

Listening to Szymanowski: Rhetoric Versus Performance 1945-1955

CINDY BYLANDER

Independent Scholar · Fort Collins, Colorado USA · ✉ bylanderc@gmail.com

During the first decade following World War II, one of the many issues facing the Polish music community concerned how to approach the persona and output of Karol Szymanowski. Given his stature during his lifetime and his personal acquaintance with many postwar musicians, it would have been difficult to ignore him, even if not everyone considered him a national treasure. Both revered and rebuked before the war for his modernist leanings, musicians and music institutions after 1945 needed to decide which of his compositions to perform and how to critique his contributions. These questions were directly related to the more crucial mission of determining what Poland's postwar musical world would look like. Szymanowski's legacy would thus be shaped by decisions made not only by his former admirers and adversaries, but also by cultural authorities in the newly redrawn country.

Inevitably, the landscape of Polish music immediately following the war was tied to recollections of prewar activities, compositions, and personalities. As the political climate evolved in Poland during this decade, however, what space existed to retain differing opinions about Szymanowski? Would advocates of socialist realism treat Szymanowski's music as a model for contemporary composition, as they did with Chopin's, or describe it as inappropriate for postwar Poland? Would it be possible during the socialist realist years to perform all of his works, including those replete with harmonic dissonances and references to foreign cultures? How would Poland celebrate the 10th and 15th anniversaries of Szymanowski's

death, which took place in 1947 and 1952, two distinctly different years politically speaking.

As noted by many scholars, governmental institutions in Poland, aided by the Soviet Union, played a rather heavy-handed role in shaping postwar musical life, especially between 1948 and 1953. Witold Lutosławski's Symphony No. 1 and Zbigniew Turski's Symphony No. 2 *Olympic* are the most notorious examples of works that disappeared from concert programs after 1949 due to their allegedly formalist characteristics.¹ This exclusionary behavior extended to prose, since, to my knowledge, no positive commentaries on these pieces appeared in print during the same period. These symphonies were denounced primarily by governmental officials, not by musicians evaluating the quality of compositions. If derogatory statements by governmental representatives could cause these compositions to be denied public performances, other compositions could conceivably be treated similarly.

Szymanowski's music was subjected to some of the same critiques that faced his younger compatriots. Critics, musicians, and cultural officials did not agree on the value of his compositions to Poland's postwar musical world. When comparing written and verbal assessments of Szymanowski's music to concert programs and radio broadcasts, a clear dichotomy exists, for the view of his output presented via performances did not reflect the nuances of his critical reception. In this essay, I will attempt to discover the extent of this discrepancy and understand why it may have happened. In doing so, we will discern a degree of institutional flexibility and personal initiative that helped make this postwar decade not one of monolithic authoritarianism, but a more fluid, albeit still restrictive period that engendered resourcefulness and perseverance among many of its participants.

¹ Danuta Gwizdalanka and Krzysztof Meyer, *Witold Lutosławski. Droga do dojrzałości* (Kraków: PWM, 2003), 183; "Konferencja kompozytorów w Łagowie Lubuskim," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/14 (1949), 18-19.

Szymanowski reception in prose

Szymanowski's critical reception has been discussed recently in monographs by Lisa Cooper Vest and Sławomir Wieczorek.² My brief remarks here will hopefully add more detail to their efforts. Some writers, including Stefan Kisielewski and Roman Palester, maintained a consistently positive opinion of Szymanowski as a composer who sought his own creative path.³ Others seemed to moderate their views or at least emphasize distinct aspects of his music according to the political mood of the day.

Until 1948, many critics and composers willingly praised Szymanowski and his music. (If his prewar adversaries — Piotr Rytel being the most vocal opponent — held different opinions, these were not published, to my knowledge.)⁴ For example, Stefania Łobaczewska in 1946 declared that Szymanowski's music should be performed throughout Poland, where he should be recognized as a leader in contemporary music.⁵ A year later, Adam Rieger remarked that "if someone doesn't recognize beauty ... in the [...] achievements of Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith or Szymanowski, God be with him."⁶

In late 1948, when the tenets of socialist realism began to be broadly discussed in Polish music circles,⁷ Szymanowski's image took a direct hit, in the person of Włodzimierz Sokorski, vice-minister of the Ministry

2 Lisa Cooper Vest, "The Discursive Foundations of the Polish Musical Avant-Garde at Midcentury: Aesthetics of Progress, Meaning, and National Identity" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 2014), 266–285; Sławomir Wieczorek, *Na froncie muzyki. Socrealistyczny dyskurs o muzyce w Polsce w latach 1948–1955* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2014), 212–215.

3 Roman Palester, "Droga do muzyki polskiej," *Odrodzenie* 20 (1945), 5; Stefan Kisielewski, "O twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego," in *Z muzyką przez lata* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1957 [1947]), 50–62; originally published in *Twórczość* 4 (1947).

4 At the 1950 Polish Composers Union congress, Rytel criticized what he perceived as Szymanowski's excessive influence on postwar composition, but these remarks were not published. ZKP, Akt 12/5, v Walny Zjazd (16, 17, 18.VI.1950 W-wa), 41.

5 Stefania Łobaczewska, "Przed nowym sezonem koncertowym," *Odrodzenie* 39 (1946), 12.

6 Adam Rieger, "Z prasy zagranicznej," *Ruch Muzyczny* 3/10 (1947), 13.

7 Cindy Bylander, "Cliches Revisited: Poland's 1949 Łagów Composers' Conference," *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* 13 (2015), 19–22.

of Culture and Art. For Sokorski, Szymanowski's music embraced new technical achievements, which were desirable according to socialist realist rhetoric, but his execution of these techniques was incorrect, for he employed "formalist methods of composition" that echoed "the chaos of a dying world."⁸ Sokorski did not point to specific works or periods of Szymanowski's creativity, apparently condemning all of his compositions.

In 1949, comments about Szymanowski's music that were printed in the government-controlled weekly *Radio i Świat* shifted rather abruptly from outright praise in late March to remarks about its performance difficulties and elitist nature in late June.⁹ These later remarks were undoubtedly a nod to the government's ongoing push towards greater accessibility for the broad public, which was already being reinforced in meetings of Poland's creative unions. (A composers' conference in Łagów would occur in August.) In 1950, Chopin and Moniuszko were cited in a *Ruch Muzyczny* editorial as representatives of "national art"; Szymanowski was not mentioned.¹⁰ Further complicating the critical scene regarding Szymanowski at the turn of the decade, however, Zofia Lissa claimed to appreciate his compositional craft and the progress it had represented during the interwar period.¹¹ Her defense of the composer thus differed from the opinions offered in *Radio i Świat* and by the Ministry of Culture and Art's representative (Sokorski), whose ideological viewpoints she frequently favored.

By 1951, a decision needed to be made. If Szymanowski's music was to be performed on that year's months-long Festival of Polish Music (organized primarily by the Ministry of Culture and Art), could it be described in terms more in line with the socialist realist aesthetics being promoted

8 Włodzimierz Sokorski, "Formalizm i realizm w muzyce," *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/23-24 (1948), 3.

9 J. P., "W 12-tą rocznicę śmierci K. Szymanowskiego," *Radio i Świat* 5/13 (28 March-3 April 1949), 10; "Karol Szymanowski," *Radio i Świat* 5/26 (27 June-3 July 1949), 2.

10 [Editorial], *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/9 (1949), 1.

11 ZKP, Akt 12/5, 45-46. Mackenzie Pierce has pointed to Lissa's advocacy in the early postwar years of both compositions understandable by the musically literate and works that were accessible to broader audiences. Mackenzie Pierce, "Polish Music in Soviet Exile during the Second World War." Paper presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society.

throughout the country? Tadeusz Marek's essay for the festival's program book accomplished this task. After acknowledging Szymanowski's talent and technical mastery, he asserted that the composer had passed through several stylistic stages typical of interwar composers before turning to folk music for inspiration, at last — and most importantly — absorbing Polish national musical traditions.¹² By the end of the year, Sokorski also softened the tone of his earlier remarks, admiring the emotional quality of Szymanowski's music but still criticizing its concentration on “rebellion, [...] anger and despair.”¹³ Festival audiences enthusiastically greeted Szymanowski's music, publicly acknowledging their admiration for this interwar figure despite (or perhaps in response to) the more disparaging remarks made by Sokorski and others.¹⁴

In early 1952, Łobaczewska offered a sharpened view of Szymanowski's music, but one also related to Marek's comments. In her opinion, our composer eventually saw the error of his ways and “escaped” the path that led to Western avant-garde music. Such pieces as his Symphony No. 3 and Violin Concerto No. 1 bore traits of “Western bourgeoisie countries,” but *Harnasie* and the *Kurpian Songs* could be linked to Polish national traditions, to “truth and progress”. Łobaczewska had voiced similar, although less strident opinions as early as 1947, when she declared Szymanowski to be a national composer despite his tendencies towards a more intentionally international style.¹⁵ Her 1947 statements also reflected, in part, the positive opinion of Szymanowski she had given in 1946, as cited earlier. As Lisa Cooper Vest has discussed, Łobaczewska had little desire to completely denounce Szymanowski.¹⁶ Her wish to maintain a distinct Polish

12 Tadeusz Marek, “O realistycznych i narodowych tradycjach muzyki polskiej,” in *Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Program Otwarcia. Kwiecień 1951* (1951), 16.

13 Speech given at the 1951 ZKP conference. Włodzimierz Sokorski, “Od Łagowa do Festiwalu Muzyki Polskiej,” *Muzyka* 3/1-2 (1952), 9.

14 Wawrzyniec Żuławski, “Koncerty Finałowe Festiwalu Muzyki Polskiej,” *Nowa Kultura* 50 (16 December 1951), 3.

15 Stefania Łobaczewska, “Dlaczego uważamy Szymanowskiego za kompozytora narodowego?,” *Odrodzenie* 12 (1947), 2; Stefania Łobaczewska, “Karol Szymanowski i zagadnienie tradycji narodowych,” *Przegląd Kulturalny* 1/5 (1952), 6.

16 Vest, “The Discursive Foundations”, 269-273.

national identity in music was of paramount importance, and was somewhat understandable in the historical moment, given Poland's tendency to be occupied by foreign powers.

As the cultural thaw progressed in the mid-1950s, officials softened their views on permissible compositional styles. Marek's remarks on Szymanowski printed in the 1956 Warsaw Autumn Festival's program book embraced this liberation. He declared that Szymanowski admired Chopin not so much for his mazurkas and polonaises, but because he was "one of the greatest musical revolutionaries, [...] In destroying formal and spiritual tradition[s], he opened the path to freedom."¹⁷ Finding a path to freedom, of course, was the goal for much of Polish society, including its composers and performers, in 1956.

Szymanowski in performance

What was the effect, if any, of these pronouncements about Szymanowski's music on the concerts and radio broadcasts available to most Polish citizens? If such programming paralleled the discursive biases described above, immediately following the war, these events would have reflected an overall appreciation for Szymanowski's music. In 1949 and especially in 1950, after Sokorski's formalist branding of his music and the infamous Łagów composers conference, most, if not all of his works should have disappeared from programs, following the models of Lutosławski and Turcki cited earlier. Beginning in 1951, works of his last, folkloristic period would have been emphasized, if not performed exclusively, affirming his relationship to Polish national traditions. Finally, embracing a symmetry to the decade, during the years of the cultural thaw, concert programming would again have encompassed Szymanowski's entire output. In reality, such transformations did not occur.

¹⁷ *Program I-go Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1956), 94.

In reconstructing the performance history of Szymanowski's music in Poland during the first postwar decade, I have looked at concert programs, press reviews, and radio broadcast schedules. These radio schedules do not list every work presented to listeners. It is also difficult to determine what changes may have been made after programs were printed. Nevertheless, I believe I have been able to gather a comprehensive, if still incomplete picture of the concert scene in Poland at that time. To simplify our discussion, only Polish performances of Szymanowski's major orchestral pieces will be examined here.

Of course, such performances could not take place without scores and parts, many of which were initially unavailable in postwar Poland. Despite the lack of contractual agreements with Szymanowski's interwar publishers, among them Universal Edition and Éditions Max Eschig, Polish Music Publishers (PWM) in 1953 announced plans to publish all of Szymanowski's music; some pieces had already been printed in Poland or imported from abroad by that time. Regardless, performances of his music had begun immediately after the war, as any available parts could be copied as needed. Some performers undoubtedly still remembered various chamber compositions they had memorized prior to the outbreak of the war.¹⁸

In general, Szymanowski's works were not neglected at any point during the decade in question, whether on concerts, recitals, or radio. There were, of course, favorite works — on recital programs, works such as *Nocturne* and *Tarantella*, Etude in B flat minor, various mazurkas, and “Roxanna's Song” from *King Roger* were frequently heard.

On orchestral programs (see Figure 1), the picture is similar, with some omissions that can be justified. Violin Concerto No. 1, Symphony No. 4, and Concert Overture were heard in ten of the eleven seasons reviewed (1945/1946 to 1955/1956). Orchestral excerpts from *Harnasie*

18 Tadeusz Ochlewski, “Sprawozdanie,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/11–12 (1946), 20–21; [PWM Advertisement] *Ruch Muzyczny* 3/5 (1947), 26; [PWM Advertisement] *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/15–16 (1946), 45–46; Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne. Biuletyn Wydawniczy Nr 2 (1952) (available in the Concert Program Collection, National Library, Warsaw, Poland (hereafter BN Collection); tyb. “Notatnik Muzyczny. Dzieła Szymanowskiego będą wydane,” *Przegląd Kulturalny* 2/21 (1953), 7.

were played every year. Either Symphony No. 2 or Symphony No. 3, both middle-period works, were programmed every year beginning with the 1947–1948 season.

Figure 1. Orchestral performances

Concert Overture	1945/1946–1950/1951, 1952/1953–1955/1956
Symphony No. 2	1948/1949, 1951/1952–1954/1955
Violin Concerto No. 1	1945/1946–1954/1955
Symphony No. 3	1947/1948–1951/1952, 1953/1954, 1955/1956
<i>Harnasie</i>	1945/1946–1955/1956
Symphony No. 4	1945/1946–1954/1955

Several interesting exceptions must be considered. As Figure 2 indicates, *Litany to the Virgin Mary* was not performed after mid-1947, while *Stabat Mater* was not presented between 1948 and 1952. The *Stabat Mater* performances occurred during commemorations of Szymanowski's death. Although the Composers Union had recommended that *Stabat Mater* be presented at the 1951 Festival of Polish Music, the piece was not programmed.¹⁹ The sacred nature of the texts for these pieces, which clashed with Poland's officially atheistic views, may have precluded such performances. It is perhaps more surprising that *Stabat Mater* was heard again in 1952 and 1953, prior to Stalin's death. Tadeusz Marek's program note for each of those performances alluded to *Stabat Mater's* folk sources, which may have prevented any objections from authorities.²⁰ Moreover, both pieces were listed in PWM's 1952 catalog despite their religious character and relative lack of performances.²¹ These compositions thus still existed within Poland's socialist realist environment, thanks to the efforts

19 ZKP Akt 12/29, Protokoły posiedzeń Prezydium ZG ZKP r. 1951–1952. Protokół z posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Gł. w dniu 11 czerwca 1951 r.

20 Tadeusz Marek, program notes for Warsaw Philharmonic concert, 4 April 1952. BN collection.

21 Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne. Biuletyn Wydawniczy Nr 2 (1952).

of writers (Marek), independent-minded publishers (Tadeusz Ochlewski, the head of PWM), and conductors (in 1952 and 1953, Bohdan Wodiczko and Witold Rowicki led *Stabat Mater*).

Figure 2. *Stabat Mater* and *Litany to the Virgin Mary*²²

<i>Stabat Mater</i>	<i>Litany to the Virgin Mary</i>
1945-1946: 3 (2 C + 1 PR)	1945-1946: 2 (2 C)
1946-1947: 2 (2 C)	1946-1947: 1 (1 C)
1947-1948: 2 (1 C + 1 PR)	
1951-1952: 2 (2 C)	
1952-1953: 1 (1 C)	
1953-1954: 2 (1 C + 1 PR)	
1954-1955: 4 (2 C + 2 PR)	

During the 1949-1951 seasons, Szymanowski's music could conceivably have disappeared from concert programs and radio broadcasts due to Sokorski's disparaging remarks made in late 1948. Such a scenario did not occur, as shown in Figure 3. Each of Szymanowski's major orchestral works was heard multiple times, as were many smaller compositions. Symphony No. 2 was not performed during the 1949-1950 season, most likely because Grzegorz Fitelberg, who had the only extant copy of the score, had given it to PWM.²³

22 I have distinguished between concert programs and radio broadcasts as follows: C means the piece was presented in concert; PR indicates a scheduled broadcast listed in *Radio i Świat*. Repeat concert performances the same weekend by the same ensemble are not counted, but Polish Radio broadcasts of live concerts are included. The *Harnasie* references are to performances of orchestral excerpts, not arrangements for violin and piano, which were presented many times; the complete ballet was presented once, in Poznań in 1947. Compositions are listed chronologically.

23 *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga z lat 1941-1953*, ed. Leon Markiewicz (Katowice: Fundacja Muzyczna Międzynarodowego Konkursu Dyrygentów im. Grzegorza Fitelberga, 2003), 186, 191, 202, 241.

Figure 3. 1949–1951 Concert seasons

1949–1950:	
Concert Overture	2 (2 C)
Violin Concerto No. 1	2 (2 PR)
Symphony No. 3	2 (2 C)
<i>Harnasie</i>	6 (1 C + 5 PR)
Symphony No. 4	6 (3 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 2	1 (1 C)
1950–1951:	
Concert Overture	6 (3 C + 3 PR)
Symphony No. 2	5 (2 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 1	1 (1 PR)
Symphony No. 3	3 (2 C + 1 PR)
<i>Harnasie</i>	9 (5 C + 4 PR)
Symphony No. 4	3 (3 C)
Violin Concerto No. 2	3 (2 C + 1 PR)
1949–1951 Totals:	
Concert Overture	8 (5 C + 3 PR)
Symphony No. 2	5 (2 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 1	3 (3 PR)
Symphony No. 3	5 (4 C + 1 PR)
<i>Harnasie</i>	15 (6 C + 9 PR)
Symphony No. 4	9 (6 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 2	4 (3 C + 1 PR)

In comparing these two seasons (1949–1951) with the two previous years and the two that fell firmly within the years of the cultural thaw, 1953–1955 (see Figure 4), the only potentially significant variations can be seen with the Concert Overture and *Harnasie* excerpts, both of which skewed higher in the middle years, possible due to their performances at the 1951 Festival of Polish Music. Violin Concerto No. 1 was performed less frequently in the middle years (eight times between 1947 and 1949, three times during the middle years (1949–1951), and five times during the last two years (1953–1955). Symphony No. 3 was presented only twice in the last two years but had been programmed four or five times during

the other periods shown. Both compositions were performed by multiple conductors and soloists over the course of the decade. I know of no circumstances that would have prevented their performance during the years of the thaw. Since other compositions from the same Szymanowskian stylistic period were presented during that time, I suspect that this situation is merely the result of typical scheduling decisions.

Figure 4. Totals

1947–1949 Totals:	
Concert Overture	4 (4 C)
Symphony No. 2	4 (3 C + 1 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 1	8 (5 C + 3 PR)
Symphony No. 3	4 (2 C + 2 PR)
<i>Stabat Mater</i>	2 (1 C + 1 PR)
<i>Harnasie</i>	8 (4 C + 4 PR)
Symphony No. 4	9 (6 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 2	3 (2 C + 1 PR)
1949–1951 Totals:	
Concert Overture	8 (5 C + 3 PR)
Symphony No. 2	5 (2 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 1	3 (3 PR)
Symphony No. 3	5 (4 C + 1 PR)
<i>Harnasie</i>	15 (6 C + 9 PR)
Symphony No. 4	9 (6 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 2	4 (3 C + 1 PR)
1953–1955 Totals:	
Concert Overture	5 (3 C + 2 PR)
Symphony No. 2	4 (1 C + 3 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 1	5 (3 C + 2 PR)
Symphony No. 3	2 (1 C + 1 PR)
<i>Stabat Mater</i>	6 (3 C + 3 PR)
<i>Harnasie</i>	5 (1 C + 4 PR)
Symphony No. 4	7 (6 C + 1 PR)
Violin Concerto No. 2	2 (1 C + 1 PR)

As mentioned above, Szymanowski's career was described in 1951 as a trajectory of mastering compositional techniques before turning to national traditions. Did the organizers of that year's Festival of Polish Music select only Szymanowski's folklore-related compositions, which best matched the government's socialist realist notions? No. As Figure 5 indicates, although representative works of his final stylistic period were presented, so were his earlier works, for ex., Symphony No. 2, Symphony No. 3, Concert Overture, and Violin Concerto No. 1.

Figure 5. 1951 Festival of Polish Music

first stage:

Concert Overture, Symphony No. 2, Symphony No. 3, *Harnasie*,
6 Kurpian Songs — excerpts, Violin Concerto No. 2

final stage:

Violin Concerto No. 1, Quartet, Symphony No. 3, Symphony No. 4,
 Violin Concerto No. 2

Szymanowski's music retained its relative popularity for the remainder of the decade. The 1952 celebrations for the 15th anniversary of his death, held in late March and early April, prompted performances of many of his major works, as had also occurred in 1947 for the 10th anniversary. One difference undoubtedly inspired by the political climate in 1952 was the programming of at least one concert for workers, which included Szymanowski's chamber compositions, whereas in the less constrained atmosphere of 1947, masses were celebrated in Kraków and Częstochowa and *Stabat Mater* was heard twice. Szymanowski was represented on the 1955 Festival of Polish Music primarily by chamber works, although *Stabat*

Mater and excerpts from *Harnasie* were also performed.²⁴ The fewer numbers seen during the 1955–1956 season are most likely due to scheduling of other works not previously heard in postwar Poland.²⁵

Is the discrepancy important?

Should concert programs have been expected to emulate official pronouncements concerning this composer's music? Polish composers were not the only musicians affected by Poland's implementation of socialist realism, for twentieth-century music from other European countries was severely limited on concert stage and on Polish Radio during much of the first postwar decade.²⁶ If Sokorski berated Szymanowski's music and prominent music critics preferred to compliment his folklore-inspired pieces, why was his output left relatively unscathed on concert and radio programs? To understand this, we must accept that the socialist realist era in Poland was infected with pockets of resistance, represented in this situation by the desire of many musicians to honor Szymanowski's legacy. The performance and publication history of *Stabat Mater* and *Litany to the Virgin Mary* mentioned above is just one example of musicians' dedication to his music.

Many composers maintained their respect for Szymanowski's overall output throughout the first postwar decade. Bolesław Woytowicz and Kazimierz Wiłkomirski, both of whom also performed professionally, were among those who expressed their admiration for Szymanowski; Wiłkomirski had explicitly supported the inclusion of Szymanowski's pieces on the

24 ZKP Akt 15/38, Sekcja Muzyczna Komitetu Wykonaw. Festiwalu im. K. Szymanowskiego 15-lecie śmierci — 1952 r. Bronisław Rutkowski, "Słowo wstępne przed koncertem dla świata pracy w 15-tą rocznicę śmierci Karola Szymanowskiego," ZKP Akt 12/129, II Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Recenzje — wycinki prasowe.

25 Cindy Bylander, "From Restrictions to Freedom—The Perilous Path to the First Warsaw Autumn Festival," *Musicology Today* (2017), 98–100.

26 Ibid.

1951 Festival of Polish Music event.²⁷ The Composers Union also asked the Ministry of Culture and Art to help organize a 1952 festival held on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Szymanowski's death.²⁸

We also know that as conductors, Fitelberg and Jan Krenz routinely suggested their own programs for the Katowice radio orchestra (although not without input from one of their bosses, Roman Jasiński) and that orchestral directors made changes to the 1955 Festival of Polish Music's program after it was supposedly finalized.²⁹ We can assume that conductors of regional orchestras and recital soloists had similar input into programming decisions. In fact, there seems to have been little attempt to avoid programming any of Szymanowski's works, with the exception of some of his sacred pieces.

In the end, performers were the driving force in promoting Szymanowski's music in concert. Soloists such as Zbigniew Drzewiecki, Jan Ekier, Eugenia Umińska, and Tadeusz Żmudziński, and among conductors, not only Fitelberg and Krenz, but also Zygmunt Latoszewski, Witold Rowicki, Karol Stryja, Stanisław Wisłocki, and Bohdan Wodiczko all performed his music. Moreover, Szymanowski's works were presented throughout Poland, not only in the major postwar centers of Warsaw, Katowice, Kraków, and Łódź, but also in Bydgoszcz, Lublin, and Poznań, which testifies to the popularity of his music at least among conductors and soloists.

But even if musicians had high regard for Szymanowski, why did Sokorski not stop them, as he apparently had with Turski and Lutosławski (or, as orchestras perhaps did themselves in acts of self-censorship, with or without official guidance from the government)? Szymanowski's treatment reveals that not all supposedly formalist works were missing from concerts and broadcasts during the socialist realist era. Moreover, the conventional

27 ZKP, Akt 12/6, VI Walny Zjazd 1951, 20, 47.

28 ZKP, Akt 12/7, VII Walny Zjazd (24, 25, 26.IV.1954 W-wa). Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego (14.12.51 – 23.4.54), 25.

29 ZKP Akt 12/8, VIII Walny Zjazd (4, 5, 6.VI.1955). Tadeusz Baird, "II Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Referat Sprawozdawczy," 7–8; *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga*, op. cit., 239, 249, 256, 300, 340, 367.

picture of centralized control over culture did not truly exist. For example, the Polish Composers Union successfully resisted creating a Party cell and its members managed to compel Witold Rudziński to resign in 1951. Orchestras experienced similar tensions, but were still able to advance their own programming agendas, at least to some extent.³⁰ Performers seemingly were able to program Szymanowski's music without any hesitation on the part of governmental authorities. The availability of printed parts and the technical difficulties of the music may have been greater concerns for them. This ability to program Szymanowski's music despite negative criticism expressed by governmental representatives not only negates the stereotypical view of top-down, government-driven restrictions on musical life in Poland at that time, but also reflects the opposite perspective — one of personalized initiatives by musicians acting to counteract the potential or actual critiques expressed by others.

At the same time, it is also clear to scholars that complete freedom of compositional choices and programming selections did not exist in Poland at that time. Is it also plausible, then, that the Ministry of Culture and Art personnel asked to review concert programs during those years were not trained musicians and did not know which of Szymanowski's works should be permitted on stage?³¹ This may be difficult to believe, but at the very least, living composers did not present these same employees with a similar collection of compositions of such varying style and complexity. The psychological and financial pressures endured by living composers during the socialist realist years compelled them to modify their compositional choices, despite the desire of many of them to react against any perceived restrictions. As a result, the works they presented for performance did not echo Szymanowski's more adventurous catalog. The example of Szymanowski is, perhaps, distinct in this postwar decade, just as Szymanowski was a unique figure in Polish music history.

³⁰ Gwizdalanka and Meyer, *Witold Lutosławski*, 226; Bylander, "From Restrictions to Freedom..."

³¹ For example, see Archiwum Akt Nowych, MKiS 366-1-2402 Generalna Dyrekcja Teatrów Oper i Filharmonii, Państwowa Opera i Filharmonia w Warszawie. Sprawozdania miesięczne z działalności 1949-51.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archive sources

- Archiwum Akt Nowych, mkiS 366-1-2402 Generalna Dyrekcja Teatrów Oper i Filharmonii, Państwowa Opera i Filharmonia w Warszawie. Sprawozdania miesięczne z działalności 1949–51.
- BN collection, Tadeusz Marek, program notes for Warsaw Philharmonic concert, 4 April 1952.
- ZKP, Akt 12/5, v Walny Zjazd (16, 17, 18.VI.1950 W-wa).
- ZKP, Akt 12/6, VI Walny Zjazd 1951.
- ZKP, Akt 12/7, VII Walny Zjazd (24, 25, 26.IV.1954 W-wa). Sprawozdanie z działalności Zarządu Głównego (14.12.51–23.04.54).
- ZKP Akt 12/8, VIII Walny Zjazd (4, 5, 6.VI.1955). Tadeusz Baird, “II Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Referat Sprawozdawczy.”
- ZKP Akt 12/29, Protokoły posiedzeń Prezydium ZG ZKP r. 1951–1952. Protokół z posiedzenia Prezydium Zarządu Gł. w dniu 11 czerwca 1951 r.
- ZKP Akt 15/38, Sekcja Muzyczna Komitetu Wykonaw. Festiwalu im. K. Szymanowskiego 15-lecie śmierci — 1952 r. Bronisław Rutkowski, Słowo wstępne przed koncertem dla świata pracy w 15-tą rocznicę śmierci Karola Szymanowskiego.
- ZKP Akt 12/129, II Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Recenzje — wycinki prasowe.

Primary sources

- Cindy Bylander, “Cliches Revisited: Poland’s 1949 Łagów Composers’ Conference,” *Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny* (2015), 15–34.
- Cindy Bylander, “From Restrictions to Freedom—The Perilous Path to the First Warsaw Autumn Festival,” *Musicology Today* (2017), 91–104.
- Danuta Gwizdalanka, Krzysztof Meyer, Witold Lutosławski. *Droga do dojrzałości* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2003).
- [Editorial], *Ruch Muzyczny* 5/9 (1949).
- J. P., “W 12-tą rocznicę śmierci K. Szymanowskiego,” *Radio i Świat* 5/13 (28 March–3 April 1949).
- “Karol Szymanowski,” *Radio i Świat* 5/26 (27 June–3 July 1949).
- Stefan Kisielewski, “O twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego,” in *Z muzyką przez lata* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1957 [1947]), 50–62.

- “Konferencja kompozytorów w Łagowie Lubuskim,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/14 (1949).
- Stefania Łobaczewska, “Przed nowym sezonem koncertowym,” *Odrodzenie* 39 (1946).
- Stefania Łobaczewska, “Dlaczego uważamy Szymanowskiego za kompozytora narodowego?,” *Odrodzenie* 12 (1947).
- Stefania Łobaczewska, “Karol Szymanowski i zagadnienie tradycji narodowych,” *Przegląd Kulturalny* 1/5 (1952).
- Tadeusz Marek, “O realistycznych i narodowych tradycjach muzyki polskiej,” in *Festiwal Muzyki Polskiej. Program Otwarcia. Kwiecień 1951* (1951).
- Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga z lat 1941–1953*, ed. Leon Markiewicz (Katowice: Fundacja Muzyczna Międzynarodowego Konkursu Dyrygentów im. Grzegorza Fitelberga, 2003).
- Tadeusz Ochlewski, “Sprawozdanie,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/11–12 (1946).
- Roman Palester, “Droga do muzyka polskiej,” *Odrodzenie* 20 (1945).
- Mackenzie Pierce, “Polish Music in Soviet Exile during the Second World War.” Paper presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society.
- Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne. Biuletyn Wydawniczy Nr 2 (1952).
- Program I-go Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Muzyki Współczesnej* (Warsaw: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 1956).
- [PWM Advertisement] *Ruch Muzyczny* 2/15–16 (1946).
- [PWM Advertisement] *Ruch Muzyczny* 3/5 (1947).
- Adam Rieger, “Z prasy zagranicznej,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 3/10 (1947).
- Włodzimierz Sokorski, “Formalizm i realizm w muzyce,” *Ruch Muzyczny* 4/23–24 (1948).
- Włodzimierz Sokorski, “Od Łagowa do Festiwalu Muzyki Polskiej,” *Muzyka* 3/1–2 (1952).
- tyb. “Notatnik Muzyczny. Dzieła Szymanowskiego będą wydane,” *Przegląd Kulturalny* 2/21 (1953).
- Sławomir Wieczorek, *Na froncie muzyki. Socrealistyczny dyskurs o muzyce w Polsce w latach 1948–1955* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2014).
- Lisa Cooper Vest, “The Discursive Foundations of the Polish Musical Avant-Garde at Midcentury: Aesthetics of Progress, Meaning, and National Identity,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 2014).
- Wawrzyniec Żuławski, “Koncerty Finałowe Festiwalu Muzyki Polskiej,” *Nowa Kultura* 50 (16 December 1951).

ABSTRACT*Listening to Szymanowski: Rhetoric Versus Performance 1945–1955*

During the first decade following the end of World War II, the perception of Szymanowski's compositions put forth in articles and speeches shifted from declarations of admiration to charges of formalism to assertions that socialist realist ideals were expressed in his folk-inspired output. But what was the effect of these pronouncements on other areas of Polish musical life, most notably on the concerts and radio broadcasts available to most, if not all Polish citizens? Was a similar transformative path taken regarding the selection of Szymanowski's pieces for these events? After reviewing concert programs and the broadcast schedules published in *Radio i Świat*, I suggest that the view of Szymanowski presented to the public via these media did not fully reflect the critical reception bestowed upon him. Our awareness of this discrepancy not only illuminates the complexity of the Polish musical scene at that time, but animates our ongoing reassessment of the accomplishments of a cultural policy ostensibly intended to benefit the broad populace of consumers.

KEYWORDS Socialist realism, concert programs, national traditions, festivals, music criticism

STRESZCZENIE*Słuchając Szymanowskiego: retoryka a wykonania (1945–1955)*

W pierwszej dekadzie po zakończeniu II wojny światowej postrzeganie kompozycji Szymanowskiego, prezentowane w artykułach i wypowiedziach, przechodziło od deklaracji podziwu przez zarzuty o formalizm aż po doszukiwanie się w jego utworach inspirowanych folklorem ideałów socrealistycznych. Ale czy wypowiedzi te miały wpływ na inne obszary polskiego życia muzycznego, zwłaszcza koncerty i audycje radiowe dostępne dla ogółu polskich obywateli? Czy można zauważyć podobnie zmienną ścieżkę przy wyborze utworów Szymanowskiego do programów koncertowych i na antenę radia? Po zapoznaniu się z programami koncertowymi i programami audycji radiowych, publikowanymi w czasopiśmie „Radio i Świat” sugeruję, że obraz Szymanowskiego przedstawiany opinii publicznej za pośrednictwem tych mediów nie odzwierciedlał w pełni krytycznej recepcji związanej z jego osobą i muzyką. Świadomość tej rozbieżności nie tylko podkreśla złożoność polskiej sceny muzycznej tego czasu, ale też inspirowała do ponownej oceny osiągnięć polityki kulturalnej PRL, rzekomo ukierunkowanej na przynoszenie korzyści szerokiej populacji odbiorców.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE realizm socjalistyczny, program koncertowe, tradycje narodowe, festiwale, krytyka muzyczna