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Citation

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The Music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki: the First Decade

The practice among writers on music of grouping composers by nationality and generation and of singling out the most representative figure of a certain place or time is perhaps inevitable; indeed without it the history of music would be unmanageable. But useful, even necessary, as it sometimes is, it can be damaging to select one composer as the leading voice of his age. In Poland Witold Lutoslawski (who celebrated his 70th birthday on 25 January this year) is the sole remaining member of his generation still in the prime of his compositional life, though had Andrzej Panufnik (b. 1914) stayed in Poland, instead of leaving in 1954, the story might have been different. But if we look at Polish composers 20 years Lutoslawski's junior we must face the fact that one composer, celebrating his 50th birthday this year, has cornered the international market to the virtual exclusion of his Polish contemporaries. The skilful and determined way in which Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 23 November 1933) has sustained his appeal contrasts sharply with the self-effacing career of another Polish composer, two weeks younger than him, who, I would contend, is just as deserving of attention.

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was born on 6 December 1933 at Czernica, near Rybnik, some 40 miles to the south-west of Katowice in Poland's southern coal-mining belt. Penderecki and Górecki both studied composition from 1955 in a State Higher School of Music (PWSM) in southern Poland—Penderecki in Kraków with Artur Malawski (1904-57) and Stanisław Wiechowicz (1893-1963), and Górecki in Katowice with Bolesław Szabelski (1896-1979). (As John Casken pointed out in an earlier article in *Contact*,[1] the compositional achievements stemming from Kraków and Katowice have closely rivalled if not surpassed those of the PWSM in Warsaw.) After graduating with first-class honours in 1960, Górecki furthered his studies for a time with Messiaen in Paris. He has since lived and worked in Katowice, travelling rarely; between 1975 and 1979 he was rector of the PWSM in Katowice, matching Penderecki's appointment in 1972 to the rectorship of the PWSM in Kraków.
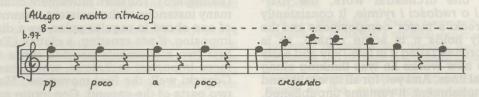
Górecki came to composition a little later than most, having become a primary teacher on leaving school in 1951. Between 1952 and 1955 he took up music studies on a regular basis in the education department of the Intermediate School of Music in Rybnik. When he was assigned to Szabelski at the PWSM in Katowice he can scarcely have imagined how influential his teacher was to be. Szabelski was very much the practical craftsman, steeped in Baroque and Classical procedures, but he had also had the rare benefit of Szymanowski's insights (particularly into orchestration) while he was a student at the Warsaw Conservatory in the 1920s. Szabelski's own predilection, up to the mid-1950s, for modal and polymodal writing was to resurface significantly in his protégé's work of the late 1960s onwards. Undoubtedly Szabelski made a powerful and immediate impact on Górecki's thinking through his ready adoption of twelve-note procedures in his

Sonety (Sonnets) for orchestra (1958). Outside the classroom the two men developed a close father-and-son relationship; I well remember the pride with which the younger composer took me in 1972 to meet the 75-year-old Szabelski, then physically ailing but with new music yet to come, including *Mikołaj Kopernik* (1975), his delayed tribute for the 500th anniversary of the birth in 1473 of the great Polish astronomer.

As the list of works at the end of this article indicates, the first two years of Górecki's studies with Szabelski were relatively prolific; all the works but *Pieśni o radości i rytmie* (Songs of joy and rhythm) op.9 (1956) are for one or two performers. Only the Sonata for two violins op.10 (1956) was published early on (in 1963)—the other works from this period have appeared in print (if at all) only during the last eight years. This hesitation to publish early works is typical of many composers; in Górecki's case the pieces he wrote under Szabelski's tutelage are particularly revelatory and are far from incidental to the main thrust of his development.

As one would expect, the compositions of 1955-6 show an assimilation of techniques prevalent in Poland in the post-war decade: a Classical control over form and a Parisian approach to style. At worst this can result in fairly desultory, four-square melodic phrases, as in the Sonatina op.8 (1956); at best it produces an impressive handling of changing metre and a rhythmic vitality, as in the first movement of the unusually scored Quartettino op.5 (1956). Folk elements are not overly intrusive, though the Lydian mode is favoured (in the simple slow movement of the Quartettino, for example). The earliest published work, the short Toccata op.2 (1955), wears its influences confidently on its sleeve—Bartók's Bagatelles, early Stravinsky, and a touch of Poulenc's brand of *moto perpetuo* brought together in a brash amalgam. The Lydian melody that dominates the second half of the Toccata (Example 1) is a close relative of the theme of the Passacaglia in Lutoslawski's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1954), while the melodic extension shown in Example 2 is not far removed from techniques Górecki was to encounter in his studies with Messiaen. The most noticeable feature of the Sonata op.10 is its deliberate, aggressive dissonance. The opening Allegro molto begins in a fashion not dissimilar to the beginning of Schoenberg's Third String Quartet (but without the twelve-note context), and its essentially neoclassical origins are at times ferociously disturbed (Example 3). It is an early example of an aspect of Górecki's musical personality that was to be realised most tellingly in the orchestral *Scontri* (Collisions) op.17 (1960) and in *Elementi* for string trio op.19 no.1 (1962).

The only surviving vocal work among this early group, *Trzy pieśni* (Three songs) op.3 (1956), is also revealing. Two sombre poetic fragments by Juliusz Słowacki (1809-49) are offset by the third song, 'Ptak' (Bird), a delightfully light-hearted setting of a poem by Julian Tuwim (1894-1953), whose work was to feature in *Epitafium* op.12 (1958) and *Dwie piosenki*

Example 1 Toccata, bars 97-100

Example 2 Toccata, bars 56-9

Example 3 Sonata, first movement, bars 133-44

(Two songs, 1972). *Trzy pieśni* is dedicated to the memory of Górecki's mother, as is the later *Do matki (Ad matrem)* op.29 (1971). The dark, reflective atmosphere engendered by the persistent use of alternating chords in the first song, 'Do matki' (Example 4), and the low *minore* piano texture in the central episode of the second song, 'Jakiz to dzwon grobowy?' (Why are the bells tolling?), are worth noting, for both are raised to the level of principal compositional materials in later choral and orchestral works, particularly in the 1970s.

Example 4 *Trzy pieśni*, no.1: 'Do matki'

But if any of these early pieces deserves a hearing today it is the one orchestral work, the four-movement *Pieśni o radości i rytmie*. It consistently heads lists of Górecki's 'major' compositions and the composer clearly holds it in some regard, as is proved by his reorchestrating it in late 1959 and early 1960 when in his new works he was thinking along much more radical lines. And yet, for all its vitality and consistent accomplishment, it remains unpublished. It is, however, an important work, for each movement contains indications of directions to be followed in later years. The two solo pianos and timpani in the coda of the final toccata recall a later liking for low sonorities and modal or minor-key inflexions (Example 5). The third movement contains the first of many instances of the insistent, hammered repetition of one chord in regular pulse, as a direct method of imposing, if not creating, a climax (Example 6). The first two movements provide three examples of a more important technique, which has since served Górecki well: the first movement, Marcato, and the two parts of the second, Con motto and Secco, each derive their momentum entirely from the accumulation of statements of a single extended phrase. In the Marcato this is a marching idea based on two chords (not regularly alternated), which is strength-

Example 5 *Pieśni o radości i rytmie*, fourth movement

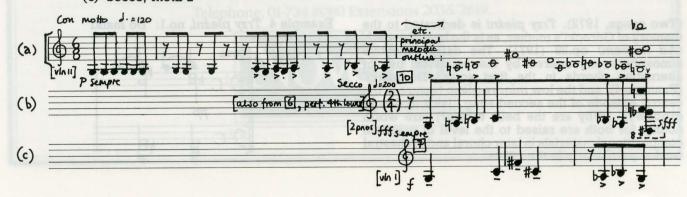Example 6 *Pieśni o radości i rytmie*, third movement

ened and gradually extended in its two successive statements. Then the climax stamps out the sequence in its fully chromatic, symmetrical guise, with octave doublings (Example 7). In fact, chord A occurs at the very start of the movement, pointing up the link with Górecki's mature style, where monumental solidity is often a more valuable asset than fluidity. The opening idea of the Con motto (Example 8a) has a more improvisational character. Its three subsequent appearances incorporate extensions and repetitions, with a new contrapuntal voice added on each occasion, so that a four-part texure is eventually achieved. The passage shown in Example 8a also

Example 7 *Pieśni o radości i rytmie*, first movement

Example 8 *Pieśni o radości i rytmie*, second movement

(a) Con motto, principal melodic outline

(b) Secco, motif 1

(c) Secco, motif 2

provides the pitch material for the two ideas of the Secco section of the movement: a seven-quaver phrase outlining the upper half of the melodic minor scale (Example 8b) and a longer-breathed counter-melody (Example 8c). The way in which Górecki builds up the texture here, by the methods mentioned above, is truly exhilarating, transcending what may seem to be rather simple material. But then, it is one of the intriguing trademarks of Górecki's mature style that it so often amounts to far more than the sum of its parts.

If I have dwelt at length on these early 'apprentice' works, it is for the very reason that they bear a closer relationship to the compositions of the mid-1960s onwards than do the intervening pieces for which Górecki is possibly better known. The seven remaining years of the first decade, 1957-64, can be divided into two distinct periods, the first culminating in *Scontri*, the second consisting essentially of the three parts of *Genesis* op.19 (1962-3), and *Choros I* op.20 (1964), which Górecki at one time regarded as a fourth member of the *Genesis* cycle.

When Tadeusz Baird (1928-81) and Kazimierz Serocki (1922-81) successfully organised the first Warszawska Jesień (Warsaw Autumn) in October 1956, they not only initiated a crucial change in general musical life in Poland, creating conditions that still more or less pertain today, but they also provided for composers and performers, not to mention audiences, the most wide-reaching forum for contemporary music anywhere in eastern Europe. In the early days of this new era visits by composers such as Cage, Nono, and Stockhausen were matched by exhibitions of new scores of contemporary music from the West. While most of this activity was inevitably centred on Warsaw, the compositional grapevine disseminated the new information rapidly. In Katowice it was not only the young Górecki who began to explore the possibilities of the twelve-note

method: so did Szabelski, then in his early sixties, whose *Sonety*, *Wiersze* (Verses) for piano and orchestra (1961), and *Aforyzmy '9'* (Aphorisms '9') for nine instruments (1962) are among the most successful examples by any Polish composer of a consistent application of twelve-note technique.

Like Penderecki, Górecki was less concerned with an integrated approach to twelve-note composition and more concerned with the comparative novelty of being able to pick and choose his sources freely. As he said later at a symposium in 1977 (*à propos* the relative merits of Rimsky-Korsakov and Musorgsky): 'For the composer it is not the compositional technique that matters but the material he uses: these sounds, and not those.'[2] The exploration of novel instrumental combinations was one of the first targets of many composers. Thus, in the four-movement Concerto for five instruments and string quartet op.11 (1957) Górecki marries a standard group with one very much of its time in western Europe: flute, clarinet, trumpet, xylophone, and mandolin. Similarly, *Epitafium* uses SATB chorus, flute, trumpet, viola, and a small percussion section (side and snare drums and suspended cymbals). The language in both works is newly fragmented and uses vivid dynamic, rhythmic, and registral contrasts, which strangely recall Stravinsky's welding of his own neoclassical idiom with the pitch organisation of Webern.

The Concerto, for all its felicities, presents an understandably varied patchwork of techniques. It was written in the short space of six weeks during August and September 1957, but waited nearly two years for its first performance, which took place in June 1959 in Katowice. The second movement, Dolce—Animo—Feroce is the most successful, not least for its imaginative textures and rhythmic drive. It begins with a distinctly Webernian trio texture, though without Webern's clearly defined pitch organisation (Example 9), and then proceeds through the

Example 9 Concerto, second movement, bars 1-7

Example 10 Concerto, second movement, closing bars

Animo and Feroce to challenge this idiom with strong chordal repetitions (Example 10). Elsewhere, the Concerto is slightly less assured. The first movement presents the problem in a nutshell. The somewhat disparate elements of an opening flute solo (shades of *Densité 21.5*), a regular viola ostinato (pizzicato *d*, *e* flat, *c* sharp) underpinning the central section, and a sequence towards the end (Example 11), in which Schoenberg's *Kammersymphonie* op.9 meets Berg's Violin Concerto, are presented as a chain of ideas rather than as a cohesive argument. But to look at the work from another angle, it takes a composer of some self-confidence to be as pitch-free as Górecki is here.

By contrast, the brief *Epitafium* is a more unified structure in every sense. It has at its core the final, offbeat poetic aphorism of Julian Tuwim: 'For the sake of economy, put out the light eternal if it is ever to shine for me.' Subdivided into a 'Preludium', largely for percussion, a slow, two-section 'Choral', a dynamic 'Antyfona', and a 'Postludium', *Epitafium* uses its resources sparingly, in a consistently fragmented manner. The choral writing, for example, embraces short chordal sequences, quasi-antiphonal syllabic presentation of the text, and frequent use of *Sprechstimme*. And while Górecki commented, at the time of its première at the second Warsaw Autumn in October 1958, that *Epitafium* was com

posed using 'a free serial technique', much of its source material is more readily identifiable than is the case with the Concerto. The work is an evocative tribute to a poet who made a deep impression on many Polish composers.

The *I Symfonia '1959'* op.14 (dedicated to Szabelski) was Górecki's first orchestral work of this period and demonstrates uncommon mastery of a deliberately restricted instrumental palette—there is no woodwind or brass, the substantial string section being countered by a percussion section which is essentially an enlargement of that in *Epitafium*. It also borrows from *Epitafium* the titles of its two middle movements: 'Antyfona' (which has another dramatic, cumulative texture as its central section) and 'Choral'. The percussion is dominant in the finale, 'Lauda'—a reversal of the balance of forces in the opening 'Inwokacja' (Invocation), where it contends valiantly with a series of overpowering twelve-note chords in the strings. The harmonic saturation of these chords is a quality one associates with the symmetrical chromatic structures of later works. Here, each of the four appearances of the twelve-chord sequence develops rhythmically in the manner of an increasingly dramatic tutti recitative (Example 12a). In fact these chords represent the most thorough example to date in Górecki's *oeuvre* of the application of twelve-note technique (albeit in simple form), for not only does

Example 11 Concerto, first movement, closing bars

Example 12

(a)

(b)

(c)

each of the twelve string parts play a different transposition of the prime form of the set (Example 12b), but these parts are arranged so that reading down the score from the first division of the first violins to the second division of the double basses reveals twelve transpositions of the inverted form of the set. (Example 12c demonstrates how the first chord is assigned among the string parts, and identifies the set transpositions that each part plays.) Registral displacement varies the inevitable parallelism in this massive texture, though the consistent emphasis on limited interval content in the chords,

akin to Lutosławski's developments in this domain, reinforces the solidity of the sequence. By any standards, this first movement of *I Symfonia '1959'* is remarkable. Its stark juxtaposition of the developing string recitative with punctuating percussion is the first Polish example of such single-minded concentration on textural qualities. It is surely significant that the efforts of the subsequent three movements to conjure up a pointillistic fabric never totally succeed, as references to the string chords in each movement all too firmly emphasise.

This stylistic struggle was not yet over, for in
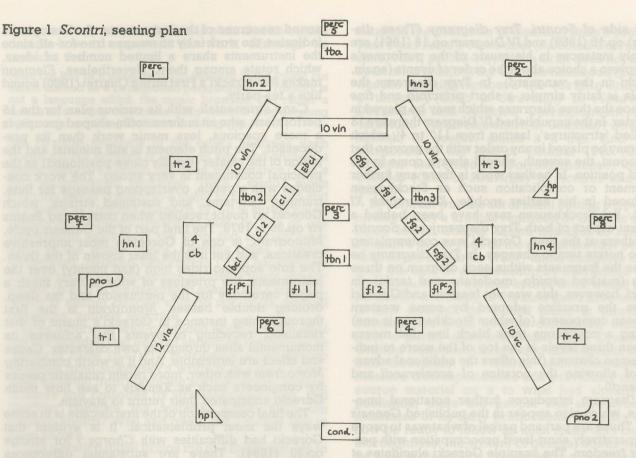
Example 13 *Monologhi*, no.2

Monologhi op.16 (1960) Górecki allowed the influence of the western European avant garde a fuller (and final) rein, treading the path of Boulez, Berio, and Nono confidently; his achievement was recognised by the Polish Composers' Union when it awarded *Monologhi* the first prize in its Young Composers' Competition for 1960. The first performance of the work, however, did not take place for another eight years, by which time Górecki had reverted to ideas that had germinated in the 'Inwokacja' of *I Symfonia '1959'*. The forces required for *Monologhi* continue the trend away from traditional ensembles, particularly in the importance accorded to the percussion department (tubular bells, marimba, and vibraphone, with an enlarged assembly of metal percussion: six cymbals, three tam-tams, and three gongs); the group is completed by two harps and solo soprano. The brief text (Górecki's own) plays with word association in a Joycean fashion and the soprano is essentially a verbal *prima inter pares*. The central monologue of the three is among the most delicate pieces Górecki has written. It shows him using substantial mirror structures for individual paragraphs in order to strengthen the formal design. One of these (Example 13) also demonstrates Górecki's free use of the twelve-note principle: here the two harps freely permute seven pitch-classes apiece (G sharp and E flat are common to both). Viewed in the long term *Monologhi* may not be central to an understanding of Górecki's total output, but it is a striking example of Polish experimentation and brings out the now obscured fact that Górecki, more than any of his contemporaries, led the way into new, uncharted territories.

In one respect this pioneering spirit had an overtly visual aspect. Starting with *Epitafium*, Górecki specified the seating plan for the performers; in *I Symfonia '1959'* and *Monologhi* he introduced new sophistications to fulfil the desire for a dynamic spatial dimension. With *Scontri* his concern for this aspect of performance reached its most extravagant expression (Figure 1): while the families of instruments (percussion, brass, etc.) are in many instances dispersed around the playing area, Górecki mostly scores for the normal family groups, thus emphasising the spatial displacement (it is worth remarking that the orchestra entirely omits oboes, and gives further evidence of Górecki's addiction to extensive percussion resources). The sight on stage of an apparent jumble of musicians must have sent a shiver of anticipation round the National Philharmonic Hall in Warsaw on the occasion of *Scontri*'s première during the fourth Warsaw Autumn in 1960. Few members of the audience can have forgotten the *succès de scandale* that followed (one venerable critic, Jerzy Waldorff, suggested that in his next work Górecki might include dead rats, to be flung at the audience . . .). But whatever the critical brickbats, here was a genuine first: a composer, recently graduated, throwing caution to the winds and letting fly. There could be no more apt title for this piece, for it is action music and its intense dynamism realises the futurist manifesto more effectively than anything produced earlier in the century.

This is not to suggest, however, that *Scontri* is a perpetual assault. In fact there is little that comes near to a complete tutti except between figures 6 and 8, where woodwind and brass chords, percussion rolls, and a slowly writhing, three-and-a-half-octave string cluster are brutally interlocked (did Lutosławski recall this passage, I wonder, when he came to write the second of his *Trois poèmes d'Henri Michaux* in 1963?). Elsewhere, there are substantial passages of slow and soft textures created by ensembles of almost chamber proportions. There is, however, little sign of the pointillistic texture of *Monologhi*—the solitary note has become the more muscular cluster, be it small or large, close-positioned or spread wide, introduced and quitted suddenly or by stealth.

The most astonishing aspect of *Scontri* is the sheer fertility of its invention, the teeming forth of ear-catching ideas, which in a lesser hand might have

Figure 1 *Scontri*, seating plan

perc 5 · tba · perc 2 · hn 3 · hn 2 · perc 1 · 10 vln · 10 vln · vln 10 · fg 1 · tr 2 · Eb cl · fg 1 · tbn 3 · tr 3 · hp 2 · tbn 2 · cl 1 · perc 3 · fg 2 · perc 8 · perc 7 · cl 2 · hn 1 · 4 cb · bcl · tbn 1 · fg 2 · hn 4 · 4 cb · pno 1 · fl pc 1 · fl 1 · fl 2 · fl pc 2 · 12 vla · perc 6 · perc 4 · 10 vc · tr 1 · hp 1 · tr 4 · pno 2 · cond.

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broken up under the weight of their own vitality. But Górecki's sense of contrast on both small and large scale enables the listener to perceive the main paragraphs without difficulty. The first of the six principal sections, up to figure 8, piles on the collisions at a furious rate; but Górecki contains the shock of the new within a rondo structure defined by interlocking dynamic and textural ideas. The ensuing respite (until two bars after 11) develops string ideas intimated at the very opening, and the third section (up to figure 15) elaborates a familiar technique, the gradual accumulation of a string texture ending with twelve stabbing iterations of the resulting twelve-note chord. The fourth section (figures 15-18), very much an interlude, is eclipsed by the fifth and most substantial section (figures 18-25), which not surprisingly is dominated by the eight-man percussion group. The short climactic coda is terminated by a marked unison *e′* on the brass, which sends the strings scurrying into the ether like some fleeing genies.

Two further points may help to put the achievement of *Scontri* into context. First, on a purely technical level the serial influence is still strongly felt, though it is a material means and not a stylistic end. Górecki felt free to make use of several twelve-note sets (Example 14), occasionally juxtaposing them as in the fourth section, and he was still drawing very much on past experience. The matrix-like technique observed in the string chords of the first movement of *I Symfonia '1959'* (see Example 12) resurfaces in exuberant form in the opening section of *Scontri*. It appears first in the woodwind (in the sixth bar after figure 2), neatly intercut with punctuation from the strings—a clear anticipation of the central section of *Refren* (Refrain) op.21 for orchestra (1965). The passage shown in Example 14a provides the pitch material and continues to do so until the apotheosis of the chordal sequence already mentioned (between figures 6 and 8). The slow string build-up of the third section utilises the material of Example 14b, stating

the notes of the set singly, then in twos, threes, and so on, until the full twelve-note texture is achieved shortly after figure 14. And it cannot go unnoticed that the serial control over durations and dynamics is another fundamental element in the total design.

The second point to be noted in *Scontri* is the experiment with unpitched string textures, which one tends to associate principally with Penderecki. In fact Penderecki's *Wymiary czasu i ciszy* (Dimensions of time and silence, 1960) also received its first performance at the fourth Warsaw Autumn, so the two composers were working closely in parallel on this aspect of their technique. But whereas Penderecki sought to homogenise these new effects, Górecki was using them as but one part of a much more colourful palette. We should not perhaps forget that *Scontri* and *Wymiary czasu i ciszy* (which Penderecki immediately withdrew for major surgery) both antedate the first performance of 'the' Polish piece of the early 1960s, Penderecki's *Tren* (Threnody, 1960).

Górecki's introduction of new string techniques in *Scontri* was shortly to lead him to further and more searching explorations in *Genesis* op.19 (1962-3). But before discussing that major work it is worth turning aside to look at the two pieces that Górecki wrote

Example 14

(a)

(b)

(c)

either side of *Scontri*. *Trzy diagramy* (Three diagrams) op.15 (1959) and *IV Diagram* op.18 (1961) are the only instances in his music of the performer's being given a choice about the order of events (again, Górecki in the vanguard). In *Trzy diagramy* the formula is fairly simple: a short *principio* and *fine* embrace the three diagrams which may be played in any order. In the unpublished *IV Diagram* there are 13 so-called 'structures', lasting from 11″ to 4′, which again may be played in any order with the proviso that the longest, the seventh, should always come in the central position. In neither work is there any further refinement or complication such as Stockhausen introduced in his earlier mobile, *Klavierstück XI* (1956). But Stockhausen may have been behind a different aspect of both *Trzy diagramy* and *Scontri*. Like others at the time, Górecki was contemplating how to notate tempo changes. In *Trzy diagramy* he notates the fragments within each diagram on three staves (marked *rapido*, *moderato*, and *tardo*). In *Scontri*, however, this was not feasible and Górecki follows the practice adopted by some western European composers (of whom Stockhausen is one) in using a continuous thick black line that moves between three levels at the top of the score to indicate tempo changes (this offers the additional advantage of allowing the notation of *accelerandi* and *ritardandi*).

IV Diagram introduces further notational innovations, which also appear in the published *Genesis* cycle. These are part and parcel of what was to prove a comparatively short-lived preoccupation with performer freedom. The example Górecki elucidates at the front of the score of *IV Diagram* is the opening of structure 11 (Example 15). He explains it as follows:

All the notes from d$^{\text{II}}$ to e$^{\text{IV}}$ are available [play freely in an irregular order], but d$^{\text{II}}$, e flat$^{\text{III}}$, and e$^{\text{IV}}$, should dominate. Employ durations ● [$^1\!/_6$″–$^1\!/_{12}$″] and ▼ [$^1\!/_2$″–$^1\!/_5$″], the former being dominant. Place two pauses ▽ [$^1\!/_2$″–$^1\!/_5$″] freely during the nine seconds. Everything *ffff*.

IV Diagram is a fine piece and should by rights take its place alongside the better-known items in the solo flute repertory.

The title *Genesis* suggests, perhaps, that Górecki wished to go back to basics after the energetic adventure of *Scontri*. And indeed, gone are the huge orchestral forces and colourful instrumental palette; in their place *Elementi* (1962) uses a string trio, *Canti strumentali* (1962) a larger band harking back to the Concerto and *Epitafium*, and *Monodram* (1963) a soprano (much as in *Monologhi*), metal percussion, and six or twelve detuned double basses.
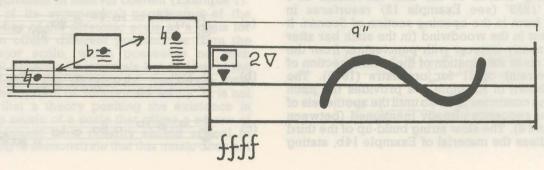
There can be few string trios like *Elementi*. From the outset it presents a bleak, internalised aggression, largely unrelenting and violent. Górecki is intent on obtaining, literally, a gut reaction from his players. The emphasis moves away from pitch to pure percussion and the notational ideas broached in *IV Diagram* are here used to call up all the potential
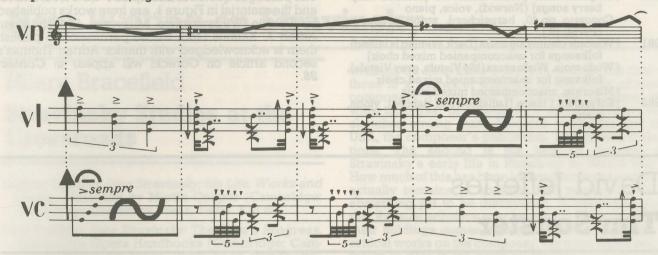
sound resources of the instruments. As Example 16 indicates, the work is by no means a free-for-all, since the instruments share a limited number of ideas, which rotate among them. Nevertheless, *Elementi* makes Penderecki's First String Quartet (1960) sound like a tea-party.

Canti strumentali, with its curious plan for the 15 performers, who sit in three coffin-shaped groups, is a more spacious, less manic work than its predecessor. The pitch element is still minimal and the notion of the cluster (usually close-positioned) as the principal constituent is very strong. The work concludes with a gentle, overlapping passage for flute, trumpet, tam-tams, and sustained strings, which Górecki no doubt recalled when completing *Beatus vir* op.38 in 1979. The final part of the *Genesis* cycle, *Monodram*, is one of Górecki's most impressive creations, and yet it is the least known of the three. The solo soprano rides high (and mighty) over the instruments, the priestess of what is very much a pagan ceremony for the percussion and the deep, droning double basses. *Monodram* is the first thoroughgoing instance in Górecki's music of that ritualistic, recycling of events that achieves its monumental aims through its own character. Cause and effect are indivisible. And it is worth comparing *Monodram* with other, more recent ritualistic pieces by composers such as Xenakis to see how much Górecki anticipated their return to atavism.

The final composition of the first decade is in some ways the most problematical. It is evident that Górecki had difficulties with *Choros I* for strings op.20 (1964). There are substantial differences between the published score and the Polish Composers' Union tape of the first performance: many of the changes are cosmetic, but some are considerable. The central, characteristic build-up between figures 36 and 52 is insufficiently charged in the earlier version; in the published score this section is strengthened and extended. Elsewhere, as at figure 12, what had been regular triplet quavers (the hallmark of the work) were later rewritten in looser, space–time notation in order to provide rhythmic variety. The difficulties run still deeper. There is a tired, almost jaded air about *Choros I*. It represents a virtual abandonment of the element of choice and its associated notation, and a whole-hearted return to pitched material and a pure string texture without percussion. The registral upper limit is a″ flat, but the general tessitura is far lower, a feature typical of many of Górecki's highly successful later compositions; but here it seems simply to intensify the monochrome gloom. *Choros I* revolves obsessively around close clusters of three semitones (like those noted in the first movement of the Concerto), and these are matched by an insistent triple-time rhythmic patterning, which pervades the work without imparting much sense of forward movement. Górecki seems to have driven himself into a corner of his own making. What is surprising is that *Choros I* should follow, and not precede, the invigorating *Genesis* cycle.

Example 15 *IV Diagram*, opening of structure 11

Example 16 *Elementi*, figure 17

Like so many of his compatriots, Górecki had travelled much further since 1955 than most composers outside Poland. The Poles felt the inescapable need to 'catch up', to explore as many avenues as were open to them. It is particularly fascinating to discover how each composer eventually reached an identifiable *persona*. Some, like Penderecki, found their way forward with relative ease and sensibly kept to it. Górecki was, during the period covered by this article, one of the most inquisitive young composers, on both the technical and expressive levels; he was not one to sit on his laurels—hence the thorough exploration of those new influences that interested him. A constant and rigorous self-examination lies behind the music of the first decade and this sometimes painful process resulted in 1965 in *Refren*, the work that paved the way for yet more individual achievements in the next 20 years.

[1] John Casken, 'Music from Silesia', *Contact 5* (Autumn 1972), pp.21-6.

[2] *Spotkania muzyczne w baranowie*, 2/I: *Muzyka w muzyce* (Kraków, 1980), p.145.

Works

This list is arranged as nearly as possible chronologically by date of composition. The principal publisher of Górecki's music is Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne (PWM), but some scores are co-published in the West by Schott (S); unpublished works are marked with an obelus. An asterisk indicates that a work has been recorded, usually by the Polish state recording company, Muza. Timings are approximate.

1955 †Cztery preludia [Four preludes], piano [8′]
        Toccata op.2, 2 pianos (PWM) [3′]
1956 Trzy pieśni [Three songs] (Juliusz Słowacki, Julian Tuwim) op.3, voice, piano (PWM) [4′]
        †Wariacje [Variations], violin, piano [8′]
        Quartettino op.5, 2 flutes, oboe, violin (PWM) [8′]
        †Sonata no.1, piano
        †Kołysanka [Cradle-song], piano [3′]
        Sonatina op.8, violin, piano (PWM) [3′]
        †Pieśni o radości i rytmie [Songs of joy and rhythm] op.9, 2 pianos, orchestra [14′]; reorchestrated 1959-60
        Sonata op.10, 2 violins (PWM) [16′30″]
        †Nokturn (Federico Garcia Lorca), voice, piano [mentioned only in Mieczysława Hanuszewska and Bogusław Schäffer, eds., *Almanach polskich kompozytorów współczesnych* (Kraków, 2/1966)]

1957 Concerto op.11, 5 instruments, string quartet (PWM) [11′]
1958 *Epitafium (Julian Tuwim) op.12, mixed choir, instruments (PWM) [5′]
1959 †Pięć utworów [Five pieces], 2 pianos [8′]
        I Symfonia '1959' op.14, string orchestra, percussion (PWM) [20′]
        *Trzy diagramy [Three diagrams] op.15, solo flute (PWM) [6′]
1960 *Monologhi (Górecki) op.16, soprano, 3 instrumental groups (PWM) [17′]
        *Scontri [Collisions] op.17, orchestra (PWM) [17′30″]
1961 †IV Diagram op.18, flute [7′30″–10′30″]
1962 *Genesis I: Elementi op.19 no.1, 3 string instruments (PWM) [12′42″]
        *Genesis II: Canti strumentali op.19 no.2, 15 players (PWM) [8′04″]
1963 Genesis III: Monodram (Górecki) op.19 no.3, soprano, metal percussion, 6 or 12 double basses (PWM) [10′]
        *Trzy utwory w dawnym stylu [Three pieces in old style], string orchestra (PWM) [10′]
1964 *Choros I op.20, strings (PWM) [18′]
1965 *Refren [Refrain] op.21, orchestra (PWM) [16′–17′]
1967 *Muzyczka I [Little music I], 2 trumpets, guitar [10′]
        *Muzyczka II op.23, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 2 pianos, percussion (PWM) [7′30″]
        Muzyczka III op.25, violas (PWM) [14′]
1968 Kantata, organ [12′]
1969 *Muzyka staropolska [Old Polish music] op.24, orchestra (PWM, S) [23′]
        Canticum graduum op.27, orchestra (PWM, S) [12′]
1970 Muzyczka IV op.28, clarinet, trombone, cello, piano (PWM, S) [9′]
1971 *Do matki (Ad matrem) op.29, soprano, mixed choir, orchestra (PWM) [10′–11′]
        Dwie pieśni sakralne [Two sacred songs] (Marek Skwarnicki) op.30, baritone, orchestra (PWM) [5′]; arranged for baritone, piano, as op.30a
1972 II Symfonia 'Kopernikowska' (psalms, Nicolas Copernicus) op.31, soprano, baritone, mixed choir, orchestra (PWM) [35′]
        Eunte ibant et flebant (psalms) op.32, unaccompanied mixed choir (PWM) [9′]
        Dwie piosenki [Two songs] (Julian Tuwim), 4-part choir (PWM) [4′30″]
1973 Trzy tańce [Three dances], orchestra (PWM) [12′]
1975 Amen op.34, unaccompanied mixed choir (PWM) [8′]
1976 *III Symfonia 'Symfonia pieśni żałosnych' [Symphony of sorrowful songs] (anonymous) op.36, soprano, orchestra (PWM) [54′]
1979 †Szeroka woda [Broad river], folksong for unaccompanied mixed choir
        *Beatus vir (psalm verses), op.38, baritone, choir, orchestra (PWM) [33′–35′]

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1980	†Błogosławione pieśni malinowe [Blessed raspberry songs] (Norwid), voice, piano Concerto op.40, harpsichord, string orchestra (PWM) [9′]
1981	†Wieczór ciemny się uniża [Dark evening is falling], folksongs for unaccompanied mixed choir] †Wisło moja, Wisło szara [My Vistula, grey Vistula], folksong for unaccompanied mixed choir †Miserere, unaccompanied mixed choir
1982	†Kołysanka i tańce [Lullabies and dances], violin, piano