

Interpreting Boundaries: The Reception of Electroacoustic Music in Poland 1958–1964

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3rd October 1958. Warsaw's Philharmonic Chamber Hall was standing room only for Karlheinz Stockhausen's lecture-demonstration of electronic music at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music. Included on the program were his own *Gesang der Jünglinge*, György Ligeti's *Artikulation*, and pieces by Herbert Eimert, Luciano Berio, Henri Pousseur, and Bruno Maderna, all of whom were gifted representatives of this relatively new musical field. Many Polish critics, both established and youthful, weighed in on this highly-anticipated event. In their opinions, the hissing and murmuring they heard, might represent the "music of the future," although they were unsure if such sounds could be used successfully in standalone compositions. Such technology was, they thought, perhaps better suited for film and theatrical sound effects.¹

Four years later, 22nd September 1962. Same location, same crowded room. Józef Patkowski, head of the Polish Radio Experimental Studio,

1 Józef Kański, "Dzień awangardy muzycznej," *Trybuna Ludu* (5 October 1958); Zygmunt Mycielski, "II Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej w Warszawie, 27 IX–5 X 1958," *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/21 (1958), 2–9; Jerzy Waldorff, "Sprzątanie ze stołu," *Odra* 24 (1958), in *Warszawska Jesień w zwierciadle polskiej krytyki muzycznej. Antologia tekstów z lat 1956–2006*, eds. Krzysztof Droba, Ewa Radziwon-Stefaniuk (Warsaw: Warsaw Autumn Festival, 2007), 26; Stefania Łobaczewska, "Warszawska Jesień 1958," *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/22 (1958), 3; Henryk Schiller, "Utwory kompozytorów obcych na festiwalu," *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/22 (1958), 16–17; Michał Bristiger, "Demon zgrzytów," *Polityka* (8 November 1958), 8–9; Zofia Dróżdż-Satanowska, "Rozmowa o 'Warszawskiej Jesieni,'" *Dziennik Ludowy* (4–5 October 1958).

gave a pre-concert talk on acoustic and synthetic sounds prior to a presentation of electroacoustic works by three Polish composers (Zbigniew Wiszniewski, Andrzej Dobrowolski, and Krzysztof Penderecki), and four foreigners (Luc Ferrari, Luigi Nono, Josef Anton Riedl, and Mauricio Kagel).² Most of these pieces were seldom mentioned in Polish press reviews. Penderecki's *Psalmus 1961*, which features electronic manipulations of a female voice, was referenced somewhat more frequently than the others, although it was not among the festival's most talked-about compositions. One student, Kazimierz Rozbicki, found it "more communicative" than other electronic pieces, while another young critic, Ludwik Erhardt, declared it was the first true "music" he'd heard in the field he called "experimental music."³

The Polish Radio Experimental Studio has been long considered a jewel in the landscape of Cold War Polish music. With its embrace of advanced technologies and new sonorities, it seemed to fit well into the blossoming modernist, even experimental approach pursued by many Polish composers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In keeping with the studio's goal of disseminating knowledge about electroacoustic techniques, in June 1959 several composers, including Penderecki and Witold Lutosławski, attended a six-day seminar organized by Patkowski.⁴ Between late 1957 and 1963 Penderecki, Dobrowolski, Wiszniewski, Włodzimierz Kotoński, and Tomasz Sikorski produced independent compositions there. Composers also often used electroacoustic means for film and theater

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- 2 For purposes of this paper, I am using the term electroacoustic to include both purely electronic sounds and *musique concrète*; traditional instruments may also be involved.
 - 3 Kazimierz Rozbicki, "Na festiwalu bez zmian," *Ruch Muzyczny* 6/22 (1962), 10; Ludwik Erhardt, "Młodzi gwizdzą?" *Przegląd Kulturalny* (27 September 1962), in: idem, *Papierowe nosy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1970), 45–46.
 - 4 Magdalena Radziejowska, "20 lat Studia Eksperymentalnego Polskiego Radia," *Ruch Muzyczny* 22/4 (1978), 3–4; Bolesław Błaszczyk, „Czy możemy mówić o ‘polskiej szkole’ muzyki elektronicznej,” <http://muzykotekaskolna.pl/wiecej-o-muzyce/natenczas-blaszczyk-ix> (last accessed 7 June 2018); Lisa Cooper Vest, "The Discursive Foundations of the Polish Musical Avant-Garde at Midcentury: Aesthetics of Progress, Meaning, and National Identity," (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2014), 415–472.

music.⁵ These explorations of new technical means were financially supported by the Polish government.

Beginning in 1958, electroacoustic compositions created either in Poland or at other extant studios were heard annually at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, Poland's premiere contemporary music event. Although Polish newspapers and journals featured many festival reviews, commentary on these pieces was limited, particularly after 1958, even though other innovative compositions, often by the same composers who worked with electronics, were discussed frequently. The comments that did appear leaned toward rejecting this music, even though audience interest in it remained strong.

The case of Krzysztof Penderecki is a prime example of this type of media coverage. While such works as his *Dimensions of Time and Silence*, *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, and *Canon* were frequent topics of discussion in the late 1950s and early 1960s when he was praised as a creator of effective new sounds for traditional instruments. His most substantial electroacoustic works from the same period, *Psalmus 1961* and *Brigade of Death*, both realized in Warsaw, were seldom mentioned. *Psalmus 1961*, discussed above, received perhaps the most positive if still limited discussion of any electroacoustic work heard in Warsaw during those years. *Brigade of Death*, on the other hand, was denounced in Poland after its first performance in January 1964 (that is, not at the Warsaw Autumn Festival), with criticism directed at its text, which was taken from Leon Weliczker Wells' first-hand account of a concentration camp. This piece subsequently disappeared from concert programs until 2011.⁶

5 *Studio Eksperyment. Zbiór tekstów*, eds. Magda Roszkowska, Bogna Świątkowska (Warsaw: Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, 2013), 134; Monika Pasiecznik, "A history of electroacoustic music in Poland from the perspective of the Polish Radio Experimental Studio 1957-1970," http://soundexchange.eu/#poland_en?id=1 (last accessed 7 June 2018).

6 According to Ewa Szczecińska, *Brigade of Death* was broadcast in 1966 on a Polish Radio Horyzonty Muzyki program, <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/2666-warszawska-jesien-2011.html> (last accessed 7 June 2018). Wells' book was published in English as *The Janowska Road*.

At first glance, the relative lack of critical attention paid to electroacoustic works in Poland is surprising, given the enthusiasm of many Polish composers for working with new compositional techniques in these years following the loosening of socialist realist restrictions. To understand the reasons for this apparent disinterest, we must understand the context in which Polish critics were operating at that time. As Lisa Jakelski has argued, Polish avant-garde music in the early 1960s could be defended within the government's socialist framework most advantageously by presenting it as uniquely Polish: although it took advantage of modern techniques, it was more than an intellectual pursuit, for it also had an emotional appeal wrapped within distinctive musical styles—that is, not mimicking foreign compositional trends—to which listeners could respond. Lisa Cooper Vest has voiced similar, although less-politically oriented ideas in her discussion of progress, backwardness, tradition, and social responsibility in mid-century Polish music.⁷ Compositional innovation was welcomed by numerous Polish critics during the early years of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, although detractors were, of course, also present. For many on both sides of the critical spectrum, the strict imitation of Western styles such as dodecaphony and pointillism was ultimately interpreted as a transitory phase, in which Polish composers became familiar with these and other techniques before developing their own musical languages. Their more mature accomplishments, in turn, earned many of them a place on the progressive side of the international music scene in the 1960s and beyond.

Neither Jakelski nor Vest looked specifically at the electroacoustic pieces presented at the early Warsaw Autumn Festivals, which offered the most comprehensive hearing of such pieces in Poland. Did such music, with its unusual musical parameters and listening experiences, fit into the narratives they presented or were there other factors perhaps unique to such music that contributed to its apparent critical disregard? Let's take a closer look at how Polish critics attempted to come to terms with the

7 Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri* and Avant-Garde Music in Cold War Poland," *The Journal of Musicology* 26/2 (Spring 2009), 205-239; Lisa Cooper Vest, "The Discursive Foundations of the Polish Musical Avant-Garde," 415-478.

phenomenon of electroacoustic music, using as our frame of reference the Warsaw Autumn presentations between 1958 and 1963 (the year in which *Brigade of Death* was composed).⁸ We will return to *Brigade* itself later.

Published Critiques of Electroacoustic Music

In 1958, electroacoustic works were treated *en masse* as compositions having common traits and therefore, similar points of critique. Perhaps because it was the first experience of such music for many Poles, this concert attracted the most commentary compared to similar events at subsequent Festivals. For the most part, these observations were predominantly neutral in tone. Critics noted the exploration of new sounds and indicated their awareness that such experimentation was needed to achieve “progress.”⁹ As noted above, however, they also had doubts about these materials being employed successfully in independent compositions.

Pierre Schaeffer’s presentation of *musique concrète* in 1959 was greeted by a standing room only crowd, as had occurred in 1958.¹⁰ Critics responded with fewer, but more dire reactions than they had a year earlier. Condemnations included Józef Kański’s “an almost unavoidable impression of ... monotony,”¹¹ an anonymous reviewer’s “I do not know if anyone in the room took this ‘music’ seriously... [there is — C.B.] a lack of any sort of order and logic of construction,”¹² and Stefan Kisielewski’s “[it was — C.B.] a complete mistake... searching for new sound sources and qualities are necessary, but I see in *musique concrète* something ‘buffo’.”¹³ Bohdan Pilarski, however, noted the evolution of this field, praising the “conscious idea” and contemporary traits of Schaeffer’s 1959

8 A list of electronic works heard at these festivals appears at the end of this essay.

9 Dróżdź-Satanowska, “Rozmowa o ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’”; Bristiger, “Demon zgrzytów.”

10 Arthur Jacobs, “Avant-Garde Series in Warsaw,” *New York Times* (27 September 1959), 5.

11 Józef Kański, “Z ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni,’” *Trybuna Ludu* (20 September 1959).

12 “Z III Międzynarodowego Festiwalu,” *Warmia i Mazury* 11 (1959), 23.

13 Stefan Kisielewski, “Warszawska Jesień po raz trzeci,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 40 (1959), 5.

Étude aux objets.¹⁴ While these comments reflected the forthrightness of many critics during that time, it is worth noting that not even the younger generation welcomed musical innovation unconditionally; Kański and Pilarski, both at the beginning of their careers, did not share the same opinions about this concert.¹⁵

In 1960, the first independent Polish electroacoustic piece was presented—Kotoński's *Étude on a Single Cymbal Stroke*, which is based in part on serial techniques. However, this historically noteworthy piece was scarcely considered worthy of mention by critics. For young writer Tadeusz Kaczyński, Kotoński's piece represented a new idea and was not monotonous (which was high praise indeed!). For another young critic, Lucjan Kydryński, *Étude* was the best work on that year's electroacoustic concert. Another representative of the same generation, Lech Terpiłowski, disagreed, bluntly stating, without naming individual compositions, that he had heard nothing of any interest at that event. Other reviewers almost completely ignored the same concert. In contrast, although Kotoński's *Musique en relief* for six orchestral groups was deemed weak by critics, it received more attention than *Étude* had (although not nearly as much as other Polish compositions for traditional instruments).¹⁶ This relative indifference towards electroacoustic composition was magnified by the appearance in *Ruch Muzyczny*, Poland's most important music

14 Bohdan Pilarski, "Orfeusz na nowej drodze," *Przegląd Kulturalny* (22 October 1959), 7.

15 Lisa Jakelski has noted the conservative tendencies of Poland's young music students during the early years of the Warsaw Autumn Festival. Lisa Jakelski, *Making New Music in Cold War Poland. The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 83–84.

16 Tadeusz Kaczyński, "Muzyka eksperymentalna," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/21 (1960), 18–19; Lucjan Kydryński, "Muzyczna Jesień jest potrzebna!," *Przekrój* 808 (2 October 1960), 7; Bohdan Pocię, "Muzyka polska 1960, czyli o potrzebie, kierunkach i granicach nowatorstwa," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/21 (1960), 23; Monika Gorczycka, "Wobec nowych wymiarów (na marginesie *Musique en relief* i *Epizodów*)," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/21 (1960), 14–15; Tadeusz Zieliński, "Polska muzyka na 'Warszawskiej Jesieni,'" *Przegląd Kulturalny* 41 (8 October 1960), 7; Lech Terpiłowski, "Granica zdrowego rozsądku," *Głos Pracy* (29 September 1960).

magazine, of individual articles devoted to single works of Polish composers at that year's Festival. None of these featured electronic pieces.

If in 1960 many writers declined to support electroacoustic music, the situation did not improve over the next few years, when presumably both critics and composers became more familiar with this medium's possibilities. In 1963, such pieces were again seldom critiqued by Festival commentators. Nine works were presented at that year's Festival electroacoustic concert, by three Polish composers (Wiszniewski, Dobrowolski, and Kotoński) and six foreigners (Lejaren Hiller, Luciano Berio, Hermann Heiss, Josef Anton Riedl, Bruno Maderna, and Bengt Hambraeus). Stanisław Żelechowski thought the survival of this type of music as an independent art form was still "problematic," although he simultaneously alluded to the tremendous audience interest in such pieces.¹⁷ Pocij considered the concert to be boring and lacking in mature compositions. He lamented the inherent weakness of the sound materials, which in his opinion had limited composers' imaginations.¹⁸ Pocij, typically favored the more inventive acoustic works of Polish composers, which made these negative remarks appear all the more strident.

As mentioned earlier, both Polish and foreign works for traditional instruments and voices were discussed at length in the Polish press. Praiseworthy works in 1959 included Górecki's *Symphony* No. 1, described by Bohdan Pilarski as reflecting a musical world that was "unusual and disturbing ... [but — C.B.] contemporary," and Penderecki's *Strophes*, lauded by the same writer as "an entirely different world."¹⁹ The same descriptions could have been applied to the *musique concrète* pieces heard that year, but those were not equally welcomed in Warsaw. In 1960, Górecki's *Scontri* drew much of the critical attention. It was acclaimed as "powerful, expansive, explosive emotion," even with orchestral sounds

17 Stanisław Żelechowski, "VII Warszawska Jesień a Wisła," *Kierunki* 40 (6 October 1963), 5.

18 Bohdan Pocij, "Prądy i kierunki," *Przegląd Kulturalny* (13 October 1960); Bohdan Pocij, "Koncert muzyki elektronicznej i konkretnej," *Ruch Muzyczny* 7/22 (1963), 17.

19 Pilarski, "Orfeusz na nowej drodze," 7.

reminiscent of electronic music and *musique concrète*, but it was also denigrated as “much noise about nothing.”²⁰

In 1962, when Penderecki’s *Psalmus 1961* was heard, critics preferred to discuss his *Canon*, which incorporated tape playback during a live performance. The target of derisive whistling from some, mostly younger audience members, *Canon* was also either praised or ridiculed by critics. Some, including Kisielewski, admired its acoustical effects. Rozbicki derided it as creating a “cheap sensation”²¹; Żelechowski found it “gloomy,” but interesting.²²

Discovering the Boundaries

Although audiences filled the halls for electroacoustic concerts every year (as they did for many festival events), these pieces never received the same attention in print as compositions performed live, using recognizable musical instruments. Perhaps most importantly, these works were not perceived by many writers as deserving such scrutiny, for they chose to discuss many other compositions, even if they disliked them. The primary concern alluded to by most critics, both young and old, was that the electroacoustic pieces presented could not be identified as something they recognized as music. Although some admitted that specific works were at least mildly interesting, others who chose to discuss these pieces doubted that such technological productions would ever lead to viable independent compositions, whether created in Poland or elsewhere.

Some critics blamed the technology itself for this limitation of scope. As Władysław Malinowski put it in 1960, since there were unlimited ways, in which to create and organize electronic sounds, listeners had no framework of aesthetic or constructive expectations with which to confront any

20 Zieliński, “Polska muzyka na ‘Warszawskiej Jesieni’”; Joachim Olkuśnik, “O IV Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej i Nowej Muzyce Polskiej,” *Współczesność* 21 (1–15 November 1960).

21 Rozbicki, “Na festiwalu bez zmian.”

22 Stanisław Żelechowski, “VI Warszawska Jesień,” *Kierunki* (30 September 1962), 3.

given electroacoustic composition. For many, these works seemed to consist of nothing more than collections of random sounds. The same year as Malinowski's comments appeared however, Kaczyński was able to discern some formal structure in the electroacoustic pieces by Hank Badings and Franco Evangelisti.²³ Moreover, deciphering novel structures in acoustic works was also problematic for many, but not all Warsaw Autumn reviewers, as alluded to above. But while most Polish critics were willing to confront the novel aspects of pieces for traditional instruments, including the innovative *Scontri*, they were less interested in engaging with compositions that relied on newer technological means.²⁴

Were Polish critics and audiences not prepared for the different mode of reception that electroacoustic music required? They sat or stood in the National Philharmonic's recital hall and looked at—loudspeakers, or perhaps nothing at all. Program notes were provided only in 1961, which was also the only year in which live instruments appeared on stage in presentations featuring electronic sounds. Notwithstanding the lack of typical visual aids, however, anyone attending a Warsaw Autumn Festival concert should have been prepared to listen closely to unfamiliar compositions. For many writers, however, such electroacoustic pieces seemed to cross the boundaries of what they would accept as an independent musical work. The world of experimental music, for these critics, did not include one of its most radical options, that being electroacoustic sound sources.

In 1960, Malinowski also delineated what he (and probably others) perceived to be another problem with these pieces—their “final and unchanging manner” and the resulting loss of interpretation provided by live

23 Władysław Malinowski, “Nowa muzyka czy nowy słuchacz?” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/17 (1960), 3; Kaczyński, “Muzyka eksperymentalna”; Żelechowski, “VI Warszawska Jesień”; Żelechowski, “VII Warszawska Jesień a Wisła.”

24 Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the reception of electroacoustic music in other countries, it is apparent that it was also criticized elsewhere in Europe and in the United States in the 1950s and early 1960s for reasons similar to those given above. Joanna Demers, *Listening Through the Noise. The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 21–22.

performances.²⁵ This raises a corollary question, one that would have been important in a socialist country that boasted of a cultural environment in which everyone could participate: How would these electroacoustic pieces be disseminated? Since live performers were often not needed, critics and teachers could not discuss different interpretations of performance, except perhaps to compare stage effects, such as lighting and loudspeaker placement. These compositions, then, might have seemed to be an elitist, intellectual invention, of interest to their creators, but not to Polish audiences. But crowded halls of presumably attentive listeners belie that interpretation, exposing divisions between audience interest and critical taste (not to mention composers' desires). Although few reports mentioned specific audience reactions during these concerts,²⁶ overcrowded venues were a perennial feature of nearly all Festival concerts that featured stylistically adventurous repertoire. Furthermore, while critical commentary has almost always reflected a delayed response with regard to innovation, the apparent chasm between published remarks and the level of audience interest in electroacoustic music in the late 1950s and early 1960s reflected the conservatism asserted by many critics within the lively, if contentious atmosphere that marked Polish contemporary music and the Warsaw Autumn Festival at that time.

Issues of identity and boundary permeated the reviews under discussion here. As noted earlier, the ideas of emotionality and audience appeal were eventually accepted by many commentators as essential traits that distinguished Polish compositions of the late 1950s and early 1960s from those of other countries. By establishing these demarcations, even if fluidly defined, compositions could be identified as somehow uniquely Polish. Jakelski, for example, has described how critics and composers managed to situate *Scontri*, with its unusual arrangement of instruments and contrasting blocks of sound that partially hid its serial aspects, within

25 Malinowski, "Nowa muzyka czy nowy słuchacz?"

26 One exception in 1958 referenced audiences sitting quietly at the electronic music concert. Waldorff, "Sprzątanie ze stołu."

parameters that, at least for some, made it an acceptable, even commendable Polish composition.²⁷

Yet discerning emotion and appeal in electroacoustic music seemed to be problematic for most Polish reviewers. In 1960, when Pociiej searched for a common national denominator among younger Polish composers, the terms he used included “anti-speculative” and “expressive,” both qualities most Polish critics were unwilling to attribute to the field of electroacoustic music.²⁸ Malinowski’s concerns related to the methodology for critical evaluations were cited above. For Kisielewski in 1961, pieces using this technology were examples of “extreme experiments” that lacked the promise of great expressive possibilities.²⁹ Patkowski, perhaps anticipating such responses, had attempted early on to ascribe aesthetic values to such compositions. In 1956, he had situated electroacoustic music as an extension of early 20th century aesthetic and technical ideas espoused by composers such as Stravinsky and Webern.³⁰ In 1961 and 1963 radio broadcasts (published in *Horyzonty Muzyki*), he had continued this train of thought by relating the listening experience of electroacoustic music to that of instrumental music, pointing out their similarities of acoustical phenomena.³¹

Other writers, however, pointed to yet another aspect, they found troublesome, one that seemingly invalidated Patkowski’s desire to place electroacoustic music within the continuum of twentieth-century compositional developments. They claimed the aesthetic experiences of such pieces were inherently poor due to the foreign influences they reflected. In 1959, one critic, writing in the Communist Party newspaper *Trybuna*

27 Lisa Jakelski, “Górecki’s *Scontri*,” 221–236.

28 Bohdan Pociiej, “Świt awangardy. Na marginesie III Warszawskiej Jesieni,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/1 (1960), 10.

29 Stefan Kisielewski, “Warszawska Jesień po raz piąty,” *Życie Warszawy* (16 September 1961), 3; Stefan Kisielewski, “Muzyka atomowa i pierożki,” *Życie Warszawy* (30 September 1961), 3.

30 Józef Patkowski, “O muzyce elektronicznej i konkretnej,” *Muzyka* 7/3 (1956), 49–68.

31 Józef Patkowski and Anna Skrzyńska, eds., *Horyzonty Muzyki* (Kraków: PWM, 1970), nos. 17, 30.

Ludu, asserted that young Polish composers should look to Chopin and Szymanowski for inspiration, not to the modern, foreign, and transitory phenomena of *musique concrète* and electronic music.³² Yes, *Trybuna Ludu* was a Party tract, but electronic music was financially supported by the government; this critic thus contributed a semi-official voice to the emerging debate about the proper character of Polish music.³³ Tadeusz Szeligowski, a respected but conservative composer and former head of the Polish Composers Union, included Cologne, the home of one of the first electronic music studios, as a source of music that was foreign to Poland, and Germany as a discriminatory country whose musical influences (not only in the area of electroacoustic means) created a threat for Polish composers.³⁴ Furthermore, these and other critics discerned no difference in the electroacoustic works produced in Warsaw and those created elsewhere, making the Polish examples susceptible to critiques of derivation, not works that could represent the special qualities of Polish composition.

Superimposed on these concerns were issues such as the resentment of some more traditionally-oriented composers towards those (primarily younger) composers who explored more avant-garde compositional techniques and who consequently (in the view of these more conventional composers, including Szeligowski) benefited from favoritism in commissions and foreign travel.³⁵ Additionally, broader questions such as the uneasy state of the Polish-West German borders around 1960 and the government's recent efforts to repopulate the western part of postwar Poland with ethnic Poles, which resulted in a homogenous population relatively devoid of foreigners, contributed to an atmosphere that for at least a few musicians made contact with and imitation of western Europe less than

32 *ibid.*, "Zakończenie Warszawskiej Jesieni," *Trybuna Ludu* (21 September 1959).

33 For information on governmental concerns about the activities of PRES in its early years, See Vest, "The Discursive Foundations of the Polish Musical Avant-Garde," 198–202.

34 As Jakelski has remarked, Szeligowski had been one of the primary players in the 1960 debate about the future of Polish music. Tadeusz Szeligowski, "Niebezpieczeństwa estetyzmu. Z przemówienia Tadeusza Szeligowskiego," *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/2 (1961), 1; Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 205–239.

35 Lisa Jakelski, "Górecki's *Scontri*," 225–231.

desirable. Furthermore, Szeligowski's references to Germany, cited above, invoked the memory of foreign occupation during World War II as well as during other periods of relatively recent Polish history. This layering of social memory on top of musical composition was also to affect the reception of Penderecki's *Brigade of Death*.

Brigade of Death

The multiple factors mentioned above—function, structure, emotional appeal, influences, and dissemination—harken back to the arguments presented by Jakelski and Vest regarding expressiveness and a kind of national idiosyncrasy as being the necessary prime ingredients for criticism of Polish composition, particularly those pieces bearing an experimental flair. This brings us to the problem of *Brigade of Death*, a tape piece that incorporates manipulated orchestral and electronic sounds, including sirens and sounds representing heartbeats under a narrator reading diary excerpts that recounted Nazi attempts to destroy evidence of mass murders at the Janowska concentration camp near Lvov, which during the interwar period had been part of Poland. For many in the audience at its premiere in 1964, the text's stark, appalling realism was not acceptable. Indeed, the Holocaust was difficult for many to talk about at that time. Some had only recently learned (via Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1961) of the full extent of the atrocities.³⁶ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz implied that with this piece, Penderecki had crossed the line between “emotion and brutal barbarism” at a time when he should have been more discerning about what was presented to the Polish public.³⁷ Zygmunt Mycielski, who frequently questioned the viability of both dodecaphony and electroacoustic techniques

36 Leah Abramowitz, “The Eichmann Trial: 50 Years Later,” http://www.aish.com/ho/i/The_Eichmann_Trial_50_Years_Later.html (last accessed 7 June 2018). See also <http://www.archives.gov.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Eichmann-List-of-Documents1.pdf> (last accessed 7 June 2018) for information on Polish governmental concerns about the trial.

37 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, “Miara i waga,” *Twórczość* 3 (1964), 86.

as appropriate methodologies for musical creation, called the composition of *Brigade of Death* a mistake, saying its text should not have been forced on an unsuspecting public. Tadeusz Ochlewski, the director of Polish Music Publishers (PWM), which organized the concert, admitted that the piece should not have been programmed. However, he also acknowledged Penderecki's right to compositional freedom and as such, the privilege of reacting to events as he desired. Only Mycielski critiqued Penderecki's musical setting, which provided an evocative underlay to the text. In his opinion, setting the text to music created a work of art, which the authenticity of the words did not merit: "art ends where true realism begins."³⁸

However, let us imagine for a moment. If criteria such as emotional response, comprehensibility, and structural cohesion had been applied to this piece, perhaps *Brigade of Death* should have been considered a critical success, for it clearly embraces such traits. As a point of comparison, another war-related piece, Schoenberg's *Survivor from Warsaw*, had been performed and encores at the 1958 Warsaw Autumn Festival. That composition, however, was more a commemoration of war events than a documentary of actual experiences. Its presentation at an international event rather than a domestic concert likely also impacted its reception, as did its avoidance of electronic means.

Despite tremendous audience interest in electroacoustic concerts, most Polish critics were reluctant to recognize this new means of creating music as relevant to their world. Many writers, notwithstanding Patkowski's educational efforts, seemed unable or unwilling to explain electroacoustic music in a way that fit into their manufactured constructs related to Polish contemporary composition, even though by avoiding or condemning this music, they were also rejecting, at least in part, government-supported compositional techniques. Paradoxically, these critics were setting aside something that composers themselves had yearned for

38 Tadeusz Ochlewski, "Korespondencje. Audiatur et altera pars," *Twórczość* 6 (1964), 110; Zygmunt Mycielski, "Nieporozumienie," *Ruch Muzyczny* 8/5 (1964), 9; Beata Bolesławska-Lewandowska, *Zygmunt Mycielski — Andrzej Panufnik: Korespondencja. Część I: 1949–1969* (Warsaw: Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2016), 172.

during the socialist realist years, that being the flexibility to choose their own compositional style and language. At the same time, composers ignored critical commentary by continuing their efforts in this arena. Kotoński, for example, claimed an ongoing interest in such music. Penderecki stated that his work at Warsaw's electronic music studio provided the impetus for *Polymorphia* and other compositions. Zbigniew Bujarski acknowledged the vital role played by electroacoustic music in his own compositional development.³⁹

The boundaries that many critics had arbitrarily created for Polish contemporary composition did not allow the inclusion of this fledgling technological area, at least in the early 1960s. Perhaps, then, *Brigade of Death* was met with such resistance not solely because its text vividly described the heinous activities of wartime, but also because of its electronic backdrop. The emotionality and communicativeness achieved through its text and music were not enough to welcome it as a desirable example of Polish composition.

39 Małgorzata Gąsiorowska, *Rozmowy z Włodzimierzem Kotońskim* (Warsaw: Warszawska Jesień, 2010), 36–40; “The Passion of Krzysztof Penderecki,” <https://www.residentadvisor.net/features/1234> (last accessed 7 June 2018); “Owoce pięćdziesięciolecia—dyskusja końcowa,” in *Muzyka Polska 1945–1995*, eds. Krzysztof Droba, Teresa Malecka, Krzysztof Szwałajgier (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 1996), 386.

Electronic Music at Warsaw Autumn Festivals 1958–1963

<p>3 October 1958</p> <p>Herbert Eimert, <i>Fünf Stücke</i> – nos. 4 and 5 Luciano Berio, <i>Perspectives</i> Henri Pousseur, <i>Scambi</i> Bruno Maderna, <i>Continuo</i> Karlheinz Stockhausen, <i>Gesang der Jünglinge</i> György Ligeti, <i>Artikulation</i></p>	<p>1961 – no monographic concert</p> <p><u>21 September 1961</u> Luciano Berio, <i>Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)</i> for voice and electronics Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, <i>Interpolation</i> for flute and tape Bruno Maderna, <i>Dimensioni II/Invenzione su una voce</i> for voice and tape John Cage, <i>Fontana Mix with Aria</i> for soprano and tape <u>22 September 1961</u> Mauricio Kagel, <i>Transicion II</i> for piano, percussion and 2 tapes</p>
<p>17 September 1959 (musique concrète)</p> <p>Pierre Schaeffer, <i>Bidule en ut</i> Pierre Schaeffer, <i>Variations sur une flûte mexicaine</i> Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, <i>Symphonie pour un homme seul</i> Michel Philippot, <i>Ambiance I</i> Iannis Xenakis, <i>Diamorphoses</i> François Bernard Mâche, <i>Prélude</i> Pierre Schaeffer, <i>Etude aux objets</i> Luc Ferrari, <i>Visage 5</i></p>	<p>22 September 1962</p> <p>Luc Ferrari, <i>Tautologos II</i> Zbigniew Wiszniewski, <i>Db-Hz-Sek</i> Andrzej Dobrowolski, <i>Music for Tape No. 1</i> Luigi Nono, <i>Omaggio a Emilio Vedova</i> Josef Anton Riedl, <i>Studie 1961</i> Krzysztof Penderecki, <i>Psalmus 1961</i> Mauricio Kagel, <i>Transicion I</i></p>
<p>21 September 1960</p> <p>Włodzimierz Kotoński, <i>Etude on a Single Cymbal Stroke</i> Franco Evangelisti, <i>Incontri de fasce sonore</i> Hank Badings, <i>Electromagnetic Sound Figures</i> John Cage, <i>Fontana Mix</i> Luciano Berio, <i>Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)</i> André Zumbach, <i>Etude</i></p>	<p>26 September 1963</p> <p>Andrzej Dobrowolski, <i>Music for Tape No. 1</i> Zbigniew Wiszniewski, <i>3 Postludes</i> Lejaren Hiller, <i>7 Electronic Studies – VII. Peroration</i> Hermann Heiss, <i>Zu Ordnung IV</i> Luciano Berio, <i>Momenti</i> Josef Anton Riedl, <i>Studie 1962</i> Bruno Maderna, <i>Serenata III</i> Bengt Hambraeus, <i>Rota II</i> Włodzimierz Kotoński, <i>Microstructures</i></p>

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ABSTRACT*Interpreting Boundaries: The Reception of Electroacoustic Music in Poland 1958–1964*

Beginning in 1958, electroacoustic compositions realized at the Polish Radio Experimental Studio and other extant studios were heard annually at the Warsaw Autumn Festival. Although these efforts were welcomed by many Polish composers, including Penderecki, Kotoński, and Dobrowolski, and overall domestic reception of this music was markedly apathetic, especially compared to the profusion of commentaries on other innovative works for traditional instruments. In this paper, I explore the reasons behind this relative neglect, focusing on how Polish critics related these examples of *musique concrète* and electronic music to the narrative many of them were currently advocating for Polish composition, which promoted emotional appeal within a uniquely Polish musical paradigm. When viewed within the broader context of Polish musical life in the early 1960s, the Studio's early achievements were not appreciated as fully as has often been claimed retrospectively.

KEYWORDS: electroacoustic music, *musique concrète*, Krzysztof Penderecki, *The Brigade of Death*, Polish Radio Experimental Studio, critical reception, Józef Patkowski, Warsaw Autumn

STRESZCZENIE*Objaśnianie granic. Recepcja muzyki elektroakustycznej w Polsce w latach 1958–1964*

Od 1958 roku kompozycje elektroakustyczne zrealizowane w Studiu Eksperymentalnym Polskiego Radia oraz innych studiach były co roku prezentowane na Festiwalu „Warszawska Jesień”. Choć działania te z zadowoleniem przyjmowało wielu polskich kompozytorów, m.in. Penderecki, Kotoński i Dobrowolski, ogólna recepcja tej muzyki była zdecydowanie niemrawa, szczególnie w porównaniu z obfitością komentarzy na temat innych innowacyjnych utworów na instrumenty tradycyjne. W pracy analizuję powody tego swoistego zaniedbania, skupiając się na tym, jak krytycy polscy odnosili te przykłady *musique concrète* i muzyki elektronicznej do narracji, za którą wielu z nich opowiadało się w odniesieniu do muzyki polskiej wyróżniającej się emocjonalnością w specyficznym polskim paradygmacie muzycznym. Gdy się je analizuje w szerszym kontekście polskiego życia muzycznego na początku lat 60., można stwierdzić, iż wczesne osiągnięcia Studia nie były w pełni doceniane w takim stopniu, jak to się często twierdzi z perspektywy czasu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: muzyka elektroakustyczna, *musique concrète*, Krzysztof Penderecki, *Brygada śmierci*, Studio Eksperymentalne Polskiego Radia, recepcja, Józef Patkowski, „Warszawska Jesień”.