumn that were both socialist and Western, and which ranged from praise to condemnation. Whether functioning as an aid to critical memory, a spur to further sponsorship of Polish contemporary music, or a substitute for physical travel to the Warsaw Autumn concerts, the festival's printed materials were simultaneously informational and promotional. Their pages contained a tangible trace of the thrills to be had at the festival in its first decade, with its meetings of musicians from various corners of the world and the exchange, if not outright clash, of their opinions.

²⁹ In the 1970s, the program books began to be published in Polish and English.

³⁰ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z działalności Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień' w okresie V Warszawskiej Jesieni (1961 r.)," 5.

Poland as a Bridge: East to West

“The composers who emigrated and settled in the West after the 1956 Hungarian revolution didn’t need the Warsaw Autumn,” Witold Szalonek claimed during the mid-1990s. “But all those who stayed behind took off from here. For Denisov, Schnittke, Slonimsky, and several others, including the Poles, the Warsaw Autumn was their springboard.”³¹ The festival schooled observers from Poland and the Soviet bloc on standard twentieth-century repertoire and avant-garde trends emerging in Western European and American composition. Curiosity, though, came from the other side as well. Throughout the 1960s, visitors from the West relied on the Warsaw Autumn to fill the gaps in their knowledge of Eastern European musical life. What they began to discover was music that defied their expectations of what Soviet—not to mention Czechoslovak, Romanian, or Yugoslav—composition could be. As avant-gardes sprang up throughout the region, their works found a place on the Warsaw Autumn programs. Steps by festival organizers to feature works by the “unofficial” composers of the Soviet Union, or by others in the Bloc whose music displayed a modernist bent, suggest that they were taking a conscious role in providing a venue where this music could be heard.

Concert programming cannot pretend to be neutral, for the act of choosing to perform some works rather than others already implies bias and exclusionary criteria. The stakes of repertoire planning were particularly high during the first five Warsaw Autumns. As the GDR and Soviet Union sought to maintain ultimate control over how their musical life would be represented at the festivals, the selection of compositions and

³¹ Witold Szalonek, “Czy ‘Warszawska Jesień’ jest potrzebna? Wypowiedzi Krzysztofa Pendereckiego, Antoniego Wita, Wojciecha Kilara i Witolda Szalonka,” *Opcje*, September 1996, 30-31.

performers became entangled with struggles for geopolitical domination.³² Complicating matters were the few direct channels that would allow festival organizers in the ZKP to contact Eastern European or Soviet composers and performers. Communication typically occurred instead with PAGART or the BWKZ as intermediaries. Negotiations took place with Soviet and Eastern European cultural organizations without the knowledge of the Festival Committee or the Repertoire Commission; performers had negligible influence over whether they would be able to travel to Warsaw at all; concert programs remained tentative until the last minute.

Organizers' artistic vision for the early Warsaw Autumn festivals was thus kept in check by the forces of political constraint, an issue that persisted into the 1960s. In their 1961 report, for example, the Festival Committee grumbled about its loss of agency in shaping the concert programs of several ensembles from the Soviet bloc.³³ Left in the dark about what a Romanian orchestral ensemble might play at the 1965 festival, the Repertoire Commission appealed to the Polish Embassy in Bucharest for aid.³⁴ Two years later, the Festival Committee bluntly stated its concerns during a postmortem of the 1967 Warsaw Autumn: "the work of the Repertoire Commission is made much more difficult since cultural exchange agreements are entered into without the participation of the Polish Composers' Union. As a result, the Commission cannot always bring its plans for the repertoire to fruition."³⁵

³² Cynthia E. Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music, 1956-1961: Its Goals, Structures, Programs, and People" (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1989), 317-33.

³³ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z działalności Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień' w okresie V Warszawskiej Jesieni (1961 r.)," 2.

³⁴ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej w dniu 17.2.1965 r.

³⁵ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego w dniu 19 października 1967 r.

From Eastern European ensembles, the Repertoire Commission might have wanted performances of new works by less radical Polish composers or the presentation of stylistically moderate works from the early twentieth century.³⁶ What these groups often brought to Warsaw instead were concert programs that toed an official ideological line. But far from defusing the potential of the Warsaw Autumn to unsettle international relations in the Soviet bloc, the appearance of unabashedly socialist realist music at the festival actually contributed to regional tensions when its performance led to bad publicity. The Festival Committee described presentations of Czech and Bulgarian music in the early 1960s as an embarrassment, and one that probably did more harm than good to advertising music from these countries. “We should no longer allow such bad experiences to happen,” they concluded.³⁷ In this case one asymmetrical power differential had come up against another: the festival organizers’ unequal interactions with cultural organizations in the Soviet bloc, and the implicit assumption that Western composition, and especially the reactions of Western observers, took precedence over music that hailed from closer to home.

Lack of sway over Soviet and Eastern European concert programming became a problem for the Repertoire Commission in more ways than one. Besides frustrating the festival organizers’ own designs, it opened them to charges of misrepresentation when the Polish Ministry of Culture came to review their repertoire proposals. After receiving the draft program for the 1962 festival from the ZKP Executive Board, the Ministry’s Music Group collected outside opinions from Stefan Kisielewski and Zofia Lissa. Neither

³⁶ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Sprawozdanie z działalności Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej ‘Warszawska Jesień’ w okresie V Warszawskiej Jesieni (1961 r.),” 5.

³⁷ Ibid.

could understand why the Repertoire Commission had not been more adventurous when it came to works by Soviet and Eastern European composers. Kisielewski, occupied at the time with music criticism and his duties as a representative in parliament, faulted the Commission for relying too heavily on Shostakovich and Prokofiev as representatives of Soviet composition. This was taking the path of least resistance, he argued. “It would be politically advisable,” he added, if dodecaphonic works by Yugoslav or Czech composers could be added to the festival roster.³⁸ Zofia Lissa was similarly attuned to the political prudence of demonstrating that Western composers did not have a monopoly on stylistic innovation. A musicologist who belonged to the PZPR, Lissa had been one of the most prominent advocates of socialist realism in Poland during the early 1950s. But by 1962, she recognized the value of promoting young Soviet modernists in an international forum whose tacit rules gave the upper hand to music from the West. “Why weren’t any young, radical composers added?” she asked. “Volkonsky, for example? [. . .] I have heard that there is a group of young, radical composers in Moscow. Would it be possible to present a work by one of them? This would counteract the prevailing view of the ‘backwardness’ of Soviet music.”³⁹ Putting such works on the Warsaw Autumn program was easier said than done, as the Music Group’s director acknowledged in his remarks on the proposed

³⁸ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW “Warszawska Jesień” (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Letter from Stefan Kisielewski to Wiktor Weinbaum, 1 June 1961.

³⁹ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW “Warszawska Jesień” (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Letter from Zofia Lissa to Wiktor Weinbaum, 27 May 1962.

repertoire for 1962, since authorities in the composers' unions of neighboring countries "do not always agree with the creative explorations of young composers."⁴⁰

It would be too easy to assume, however, that the festival organizers were altogether hampered by their subjugation to the desires of cultural commissars in the East. As if in response to Lissa's and Kisielewski's complaints, by the end of 1962 the Repertoire Commission had started to float ideas for riskier concerts of Soviet music. Members proposed a visit by Maria Yudina (1899-1970), a pianist whose performances of modernist works had already gained her some notoriety in the Soviet Union, or a chamber concert by a "young Soviet ensemble." Branching out from Shostakovich and Prokofiev, the Commission suggested finding pieces by the "younger generation" of Soviet composers, whose works were "entirely unknown in Poland."⁴¹

"Youth" here was not merely a function of chronological age. During the early 1960s, efforts to present music by "young composers" from the Soviet bloc became elided with the Repertoire Commission's aims to present music from whatever avant-gardes existed in the region, until "young" and "avant-garde" came increasingly to mean the same thing. At the time, the phrase "young composers" (*molodiye kompozitori*) had thoroughly negative connotations in the Soviet Union, where it designated a group that had come of age in the post-Stalin era and was fascinated by modernist techniques from the West.⁴² Its members were also targeted in Poland, but for opposite reasons: here, their

⁴⁰ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW "Warszawska Jesień" (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Letter from Wiktor Weinbaum to Tadeusz Galiński, 9 June 1962.

⁴¹ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Programowej w dniu 11 października 1962 r. godz. 10.00.

⁴² Peter J. Schmelz, "Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings of Unofficial Music in the Soviet Union," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/1 (2005): 139-40.

stylistic predilections made them candidates for promotion, not condemnation. Unearthing compositions by Edison Denisov, Alfred Schnittke (1934-98), Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) and, later, Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), became part of the festival organizers' agenda to expand the pool of works they could draw on in crafting concert programs from year to year. In 1963, they articulated a fourfold plan of action to enrich the Warsaw Autumn repertoire: repeating canonical twentieth-century pieces; planning retrospective concerts devoted to a single composer; "sending observers to international festivals (Darmstadt) so they can select the most attractive musical works presented there, and bring them back for performance at our festival;" and "establishing contacts with the People's Democracies and presenting their compositions, above all the works by young, avant-garde composers."⁴³

Włodzimierz Kotoński, a composer who was involved with planning the Warsaw Autumn from the very beginning, recalls that in the 1960s, seeking out avant-garde music from the Soviet bloc accorded with the festival organizers' goal of presenting as broad a picture as possible of musical life in different countries. "We were glad to be able to show that in the Soviet Union—be it in Russia, Lithuania, or Georgia—there were some interesting things going on in new music, often with an intriguing local character."⁴⁴ To glean information on current musical events, composers relied on personal contacts or the same cultural exchange agreements that brought Soviet and Eastern European visitors to the Warsaw Autumn each year. A report from Stefan Kisielewski suggests what the Repertoire Commission may have been looking for when it sought out new works by

⁴³ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego, sobota, dnia 12.X.63 r.

⁴⁴ Interview with Włodzimierz Kotoński, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

young composers from the Soviet bloc. During a 1965 visit to Romania, Kisielewski encountered a group of hatchling avant-gardists who were conducting enthusiastic experiments in the spirit of Western modernism. He catalogued these composers' stylistic traits in a letter to the Warsaw Autumn organizational committees. Their music was "dodecaphonic in its own specific way," "typically avant-garde, serial, very colorful," or "very advanced, with the most varied sorts of fashionable effects (playing on the body of the cello and on the piano strings)."⁴⁵

Two of the composers Kisielewski mentioned—Aurel Stroe (b. 1932) and Tiberiu Olah (b. 1928)—had already been heard at the Warsaw Autumn that year. At the 1965 festival, the Romanian Film Studios Orchestra rounded out its program of Stravinsky and Schoenberg by showing off the wares of a new local generation.⁴⁶ Marek Kopelent (b. 1932), representative of an emerging Czechoslovak modernism, had his first Warsaw Autumn performance in 1964.⁴⁷ This was just when an alternative category of Soviet composer was beginning to show up on the festival concert program. Edison Denisov's debut also took place in 1964, with a performance of his Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Piano, and Percussion. A year later, festival audiences had the chance to experience works by Alfred Schnittke (Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra) and Arvo Pärt (*Perpetuum*

⁴⁵ Archiwum ZKP, 11/33. Letter from Stefan Kisielewski to the Organizing Committee of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, 26 October 1965.

⁴⁶ Orch. Simfonica a Cinematografei, Bucharest, conducted by Constantin Bugeanu. Warsaw Autumn performance on 25 September 1965. Concert program: Aurel Stroe, *Arcades* for 10 instrumental groups (Polish premiere); Stefan Niculescu, *Symphonies pour 15 solistes* (Polish premiere); Tiberiu Olah, *Columna infinita "Hommage à Brancusi"* for large orchestra (Polish premiere); Igor Stravinsky, *Agon* (Polish premiere); Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, op. 17 (Elisabeth Neculce Cartis, soprano).

⁴⁷ Novákovo kvarteto, Prague. Warsaw Autumn performance on 22 September 1964. Concert program: Józef Koffler, *Trio smyczkowe*, op. 10; Igor Stravinsky, *Concertino*; Ilia Zeljenka, String Quartet (Polish premiere); Marek Kopelent, String Quartet no. 3 (Polish premiere); Alois Hába, String Quartet no. 14 (Polish premiere).

Mobile) for the first time.⁴⁸ But whereas compositional shifts in Romania and Czechoslovakia were reflected by the repertoire choices of musicians from these countries, Soviet ensembles did not present the first Warsaw Autumn performances of Denisov, Pärt, and Schnittke. Festival organizers circumvented potential Soviet resistance by assigning these works to Poles or soloists from more liberal countries in the Bloc. Groups from the USSR continued to stick largely to the heavyweights, Shostakovich and Prokofiev, or younger composers who fit more easily into their official fold. Although the Repertoire Commission may have had little direct leverage over the concert programs of Soviet ensembles, an arsenal of domestic soloists, chamber groups, and orchestras gave its members room to maneuver when it came to bringing music by unofficial composers to Warsaw.

The innovative traits of new Polish music in the late 1950s had cemented its reputation among critics in the West. Nearly a decade later, the almost simultaneous mushrooming of local, socialist avant-gardes set off another round of Western critical jubilation. Commentators prone to view the world in terms of Cold War categories were keen to hear the modernist works by Soviet and Eastern European composers presented at the Warsaw Autumn as signs of regional renewal, a renewal they traced to the festival itself. Ulrich Dibelius, for one, penned an extensive report on the “Warsaw Autumn

⁴⁸ Poznań State Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Witold Krzemiński. Warsaw Autumn performance on 28 September 1965. Concert program: Ivo Malec, *Sigma* for large orchestra (Polish premiere); Alfred Schnittke, Music for Piano and Chamber Orchestra (world premiere); Alberto Ginastera, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (Polish premiere); Igor Stravinsky, *Capriccio*; Charles Ives, Holidays Symphony, mvt. 3, “The Fourth of July.” Poznań State Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andrzej Markowski. Warsaw Autumn performance on 29 September 1965. Concert program: Arvo Pärt, *Perpetuum Mobile* (Polish premiere); André Boucourechliev, *Grodek* for soprano and three percussion ensembles (Polish premiere); Bogusław Schäffer, *Mala symfonia ‘Scultura’* for large orchestra (world premiere); Krzysztof Penderecki, *Sonata per violoncello e orchestra* (Polish premiere); Luigi Dallapiccola, *Tre laudi* for soprano and chamber orchestra; Luigi Nono *Composizione per orchestra N. 2: “Diario polacco ‘58”*, new version (world premiere).

effect” in Poland’s neighbors; his analysis appeared in *Die Welt*, a newspaper established in 1946 by British occupation authorities in West Germany, and which was transferred to German control in 1950. Dibelius, a West German specialist in twentieth-century music, was cheered by the modernist compositions he had encountered by Yugoslav Ivo Malec (b. 1925) at the 1965 Warsaw Autumn; “as far as Czechoslovakia goes,” he added as an aside, “there is no need for it to prove its open stance.” He cited Hungary as another country whose musical life had been “following Poland’s example,” whereas the presentation of new Romanian music at the most recent festival was “an astonishing surprise.” Works by Pärt and Schnittke likewise testified to “a certain rejuvenation of the musical spirit” in the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ Only East Germany, it seems, was missing from the critic’s account; although musical life in the GDR was not one-sided during the 1960s, Warsaw Autumn performances of East German music tended to cleave to the conservative.

Like Dibelius, other West German reviewers assumed that modernism unambiguously meant freedom, going so far as to imagine what experiencing the Warsaw Autumn was like for listeners from the other side. “The Warsaw Autumn must constantly act as a bewitching promise for some guests from the East,” one commentator wrote in 1964. “Here, Poland can show the free development of its artistic individuality and its own creativity, unfettered by ideological considerations. As a result, someone who does not want to take advantage of this artistic freedom, or who cannot do so, feels bad here. Even though novelty shouldn’t be pursued at all costs, no one likes official conciliation

⁴⁹ Ulrich Dibelius, “Muzyka promieniująca poza granice,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 46-50. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article that first appeared in *Die Welt* (15 October 1965).

on demand, false vitality, or pompous classicism.”⁵⁰ The reporter did not entertain the idea that the “unfettered” freedom showcased at the Warsaw Autumn could itself be ideological. Starting in 1956, demonstrations of avant-gardism had been one of the tactics Polish musicians used to broadcast their cultural differences from the USSR, particularly its Stalinist-era policies. As manifestations of political and cultural thaws surfaced elsewhere in Eastern Europe, local contemporary music scenes responded by taking what had become, by then, an obvious course: a belated turn to the Western avant-garde and the embrace of the Warsaw Autumn in official publications.

The Polish experience was claimed as a model in places that were seeking their own specificity within the Soviet bloc during the 1960s. In the years leading up to the Prague Spring, Czechoslovakia aimed to create “socialism with a human face,” triggering changes in cultural policy that were felt throughout musical life. Astounded by his encounters with Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg at the 1964 festival, a Czechoslovak critic urged his countrymen to imitate Poland’s efforts to disseminate knowledge about twentieth-century music: “we too should rehabilitate works that until even recently were enveloped by the myth of their unintelligibility, ideological harmfulness, cosmopolitanism, and I don’t know what else.” The same forces that were transforming responses to modernist composition were also changing reactions to the Warsaw Autumn in Czechoslovak music criticism. “Even recently,” the author continued, “our official tendency was to criticize the Warsaw Autumn and condemn it for turning away from the compositional direction that had been professed here [in Eastern Europe]. Today, thank

⁵⁰ Klaus Kirchberg, “Festiwal Warszawski,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 19. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article that first appeared in a West German publication, *Musikhandel*, 7 (1964).

God, it is relatively easy to travel to the Warsaw Autumn and openly express our opinions.”⁵¹ Yugoslavia, long idiosyncratic among the Warsaw pact nations, had already begun to implement an institutional structure that resonated with Poland’s example. An international festival of contemporary music was launched in Zagreb in 1961, and its programming—a mixture of pieces from the first half of the twentieth century, “contemporary classics,” and recently composed works—took the Warsaw Autumn as its guide.⁵²

A Yugoslav contemporary music festival, relaxed attitudes in Czechoslovak music criticism, a crop of modernist composers from the Soviet Union—beyond providing fodder for Western commentators, these developments also meant that the Warsaw Autumn was losing one of its claims to fame. By the mid-1960s Poland was ceasing to be the lone outpost of avant-gardism in Eastern Europe, although its contemporary music scene would remain the most internationally prominent and institutionally secure for years to come. When serialist pieces, works for prepared piano, and aleatoric scores were being composed and performed even in scattered locations in the Soviet Union, Zygmunt Mycielski wrote in *Ruch Muzyczny*, it was clear that “we no longer have a monopoly on these things.”⁵³ He took Schnittke and Pärt as final proof that

⁵¹ Marian Jurik, “Antytezy—Poglądy—Sztuka,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 5. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article that first appeared in a Czechoslovakian publication, *Kulturny život* (24 October 1964).

⁵² Peter Selem, “Sytuacja nowej muzyki przez pryzmat ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni.’ Kryzys u progu dojrzałości,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 13-14. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article that first appeared in a Yugoslavian publication, *Polet*, 11 (1964).

⁵³ Zygmunt Mycielski, “Do przyjaciół,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 9/21 (1965): 13.

modernist imperatives of progress had triumphed over socialist realism's preservation of musical traditionalism.

Pointing this out in print, however, overstepped the bounds of decorum that governed Polish-Soviet international relations, even when these relations were musical. Mycielski's review provoked a truculent response in the official organ of Soviet musicology, *Sovetskaya Muzika*. Its editor-in-chief, musicologist Yelena Grosheva, dismissed the flirtation of young Soviet composers with serialism as nothing more than experimentation, an acquaintance with the method before it was (to her appropriately) discarded. More troubling was the "runaway train of Polish formalistic-technical experimentation," along with the peril that music composition in Poland might become a "barren desert" cut off from the needs of society. As it was, Polish composers were not even serving the needs of their domestic intellectual elite. Put off by her distasteful reminiscences of the 1964 Warsaw Autumn, Grosheva accused festival audiences of being interested only in what was novel and shocking, rather than imbibing works of "uplifting art" in a properly staid atmosphere of respect.⁵⁴

The formulations of Grosheva's letter, which was translated into Polish and reprinted in *Ruch Muzyczny*, would have been instantly recognizable to readers familiar with reliably cranky responses to the Warsaw Autumn in the official Soviet press. To anyone who had been keeping up with the political and cultural stratagems Poland had employed since the mid-1950s, Mycielski's response was just as formulaic, albeit equally necessary. He argued that Soviet culture, and its Russian roots, was a particularity rather than a universal. The definition and functions of art in Poland, Mycielski continued, were

⁵⁴ "Listy o muzyce," *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/22 (1966): 15.

more strongly tied to Western European traditions than legacies from Russia; the Soviet experience was therefore not directly applicable to contemporary Polish musical life.⁵⁵ A decade after the events of October 1956, Mycielski was reiterating the same justification that had been used to defend Polish divergence from Soviet cultural rhetoric in the first place: an argument for national difference.

Grosheva's confident rejoinder to Mycielski masked the complicated attitudes in official Soviet musical life to the modernism springing up both in Poland and on its own soil. Censure coexisted with curiosity, manifested not least by pilgrimages to Warsaw by Soviet composers and requests from Soviet musicologists for festival programs and recordings.⁵⁶ But if censure ever were to outweigh fascination, the Warsaw Autumn could be put in danger. In Poland, government support for the festival depended as much on foreign reception as domestic criteria. Mycielski's maneuvers were thus a counterpart to efforts by festival organizers to bring the music of local modernists, both official and non-, to the attention of an international forum. They were all steps in a continual process of negotiation.

The Empty Frame

Audiences at the Warsaw Autumn concerts gleaned information about twentieth-century music from the printed materials they held in their hands and the sounds that they heard during each year's performances. The messages encoded in festival texts and

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁵⁶ Leonid Entelis, a Soviet musicologist based in Leningrad, contacted the festival office repeatedly to ask for materials related to Polish music. Archiwum ZKP, 11/33. Letter from Leonid Entelis to the Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, 3 October 1966; Letter from Leonid Entelis to the Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, 26 November 1965.

repertoire, however, were not addressed solely to the average listener. For officials in the Ministry of Culture, program books, compositions, performers, and internal festival documentation were data, information that could be mined in determining whether the Warsaw Autumn was meeting its goals of promoting Polish music, educating the public, and providing a balanced overview of composition both East and West. Success (or failure) had practical implications, since MKiS used its assessments in making decisions about the annual festival budget. Talk about the Warsaw Autumn during its first decade was, as a result, neither idle theorizing nor the simple fulfillment of bureaucratic requirements. Strategies to mediate the festival's reception were inseparable from efforts to secure a steady stream of resource allocations. Cold War rhetoric and the implications of musical style became tools that allowed organizers in the ZKP to shape a discourse about the Warsaw Autumn that would highlight its political neutrality, stylistic inclusiveness, and social utility—all features that could ensure continuing institutional support.

The public face of this strategy were prefatory essays published in the festival program books between 1956 and 1961 that presented, clarified, and reiterated the Warsaw Autumn's *raison d'être*. For Polish audiences and international visitors, the prefaces were an introduction to the city and its newly minted music institution. But like all Warsaw Autumn texts, they were written with the knowledge that cultural officials would be reading. Musicologist Andrzej Chłopecki has, in fact, maintained that whatever their ostensible function, the prefaces were directed primarily to the Polish political

authorities (and, by extension, to dignitaries and cultural commissars visiting from elsewhere in the Bloc), turning the texts into “idiosyncratic ideological manifestos.”⁵⁷

Tadeusz Marek, author of the 1956 preface, aimed to legitimize the rise of a new music festival in what was perhaps an unlikely location by arguing for the Warsaw’s pedigree as a European musical capital. Home to Italian composers in the seventeenth century, a prescient supporter of Mozart in the eighteenth, host to traveling virtuosi in the nineteenth and producer of native talent in the early twentieth, Warsaw was no backwater.⁵⁸ Its belated arrival on the postwar contemporary music scene was the fault of Nazi occupation and years of reconstruction. This rhetorical line crested in bellicosity in 1959. Warsaw, the program book preface crowed that year, was “a city almost completely wiped from the face of the earth by fascist Nazi barbarians, smug in their fanaticism, intolerance, and hatred of humanity”; it had been resurrected only through the “love and fervent patriotism” of the Polish nation.⁵⁹

Far more important than blatant anti-Nazi propaganda were rhetorical moves to empty the Warsaw Autumn of bias and thereby turn the festival—unlike the city where it was taking place—into a neutral space where a variety of musical works and aesthetic opinions could come into contact. The repertoire was conceived, the 1958 preface announced, as an “anthology.”⁶⁰ One year later, the opening essay institutionalized the discourse of the Warsaw Autumn as a meeting place for the competing worlds of the

⁵⁷ Andrzej Chłopecki, *Polska kolekcja ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1956-2005/Polish Collection of the Warsaw Autumn 1956-2005* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 2005-2007), 109.

⁵⁸ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program I-ego Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej Warszawa 10-21 października 1956* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1956), 27.

⁵⁹ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej, Warszawa 1959* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1959), 5.

⁶⁰ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program II Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej, Warszawa 1958* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1958), 3.

Cold War. Festival organizers were mute when it came to dictating what the results of this confrontation should be. Theirs was a “festival of ideas,” whose repertoire was selected and organized according to principles of “objective neutrality.”⁶¹ Unlike other festivals of contemporary music, the unsigned preface claimed in 1960, the Warsaw Autumn “does not try to answer what the course of music’s future development will be.”⁶² In Warsaw, the implication was, the listener is free to think whatever she likes. Therein lay one of the festival’s kernels of danger and allure, for there was no guarantee, from an official standpoint, that members of the audience would react according to socialist maxims. At the same time, casting the Warsaw Autumn as objective and neutral was a crucial element in the festival’s mediation, since this formulation served to mitigate accusations that its organizers might favor one ideological orientation over another, and were thus not fulfilling their role of creating a balanced forum for East-West cultural exchange. The success of the program book prefaces in propagating a view of the festival as an ideological “blank” was proved on its tenth anniversary, when one Polish critic could claim that “the Warsaw Autumn does not have its own individuality; it is simply a window through which the contentious terrain of twentieth-century music can be seen.”⁶³

Behind closed doors, the Warsaw Autumn was mediated through drafts of its repertoire and annual reports detailing the activities of its organizers. The need to situate the festival was particularly pronounced from 1961 to 1964, years of fiscal uncertainty when the Ministry of Culture approved lower monetary amounts than the organizing

⁶¹ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej, Warszawa 1959*, 4.

⁶² Preface [unsigned] in *Program IV Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej, Warszawa 1960* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1960), 3.

⁶³ Tadeusz Kaczyński, “Jesień 1966—Drugie rozpoznanie,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/23 (1966): 14.

committees had requested.⁶⁴ Funds for the annual Warsaw Autumn budget came from three sources at that time. Through PAGART, the Polish artistic agency, the BWKZ paid the expenses of bringing foreign performers to Warsaw; the Music Department at MKiS covered appearances by Polish musicians. All other costs were the responsibility of the ZKP, which ultimately received its funds from MKiS. Any complaints about the festival budget had to be taken up with MKiS directly.

Financial worries joined geopolitical considerations as one of the forces shaping the Warsaw Autumn in the early 1960s. The nadir came in March 1964, when the budgetary situation was so dire that Tadeusz Galiński, Minister of Culture, suggested that the festival be cancelled for one year. His proposal was rejected by the Festival Committee, which declared that such a move could damage the Warsaw Autumn's growing international reputation. Their solution was to revise the program to keep costs to a minimum, which meant making do without groups like "Die Reihe," a 27-member new music ensemble from Vienna, which had been invited to perform at the festival that year. After meticulously going over the new draft program, Galiński was satisfied with the changes committee members had made. He approved both the amended festival roster and budget, and the 1964 Warsaw Autumn took place as planned.⁶⁵

What the Festival Committee had presented to Galiński was a detailed breakdown of the repertoire, categorized according to compositional style and quantified based on

⁶⁴ For example, the Festival Committee requested 556,000 zł to plan the 1962 Warsaw Autumn. Only 421,000 zł was approved, a sum that was raised to 451,000 zł after festival secretary Leokadia Malinowska negotiated with the Music Group at MKiS. Organizers also had problems accessing these funds, since they were not transferred to the Executive Board of the ZKP at once or in full. Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1962 roku," 1.

⁶⁵ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z przebiegu prac Komitetu Festiwalowego za czas od 1. czerwca 63 r. – 14. lutego 64 r.," 4.

the approximate running time works from socialist and capitalist countries would occupy at the Warsaw Autumn concerts.⁶⁶ Demonstrating stylistic and geopolitical parity through the force of numbers became, as a result, a means for festival organizers to shore up the claims of objective neutrality that had first been asserted in the program book prefaces.

The Repertoire Commission began to class potential repertoire while planning the 1960 Warsaw Autumn, designating composers and their music as “contemporary classics” (meaning works in the twentieth-century canon), moderate, avant-garde, or Polish (Table 2.1).⁶⁷ Each group was a grab bag linked by loose criteria, in which the Commission was influenced as much by nationality and prestige as compositional persuasion. Stockhausen, Cage, Boulez, Berio, Nono, Xenakis, Kagel, and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati rubbed shoulders in the avant-garde, whereas Messiaen, Shostakovich, and Dallapiccola were among the moderates. As for the “classics,” the Repertoire Commission’s selections were both predictable (Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, and Stravinsky) and idiosyncratic, as the elevation of little-known Józef Koffler, the first Polish dodecaphonist, attests. Temporal divisions were likewise fluid; most of the pieces by Stravinsky were nearly contemporaneous with works by the moderates or the avant-garde, which gave them hardly enough time to have achieved “classic” status. Whereas dubbing pieces as moderate or avant-garde hints at how they might sound, the separation of Poles into their own group intimates that, to the Commission, nationality trumped style when it came to promoting homegrown composers.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z posiedzenia tymczasowej Komisji Repertuarowej IV Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej /1960/ w dniu 23.XI.1959 r.

TABLE 2.1

Compositions and Composers Selected by the Temporary Repertoire Commission
(November 23, 1959)⁶⁸

I. Contemporary Classics

Béla Bartók	Arthur Honegger
Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion	<i>Joan of Arc</i>
<i>Contrasts</i>	
<i>Music for Strings, Percussions, and Celesta</i>	Alban Berg
Second Piano Concerto	<i>Lulu</i>
	<i>Wozzeck</i>
Leoš Janáček	Chamber Concerto
<i>Rikadla</i> ("Nursery Rhyme")	
	Józef Koffler
Igor Stravinsky	String Trio
<i>The Soldier's Tale</i>	Songs
<i>In Memoriam Dylan Thomas</i>	
<i>Canticum Sacrum</i>	Karol Szymanowski
<i>Agon</i>	Piano Sonata No. 3
	String Quartet No. 2
Manuel De Falla	<i>Litany to the Virgin Mary</i>
<i>El Retablo de Maese Pedro</i>	<i>Songs of a Fairy-tale Princess</i>
	<i>Metopes</i>
Arnold Schoenberg	<i>King Roger</i>
<i>Pierrot Lunaire</i>	
Fünf Orchesterstücke	Sergei Prokofiev
Suite for Piano, Op. 25	Quintet
<i>Erwartung</i>	<i>Visions Fugitives</i>
Variations, Op. 31	<i>Sarcasms</i>
"Dance of the Golden Calf," <i>Moses und Aron</i>	
Anton Webern	
Variations, Op. 30	
Concerto for Nine Instruments	
Songs, opp. 14, 15, 19	

⁶⁸ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z posiedzenia tymczasowej Komisji Repertuarowej IV Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej /1960/ w dniu 23.XI.1959 r.

Table 2.1. (continued)

II. Moderate Works

Olivier Messiaen	Luigi Dallapiccola
<i>Le réveil des oiseaux</i>	<i>Cinque Canti</i>
<i>Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus</i>	
	Alberto Ginastera
Illio	Hilding Rosenberg
Sinfonia Breve	
	Michael Tippett
Dmitri Shostakovich	
Cello Concerto No. 1	Hans Werner Henze
	Five Neopolitan Songs
Karl Hartmann	Four Nocturnes and Arias
Symphony No. 6	
	Carlos Chavez
Jean-Louis Martinet	Toccata for Percussion
<i>Prometheus Trilogy</i>	
	Goffredo Petrassi
Boris Blacher	Serenata
Orchester-Ornament	
	Ingvar Lidholm
Carl Orff	Ritornello
<i>Trionfano de Afrodite</i>	
	Heitor Villa-Lobos
Humphrey Searle	

III. Avant-Garde Works

Karlheinz Stockhausen	Pierre Boulez
<i>Gruppen</i>	<i>Improvisation sur Mallarmé</i>
<i>Zyklus</i>	<i>Le soleil des eaux</i>
<i>Kontra-punkte</i>	
	Luciano Berio
Bo Nilsson	<i>Allelujah II</i>
<i>Mächentotenlieder</i>	<i>Nones</i>
<i>Ein ihrender Sohn</i>	
	Roman Haubenstock-Ramati
Luigi Nono	<i>Serenade</i>
<i>Cori di Diodone</i>	

Table 2.1. (continued)

	Henry Brant
John Cage	<i>Galaxy 2</i>
Concerto for Prepared Piano	
	Yoritsune Matsudaira
Iannis Xenakis	<i>Figures Sonores</i>
<i>Achorripsis</i> for 21 Instruments	
	Sylvano Bussotti
Henri Pousseur	
<i>Rimes pour différentes sources sonores, 3 orchestral groups, and 2-track tape</i>	Mauricio Kagel
	<i>Transitions II for Piano, Percussion, and Tape</i>
Niccolo Castiglioni	
	Roland Kayn
Sven Erik-Bäck	<i>Aggregate</i>
<i>A Game Around a Game</i>	
Dieter Schönbach	
<i>Canticum Psalmi Resurrectionis</i>	

IV. Polish Works

Kazmierz Serocki	Wojciech Kilar
<i>Episodes</i>	
	Tadeusz Baird
Włodzimierz Kotoński	<i>Exhortation</i>
<i>Musique en relief</i>	
	Zbigniew Turski
Witold Szalonek	<i>Sinfonia da camera</i>
Witold Lutosławski	Krzysztof Penderecki
Henryk Górecki	Jan Krenz
Bogusław Schaeffer	

Determining “appropriate proportions” in the Warsaw Autumn repertoire was, organizers claimed, their guiding principle in planning the 1960 festival.⁶⁹ As such, this rubric reflects the Commission’s concerns: foregrounding recent Polish works, comparing moderate and avant-garde pieces, and catching up on the compositional past. By 1962, classifying works on the program according to style and geopolitical provenance had become a thoroughly institutionalized component of the festival planning, one that affected not only how the organizational committees carried out their day-to-day work, but also how they presented their choices to the Ministry of Culture for its approval. In early June of that year, Galiński received a packet of materials related to the upcoming festival: a draft of the program that had been prepared by members of the Festival Committee, outside opinions from Stefan Kisielewski and Zofia Lissa, and commentary by Wiktor Weinbaum, head of the Ministry’s Music Group. Prefatory remarks to the draft program summarized the festival organizers’ aims. Many of these were standard – presenting a comprehensive picture of contemporary composition, playing the “classics,” presenting the best Polish works written in the past year, and ensuring a place on the program for music from the Soviet bloc. More specific goals for 1962 were increasing the amount of opera and ballet on the program and highlighting composers who worked outside the traditions of the Second Viennese School.⁷⁰

Proof of these assertions came in the numbers. Works on the draft program were placed under three main headings: “classic” twentieth-century works; current and less

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wyd. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW “Warszawska Jesień” (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Założenie programowe VI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień,” 1-3.

recent pieces by the “older generation of the greatest twentieth-century composers;” and the “newest music” (Table 2.2). Works in the latter category were further subdivided into those using the “most recent” post-dodecaphonic techniques and others whose strategies were mixed, displaying elements of tonality, neoclassicism, and “individual explorations in the field of musical language.” The aesthetic divisions had been refined since 1960. No longer were the Poles in a category of their own. Pieces by Stravinsky, Hindemith, Webern, and Schoenberg could now be classed in either of the first two categories, depending on whether they had, according to the Festival Committee, “already achieved a lasting place in the history of contemporary music.” Idiosyncratic decisions prevailed despite the seemingly more precise groupings: Webern’s *Variations*, op. 30, for example, were taken to be canonical but his *Concerto*, op. 24, was not.

Tallies accompanying each category were a stark argument for aesthetic proportionality. Despite the Warsaw Autumn’s reputation as favoring the avant-garde, works of that ilk were projected as only 251 minutes of the total festival duration in 1962, barely edging out the older generation (224), lagging behind the classics (307), and far overshadowed by the compositions employing mixed techniques (457). Even this amount led Weinbaum to comment that the 1962 concerts would be “avant-garde and exclusive,” as the festival had been in earlier years.⁷¹ Changes in response to MKiS suggestions skewed the repertoire further away from the avant-garde toward the classics and the older generation. For financial reasons, neither Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* nor Berio’s *Alleluja II* could be performed, whereas the festival would now open with an evening of

⁷¹ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW “Warszawska Jesień” (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Letter from Wiktor Weinbaum to Tadeusz Galiński, 9 June 1962.

TABLE 2.2

Proposed Repertoire for the 1962 Warsaw Autumn Festival
(Draft Program Sent From the ZKP to MKiS for Approval, May 1962)⁷²

I. Classic Twentieth-Century Works

COMPOSER	WORK	DURATION (in minutes)
Schoenberg	<i>Moses und Aron</i>	30
Bartók	<i>Contrasts</i>	18
Stravinsky	<i>Persephone</i>	50
	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	30
Webern	Bagatelle op. 9	8
Berg	String Quartet op. 3	18
Webern	Variations op. 30	8
Debussy	<i>Jeux</i>	18
	Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp	15
Szymanowski	<i>Słopiewnie</i>	18
	<i>Masques</i>	10
Stravinsky	<i>Le Renard</i>	20
Bartók	String Quartet no. 1	18
Martin	<i>Petite Symphonie Concertante</i>	22
Hindemith	<i>Kammermusik, op. 24</i>	12
		TOTAL: 307

II. Current and Less Recent Pieces by the Older generation of the Greatest Twentieth-Century Composers

COMPOSER	WORK	DURATION (in minutes)
Dallapiccola	<i>Cinque Canti</i>	12
Shostakovich	Suite from <i>Lady Macbeth</i>	18
Stravinsky	Concertino	15
Shostakovich	Two Works for String Orchestra, op. 11	15

⁷² Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW "Warszawska Jesień" (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Założenie programowe VI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," 1-3.

Table 2.2. (continued)

Martinu	<i>Serenade for Chamber Orchestra</i>	25
Stravinsky	Concerto in E-flat	12
Webern	Concerto, op. 24	10
Schoenberg	Suite, op. 29	14
Stravinsky	Septet	15
Prokofiev	Violin Sonata in F Minor, op. 80	20
Stravinsky	Duo Concertante for Violin and Piano	16
Hartmann	Symphony no. 2	16
Webern	Cantata, op. 31	8
Barber	Summer Music	10
Hindemith	Quartet no. 3, op. 22	18
		TOTAL: 224

III. Newest Music

a) Most Recent Post-Dodecaphonic Compositional Techniques

COMPOSER	WORK	DURATION (in minutes)
Schönbach	<i>Lyrische Gesänge</i>	10
Kotyczka	<i>Permutacje</i>	8
Penderecki	String Quartet	12
Castiglioni	<i>Apreslude</i>	6
Krenz	Capriccio	8
Penderecki	<i>Canon</i>	8
Górecki	<i>śpiewy instrumentalne</i>	10
Donatoni	<i>For Grilly</i>	6
Kotoński	<i>Canto</i>	8
Szeiber	Suite for Harpsichord and String Quartet	12
Szabelski	<i>Apostrofy</i> for 9 instruments	10
Kilar	<i>Riff 62</i>	10
Twardowski	<i>Antyfony</i>	8
Nono	<i>Cori di Didone</i>	12
Cardew	3 Orchestra Piece	8
Evangelisti	<i>Ordini</i>	6
Serocki	<i>Segmenty</i>	6

Table 2.2. (continued)

Cage	Music for Wind Instruments	12
Nilsson	20 Gruppen	6
Stockhausen	<i>Gruppen</i> for Three Orchestras	20
Berio	<i>Alleluja II</i>	20
Xenakis	<i>Pithopracta</i>	8
Matsudaira	<i>Figures sonores</i>	15
Baird	<i>Wariacje bez tematu</i>	10
Pousseur	Quartet 1961	12
		TOTAL: 251

b) Mixed Techniques (elements of tonality and neoclassicism, as well as individual explorations in the field of musical language)

COMPOSER	WORK	DURATION (in minutes)
Bacewicz	Concerto for Orchestra	20
Stroe	Piano Sonata	22
Nikolov	Sonata for Flute and Piano	16
Blacher, Dessau, Hartmann, Henze, Wagner-Regeny	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	35
Sikorski	Trumpet Concerto	15
Schuller	String Quartet no. 1	19
Jaroch	Symphony no. 2	25
Musgrave	<i>Serenade</i>	11
North	<i>Octet</i>	12
Mycielski	Symphony no. 2	22
Ustvolskaya	Violin Sonata	18
Kluzner	Violin Sonata	20
Fortner	5 Bagatelles	15
Carter	<i>Eight Etudes and a Fantasy</i>	15
Shapey	<i>Movements</i>	10
Mielikov	<i>The Legend of Love</i>	150
Pijper	Quartet no. 5	20
Lindholm	<i>Mutanza</i>	14
		TOTAL: 459

Szymanowski symphonies to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the composer's death. Beyond proving stylistic inclusiveness, durations were marshaled to show that the festival was a level geopolitical playing field. According to the draft program, music from the West would predominate in 1962 (as it did in most years), but not egregiously so. Its 671 minutes were to be countered by 558 minutes of music from socialist countries, in which Polish works would last 183 minutes and Soviet compositions 241.⁷³

What the East lacked in duration was to be made up in 1962 by the bodily presence of its musicians. Like pieces of music, performers were a variable in the Warsaw Autumn equation; their points of origin were monitored just as closely as composers' methods and nationalities, and could just as easily be used to gauge whether the festival's geopolitical distribution was suitably wide-ranging. Predictably, the 1962 draft program sorted performers along the lines of East and West (Table 2.3). Musicians from the Soviet bloc outweighed their Western counterparts, an edge that mostly came from the heavy presence of Polish orchestras, soloists, and conductors.

A Polish-foreign binary was, in contrast, how the Festival Committee typically categorized performers in its annual reports. As the 1963 report illuminates, Warsaw Autumn organizers relied on Polish musical institutions, large ensembles chief among them, to be the backbone of festival personnel; foreigners comprised the bulk of the

⁷³ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW "Warszawska Jesień" (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Założenie programowe VI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," 3-4.

TABLE 2.3

Proposed Performers for the 1962 Warsaw Autumn, According to Geopolitical Origin
(Draft Program Sent From the ZKP to MKiS for Approval, May 1962)⁷⁴

Performers from Socialist Countries

a) Ensembles:

USSR	Leningrad (Kirov) Ballet
CSRS	Prague Orchestra "Komorni Soubor"
Poland	National Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir
	Great Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra
	Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir
	Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra
	Bydgoszcz Philharmonic Orchestra
	Warsaw Opera Ensemble

b) Soloists:

USSR	Karandasheva (piano)
	Vaiman (violin)
Poland	H. Jamroz
	Z. Krauze
	A. Hiolski
	W. Wiłkomirska
	A. Szulc
	J. Chudyba
	J. Szamotulska
	A Müller
	B. Zubrzycki
	Kopacki
	Artysz
	Michonski
	Janukowicz
	A. Bardini

⁷⁴ Archiwum MKiDN [uncatalogued document]. Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki Wydz. Konkursów i Festiwalu (14). VI MFMW "Warszawska Jesień" (Projekt programu i uwagi do projektu programu) 1961-1962 r. Założenie programowe VI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," 4.

Table 2.3. (continued)

c) Conductors:

USSR	Conductor of the Leningrad Ballet
Poland	W. Rowicki
	J. Krenz
	K. Stryja
	Z. Chwedczuk
	A. Markowski
	B. Wodiczko
	K. Stryja
	B. Madey

Performers from Western Countries

a) Ensembles:

England	Melos Ensemble
USA	La Salle Quartet
	Dorian Quintet
Holland	Holland String Quartet

b) Soloists:

Switzerland	E. Tappy (voice)
Federal German Republic	Carla Henius

c) Conductors:

Italy	Bruno Maderna
Federal German Republic	K. Stockhausen
Austria	F. Cerha

chamber groups and soloists for that year (Table 2.4).⁷⁵ The rationale for dividing the performers up in this way was surely practical. Poles came to the Warsaw Autumn on different terms from foreigners. Polish musicians did not require clearance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for travel to Poland, nor was the BWKZ involved in negotiating their appearances; MKiS paid their fees, whereas foreign performers received their payments through PAGART. The proportions also reflected budgetary realities. Large Eastern European ensembles might travel to Warsaw as part of cultural exchange agreements, but limited access to hard currency made it difficult in the early 1960s to engage similar groups from the West. It was often more feasible to bring a soloist or small chamber ensemble from abroad than a large orchestra or choir. Yet the Polish-foreign split also accomplished something else. It reinforced notions of home and abroad—self and other—that had influenced the festival from the start. Just as the program book prefaces cast the Warsaw Autumn as neutral ground, beholden to the ideology of neither East nor West, so too did the separation of performers in festival reports implicitly place Poland outside the Cold War’s competing spheres of cultural, economic, and political influence.

It was not enough, though, for the Warsaw Autumn to be stylistically inclusive and politically neutral. To shore up their institutional position, festival organizers also had to prove the usefulness of their endeavor. The Festival Committee pointed to rising audience turnout as a legitimizing sign, one that proved the vitality of Poland’s musical life and confirmed that their institution was socially beneficial. After increases in both

⁷⁵ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VII ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ – 1963 roku. (Sprawozdanie Sekretarza Festiwalu),” załącznik nr 1.

TABLE 2.4

Polish and Foreign Ensembles, Conductors, and Soloists at the Warsaw Autumn, 1963⁷⁶

LARGE ENSEMBLES		CHAMBER ENSEMBLES		CONDUCTORS		SOLOISTS	
Polish	Foreign	Polish	Foreign	Polish	Foreign	Polish	Foreign
5	2	1	3	5	3	14	23
7		4		8		37	

POLISH CHOIRS	POLISH BALLET ENSEMBLES	CHOIR DIRECTORS	BALLET DIRECTORS
4	1	4	1

Total Number of Works Performed: 83

World Premieres: 16

Polish Premieres (not including the concert of electronic music): 42

1961 and 1962, organizers of the 1963 festival considered staging open rehearsals to meet swelling audience demand.⁷⁷ Almost 19,000 listeners packed into Warsaw's concert halls in 1963 and 1964, marking a twofold increase in turnout since the 1950s and stretching festival venues to the limit (Table 2.5).⁷⁸ Most in the audience had booked their seats long before the festival began, a prudent strategy when, according to the 1962 report, even average concerts were overfilled, and some performances drew twice as many

⁷⁶ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' – 1963 roku. (Sprawozdanie Sekretarza Festiwalu)," załącznik nr 1.

⁷⁷ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego, sobota, dnia 12.X.63 r.; Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z działalności Komitetu Festiwalowego Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień' w okresie V Warszawskiej Jesieni (1961 r.)," 4.

⁷⁸ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' 1964 roku," 6.

listeners as there were tickets.⁷⁹ Large numbers of people flocking to the concerts and reserving their tickets early led the Committee to claim that, “the international festival of contemporary music is not an elite institution, but a socially necessary event.”⁸⁰ Filling the seats of concert halls, clamoring for standing room tickets, heatedly debating the performances—listeners became the gauge of the Warsaw Autumn’s social utility in the early 1960s.

Such equations were possible because large numbers of listeners attending festival performances could easily become equated with the “masses,” one of the most reliable elements in the lexicon of socialist propaganda. Throngs of people filling public space at rallies or communist holidays, in a multitude of bodies putatively united by a single idea, were touted by the Polish regime as palpable proof of its legitimacy. During the 1950s, figures of the “mass” even became part of Warsaw’s new socialist face: a depiction of crowds hailing the opening of the MDM district, an area of apartments and state-run shops designed in accordance with socialist urban planning, were preserved in bas-relief on the walls of some of the new buildings before these figures had actually appeared at the event they ostensibly commemorated.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1962 roku,” 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid. The spaces of the Warsaw Autumn, however, were held in check by more than just the physical limitations of the concert halls in which the performances were taking place. Ticket availability was another factor. In 1966, the Festival Committee, along with the house manager of the National Philharmonic, complained that not everyone who wanted a ticket could get one, whereas tickets allotted to cultural officials often lay unused at the ticket booths of the National Philharmonic hall, which in 1961 had begun to be responsible for festival ticket sales. Audience turnout that year was reported as 15,471 listeners, which was in fact a decline. Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie X ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1966 roku,” 3.

⁸¹ David Crowley, *Warsaw* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 183-84.

TABLE 2.5

Audience Turnout at the Warsaw Autumn, 1956-1969⁸²

YEAR	NUMBER OF EVENTS	NUMBER OF WORKS	NUMBER OF LISTENERS
1956	20	78	8,433
1958	18	58	9,409
1959	19	63	9,987
1960	16	71	11,209
1961	16	66	12,570
1962	17	83	18,738
1963	17	96	18,900
1964	18	92	18,900
1965	18	79	17,087
1966	16	70	15,471
1967	17	76	16,343
1968	14	59	10,450 (without the Teatr Wielki) (1,740)
1969	17	71	12,240 (without the Teatr Wielki, Teatr Dramatyczny)

⁸² Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XIII "Warszawskiej Jesieni" w roku 1968/1969, załącznik nr 2.

Like the practice of reducing music and performers to statistical variables in the annual Warsaw Autumn reports, tallies of audience turnout rendered listeners singular, quantifiable, and largely voiceless—a bas-relief in print. Yet even though their numbers helped bolster official sponsorship for the festival during a financially precarious period, Warsaw Autumn crowds were hardly a blindly affirmative “mass.” Volatile audience reactions did as much to create the festival atmosphere in the early 1960s as the music played at its concerts. Shaped by the Warsaw Autumn itself, listeners’ practices and perceptions would be yet another way the festival served as a forum for information exchange.

Resonant City

The festival’s location, the music performed at its concerts, the structure of the concert calendar, and the language in the program books informed Warsaw Autumn audiences in ways that went beyond the imparting of factual knowledge about twentieth-century composition. The places of the Warsaw Autumn were metaphorically and physically at the heart of the city’s official musical life; their edifices were concrete frames that influenced how listeners might apprehend festival performances. That such concerts were taking place at all—and in public—was one source of their resonance. In his study of material culture in post-war Warsaw, art historian David Crowley focuses particular attention on the charged associations of public and private space as they competed for legitimacy in the Polish capital city. Public space, including cultural life, was viewed as thoroughly politicized, inextricably linked with communist authority; private life was the sphere of unbridled personal expression. This was a distinction

policed by both state and society, but one that could occasionally be unsettled by cultural activity. Citing the activities of the “Teatr Osobny Trzech Osób” (The Individual Theater of Three Individuals), an avant-garde theater troupe that performed in private apartments during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Crowley argues that artistic presentations in domestic spaces served as opposition to the paradigm of public cultural production and the official endorsement such production required.⁸³

Music presents particular problems when considered against this backdrop of public acts being presented in private spaces. A small theater troupe could easily mount its productions at home, but much of the music by the Polish avant-garde depended on public spaces for its presentation, and the most visible platform for promoting these compositions, the Warsaw Autumn, was underwritten by state support. Samizdat publications could be printed independently, passed hand-to-hand, and read within the confines of a private apartment. Modernist paintings and sculptures could be displayed in similarly domestic settings.⁸⁴ The works for large ensembles that made up a substantial portion of the Warsaw Autumn programs required concert halls that could hold the forces needed to perform them and the audiences that were coming to listen. That meant official approval. There was no way for the festival to be what it was in the 1960s and escape the system.

The concert venues thus embedded the festival in a context of state power. The epicenter of the Warsaw Autumn in its first decade was the National Philharmonic

⁸³ Ibid., 171-73.

⁸⁴ Art historian Christine Lindey, for example, has extensively discussed the display of “non-conformist,” modernist artworks in private Soviet apartments. See her *Art in the Cold War: From Vladivostok to Kalamazoo, 1945-1962* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1990), 140-71.

concert hall, a monument to the rebuilt city and, in its architecture and location, to the political ideology that had begun to reign in Poland. One of the first buildings to be reconstructed after the city's wartime destruction, it is located in an area of central Warsaw that underwent extensive reshaping as new structures were erected amid the rubble. The progenitor of the current hall was built in 1901 during a period of urban investment and planning. Architect Karol Kozłowski found inspiration for his design in models from Western Europe, the Paris Opéra (for the exterior) and the Leipzig Gewandhaus (for the interior).⁸⁵ Housing profitable enterprises along with its two performance spaces, the pre-war Philharmonic was integrated into the economic fabric of the densely constructed commercial center it had inhabited.⁸⁶ A ghost-like photograph, affixed to the exterior walls of the rebuilt concert hall, is the only visual trace of this building that now remains.

Inaugurated in July 1955, the reconstructed National Philharmonic concert hall bore little resemblance to the earlier structure. Architects Eugeniusz Szparkowski and Henryk Białobrzęski designed the building in typical socialist realist style, complete with heavy, classicized façade.⁸⁷ But the building possessed another element in addition to its columns, arches, and porticos: neon lights, glimmering in blue and green. In this way, the

⁸⁵ Danuta Jackiewicz, "'Rozfilharmonizowana' Warszawa: dzieje gmachu Filharmonii Warszawskiej," in *100 lat Filharmonii w Warszawie 1901-2001*, ed. Maria Bychawska and Henryk Schiller (Warsaw: Fundacja Bankowa im. Leopolda Kronenberga Filharmonia Narodowa, 2001), 78.

⁸⁶ Before its post-WWII reconstruction, the National Philharmonic concert hall housed a restaurant, café, pastry shop, and a bike shop (which also sold motorcycles during the interwar period), while the exterior of the building was festooned with advertisements for local businesses. *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

hall also participated in Warsaw's new modernity, signaled by the nighttime electrification of its streets.⁸⁸

The neighborhood surrounding the National Philharmonic was, like the hall itself, thoroughly transformed in the early 1950s, becoming saturated in the process of reconstruction with elements possessing a keen ideological charge. The hall lies in the shadow of the Palace of Culture and Science, a towering, crenellated (and controversial) structure that was Stalin's "gift" to Warsaw. Dominating the city's skyline even today, the Palace of Culture served as a palpable reminder of Soviet influence during the socialist era.⁸⁹ At the time, the National Philharmonic was also just a brief walk from the Plac Defilad, the extensive parade grounds of the PZPR. The razing of pre-war buildings that survived Nazi destruction to make space for the Plac Defilad signaled that Polish authorities' plans for reconstruction were not driven solely by an aim to recapture lost spaces and sites with an eye for precise historical accuracy. Warsaw's landscape was instead to be remade into the visage of an idealized socialist city.

These were the spaces where the Warsaw Autumn was taking place in its first decade. The notion that performance environment might play a role in audience reception is not a new one. Marvin Carlson has argued that theater buildings are rich sites for the production of meanings, emphasizing that, "the entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its

⁸⁸ Crowley discusses the installation of neon lights throughout Warsaw during the mid-1950s as part of a broader shift in ideals of Polish urban planning that were meant to suggest ways in which the everyday lives of average citizens were going to be improved by the policies of the regime. See his *Warsaw*, 123-28.

⁸⁹ For a description of the construction of the Palace of Culture and Science, and a discussion of ambivalent Polish reactions to the structure, see Crowley, *Warsaw*, 38-47.

experience.”⁹⁰ While perhaps not as immediately visible as the buildings making up Warsaw’s new landscape, the intellectual ferment of its cultural life in the 1950s and 60s, of which the festival was an integral component, was as vital a sign of the city’s new modernity as its exterior trappings of concrete, steel, and glass.⁹¹ But although many aspects of the festival seemed to point to an official public realm, reactions to the music often pointed somewhere else: toward a space in which manifestations of disagreement were possible.

The Listening Public

Twenty-five minutes into Giya Kancheli’s *Kápote* (2006) at the 2007 Warsaw Autumn Festival, the audience started to revolt. Long after he first traveled to the Warsaw Autumn as a wide-eyed composition student, Kancheli began to have his own music featured at the festival – first in 1986, with the Polish premiere of his Sixth Symphony, and then in the mid-1990s, when Polish ensembles presented a number of his works to sympathetic listeners. The crowd in 2007, however, was having none of it. As the accordion soloist gazed heavenward, his sweetly tonal melodies were accompanied not only by the percussion, bass guitar, and strings Kancheli had scored, but by snickering from the hall. Students swayed ironically in their seats to clip-clops from the percussion section, while peals of applause erupted to discourage the musicians from continuing. Doors slammed as some listeners voted with their feet. A voice cried out, in English,

⁹⁰ Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 2.

⁹¹ For an overview of Polish cultural life during the Gomulka era, see Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles From Occupation to Freedom* trans. Jane Cave (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 334-43.

“stop the piece!” “Let them finish,” volleyed another, in Russian. The work ended in pandemonium. “Bravo, bravo!” shouted a sardonic trio of older Polish gentlemen, “take it again from the top!”

Kancheli’s loosely episodic, tuneful piece was no aesthetic or technical breakthrough. But at a long-running festival of contemporary music it seemed calculated to provoke. For critic Dorota Szwarzman, the riotous audience response could not have come at a better time. Trained at Warsaw’s Music Academy, she is a longtime observer of the Warsaw Autumn; her reviews appear in the daily and musical press. At the fiftieth anniversary festival, reactions to Kancheli’s piece recaptured for Szwarzman some of the electricity of years past, when contention was essential to the Warsaw Autumn atmosphere. “Everyone felt the responsibility to voice their opinion if they did not like something,” she recalls. “And if the Autumn could be called an oasis of freedom in the sad Polish People’s Republic, it was so in this respect as well. There was freedom of speech here.”⁹² Nearly two decades after political and economic changes transformed the festival’s context, its audiences were rediscovering a voice Szwarzman had feared they had lost.

Traces of this voice remain in eyewitness accounts of the Warsaw Autumn from the early 1960s. Restive festival audiences intrigued foreign observers: in 1962 an Austrian critic recorded sighs of satisfaction, outbursts of spontaneous applause, whistling, hissing, and grumbling. Such an outright voicing of opinions in the middle of a

⁹² Dorota Szwarzman, “Publiczność znów aktywna,” (<http://szwarzman.blog.polityka.pl/?p=47>), 26.09.2007.

concert was a sharp contrast to the subdued reactions he was used to at home.⁹³ That same year, a Czechoslovak critic stressed that Warsaw Autumn listeners were not a “passive mass, applauding everything that is presented to it,” but that they instead displayed a broad range of responses, making them active participants in shaping their musical experience.⁹⁴

For the Austrian and Czechoslovak observers, these were signs of an egalitarian spirit. Festival audiences, the Austrian contended, consisted of “interested amateur listeners” as opposed to the “specialists” that gathered for performances of new music at Darmstadt and Donaueschingen.⁹⁵ Listeners at the Warsaw Autumn were (in the Austrian’s mind at least) less a rarefied group saturated with musical training than a representative sample of Polish society. Their responses, immediate and embodied, contributed to the idea that the festival spoke to all kinds of listeners, not just jaded professionals. The Czechoslovak reporter similarly viewed reactivity as a form of social involvement. Anticipating that his report might unsettle devotees of nineteenth-century concert rituals, in which musical works were to be apprehended in an atmosphere of devotional silence, he argued: “a moralizer might be offended if he were unable to see

⁹³ fed., “Warszawa,” in *Międzynarodowe Festiwale Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień 1962” i “Warszawska Jesień 1963”—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1964), 3. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article published in *Der Opernfreund* (November 1962).

⁹⁴ Jan Szelepscényi, “Warszawska Jesień – wiosną nowej muzyki,” in *Międzynarodowe Festiwale Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień 1962” i “Warszawska Jesień 1963”—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1964), 8. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article published in *Kulturalny život* (3 November 1962).

⁹⁵ fed., “Warszawa,” 3.

these responses as the immediate reactions of an engaged listener, who both has the desire and is demanding the right to join in musical criticism.”⁹⁶

This was a strand of reception festival organizers were happy to exploit. In reality, most in the audience came from the intelligentsia, even if their education was not musical; cultural officials criticized the concerts for their elitism. The Warsaw Autumn was hardly populist. Thus when members of the Festival Committee reported in 1962 that audience reactions included “applause or expressions of disappointment, *expressed without snobbishness*, in response to the music,” they were adapting an idea that had first appeared in the foreign press to their own purposes.⁹⁷ By manifesting their shock, enthusiasm, and dismay, listeners were undermining the dictation of taste from above. The festival was becoming a means of expanding public participation in musical life.

Audience behavior at the Warsaw Autumn contributed to a sense of group cohesion in which political and aesthetic implications, as in Szwarcman’s memory, were intertwined. Breaking the silence was the first step. Performances in other Polish venues, such as the regular subscription concerts at the National Philharmonic, still took place in the silence that had become *de rigueur* in the nineteenth century.⁹⁸ As elsewhere in Europe, habits of bourgeois respectability had directed audiences inward. Spectators’ reactions became directly communicable neither to themselves nor to others, for the decoupling of music from language fostered a mode of listening that was at once more personal and absorbed, but which also rendered musical experience largely

⁹⁶ Jan Szelepściński, “Warszawska Jesień—wiosną nowej muzyki,” 8.

⁹⁷ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1962 roku -- najogólniejsze podsumowanie festiwalu VI ‘Warszawska Jesień’,” 1.

⁹⁸ Interview with Zygmunt Krauze, 6 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

indescribable.⁹⁹ The Warsaw Autumn, however, took place outside the patterns of everyday musical life. Several concerts a day of frequently challenging musical works, in multiple locations, for a week or more, stretched ears and mental capacities to the limit.

Physical responses to the music, whether vocalized or gestural, gave individuals a chance to glimpse other listeners' private opinions and to broadcast their own. Behavior became a form of information transfer. In this respect, the festival phenomenon in its first decade resonates with a theoretical model devised by Michael Chwe to describe how common knowledge is generated among members of a group. For communication to be successful, Chwe argues, each person must have knowledge of the information, but they also need to know that others have gotten the message.¹⁰⁰ During the festival, performance spaces became dynamic environments, marked by exchanges of information between and among musicians and listeners. In this sense, the Warsaw Autumn in the 1960s was a site for the production of common knowledge.

Or, more surprisingly, public knowledge. Art historian David Crowley has claimed that conventional conceptions of the public sphere did not apply at all in socialist-era Warsaw, where shops, squares, and streets were sites of political authority, and the majority of the population preferred to cultivate private life within the home.¹⁰¹ Yet by the festival's tenth anniversary in 1966, a notion of the Warsaw Autumn public, characterized as "a growing audience trained to listen to contemporary music," held

⁹⁹ James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 274-83.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-9 and 25-30.

¹⁰¹ Crowley, *Warsaw*, 183-84.

enough sway to appear in a commemorative preface penned for the program book.¹⁰² And while the author was reticent on this point, the implications of this public were political as well as aesthetic. As Szwarzman's reminiscence intimates, the audience was an arbiter of taste that was distinct from government channels.

Various aspects of the Warsaw Autumn during its early years engaged contemporary politics. Not least of these was the very act of performing modernist and avant-garde music at an international festival of contemporary music, representing a varied aesthetic spectrum, as part of the official musical life of a Soviet bloc country. It was a project that dovetailed neatly with the society-wide effects of the Thaw, which encouraged openness to the new and Western. The turbulent political events of October 1956 provided another lens, for the first series of Warsaw Autumn concerts took place against the backdrop of Władysław Gomułka's rise to power. "I remember how we ran to the telephones for news during the concert intermissions," Jerzy Waldorff recalled, "and how we then returned to our foreign guests in the hall, smiling and outwardly calm, as if nothing was happening."¹⁰³ Festival texts further encouraged an apprehension of the concerts that was cognizant of categories of East and West, domestic and foreign. The 1959 program book characterized the festival as providing the basis for "a multifaceted comparison of contemporary Polish music with the achievements and aims of foreign musicians from both socialist and capitalist countries."¹⁰⁴ In other words, audiences were

¹⁰² Stefan Śledziński, "Dziesięć 'Warszawskich Jesieni,'" in *X Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej Warszawska Jesień. Warszawa 17-25 września 1966* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1966), 6.

¹⁰³ Jerzy Waldorff, "Sezon rozpoczęty," *Świat* (28 September 1958): 11.

¹⁰⁴ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej Warszawa 1959* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1959), 3.

primed to hear the concerts with an ear not only to charting musical techniques, but also to geopolitical provenance.

Within the politicized atmosphere of the Warsaw Autumn, the expression of opinions, whatever their private impetus, could become linked with manifestations of political divergence, especially when the music in question already had overtly political connotations. Such was the case in 1958, when listeners responded in diametrically opposed ways to works by Schoenberg and Paul Dessau. Everett Helm reported:

A concert by the East German chorus and orchestra of Radio Leipzig illustrated with crystal clarity the position of the Polish public. Before the intermission this excellent ensemble gave a moving performance of Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*. The applause was so great that the work had to be repeated. After the intermission came an epic musical poem, *The Cultivation of the Millet* by Paul Dessau on a socialistic-political text by Bertold Brecht. When the music began, the previously full house was half empty, and during the performance many others left ostentatiously. Some of the most obviously 'party-line' passages caused scarcely controlled tittering and mirth in the audience. The applause was lukewarm.¹⁰⁵

About both pieces, Helm contends, there was unity of audience opinion. But whereas the affirmative response to the Schoenberg was manifested consistently—applause, demands for an encore—reactions to the Dessau, while no less unanimous, were differentiated in their mode of delivery. Physical absence was only one of the behaviors by which individuals expressed their disapproval. Composer and musicologist Krzysztof Baculewski, currently a member of the Repertoire Commission, remembers his own “aesthetic-political displays” from later years: meeting for drinks with fellow Polish composers rather than attending concerts of Soviet music that was “of little aesthetic or

¹⁰⁵ Everett Helm, “Current Chronicle—Poland” *The Musical Quarterly* 45/1 (1959): 111-12.

compositional interest.”¹⁰⁶ Judgments that were ostensibly musical, Helm’s and Baculewski’s accounts attest, were hopelessly entangled with politics.

Warsaw Autumn organizers nevertheless attempted to extricate themselves from the political sphere, cultivating a role for the festival as a neutral space for the meeting of musical styles. Successful mediation of the festival through the years has been a primary factor in its longevity, since the official sources of its funding meant that the Warsaw Autumn could not be a dissident event and continue to exist. It helped that audiences represented an elite sliver of Polish society, and that most expressions of divergence had Soviet power as their object, rather than domestic politics. The festival’s propaganda value also made it a safe space for voicing opinions. Elsewhere, expressions of disagreement were not nearly so benign. Critic Stefan Kisielewski was among those who signed the “Letter of the Thirty-Four,” a protest against censorship and restricted allocations of paper and newsprint that was sent to the Polish prime minister on 14 March 1964.¹⁰⁷ The letter’s signatories became targets for the authorities, and some of them were restricted from publishing altogether. In 1968, a similar protest kept Kisielewski from seeing his work in print for three years, and he was physically attacked by “unknown assailants.” Critic Zygmunt Mycielski lost his post as editor of *Ruch Muzyczny* after criticizing Poland’s involvement in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The Warsaw Autumn removed the danger from dissent. And yet politics continued to play a role until the fall of state socialism in Poland, not least because the festival was international. Interactions between organizers and foreign musicians, along

¹⁰⁶ Krzysztof Baculewski, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 24.

¹⁰⁷ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 295-300.

with prickly responses in the Soviet press to music by Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt, and Edison Denisov played at the Warsaw Autumn, held political significance throughout the 1960s.¹⁰⁸ Domestic censorship, which excised the works of defectors Andrzej Panufnik and Roman Palester from the program until 1977, was another element of political involvement. The concert hall environment, in which individual listeners could construe their experiences as a form of free speech, likewise recharged the festival's political associations from year to year. Paweł Socha's sociological study of 1997 festival audiences even suggests that Warsaw Autumn attendance was driven primarily by politics during the socialist era, whereas personal interest did not become listeners' primary motivation for attending the festival until the post-socialist period.¹⁰⁹ His characterization reinforces a sweepingly categorical notion that all individual action in a socialist society is motivated and interpreted along political lines, leaving little room for personal engagement.

The Aftermath of Spectacle

But as pervasive as such factors may have been, they were far from the only ones shaping listening to the Warsaw Autumn during its first decade. To view audience behavior solely from a political vantage point impoverishes the picture and forgets that modernism and the avant-garde had a musical history that predated Cold War rhetoric. Modernist music came with a ready-made set of associations, vociferous audiences

¹⁰⁸ For a description of Soviet interference in the planning of the 1960 festival, see Bylander, "The Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," 417-34.

¹⁰⁹ Paweł Socha, "Publiczność współczesnej muzyki poważnej: analiza socjologiczna na przykładzie publiczności Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień'." (M.A. Thesis, University of Wrocław, 1999), 65.

among them. If, broadly speaking, the romantic experience of listening to music was marked by introspection, in a silence that was venerated but also policed, audiences for modern art, the legends go, were distinguished by their energy, rebelliousness, and vocality. The 1913 premiere of the *Rite of Spring* is just the most famous example among many—a landmark at which modernism became, as historian Modris Eksteins puts it, became “a culture of the sensational event.”¹¹⁰

Provocation, scandal, event. For many Warsaw Autumn listeners, this is what avant-garde music was all about. Composer and pianist Zygmunt Krauze (b. 1938) recalls that the arguments were part of what made his early festival experiences exciting:

The atmosphere at the concerts was fantastic. Since then, I’ve never experienced such a heated concert atmosphere as there was in those days. The concerts were overfilled with people, and a vast majority of them were enthusiastic about our artistic endeavors. But there were also groups that protested. There was a group of older professors, including my teachers, Piotr Perkowski, Tadeusz Szeligowski (with whom I studied composition), and Witold Rudziński. They were conservative composers, and with a group of their younger adepts, they protested against the works that we were performing. They booed, whistled, and even tried to interrupt the performances. They were a clear minority. However, the existence of an opposing aesthetic camp created a one-of-a-kind atmosphere, one of a battle over new music.¹¹¹

Poland’s avant-garde composers supplied works sure to incite audiences in the early 1960s, and the audiences responded on cue. Catcalls greeted the 1962 premiere of Penderecki’s *Canon*, an experiment in sonoristic counterpoint that has all of the unsettling acoustic trappings of *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* without the balm of a politically correct programmatic title. Bogusław Schaeffer’s 1962 contribution was hissed by the crowd, and during the performance, Stefan Kisielewski noted, “a young

¹¹⁰ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989), 16.

¹¹¹ Interview with Zygmunt Krauze, 6 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland). Quotation authorized 20 July 2009.

man in a windbreaker, smug in his ignorance, loudly exited through the balcony door.”¹¹² The critic disagreed with these reactions: he saw protests against the Penderecki and Schaeffer as a sign of lingering Polish provincialism. Nevertheless, he defended audiences’ rights to sound their opinions, for no less than applause, he wrote, “cat-calling ennobles the festival, giving it an atmosphere of engagement and of a battle for sacrilegious freedom.”¹¹³ Kisielewski’s remarks are oddly contradictory. Restive audiences reflect a vigorous musical life, infused with the spirit of avant-garde rebellion. Yet in specific instances these same reactions are a sign of mental rot. Some responses were more correct than others. The person who walked out during the Schaeffer was ignorant; those who catcalled the Penderecki were hopelessly out of touch with current musical trends. Listeners were free to revolt, but what they actually needed was education.

Education was fundamental to the Warsaw Autumn in its first decade. As general literacy increased in Polish society, the festival promoted a specialized kind of musical literacy, one that respected modernist techniques and avant-garde experimentation, as well as more traditional compositional means. Such literacy was gained from the repertoire, as the Festival Committee claimed in their 1962 report.¹¹⁴ Yet vociferous audiences could be just as instructive. Listeners’ reactions to performances of twentieth-century works, from both past and present, East and West, not only promoted the

¹¹² Stefan Kisielewski, “Spotkanie języków czyli Warszawska Jesień,” in *Międzynarodowe Festiwale Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień 1962” i “Warszawska Jesień 1963”—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1964), 17. Reprinted from an article first published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* (7 November 1962).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹⁴ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Działalność Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie VI ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ 1962 roku -- najogólniejsze podsumowanie festiwalu VI ‘Warszawska Jesień’,” 1.

development of a public, but linked audience members through the circulation of opinion. Festival venues were a space for real-time comparison, in which listeners could juxtapose their reactions with those of their peers, forming shared musical tastes. Learning about twentieth-century music, then, was not just a matter of recognizing composers, pieces, and styles, but also knowing how to respond to these works.

By 1964, foreign critics were reporting a consensus among festival listeners about what kinds of music were interesting. One stated that, “listeners were captivated more often by progressive works than by the more conservative pieces.”¹¹⁵ The correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* agreed. “The public hangs on every note,” he said, “and if the music is sufficiently modern and sufficiently good, their enthusiasm knows no bounds.”¹¹⁶ But where the music was less modern, reactions were more subdued:

The Pittsburg Orchestra . . . earned great applause . . . but only the work by Gunther Schuller aroused any greater interest. For this audience Copland, Hindemith, and Piston are simply not avant-garde enough. . . . The Moscow Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Rudolf Barshai elicited very similar reactions. This outstanding string ensemble . . . exhibited an almost ideal fluidity in its ensemble playing, but its program (the music of Russian composers written, it seems, in a socialist realist style) was a weak point of musical interest.¹¹⁷

No matter whether American or Soviet, in other words, consonant sonorities and traditional musical forms had ceased to fire the imaginations of Warsaw Autumn

¹¹⁵ Lex van Delden, “Utwory chóralne zwracają na siebie uwagę w Warszawie,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 6. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article published in the Dutch publication *Het Parool* (7 October 1964).

¹¹⁶ Eric Salzman, “Festiwal Jesień Warszawska. Wielki Pokaz Nowej Muzyki,” in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 39. Quoted and translated into Polish from an article published in *The New York Herald Tribune* (30 September 1964).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

listeners. The avant-garde, the elite, the difficult – these were the tastes cultivated among the festival public.

Eternal scandal foundered, though, on the very education the festival promoted. During its earliest years, a lack of familiarity contributed to the electric atmosphere. So much was new: not just the Western European avant-garde, or a wave of new Polish composers, but also works by Webern, Berg, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky. Over time, audience expectations to hear the unexpected began to clash with their prior experiences, which had seasoned their ears with a growing knowledge of avant-garde works. By mid-decade, listening to avant-garde music at the Warsaw Autumn had even become fairly routine. Tadeusz A. Zieliński, steadfast supporter of post-war Polish composition, admitted that the titillation of the new dissipated through repetition. He mused:

Three or four works similar to *Scontri* were performed this year, and they were no worse than Górecki's composition, which caused a sensation in 1960; we heard two works by that same Xenakis who stirred up widespread agitation two years ago; and we calmly listened to Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, surely finding more music in it this time than we did in 1961, when its shocking oddities made it one of the main festival sensations. . . . Seven Warsaw Autumns have been enough time for us to become familiar with all the breakthroughs in contemporary music, and the works performed up to now have acted as a vaccine immunizing us against experiencing another shock on the same level.¹¹⁸

But did that mean the festival had entered a period of decline? It was not the festival that had changed, nor composers, but listeners. A year later, another Polish critic claimed that the lack of scandal came from an evolution in audience taste, not the failure of festival

¹¹⁸ Tadeusz A. Zieliński, "Odkrycia i wydarzenia," in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty recenzji (biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 32-33. Reprinted from an article first published in *Ruch Muzyczny* (November 1964).

organizers.¹¹⁹ Commentators summarizing the first ten years of festival history claimed that Warsaw audiences had matured since their initial astonishment at avant-garde music and were consequently better equipped to judge a work's quality.¹²⁰

Less than ten years after it had begun, critics were defending the Warsaw Autumn against charges that it was becoming stagnant. That they felt compelled to do so proves the iconic power of modernist *succèses de scandale* in deciding what is new, what is vital, and what is modern. Yet the history of the Warsaw Autumn also proves the danger of looking for modernity solely among rioting crowds. Moments of scandal are fragile, for they are essentially unrepeatable. Focusing on moments of revolt privileges instances when the unknown is first perceived, at the expense of following the thread of history. The Warsaw Autumn was a site for spectacle, but it also generated legacies and a sense of shared festival culture. Some events were spectacular, some mundane, but they accumulated year on year. And if the political charge lasted longer than the aesthetic one, this was not least because the public expression of divergent opinions remained the exception to the rule in Poland for years to come. Less sustainable were the ephemeral moments and extravagant gestures of avant-garde aesthetics. Audiences came to expect the unexpected, at the same time as they became familiar with its musical means. Hearing the new became institutionalized, to the extent that future shocks had to come largely from outside the avant-garde. Paradoxically, the culture of the sensational event the Warsaw Autumn promoted had become tempered by the festival's success.

¹¹⁹ Adolf Dygacz, "Refleksje po 'Warszawskiej Jesieni'," in *Warszawska Jesień 1964 i 1965—fragmenty Recenzji (Biuletyn na prawach rękopisu)* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, September 1966), 56. Reprinted from an article first published in *Trybuna Robotnicza* (16-17 October 1965).

¹²⁰ See for example, Lucjan Kydryński, "Jesień, warszawska, jubileuszowa," *Przekrój* (9 October 1966): 4.

Chapter Three

The Economics of St. Luke

From Warsaw to Münster, and Back Again

The lobby of Warsaw's National Philharmonic Concert Hall buzzed with anticipation on September 24, 1966. Journalists on the scene reported that the throngs gathered for the evening's performance were huge even for the traditionally well-attended Warsaw Autumn. The next day, one critic telephoned Kraków with news that not even Artur Schnabel's appearance at the festival's opening concert had generated such a packed hall.¹ Another gushed in his newspaper column that the Warsaw Autumn's presentation of a new piece of contemporary music had attracted just as many listeners as the highlights of the Chopin Piano Competition a few months before.²

With the sound of the second bell, the mood in the lobby swiftly turned to anarchy. Many lacked tickets to the sold-out concert. Among them was composer Krzysztof Baculewski. Then a young music student, Baculewski hoped that the rumor of last-minute standing room tickets would prove to be true. As he remembers it, a single usher manned one of the glass double-doors that led to the interior of the National Philharmonic's main concert hall. The other door had been propped shut with a wooden doorstep. When a curious onlooker came from inside the hall to investigate the commotion in the lobby, Baculewski seized his chance. Nose pressed to the glass, he signaled that the person should 'accidentally' trip over the doorstep holding the second

¹ Lucjan Kydryński, "Telefonem z Warszawskiej Jesieni—Penderecki, Czyż i Krenz," *Dziennik Polski* (27 September 1966).

² M. Józef Michałowski, "X 'WJ' Pasja Pendereckiego," *Dziennik Zachodni* (28 September 1966).

door closed. Baculewski's co-conspirator got the message, and dutifully stumbled. The door gave way, exploding open from the weight of the crowd that had been pressing up against it. Baculewski admits that his adrenaline-fuelled rush into the hall was, along with the music he would hear, part of what made his memory of that evening indelible: "dozens of people rushed inside . . . I even managed to find an empty seat on the ground floor. True, it was in front of the double basses, but anyway . . . it's not surprising that the *Passion* made such an impression on me before it even began."³

The commotion at the National Philharmonic was triggered by the Warsaw premiere of Krzysztof Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*. The work had already been performed to great acclaim at its world premiere in Münster, West Germany several months before; this triumph was soon followed by a series of sold-out performances in Kraków.⁴ But the mood in West Germany could not have been more different from the tumult greeting the piece in Warsaw. If the Polish audience was raucous, and the Varsovian setting strictly secular, the presentation at the Münster Cathedral had blurred the boundaries between concert performance and Catholic liturgical observance. The Münster performance took place on Wednesday during Holy Week, the traditional day for reading Luke's account of the suffering and death of Christ.⁵ Rather than a boisterous

³ Krzysztof Baculewski, "Pamiętam, była 'Jesień,'" *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 23.

⁴ The Kraków premiere took place on April 22, 1966 in the concert hall of the Kraków Philharmonic; it was followed by two additional sold-out performances on the 23rd and 24th. The *St. Luke Passion* was heard again in Kraków in June 1966, in a presentation at Wawel Castle that took place before a reported audience of 15,000. For an example of how the Wawel event was covered in the West, refer to "Genützte Chance," *Polen* (9 September 1966).

⁵ Ray Robinson and Allen Winold, *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion* (Celle: Moeck Verlag, 1983), 17. The date of the world premiere was March 30, 1966.

crowd rushing into the concert hall, the West German premiere was ushered in by a procession of Catholic dignitaries outfitted in full clerical regalia.⁶

At the Münster premiere, the visual focal point was not the enormous musical forces Penderecki deploys in the piece, which marshals bass, baritone, and soprano soloists, a speaker, three mixed choirs, a boys' choir, and large symphony orchestra. All eyes were directed instead toward the altar at the heart of Münster Cathedral, ornamented with flickering candles and bearing a cross prominently displayed at its center. During the performance, the altar separated the clergy from the lay public and musicians. The audience sat facing the main altar, backs turned to the performers.⁷

Among this crowd, journalists and music critics formed a substantial cohort. Handpicked to ensure widespread international dissemination of reports on Penderecki's new work, their eyes would later be directed towards the composer and his West German patrons. Press conferences accompanying the world premiere were carefully orchestrated to manage the publicity inevitably generated by the *Passion's* composition—that is, by the appearance of a religious work by a Polish avant-garde composer, written in response to a West German commission during the midst of the Cold War. From its inception, the *St. Luke Passion* was entangled within a knot of problems that were as economic as they were aesthetic, as religious as they were political. Some of these bound together Poland and West Germany, while others were specific to Poland. Penderecki's stylistic eclecticism, which melds references to chant, common-practice tonality, and serialism with shrieking sonoristic timbres, challenged the primacy of avant-garde ideals among

⁶ Hanspeter Krellmann, "Passion aus Polen," *Die Welt* (4 April 1966).

⁷ Photo: *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/10 (1966): 3. And photo: *Melos* (May 1966), 154.

Polish composers. As the first large-scale, overtly religious piece created by a composer from socialist Poland, the *St. Luke Passion* became implicated in a domestic power struggle over how to celebrate the Polish millennium in 1966. Collisions between religion and politics were equally central at the time to Polish and West German international relations.

The differences between the Warsaw and Münster performances of Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion* seem to encapsulate the distance separating Poland from West Germany in the mid-1960s. But the phenomenon of this piece would have been inconceivable without the international—and institutional—connections that drew Western Europe close to portions of the Soviet bloc. Linked to networks of international cultural exchange through the Warsaw Autumn, Polish music proved capable of traversing distances that were not easily surmounted by the physical movement of ordinary citizens or the flow of shoddily manufactured Polish goods into Western markets. Part of the power of the *St. Luke Passion* was its freedom of movement, which allowed it to slip back and forth between the socialist and capitalist camps of cold-war Europe. This economic dimension would turn out to be just as key in ensuring the work's success in Poland as the religious import of its text, the politicized circumstances of its first performances, or the aesthetic draw of Penderecki's music.

A Rationalizing Passion

A potent mix of avant-garde swagger, political frisson, and promotion at contemporary music festivals propelled Penderecki's compositional career in the early 1960s. Few had benefited as spectacularly from the possibilities for international

exchange first unlocked by the Warsaw Autumn in 1956. For Penderecki the festival was a stepping-stone to lucrative engagements in West Germany; the performance of his *Strophes* at the 1959 Warsaw Autumn even gained him a West German publisher.⁸ This was an unheard-of achievement among Polish composers, who up to that point had depended solely on PWM, the state-owned Polish Music Publishers, for distribution of their works. For jaded foreign observers, Penderecki's ear-splitting timbres were a shocking antidote to the obsolescence of the Western European avant-garde. Everett Helm counted Penderecki's *Anaklasis* as the only bright spot of the 1960 Donaueschingen Festival, where avant-gardism otherwise seemed to be gasping its last breath. Such ennui was just the beginning of a period of decline in the West German new music establishment: in her study of experimental music in post-war Germany, Amy C. Beal describes the 1960s as "Darmstadt's darkest decade" and highlights the air of stagnation that had begun to cling to the formerly lively bastions of the musical avant-garde.⁹ But Penderecki's contribution to Donaueschingen, Helm reported, "made the radical [Bo] Nilsson's work sound old-fashioned in comparison and provoked the only near-riot of the festival."¹⁰ Polish music, whose whiff of scandal wafted to West Germany from beyond an increasingly hardened cold-war horizon, seemed to promise rejuvenation.

The novelties of Penderecki's avant-garde compositional techniques became even more alluring when injected with a heavy dose of contemporary politics. The greatest success of his early career, *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, achieved its renown

⁸ Wolfram Schwinger, *Krzysztof Penderecki: His Life and Work* trans. William Mann (New York, London: Schott, 1989), 27. The West German publisher was Hermann Moeck from Celle.

⁹ Amy C. Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 135.

¹⁰ Everett Helm, "Black Forest Town Magnet for Avant-Garde," *New York Times* (30 October 1960).

not least through pairing a viscerally gripping sound world with the brutal implications of its name. While some commentators took the title as proof of social engagement, it was actually a later appendage to a work originally called *8'37"*. The origins of the change are murky. Musicologist Ludwik Erhardt has reported that the new title was chosen by Roman Jasiński, music director of the Polish Radio, with an eye to the foreign judges of UNESCO, whose annual music competition played an important role in the dissemination of new works internationally.¹¹ Others have attributed the full title to PWM director Tadeusz Ochlewski, who allegedly acted without consulting Penderecki.¹² Whatever its true impetus, the transformation convinced state authorities and competition jury alike. Newly anointed, the *Threnody* was wrenched from the realm of abstraction and cast into the shifting currents of anti-American sentiment, the legacies of the Second World War, and rhetoric characterizing the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations as advocates for humanism and world peace. After *Threnody* earned the UNESCO distinction in 1961, radio stations throughout the world promoted it, ensconcing it in the canon and ensuring Penderecki's continued presence in surveys of twentieth-century music.

The commission for the *St. Luke Passion* was fed by similar contradictions. The commission resulted in part from Penderecki's early fame abroad, a renown nourished by the composer's avant-garde credentials. The 1962 Donaueschingen performance of his timbrally adventurous *Fluorescences* not only provoked a by-now predictable sensation among the public but also helped Penderecki forge connections with the influential Otto

¹¹ Ludwik Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1975), 32-33.

¹² Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki: Bunt i wyzwolenie, Tom I. Rozpętanie żywiołów*, (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2008), 143.

Tomek, director of new music at the WDR in Cologne. The seeds of their encounter bore fruit later the same year, when the WDR formally commissioned a large religious work from Penderecki. The composer seems to have envisioned this as the *St. Luke Passion* from the very beginning. But Tomek, still reeling from *Fluorescences*, doubted that the young avant-gardist's excesses were suitable for the text. He urged Penderecki to consider less aggressive sound sources. Penderecki complied, and gained an ardent supporter in the process – one who held the keys to the enormous resources for producing and performing contemporary music in West Germany.¹³ Penderecki's interactions with Tomek imply that promises to become less—rather than more—radical were decisive in winning over the radio representative. With the *St. Luke Passion*, Penderecki's greatest coup would come when he left some of the avant-gardism, but perhaps not all of the politics, behind.

The music of the *St. Luke Passion* exhibits the same spatialized effects and predilection for conjuring tactile masses of sound that were hallmarks of the Polish avant-garde in the early 1960s. Throughout, however, Penderecki disciplines his timbral projections by framing them with denuded melodic lines and tethering them to grounded pitch centers. The opening of the *Stabat Mater* (1962), a choral set piece Penderecki inserts into the *Passion* near the end of its second half, exemplifies this particular compositional strategy (Ex. 3.1). After a chant-like incantation, whose restricted range, stepwise motion, and hints of modality signal the archaic, Penderecki deploys a hoary technique, spatially separated choirs, in the service of modern ends. As the text wraps from one choir to another, the basses' low A intonations create a stereophonically

¹³ Ibid., 47-52.

fluctuating pitch field whose center forecasts the eventual resolution to D major that comes at the *Stabat Mater*'s conclusion. This field becomes increasingly dense throughout the reiteration of the first full sentence of text, growing to encompass the pitches E, F, F-sharp, A, B-flat, and B before an abrupt shift in texture halts the cluster's expanse.

The acoustics at the *St. Luke Passion*'s world premiere intensified the spatial effects prescribed by the score. Resonating within the interior of the 700-year-old Münster Cathedral, Penderecki's music acquired a static, elemental force. Zygmunt Mycielski, one of the two Polish critics permitted to travel to West Germany for the work's first performance, wrote that the extended reverberations fostered by aged stone meant that listeners heard the sounds as if they were "layered on top of one another, like geologic strata visible in a soil sample."¹⁴ Although Mycielski doubted the *Passion* would create a similar effect in a concert hall, West German critic Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt admitted in a review that he would be eager to hear the piece in a more modern setting.¹⁵

But the *St. Luke Passion* did not easily survive its transplant from Münster Cathedral to the post-war acoustics of Warsaw's National Philharmonic. Although the huge and excited crowd at the Warsaw Autumn performance may have imprinted the evening indelibly on listeners' memories, the accumulated mass of their bodies altered the sonic environment within the hall. Newspaper critic Zdzisław Sierpiński complained that, "the crush of people made the music suffocate from a lack of space . . . the music sounded flat, without the resonance and breathing room that perhaps only old church

¹⁴ Zygmunt Mycielski, "Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundam Lucam Krzysztofa Pendereckiego," *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/10 (1966): 4.

¹⁵ Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, "Polnische Passion im Dom zu Münster," *Melos* (May 1966), 155.

Example 3.1. Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion*, Stabat Mater, opening.

CORI 24 *a cappella*
Soprano: do-lo-ro-se
Tenor: -ter
Bass: -ro-se
Tutti

I
Soprano: -ter
Tenor: -ro-se
Bass: -ro-se
Tutti

II
Soprano: -ter
Bass: -ro-se
Cru-cif-fer
Dum

III
Soprano: Ma-ter
Bass: pen-

CORI
I
Soprano: 20 Stabat Mater dolens luxuriose Crucifera
Tenor: Stabat Mater dolens luxuriose Crucifera
Bass: -ter
Dum

II
Soprano: Stabat Mater dolens luxuriose Crucifera
Bass: -ter
Dum

III
Soprano: Stabat Mater dolens luxuriose Crucifera
Bass: -ter
Dum

Example 3.1. (continued)

CORI

I

Piu mosso
 30
 5 3 4
 8 4 4
 2 4

Chorus

mf

Chorus *norma*

A - - -cem le - cri - mo - sa, Dum pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 T pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 B - - -cem le - cri - mo - sa, Dum pen - de - bet Fi - li - us

II

Chorus I

A - - -cem le - cri - mo - sa, Dum pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 T pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 B - - -mo - dum - - -us

III

Chorus

A - - -cem le - cri - mo - sa, Dum pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 T pen - de - bet Fi - li - us
 B - - -sa pen - de - bet - - -li -

walls could guarantee.”¹⁶ By denying the equivalence of cathedral and concert hall as appropriate venues for the *Passion*, Sierpiński effectively resisted the secularization that came with the work’s promotion on the international concert circuit and which was a necessary component of its early public performances in Poland. The political implications of Sierpiński’s stance could easily be teased out in the prevailing context of mid-1960s Poland, where religious uses of public space had performed a particularly charged resonance. His comment also points to a curious feature of Penderecki’s score, whose timbres and stereophonic effects depend on sympathetic spaces for their presentation. As an acoustic phenomenon, in Warsaw the *St. Luke Passion* seemed to fall victim to its own success.

If the external physical structures in which the *St. Luke Passion* was performed were ripe for symbolic interpretation, the work’s internal logic provided equally fertile ground for Polish critics, who viewed the piece as a synthesis of bygone techniques with present-day compositional strategies. Beyond his fleeting use of implied tonal centers, Penderecki erected his pitch material on the basis of two series (Ex. 3.2). Musicologist Regina Chłopicka deftly elided historical practice with more recent compositional techniques when she described the *Passion* in an essay published in the Warsaw Autumn program book as governed by twelve-tone “canti firmi.”¹⁷ Her formulation was typical of a strand of the *Passion*’s Polish reception that saw Penderecki’s achievement as rooted precisely in his stylistic eclecticism, which critics interpreted as a move by the composer

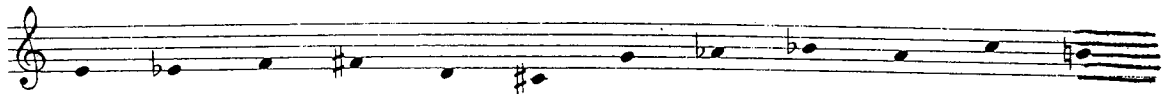
¹⁶ Zdzisław Sierpiński, “Ostatnie akordy,” *Życie Warszawy* (27 September 1966).

¹⁷ Regina Chłopicka, “Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundam Lucam,” program note in *X Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień,” Warszawa 17-25 września 1966* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1966), 107-108.

Example 3.2. Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion*, Series I and II.



Krzysztof Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion* – Series I



Krzysztof Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion* – Series II

to intertwine avant-gardism with audible references to the legacies of Western European art music. Such appeals to tradition were especially important in a place that has typically been on the fringes of Western European music history, but where ties to the West have nevertheless persisted as an important source of cultural identity. The delimited intervallic construction of the first row made one commentator claim that Penderecki's liberal use of seconds, and their inversions throughout the piece as sevenths or ninths, gave the *Passion* a character that was simultaneously archaic and contemporary.¹⁸ For still others, the architecture of Penderecki's second row formed a bridge to the Baroque, since it ends with a BACH cipher.¹⁹ Although the row is combinatorial, Penderecki typically does not partition it into six-note units, preferring instead to separate the final four pitches from the eight preceding it, as if to foreground the musical deity that informs his composition.

In trumpeting his relationship to Bach, Penderecki staked his claim to a Western European musical lineage using a tool that had long been wielded by pretenders to the Austro-German tradition—including Liszt, Schumann, and members of the Second Viennese School. The twist at the *Passion*'s conclusion, however, confounded devotees of musical progress: the work ends with a blazing E Major triad, played fortissimo by the full orchestra and belted by all four of the work's choirs (Ex. 3.3a). This was a trick Penderecki had played before, most recently in the conclusion of the *Passion*'s *Stabat Mater* passage, where the composer resolves a 10-note cluster to a D Major triad using

¹⁸ Mycielski, "Passio et Mors," 5.

¹⁹ Pointing to the BACH cipher in Penderecki's work was a reliable feature of both its Polish and German reception. See, for example: Mycielski, "Passio et Mors," 5; Jerzy Waldorff, "Passio secundam Lucam," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 20/17 (24 April 1966); Krellmann, "Passion aus Polen;" Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, "Polnische Passion im Dom zu Münster," 155.

linear voice leading (Ex. 3.3b). More notoriously, Penderecki first used this effect in *Polymorphia* for forty-eight string instruments. Composed in 1961, the roiling lines of this work are best remembered today from their appearance in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining*. After building to a final cacophony of percussively bowed clusters, *Polymorphia* suddenly ends with a fortissimo C Major triad (Ex. 3.3c). Within the context of this work, it is hard to hear the triad as anything other than the brashness of a young avant-gardist intent on flouting taboos of all kinds. The final moments of the piece take the force that drives diatonic cadential motion, the resolution of dissonance to consonance, to an absurdist extreme. Here Penderecki juxtaposes maximal dissonance, in which individual pitches can be picked out neither by the ear nor from the notation in the score, with perhaps the ultimate symbol of maximal consonance. He renders the C Major triad an intrusion, an "other," a joke.²⁰

Recontextualized in the *St. Luke Passion*, the concluding triadic harmony announced instead that Penderecki was leaving his earlier avant-garde foibles behind. The difference was one of strategy. Penderecki does not simply play with the principle behind cadential motion as the *St. Luke Passion* comes to an end. He also adopts the way cadential motion has been practiced, and herein lies the distance separating this piece from *Polymorphia*. In the measure just preceding the concluding E Major triad (Ex. 3.3a), the boys' choir and the sopranos of Choir One sing a "Domine" figure that has recurred several times throughout the work, moving fluidly among pitch centers but always

²⁰ When *Polymorphia* was performed at the 1963 Warsaw Autumn, the audience burst out laughing at the C Major triad—a far cry from listeners' behavior in the late 1970s when, one observer reported, they had started to take tonal allusions seriously. See Zdzisław Sierpiński, "Awangarda w stylu . . . retro," *Życie Warszawy* (23 September 1977).

Example 3.3a. Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion*, "In te, Domine, speravi," conclusion.

D
CORIUM

9 *quasi recit.*
8 *MONO MESSO*
7
4 *a tempo*

S
A
T
B

I

S
A
T
B

II

S
A
T
B

III

S
A
T
B

9 8 7 4

ff

fig
cfig
1-2
cr 3-4
5-6
1-2
tr
3-4
1-2
tn
3-4
tb
tmp
gng 1
tam 1

cmp

org

vn
vl
vc
vb

Example 3.3b. Penderecki, *St. Luke Passion*, Stabat Mater, conclusion.

CORI

110

The musical score is divided into three systems, labeled CORI I, II, and III. Each system contains four staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are written below the staves. The score includes dynamic markings such as *Fac.*, *f*, and *ff*. Time signatures of 2/4 and 4/4 are indicated above the staves. The lyrics for the first system are: *-pus Fac. ul Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Soprano; *-ri - e - lur, Fac. ul a - ni - mae do - ne - lur a - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Alto; *Fac. ul Pa - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Tenor; and *ul Fac. - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Bass. The second system continues with *Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Soprano; *Fac. ul Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Alto; *cor - pus Fac. ul Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Tenor; and *-ri - e - lur, Fac. ul a - ni - mae do - ne - lur Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Bass. The third system has *Fac. ul a - ni - mae do - ne - lur Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Soprano; *Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Alto; *Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Tenor; and *Fac. ul Pa - ra - di - si glo - ri - a.* for Bass.

Example 3.3c. Penderecki, *Polymorphia*, conclusion.

The musical score is organized into measures 63 through 67. The parts are labeled as Vn (Violin), Vc (Viola), and Vb (Violoncello). Measure 63 includes a first ending (1-12) for Vn and Vb, and a first ending (1-8) for Vc. Measure 64 includes a first ending (13-24) for Vn and Vb, and a first ending (1-4) for Vc. Measure 65 includes a first ending (19-24) for Vn and Vb, and a first ending (1-8) for Vc. Measure 66 includes a first ending (1-8) for Vc. Measure 67 includes a first ending (1-8) for Vb. The score includes various performance instructions such as dynamics (ff, f, mf, p, pp), articulation (acc), and fingering (1-4, 5-8). The score is divided into measures 63-67 and includes various performance instructions such as dynamics (ff, f, mf, p, pp), articulation (acc), and fingering (1-4, 5-8).

promising cadential resolution through Penderecki's use of linear voice-leading. In its final iteration, the motive's pair of augmented sixths resolve outwards by half-step to an implied E minor chord, which is then transformed into E Major one measure later. As in the conclusion of the *Stabat Mater* set piece, the dissonance that occurs near the end of the *St. Luke Passion* as a whole can be demonstrably connected to the consonance that follows it. It would be difficult to think of a more effective way to end a composition whose narrative arc serves as the run-up to the sudden transformation of Christ's resurrection. Yet taken within the overall span of the work, whose depictions of the clamoring crowds from Luke's biblical account employ all of the extended vocal and string techniques typical of early 1960s Polish avant-gardism, the final resolution acquires another, equally charged, meaning. Set to the words, "God of truth," the blaze of consonance ultimately tames Penderecki's avant-garde techniques, yoking them to a semantic rationale and subordinating them by cadential gestures to earlier musical practice. As the *St. Luke Passion* came to a close, it turned out that Penderecki was no longer thumbing his nose as an avant-gardist, but at avant-gardism.

Polish critics hailed the piece with defensive glee. They heard Penderecki's rapprochement of past musical styles with a contemporary compositional idiom as a path to salvation from their anxieties about the past, present, and future of the Polish avant-garde. After the work's West German world premiere, Jerzy Waldorff, a long-time observer of the Polish music scene, quipped that, "proponents of the new in Darmstadt and Donaueschingen will surely strip Penderecki of his laurels and denounce him as a renegade or perhaps as a regressive, who betrayed the demands of progress to pursue the

bonds of human emotion.”²¹ Far from being troubled by this potential development, Waldorff was relieved. Viewing the *Passion* as a rationalizing corrective to Penderecki’s earlier career, he was satisfied that, “even the most freakish experiments can make sense if they turn out to be a means to an end.”²² After the first Polish performance of the *St. Luke Passion* in Kraków, critic Henryk Swolkień described it as molding the sonic inventiveness of Penderecki’s musical language into a “sensible whole.”²³ For these commentators, Penderecki’s new work quelled anxieties that Polish avant-gardism was in danger of becoming nonsensical.

When it came to the *Passion*’s foreign reception, Waldorff’s prediction turned out to be prescient. Dissenters began to raise their voices after the work’s 1967 London premiere. “Listening, and looking at the vocal score, I had an uneasy feeling that it does not really take what we have always understood by a ‘composer’ to compose this kind of piece,” Stanley Sadie sniffed in *The Musical Times*.²⁴ Two years later, the response to the American premiere was equally damning. “It may be that there is more drama than music in it,” Harold Schonberg wrote in the *New York Times*.²⁵ Jeffrey Kresky’s apoplectic review encapsulated the position of academic modernists concentrated in the music departments of Princeton, Columbia, and New York University. He accused Penderecki of shallowness: “very little happens with pitches . . . the events are trivial, and are treated, when treated at all, with the identity operation. . . . I cannot remember, in fact, ever hearing a piece of music that could more fittingly be described as being, simply, a

²¹ Jerzy Waldorff, “Pasja Łukaszowa,” *Kultura* 4/17 (24 April 1966): 9.

²² Ibid.

²³ Henryk Swolkień, “Triumf Pendereckiego,” *Kurier Polski* (25 April 1966).

²⁴ Stanley Sadie, “Editorial,” *The Musical Times* (September 1967), 793.

²⁵ Harold C. Schonberg, “Music: ‘St. Luke Passion’,” *New York Times* (7 March 1969).

'list'."²⁶ But behind his analytical critique was wounded professional vanity: "I would like to know why America is so interested in such music; why these audiences (not to mention the performing forces and money sources of such size) are so ready to believe in a composer like Mr. Penderecki, and so hostile to American composers."²⁷ Kresky resented the *St. Luke Passion* both for how it was written and for what it symbolized: adulation, fame, and an access to economic resources that was beyond the wildest dreams of most American academic modernists.

Although disgruntled Western commentators may have charged Penderecki with a lack of technical craft, the *St. Luke Passion*'s success among general audiences shored up Penderecki's position in Poland, a power that extended to legitimizing the institutions that had launched his career in the first place. The work's performance at the Warsaw Autumn in 1966 was widely judged to be the pinnacle of the festival's ten-year jubilee. That year the *St. Luke Passion* served metonymically in critical discussion: talking about Penderecki's new work became equivalent to talking about the Warsaw Autumn itself. In his post-festival wrap-up, Stefan Wysocki hyperbolically claimed that the appearance of a composition like the *St. Luke Passion* proved the worth of the entire Warsaw Autumn endeavor during its first decade. Wysocki, for one, was grateful for a respite from the disorder that reigned at the festival, where, he complained, "nothing is shocking because everything is permissible . . . I am starting to get bored from hearing nothing but noise for years on end."²⁸ Henryk Swolkień boasted in his report from Warsaw that Penderecki "has conferred sense on everything, or almost everything, that has been presented at the

²⁶ Jeffrey Kresky, "Penderecki: Saint Luke Passion," *Contemporary Music Newsletter* 3/1-2 (1969): 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸ Stefan Wysocki, "Pasyjna 'Jesień,'" *Kultura* 4/41 (9 October 1966): 5.

festival as a whole.”²⁹ The Warsaw audience evidently shared the critics’ excitement. As throngs of listeners milled throughout the lobbies of the National Philharmonic Hall on the festival’s penultimate evening, at least one person was overheard exclaiming, “at last, the tenth Autumn has finally gotten started!”³⁰ Harnessing the energy of the festival crowds, the performance of the *St. Luke Passion* threatened to eclipse the jubilee Warsaw Autumn altogether.

A Reluctant Jubilee

But what did it mean that the justification for ten years of the Warsaw Autumn was a departure from the very avant-garde the festival had been intended in part to create and promote? Whereas the *Passion*’s catholicity of stylistic references suggested that Penderecki was coming to his own terms with the past, the festival’s organizers were still struggling with whether to give the 1966 concerts a strongly retrospective flavor. During their first meeting to plan the 1966 festival, members of the Repertoire Commission weighed a suggestion from the Polish authorities to treat that year’s Warsaw Autumn as a showcase of the institution’s prior achievements.³¹ That the festival could be enlisted to play a commemorative role had already been proven in 1964, when cultural commissars requested that an extra day be added to the festival to stage a concert celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the PRL (Polish People’s Republic).³² This celebratory concert, as befit its political genesis, took place on opening night, typically the most prestigious

²⁹ Henryk Swolkień, “I już po ‘Jesieni,’” *Kurier Polski* (26 September 1966).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z Zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej (piątek) 22 października 1965 r.

³² Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Prezydium Komitetu Festiwalowego z dnia 10 grudnia 1963 r.

time-slot on the festival calendar. The items on the program, which included Penderecki's *Threnody* and Lutosławski's *Funeral Music*, were standard bearers of the freedoms vouchsafed by post-1956 liberalizations in Polish cultural policy. They were also among the Polish works that were best known—and most praised—abroad.

As a whole, this 1964 concert was to serve as an exposition of recent Polish composition, beneficently supported by the regime and successful in the world market for new music by contemporary composers. And yet it failed to perform this ideological work fully. What was apparent behind closed doors did not surface in the printed materials produced for public festival consumption, since the program book failed to broadcast this concert as a gesture to the state responsible for the Warsaw Autumn's continued institutional support. Five years later, less was left to chance. To celebrate the PRL's twenty-fifth anniversary, the Repertoire Commission again highlighted Polish music on the Warsaw Autumn program.³³ The 1969 festival opened with a spate of Polish premieres, including first performances of Tadeusz Baird's Third Symphony, Włodzimierz Kotoński's *Music for 16 Cymbals and Strings*, and a symphony by Zbigniew Rudziński, along with the first performance in Poland of Lutosławski's *Livre pour orchestre*. Lest the import of the inaugural concert be forgotten, the program book opened with a retrospective essay penned by musicologist Stefan Jarociński especially for the occasion. Titled "A General Overview of Musical Creativity in the 25 Years of the

³³ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' w roku 1968/1969.

Polish People's Republic," the text fulfilled its commemorative function in unmistakable prose.³⁴

During the 1960s, then, the Warsaw Autumn was not an altogether straightforward platform for memorializing recent decades in Polish history. Its organizers likewise hesitated to use the 1966 festival as an uncontested vehicle for historical reflection. Instead, they continued to set their sights on the musical cutting-edge. When the Repertoire Commission met in October 1965 to discuss the shape of the next year's concert programs, its members dismissed any question that the Warsaw Autumn would mellow with age. Neither would they select that year's repertoire primarily with an eye to general audience accessibility, for the basis of the Commission's work was to be "the utmost tolerance in the presentation of all musical trends, especially the newest."³⁵ As in previous years, this inclusive choice of repertoire was meant to reflect the current state of composition. To discover works on the musical vanguard, organizers relied on personal contacts and information gleaned from sending Warsaw Autumn representatives to centers of contemporary music throughout Europe, with Darmstadt remaining a particularly valued fount of news from abroad. Although one of the publicized institutional aims of the Warsaw Autumn had been the dissemination of contemporary music to Polish society at large, in 1966 the goal of stylistic eclecticism, invoked by the Repertoire Commission to defend the continued inclusion of difficult works on the concert programs, trumped populist overtures.

³⁴ Stefan Jarociński, "Ogólne spojrzenie na twórczość muzyczną 25 lat Polski Ludowej," in *XIII Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," Warszawa 20-28 września 1969* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1969), 5-12.

³⁵ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z Zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej (piątek) 22 października 1965 r.

Dubious about cleaving too obviously to the musical past or of making concessions to their listeners, the Commission construed the celebratory aspect of the tenth anniversary festival as a rationale for emphasizing their institution's international component. In communications with the Polish Ministry of Culture, they asked that a number of foreign soloists and instrumental ensembles be invited to perform in Warsaw, where musicians from the West would, importantly, be paid in hard currency, a commodity perennially lacking in cash-strapped 1960s Poland. Over the course of November 1965, the Repertoire Commission suggested a variety of potential performers for the upcoming festival concerts, including the symphony orchestra of the NDR or WDR under Boulez or Maderna's direction; Balanchine's ballet ensemble; an ensemble from Covent Garden in a performance of Britten's *Curlew River*; the Budapest Opera in a performance of *Wozzeck*; the Leningrad Philharmonic, conducted by Evgeny Mravinsky; chamber ensembles from Copenhagen, Bratislava, Stockholm, and the University of Illinois; and an extensive list of soloists that initially included Mstislav Rostropovich, and later Sviatoslav Richter.³⁶ The starting point of festival negotiations was the same, whether the musicians hailed from East or West: approval by the BWKZ at the Ministry of Culture, followed by formal contact from PAGART, an artistic agency that handled questions of fees and logistics. The BWKZ announced its decisions to the Repertoire Commission beginning in mid-December 1965.³⁷ With the exception of the

³⁶ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej wtorek, 9 listopada 1965 r.; Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej wtorek, dnia 23.XI.1965 r.; Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej w dniu 30.11.1965 r.

³⁷ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej – wtorek, 7 grudnia 1965 r.

operatic ensembles and the West German orchestras, the majority of their requests had been granted.

In their statements to the press the Repertoire Commission downplayed the importance of the tenth festival, claiming that the Warsaw Autumn should remain “young, exploratory, and controversial.”³⁸ Their lone concessions to the commemorative impulse similarly undermined any sense of historical completion. One marker of the anniversary was a series of photographs from previous festivals that were printed at the end of the program book.³⁹ They included a collection of famous faces, among them Benjamin Britten, John Cage, and Nadia Boulanger, that appeared alongside images of Party officials attending the Warsaw Autumn, including Lucjan Motyka, Minister of Culture in the early 1960s, and Stanisław Witold Balicki, the Ministry’s General Director. Snapshots of conversations between composers and performers, both Polish and foreign, were interspersed with pictures taken during the festival concerts. Even the audience was present, in a curious photo that shows a woman, seated with her stocking feet balanced on top of her discarded high heels, yawning as members of the audience around her are chatting, their heads tilted towards one another in conversation. The image has the sardonic caption, “the audience reacted in various ways to the festival presentations,” and it seems a cheeky puncturing of the gala performances and musical diplomacy visually celebrated on the preceding pages of the program.⁴⁰ For its part, the program book’s brief preface claimed that it would not sum up the festival, “for the

³⁸ Henryk Swolkień, “Rubinstein otworzył ‘Jesień,’” *Kurier Polski* (19 September 1966). See also: Zdzisław Sierpiński, “Wczoraj i jutro,” *Życie Warszawy* (16 September 1966).

³⁹ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej dnia 1. lutego 1966 r.

⁴⁰ Photo: *X Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień” Warszawa 17-25 września 1966* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1966), 146.

simple reason that the Warsaw Autumn has by no means been completed yet, and we hope that it will continue to develop.”⁴¹ While not diminishing the achievements of the past decade, the preface implied that too great a focus on festival history would keep it from being oriented to the future and serving as a mirror of the present.

Echoes of the past nevertheless found their way to the auditorium of the National Philharmonic on the festival’s opening night. The concert program itself was a throwback to the prior eras, one that postulated both an indigenous and a Western European legacy for contemporary Polish music. Webern’s *Passacaglia* preserved the festival’s longstanding focus on the composers of the Second Viennese School, albeit in an uncharacteristically lush fashion. Varèse’s *Integrales* provided a pre-war antecedent to more recent experiments with musical timbre. Kazimierz Serocki, one of the acknowledged founders of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, represented the new generation of Polish composers; his *Niobe* for chorus, orchestra, and two speakers employed the variegated timbral palette that had become a hallmark of Polish sonorism in the early 1960s. His was hardly a work of unbridled avant-gardism, however. Musing on the 1966 festival as a whole, Tadeusz Kaczyński claimed that Serocki never aimed to be in the front ranks of an avant-garde of any kind, and certainly not in *Niobe*, which the musicologist described as “traditionally conceived in its very foundations.”⁴²

More charged was the very first work on the program, Józef’s Koffler’s *Variations for String Orchestra*. Sounding just after the Polish national anthem, this

⁴¹ Stefan Śledziński, “Dziesięć ‘Warszawskich Jesieni,’” in *X Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień” Warszawa 17-25 września 1966* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1966), 5.

⁴² Tadeusz Kaczyński, “Jesień 66: Pierwsze rozpoznanie,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/22 (1966): 12.

performance was a symbolic reclaiming of a composer whose Jewish background had condemned him in the Second World War. Reflecting on the concert, Henryk Swolkień wrote “there was something moving in the homage to Józef Koffler, the first Polish dodecaphonist, who was murdered in the Nazi occupation.”⁴³ In her account of the inaugural performance, Teresa Grabowska characterized the inclusion of Koffler’s work as “a lovely gesture,” meant to honor a composer “who, in a certain sense, deserves to be called the precursor of the Polish avant-garde.”⁴⁴ But the most palpable link to a bygone musical era was embodied in the person of Artur Rubinstein, who had traveled to Warsaw to play the solo piano part in Szymanowski’s Fourth Symphony (*Symphonie Concertante*). His performance on opening night led one critic to exclaim that both pianist and composition had succeeded in reviving a long-lost Polishness.⁴⁵ Elsewhere, Zygmunt Mycielski interpreted Rubinstein’s appearance as fulfilling a need for mythologies and symbols.⁴⁶ Like Koffler and Szymanowski, Webern and Varèse, Rubinstein’s appearance on the inaugural concert program was far from incidental. Along with them, he confirmed the pre-war pedigree of contemporary Polish music, tying its newness to sources from the past.

Yet if the past turned out to be more present at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn than its organizers had let on, the avant-gardism of many Polish composers had curiously gone missing. Penderecki’s dramatic about-face was only the most glaring example of a more

⁴³ Henryk Swolkień, “Rubinstein otworzył Jesień.”

⁴⁴ Teresa Grabowska, “Z ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ —Polskie prawykonania,” *Trybuna Ludu* (20 September 1966).

⁴⁵ Bohdan Pilarski, “Notatnik festiwalowy,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/22 (1966): 13. See also: Janusz Ekiert, “X Warszawska Jesień – Wczorajsze jutro,” *Express Wieczorny* (19 September 1966).

⁴⁶ Zygmunt Mycielski, “Artur Rubinstein otworzył X Warszawską Jesień,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/22 (1966): 3.

pervasive shift that was beginning to take place in Polish composition in the mid-1960s, which resulted in a void on the festival program that the domestic avant-garde had once filled. Kaczyński ticked off a string of Polish departures from avant-gardism at that year's Warsaw Autumn, ranging from actual absence, to meager representation, to outright desertion. Neither Wojciech Kilar nor Witold Szalonek, veteran members of Poland's avant-garde coterie, had works on the festival program in 1966. According to Kaczyński, Włodzimierz Kotoński's brief work for percussion, despite being suitably avant-garde in its timbral complexity, did not have the dimensions to serve as the standard-bearer of an entire artistic movement. And Penderecki, of course, had left the avant-garde behind to become a "classic." The Polish avant-garde, Kaczyński concluded, had ceased to exist as a "collective concept" at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn, a loss he explained by pointing to growing stylistic differentiation among the composers who had made up its ranks.⁴⁷

Stefan Kisielewski saw in contrast a web of similarities binding together the composers of Penderecki's milieu. Kisielewski, a prominent critic and cultural commentator known for his opposition to the Polish regime, looked beyond their idiosyncratic stylistic choices to find a shared stance toward musical representation and audience response. More than the sound of their music, it was these attitudes that confirmed for Kisielewski the distance of Polish composers from the tenets typically ascribed to the Western European avant-garde. An avowed musical "super-conservative," Kisielewski had experienced a crisis of critical faith at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn. "I found the traditional music boring, the new music even more so," he opined.⁴⁸ To his

⁴⁷ Tadeusz Kaczyński, "Jesień 66: Pierwsze rozpoznanie," 11-12.

⁴⁸ Stefan Kisielewski, "Muzyka i nowa jesień," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 20/42 (16 October 1966): 1.

surprise, his interest was piqued only by the appearances of small ensembles from Sweden, the United States, and Czechoslovakia, events that veered closer to performance art than to the conventions typically prevailing at concerts of art music.

Unlike the avant-gardists, who rejected both convention and audience accessibility, Kisielewski described the Poles as actively courting their listeners at that year's festival. Such a trope had long been a component of domestic critical reception, where the emotional draw of Polish music was cited as a positive attribute separating it from the intellectual chill popularly ascribed to the avant-garde's Western European variant. In the narrower sense, Penderecki's pull on the public was a reliable feature of Polish reviews of the *St. Luke Passion* in 1966, regardless of whether the performances had taken place in Kraków, Warsaw, or elsewhere. At a time when popularity was suspect among committed avant-gardists, Lucjan Kydryński touted Penderecki's "ability to connect with listeners" and the approachability of his works.⁴⁹ But whereas sympathy for the audience may have eased the reception of Polish avant-gardism in its particular social and political context, in Kisielewski's review-essay this trait had become a liability. After its showing at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn, it was no longer clear whether recently-composed Polish music could still be called "avant-garde" at all.

Far more unsettling for Kisielewski, however, were the references to extra-musical content he heard in recent Polish compositions, with Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion* as the prime offender. The problem of musical representation had needled Kisielewski at least since 1948, when he contended in his sketch "Is Music Anti-Humanistic?" that music was fundamentally abstract, capable only of evoking its own

⁴⁹ Lucjan Kydryński, "Słuchane wczoraj: Penderecki na Wawelu," *Dziennik Polski* (11 June 1966).

specifically musical emotion.⁵⁰ While according with the opinions of composers such as Igor Stravinsky, this was a view at odds with the principles of socialist realism that would soon be introduced to Poland, which required music to convey ideas that were not only politically acceptable but also apprehensible.

Kisielewski was suspicious of musical depiction, seeing it both as incontrovertibly bound to the conventions of a particular time and place, as well as dependent on the psychological predilections of the individual listener. Despite his momentary ravishing by avant-garde experimentalism at the Warsaw Autumn, he continued to valorize a concept of self-contained absolute music in 1966. According to the critic, Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion* and avant-garde works employing theatrical effects all showed a lack of faith in the possibilities of musical abstraction. He was not the first to describe the *St. Luke Passion* in representational terms. Penderecki's emphatic use of word and musical symbol to create meaning prompted a number of other commentators to compare the work to visual art. Zygmunt Mycielski, for one, described it as a "giant fresco" in which religiosity intermingled with theatricality.⁵¹ Elsewhere, Tadeusz Kaczyński mused that the work was "a large, panoramic picture, painted solely with musical means instead of a brush . . . the techniques are modern, but they cannot be called abstract."⁵² Kisielewski's avowed allegiance to abstraction, however, made representation a problem for him in a way that for these other critics it was not. If others had heard the *Passion* as rationalizing the techniques of Polish avant-gardism into a

⁵⁰ Stefan Kisielewski, "Czy muzyka jest niehumanistyczna?," *Znak* 3/10 (April 1948): 222-31.

⁵¹ Zygmunt Mycielski, "Pendereckiego opus magnum," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 20/27 (3 July 1966): 1, 5.

⁵² Tadeusz Kaczyński, "'Pasja' Pendereckiego w Filharmonii Krakowskiej," *Współczesność* 11/10 (11-24 May 1966): 8.

sensible whole, Kisielewski intimated that this effect came less from the merits of Penderecki's musical construction than from the work's narrative thread. The *Passion* genre, Kisielewski explained, imposed coherence where there might otherwise have been none, thereby allowing the composer to create a piece that was "rather more horizontally panoramic than organically vertical."⁵³ Fleeing the field of avant-garde battle, Penderecki, like many of his compatriots, had found refuge in the fold of cultural association.

Kisielewski cited Henryk Górecki's contribution to the 1966 Warsaw Autumn as an antidote both to avant-garde extremism as well as to Penderecki's rampant pictorialism. Like the *St. Luke Passion*, Górecki's *Refren (Refrain)*, op. 21, received its first performance abroad: the world premiere took place on October 27, 1965 in Geneva. Otherwise, these two works are wildly different. Whereas the *Passion* has all the trappings of a magnum opus, *Refrain* unfolds on a more modest scale. The piece lasts just over fifteen minutes; no textual narrative guides it. It is composed for an orchestra that, in comparison with the symphonic extravagance of Górecki's works from the early 1960s, is restrained, lacking flutes and tubas, and marshalling a minimum of percussion. The ascetic sonic fabric similarly shows the composer in a stripped-down guise. Throughout *Refrain*, Górecki arranges his delimited palette of seconds and tritones into a strictly articulated ABA' form, in which the first section outlines a process of gradual accumulation, which is then followed by a passage of palindromic rhythmic interplay, and which finally concludes with an episode of sustained dissipation that mirrors the work's opening.

⁵³ Kisielewski, "Muzyka i nowa jesień," 2.

The first four measures of *Refrain* set up the polarities driving the piece: sound and silence, second and tritone, stasis and motion (Ex. 3.4). Undulating strings, rocking in open octaves between C and D-flat, follow the empty space of the opening measure, marked “P.G.” F-sharps played by the horns articulate the boundaries of the first phrase while simultaneously pricking the consonance of the open octaves on C. Taken together, these elements comprise the first of six ‘refrains’ that gradually expand in length over the course of the A section. Górecki’s compositional process in the refrains dissipates a feeling of forward propulsion. The slow, sustained rhythmic values, the palindromic pitch construction, the pauses that introduce each new phrase, and the constant returns to C in the strings ensure that the refrains are always circling back to their beginnings. But the process of the refrains is also one of slowly increasing pitch density. With each new phrase, successive whole steps shade the underlying octaves on C, until the sixth refrain culminates in a verticalization of all the pitches of the whole-tone scale, played by a stratum of strings, in a phrase still punctuated by F-sharp stutters in the brass (Ex. 3.5).

Refrain’s stark formal outlines and deliberate pacing ensure that its guiding logic is graspable by the ear. Moreover, the reversal of the refrain process in the A’ section, in which a whole-tone cluster gradually clarifies to an open C octave in the low strings, provides something akin to tonal closure. Mimicking the effect of listening to compositions based on diatonic harmony, the piece translates tonally driven patterns of tension and release into a sound world that has little to do with actual tonal practice. As a

Example 3.4. Górecki, *Refrain*, op. 21, refrain 1.

1 5 3 5 3 5 3 2 3

J-26-28 *legatissimo e ben tenuto*
mp sempre

tr

cr

tn

vn I, II *pp* *quasi pp*

vn III *PG* *PG*

vl

vc

vb

Example 3.5. Górecki, *Refrain*, op. 21, end of refrain 6.

⑦

6 3 6 3 6 2

tr

CR

trn

poco pp

vn I, II

vn III

vl

vc

vb

result, Górecki's *Refrain* offered an alternative to the *St. Luke Passion*'s perspective on how compositional modernity might interact with elements derived from musical tradition. One of the critics gathered at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn lauded the work as a "return to music" after Górecki's sonoristic adventures of the early 1960s.⁵⁴ An extensive essay in *Ruch Muzyczny* further explored the questions of *Refrain*'s links with the past. Bohdan Pocij asserted that the piece exemplified Górecki's detached approach to the trappings of closed forms and conventional musical rhetoric, which perhaps was only possible for composers who, "having left tradition far behind them, return to it as if from outside." The work's simplicity, Tadeusz Kaczyński added, served to instruct listeners in hearing a "new musical language."⁵⁵

This new language, however, did not elicit the immediate intoxication that gripped the Warsaw Autumn audience during the performance of the *St. Luke Passion*. Although the festival crowd ultimately responded to the work with a standing ovation, Kaczyński described the process of listening to *Refrain* as beginning with irritation at its seeming monotony. Only gradually did this initial negativity begin to fluctuate with an acceptance of Górecki's compositional process, a progression that finally culminated in listeners' total absorption by the work.⁵⁶ In a similar vein, Jerzy Jaroszewicz granted that *Refrain* was the most interesting item on the program of the Warsaw Autumn's closing concert, but he admitted that he did not begin to warm to the piece until hearing it a second time as a recording.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ M. Józef Michałowski, "X 'WJ' Pasja Pendereckiego."

⁵⁵ Tadeusz Kaczyński and Bohdan Pocij, "Dwugłos o 'Refrenie'," *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/23 (1966): 6-7.

⁵⁶ Tadeusz Kaczyński, "Jesień 66: Pierwsze rozpoznanie," 11.

⁵⁷ Jerzy Jaroszewicz, "Trzy wieczory festiwalu," *Ruch Muzyczny* 10/22 (1966): 10.

Thus when the *St. Luke Passion* was performed at the Warsaw Autumn in 1966, the work provided just one answer to a broader question of what the relationship between past and present in Polish composition should be, a tension that extended to Górecki's *Refrain* and the programming of the festival at which these performances were taking place. Whereas Penderecki offered an eclectic intermingling of recognizable musical styles, Górecki's engagement with tradition did not deal in sonorities that were directly traceable to their historical origins. The one composer promised emotional absorption, deploying musical gestures freighted with deliberate semantic content; the other approached the past as if from a distance, at the level of abstract formal strategy. In the end, the success of the *St. Luke Passion* would take Penderecki outside the well-worn channels of the avant-garde concert circuit. But as one of the nodes in this particular network of musical exchange, the Warsaw Autumn negotiated a more complicated balance between old and new. Drawing at least part of its international renown from the ability to present the new and unusual, the festival would be continually compelled to reaffirm its forward-looking credentials.

Religion and Politics, Two Ways

Performances of the *St. Luke Passion* in Poland and West Germany were inflected by far more than arguments about the place of the past in avant-garde composition. While the stated pretext for the *Passion* commission may have been the 700th anniversary of the Münster Cathedral, this was a time of historical remembrance in Poland as well, for an accident of chronology meant that the cathedral's jubilee year coincided with celebrations of the Polish millennium. Even without the pressure of commemorating the first recorded

date in Polish history, relations between the Catholic Church and Party-state apparatus were never easy during the socialist era. Authorities were just as keen to bend Catholic influence to their own advantage as they were to undermine the position of the Church with stringent controls. For its part, in the early 1960s the Church was more prone to serve as a mediator between government and society than as an outright opponent to the regime's policies; its pronouncements tended to be limited to questions of religion and morality. Catholicism had a sanctioned political presence in Poland at the time, albeit one that was tightly circumscribed. The circulation of its newspaper was kept within closely monitored boundaries, and like all printed materials, it was subject to scrutiny by the censor. The governmental presence of the Church's political wing was limited to nine seats in parliament.⁵⁸ Its legal status remained ambiguous throughout the 1960s, leaving the Church vulnerable to attempted seizures of its land and property, particularly in the formerly German territories that were tacked on to western Poland after World War II.⁵⁹

This uneasy coexistence became fraught as the millennial date drew near and each side struggled to assert the legitimacy of its vision of Poland's past. Both Church and state had begun their preparations for the millennial celebrations nearly a decade before. To catalyze Polish Catholics and reaffirm the Church's role in national history, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński mounted the Great Novena beginning in 1957.⁶⁰ Wyszyński crafted his

⁵⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, trans. Jane Cave (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 304-11.

⁵⁹ Wanda Chudzik, Iwona Kielmel, and Irena Marczak, eds. *Obchody milenijne 1966 roku w świetle dokumentów Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych* (Warsaw: Centralne Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji, 1998), 10-11.

⁶⁰ For English-language accounts of the Great Novena, see: Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 110-19; and: Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 59-80.

program around annual pilgrimages and the peregrination of a copy of the icon of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, one of the nation's most powerful religious symbols, throughout Poland. Capable of assembling multitudes, the events of the Great Novena annexed public space for sacred rather than secular purposes. Images of these crowds found almost no place in the official media, which focused instead on the masses assembled for government-sponsored activities that culminated in the Parade of the Millennium on July 22, 1966. The date was chosen by design, for it marked the twenty-second anniversary of the establishment of the PRL by the Polish Committee of National Liberation, a Soviet-backed provisional government operative in Poland during World War II. Political authorities systematically aimed to oppose Catholic influence at every turn. They denied permission for Pope Paul VI to travel to Poland and confiscated the Black Madonna icon that had been wending its way around the country. Such harassment, especially when it took the form of bullying by government operatives at Catholic millennial celebrations, began to forge the link between religious expression and resistance to communist rule. As anthropologist Jan Kubik points out, the Great Novena nurtured strategies of oppositional action that would later be employed for political ends.⁶¹

But obstruction was not the state's only tactic in claiming a secularized perspective on the Polish millennium. Starting in 1958, the Party-state launched an offensive that incorporated political action with the construction of badly needed infrastructure, support of academic research, and sponsorship of artistic production. A document produced in late 1965 by Poland's Ministry of Internal Affairs schematically

⁶¹ Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, 128.

divided millennial activities into columns corresponding to Church and state; within the context of this rubric, music fell squarely on the side of the authorities. Further research on the history of Polish music was explicitly called for in the section outlining plans for academic activity. The Congress of Polish Culture, then scheduled for September 1966, was counted as one of the most important components of the millennial celebrations.⁶² Elsewhere, a representative of the ZKP revealed that the Warsaw Autumn Festival had been officially added to the calendar of millennial events.⁶³

The festival performance of the *St. Luke Passion* therefore skirted the boundaries between Church and state that were being strenuously policed in other areas of Polish society. The performance of a work with an unambiguously sacred text would understandably generate tremendous interest among Polish audiences, especially at a time when religiosity had acquired a new potency. It would be easy to read the large audience turnout that greeted Polish performances of the *St. Luke Passion* as a simple analogue to the crowds gathered for other religiously themed events, a habit that has persisted in Western accounts of work and its impact in socialist-era Poland.⁶⁴ Yet whatever headaches they may have caused in closed government circles, performances of Penderecki's new composition took place well within the purview of official cultural life. On June 19, 1966, the journal *Życie Literackie* (*Literary Life*) published a photo of a performance of the *St. Luke Passion* that had recently taken place in Kraków's Wawel

⁶² MSW II 3964, k. 1 (pismo przewodnie z 2 XII 1966 r.) 17-24. 10 listopada 1965 r., Warszawa. MSW, dyrektor Departamentu IV płk S. Morawski do szefa Oddziału Prewencji Ogólnej KG MO płk. B. Skutelego. – "Tezy, założenia i programy państwowych obchodów Tysiąclecia Państwa Polskiego [i] kościelnych uroczystości Tysiąclecia Chrztu Polski." Reprinted in *Obchody milenijne 1966 roku*, 19-28.

⁶³ "Na horyzoncie—Kongres Kultury Polskiej. Włodzimierz Kotoński w-prezes Związku Kompozytorów Polskich," *Współczesność* (30 March – 12 April 1966), 2.

⁶⁴ See, for example: Frederick Page, "Warsaw: Penderecki's Passion," *The Musical Times* 107/1486 (December 1966), 1079 and also: Robinson and Winold, *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, 19-20.

Castle, the historical seat of the Polish monarchy.⁶⁵ A few days earlier, *Gazeta Krakowska* (*Kraków Gazette*), the local Party newspaper, listed the Wawel Castle performance of Penderecki's *Passion* as part of a concert series that also included Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and *Harnasie*, along with Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc*.⁶⁶ After the Warsaw Autumn Festival, a glowing review of the piece likewise appeared on the front page of *Trybuna Ludu*, the primary organ of the PZPR.⁶⁷ Although the Church was experiencing a period of repression in 1966, the *St. Luke Passion* was presented in venues whose concert repertoire depended on approval from cultural authorities, and references to it turned up in publications that served as mouthpieces for the state apparatus.

One source of this acceptance was, to a certain extent, Western in origin. While the long tradition of performing sacred music in secular venues eased the *St. Luke Passion*'s entry into Poland, the immediate politicization attached to the piece at its West German premiere provided a further distraction from its religious dimension. At a time when culture was a powerful agent of diplomacy, it was perhaps inevitable that the *St. Luke Passion* would become embroiled in questions of international relations and the ownership of historical legacies. West German commentators were keen to see the work as auguring a new stage in Polish interactions with West Germany. The reporter from the magazine *Kirche und Rundfunk* told his readers that the political symbolism of the *St. Luke* premiere, in which the collaboration of West German and Polish musicians provided physical testimony to hopes for post-war reconciliation, overshadowed its

⁶⁵ Photo: *Życie Literackie* 16/25 (19 June 1966): 7.

⁶⁶ "Aktualności krakowskie," *Gazeta Krakowska* (14 June 1966).

⁶⁷ ERG, "'Pasja' Pendereckiego kulminacja festiwalu," *Trybuna Ludu* (25 September 1966).

importance as an artistic event.⁶⁸ At one of the press conferences accompanying the premiere, Klaus von Bismarck, managing director of the WDR, spoke of the need for Germany to atone for the past.⁶⁹ His words were well received in the official Polish press, where Bismarck was characterized as “a new type of German humanist, valued by us as a friend of Poland.”⁷⁰

Less well received in Poland, however, were similar moves by Polish bishops to effect mutual understanding between the two barely tolerant neighbors. On November 18, 1965 Polish bishops participating in the Second Vatican Council sent a letter to their West German counterparts.⁷¹ On the surface, this letter was an invitation to participate in the Polish millennial celebrations, which was accompanied by an outline of Poland’s history in which its centuries-long association with Germany loomed large. The real thrust of the letter was much more subversive, for the bishops’ ultimate aim was to open a dialogue that would exorcise demons still lingering from the Second World War. Concluding with the words, “we hold out our hands to you . . . and we extend our forgiveness and ask for the same,” the text caused shockwaves in Poland. It triggered a virulent anti-Church propaganda campaign, for the danger of the letter lay in its use of religious channels to engineer political change. The situation was complicated by political contentions over Poland’s western border, which would not be formally ratified by treaty until December 1970; until then, enmity with West Germany was fundamental

⁶⁸ EPD, “Im Auftrag des WDR: Die Lukas-Passion von Penderecki,” *Kirche und Rundfunk* 14 (6 April 1966), 1.

⁶⁹ Schwinger, *Krzysztof Penderecki*, 39-40.

⁷⁰ Jerzy Waldorff, “Passio secundam Lucam,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 20/17 (24 April 1966).

⁷¹ *Orędzie biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich: materiały i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Polonia, 1966).

to Polish foreign policy.⁷² It is important to remember that the commission for the *St. Luke Passion* had come from the West German Radio, not the West German Catholic Church, as Stuckenschmidt indeed cautioned in his account of the world premiere.⁷³ The juxtaposition of the *Passion*'s first performance and the ramifications of the Letter of the Polish Bishops was a coincidence, unforeseeable when the work was commissioned in 1962. Yet political fallout from the letter made it a subtext to many of the press conferences and reports publicizing the appearance of Penderecki's new work on the international music scene.

In his own remarks, Penderecki shrewdly positioned himself within the competing contexts of religion and politics. He appealed to the cold war prejudices of his Western European interlocutors, candidly acknowledging in one interview, "I am a Catholic."⁷⁴ But he just as quickly expanded the *Passion*'s connotations to encompass the tortured history of recent decades. Speaking with interviewer Ryszard Wasita, Penderecki emphasized, "the *Passion* is not just the suffering and death of Christ, but also the suffering and death of Auschwitz, the tragic experience of humanity in the mid-twentieth century."⁷⁵ The press seized on Penderecki's comment, glossing it to include Germany among the nations ravaged by World War II. One West German reviewer claimed that the *St. Luke Passion* "is now not only the story of Christ's suffering, but the story of the suffering of all mankind. Golgotha, Hiroshima, Auschwitz, and Dresden are

⁷² Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 177-80.

⁷³ Stuckenschmidt, "Polnische Passion," 152.

⁷⁴ Recounted in Stuckenschmidt, "Polnische Passion," 152.

⁷⁵ Ryszard Wasita, "Avantgarde und Erbe," *Polen* (July 1966). Also recounted in Erhardt, *Spotkania z Krzysztofem Pendereckim*, 89.

interchangeable; in the events of the Passion, they are unified as the historical events of our time.”⁷⁶ In contrast, Polish commentators argued that the resonance of Penderecki’s achievement could not be understood without fathoming its distinctly local source. Jerzy Waldorff, for one, dubbed the piece a “Slavic Passion” inspired by the specificity of Polish victimhood, a rhetoric in line with Polish government efforts to portray Auschwitz as a symbol of Polish—rather than Jewish—suffering.⁷⁷

By appealing so casually to Auschwitz, Penderecki rendered the *St. Luke Passion* much more than a prelude to simple cultural reconciliation between Poland and West Germany. Although the work may have had a religious theme, its echoes of the traumas of Polish history made it potentially good politics, since criticism of fascist brutality formed a cornerstone of post-war socialist rhetoric. Thus when it traveled between various performance venues in 1966, the *St. Luke Passion* carried with it a host of concerns about modernity, history, religion, and politics. In West Germany, the *Passion* became weighted with the burdens of post-war reconciliation and remembrance. In Poland, the international phenomenon was distinctly more national, as critics moved to claim the *Passion* as a work sprung from local concerns and interpreted it as a referendum on domestic musical life.

Political and religious overtones surely colored the circumstances of the early performances and reception of the *St. Luke Passion* in Poland. But the tale of how the work came to be featured at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn suggests that the festival

⁷⁶ Hanspeter Krellmann, “Passion aus Polen.”

⁷⁷ Jerzy Waldorff, “Droga przez mękę,” *Świat* 16/18 (1 May 1966): 15. For an account of Auschwitz’s continuing status as a flashpoint of Polish-Jewish relations, see: Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

organizers were more driven by the desire to promote a new work by a Polish composer of international stature. During a meeting in early November 1965, the Repertoire Commission included only one Polish composition among the pieces they hoped to hear at the upcoming festival: the *St. Luke Passion* in a performance by the Kraków Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and Choir.⁷⁸ At this point, the *Passion* was still months away from its world premiere and its concomitant politicization, and the Letter of the Polish Bishops had not yet been written. Negotiations of the ensemble's appearance appear to have proceeded unhindered even after tensions erupted between Church and state at the end of the year. Formal letters of invitation were sent to the conductor and to the director of the Kraków Philharmonic at the beginning of January 1966, and the specifics of the group's festival appearance were settled by the summer.⁷⁹ Strangely, in archival documents the only recorded resistance to the performance of the *St. Luke Passion* at the 1966 Warsaw Autumn seems to have come not from the authorities, but from its composer. On November 23, 1965 a member of the Repertoire Commission informed his colleagues that Penderecki was reluctant to have the work performed during the festival.⁸⁰ Lutosławski agreed to clear up the matter by speaking with Penderecki directly, securing the composer's agreement by the end of 1965.

⁷⁸ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej wtorek, 9 listopada 1965 r.

⁷⁹ Archiwum ZKP, 11/34. Letter from Leokadia Malinowska and Stefan Śledziński to Henryk Czyż, conductor of the Kraków Philharmonic, 4 January 1966; Letter from Leokadia Malinowska and Stefan Śledziński to Tadeusz Krzesiński, Director of the Kraków Philharmonic, 4 January 1966; Letter from Tadeusz Krzesiński to Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, 18 January 1966; Letter from Leokadia Malinowska to Kraków Philharmonic 20 January 1966; Letter from Maria Kłopotowska to Kraków Philharmonic, 28 March 1966; Letter from Tadeusz Krzemiński to Warsaw Autumn Festival Office, 28 June 1966; Letter from Leokadia Malinowska to Kraków Philharmonic 9 July 1966.

⁸⁰ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Repertuarowej wtorek, dnia 23.XI.1965 r. The document does not list Penderecki's reasons for not wanting the piece to be performed.

Once it appeared on the international scene, the composition's initial foreign success further encouraged government authorities to permit its performance in official concert venues. The West German premiere, and the cadres of music critics who attended and dutifully published reviews of Penderecki's new piece, meant that the *Passion* was already visible on the international scene by the time it reached Poland. Efforts to suppress Catholic interpretations of the Polish millennium could more easily be hidden from the international press, marginalized as a domestic matter. In contrast, the *St. Luke Passion* had already received international coverage that cast both composer and nation in a favorable light. A ban would have tarnished Poland's carefully constructed image of cultural liberality, a much greater liability than whatever ideological dangers the *Passion* may have posed in Polish musical life. For within a context of international exchange, works such as the *St. Luke Passion* had worth as export commodities, and cultural production, with all of its economic implications, was a primary component in Polish negotiations of its national prestige.

Capital Authority

The flip side to the religious celebrations of the Polish millennium was the media construction of an image that stressed Poland's contemporary achievements and its place near the end-point of a teleological process of historical development. Numerous articles highlighted the importance of cultural production in the annals of the Polish state and situated Poland's cultural modernity as a marker of the nation's European partnership. An unsigned editorial from an April 1966 edition of *Współczesność* (*Modernity*), a biweekly literary journal, laid bare Polish inferiority complexes in relation to Europe. The editorial

boasted, “the time has passed when Polish culture was considered to be nothing but a ‘poor relation’ of European culture, able to copy and imitate with great facility, but unable to create anything with its own artistic value . . . the last two decades have proved that we have achieved a particularly high level according to European standards.” The Polish millennium constituted a call to display as many products of Polish culture to the outside world as possible, in a way that was “maximally concrete and material.”⁸¹ Making Polish culture quantifiable was one way of thrusting it into the material sphere. Newspaper and journal articles used the language of economics to report book sales, enumerate musical and theatrical performances abroad, and chronicle the transfer of tangible artifacts. Polish culture, it seems, had value as an exportable good.

Designed to bring the output of Polish composers into contact with the outside world, the Warsaw Autumn Festival proved particularly amenable to this kind of economic discourse. In 1966 Włodzimierz Kotoński, then vice-president of the ZKP, called the Warsaw Autumn a “noble exchange of new works.”⁸² Throughout the 1960s the Warsaw Autumn was indeed a vital transfer point for circulating musical information throughout Europe. Beyond the chance to hear the festival concerts, attendance at the Warsaw Autumn gave composers, critics, and musicologists the chance to acquire more durable tokens of their interest in contemporary music, including the hefty program book, scores, and recordings. The Festival Office likewise ferried scores from composers to musical ensembles. This role was particularly important when a composition existed only in manuscript form, when the ensembles in question were from the Soviet bloc and

⁸¹ Unsigned editorial, “Polska w Europie,” *Współczesność* (30 March–12 April 1966), 1.

⁸² “Na horyzoncie—Kongres Kultury Polskiej. Włodzimierz Kotoński w-prezes Związku Kompozytorów Polskich,” 2.

lacked direct access to many pieces of contemporary music, or when a composer hailed from Eastern Europe, but could not count on promotion by the local composers' union. All three circumstances converged in early 1966, when the Festival Office supplied a Czechoslovak chamber ensemble with a copy of the score and parts to Edison Denisov's *Sun of the Incas*, one of the pieces the Repertoire Commission had requested these musicians to play in Warsaw later that year.⁸³

Kotoński had something else in mind, however, when he described the Warsaw Autumn as part of a network of international musical exchange. He stressed that the annual visits by foreign guests were crucial to the work of the festival. These figures had enormous influence, especially in Western Europe; they had the power to arrange performances and dispense commissions. And when they came to Warsaw, Kotoński related, they wasted no time in snapping up the Polish composers whose music they heard there. Kotoński was among those who benefited from the international contacts he made at the festival, and he continues to credit the Warsaw Autumn for opening a world of compositional opportunity to him during his early career. He recalls:

During its first phase, the Warsaw Autumn was very meaningful for me, above all as an opportunity for getting out [of Poland]. I was thirty or thirty-one when it began, a young composer, but in terms of new music I was just beginning. That my works were performed [at the festival] and heard by many of the organizers of musical life, especially from western countries, was influential in establishing interest in my music. I received commissions from the West and was able to establish contacts. This in turn affected the very form of my compositional ideas. If you do not have to worry about who is going to commission your next work, your thoughts work in an entirely different way. While you want to satisfy those who made the commission, you are not thinking about whether or not they will

⁸³ Archiwum ZKP, 11/34. Letter from Maria Kłopotowska to Ladislav Kupkovic of the Hudba Dneška chamber ensemble, 10 March 1966. The letter indicates that the Warsaw Autumn Festival Office was in possession of at least two manuscript copies of Denisov's work at the time. Although the *Sun of the Incas* was composed in 1964, it was published by Universal Edition only in 1971. I am grateful to Peter Schmelz for information on the publication history of this work.

like the piece, but are only concerned with writing something interesting. A few of my works had specified parameters, such as instrumental theater pieces for Sweden or Norway, since that is where those commissions came from, or chamber music in Germany . . . My successes at the Warsaw Autumn, not only the performances but also the good reviews I received in Poland and abroad, buoyed my spirits, and that support meant that my ideas were better able to come across [in my music.]⁸⁴

Journalists followed Kotoński's lead during the mid-1960s by linking recent musical gains to the Warsaw Autumn Festival and the foreign institutions that were keen on disseminating works by up-and-coming Poles. In October 1966 an article propagandizing Polish music provided both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of its international presence. "During this half-year alone," the author reported, "works by Polish composers have been performed abroad more than 150 times, in concerts played by leading ensembles and distinguished soloists from many countries. Grażyna Bacewicz, Tadeusz Baird, Witold Lutosławski, and Krzysztof Penderecki hold the leading places on this formidable list."⁸⁵ The West German premiere of the *St. Luke Passion*, and its projected performances throughout Western Europe and North America during the upcoming concert season, brought Penderecki in for special recognition. Elsewhere, Henryk Swolkień described Polish composers as a "brand," so desirable abroad that they were increasingly earning foreign commissions for their works. With the commission of his *St. Luke Passion* from the West German Radio, Penderecki had scored the greatest coup of any Polish composer to date. Swolkień dubbed the piece an "export for import," since its first performance had taken place outside the composer's homeland.⁸⁶ From its very beginning, then, the *St. Luke Passion* was implicated in the language of commodities

⁸⁴ Interview with Włodzimierz Kotoński, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

⁸⁵ Stefan Drobarek, "Polska muzyka liczy się," *Kurier Polski* (20 September 1966).

⁸⁶ Henryk Swolkień, "Triumf Pendereckiego."

and foreign trade that had accrued to Polish composition, whose value in an international market for cultural production was taken as indicative of Poland's more general status on the world stage.

Of course, the discursive habit of talking about music in terms of exports or imports arose at a time when the actual state of the Polish economy was considerably more lackluster. Throughout the early 1960s, the economy was plagued by bottlenecks and shortages. Real wages grew slowly. The allegiance of Gomułka and his team to socialist orthodoxy hampered economic development, since they prioritized new investment in heavy industry at the expense of a focus on consumption.⁸⁷ Both labor and capital productivity fell in the 1960s, which in turn required the investment of ever-larger shares of national income to maintain planned rates of economic growth, while also necessitating that planned increases in rates of employment be exceeded in order for enterprises to have an adequate labor force.⁸⁸ The supply of goods in state-run shops could not meet consumer demand, nor could available resources sate Polish society's appetite for social services. Even as the West gradually became the benchmark against which Polish citizens compared conditions at home, the goods manufactured in the Polish economy had little success breaking into Western markets. The Polish economy had largely been directed away from the West since the late 1940s: when the two camps of the Cold War had begun to crystallize, Poland's trade flows were oriented toward the Soviet Union and the member nations of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, established in 1949. Poland withdrew from the IMF and refused Marshall Plan aid as a

⁸⁷ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 286-292.

⁸⁸ Ben Slay, *The Polish Economy: Crisis, Reform, and Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 32.

result of Soviet pressure.⁸⁹ Until the reforms of the early 1970s, Poland would remain, economically speaking, part of an isolated and insular world.

But musically, foreign and domestic patronage had integrated Polish music into the cultural life of Western Europe. There it proved capable of generating actual capital for the composers who wrote it, the conductors who performed it, and through record sales. Foreign commissions gave composers access to foreign hard currency, a substance that was ever elusive, and for that reason all the more desirable in 1960s Poland. Whereas Soviet musicians earned the same amount for performances in the West as they would in Moscow or Leningrad, Polish composers suffered no similar financial disincentives for accepting commissions from Western institutions. They were paid at the same level and in the same funds as their counterparts in France, Italy, or West Germany. The money they earned abroad could, as Włodzimierz Kotoński recalls, be “legally or half-legally” brought back to Poland or held in foreign bank accounts.⁹⁰

Unlike artists, private Polish citizens technically were not allowed to own hard currency during the 1960s, and hard currency bank accounts would not become legal in Poland until the 1970s. In principle composers’ access to these types of funds remained subject to the Byzantine regulations established by the Ministry of Finance. The ZKP information bulletin of January-June 1966 reminded composers of their duties in regards to the hard currency they were earning from copyright royalties, foreign production of new works, and compensation for their artistic services abroad.⁹¹ Officially, these

⁸⁹ Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism*, 12-16.

⁹⁰ Interview with Włodzimierz Kotoński, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

⁹¹ The relevant regulations included the following: “Rozporządzenie Ministra Finansów z dnia 15 kwietnia 1952 r. w sprawie wykonania ustawy dewizowej /Dz. U. nr 21, poz. 137 – i z 1956 r. nr 50, poz. 223/;”

transactions were to take place with ZAIKS as an intermediary. ZAIKS, the Polish agency that handles artistic copyright, could hold composers' foreign currency in the Commercial Bank (*Bank Handlowy*) in Warsaw. Composers were then granted access to these funds to pay for the costs of international travel, to cover living expenses while they were abroad (as long as their stay was not longer than two weeks, and if the sum total of their room and board did not exceed the limits that had been established for the country in question), or to buy goods in the nascent "internal export market."⁹² Other uses required special permission.

That it was felt necessary to reiterate these obligations suggests that composers were not entirely playing by the book. Włodzimierz Kotoński remembers that these rules were subject to lax oversight: "no one kept an eye on it, neither those who were receiving the payments nor those who were supposed to be enforcing the law . . . I never heard of anyone being prosecuted for illegal possession of hard currency, even though that often happened in the Soviet Union."⁹³ He also recalls that nearly everyone found ways to work around the official regulations, which dispensed only miniscule amounts of hard currency

"Zarządzenie Ministra Finansów z dnia 31 maja 1960 r. w sprawie stosowania przepisów ustawy dewizowej do osób czasowo przebywających za granicą lub w kraju oraz zezwolenia dla tych osób na niektóre czynności obrotu wartościami dewizowymi /M.P. nr 51, poz. 244/;" "Zarządzenie Ministra Finansów nr 132 – z dnia 9 sierpnia 1960 r. w sprawie zezwolenia na dysponowanie zagranicznymi środkami płatniczymi uzyskanymi w niektórych praw autorskich w obrocie z zagranicą;" "Zarządzenie Ministra Finansów nr 402 z dnia 14 sierpnia 1958 roku w sprawie zezwolenia na dysponowanie częścią zagranicznych środków płatniczych uzyskiwanych przez osoby fizyczne za niektóre prace wykonywane w obrocie z zagranicą." Reprinted in *Związek Kompozytorów Polskich: Biuletyn informacyjny* 37 (January-June 1966), 47-53.

⁹² "Internal export" shops would not become widespread in Poland until the 1970s, when they were used to drain hard currency out of circulation. Financed by foreign loans, a brief period of economic prosperity in the early 1970s made access to foreign currency more widespread among Polish citizens. This could be spent at PEWEX (short for *Przedsiębiorstwo Eksportu Wewnętrznego*), a chain of hard currency shops that offered otherwise unobtainable Western goods, as well as domestically manufactured products that typically were for export only. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Baltona Foreign Trade Company served a similar function to PEWEX, providing access to Western goods for those who could pay in hard currency.

⁹³ Interview with Włodzimierz Kotoński, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

for travel to western countries. International contacts proved doubly useful in these cases. Foreign friends and acquaintances increased the likelihood of receiving a commission from a western institution in the first place. Then when these contacts traveled to Poland, they could discreetly bring along the payments Polish composers had earned in hard currency, which the Poles could in turn spend during their next journey abroad.

Within this context, the *St. Luke Passion* turned out to be a sound investment. Soon after the work's premiere, Penderecki was allowed to take posts in Essen and then in West Berlin, where he was paid in German marks in a grant from the West Berlin government.⁹⁴ The *Passion's* conductor, Henryk Czyż of the Kraków Philharmonic, credits the piece with gaining him access to the "great stages of the world," from a debut in London's Albert and Royal Festival Halls to appearances in Berlin, Rotterdam, Venice, and Buenos Aires.⁹⁵ In late June 1966, the Warsaw Autumn's Repertoire Commission decided to send a letter to the director of Polskie Nagrania, the state-owned Polish record label, with a request to speed up production on their forthcoming recording of the *St. Luke Passion*.⁹⁶ The Polskie Nagrania version appeared just in time for the 1966 festival, where it sold briskly.⁹⁷ A few months later, Philips released the same 2 LP recording on its label, distributing it for hard currency in the West. To entice potential consumers, the liner notes capitalized on the ecstatic response Penderecki's work garnered both inside and outside of Poland. The record jacket proclaims that, "in Warsaw, one of the biggest crowds ever to pack National Philharmonic Hall cheered and

⁹⁴ Donal Henahan, "Religiously, a Free Spirit. Politically?" *New York Times* (23 February 1969), D19.

⁹⁵ Henryk Czyż, *Pamiętam jak dziś—* (Warsaw: Tryton, 1991), 134.

⁹⁶ Archiwum ZKP, 11/75. Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego w dniu 29 czerwca 1966 r.

⁹⁷ Kydryński, "Telefonem z Warszawskiej Jesieni – Penderecki, Czyż i Krenz."

clapped for ten minutes. In Venice's San Giorgio church, where applause is forbidden, clergy and audience alike burst into a spontaneous ovation that one priest excused as 'homage our Lord would surely want us to pay.'"⁹⁸ Penderecki's good press, it seems, made for effective advertising.

Yet the tokens of the *St. Luke Passion*'s success went beyond marketing claims to include expanded access to economic capital and the prestige that came with a high-profile foreign commission. Literally and figuratively, the piece had currency within a Western European framework of cultural production. In turn, Penderecki's high status according to this model influenced his secure position at home, where the victories of Polish composers in foreign markets were trumpeted as confirming the dominance of Polish cultural production abroad, even when pieces such as the *St. Luke Passion* seemed to contradict the ideological principles avowed by the regime.

Rumors of Penderecki's West German triumph exerted their charm on his expectant audiences, ensuring high audience turnout for performances of the *Passion* in Polish concert halls. Tadeusz Kaczyński noted that audiences in Kraków were flocking to hear Penderecki's work as much to "check and see if the legend was true" as to assuage their curiosity about the music.⁹⁹ Penderecki's international presence also allowed him to become the most reliable purveyor of large-scale sacred works in socialist Poland. Performances of religiously tinged compositions were not expressly forbidden at the Warsaw Autumn during the late 1950s and early 1960s, as a sample of its concert

⁹⁸ Liner Notes from *Penderecki: Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to St. Luke*, Soloists, boys' chorus, mixed chorus, and orchestra of the Cracow Philharmonia, conducted by Henryk Czyż, Philips PHS2-901, 1967, Record.

⁹⁹ Kaczyński, "'Pasja' Pendereckiego w Filharmonii Krakowskiej," 8.

programs from 1956 to 1969 demonstrates (Table 3.1). But until the 1970s Penderecki would be virtually the only composer among this group who had come of age in post-war Poland. In a 1969 interview for *The New York Times*, Penderecki claimed that Polish composers were not restricted in their choice of themes. His colleagues were not writing religious works during the 1960s because they simply were not interested.¹⁰⁰ Left unsaid was that the commissions to write these works overwhelmingly came from institutions based outside Poland, where commissioning a sacred composition of similar dimensions would have been impossible, even if performing such a piece was not.¹⁰¹ The phenomenon of Penderecki's sacred works, beginning with the *St. Luke Passion*, thus resulted from the interaction of Eastern and Western European perceptions of the composer and his music.

As such, the story of the *St. Luke Passion* in 1966 demonstrates the limits of existing models for theorizing cultural production. These limits have been pointed out before. Katherine Verdery, for one, has re-imagined Bourdieu's well known model of "distinction" to account for the dynamics of cultural politics in socialist systems.¹⁰² Drawing from her ethnographic work on Romanian intellectuals, she points out that Bourdieu's terms need to be changed when speaking about managed economies, since

¹⁰⁰ Henahan, "Religiously, a Free Spirit. Politically?"

¹⁰¹ *Utrenja* (1969-71), for example, arose in response to another commission from the WDR; its first full performance was on 28 May 1971 in Münster, West Germany. *Magnificat* (1973-74) was composed for the Salzburg Festival, with funding from the Austrian Radio; it was premiered in Salzburg on 17 August 1974. *Paradise Lost* (1976-78) was a commission from the Chicago Lyric Opera, and its premiere took place in Chicago on 29 November 1978. *Te Deum* (1979-80) was dedicated to Pope John Paul II, and it was premiered in Assisi, Italy. *Dies Irae* (1967) was the only one of these works to be premiered in Poland: its official premiere took place in Auschwitz on 16 April 1967, as part of a ceremony to unveil an international monument dedicated to the camp's victims.

¹⁰² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), and "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7/1 (Spring 1989), 14-25.

TABLE 3.1

Works with Religious Associations Performed at the Warsaw Autumn,
1956-1969

YEAR	COMPOSER	WORK
1956	Karol Szymanowski	<i>Stabat Mater</i> , op. 53
1956	Arthur Honegger	Symphony no. 3, "Liturgique"
1958	Arnold Schoenberg	<i>Moderne Psalmen</i> , op. 50, Psalm 1
1960	Roman Maciejewski	<i>Requiem</i>
1960	Tadeusz Szeligowski	<i>Psalm CXVI—Laudate Dominum omnes gentes</i>
1963	Igor Stravinsky	<i>Canticum sacrum ad honorem Sancti Marci nominis</i>
1964	Krzysztof Penderecki	<i>Stabat Mater</i>
1965	Igor Stravinsky	<i>The Flood</i>
1966	Krzysztof Penderecki	<i>Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundam Lucam</i>
1967	Krzysztof Penderecki	<i>Dies irae, oratorium ob memoriam in perniciem castris in Oświęcim necatorum inextinguibilem reddendam</i>
1968	György Ligeti	<i>Requiem</i>
1968	Augustyn Bloch	<i>Ajelet</i> , opera-mysterium for speaker, soprano, baritone, choir, and orchestra
1968	Tadeás Salva	<i>Canticum Zachariae</i> for soprano and chamber orchestra
1969	Olivier Messiaen	<i>Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus</i>
1969	John Tavener	<i>The Whale</i>

these systems are based not on the circulation of capital throughout society, but on the accumulation of resources from the center – whether these are raw materials for industrial manufacturing or the means of cultural production.¹⁰³

In an economy bereft of the influence of market mechanisms, Verdery stresses, culture is no longer a commodity to be bought and sold. It is instead a part of socialist bureaucracy's "space of legitimation," where control over discourse is essential for

¹⁰³ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 87-94.

perpetuating the power of the regime. The payoff for cultural producers in such a system consists in being able to shape official conceptions of history or contemporary reality; publication, exhibition, or public performance; and the receipt of prizes, worthy for their potential to open future avenues for bureaucratic funding rather than their effects on sales and income. Verdery accordingly revises Bourdieu's framework to describe struggles among factions of the cultural elite for influence within socialism's particular configuration of power relationships. Whereas Bourdieu plots economic capital against cultural capital, Verdery sets political status, identifiable by markers such as formal bureaucratic office or politically significant titles, against the category of creative, scientific, and cultural authority, a more slippery measure liable to shift according to factional allegiances.

Her revised framework, however, suffers the same drawback as Bourdieu's. Neither model is easily transferable. If Bourdieu's terms are limited by their implicit assumption of capitalist market mechanisms, Verdery's model is primarily designed to account for cultural production within the circumscribed boundaries of Eastern Europe. Each is better suited to imagine a Cold War landscape divided into separate camps rather than characterized by flux and fluidity. Through circulating between capitalist and socialist systems of cultural production, works such as the *St. Luke Passion* reveal the ways in which both Bourdieu's and Verdery's categories were dynamic in Cold War Europe. A model accounting for the international networks of cultural exchange that bound Eastern and Western Europe together in the 1960s—networks in which the Warsaw Autumn Festival was a central transfer point—would need to take into account

the impact of their contrasting political, economic, and cultural systems on one another, which transmuted the axes from cultural capital to creative authority, and back again.

This is not to say that the West has no place in Verdery's theorization of socialist cultural production. Within her framework, rhetorical appeals to the West constitute a means for recalibrating existing official hierarchies; claiming Western alignment was thus a strategy most often employed by disadvantaged intellectual fractions seeking to improve their status.¹⁰⁴ But channeled through the Warsaw Autumn Festival, the influence of the West on Polish music tended to sustain the official hierarchy rather than undermine it, consolidating the position of composers like Penderecki while confirming the dominance of state-sponsored cultural institutions. Polish composition was also more than just rhetorically connected to the West by the mid-1960s. As a point of contact between East and West, the festival occupied an interstitial position where this alchemy could take place. Works that did not precisely function as commodities in their home environment were launched into the outside world at the Warsaw Autumn, becoming in the process goods that could travel. So too did the creative impulses of Polish composers enter an international market for contemporary music through the annual festival concerts. The economics of *St. Luke* was precisely this transformative power—for cultural capital to change into creative authority, for this authority to create opportunities to earn economic capital abroad, and for the international prestige of Polish composers and musical institutions to become a source of legitimacy both for them and for the regime at home.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 96-97.

Chapter Four

(Un)common History

Telling Secrets

The 1972 premiere of *Enkyklopaideia* began with a moment of mystery. An announcer informed the audience that the fifteen short works penned for the Warsztat Muzyczny (Musical Workshop) ensemble would not correspond to the alphabetized list of composers in the program.¹ Neither did he divulge the order in which the pieces would be heard. Separated by silence, the miniatures became part of a guessing game in which authors were apprehensible only through the hints of musical style. The audience listened in hushed concentration, at times punctuated by applause or laughter.² Some possibly connected a jaunty stylization of Spanish dance to Luc Ferrari. Others maybe recognized Morton Feldman in a barely audible chord held by the piano, answered with briefly pulsating harmonics in the cello. Or perhaps they linked blubbery, pained cries from the cellist, clarinetist, and trombonist to Mauricio Kagel's experiments in musical theater. But who was behind the solo clarinet cantilena, which unfurled slowly in seconds and quartertones before dissipating in a murky descent?

¹ The composers were listed as: Louis Andriessen, Giuseppe Chiari, Morton Feldman, Luc Ferrari, Vinko Globokar, Mauricio Kagel, Arne Nordheim, Per Nørgård, Louis de Pablo, Carlos Roqué Alsina, Frederic Rzewski, Dieter Schönbach, Aurel Stroe, Gala Varvarin, and Karl Erik Welin. *XVI Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," Warszawa 16-24 września 1972* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1972), 102.

² Archiwum PR, Rekord 403082, Sygnatury ZWJ 618, WJ 1972/48. *Enkyklopaideia—15 utworów na zespół instrumentalny*, Warsztat Muzyczny, 20 September 1972, Warsaw Autumn Festival, live recording.

Enkyklopaideia promised a capsule overview of composition circa 1972.³ It delivered a compendium in which multimedia presentations coexisted with arrangements of early music, consonance was as viable as dissonance, and authorship was less important than a work's sounding surface. The project adapted one of the Warsaw Autumn's aims—providing a snapshot of current musical trends—to the capacities of a specific group of performers. Each of the miniatures showcased a different configuration of Warsztat Muzyczny's four players. The composers, from North America and both sides of Europe, reflected the interests and personal contacts of the ensemble's leader, composer and pianist Zygmunt Krauze. Krauze began to play with Warsztat Muzyczny in 1963, becoming part of a group that performed twentieth-century works in a concert series mounted by the Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio. Musicians at first came and went under the Warsztat Muzyczny name. Frustrated by the group's changing personnel and its questionable performance standards, Krauze transformed the ensemble into an ongoing collaboration among musicians who were similarly committed to painstaking preparation. Three others joined him: Edward Borowiak (b. 1934) on trombone, Witold Gałązka (b. 1941) on cello, and Czesław Pałkowski (b. 1933) on clarinet.⁴ As Warsztat Muzyczny, the four played together from 1967 to 1988. They became veteran purveyors of experimental music and introduced Warsaw Autumn audiences to a host of new works, many written especially for them.

³ Zygmunt Krauze, *ENKYKLOPAIDEIA*, program note in *XVI Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," Warszawa 16-24 września 1972* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1972), 107.

⁴ Michalina Cieślak, "Zespół 'Warsztat Muzyczny' i jego rola w kreowaniu muzyki awangardowej" (M.A. Thesis, Warsaw University, 1993), 12-13.

These performers were no strangers to controversy. One of their early collaborators, English pianist John Tilbury (b. 1936), had connections with Cage, Cornelius Cardew, and the Fluxus movement; he introduced Krauze and his cohorts to works by Feldman and Christian Wolff.⁵ Tilbury was on the scene at one of the group's most notorious Warsaw Autumn concerts: a 1970 enactment of Cardew's *The Great Digest* (*Paragraph 7*, 1968-1970) that ended in pandemonium. As the audience burbled, ambled, and mingled with the performers, someone commandeered the piano to play a Chopin mazurka. Others began to destroy a pile of branches that had been stacked onstage for a performance of Wolff's *Sticks* (ca. 1970). The administration of Warsaw's Higher School of Music cut short the revels by blasting a high-intensity sine wave into the auditorium.⁶

Unlike *The Great Digest*, the drama of *Enkyklopaideia* unfolded in a web of secret signs that were hidden from the audience. Many pieces' messages became invisible once the players stripped the sounds of their authors, titles, and program notes. Few could have guessed that Ferrari's catchy number, "Dance des ministres chez G. Pompidou," was a snide commentary on 1960s French politics.⁷ The audience relished Kagel's piece as a joke, but they may have thought otherwise had they known that, according to the composer, the performers' vocalizations portrayed the situation of dissident artists in post-1968 Czechoslovakia.⁸ The implications of the clarinet cantilena were doubly hidden

⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁶ Ibid., 69-70. See also: Marian Wallek-Walewski, "Jesień Warszawska" (*Odra* 12, 1970), reprinted in *Warszawska Jesień w zwierciadle polskiej krytyki muzycznej: Antologia tekstów z lat 1956-2006* (Warsaw: Warszawska Jesień, 2007), 149-150.

⁷ Cieślak, "Zespół 'Warsztat Muzyczny,'" 94.

⁸ Ibid., 97.

within the play of resonant surfaces, for not only was its author concealed during the concert, the piece was tethered to a name that was not its composer's own. Those in the know recognized "Gala Varvarin" as a substitution born from political necessity. Behind the name was Soviet composer Edison Denisov, a problem not for his content—unlike the Kagel, his vaguely twelve-tone clarinet melody pretended to nothing other than abstraction—but because his participation in that year's Warsaw Autumn was a sensitive political issue. Varvarin, maiden name of the composer's wife, shielded him from official view.⁹

By the early 1970s troubles with Soviet musicians were routine, even expected as part of Warsaw Autumn planning. The year 1972 was no different. What surprised organizers was the extent of the intrigue. The Moscow Conservatory Chamber Orchestra failed to materialize, although the group had been promised in lieu of a large symphonic ensemble. The Prokofiev Quartet, in a half recital of Boris Chaikovsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich, became the only Soviet ensemble on the roster that year. Aram Khachaturian and Tikhon Khrennikov counterbalanced this otherwise modest representation. The two appeared with the Silesian Philharmonic—Khrennikov as soloist in his Second Piano Concerto, Khachaturian as conductor of his Second Symphony, a work that had already been heard at the festival in 1956. It would be the first (and last) time Khrennikov was featured at the Warsaw Autumn. As general secretary of the Soviet Composers' Union, Khrennikov wielded great institutional power. Thus when the Polish Ministry of Culture, acting on a Soviet request, urged festival organizers to schedule a

⁹ Olgierd Pisarenko, "Warszawska Jesień," in *50 lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, ed. Ludwik Erhardt (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1995), 188.

concert showcasing Khrennikov's and Khachaturian's works, the Program Commission was in little position to argue. The Silesian Philharmonic was enlisted in late July 1972, after a draft of the program book had already been printed. Reflecting the circumstances, the performance was scheduled for a late afternoon time slot typically reserved for chamber music; the musicians were to be paid directly by the Ministry of Culture rather than from the festival budget.¹⁰

Khrennikov trumpeted Soviet-Polish friendship at one of the festival press conferences.¹¹ A special issue of *Ruch Muzyczny* profiled the Soviet delegation that traveled to Warsaw in late September—just in time for the 1972 Warsaw Autumn.¹² Yet muffled complaints about the Soviet concert also surfaced in the Polish press. A *Ruch Muzyczny* contributor spoke of “disturbing” last minute changes in the festival repertoire, changes all the more worrying for having come from above.¹³ Elsewhere, a reporter alluded to “unforeseen interventions from outside” that revealed the organizers’ lack of power. “There were completely radical changes,” he complained in *Kultura*, one of the publications received by Poland’s political elite. “Different musicians, different program, a completely different concert. Who was behind them? Chance?”¹⁴ Many boycotted the

¹⁰ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. “Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XVI ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’ w roku 1971/72,” 2-3.

¹¹ Archiwum ZKP, Biuletyny prasowe 1966-1977 (brak r. 1975) [uncatalogued document]. Biuletyn nr. 10.

¹² *Ruch Muzyczny* 16/23 (1972), described as a special issue for “the 50th anniversary of the Soviet nation,” 3.

¹³ Mirosław Kondracki, “A na ‘Jesieni’ wiosennie (II),” *Ruch Muzyczny* 16/24 (1972): 10.

¹⁴ Grzegorz Michałski, “Dwie twarze ‘Jesieni’,” *Kultura* (8 October 1972). Besides *Kultura*, in the 1970s the elite received *Signaty*, *Trybuna Ludu*, *Życie Gospodarcze*, and *Polityka*. Jane Leftwich Curry, “Polish Journalists in the Policy Making Process,” in *Background to Crisis: Policy and Politics in Gierek’s Poland* ed. Maurice D. Simon and Roger E. Kanet (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 181.

Silesian Philharmonic performance even though, one witness remembers, Khrennikov was an able pianist and not half-bad as a composer.¹⁵

Had the question only been one of Khrennikov, festival organizers might not have deleted their names from the program book as a sign of protest. Denisov was the other side of the story. A performance of one of his works, planned by a visiting orchestra from Brussels, was cancelled in response to Soviet pressure; this was the same pressure that led Warsztat Muzyczny to devise a subterfuge to allow *Enkyklopaideia* to be presented as planned. The Festival Committee bitterly complained about the incursion into its organizational territory. At a meeting to discuss the 1972 concerts, Kazimierz Serocki described the Khrennikov affair as putting “the festival’s entire profile into question.”¹⁶ It was understood that Soviet bloc countries would rein in their own ensembles, but never before had their influence affected a group from Western Europe. Józef Patkowski could not fathom Soviet motivations, for, he claimed, “Denisov is played everywhere.” The composer’s works “are known and published . . . anyone can play them,” added another member of the Festival Committee.¹⁷ This very promiscuity was part of the problem. Published works could slip across borders, becoming dissociated from a controlling center and used in unforeseeable ways. Never mind that Denisov’s comments in a West German interview had gotten him into trouble during the early 1970s.¹⁸ More was at stake than irritation with a single composer: Soviet authorities had long feared the use of

¹⁵ Olgierd Pisarenko, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 20.

¹⁶ WAF, Protokoły z posiedzeń Komitetu Festiwalowego 1972/73 r., 74 r. [uncatalogued document]. Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego w dniu 8 grudnia 1972, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 278-81.

“unofficial” works as anti-communist propaganda.¹⁹ A MKiS representative reminded the disgruntled organizers that there were “certain situations” related to “cultural co-habitation.”²⁰ In other words: the Warsaw Autumn was important politically, and if a Western ensemble wanted to play a work from Eastern Europe, the suggestion from MKiS was to clear the choice beforehand with the composer’s home country.

Today the Khrennikov affair is cited as a central chapter in festival lore. Commemorative materials call his performance the most political in Warsaw Autumn history; Gala Varvarin’s name still appears in the index of composers printed in each year’s program book.²¹ The tale feeds memories of Polish resistance to Soviet domination and serves as an exemplar of a now bygone age. Olgierd Pisarenko, part of the current Repertoire Commission, remembers being pulled aside during the 1972 festival’s closing banquet to watch one of the organizers destroy a Khrennikov recording.²² His colleague, musicologist Krzysztof Droba, recalls, “I thought this concert was bizarre, something to laugh at. But today I appreciate it as a document *sui generis*. The image is indelible: Khrennikov at the piano . . . looking like Marian Konieczny’s statue of Lenin in the main square at Nowa Huta.”²³ Through the force of time and political change, the machinations of 1972 have become crystallized into a memento of the socialist era.

At the time, Khrennikov’s appearance proved that Cold War obsessions were alive and well. That Denisov could not be named as a contributor to *Enkyklopaideia*

¹⁹ Ibid., 174.

²⁰ WAF, Protokół z zebrania Komitetu Festiwalowego w dniu 8 grudnia 1972, 2.

²¹ *50 lat Warszawskiej Jesieni/50 Years of the Warsaw Autumn*, Związek Kompozytorów Polskich and Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień,” 2007, multimedia DVD.

²² Pisarenko, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .”, 20.

²³ Krzysztof Droba, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 16.

likewise perpetuated Cold War approaches to questions of cultural politics. While the project is now remembered primarily for its role in slipping Denisov's composition past the Polish and Soviet authorities, the way *Enkyklopaideia* was performed at its premiere provided a momentary respite from such divisions. Warsztat Muzyczny presented a utopian view in which identities, politics, and national boundaries might become secondary to aesthetic contemplation and the wills of the performers. If one of the era's foundational tactics was to tie musical styles to the ideologies of particular places, *Enkyklopaideia* denied any easy categorization of its pieces along East-West lines—a strategy that was itself political. This tension—between reinforcing and undermining Cold War culture—loomed ever larger at the Warsaw Autumn during the 1970s. It would come to define the festival in an increasingly postmodern age.

Changes at the Helm

Cold War competition thrived on a Europe split between Soviet and American poles of power and political influence, which gave European integration the potential to counteract binary visions of the globe. Already in 1950, Polish historian Oscar Halecki was challenging notions of East-West division, along with the power differential these designations implied. Not only was the East part of the “real” Europe, he claimed; no full understanding of the forces at work on the continent was possible without considering its third, east-central, region.²⁴ The concept of central Europe gained in potency as opposition movements surged in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland during the late

²⁴ Oscar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 121, 140-41.

1970s. Where Cold War geopolitics traced boundaries, central Europe saw common ways of perceiving and being, a dream of unity at odds with a splintered European reality.²⁵

From the start, the Warsaw Autumn staked a Polish claim to a European identity, one that seemed to be confirmed when the festival was asked to co-sponsor the ISCM World Music Days in 1968. Yet geopolitics soon shattered any illusions of Poland's uncomplicated cultural partnership with the West. Plans for the 1968 festival fell apart with the mobilization of Polish troops to invade Czechoslovakia. Days before the Warsaw Autumn was scheduled to begin, the Swedish section of the ISCM withdrew its participation. A Danish percussion ensemble cancelled its concert, leaving organizers scrambling unsuccessfully to find new performers for works by Serocki and Messiaen. *Musica Viva Pragensis*, a Czechoslovak group specializing in twentieth-century music, was dissolved at the beginning of September, making a festival appearance impossible. Although a handful of Western soloists and conductors traveled to Warsaw, the only foreign ensembles in 1968 came from Bulgaria and the Soviet Union. Neither Heinrich Strobel, then head of the ISCM, nor any members of the ISCM board were present at the festival. Their decision was a source of Polish "surprise" and "regret" since, ZKP and Warsaw Autumn representatives pointed out, the concerts were arranged "in an exceptionally difficult situation, at tremendous organizational cost."²⁶ The ZKP and Warsaw Autumn had long prized their relative autonomy vis-à-vis the Polish cultural authorities, but their independence only went so far. Whatever the motivations of its

²⁵ See, for example; Czesław Miłosz, "About our Europe," in *Between East and West: Writings from Kultura* ed. Robert Kostrzewa (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 99-108; Timothy Garton Ash, "Does Central Europe Exist?" *The New York Review of Books* 33/15 (9 October 1986); and Svetlana Boym, "Europa's Eros" in *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 219-47.

²⁶ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie z XLII Światowego Festiwalu SIMC w Warszawie," 7.

organizers, the Warsaw Autumn had symbolic status as a state institution—a status the ISCM affair underscored. Poland, it turned out, was still ensconced in the Soviet bloc after all.

Détente, *Ostpolitik*, and domestic turmoil recalibrated Poland's place between East and West, making it more integrated with the outside world during the early 1970s, while also reinforcing its status as a socialist nation. The Polish-German treaty of December 1970 finally settled the question of national borders, putting the West German specter to rest and destabilizing one of the rationales underlying Poland's continued dependence on Soviet power. Nearly simultaneously, a wave of strikes in response to price increases brought Władysław Gomułka's reign to a halt. The hopes of the late 1950s were long gone, dissipated through years of stagnation. The Polish road to socialism had done little to solve the problems of a sputtering planned economy. Edward Gierek's solution was to open Poland to the West. Newly installed as PZPR First Secretary, he embarked on an ambitious plan to modernize Polish industry and agriculture through imports of Western machinery and other investment goods, while an influx of Western products was meant to spur domestic consumption. To finance his designs, Gierek relied on high-interest Western loans, which he meant to repay with the profits from increased Polish exports of steel, ships, and coal.²⁷

Gierek's rise seemed to augur a new era of liberalism and prosperity. He cut a dynamic figure in the West and was keenly aware of Poland's image abroad. But the

²⁷ For an overview of the Gierek years, see: Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 351-410; Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History*, 172-236; Ben Slay, *The Polish Economy: Crisis, Reform, and Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 36-49; Keith John Lepak, *Prelude to Solidarity: Poland and the Politics of the Gierek Regime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Maurice D. Simon and Roger F. Kanet, eds., *Background to Crisis: Policy and Politics in Gierek's Poland* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981).

effects of Western recession, domestic mismanagement, and spiraling deficits quickly followed a brief period of rapid growth, triggering an economic collapse that laid the groundwork for the Solidarity strikes of the early 1980s. The profits from Polish exports never materialized, for there was no demand for these goods on the world market. Nor did Gierek's initial openness, any more than his predecessor's, entail jeopardizing the position of the PZPR in Poland or disrupting international relations with the Soviet Union. Sweeping domestic reforms decreased the power of regional officials, thereby cementing the dominance of the political center. Changes in the local administration were joined by revisions to the Polish constitution introduced between 1972 and 1975. Intellectuals and the Church greeted the proposals—particularly those that enshrined the “leading role” of the PZPR and guaranteed “indissoluble fraternal ties” between Poland and the socialist states—with howls of protest.²⁸ In response, the leadership softened the language, but kept the sentiments. The splits of the Cold War would not be overcome so easily.

Change at the top was soon followed by a reconsideration of the Warsaw Autumn. In May 1971, the MKiS municipal board weighed a proposal from the Music Group to turn the festival into a biennial event.²⁹ Despite the precarious financial situation, the board recommended maintaining the Autumn as an annual affair, not only because the concerts were renowned among composers both East and West (with Shostakovich and Khachaturian named specifically), but also because turning the festival into a biennial

²⁸ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 366-67.

²⁹ Archiwum MKiDN, 833/7 (M-I-055). “Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej ‘Warszawska Jesień’,” 21.V.1971 r.

when it had already been running for fifteen years “would surely elicit undesirable commentary in the international press.”³⁰

The matter was discussed at greater length several months later, when the Music Group at MKiS convened a meeting of ministerial officials and festival representatives. Jerzy Gabryś was the mouthpiece for ideas that had first been conveyed to the vice-minister of culture.³¹ From the Music Group’s perspective, the perennial concern was how the festival might promote Polish music abroad while contributing to cultural life at home. And there were worries that the Warsaw Autumn’s image was slipping: for Gabryś the decline of avant-gardism as a source of fascination and the appearance of lackluster reviews in the foreign press were signs that the festival had become stagnant. Moreover, he claimed, the concerts had outlived one of their original functions. When contemporary music festivals were springing up in “both Europes,” the Warsaw Autumn no longer needed to play its role as a space for East-West confrontation.³² Gabryś favored re-imagining the festival to make it less experimental—and thus, to him, less boring. This meant programming more opera and ballet, code in Warsaw Autumn discussions for making the performances less elitist. It entailed retrospective concerts of music by composers of established renown, more reliance on the classics, and generating buzz through the premieres of new Polish works. Most worrying for organizers in the ZKP,

³⁰ Archiwum MKiDN, 833/7 (M-I-055). “Racje przemawiające za utrzymaniem corocznych festiwalu.”

³¹ Archiwum MKiDN, 833/77 (M-I-055). Summary of letter from MKiS Prezydium Kolegium to Vice-Minister of Culture Aleksander Syczewski, 17 June 1971.

³² Archiwum MKiDN, 833/77 (M-I-055). Stenogram z konferencji w sprawie Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień”—zorganizowanej przez Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki—Zespół d/s Muzyki w dniu 16 grudnia 1971 r. w Warszawie, 8.

Gabryś called for more music from the USSR, the Soviet bloc, and the Third World, all in the name of fostering “international friendship.”³³

The composers were wary of any changes that might pull the Warsaw Autumn away from Western Europe. Poland’s political thaw of the mid-1950s—with its narratives of making up for lost time, gaining access to information, and demonstrating cultural difference by turning to the West—had given the festival a clear rationale, one that its organizers intended to maintain. The festival would, without a doubt, remain international. But as the Warsaw Autumn entered the 1970s, the question was asked again: what kinds of connections would its concerts promote? A specifically socialist cohesion? Or would it perpetuate the aesthetics of the post-war avant-garde, in which dissonance and difficulty ostensibly gave composers a common vocabulary, no matter where they happened to be from?

As usual, Lutosławski and Serocki supported keeping the festival tilted in favor of recent composition, especially if these works had a modernist bent. Where Gabryś stressed excellence, Serocki countered that, “the Warsaw Autumn is not a festival of masterpieces. It is a festival of ideas.”³⁴ Larding the repertoire with too many classics, he cautioned, could lead to irreparable harm: “it’s easy to distort something, but very difficult to rebuild it if it has already been lost.”³⁵ In Lutosławski’s view, the classics should not be part of a festival at all, but should figure instead on standard concert programs. As for the suggestion that each day of the festival should highlight the music of a different socialist country, he quipped that, “the festival would then be a festival of

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁵ Ibid., 31.

the Peoples' Democracies and cease to be the Warsaw Autumn."³⁶ In his closing remarks, vice-minister of culture Aleksander Syczewski ended up sympathizing with organizers from the ZKP. He agreed that the festival should remain creative, restless, and exploratory; he cited Brezhnev's thoughts on Poland's central role in European integration.³⁷ For the time being, the Warsaw Autumn would stay an annual event, with its character largely unchanged.

At a time when Poland's political administration was increasingly centralized, the festival's organizational practices continued to run counter to top-down models of bureaucratic control. Talk at MKiS about installing a festival director came to naught, leaving in place the decentralized organizational structure that was established in the early 1960s.³⁸ The Repertoire Commission, comprising ZKP members exclusively, shouldered the bulk of the day-to-day work; the more institutionally diverse Festival Committee met only a few times a year. By the mid-1970s, the commission was toying with abandoning its system of voting on the festival program so that individual members could more easily schedule works that were unlikely to meet with unanimous approval.³⁹ As ever, there were few chances for direct government oversight.

Influencing which performers and repertoire would be featured at the festival concerts was tantamount to shaping what meanings the Warsaw Autumn might convey. The composers and musicologists on the Repertoire Commission jealously guarded their

³⁶ Ibid., 39.

³⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

³⁸ Archiwum MKiDN, "Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień'," 21.V.1971 r.

³⁹ WAF, Protokoły 1974/75 [uncatalogued document]. Protokół z zebrania członków Komisji Programowej 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' w dniu 21.XI.1974.

freedom of action, using festival planning to imagine a world in which politics could be secondary and Cold War constraints a minor annoyance at worst. Zygmunt Krauze, involved with the festival in the 1970s as a composer, performer, and organizer, recalls his years on the commission as ones of near-limitless possibility:

In the end, the money always came through, and it was a decent amount. I say “in the end” because the Ministry of Culture approved our budget rather late. So in practice, we put together the festival program without knowing for sure how much money there would be. But there was always enough. I want to add another important thing: when we were coming up with the festival program, we were always driven by aesthetic concerns, never financial. We created the Warsaw Autumn program according to our musical tastes and not according to a budget. It was like a fairy-tale. When I think about it today, it seems unreal.⁴⁰

Not only was there plenty of money for the festival, Krauze remembers MKiS bureaucrats as being well versed in twentieth-century composition and sympathetic to the organizers’ cause. He stresses: “while today we view the Ministry of Culture through the prism of ideology, meaning that we see it as an entity opposed to the Composers’ Union, at the time there was a large degree of mutual understanding. The Ministry of Culture understood what the Warsaw Autumn was.”⁴¹ With the lone exception of the Khrennikov case in 1972, festival organizers had carte blanche to ignore MKiS proposals. As Krauze puts it:

The Warsaw Autumn Repertoire Commission was an independent body, autonomous in relation to the Ministry of Culture and even the ZKP. . . We were free, and we had free rein over the choice of works and performers. From time to time, we received a suggestion from the Music Department at the Ministry of Culture that there was some piece they wanted us to perform. Our commission was very sensitive on this point, and we rejected these suggestions on principle. There were never any consequences.⁴²

⁴⁰ Interview with Zygmunt Krauze, 6 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland). Quotation authorized 20 July 2009.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Archival documents support Krauze's assertions. In 1976, for example, the Repertoire Commission rejected Cuban works proposed by the BWKZ, citing the music's poor quality as grounds for its disqualification.⁴³ The reaction was just as prickly when it came to Western ensembles specializing in standard repertoire. An agency that arranged tours for American choirs, bands, and orchestras was rebuked with a typical reply: "our festival is concerned only with avant-garde music."⁴⁴

Jan Stęszewski, head of the ZKP from 1973 to 1979, has mused that the near-total absence of PZPR members in the union leadership was a source of leverage when it came to negotiating with government officials. The ZKP could not be controlled by demands for Party discipline when so few in its ranks were Party members.⁴⁵ The independence of the ZKP rubbed off on the committees responsible for Warsaw Autumn planning. But it was not only a dearth of PZPR influence that gave festival organizers bargaining power well into the 1970s. As much as the festival needed government approval of its funding, repertoire, and ensembles, Polish authorities depended on the Warsaw Autumn to maintain Poland's image abroad. For festival organizers this dependence could be productive, gaining Warsaw Autumn participants access not only to less tangible realms of art and inner subjective experience, but also to goods that were increasingly scarce in Polish state-run shops as the 1970s dragged on: applications for the meat, coffee, and alcohol served at festival functions never failed to mention the Autumn's international

⁴³ Archiwum ZKP, 47/2. Letter from Józef Patkowski to MKiS BWKZ, 23 July 1976.

⁴⁴ Archiwum ZKP, 11/71. Letter from Warsaw Autumn Festival Office to Council on Intercultural Relations, 21 November 1974.

⁴⁵ Jan Stęszewski, "Między Bachem a Tejchmą," in *50 lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, ed. Ludwik Erhardt (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1995), 116-17.

status.⁴⁶ Paradoxically, the freedom of festival organizers to act as if politics were merely incidental was buttressed by the persistence of Cold War concerns.

Not everyone, however, was pleased with the festival's resistance to change, especially when it came to the crafting of concert programs. Tadeusz Baird, among the Warsaw Autumn's initiators, stopped working on the Repertoire Commission in 1969. As he explained in a 1971 interview: "like everything past the first blush of youth, the festival has sunk into the monotony of everyday life. . . . The Warsaw Autumn's conceptual-organizational model, which served the festival well during its first decade, has become outdated. . . . There is an urgent need to change the festival, to come up with new ways of choosing the repertoire."⁴⁷ For Baird, the original formula—an overview of recent composition, paired with a dose of the contemporary classics—was no longer working. When his calls for change fell on deaf ears, he submitted his resignation.

Baird was the first to leave the Repertoire Commission. Others soon followed, disrupting an organizational core that had remained stable for over a decade. Kazimierz Serocki lasted until 1973; Lutosławski and Włodzimierz Kotoński left a year later, not to return until the early 1980s. Composers typically quit not out of frustration, but to spend more time on their own work. As an active commission member until 1991, Józef Patkowski was a source of institutional continuity in the face of transition. If the earlier group consisted of a small number of composers and musicologists who were involved with the festival continuously for extended periods of time, the Repertoire Commission

⁴⁶ Archiwum ZKP, 29/5. Letter from Warsaw Autumn Festival Office to Społem WSS in Warsaw, 1 August 1976; letter from Festival Committee to Izabela Karwacińska-Rutkowska (vice-mayor of Warsaw), 29 August 1977; and letter from Warsaw Autumn Festival Committee to the board of Społem WSS in Warsaw, 9 September 1977.

⁴⁷ Janusz Cegieła, *Szkice do autoportretu polskiej muzyki współczesnej* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1976), 23-24.

Patkowski led starting in 1974 was larger and less stable.⁴⁸ By decade's end, the ranks had swelled from six to twelve members. Among them was musicologist Tadeusz Kaczyński, who was, like Patkowski, an ardent promoter of postwar Polish music. The composers brought with them an eclectic range of interests, from Krauze, then cultivating an idiosyncratic brand of minimalism, to Bogusław Schaeffer, the most faithful Polish adherent to avant-garde ideals. There was also Wojciech Kilar (b. 1932), not only born within a year of Penderecki and Górecki, but who was, like them, shifting to traditional conceptions of form and consonance after shedding his youthful sonoristic skin.⁴⁹

Unlike their predecessors, this wave of organizers joined the Repertoire Commission with international careers that were already thriving—careers that were shaped by the festival itself. Warsaw Autumn representatives were still sent to new music events in Aix-en-Provence, Barcelona, and Zagreb. Or they might attend the old standbys: the Holland Festival, Darmstadt summer courses, concerts in Donaueschingen.⁵⁰ Personal connections were the engine that drove Warsaw Autumn planning, as indeed they always had been. By this time, however, trips to sister events were less of an urgent necessity, since Polish musicians were integrated into the cultural life of the West to a degree unimaginable when the festival first began. Rarely was there full attendance at Repertoire Commission meetings: too many of its members lived and worked abroad for

⁴⁸ WAF, Protokół z zebrania członków Komisji Programowej 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' w dniu 21.XI.1974.

⁴⁹ Kaczyński and Krauze were both on the commission from 1970 to 1981; Kilar served from 1975 to 1981 and Schaeffer from 1975 to 1980. Along with Patkowski, other members of the Repertoire Commission in the 1970s were: Kazimierz Nowacki (1966-81), Tomasz Sikorski (1966-74), Andrzej Markowski (1971-81), Bohdan Pociąg (1971), Augustyn Bloch (1974-93), Krzysztof Meyer (1975-86), Marek Stachowski (1975-95), Jerzy Maksymiuk (1978-86), and Eugeniusz Knapik (1979-89).

⁵⁰ WAF, Protokoły Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" od 1975 do 1978 [uncatalogued document]. Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Programowej w dniu 4 października 1976 r.; and WAF, Sprawozdania z Komisji Programowych [uncatalogued document], Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Programowej w dniu 17 października 1979 r.

months at a time, an ability to live in two worlds that was beyond the realm of possibility for average Polish citizens.

New commission members began their work with more than just a web of contacts they could exploit in festival planning: they brought memories of the Warsaw Autumn with them as well. This is not to say that the past did not affect the festival during its earliest years. Far from it—the first Autumns, in some respects, were protracted exercises in forgetting, meant to exorcise the recollection of what had come before. In other ways, the festival marked the persistence of memory, since reminiscences of Stalinism were part of what gave early Warsaw Autumns their meaning. Cold War understandings of constraint and possibility became part of the festival’s legacy both for its first organizers and for the generations that followed. Yet the memories of those who joined the Repertoire Commission in the 1970s were colored just as much by the excitement of youth and first performances: all of the new members participated in the festival as composers, conductors, or critics prior to embarking on their organizational roles. Not only could they remember the past that came before the festival, they also had memories of festivals past. The Warsaw Autumn had given its organizers a sense of institutional and personal history.

In Search of the Real

As a young composer attending his first Autumns in the 1970s, current festival director Tadeusz Wielecki made discoveries that went beyond the sounds that he heard. The concerts “gave me a feeling of being connected to world culture,” he recalls, “and

the bliss of certainty, knowing that I was at the center of things.”⁵¹ Through the festival Wielecki came to understand twentieth-century music and himself, imagining an identity that transcended nation and region. Musicologist Andrzej Chłopecki, also currently involved in repertoire planning, learned similar lessons from festival events. For him the Warsaw Autumn was “at the center of something larger than itself, that brought together thought, commentary, criticism, and books—the whole package of musical modernity.”⁵² Beneath these affirmations is a subtext of insecurity: that culture might have centers and peripheries; that modernity might appear only in a particular guise. Repertoire choices were one attempt to quell these anxieties. The paths organizers cut through the landscape of twentieth-century music constituted a form of historiography, in which ways of interpreting the present and remembering the past articulated ideas about identity, community, and what it meant to be modern. For its participants, the Warsaw Autumn perspective promised an interface between local and global understandings of twentieth-century music—this was the message Wielecki and Chłopecki took from the festival experiences of their youth.

Historical consciousness was built into the Warsaw Autumn’s foundations: one of its initial goals was to make up for lost time, an objective implying not only that such a time had once existed, but also that there was agreement as to what counted as musical progress. The modernist aesthetics inherent to this project marked Poland as sharing the concerns that drove cultural reconstruction throughout postwar Europe, most notably in Germany. And the past, it seemed, was easily recovered. By the end of the 1960s, festival

⁵¹ Tadeusz Wielecki, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 27.

⁵² Andrzej Chłopecki, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .” *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 26.

organizers declared this project a mission accomplished and announced their intent to focus more narrowly on the present day.⁵³

Grasping the present in its entirety proved to be a challenge. A neatly divided concert schedule defined and limited the perspective on twentieth-century music a festival listener was liable to hear. Chamber groups and soloists had their recitals in the afternoon, while evening concerts kept symphonic composition on life support. Experimental music had its own time-slot, in the performances that took place under a cover of late-night darkness—proof that the avant-garde was, by this time, thoroughly conventional. This tripartite structure sustained categorical notions of what concerts, ensembles, and serious music might be. Rarely did festival events break out of a standard format; it was even less common for such performances to be well received in the domestic musical press. The first festival attempt to subvert generic boundaries was a 1974 concert by Agitation Free, a rock group from West Berlin—whose performance was so poor it killed any hopes of staging a similar event in the near future. *Ruch Muzyczny* dubbed the affair a “wasted opportunity” to rejuvenate a Warsaw Autumn ailing from its inability to incorporate avant-garde jazz and rock.⁵⁴ Doubtful responses also met that year’s venture into multimedia, in which visuals by filmmaker Kazimierz Urbański were paired with a collective improvisation by Grupa KEW (an electroacoustic ensemble

⁵³ Tadeusz Kaczyński and Andrzej Zborski, *Warszawska Jesień-Warsaw Autumn* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1983), 10.

⁵⁴ Andrzej Trzaskowski, “Zmarnowana szansa,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 18/22 (1974): 17-18.

comprising the young composers Krzysztof Knittel, Elżbieta Sikora, and Wojciech Michniewski).⁵⁵

The feelings of connectedness Wielecki evokes in his recollections sprang from his conviction that the festival was comprehensive in its presentation of “internationally important” musical phenomena.⁵⁶ But not everything was there in equal measure: the festival roster tended to highlight compositional trends that would forge alliances with the West while confirming the centrality of Polish aesthetics. One 1977 reviewer, for example, lamented the absence of Brian Ferneyhough (b. 1943), an English composer who had recently begun lecturing at the Darmstadt summer courses, but would not be featured at the Warsaw Autumn until the mid-1980s.⁵⁷ It is not surprising that the arcane complexity of Ferneyhough’s modernist aesthetic held little attraction for the Repertoire Commission at the time, when so many of its members were simplifying their own compositional languages and experimenting with modes of direct emotional expression. Equally unsurprising is that American George Crumb (b. 1929) started to be a force at the Warsaw Autumn by decade’s end. Crumb was first heard at the 1972 festival, in a presentation of his orchestral piece *Echoes of Time and the River. Black Angels* for electronically amplified string quartet followed in 1975, and the two years after that saw a spate of Crumb performances, including his *Madrigals* and *Makrokosmos* I, II, and III. The draw for Polish reviewers was Crumb’s crooked lyricism, the theatricality that critic

⁵⁵ Ludwik Erhardt, Tadeusz Kaczyński, Władysław Malinowski, and Tadeusz A. Zieliński, “Drugi poemat tajemny grupy KEW i Urbańskiego,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 18/23 (1974): 9-10.

⁵⁶ Tadeusz Wielecki, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .”, 27.

⁵⁷ Józef Kański, “Barwy ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni,’” *Trybuna Ludu* (6 October 1977).

Jerzy Jaroszewicz called a “specific contemporary expressionism.”⁵⁸ *Ruch Muzyczny* lauded the composer’s “sonoristic experiments” and the accessibility of his symbolic world for a broad new music audience.⁵⁹ Emotionality, sensitivity to timbre, audience appeal—the qualities critics discovered in Crumb were the same ones they had been claiming for Polish composers since the early 1960s.

Making the Warsaw Autumn contemporary (in the sense that it would highlight music of the time) bound the festival tightly to its particular set of historical circumstances, a dangerous strategy when the present was found wanting. This project was viewed in some corners as doomed from the start: one writer likened the annual concerts to an attempt to mythologize the present day by those who were living through it, an act he described as lying somewhere between erecting a monument and gazing into a funhouse mirror. In either case, distortion was the inevitable result.⁶⁰ Others heard historical breakdown in the eclecticism of the festival repertoire. Whatever its limitations, the narratives of progress inherent in postwar modernism had at least provided its followers with a sense of direction. Although most Polish critics welcomed the challenges to the Western European avant-garde that were posed by works like the *St. Luke Passion*, some found themselves confronting feelings of unreality when they encountered the music of the early 1970s. The concept of new music, Jaroszewicz complained, had grown to encompass such a wide array of techniques that it no longer signified anything at all. He longed for a codification of musical style that might provide

⁵⁸ Jerzy Jaroszewicz, “Odtwórcy górą,” *Perspektywy* (30 September 1977).

⁵⁹ Krzysztof Baculewski, “Crumb: Madrygały, Makrokosmos II,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 21/22 (1977): 5.

⁶⁰ Wacław Panek, “Jesień i złudzenia,” *Kultura* (6 October 1974), 12.

stability to an uncertain present.⁶¹ Olgierd Pisarenko had no illusions that an artistic canon would be returning anytime soon; for him, the days when compositional systems could be considered normative or universal were “a paradise that has been lost forever.”⁶² Then a member of the Repertoire Commission, musicologist Tadeusz Kaczyński showed a similar pessimism when he declared the “second avant-garde” of the 1970s dead on arrival. “No such avant-garde exists,” he huffed after the 1974 Warsaw Autumn. “There was only dabbling in various trends: pop-art, collage, folklore.”⁶³ Cut off from a sense of teleological inevitability, music composition seemed, to these observers, to be drifting toward an unknown future.

Yet more than uncertainty, it was boredom that most afflicted festival listeners during the early 1970s. John Cage’s highly anticipated 1972 visit ended up eliciting barely a yawn from the audience, “bored to death” by the Merce Cunningham ballet ensemble—until, that is, the reliably colorful critic Jerzy Waldorff broke the monotony by causing a scandal.⁶⁴ It was the same story two years later, when journalist Lucjan Kydryński wrote: “the dominant characteristic of this year’s Warsaw Autumn was boredom, a conscious, intentional, programmatic, and provocative boredom . . . but boredom does not always have to provoke, most often it simply is boring.”⁶⁵ The repertoire was so uniformly tedious that another reporter christened the 1974 concerts the “festival of lowered expectations.”⁶⁶ Only soprano Cathy Berberian (1925-83) made

⁶¹ Jerzy Jaroszewicz, “Jesienne narzekania,” *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (8 October 1972).

⁶² Olgierd Pisarenko, “Znów Jesień,” *Literatura* (12 October 1972).

⁶³ Tadeusz Kaczyński, “Spokojna ‘Jesień’,” *Sztandar Młodych* (3 October 1974).

⁶⁴ Olgierd Pisarenko, “Znów Jesień.”

⁶⁵ Lucjan Kydryński, “Tęsknota za Puszkinem . . .,” *Przekrój* (13 October 1974): 9.

⁶⁶ Tadeusz Szyłłejko, “Muzyka zmęczenia,” *Literatura* (10 October 1974).

navigating an eclectic present seem even remotely enjoyable. Her recitals were a critical splash, for she offered her listeners pleasure, something that typically was in short supply at festival concerts. Reviewers luxuriated in the sound of her voice and mimetic facility, momentarily forgetting one of the Warsaw Autumn's maxims: that it showcased pieces of music, not virtuosic musicians. She was a "phenomenon," Waldorff gushed in 1974, "one of those performers who, even if you gave them nothing but a comb to play on, would produce a masterpiece of artistic interpretation."⁶⁷ A later reviewer extolled the intertwining of serious and popular genres in Berberian's 1977 recital, "From Monteverdi to the Beatles," claiming that it captured the essence of the cultural moment.⁶⁸

Berberian was sensitive to the needs of her audiences, as she explained in a letter to the festival office: "I prefer to alternate extreme avant-garde with more relaxed semi-modern pieces . . . My personal experience has taught me to avoid saturation of the ear (and mind) in the receptivity of the audience—because it is so detrimental to the pieces that are performed after the saturation level has been reached."⁶⁹ Similar concessions to listener perception were rarely made elsewhere in the program, and some proponents of the Warsaw Autumn format intimated that the pursuit of sonic delight was inimical to achieving a more sober goal: the dissemination of musical knowledge. Journalist Tadeusz Szyłłejko counseled his readers that the festival did not exist solely to gratify them. "We expect something more from it," he asserted, that something being "information on the styles, trends, endeavors, tendencies and mistakes in contemporary music." Szyłłejko's

⁶⁷ Jerzy Waldorff, "Kompromitacja staruszki," *Polityka* 18/40 (1974), 8.

⁶⁸ Tadeusz Kaczyński, "Od Monteverdiego do Beatlesów," *Ruch Muzyczny* 21/24 (1977): 12.

⁶⁹ Archiwum ZKP, 25/6. Letter from Cathy Berberian to Maria Kłopotowska (Secretary, Warsaw Autumn Festival Office), June 1974.

logic led him to a paradoxical conclusion: that the snooze-worthy 1974 festival may have been more valuable than times when the concerts met with general acclaim, because, he reasoned, “perhaps it offered us more truth about music than many of the previous festivals, when the brilliance of the famous, extraordinary works overshadowed the rest of the pieces on the program.”⁷⁰ The day-to-day reality of musical life, he implied, was tarnished; its truth lay in what was typical, not atypical. If objectivity was the aim of festival repertoire, then that meant accepting the inevitable appearance of mediocrity.

Szyłłejko was picking up on a line of argument dear to many organizers: that the Warsaw Autumn’s role was to exhibit the current state of music, warts and all. Tadeusz Baird defended the Repertoire Commission’s work in these terms, stating that the festival “attempts to show the face of contemporary music as it truly is at the present moment, or like it was a year or two ago at most. If that visage is not glamorous enough, or if it disappoints someone, maybe that is the fault of the music itself, not the organizers.”⁷¹ Lutosławski also deployed this trope, saying that the festival presented contemporary music “as it is, without embellishments, and without artificially selecting the most successful items or the most convincing trends.”⁷² These statements at first seem to be little more than the apotheosis of a long-familiar notion in Warsaw Autumn reception: that the concerts were a neutral space for aesthetic confrontation, in which organizers made a wide variety of music available while simultaneously disavowing any responsibility as to how these pieces might be interpreted. They can also be read as an attempt to deflect blame from the Repertoire Commission, rendering its choices

⁷⁰ Szyłłejko, “Muzyka zmęczenia.”

⁷¹ Cegiełła, *Szkice do autoportretu polskiej muzyki współczesnej*, 23.

⁷² Szyłłejko, “Muzyka zmęczenia.”

unassailable. But in 1970s Poland these words had an additional edge, for Baird and Lutosławski cast commission members as champions of an unvarnished reality when such depictions were becoming increasingly rare in the Polish media.

Censorship had been a fact of life for centuries by the time the GUKPPiW (Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications, and Public Performances) was founded in 1946. With branches throughout the country, the Main Office for Control lay at the center of a bureaucracy whose aim was to engineer how Poles perceived their world, an endeavor that, like many things in socialist-era Poland, waxed and waned in response to political and social change. The relative weakness of the Party in the immediate postwar period subdued the power of censors, who were typically women with few employable skills. During the Gomułka era of the 1960s, information control was part of a game of competing interests: journalists negotiated the demands of Party officials within a context ruled by an unpredictable Main Office for Control, which was free to make its own regulations. The leadership's ambivalence when it came to media oversight meant that limited differences of opinion could find their way to publication, a state of affairs that ceased after Gierek came to power in December 1970.

Poland's censorship apparatus reached a baroque level of complexity and artifice in the Gierek era. An army of office workers kept an eye on everything from business cards to theater performances; anything published in the official media had to conform to the interpretations of history and current events that were approved by the political center. Merging *RSW Prasa*, the state publishing agency, with the *Ruch* distribution network and the *Książka i Wiedza* publishing enterprise gave the PZPR tremendous power over access to information—one estimate indicates that between 85 to 92 percent

of all press circulation was under Party control by decade's end.⁷³ A sprawling list of taboo topics explained away social problems, obscured the Church's role in Polish culture, and silenced memories of Soviet brutality and Polish resistance in World War II. In the face of economic disaster, the media was saturated with the "propaganda of success" that lauded Polish achievements on the basis of falsified data. There was no mention of the shortages, low-quality goods, and myriad difficulties plaguing the lives of those who were not well placed in the PZPR bureaucracy. There was only a pervasive sense of unreality as the world depicted in the press departed ever further from the daily experiences of the majority of the population. The classified documents that Tomasz Strzyżewski, a censor at the Kraków Main Office for Control, smuggled to Sweden in 1977 began to reveal the extent of the misinformation that was passed off as reality in the Polish media. First published in England, the documents were returned to Poland where they were circulated by the independent press in 1978.⁷⁴

Poland in the seventies was marked by a heightened sensitivity to veracity and falsehood. Ironically, Gierek's tenure had begun amidst a call for the public expression of unspoken truths: among society's demands after the strikes of December 1970 were freedom of speech and access to uncensored information.⁷⁵ These demands continued to have political significance into the 1980s, when they became a cornerstone of Solidarity's platform. The idea of open expression carried no less weight in the cultural sphere, where

⁷³ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 364-65.

⁷⁴ The documents were first published as: *Czarna księga cenzury PRL* (Uppsala, London: ANEKS—Polish Political Quarterly, 1977-1978). This was the volume that was reprinted by NOWa (Independent Publishing House), the first underground press in socialist Poland. In English, the documents are available as: *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*, trans. and ed. Jane Leftwich Curry (New York: Random House, 1984). I have relied on the English-language version as the basis of my discussion above.

⁷⁵ Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism*, 191.

artists, writers, and musicians reacted in various ways to the pressures of the censored world. While artists adopted the visual trappings of Western postmodernism, their work did not employ these elements with the aim of political critique. Polish art of the 1970s was politically neutral or, at the most, “pseudo-critical.”⁷⁶ With non-involvement came palpable rewards, not least the absence of any censorship besides that imposed by visual artists on themselves. Writers were at the opposite extreme. Among the most politically minded cultural figures, they were also the most closely scrutinized by the censor (with the filmmakers not far behind). After a fresh wave of strikes in 1976, authors critical of the regime increasingly found a home for their work in émigré publishing houses or in the burgeoning unofficial press.⁷⁷ Poet Stanisław Barańczak was soon referring to official cultural life as a “dead façade,” sapped of the vitality infusing independent books, periodicals, and photographs.⁷⁸ His metaphor implies more than torpor, for the word “façade” points to that which is constructed, artificial, a pretense. Not only was the façade of official culture lifeless, Barańczak was saying—it was also a lie.

Thus when proponents of the Warsaw Autumn spoke of presenting contemporary music “as it is,” without any embellishments that might obscure a disappointing aesthetic reality, their statements set in motion a host of associations that went far beyond the festival concerts. Music was in between literature and the visual arts when it came to negotiating official censorship during the 1970s. Composers and musicologists were not

⁷⁶ Piotr Piotrowski, “Post-modernism and Post-totalitarianism: The Poland Case of the 1970s,” *Ars* 2-3 (1993), 241.

⁷⁷ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 383-85; 398-99.

⁷⁸ Stanisław Barańczak, “Behind the Façade (1977),” in *For Your Freedom and Ours: Polish Progressive Spirit from the 14th Century to the Present*, 2nd ed.; ed. Krystyna M. Olszer (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 327-30.

as closely watched as writers, but neither was the Repertoire Commission's work entirely depoliticized. Although many pieces on the festival roster lacked overt political messages, the way the repertoire was put together and subsequently explained was relevant in an environment marked by unreliable official sources of information. The value of a bad Warsaw Autumn, then, was not that it was boring and featured mediocre music, but that these things hinted at an imperfect, uncensored view of the world that otherwise found little expression in the state-run media. There could be, festival organizers implied, a sort of truth in tedium.

Past Present

Warsaw Autumn planners, however, were not solely in the business of reflecting a bleak present; they also sought to shape the future and filter the past, and it is here that hopes for Polish integration with the West were most forcefully articulated through repertoire decisions. Casting the festival as an unbiased purveyor of information was a source of power for its architects, but this same strategy could be limiting if it kept the Autumn in a passive state, mirroring trends and information from abroad without making its own contributions. To raise their status in the new music world, organizers began looking for ways to commission pieces for Warsaw Autumn premieres. The Repertoire Commission at first considered approaching only Western composers; their 1975 wish list included some of the big names in the avant-garde establishment (Berio, Ligeti, Stockhausen), but mainly focused on those who defined themselves against it (like

Crumb, Feldman, and Nørgård).⁷⁹ As the discussion continued in subsequent years, the pool of potential composers expanded to include Poland's big three (Lutosławski, Górecki, Penderecki)⁸⁰ and politically sensitive figures from the East, including perennial favorite Edison Denisov and the Czech composer Marek Kopelent, whose works were banned in his home country with the advent of political normalization after the Prague Spring.⁸¹ When the ZKP pitched the idea to MKiS in 1977, a project that could have moved away from supporting the postwar avant-garde ended up reinforcing its dominance. The proposal to commission works from Nono, Xenakis, and Stockhausen venerated composers who not only impacted Polish music in the early 1960s, but also had become thoroughly institutionalized in contemporary music circles.⁸²

Although the aim was to generate new pieces, it was not to discover new composers, who did not have the name recognition to burnish the festival's luster. Neither was the goal precisely to attract Western composers, whose works were regularly performed at festival concerts and for whom payment in złoty, Poland's nonconvertible currency, was hardly a compelling incentive. The motive behind engaging composers like Nono, Stockhausen, and Xenakis was to broadcast that the Warsaw Autumn was not just

⁷⁹ WAF, Protokoły Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" od 1975 do 1978 [uncatalogued document]. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" 15.X.1975 r.; Protokół z zebrania Komisji Programowej Festiwalu "Warszawskiej Jesieni" 22.X.1975 r.

⁸⁰ WAF, Sprawozdania z Komisji Programowych 1979/80 [uncatalogued document]. Sprawozdanie z zebrania Komisji Programowej w dniu 3 października 1979 r. When the commission voted to decide which composers they would ask to write something for the 25th anniversary festival in 1981, Lutosławski came in first (5 votes), with Penderecki, Boulez, Nono, Stockhausen, Ligeti, and Crumb close behind (4 votes each). 6 commission members were present at this meeting: Augustyn Bloch, Tadeusz Kaczyński, Wojciech Kilar, Krzysztof Meyer, Kazimierz Nowacki, and Józef Patkowski.

⁸¹ WAF, Protokoły Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" od 1975 do 1978 [uncatalogued document]. Protokół z zebrania Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" w dniu 11 listopada 1976 r.

⁸² Archiwum ZKP, 47/2. Letter from Jan Szczerwski (president, ZKP) and Władysław Słowiński (general secretary, ZKP) to Aleksander Syczewski (Minister of Culture), 11 March 1977.

a second-tier, regional affair—a message that could have been sent if the project had been approved. Financial concerns surely played a role in thwarting organizers' ambitions to turn the festival into a commissioning power, for at a moment when the Polish government was lurching toward bankruptcy, the Festival Committee sought to add an additional 400,000 zł to the Warsaw Autumn budget.⁸³ Even during the flush early 1970s, the budget never totaled more than 1,500,000 zł annually. MKiS did not allocate resources to fund commissions until 1980, in time for the festival's twenty-fifth jubilee. The spirit of Cold War comparison and national promotion lived in its decision to grant commissions to four composers—two from Poland, another from the West, and the fourth from a socialist country, terms of engagement that had been in force since the Warsaw Autumn began.⁸⁴

The Repertoire Commission had more success resurrecting the past than it did sponsoring the works of the future. Despite talk of making the Warsaw Autumn contemporary, its concerts were more consciously retrospective in the 1970s than a decade earlier, when organizers had been wary of making the festival a vehicle of commemoration. Now, heroes of twentieth-century composition began to be honored with retrospective concerts of their works; festival performances exhumed progenitors of the postwar avant-garde, even as composers on both sides of the Cold War divide were starting to critique its adulation of abstraction and technological progress. The past did active work in the present, as it had in Poland for decades: Patrice Dabrowski contends that commemorations venerating Polish cultural figures and historical events helped to

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Archiwum ZKP, 47/2. Letter from Michał Kabata (vice-director, MKiS Department of Music, Theater and the Stage) to the Warsaw Autumn Festival, 23 July 1980.

forge a shared national identity during the early twentieth century, a period when the Polish state did not exist.⁸⁵ While these celebrations focused on events with local significance and thereby cemented a sense of national belonging, playing music from the past at the Warsaw Autumn was a way to link musical life in Poland with an international community, one whose history was the strand of twentieth-century composition that ran from modernism to postmodernism.

When festival organizers went digging for the roots of the postwar avant-garde, they did more than discover similar ancestors to those that were being uncovered in the West. Merely having works by Charles Ives, the futurists, or Erik Satie on the festival roster only went so far when it came to cultivating a shared perspective on twentieth-century music history. Culture also came from planting the seeds for a common understanding as to what these composers and their music could mean. Thus Polish critics described Charles Ives not as he would have seen himself—as continuing a nineteenth-century symphonic tradition—but as a maverick who presaged American experimentalism. After hearing the Piano Sonata no. 2, *Concord, Mass., 1840-60*; Symphony no. 4; and selections from the *114 Songs* at the 1972 Warsaw Autumn, one reviewer exclaimed that although Ives was cut off from the contemporary music culture of his time, some of his works “fully anticipate the achievements of the postwar avant-garde.”⁸⁶ Mirosław Kondracki hailed Ives as the “greatest musical innovator besides Cage,” one who, drawing sustenance from Thoreau’s concept of civil disobedience, was able “to carry out his politically oppositional and musically iconoclastic activity in an

⁸⁵ Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ Pisarenko, “Znów Jesień.”

environment that was completely hostile and which did not understand him.”⁸⁷ In Europe, Ives had been viewed as a precursor at least since the 1950s, when the notion of an American experimental tradition was promulgated at Darmstadt.⁸⁸ Composer Henry Cowell promoted Ives as representing a stubborn brand of American individualism—an idea that, David Paul argues, was inextricably entangled with Cold War culture.⁸⁹ Ives, then, was not reinterpreted when his music came to the Warsaw Autumn: along with his compositions came established notions about his place in a twentieth-century pantheon, notions that were adopted by the Polish musical press and subsequently disseminated to festival audiences.

Listening to works by Satie and the futurists at the 1974 festival gave commentators a chance to connect Polish culture to the avant-garde movements of the past. That year, the West Berlin duo Ensemble 4’33” gave a half-recital of music and manifestos by the Italian futurists, along with a dash of Dada in the form of a work by Marcel Duchamp. No Polish futurists were on this concert program, but they were in the program book, written into an essay meant to give spectators a context for the sights and sounds they encountered during the performance. The text explained that futurist aims to change art and life resonated only in Italy, Russia, and Poland, all places where technological innovation was more a dream than a reality in the early years of the

⁸⁷ Mirosław Kondracki, “A na jesieni wiosennie,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 16/22 (1972): 4-5.

⁸⁸ Amy C. Beal, “Negotiating Cultural Allies: American Music in Darmstadt, 1946-1956,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/1 (2000): 105-39.

⁸⁹ David C. Paul, “From American Ethnographer to Cold War Icon: Charles Ives through the Eyes of Henry and Sidney Cowell,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59/2 (2006): 399-457.

twentieth century.⁹⁰ Whereas futurism connected interwar Polish artists to their Italian and Russian counterparts, Satie made festival reviewers imagine links between *fin-de-siècle* Paris and 1970s Warsaw: Marek Wieroński, for one, heard parallels between the piano works played by Reinbert de Leeuw and recent compositions by Górecki and Krauze.⁹¹

The irony was that by enshrining iconoclastic artistic movements as forerunners to the postwar avant-garde, the Warsaw Autumn helped to absorb these artists into the very cultural institutions and traditions they had sought to dismantle. But the festival project had always been less about rupture (unless the break was with Stalinism) than about building a home for a modern music culture, defined according to Western terms. Institutionalizing avant-gardes from the early twentieth century was just another way the Warsaw Autumn integrated Poland into trends that were in force elsewhere during the 1970s: Andreas Huyssen, for example, asserts that a similar yearning for tradition and continuity with the interwar period underlay postmodernism in American literature, the visual arts, and architecture.⁹²

Just as a breakdown in linear notions of progress accompanied Western postmodernism, the commemoration of avant-garde origins at the Warsaw Autumn fostered similar critiques of conventional evolutionary wisdom when works from the past echoed music of the present day. In 1974, a twelve-hour performance of Satie's

⁹⁰ Krzysztof Baculewski, program note on Futurism, in *XVIII Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej 'Warszawska Jesień'* Warszawa 21-29 września 1974 (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1974), 81-4.

⁹¹ Marek Wieroński, " 'Zmęczeni' muzyką," *Argumenty* (27 October 1974).

⁹² Andreas Huyssen, "The Search for Tradition: Avant-garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 160-77.

Vexations was likened to the experience of hearing postwar compositions that were static and contemplative, most notably Stockhausen's *Stimmung*, which also was featured at the festival that year. "Satie," wrote musicologist Tadeusz Kaczyński, "turned out to be a close cousin of today's avant-gardists, who are trying to hold back what used to be the most essential element in music—motion."⁹³ Another critic said that compared to the Stockhausen, Satie's *Vexations* "has its beauty and didactic sense. We were able to recall that no avant-garde comes from nowhere."⁹⁴ When it came to the futurists, observers heard their works as analogous to postwar attempts at audience provocation. One reviewer described the concert as a "good lesson," since it demonstrated not only that the arsenal of techniques for antagonizing listeners was very small, but also that audiences in earlier years had responded seriously to this kind of music mostly through their ignorance.⁹⁵ For critic Jerzy Waldorff, the futurists discredited postwar claims of stylistic innovation, since "everything that is hailed as a formidable novelty by today's avant-garde already existed then."⁹⁶ The past, it seemed, was inescapable, even for those who had sought to outrun it.

Jettisoning history, though, was the last thing on the festival organizers' minds. Despite Lutosławski's assertion that it was "high time" the classics were played alongside Beethoven on the radio and throughout the regular concert season, these works continued

⁹³ Kaczyński, "Spokojna 'Jesień'."

⁹⁴ Szyłłejko, "Muzyka zmęczenia."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Jerzy Waldorff, "Kompromitacja staruszki," 8.

to appear on Warsaw Autumn programs.⁹⁷ Still a member of the Repertoire Commission, Olgierd Pisarenko has described this effort in canonical terms. “A certain canon of twentieth-century music operated in the festival programs until the 1990s,” he said in 2007. This canon elevated Bartók, Stravinsky, the Second Viennese School, Szymanowski, Prokofiev, and Ives, but excluded composers like Britten, whose compositional strategies were considered to be “a sort of compromise with the past.”⁹⁸ With the exception of Szymanowski, who barely figures in accounts of twentieth-century music from outside Poland, Pisarenko’s luminaries are textbook-standard.⁹⁹ Focusing on these composers at early festivals was informational, for while there was limited access to scores and recordings, performances of their music had been rare indeed. By 1970, there was little need to acquaint audiences with twentieth-century classics, many of which had already been performed under Warsaw Autumn auspices. This music had now begun to do something else—to serve as a mode of remembering.

What composers were celebrated, and how, articulated notions of community while at the same time exposing the limits to Polish integration with Western music circles defined according to avant-garde ideals. Polish composition continued to serve a commemorative purpose at the festival when it came to celebrating anniversaries of the Polish People’s Republic: the inaugural concert in 1974 marked thirty years of socialist

⁹⁷ Archiwum MKiDN, 833/77 (M-I-055). Stenogram z konferencji w sprawie Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień” – zorganizowanej przez Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki – Zespół d/s Muzyki w dniu 16 grudnia 1971 r. w Warszawie, 40.

⁹⁸ Pisarenko, “Pamiętam, była Jesień . . .”, 22.

⁹⁹ Glenn Watkins, for example, gives Szymanowski barely a sentence in his survey of twentieth-century music. See his *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer, 1995), 618. Szymanowski fares better in Robert Morgan’s account, where he gets two pages in a chapter titled, tellingly, “Other Europeans.” See: Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), 263–64.

rule by showcasing Baird, Penderecki, and Zbigniew Bujarski.¹⁰⁰ More telling were the honors afforded to foreign composers. As if to signify that the legacies of twentieth-century music could be remembered just as legitimately in Poland as anywhere else, organizers planned special performances for the Bartók and Schoenberg years. The Bartók commemorated at the 1970 inaugural concert, however, was not the one whose dissonances had been reclaimed during the Thaw; instead, audiences heard the *Concerto for Orchestra*, a work whose populism was politically marked as Eastern in the first decade of the Cold War.¹⁰¹ Four years later, the East Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra played *Pelleas und Melisande* to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of Schoenberg's birth. In response, the Polish National Philharmonic scrapped its plans for an all-Schoenberg concert and performed only *A Survivor from Warsaw*, a choice that perhaps memorialized an additional, and more politically problematic, event: the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.¹⁰² Shostakovich's recent death was mourned literally by accident in 1975, when pianist Maurizio Pollini cancelled his festival appearance after being in an automobile crash. Pollini's recital was replaced with a retrospective concert featuring Shostakovich's Second String Quartet, op. 69, and the *Seven Romances* (on poems by Alexander Blok), op. 127.¹⁰³ That this performance took place at all speaks to Poland's place in the Soviet

¹⁰⁰ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XVIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' — w latach 1973/1974 r.," 1-2.

¹⁰¹ Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XIV 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' w roku 1969/70," 2. For an overview of Eastern and Western appropriations of Bartók, see: Danielle Fosler-Lussier, "Bartók Reception in Cold War Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bartók* ed. Amanda Bayley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 202-14.

¹⁰² Archiwum ZKP [uncatalogued document]. "Sprawozdanie Komitetu Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej w okresie XVIII 'Warszawskiej Jesieni' — w latach 1973/1974 r.," 1.

¹⁰³ WAF, Protokoły 1974/75 [uncatalogued document]. Sprawozdanie z zebrania Komisji Programowej "Warszawskiej Jesieni" 9.IX.1975 r.

bloc, for commemorating Shostakovich at the festival intimates that his music was taken seriously there in a way it was not yet taken in the West.¹⁰⁴ Yet celebrations could also chafe against an Eastern identity, as they did in 1978, when Messiaen's seventieth birthday was feted with performances of the *Quartet for the End of Time* and *La Transfiguration de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*.¹⁰⁵ These concerts not only linked Polish musical life to Western Europe; their religious content and church setting also resonated with the role Catholicism had begun to play in the Polish opposition.¹⁰⁶

Not all historical returns were equally welcome, especially when they came from close to home. Classic status generally was not pejorative when it came to festival planning, for while the "classic" can imply historical distance, and thereby sunder a composer's ties to the present day, promoting a twentieth-century canon at the Warsaw Autumn helped to suture temporal and geographical ruptures. Thus the first program book claimed an interwar tradition of Polish new music composition and performance, one that had cosmopolitan links with Paris and boasted a local section of the ISCM.¹⁰⁷ Evoking this past, however, was easier than coming to terms with the figure most prominently associated with it: Karol Szymanowski. Bartók, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg appeared on festival concert programs even when they were not specifically being

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Richard Taruskin's account of his astonishment when his Soviet companions in 1970s Moscow responded reverently to music by Shostakovich he had been taught to ridicule. Taruskin, "Double Trouble: When Serious Music Mattered," *The New Republic* 225/26 (24 December 2001): 26. The article is reprinted as "When Serious Music Mattered" in Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 299-321.

¹⁰⁵ WAF, "Sprawozdanie z prac przygotowawczych Biura Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej do XXII Festiwalu 'Warszawska Jesień' w okresie październik 1977-październik 1978 roku," 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ The performances took place in the St. James's Church in Warsaw.

¹⁰⁷ Tadeusz Marek, preface in *Program I-ego Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej Warszawa 10-21 października 1956* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1956), 27.

commemorated; most Warsaw Autumn performances of Szymanowski, in contrast, took place between 1956 and 1963, and later occurred primarily during the anniversary years of his birth or death (Table 4.1).

The Warsaw Music Society decided this was a problem: in 1970, its representatives urged the ZKP executive board to open each festival with a Szymanowski work.¹⁰⁸ Given that the Polish national anthem was the first music heard at every Warsaw Autumn, following this with a piece by Szymanowski would have unmistakably anointed him as a forefather to postwar Polish composers, as well as promoted him as a dominant figure in twentieth-century music more generally. Festival architects balked at the suggestion, claiming that Szymanowski was already being “systematically performed,” which was, at this time, a half-truth at most.¹⁰⁹ When the issue came up again during a 1971 conference at MKiS, Lutosławski cautioned against turning Szymanowski into a monument, contending that, “we should treat him as a living composer, not a ritual.”¹¹⁰ In Poland, Szymanowski was not unambiguous as an avant-garde hero, as figures like Schoenberg could be; while he did much to integrate Polish music into European circles during the interwar period, Szymanowski had become the composer that postwar Polish avant-gardists struggled to define themselves against.¹¹¹ The question, again, was one of regionalism versus international integration. Commemorating Szymanowski at the start of each and every Warsaw Autumn, especially when so much of his music is steeped in

¹⁰⁸ Archiwum ZKP, 47/1. Letter from Warsaw Music Society to ZKP Executive Board, 16 April 1970.

¹⁰⁹ Archiwum ZKP, 47/1. Letter from Stefan Śledziński to the Warsaw Music Society, 13 May 1970.

¹¹⁰ Archiwum MKiDN, 833/77 (M-I-055). Stenogram z konferencji w sprawie Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej “Warszawska Jesień”—zorganizowanej przez Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki—Zespół d/s Muzyki w dniu 16 grudnia 1971 r. w Warszawie, 41.

¹¹¹ Mieczysław Kominek, “Szymanowski i Warszawska Jesień,” in *“Warszawska Jesień” jako realizacja Karola Szymanowskiego wizji nowoczesnej muzyki polskiej* (Warsaw: POLMIC, 2008), 2.

TABLE 4.1

Szymanowski Performances at the Warsaw Autumn, 1956-2007

DATE	WORK
1956	<i>Six Kurpian Songs</i>
1956	<i>Stabat Mater</i> , op. 53
1956	Third Symphony, op. 27 (Song of the Night)
1959	Third Symphony, op. 27 (Song of the Night)
1959	Fourth Symphony, op. 60 (Symphonie Concertante)
1960	<i>Harnasie</i> , op. 55
1961	<i>King Roger</i> , op. 46
1962	<i>Demeter</i> , op. 37b
1962	Third Piano Sonata
1962	Third Symphony, op. 27 (Song of the Night)
1962	Fourth Symphony, op. 60 (Symphonie Concertante)
1963	Second Violin Concerto, op. 61
1963	<i>Masques</i> , op. 34 (performed as accompaniment to a ballet)
1963	<i>Myths</i> , op. 30 (performed an accompaniment to a ballet)
1966	Fourth Symphony, op. 60 (Symphonie Concertante)
1967	Four Songs, op. 41
1967	Four Songs, op. 54
1967	Two Mazurkas, op. 62
1967	<i>Metopes</i> , op. 29
1967	Twelve Etudes, op. 33
1972	<i>Songs of a Fairy-tale Princess</i> , op. 31
1972	<i>Litany to the Virgin Mary</i> , op. 59
1973	First String Quartet, op. 37
1977	Second Violin Concerto, op. 61
1980	<i>Songs of an Infatuated Muezzin</i> , op. 42
1987	Mazurka, op. 62, no. 2
1993	<i>Słopiewnie</i>
1997	<i>Myths</i> , op. 30
1997	Third Piano Sonata, op. 36

late romanticism, would have marked the festival as more past than present, more local than global. Through appearing mainly during his anniversary years, Szymanowski became just one early twentieth-century composer among many who could be remembered at the Warsaw Autumn, a move that implicitly placed him on par with the

century's most canonical representatives, but did not overshadow them. The trick was to imagine a place for Polish music that would be central to the story of twentieth-century composition, but not to focus so strongly on this image that the tenuous vision of international connection disappeared.

Uprooting the Folk

“Turning to tradition” were the buzzwords of Polish composition in the 1970s. But just as the ZKP refused to idolize Szymanowski as the Warsaw Autumn's spiritual patron, some returns to symbolic idioms were more welcomed in Poland than others. Tradition was not a problem if it entailed religious motifs and claiming a “universal” (read: pan-European) relevance for Polish music, as it did in Penderecki's sacred works from the mid-1960s onwards. As long as Catholicism and historical memory continued to be contested in Polish society, compositions evoking sacred and nationalistic associations would enjoy an enthusiastic local reception. Resuscitating folk music was another matter entirely. Folk music had been dormant in Polish musical life since the Thaw, when it became a taboo symbolizing all that was tainted and misguided in the Stalinist era. This view was thoroughly institutionalized by the time musicologist Stefan Jarociński wrote an essay on postwar Polish music in honor of the PRL's twenty-fifth anniversary. Distributed at the 1969 Warsaw Autumn, the text blamed the compulsion to write in a folksy style for making Polish music “barren” in the early 1950s. For Jarociński, using folk idioms as a refuge from the effects of time and outside influence was “anachronistic and glaringly naïve;” it meant returning music “to some imagined point in the past” at a

time when massive industrialization was taking place throughout the world.¹¹² Although Jarociński was careful to say that Polish composers did not shy away from tradition when it suited them, his characterization of folk music implicitly enshrines modernism as the only viable medium for depicting contemporary reality. Vilifying a folk idiom, then, helped draw the two spheres of the Cold War together culturally, but merely inverting what was glorified and what was condemned did little to dismantle the assumptions that underlay how these judgments were made. It would take the resurrection of folk music, with all of its socialist realist baggage, to mark the onset of a postmodern sensibility in Polish musical life that might contribute to the breakdown of Cold War terms of engagement.

Folk music reappeared at the Warsaw Autumn during the early 1970s, a period of détente when Poland sought to build economic bridges to the West and strove to imitate capitalist modes of consumption. This was also a time when George Rochberg's noisy defection from the ranks of serialist composers was just one manifestation of a growing loss of faith in the creative potential of postwar modernism. If European integration offered one alternative to Cold War divisions, the rehabilitation of expressivity among Western composers offered another. Danielle Fosler-Lussier has suggested that when Rochberg reinstated consonance in his music without entirely discarding chromaticism,

¹¹² Stefan Jarociński, "Ogólne spojrzenie na twórczość muzyczną 25 lat Polski Ludowej," in *XIII Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej "Warszawska Jesień," Warszawa 20-28 września 1969* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1969), 6.

he embarked on a path that led away from Cold War aesthetics that depended on negation, rather than plentitude, to create their meaning.¹¹³

As Rochberg reclaimed composers from Bartók to Beethoven in his Third String Quartet, Zygmunt Krauze began to experiment with folk material in his large ensemble works. Krauze speculates that his turn to the folk was born from dreams of Poland's southern mountain ranges, dreams that were constant companions during his tenure at Cleveland State University from 1970 to 1971.¹¹⁴ He has also claimed that this interest came as much from compositional need as from nostalgia.¹¹⁵ Krauze used folk music to negotiate issues of surface and depth in his unistic works, pieces in which he strove to transfer features of Władysław Strzemiński's paintings into sound. Linked to Suprematism in his early career, Strzemiński devised the theory of artistic Unism in the 1920s to produce works that were rigorously abstract—homogenous in color, devoid of surface contrasts, but with subtle internal fluctuations.¹¹⁶ Krauze correspondingly jettisoned developmental forms and stark differentiations in his unistic music of the 1960s; lacking a defined sense of rhythmic pulse, these pieces seem to exist in space rather than unfold linearly in time. The question was whether all the parts in a unistic composition had to be similar to produce the effect of an undifferentiated whole. In Krauze's earliest unistic works, the instrumental writing is homogenous from macro-level

¹¹³ Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók's Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 157-65.

¹¹⁴ Krystyna Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, *Zygmunt Krauze: Między intelektem, fantazją, powinnością i zabawą* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001), 51.

¹¹⁵ Archiwum ZKP, Warszawska Jesień—Biuletyny prasowe 1966-1977 [uncatalogued document]. Biuletyn nr. 8—28 września 1973, 3.

¹¹⁶ For extended considerations of the role of unism in Krauze's oeuvre, see: Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, *Zygmunt Krauze*, 107-71; and Krzysztof Szwałgier, *Obrazy dźwiękowe muzyki unistycznej: inspiracja malarska w twórczości Zygmunta Krauzego* (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2008).

to micro-level. Folk music allowed Krauze to explore another way of creating a uniform mass of sound, through fusing maximally heterogeneous individual lines.

Krauze first tried out this strategy in *Folk Music*, premiered at the 1972 Warsaw Autumn. The piece is for a large orchestra subdivided into twenty-one small ensembles; the score specifies where each ensemble should be located onstage and indicates that the groups should be spaced as far apart as possible (Ex. 4.1). An ethnographic train wreck, *Folk Music* assembles transcriptions collected throughout east-central Europe, assigning one to each ensemble; snippets from Poland are heard simultaneously with Czech, Hungarian, Austrian, Lithuanian, and Slovenian melodies. Like the *Enkyklopaideia* project that same year, in *Folk Music* Krauze decouples sounds from their cultural and authorial points of origin, subsuming them into a sonic mass that is not easily connected with the pastoral pleasures of a lost age. Even the title implies distance, since for many in the festival audience the English language had to be filtered through translation.

Krauze outlines only the barest sense of form in *Folk Music*, moving from contraction to expansion, soft to loud. Although each subgroup is internally consonant and plays according to a defined metric pulse, the overall effect is of an otherworldly haze that gradually fluctuates in and out of tonal and rhythmic focus. After the hushed opening, when all the groups play as quietly as possible, the conductor begins to signal individual musicians to play more loudly, creating a sense of foreground and background within the sonic plane. From the solo oboe's minor-mode, rhythmically flexible cantabile line, the conductor proceeds to each subgroup according to the instructions in the score, ending with a raucous brass section that puffs out a jolly four-square tune (Ex. 4.2).

Example 4.1. Krauze, *Folk Music*, orchestral layout and division of the groups.

ORCHESTRA

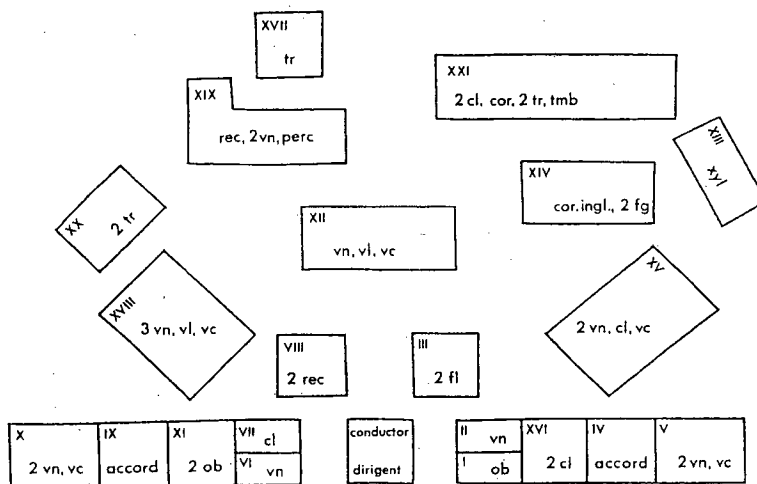
- 2 flauti
- 3 recorders
- 3 oboi
- corno inglese
- 6 clarinetti in sib
- 2 fagotti
- 5 trombe in sib
- corno in fa
- trombone
- 2 accordions
- xylofono
- piatti
- gran cassa
- 14 violini
- 2 viole
- 5 violoncelli

GRUPPIERUNG / DIVISION OF THE GROUPS

- 1 - oboe solo
- 2 - violino solo
- 3 - 2 fl
- 4 - accordion solo
- 5 - 2 vn, vc
- 6 - vn
- 7 - cl
- 8 - 2 recorders
- 9 - accordion
- 10 - 2 vn, vc
- 11 - 2 ob
- 12 - vn, vl, vc
- 13 - xylofono
- 14 - cor ingl, 2 fg
- 15 - cl, 2 vn, vc
- 16 - 2 cl
- 17 - tr
- 18 - 3 vn, vl, vc
- 19 - recorder, 2 vn, perc
- 20 - 2 tr
- 21 - 2 cl, 2 tr, cor, tmb

Alle Stimmen sind in C notiert / In the score all parts are notated in C

Durata: 10 - 20 min.



Example 4.2. Krauze, *Folk Music*, opening, groups 1-13.

liberamente, cantabile

Ob
vn $\text{♩} = 160$
fl $\text{♩} = 80$
fl
acc $\text{♩} = 60$
vn $\text{♩} = 176$
vn
vc
vn $\text{♩} = 190$
cl $\text{♩} = 120$
rec
rec
acc $\text{♩} = 80$
vn $\text{♩} = 480$
vn
vc
Ob $\text{♩} = 84$
Ob
vn $\text{♩} = 152-160$
vl $\text{♩} = 152-160$
vc
xy $\text{♩} = 144-160$

Example 4.2. (continued) Krauze, *Folk Music*, opening, groups 14-21.

The musical score is arranged in systems for various instruments. The first system includes:

- c.i. (Cornet I) with tempo marking $J=80$
- 2 fg. (2nd Flute)
- vn. (Violin) with tempo marking $J=86$
- cl. (Clarinet)
- vn. (Violin)
- vc. (Violoncello)
- cl. (Clarinet)
- cl. (Clarinet)
- tr. (Trumpet)
- vn. (Violin) with marking *rubato*
- vn. (Violin)
- vn. (Violin) with marking *sim.*
- vl. (Viola) with marking *sim.*
- vc. (Violoncello)

The second system includes:

- vn. (Violin) with tempo marking $J=152$
- rec. (Recorder)
- vn. (Violin)
- ptti. g.c. (Percussion - Gong/Cymbal)
- tr. (Trumpet)
- tr. (Trumpet)
- cl. (Clarinet) with marking *andante*
- cl. (Clarinet)
- cr. (Corno)
- tr. (Trumpet)
- tr. (Trumpet)
- tmb. (Tombone)

The score contains various musical notations including notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Warsaw Autumn listeners delighted in Krauze's playful folk revival, but critics were less easily seduced. Kaczyński counted *Folk Music* as part of a more widespread turn to tradition at the 1972 festival, one that included pieces like Mauricio Kagel's *Chamber Music*. Just as Kagel did not simply reanimate early music, neither was Krauze's effort an unstudied replica of days gone by. When it came to art, Kaczyński wrote, "there are only apparent returns to the same place. In reality, they are always returns to parallel places."¹¹⁷ Whether these returns were worth making was subject to debate. Pisarenko was skeptical that folk music was viable as a long-term compositional strategy, saying that, "I fear certain values cannot be reanimated."¹¹⁸ And while *Folk Music* could be read as reclaiming a sidelined tradition, another critic faulted Krauze for writing music that, like Cage's *4'33"*, seemed to be a joke, meant to be heard once and then discarded rather than becoming the dominant style of its epoch.¹¹⁹

Failing to create a new tradition, though, was less objectionable than salvaging the wrong one. Opinions of *Folk Music* were not nearly as mixed as the reviews greeting Wojciech Kilar's *Krzesany (Sparkling Dance)* two years later. Both Krauze and Kilar used folk music as a means to an end: Krauze to extend his unistic style, and Kilar to break with sonorism, the aesthetic that defined his youth. *Krzesany* is no distanced agglomeration of folk music transcriptions. It depicts the Podhale region of southern Poland in a graspable, lucid way—which was precisely the source of its subversive potential. For while Krauze's use of folk transcriptions could be understood as part of an

¹¹⁷ Tadeusz Kaczyński, "Droga powrotna?", *Perspektywy* (29 September 1972).

¹¹⁸ Pisarenko, "Znow Jesień."

¹¹⁹ Jaroszewicz, "Jesienne narzekania."

experimental strand of postwar composition, the only style Kilar seemed to reference seriously in *Krzesany* was socialist realism.

Kilar is one of the many Polish composers for whom the avant-garde did not necessarily spell liberation. Although he tends to be overshadowed by Penderecki and Górecki, Kilar's early career followed a similar trajectory of Warsaw Autumn promotion, travel to Western Europe, and gradual disillusionment with dissonance.¹²⁰ Kilar now distances himself from his sonoristic pieces, preferring to focus on his music from the 1970s and after. He links *Krzesany* with the optimism of the early Gierek years and counts it as the beginning of postmodernism in his oeuvre. But he also stresses that, "before I heard about postmodernism, I associated one very essential word with *Krzesany*: freedom."¹²¹ Freedom for Kilar in the early 1970s meant writing music that was illustrative, based on folk music, nationalistic, audience-friendly—that is, all the traits that would have been compulsory for Polish composers just two decades before.

Krzesany is part of a tradition in Polish music that wends its way from mountain passes to urban centers. Kilar uses folk music to conjure an image of dance in Podhale, a region that had long kindled the imaginations of intellectuals looking to the Tatra Mountains as an untouched repository of Polish nationhood. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Cooley contends that these urban intellectuals played as big a role in codifying Tatra music as local musicians, working with them to devise an increasingly narrow definition

¹²⁰ Kilar went to Darmstadt in 1957, one of the first postwar Polish composers to do so; he traveled to Paris in 1959 to study with Nadia Boulanger.

¹²¹ Leszek Polony and Klaudia Podobińska, *Cieszę się darem życia: rozmowy z Wojciechem Kilem* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1997), 68.

of what mountain music might be.¹²² Over the course of the nineteenth century, published collections excised melodies that were a part of local practice but did not conform to a stringent set of characteristics, including a raised fourth scale degree whose dissonant twang became a potent signifier of Tatra music. This ideal was in full force by the time ethnographer Stanisław Mierczyński, with Szymanowski's assistance, produced *Muzyka Podhala*, a 1930 collection that Kilar mined for *Krzesany*'s source material.

Example 4.3. Kilar, *Krzesany*, folk music quotation, mm. 78-83.

The musical score is for guitar (gng gr) and violin I (vn I). It is in 2/4 time with a tempo marking of (♩ = ca 90). The guitar part is marked *MF quasi MP* and the violin part is marked *[lungo poss.]*. The score spans measures 78 to 83, with measure numbers 80 and 83 circled. The music features a melody with a raised fourth scale degree.

Kilar's treatment of this material forges connections between the free use of dissonance in postwar composition and the harmonic and melodic patterns stereotypically associated with Polish mountain music. The strings play a quotation from *Muzyka Podhala* starting at measure 78 (Ex. 4.3). The fragment contains three main ideas—a melody with a raised fourth (here, a d-sharp leading to the fifth on e), accompanied by a

¹²² Timothy J. Cooley, "Creating a Folk Music in the Polish Tatras," in *After Chopin: Essays in Polish Music* ed. Maja Trochimczyk (Los Angeles: Polish Music Center at USC, 2000), 243-44.

drone and an oscillating line that produces dissonant vertical harmonies. Tension between sweetness and harshness thus came into *Krzesany* from its source. Kilar expands these ideas to build the work's opening chords (Ex. 4.4): the drone becomes an open fifth in the double basses, whereas the violas and cellos undulate in stepwise motion while simultaneously presenting a verticalization of the pitch collection A, B, C, D#, E. Over this harmonic background, the first and second violins take over the melodic line, moving in parallel motion while playing verticalized triads.

For musicologists prone to indulge in illustrative flights of fancy, the opening section of *Krzesany* was irresistible. In his 2005 study of the composer, Leszek Polony describes the chords opening the work as “reminiscent of the granite boulders of the Tatras,” a leap he makes based on their timbre and harmonic structure.¹²³ Polony reads the chords as a fusion of sonorism, diatonic harmony, and folk modality that manifests a conscious synthesis of disparate traditions. Soon after *Krzesany*'s 1974 premiere at the Warsaw Autumn, Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa analyzed the piece not as a *krzesany*, but a *zbójnicki*, a vigorous men's dance from Podhale depicting highland robbers. Wnuk-Nazarowa's thesis—that *Krzesany* portrays a dance scheme other than its name—is not as noteworthy as her reading of the piece as a narrative progression, in which musical figures serve a mimetic function in the scenario she describes. She interprets fortissimo glissandi played by the full orchestra (mm. 67-70), for example, as imitating the beating of mountain hatchets on the ground.¹²⁴

¹²³ Leszek Polony, *Kilar: Żywioł i Modlitwa* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2005), 113.

¹²⁴ Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa, “*Krzesany* czy *zbójnicki*,” in *Zeszyty naukowe Zespołu Analizy i Interpretacji Muzyki*, ed. Krzysztof Droba (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 1979), 4: 43-52. Quoted in Polony, *Kilar*, 111.

Example 4.4. Kilar, *Krzesany*, opening chords.

Libero, senza tempo

4/4 $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 30$
4 **FFF**

vn I 1-4, 5-8, 9-12

vn II 1-4, 5-8, 9-12

vl 1,2, 3,4, 5,6, 7,8, 9,10

vc 1,2, 3,4, 5,6, 7,8, 9,10

cb 1-4, 5-8

3

Yet *Krzesany* is only superficially about dance in an open-air landscape; its deeper story is Kilar's relationship to Poland's post-1956 avant-garde. The work's concluding section opens with a jaunty imitation of a Podhale string band (Ex. 4.5a). Accompanied by open fifths, the violin line struts in blocky four-bar phrases; the melody is punctuated by bravura flourishes and repeats ad infinitum. Each iteration brings a new layer of cacophony—first the brass trill a Bronx cheer, next the woodwinds burst in with free improvisation, and then the percussion jangles, instructed to use as many bells and triangles as possible. Visually and aurally, this is the moment most akin to sonorism in the score, but the string band sawing away in the background makes the chaos impossible to take seriously. Kilar finally ends his prankish farewell to avant-gardism by using a familiar ploy: amidst the clamor, the organ pounds a fortissimo C Major triad (Ex. 4.5b).

Could such a work be called contemporary music? Kilar thought so. At a festival press conference he mused, “especially now, I think it could be possible for a contemporary piece in D minor to be a work from 1974, and a composition based on new sonic effects to be aesthetically situated in 1850.”¹²⁵ Kilar turned the Cold War binary on its head by implying that tonal harmony, anathema to all composers with an overdeveloped sense of postwar historical consciousness, was more modern than modernism. Decades later, he continued to bristle at critics who saw *Krzesany* as a symptom of devolution: “despite the presence of melody, tonal chords, and regular rhythm, the particular mode of thinking and the formal construction prove that this music could not have been written earlier. The problem concerned certain likenesses and

¹²⁵ Archiwum ZKP, 11/68. Biuletyn nr. 7—26 września 1974, 2.

Example 4.5a. Kilar, *Krzesany*, coda, imitation of Podhale string band.

(715)

Molto rustico, con gran forza e vigore
FFF

ptti a 2
sulla corda

vn I 1-12
sulla corda

vn II 1-12
sulla corda

1-4 unis.
sulla corda

vl 5-7 unis.
sulla corda

8-10 unis.
sulla corda

1-4 unis.
sulla corda

vc 5-7 unis.
sulla corda

8-10 unis.
sulla corda

1-4 unis.
sulla corda

cb 5-8 unis.
sulla corda

(720) (725)

vn I 1-12

vn II 1-12

1-4 unis.

vl 5-7 unis.

8-10 unis.

1-4 unis.

vc 5-7 unis.

8-10 unis.

1-4 unis.

cb 5-8 unis.

Example 4.5b. Kilar, *Krzesany*, conclusion.

4/4 ⁷⁴⁹ * ₆₀ CON BATTUTA

2 pc
2 fl
4 ob
2 cl pc
2 cl
2 fg
2 cfg

cr
1,2
3,4

tr
1,2,3
4

tn
1,2
3,4

tomt
tmp

FF
4 Batt

FF tutti
org (ad lib.)

vn I
vn II
vl
vc
cb

FFFF

cr, fl, tn:
stopniowo podnosić w górę czapę instrumentu - WSTAĆ
gradually raise the bells of the instruments - STAND UP

borrowings.”¹²⁶ *Krzesany*, in other words, shared common features with socialist realist compositions, a family resemblance that led one journalist to valorize *Krzesany* as the first “Polish” work written since Lutosławski’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, the culminating example of Polish socialist realism in the 1950s.¹²⁷ Kilar’s rejection of the avant-garde, then, also meant cultivating a local relevance that was at odds with cosmopolitanism, and in this respect *Krzesany* mirrored the emergence of postmodernism in other socialist climes.¹²⁸

Kilar defended the piece as an expression of inner truth, contending that, “what is most authentic, the most honest and your own, is also the most contemporary.”¹²⁹ Others doubted that *Krzesany* was any of these things. One review denounced it as “a giant piece of kitsch that, even worse, uses motives from folk music;” another decried it as a “tendentious” manifestation of the “increasingly modish idea of music’s maximal simplification.”¹³⁰ *Ruch Muzyczny* critics could not decide if they liked the piece or not. Ludwik Erhardt found *Krzesany* “hard to resist;” Władysław Malinowski extolled it as an “authentic, conscious decision by the composer;” but Tadeusz A. Zieliński came out strongly against the work.¹³¹ Zieliński had been an ardent proponent of the Polish avant-

¹²⁶ Polony, *Cieszę się darem życia*, 33.

¹²⁷ M. Józef Michałowski, “Muzyka polska,” *Dziennik Zachodni* (9 October 1974).

¹²⁸ Aleš Erjavec, *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art Under Late Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 43.

¹²⁹ Archiwum ZKP, 11/68. Biuletyn nr. 7—26 września 1974, 3.

¹³⁰ Jerzy Jaroszewicz, “Pod feralnym znakiem,” *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (2 October 1974); Janusz Ekiert, “Notatki z ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’,” *Zwierciadło* (10 October 1974).

¹³¹ Ludwik Erhardt, Tadeusz Kaczyński, Władysław Malinowski, Olgierd Pisarenko, and Tadeusz A. Zieliński, “Kzesany Kilara,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 18/23 (1974): 4-5.

garde when it began to emerge around 1960, and for him, Kilar's attempt to fuse folk music with modern composition was "false in its very foundations."¹³²

Discussions of *Krzesany* thus had moral overtones that resonated with the broader ethical concerns of 1970s Poland. Entangled with the turn to tradition was the urge to capture something real, whether this was a portrayal of the outside world or a response to inner aesthetic desire. The revival of folk idioms was also a way of making music meaningful in a period that was obsessed with signs and symbols: as composers made their messages more transparent, musicologists had a growing interest in semiotics and hermeneutical interpretation. As an example, Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*, the original turn to tradition in postwar Polish composition, was the subject of one of the earliest semiotic analyses in Polish criticism.¹³³

The problem was that it was unclear where socialist realism ended and postmodernism began, an issue that was particularly pronounced in the case of works like *Krzesany*. Boris Groys has called socialist realism a "style and a half," parallel to the avant-garde in its aims of internal purity and modernization, but auguring postmodernism through its appropriation of kitsch and popular culture.¹³⁴ By qualifying Kilar's postmodernism as "engaged," Polony underscores the ties between Kilar's works in the 1970s and Zhdanovite ideas of artistic engagement, whatever the differences in their ultimate import.¹³⁵ However, in a place where post-1956 cultural strategy had been to

¹³² Ibid., 5.

¹³³ Andrzej Chłopecki, " 'Pasja' Pendereckiego jako znak," *Ruch Muzyczny* 19/4 (1975): 3-5.

¹³⁴ Boris Groys, "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores* ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 79.

¹³⁵ Polony, *Kilar*, 106-7.

move as far away from socialist realism as possible, postmodernism had an edge that it did not have in the West, where postwar serialism may have been enforced through the unequal distribution of prestigious awards and plum academic posts but was never an overt government program propped up through the force of censorship.¹³⁶ Nor was this shift entirely the same as Soviet composers' reclamation of mimesis starting in the late 1960s, since socialist realism had not been officially abandoned in the USSR during the Thaw.¹³⁷ Poland, as always, was in between, with a history not quite traceable to East or West.

For those in Poland who were still invested in the Cold War connotations of the Western avant-garde, *Krzesany* could hardly be an expression of truth if it audibly referenced a period of error and distortions. Yet perhaps the ultimate lesson of *Krzesany* was that these connotations were starting no longer to apply. Both politically and culturally, the transition to the 1970s was marked by a loss of belief, whether that belief was in the power of the avant-garde to serve as an arbiter of musical progress or in socialism's intellectual legitimacy. Poland's political system had become a shell by the end of the 1960s: a CIA report indicated that Communist ideology had become irrelevant to the younger generation, who had a strong sense of European identity and viewed the PZPR as the core of a stagnant society.¹³⁸ In Polish musical life, a new wave of musicologists and critics came of age in the 1970s and agitated for changed attitudes in the arts. Marxism was not the bane for these commentators that it had been for their

¹³⁶ See Joseph N. Straus, "The Myth of Serial 'Tyranny' in the 1950s and 1960s," *The Musical Quarterly* 83/3 (1999): 301-43; along with: Anne C. Shreffler, "The Myth of Empirical Historiography: A Response to Joseph N. Straus," *The Musical Quarterly* 84/1 (2000): 30-39.

¹³⁷ Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 274.

¹³⁸ Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism*, 170-71.

forbears; they championed Kilar, Penderecki, and Górecki in their revolts against the avant-garde and strove to depict the concrete details of daily life in their writings.¹³⁹ Even Lutosławski, long a proponent of modernist abstraction, said that not every composer sought to be innovative and claimed that newness was not the only thing that counted in a musical work.¹⁴⁰

Postmodernism rebelled against the Cold War logic that wielded modernism for political ends. That it could do so was a consequence of modernism's institutionalization as an instrument of Western cultural propaganda.¹⁴¹ Like reclamations of expressivity and consonance in the West, Polish annexations of folk music in the 1970s were a vote of no confidence in Cold War culture. What these challenges meant for the Warsaw Autumn Festival, however, was less clear. Just as postmodernism was meaningful insofar as it articulated a relationship to modernism, and revivals of Polish folk music gained their significance in comparison to socialist realism, the connotations of the Warsaw Autumn relied on a cultural paradigm that locked modernism and socialist realism in an antagonism of mutual dependence. The festival's importance was greatest when Cold War tensions were at their peak, and this is why, despite claims that politics played only a small role at the Warsaw Autumn, stories about the 1972 Khrennikov affair continue to be told. Tentative government support for a festival commissioning structure—as long as the invitations fell into the timeworn categories of Eastern, Western, and

¹³⁹ Leszek Polony, "O co nam szło," in *Przemiany techniki dźwiękowej, stylu, i estetyki w polskiej muzyce lat. 70: Materiały XVII Ogólnopolskiej Konferencji Muzykologicznej Kraków 8-10 grudnia 1983*, ed. Leszek Polony (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, Sekcja Muzykologów ZKP), 79.

¹⁴⁰ Zofia Helman and Bohdan Pocij, "Dyskusja: obecność tradycji we współczesności," in *Spotkania muzyczne w Baranowie I: Muzyka w kontekście kultury*, ed. Leszek Polony (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 220-21).

¹⁴¹ Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 197.

Polish—likewise perpetuated Cold War worldviews. Threats to modernism as a master narrative had the potential to put the festival’s symbolic context at risk, for the plurality of styles heard during its concerts were noteworthy primarily in relation to how strongly a rhetoric of negation was espoused elsewhere. Thus long before political and economic paroxysms imperiled its existence, the Warsaw Autumn already had to redefine its relevance.

Epilogue

Ruptures and Returns

No flags fluttered over the stage of the National Philharmonic when the Warsaw Autumn began in 1983, one year after the thread of festival history had been broken by the imposition of Martial Law in Poland. Nor did any VIPs from the Ministry of Culture see Kazimierz Kord lift his baton in preparation to conduct eight groups of performers. The sounds that followed Kord's signal—a tolling gong, an angular woodwind refrain—made it clear that this festival would not be business as usual. In place of the strains of Poland's national anthem, the audience heard music shadowed by the aura of the dead: Boulez's *Rituel (in memoriam Bruno Maderna, 1974-75)* during the concert's first half, Denisov's *Requiem* (1980) in the second. Just a few months earlier, Lutosławski and Górecki had been imagined as the heroes of opening night.¹ Now, their works were not on the program at all. Baird, Kilar, Serocki, Kotoński: like Lutosławski and Górecki, they were present through their absence. This was a moment when actors and musicians throughout Poland protested against Martial Law by refusing to appear in certain public venues, and “collaborator” performers were applauded off the stage. “We are in the graveyard of contemporary music,” one journalist reported after the inaugural festival concert.² “The world around us is not the happiest,” wrote another, “and it was reflected

¹ WAF, Sprawozd. z zebr., 1981-83 [uncatalogued document]. Notatka z zebrania roboczego składu Komisji Programowej “Warszawskiej Jesieni” w dniu 28 maja 1983 r.

² Zbigniew Lampart, “Jesienny smutek,” *Gazeta Krakowska* (22 September 1983).

by the works at this year's Autumn."³ After two years of silence, this was hardly a triumphal return.

What the Warsaw Autumn could mean—and to whom—had become subject to multiple interpretations, in which the boundary between autonomy and co-optation was always drifting. Organizers had cancelled the 1982 festival in response to a moment of rupture: the declaration of Martial Law in Poland on December 13, 1981. Its power shaken by Solidarity's days of summer delirium, the PZPR disbanded the trade union, instigated a wave of arrests to cripple the opposition, severed lines of communication, and implemented a nightly curfew. Days later, the creative unions were suspended. While many of them would remain in limbo for months to come, the ZKP office was soon able to reopen on a limited basis. Józef Patkowski, then head of the ZKP, later hypothesized that this was the authorities' first step in cajoling the composers to organize the Warsaw Autumn.⁴ Although the ZKP had not agreed to the stringent conditions laid out by MKiS, it nevertheless was reactivated on March 30, 1982, ahead of all the other creative unions.

For MKiS, the eclecticism of the festival's repertoire and performers served as always, if wishfully, to symbolize the liberality of Polish cultural life. The Autumn had shored up the legitimacy of the state in the past, and authorities were hoping it would now do so again: by occurring as planned, the festival would be an outward sign of internal normality. Considering that Martial Law had been justified as the lesser of two evils—a domestic move to prevent Soviet intervention—it was understandable that the authorities were looking for ways to advertise their control. The Repertoire Commission

³ Ewa Solińska, "W getcie muzyki," *Sztandar Młodych* (16 October 1983).

⁴ Józef Patkowski, "Suchą stopą przez 'morze czerwone'," in *50 Lat Związku Kompozytorów Polskich*, ed. Ludwik Erhardt (Warsaw: Związku Kompozytorów Polskich, 1995), 150.

had not immediately rejected the idea of staging the festival even in 1982, but it soon became clear that the arrangements for that year were in disarray. Ensembles had cancelled their appearances, hotel space was not confirmed, there was little chance of being able to contact performers and composers on a normal basis. The commission voted unanimously to cancel.⁵ As Lutosławski put it during a meeting of the ZKP Executive Board, “the purely organizational reasons are so strong that it is unnecessary to discuss whether we want to have the festival or not.”⁶ Augustyn Bloch, head of the Repertoire Commission, likewise saw no need to belabor the point: “we don’t need to think about moral appearances, for the technical issues are sufficient for a conversation with the authorities.”⁷

A moral valence was unavoidable, however. Creative unions occupied a liminal space in Poland, somewhere between the state and civil society. The tensions of this position were set in high relief when state and society were in open conflict, as they were in the 1980s. Defining a clear field of moral action was the first thing on the ZKP’s mind when its Executive Board met in mid-April 1982. Patkowski reminded his colleagues that “we are able to carry out international activity in a situation where all of society is cut off from the world, and every trip abroad is a moral dilemma.”⁸ The ZKP’s exceptional position made it all the more vital to stake out some distance from the state, for, as another board member stressed, “the ZKP has tremendous moral authority . . . This is a

⁵ WAF, Sprawozd. z zebr., 1981-83 [uncatalogued document]. Sprawozdanie z zebrania Komisji Programowej Warszawskiej Jesieni w dniu 15 kwietnia 1982 roku.

⁶ Archiwum ZKP, 40/7. Protokół a obrad VII Plenum Zarządu Głównego Związku Kompozytorów Polskich 19.IV.1982, 51.

⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁸ Ibid., 21.

moment when we must be the watchmen.”⁹ Canceling the Warsaw Autumn was tantamount to claiming an ethical high ground. “It would be a protest not to organize the festival,” one composer argued.¹⁰ Her colleague reasoned, “we have the right to think that the authorities’ intention was for the Warsaw Autumn to be organized at all costs . . . But we should not be interested in the intention of the authorities. We need to be interested in the moral issue.”¹¹ Times certainly had changed: once a showcase of ostensible freedom, the Warsaw Autumn was now an actual bargaining chip between the ZKP and a delegitimized state.

As always, it would be too simple to view the Warsaw Autumn in the 1980s primarily as a tool of the regime. Neither was the attitude of festival organizers solely one of opposition: their refusal to plan the concerts did not extend to rejecting the funds that had been promised for them. As an alternative, the Executive Board proposed using the allotment to document festival history or to record the works of young composers. Everyone also agreed that the performances should happen in 1983, and that planning them should begin right away—even though there was no end in sight to Martial Law.¹² Serving society ultimately trumped countering state authority: Patkowski explained that the 1983 Autumn was organized because “Warsaw needed the festival.”¹³

From that point on, the concerts continued as before. Retrospectives anointed twentieth-century greats; the avant-garde died on festival stages again and again. Organizers still sought to provide a snapshot of current musical life. And there remained

⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹ Ibid., 28.

¹² Ibid., 54-55.

¹³ Henryk Swolkieñ, “Pokłosie ‘Jesieni’,” *Kurier Polski* (29 September 1983).

the potency of symbolic renunciations. Even after Martial Law was rescinded in July 1983, Lutosławski did not reappear at the Warsaw Autumn until 1988, when he conducted his Piano Concerto and Third Symphony. His loyalty was with musicians, not official cultural life. Yet despite maintaining a public absence, he worked behind the scenes throughout the 1980s to help plan festival concerts.

The rupture of 1981 was book-ended at the decade's close when the PRL crumbled on July 19, 1989. In the ailing person of Andrzej Panufnik, the 1990 festival bid a final farewell to the bad old days of socialist Poland and the circumstances that had first made the Warsaw Autumn meaningful. Once the brightest star among Polish composers, Panufnik had defected in 1954. His music was rehabilitated in 1977, but could not be slated for the Warsaw Autumn's inaugural or closing concerts. Now, however, an orgy of Panufnik's works opened the festival, some of them under the composer's baton.¹⁴ Wanda Wilkomirska's homecoming further upped the emotional ante, for when she appeared as soloist in Panufnik's violin concerto, it was the first time she had played in Poland since her defection in 1982. In the press, Wilkomirska was wide-eyed at the pineapples and cold cuts she found in Polish shops, whereas Panufnik trumpeted his Polish identity.¹⁵ Journalists gushed that the two had "declared that today's Poland is finally free."¹⁶

¹⁴ The program that year featured no fewer than eleven compositions by Panufnik, an unprecedented emphasis on a single composer. They were: *Arbor Cosmica*, *Dreamscape*, *Harmony*, Piano Concerto, Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra, *Circle of Fifths*, String Quartet no. 2 ("Messages"), *Autumn Music*, *Pentasonata*, Tenth Symphony, and *Tragic Overture*.

¹⁵ Anna Bimer-Góralczyk, "Wanda Wilkomirka o wędlinach i ananasach," *Kurier Polski* (17 September 1990); and Teresa Grabowska, "Spotkanie z Panufnikiem," *Trybuna* (18 September 1990).

¹⁶ Dorota Szwarzman, "Złota Warszawska Jesień," *Gazeta Wyborcza* (25 September 1990).

There were other breaks at the 1990 festival. For the first time since 1956, the Soviet Union failed to send ensembles to Warsaw according to cultural exchange agreements. PAGART no longer served as an intermediary between the festival office and foreign performers.¹⁷ Gone too were its funds; foreign cultural institutions helped fill the void in festival coffers. Audiences tittered during Shostakovich's *Anti-Formalist Rayok*, a satire of Stalin and socialist realism, the full version of which had just been presented in Moscow a year before. They relished John Adams as he set Party chairmen to dancing, and marveled at the newly minted Lithuanian flag hanging as part of the collection outside the National Philharmonic.

It is tempting to read these gestures as confirmation that 1989 was the year that changed everything. But their power relied on the persistence of modes of thought that had been prevalent since the 1950s, and as such, they maintained a Cold War mentality even as they presaged its decline. Cut off from channels of Polish institutional support, Panufnik had been at once self-pitying and self-aggrandizing, lamenting, "I had leapt from my Polish position of No. One to No One at All in England."¹⁸ While political exile indeed brought Panufnik little fame abroad, it made him a legend in Polish cultural mythology—a status that was sustainable only as long as he remained unknown and his compositions quasi-forbidden. Even at the Warsaw Autumn, Panufnik's resonance depended on the rhetoric of negation: take it away, and his music rang hollow.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ewa Solińska, "Muzyczna i polityczna," *Życie Warszawy* (27 September 1990).

¹⁸ Andrzej Panufnik, *Composing Myself* (London: Methuen, 1987), 245.

¹⁹ See, for example, Tadeusz Wielecki's description of his disappointment upon finally hearing Panufnik's works: "Pamiętam, była Jesień . . ." *Ruch Muzyczny* 51/18-19 (2007): 27.

The Warsaw Autumn preserved more than just a mindset into the 1990s. The moment of political rupture took its place within a cultural and practical continuum. Although a director was appointed in 1995, a repertoire commission of ten to twelve members still performs the bulk of day-to-day planning—an arrangement unique among European music festivals. Neither democracy nor an emerging market economy could prevent the return of old problems. The crisis of the early 1990s was not unprecedented for the festival. Empty halls troubled commentators well before the advent of political change: by 1988, not even professional critics were bothering to attend all of the annual concerts.²⁰ Complaints that the repertoire had grown stagnant had plagued organizers at least from the mid-1960s.²¹ Financial woes reanimated the struggles of 1964 and 1971, when the Warsaw Autumn had been threatened with becoming a biennial. In 1994, the Minister of Culture, Kazimierz Dejmek, proposed that the festival should happen once every two years.²² Although the plan was thwarted, organizers had to scramble for funds when the 1995 budget was slashed in half. The difference was that there were now no guarantees. The festival had already had to redefine its relevance starting in the 1970s, but in the absence of a political context that could buffer economic uncertainty, all bets were off as to whether it would survive.

What does the Warsaw Autumn still have to offer? This is the question its architects have been struggling to answer. For composers whose careers are almost as old as the institution itself, the festival is important for its legacy of freedom, its tradition, and

²⁰ Mirosław M. Bujko, “Ziarna i plewy,” *Odrodzenie* (15 October 1988).

²¹ Ludwik Erhardt, “Co dalej z Jesienią?” *Ruch Muzyczny* 36/21 (1992). Reprinted in *Warszawska Jesień w zwierciadle polskiej krytyki muzycznej: Antologia tekstów z lat 1956-2006* (Warsaw: Warszawska Jesień, 2007), 254-56.

²² Interview with Krzysztof Knittel, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

for creating a space in which Polish music could thrive.²³ For Krzysztof Knittel, festival director from 1995 to 1998, the Warsaw Autumn now had the potential to shed its light on composition in different places, a strategy that arose in part from financial necessity. As he recalls, “the Polish Ministry of Culture did not provide adequate funding to organize the festival, so we had to begin looking for financial help abroad in order to save the Warsaw Autumn.”²⁴ Thus the 1997 festival focused on France, Germany, and Poland, and relied heavily on French and German funds. The biggest coup was in 1998, when Knittel secured a subsidy from the Nordic Council’s seemingly bottomless resources for cultural promotion. *Północ* (North) was the result: a Warsaw Autumn highlighting music from Scandinavia, in a series of concerts that met with an ecstatic audience and critical response.

Knittel suspects he was appointed festival director because he was successful in finding new forms of monetary support. Today, the financial situation is secure: the festival has three-year contracts with the city of Warsaw, and the Ministry of Culture allots funds for it each year. International sponsors still play an important role in bringing foreign composers and musicians to the festival concerts. Not only did Knittel stave off economic extinction, he also strove to preserve the Warsaw Autumn’s basic idea. He says, “in a certain sense, I defended the festival for those who had directed it until then. And I also defended a certain conception: of an international festival, one of great

²³ Iwona Szafrńska, “Czy ‘Warszawska Jesień’ jest potrzebna? Wypowiedzi Krzysztofa Pendereckiego, Antoniego Wita, Wojciecha Kilara i Witolda Szalonka,” *Opcje*, September 1996, 5, 10, 15-16, 22-23, 30-32.

²⁴ Interview with Krzysztof Knittel, 13 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland). Quotation authorized 21 July 2009.

renown, where the works of Polish composers did not comprise more than one-third of the total program.”²⁵

Since 1999, Tadeusz Wielecki—composer, double-bassist, and current festival director—has worked to protect the Warsaw Autumn’s legacy and draw new audiences into the festival fold. No longer do attendees tread a staid path from the National Philharmonic to the Music Academy in the center of town. Gallery space, a converted vodka factory, a recently constructed concert hall in south Warsaw: all are new venues, and they are all elements in the festival’s new marketing strategy, in which organizers attempt to lure young listeners with an aura of edgy exclusivity. Throughout its first decades, the Warsaw Autumn had no need to rely on advertising to attract its audiences. It could then rely on its political cachet and the seemingly self-evident importance of high culture in Polish society. During an era of commercialism, the Autumn now actively flaunts its status as high art; promotional literature on its website extols a new elite of festival listeners who seek to distinguish themselves from the consumers of youth culture.²⁶ The balancing act for organizers is how to market this experience, for the magnetism of high art is its supposed anti-consumerist mores. Youthful idealism helps, within limits. While young people still believe that music matters, Wielecki notes that these listeners have been raised on the Internet and recordings rather than traditional concert-going.²⁷ In other words, the challenge is to appeal to those who have little

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Tadeusz Wielecki, “O festiwalu,” (http://www.warszawskajesien.art.pl/08/index.php#/O_FESTIWALU/0/0/).

²⁷ Interview with Tadeusz Wielecki, 10 June 2008 (Warsaw, Poland).

invested in standard concert life, at a time when the festival's original *raison d'être*—providing access to the outside world—is increasingly obsolete.

Today's critics and composers are mobile and connected, as much citizens of Europe as they are of Poland. For twentysomething Jan Topolski, “this access to information, unbelievable just ten or twenty years ago, gives us freedom—and power. To criticize.”²⁸ He decries the Warsaw Autumn's panoramic formula as useless in understanding recent composition. Just as irksome is the festival's emphasis on “new classical” works to the exclusion of trends such as improvisation and interactive art. The “former window on the world,” he warns, is in danger of becoming little more than a “window on the past.”

As the Warsaw Autumn enters its sixth decade, it is indeed still much as it was: Eurocentric, collectively organized, and focused on time-honored concert formats and musical genres. The festival has proved to be resilient in the face of social and political changes that took away the symbolic import of its original context. Such is its centrality in Polish musical life that even protests, like Topolski's, cannot escape the festival as a point of reference, and the very fact of its institutional longevity is now one of the most powerful arguments in favor of its continued existence. Katherine Verdery has challenged the notion of transition when it comes to talking about post-socialist nations: in her mind, transition implies directional change according to a Western paradigm, in which the path from socialism—bankrupt morally, politically, and quite literally—leads inevitably to market capitalism. Transition, that is, implies teleology. She prefers the term

²⁸ Jan Topolski, “A Young Barbarian in the Gardens of the Warsaw Autumn,” in *“Warszawska Jesień” jako realizacja Karola Szymanowskiego wizji nowoczesnej muzyki polskiej* (Warsaw: POLMIC, 2008), 1.

transformation to allow for the possibility of change that does not decide in advance what its endpoint will be.²⁹ But whether open-ended or no, both terms imply departure, embarkation on a process of change. And while the Warsaw Autumn has not been unaffected by the pressures of operating in a market economy and navigating a shifting political landscape, its basic identity—its organizational structure, and the aims of those who plan it—perpetuates some features of a world that has supposedly been lost to history. Today, the festival is as much a force for stability in Polish musical life as it was a sign of change when it began in 1956. In place of transition, the Warsaw Autumn offers tradition. What this tradition has to say to a new generation remains to be seen.

²⁹ Katherine Verdery, *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15-16.

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Appendix A

Members of the Warsaw Autumn Festival Repertoire Commission, 1959-1995

Jan Astriab (1983-86)	Krzysztof Meyer (1975-86)
Rafał Augustyn (1981-95)	Kazimierz Nowacki (1966-81)
Krzysztof Baculewski (1987-95)	Edward Pałłasz (1983-95)
Tadeusz Baird (1959-69)	Józef Patkowski (1959-91)
Augustyn Bloch (1974-1993)	Olgierd Pisarenko (1983-1995)
Michał Bristiger (1990-94)	Bohdan Pocij (1981)
Paweł Buczyński (1993)	Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil (1994-95)
Andrzej Dobrowolski (1959-76)	Bogusław Schaeffer (1975-80)
Tadeusz Kaczyński (1970-81)	Kazimierz Serocki (1959-73)
Wojciech Kilar (1975-81)	Tomasz Sikorski (1966-74)
Eugeniusz Knapik (1979-89)	Adam Sławiński (1989)
Krzysztof Knittel (1994-95)	Marek Stachowski (1975-95)
Włodzimierz Kotoński (1959-74, 1983-86)	Ryszard Szeremeta (1994-95)
Zygmunt Krauze (1970-81)	Paweł Szymański (1987-95)
Stanisław Krupowicz (1994-95)	Tadeusz Wielecki (1993)
Witold Lutosławski (1959-74, 1983-92)	Lidia Zielińska (1990-92)
Jerzy Maksymiuk (1978-86, 1990-93)	Tadeusz A. Zieliński (1968-69)
Andrzej Markowski (1971-81)	

Appendix B

Ministers of Culture in the PRL, 1944-1989

Wincenty Rzymowski (July 1944-May 1945)	Czesław Wiśniewski (October 1971- December 1971)
Edmund Zalewski (May-June 1945)	Stanisław Wroński (December 1971-February 1974)
Władysław Kowalski (June 1945-February 1947)	Józef Tejchma (February 1974-January 1978), (October 1980-October 1982)
Stefan Dybowski (February 1947-November 1952)	Janusz Wilhelmi (January 1978-March 1978)
Włodzimierz Sokorski (November 1952-April 1956)	Jan Mietkowski (March 1978-July 1978)
Karol Kuryluk (April 1956-April 1958)	Zygmunt Najdowski (July 1978-October 1980)
Kazimierz Rusinek (April 1958-July 1958)	Kazimierz Żygulski (October 1982-September 1986)
Tadeusz Galiński (July 1958-December 1964)	Aleksander Krawczuk (September 1986-August 1989)
Lucjan Motyka (December 1964-October 1971)	Izabella Cywińska (September 1989-December 1989)