

contact

Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music (1971-1988)

<http://contactjournal.gold.ac.uk>

Citation

Thomas, Adrian. 1984. 'A Pole Apart: The Music of Górecki Since 1965'. *Contact*, 28. pp. 20-31. ISSN 0308-5066.

Adrian Thomas

A Pole Apart: the Music of Górecki since 1965

This is the second of two articles on the music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (b. 1933); the first appeared in *Contact* 27 (Autumn 1983) under the title 'The Music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki: the First Decade'.

The early and mid-1960s were years of considerable achievement for Polish composers: western European acclaim was rapid and enthusiastic and at home there seemed to be no dearth of new ideas and new compositional talent. World premières given in 1965,¹ for example, clearly indicated the vigour of the period. Outside Poland, they included the Flute Concerto (1964) by Bolesław Szabelski (1896-1979) given at the Zagreb Biennale, Music for Strings and Four Groups of Wind Instruments (1964) by Andrzej Dobrowolski (b. 1921) at the ISCM Festival in Madrid, and *Paroles tissées* by Witold Lutosławski (b. 1913) at the Aldeburgh Festival. Lutosławski's String Quartet (1964) was one of three works first performed in Stockholm, the others being *Musica sinfonica in tre movimenti* by Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-69) and *Springfield Sonnet* for orchestra by Wojciech Kilar (b. 1932).

At home, the ninth Warsaw Autumn festival included first performances of works by the established middle generation of Polish composers: the Wind Quintet (1964) by Włodzimierz Kotoński (b. 1925), the orchestral *Les sons* by Witold Szalonek (b. 1927), and Little Symphony 'Sculptura' (1960) by Bogusław Schäffer (b. 1929). Two younger composers, sons of composer fathers, developed their own idioms in orchestral pieces: Zbigniew Rudziński (b. 1935) with *Moments musicaux I* and Tomasz Sikorski (b. 1939) with *Concerto breve*. And the works of two other composers in their 20s, Zygmunt Krauze (b. 1938) and Krzysztof Meyer (b. 1943), appeared on a Warsaw Autumn programme for the first time (in each case a first string quartet, Meyer's dating from 1963). In addition, major works were being written by several composers not cited above. These included *Continuum* (1965-6) for percussion sextet by Kazimierz Serocki (1922-81), the opera *Jutro* (Tomorrow, 1964-6) by Tadeusz Baird (1928-81), and *Passio et mors Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Lucam* (1963-5) by Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 1933).

The stylistic and aesthetic diversity of all these works was as wide as in the music of many another European country in the mid-1960s and should serve to dispel the notion of a Polish 'school', with its somewhat dismissive implication of narrowly based uniformity. And, if further proof of this musical renaissance were needed, an especially significant concert in Geneva on 27 October 1965 provided it: this was the occasion of the première by the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, conducted by Pierre Colombo, of *Refren* (Refrain) op.21 (1965) by Górecki. Not only was *Refren* Górecki's first work to be given its première outside Poland, but it also marked a decisive stylistic turning-point and established the central tenets of his mature compositional credo. *Refren* cleared the air of the textural abrasiveness and structural obscurities of the *Genesis* cycle op.19 (1962-3) and *Choros I* op.20 (1964), while

creating an even greater intensity of concentration. In comparison with those of his contemporaries teetering on the brink of anonymity in their search for a new simplicity and directness of expression, here was a composer unequivocally investing the most basic of musical materials with distinctive character.

In the sustained outer sections of the work's broad ternary design, a single melodic and harmonic idea is developed through multiple statements. In the opening section the strings gradually unfold six versions of these 'refrains' and a codetta, which are rooted on C natural and marked off by general pauses and brass punctuation (Example 1). Each refrain is a palindrome and the brass occasionally emancipates itself both from its role as a boundary marker and from its original pitch of F sharp (Example 2). The tempo is extremely slow, the dynamics subdued. The melodic outlines are contained chromatically within a minor 3rd (C to E flat). The harmony, moving in parallel, accumulates in rising whole-tone steps, until by the sixth refrain a full whole-tone harmony is achieved. The conclusion of *Refren* restates, in broken phrases, the sixth refrain and codetta of the opening, and the final brass 'full stop' effects a brief resolution of the work's initial counterpoise of C and F sharp.

The central section of *Refren* is, after a brief introduction, an interlocking sequence of three ideas (*ababcbb*). Although the speed is five times that of the outer sections, and the textures, dynamics, and rhythms are more extrovert, the hyperactivity is deceptive. The harmonic content is very stable, its marginal shifts serving to highlight changes in texture and instrumentation. The pitches of all three ideas are derived from the combination (not alternation as in the outer sections) of the two whole-tone scales, presented in different degrees of overlap (Example 3). The minor 3rd clusters of the third idea, *c*, are drawn from the second harmonic aggregate of the first idea, *a*. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of ideas *a* and *c* is their use of large- and small-scale mirror structures, which recall not only the opening of *Refren* but also earlier works such as *Monologhi* op.16 (1960)² and *Scontri* (Collisions) op.17 (1960).

The most elaborate of these mirror designs is that of *a* on its first appearance (one bar before figure 9 to figure 15, the pivotal point occurring two bars before figure 12). Here, 17 bars, each of seven crotchets' duration (repeated quavers on woodwind and strings), are punctuated by bars in 1/4 or 1/8 (brass and/or timpani), the latter element being a clear reference to the demarcation of the refrains in the opening section (Example 4). The brass and timpani confuse the issue by invading the domain of the woodwind and strings, hocketing with them seemingly at random. In fact, the pattern of these incursions on either side of the mirror's pivotal point is based on a positive-negative principle—the substitution of attacks for rests and *vice versa*. Meanwhile, the woodwind and strings, shifting uneasily under this fusillade, create their own palindrome around the central bar of *a*, ringing the changes on the ordering of a group of one, two, three, and five quavers, separated by quaver rests, in a bar; Example 4 shows

two such orderings—2351, 3125. At the same time, the two harmonic aggregates of *a* are apportioned in a small mirror pattern, (i)—(ii)—(i) to the eleven sounding quavers in each bar (515 and 434 in Example 4).

Given the straightforward nature of *Refren*'s construction and materials, wherein lies its significance? In the context of 1965 its austere ritual, devoid of flamboyance and decorative trappings, was decidedly unusual. *Refren*'s closest spiritual ties are with the music of Olivier Messiaen, to whose early orchestral work *Les offrandes oubliées* (1930) it bears a perceptible resemblance. As a springboard for later developments, *Refren*'s role is fundamental. Certain features, such as the mirror patterns and refrains, the sustained harmonic schemes and slowly evolving melodic lines, and the abrupt textural and dynamic contrasts, all designed as substantive, long-term structural components, are hallmarks of Górecki's mature style. Others, such as the pervasive use of whole-tone harmony and the C-D flat-C outline of the first refrain, can be followed through to specific works.

Górecki's use of the whole tone is hardly French. In *Canticum graduum* for orchestra op.27 (1969), for example, his saturated harmonies anticipate Stockhausen's string writing in *Trans* (1971). With the notable exception of the Dorian coda, the harmony of *Canticum graduum* centres on the whole tone. The technique used to create the pitch material is a direct descendant of the overlapping scales in the central section of *Refren*. The nucleus is initially established

at figure 6 (Example 5(i)). A complementary grouping, (ii), is immediately set against the first, and the two alternating aggregates—now expanding, now contracting—gradually gain rhythmic and dynamic confidence as they fan out to their full limits. The original nucleus reappears from time to time, marked *dolcissimo*, *cantabilissimo*, as if to monitor the state of its amoebian progeny. Similarly, the sequence of whole-tone chords at the start of *II Symfonia 'Kopernikowska'* for soprano, baritone, choir, and orchestra op.31 (1972) is derived from a contracting and expanding nuclear structure, with one whole-tone scale per chord as in the opening section of *Refren*. *II Symfonia*'s greater dynamic and instrumental profile, however, lends the idea a mighty Slavonic fierceness.

The mordent contour of the pitches C-D flat-C seems to hold a primal fascination for Górecki. Following its appearance at the beginning of *Refren*, he used it as an important element in a number of works and to open several more (in the original form and/or its inversion); these include *Muzyczka II* (Little music II) for four trumpets, four trombones, two pianos, and percussion op.23 (1967), *Muzyczka III* for violas op.25 (1967), and *Dwie pieśni sakralne* (Two sacred songs) for baritone and orchestra op.30 (1971).

In *Muzyczka III* the opening pitches attract groups of grace notes in a framework of evolving refrains, as each of the three viola lines takes it in turn to muse on the increasingly obsessive roulades (Example 6). The grace notes soon develop into one of Górecki's

Example 1 *Refren*, opening 'refrain'

Example 2 *Refren*, beginning of the fifth 'refrain'

Example 3 Pitch structures of the central section of *Refren*

Example 5 Pitch structures of the main section of *Canticum graduum*

Musical score for Example 5, *Canticum graduum*. The score shows two staves (treble and bass clef) with circled measure numbers: 6, 7, 17, 18, 21, 23, 26, 28, 29, 32. Above the staves are various pitch structures represented by notes and accidentals. Below the staves are dynamic markings: p, mf, poco ff, sub.p, poco più ff, sub(m)p, molto ff, fff, sub(m)p, molto fff, fff.

Example 6 *Muzyczka III*, part of the opening section

Musical score for Example 6, *Muzyczka III*. The score shows two systems of music. The first system has circled measure numbers 7 and 8. The second system has circled measure numbers 13 and 14. The score includes dynamic markings like [poco f] and [mf].

Example 7 *Muzyka staropolska*, opening

Musical score for Example 7, *Muzyka staropolska*, opening. The score shows trumpet (tr) and trombone (tn) parts. The tempo is marked LENTO, and the performance instruction is marcato ma ben tenuto. The score includes circled measure numbers 1 and 2.

Example 8 *Kantata*, bars 53-5

Musical score for Example 8, *Kantata*, bars 53-5. The score shows a single staff with complex chordal structures.

most telling devices: at the start of *Muzyka staropolska* (Old Polish music) for orchestra op.24 (1969) they are an integral part of the mirror that the trumpet and trombone fanfare creates around a central dyad (Example 7); in *Kantata* for organ op.26 (1968) symmetrical chord structures are deployed in much the same way (Example 8). Both of these are diminutive forebears of the pattern of pitch presentation observed in *Canticum graduum*. From *Muzyczka II* onwards, the grace notes become detached to create their own flurrying textures that are frequently the only passages in Górecki's music of this period to use non-synchronous or space-time notation.

The four parts of the *Muzyczka* series fulfil a comparable role in the development of Górecki's musical ideas to the three-part *Genesis* cycle: they 'all tackle the same problem, that is of putting the

most stringently restricted material to maximum use'.³ *Muzyczka I* for two trumpets and guitar (1967) has yet to be performed and published. *Muzyczka II* has the largest instrumental complement of the four and proceeds steadily, unlike any other of Górecki's works of that period, to a climactic tutti conclusion. Its 'argument' is based on the combination and separation of sustained and grace notes within a carefully organised pitch strategy. In this respect *Muzyczka II* conforms to the types of procedure seen in other compositions, whereas in *Muzyczka III* the pitch design is deliberately obscured. Recalling the drone of the detuned double basses in *Monodram* op.19 no.3 (1963), all the violas are required to detune 'severely' throughout the piece. This distorts not only their open-string drones but also the carefully charted melodic lines of the main sections and the coda (see Example 6). Taken in conjunction with the work's two episodes, in which rapidly spread chords, played as high as possible and *ffff*, are catapulted from viola to viola, this denial of the ostensibly tempered pitches connects *Muzyczka III* more closely with the disturbed string trio texture of *Elementi* op.19 no.1 (1962) than with its fellow 'little musics'.

Muzyczka IV for clarinet, trombone, cello, and piano op.28 (1970), written for Krauze's group Warsztat Muzyczny (Music workshop), is one of Górecki's most performed pieces. Cast in two movements, it has no full score: the performance is directed by the trombone player (hence the subtitle 'Trombone Concerto'). The structure of the highly charged first movement (*a ♭ b ♭ ac ♭ ac ♭ c ♭ adad*) is symptomatic of the trust Górecki was now placing in sound-masses alternated in quasi-rondeau fashion. The four main ideas of the movement all share the same high dynamic level, fast tempos, unrelieved tutti textures, and a registral approach to rhythmic activity (the highest register, given to the clarinet, being generally the most active, the lowest, given to the piano, the least so). While each of the four basic sound-masses has a clearly defined pitch content, the greatest contrast is provided by the five stunning pauses inserted between their onslaughts. The second movement is comparatively calm and collected, its outer sections intoning a chant-like melody (minor mode on E flat) supported by black-note pentatonic harmony from the piano. Yet, even this respite is disrupted by dissonant treatment of the chant in the central episode, undermining its role as coda to the first movement.

Quite how *Muzyczka IV* would have turned out had Górecki kept to his original instrumentation is hard to assess. In mid-1968, when the score was 'almost ready', Górecki said in an interview that he was writing for a chamber orchestra (double woodwind, two horns, two trumpets, perhaps two trombones, and strings). The same interview gives an insight into his working methods. Górecki can evidently work simultaneously on several compositions and is quite capable of shelving nearly completed projects; and, as the score of *Muzyczka III* indicates, he can work extremely fast when required (it was written in the space of ten days and completed just one week before its first performance). In mid-1968 Górecki had three compositions on his mind. He felt confident that he would 'soon complete a composition called For Three . . . a work for viola, harp and flute'; this has never materialised. *In memoriam*, potentially of 25 minutes' duration and scored for large orchestra, was at the time Górecki's 'important thing': 'The *In memoriam* is perhaps a little odd because it is not dedicated to any one person. It simply fills a need I feel.' Given the monumental nature of the later works

Do matki (Ad matrem) for soprano, choir, and orchestra op.29 (1971) and *II Symfonia*, it is quite possible that the substance of *In memoriam* was diverted into one or the other of these specific tributes. A third composition, connected with the tragedy of Auschwitz (its working title was 'Barbaric Mass'), had been occupying Górecki's thoughts since 1960. In the intervening eight years he had studied reports, letters, documents, memoirs, and poems: 'The composition has been germinating in my mind for years. It frightens me and is compellingly attractive at the same time. I would love to write it. I would love to be able to write it.' It was to be a further eight years before this compulsion was to surface in the haunting second movement of *III Symfonia 'Symfonia pieśni żałobnych'* (Symphony of sorrowful songs) for soprano and orchestra op.36 (1976).

This willingness to shelve and retrieve explains the discrepancy between the opus number and date of *Muzyka staropolska*, a work that goes unmentioned in the interview of 1968 (unless it is a working of *In memoriam*, with a severely pared-down version of the extravagant orchestral resources intended for that piece). Begun in August 1967, it was put aside shortly afterwards and completed between April and May 1969. As is not unusual, Górecki's music was the controversial talking-point of the Warsaw Autumn in September 1969. Yet the première of *Muzyka staropolska* revealed many familiar features, both general and particular. The critical discomfiture was caused in part by the breadth of the design—at 25 minutes, it was Górecki's longest work to date, and there is no doubt that the composer was testing his techniques to the full by using only three ideas in the whole piece.

The opening fanfare for trumpet and trombone (see Example 7) quickly expands to a total of four such pairs, creating a dense contrapuntal web. This bright, registrally static texture is alternated, for the utmost contrast, with slow, sustained string passages, at first a 2, then a 4 (Example 9), a 6, and a 12. With the exception of the final appearance a 12 (at which the registral range is at its greatest), these homophonic string passages are played *sul ponticello*, 'with no shading at all', a sound-world remote from the ceremonial glare of the trumpets and trombones. Intersecting these passive confrontations is a curious timbral and motivic no-man's-land, an aleatoric texture of no great individuality through which five horns wander. The unchanging use of instruments in their normal family groups, and the absence of both woodwind and percussion emphasise a palette that might reasonably be termed ascetic.

The unexpected feature of *Muzyka staropolska* (if the title did not already give the game away) is Górecki's plundering of old Polish compositions to provide material for the greater part of the work. Yet, to those familiar with his complete *oeuvre*, a seemingly innocuous little piece from 1963, *Trzy utwory w dawnym stylu* (Three pieces in old style) for string orchestra, would have prepared them for such a move. Its modal language and neat pastiche qualify it as 'light music', a stylistic aberration, sandwiched as it was between *Genesis* and *Choros I*. But it is not simply pastiche: the last movement is virtually a transcription of an anonymous four-part Polish song from the mid-16th century, *Pieśń o weselu Króla Zygmunta wtórego* (Song on the wedding of King Zygmunt II).⁴ Two techniques in this movement were later to bear fruit: the use of melody notes as a harmonic aura (the first five notes of the home Dorian mode provide an initial backdrop), and the parallel harmonisation of the melody, as in *Refren* (Górecki

isolates the tenor for such treatment after the first statement of the complete song; Example 10).

The sources of *Muzyka staropolska* are the first section of an anonymous organum *Benedicamus Domino* (c1300) (Example 11),⁵ and the tenor of *Modlitwa, gdy dzieci spać idą* (Prayer, for children going to sleep), a song in four parts by Wacław z Szamotuł (c1524-60) (Example 12).⁶ A comparison of Examples 7 and 11 shows that Górecki uses *Benedicamus Domino* mainly as a source of inspiration, not in straight transcription: he readjusts the relative levels of the two lines in order to obtain mirror images and then develops the fanfares away from the original lines of the organum. Nevertheless, compared with other composers' use of quotation, this is very straightforward, and the crucial modal context, altered from the original Dorian to Phrygian,

remains intact. The 48-note tenor of *Modlitwa*, which furnishes the melodic lines of the strings, is treated rather differently. Górecki subjects it to traditional serial procedures. The second string passage, a 4, of which the opening is given in Example 9, combines the first 32 pitches of the four set forms (reading down the score, and taking the tenor as P-0): I-7, RI-6, P-0, and R-11. In an otherwise carefully patterned choice of set forms, there is a strange digression from Szamotuł's tenor line: all I and RI statements consistently flatten one particular step of the original mode (F natural) by a semitone (marked by ringed notes in Examples 9 and 12).

One final point to be made about *Muzyka staropolska* concerns the coda. Against an accumulating modal 'aura' in the strings, two trumpets, *sotto voce*, intone the organum *verbatim*. This was not the first,

Example 9 *Muzyka staropolska*, bars 279-87

49

MOLTO LENTO $(\text{♩} = 33-30)$ *molto bene tenuto*

4/4 2

Vn II

Vn III

VL

VC

tutti sul ponticello *prawie przy samym podstrunku*
almost at the tailpiece

287

poco p *absolutnie bez niuansów* with no shading at all

Example 10 *Trzy utwory w dawnym stylu*, no.3,
bars 21-6

$\frac{2}{2}$ subito **fff** con molto pressione $(\text{♩} = 40-42)$ 25

Vn I div.

Vn II div.

Vl div.

Vc div.

Vb div.

sempre

Example 11 Anonymous organum, *Benedicamus Domino* (c1300)

Example 12 Wacław z Szamotuł, *Modlitwa, gdy ziać spać idą* (c1556)

nor the last time that Górecki wrote a modal or quasi-modal coda: both *Muzyczka III* (disfigured by scordatura) and, more substantially, the second movement of *Muzyczka IV* rely on the calming effect of a chant-like conclusion. *Canticum graduum* and *Do matki* follow suit. The added dimension in *Muzyka staropolska* of organically relating the fanfares to the coda stresses the metaphysical aspect of Górecki's music. Here, possibly more than in any other work, he challenges us to re-evaluate the nature of the modern sound-world and our perception of the relationship of musical idioms past and present.

As *Muzyka staropolska* before it, *Do matki* was the sensation of the Warsaw Autumn, this time of the 16th festival, held in September 1972. For the first time since *Epitafium* op. 12 (1958) and *Monologhi*, Górecki combined voices with instruments, initiating a decade-long absorption with the human voice. Of more immediate impact in 1972 was the religious implication of the title and text of *Do matki*, although the work is dedicated to the memory of Górecki's own mother. Concomitant with this theme was a shift towards greater expressivity, achieved through a remarkably poignant synthesis of older elements, such as a viola theme related to the chromatic world of *Muzyczka III*, and newer ideas, such as the unabashed introduction of diatonic harmony—the orchestral texture in the central section is an elaboration of a single dominant 13th (Example 13). This passage is marked 'tranquillissimo—cantabilissimo [*sic*]—dolcissimo—affetuoso e ben tenuto e LEGATISSIMO', an extreme example of Górecki's sometimes overpowering performance indications (see also the opening of *Do matki*, which is marked 'ritmico—marcatissimo—energico—furioso—con massima passione e grande tensione'). The work closes with the entry of the solo soprano, whose lament 'Mater mea lacrimosa dolorosa' articulates an unresolved Hypoaeolian harmony in the strings.

Example 13 *Do matki*, central section

Górecki's music has sometimes been labelled 'granitic' and 'monumental'. *II Symfonia 'Kopernikowska'* is the embodiment of this side of his personality. Commissioned by the Kościuszko Foundation in New York for the 500th anniversary in 1973 of the birth of the Polish astronomer Copernicus, *II Symfonia* uses a large orchestra, choir, and two soloists. Its texts are drawn from Psalms 136 and 146 and from the introduction to Copernicus's treatise *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*. *II Symfonia* is built on the grand scale and follows very much the same dynamic and expressive design as the bipartite *Muzyczka IV*. Each movement treads a familiar path of refrains and episodes. Of the seven distinct ideas in the opening movement, the first has already been mentioned for its whole-tone construction (its rhythmic guise is drawn from the setting of the words 'Deus qui fecit caelum et terram' etc., which closes the movement). The second section provides a much-needed respite from this exaltation and the strings duly unfold a chant-like segment modelled on *Refren*. The difference here is that Górecki sets the whole-tone aggregate based on C against 'black-note' pentatonic chords on D flat and E flat, exploiting the subtle intervallic connections between the whole-tone and pentatonic scales as Debussy had done in *Voiles*. Górecki had already introduced pentatonic elements in *Kantata* and *Muzyczka IV*, although these were incorporated into more complex harmonic textures. In fact, the first movement of *II Symfonia* takes stock of most of the harmonic ideas of the preceding seven years.

The second movement, on the other hand, looks firmly ahead to the modal and diatonic language which has preoccupied the composer since the mid-1970s. The baritone and soprano soloists take up the psalm verses declaimed by the choir at the conclusion of the first movement; now, however, the mood is contemplative. Two harmonic ideas underpin the whole 21-minute movement: a low, close-position, black-note pentatonic chord on D flat provides the stable foundation for the solo baritone sections, while three closely related diatonic chords accompany the major appearances of the soprano. In the coda Górecki imaginatively unites the pentatonic orchestral chord with four-part Dorian homophony in the choir to provide, fittingly, a fully chromatic setting of Copernicus's question 'Quid autem caelo pulcrius, nempe quod continet pulcra omnia?' ('What indeed is more beautiful than heaven, which of course contains all things of beauty?'). For the choral music in the coda, Górecki went back to Copernicus's own time, choosing a vocal fragment from a mid-15th-century antiphony belonging to a minor monastic order called the Bożogrobcy (which in the 12th century had guarded Christ's tomb in the Holy Land and later settled in Miechów, north of Kraków); he replaced the original text with that of the astronomer. The harmonic and melodic language of this movement and that of the equally straightforward *Dwie pieśni sakralne* predicates a highly individual departure from avant-garde trends of the time.

As if taking rest from the exertions of recent large-scale compositions, Górecki wrote only four comparative miniatures between 1972 and 1975. The one work without voices is *Trzy tańce* (Three dances) for orchestra op.34 (1973), commissioned by the symphony orchestra of Rybnik, where Górecki had received his education in the post-war years. The lively and carefree quality of the outer movements may be seen as a precursor of the extrovert tone of the Concerto for harpsichord and strings op.40 (1980), much as *Trzy utwory w dawnym stylu* foreshadowed *Muzyka staropolska*. The other works

are all for unaccompanied choir: *Euntes ibant et flebant* (They who go forth and weep, Psalms 126 and 95) op.32 (1972), *Dwie piosenki* (Two songs, to texts by Julian Tuwim) op.33 (1972), and *Amen* op.34 (1975). Both *Euntes ibant et flebant* and *Amen* consist of slow-moving homophonic writing and both absorb major-chord variation of their basic minor modality. *Amen* expands the registral and structural scope of the mirror-image fanfares in *Muzyka staropolska* in its eight-minute reflection on the one word 'Amen', while in *Euntes ibant et flebant* and the first of the childlike *Dwie piosenki*, 'Rok i bieda' (The year and hardship), harmony is created out of melody, just as it is in the music for solo soprano and strings in the second movement of *II Symfonia*. The second of *Dwie piosenki*, 'Ptasie plotki' (Bird gossip), is a vivace, tongue-twisting patter song in folk style.

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, melody did not play a conspicuous role in Górecki's music: the melodic aspect of his chant-like lines was largely negated through dense chordal doubling and extremely slow tempos. Medieval and Renaissance quotation (pioneering in a Polish context) alerted Górecki to the added richness modal melody could bring, and his concentration on vocal composition from *Do matki* onwards reinforced this development. In 1976 he completed one of his most outstanding compositions, a work that, in the directness of its melodic appeal, underlined his exceptional originality.

III Symfonia 'Symfonia pieśni żałobnych' (Symphony of sorrowful songs) was commissioned by Sudwestfunk, Baden-Baden, and first performed by its symphony orchestra and Stefania Woytowicz (soprano), conducted by Ernest Bour, in April 1977 at the Festival International d'Art Contemporain in Royan. Written between late October and December the previous year, its three movements use the orchestral resources sparingly (the scoring is for quadruple woodwind and brass without oboes and trumpets, piano, harp, and strings, the strings bearing the main burden). The three 'sorrowful songs' draw their texts respectively from the late 15th-century *Lament świętokrzyski* (Holy Cross lament), a Polish wartime graffito, and a folksong from the Opole region between Katowice and Wrocław. In this last movement Górecki also uses the original folk melody, as transcribed by the Polish ethnomusicologist Adolf Dygacz during the spate of folksong research in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The first movement too makes use of a folksong, collected in the interwar years by Father Władysław Skierkowski in the Kurpie region north-east of Warsaw.

Górecki achieves an uncanny balance in *III Symfonia* between making his adopted melodies sound very much his own and daring to let them speak for themselves. There is never any feeling of artifice in his treatment, as there is in Krauze's earlier mannerist compilations in the orchestral *Folk Music* (1972), *Automatophone* for guitars, mandolins, and mechanical music boxes (1974), and *Fête galante et pastorale* for orchestra and folk instruments (1974-5). It is indeed, a curious development in post-war Polish music that younger composers should have rediscovered their native musical tradition 20 years after their elders had willingly abandoned its usage in reaction to its being enforced on them during the period of the Stalinist drive towards socialist realism. Their return was motivated, one suspects, partly by reasons of national as well as personal identity, following in the footsteps of Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) in the 1920s and 1930s. The latter's pre-eminent vocal composition, *Stabat mater* for soprano, contralto, baritone, choir, and orchestra

op.53 (1925-6), is a direct precursor of *III Symfonia* in its use of folk idioms and in its poignant litanies.

The lament of the first movement, that of the Virgin Mary for her Son, occupies only the central five minutes out of a total span of 25. The harmony is derived in large measure from the vocal line, creating resonant after-images (Example 14). The occasional Phrygian inflexion is particularly telling, as in Example 15, where the cumulative harmony is a sophisticated version of that occurring in the music for solo soprano in *II Symfonia*. The vocal line itself is a free development of phrases from the Kurpie folksong that dominates the outer sections. The meditative, almost ritualistic atmosphere of this movement is caused by the extensive canon that occupies the outer portions (this is the only example in Górecki's music of such thorough-going linearity). Starting with the plain statement of the 24-bar melody low in the double basses, Górecki builds up an eight-voice string canon, marked 'Lento, sostenuto tranquillo ma cantabile' (Example 16). The method is blindingly simple: after one voice has played the entire melody, the next enters at a bar's distance and five steps higher, keeping strictly within the given Aeolian mode on E. The cumulative effect is overwhelming, not least because of the innate eloquence of the folk melody.

The central movement has an even shorter text than the first: 'Mother, please do not cry. Queen of Heaven, Virgin most pure, protect me always. Hail Mary, full of grace.' The full import of this anguished plea is comprehended only when it is realised that it was found after World War II scratched on a cell wall in the Gestapo prison called the 'Palace' at Zakopane in the Tatra mountains. It is signed: 'Helena Wanda Błażusiak, aged 18, detained since 25.IX.44.' Characteristically, Górecki resists any temptation to exploit this emotive inscription for all it is worth, and his habitual reticence pays expressive dividends. Two unassuming melodic-harmonic ideas provide ample support. The first, which opens the movement, is given to the strings, with the harp and piano highlighting the melodic outline. At its later appearance, when the soprano enters with the single word 'Mamo', the effect is electrifying (Example 17). The extensive second idea is cast in the Aeolian mode based on B flat, and in accumulated harmony the strings track the soprano line in inversions of primary and secondary seventh chords.

The final movement, like the first, is the lament of a mother for her lost son. The Opole folksong dates from one of Poland's many insurrections against occupying forces. It is therefore appropriate (if coincidental) that there is a striking, spectral likeness between the lullaby accompaniment that Górecki adds to the opening and that of the melancholic Mazurka op.17 no.4 (1832-3) by Chopin, himself exiled by the insurrections of 1830-31 (like Chopin, Górecki makes substantive use of an A major drone later in the movement). Each of the folksong's eight-line verses is varied by subtle changes in the melody and its Aeolian accompaniment. In a manner strongly reminiscent of his one-time teacher, Messiaen, Górecki accords the fourth verse special weight through an expansive reiteration of A major chords. After a brief recapitulation of two of the earlier textures, the A major chords return, *ben sonore*, to bring this extraordinary 55-minute symphony to a close. Its quality of devotion and disarming simplicity has irritated some but moved far more.

Górecki's tenure as rector of the PWSM (State Higher School of Music) in Katowice between 1975 and 1979 seems to have occupied much of his attention. No compositions appeared in the two years

following *III Symfonia*. Renewed activity was triggered by the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Kraków to the papal throne in October 1978. Between April and May 1979, Górecki wrote *Beatus vir* for baritone, choir, and orchestra op. 38, and he conducted its première on 9 June during the pope's visit to his home city. For once Górecki was able to appreciate his music in the resonance of an ecclesiastical acoustic—the performance took place in the Bazylika 00 on Franciszkanów Street, where Wojtyła had lived while he was cardinal.

Beatus vir recreates in tonal terms the declamatory style of the opening of *II Symfonia*, and is likewise cast in the grand mould. Yet instead of joining in the patriotic and religious elation of his compatriots, Górecki stands back from the general euphoria and presents a serious, if not sombre celebration of the election of a Polish pope. His choice of supplicatory verses from Psalms 143, 30, and 37 is matched by music firmly grounded in C minor and E flat (the diminished 4th B-E flat is particularly prominent). When, towards the end, Górecki sets Psalm 34.9 ('O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man who trusts in Him.'), the tonality brightens to a first inversion of a C major chord which admits of modal inflexions and accompanies the ethereal orchestral ostinato (E-G-F sharp) with which the work concludes. *Beatus vir* may not break any new ground, but it is hard to imagine a more noble tribute to John Paul II.

It is fair to say that one of Górecki's most obvious traits is his predilection for slow tempos. In the 1970s, for example, there are only three works that include fast tempo indications: the first part of *Muzyczka IV*, the outer movements of *Trzy tańce*, and the second of *Dwie piosenki*, the last two being relatively minor works. So the arrival of the concerto for harpsichord and strings early in 1980 caused something of a stir: both its movements are in fast tempos, *Allegro molto* and *Vivace* respectively. Quite possibly it was the lively personality of the work's dedicatee, the Polish harpsichordist Elżbieta Chojnacka, that spurred Górecki to write one of his most extrovert pieces. Apart from its short duration (it lasts a mere nine minutes), the Harpsichord Concerto is still recognisably Góreckian: there are strong modal and tonal bases (D Aeolian in the *Allegro molto*, D major in the *Vivace*), broad swathes of repeated figurations and textures, and even sustained modal melody. This last is the backbone of the first movement, played by the strings. A degree of ornamentation develops, but this aspect remains essentially the prerogative of the soloist (Example 18). The second movement, in its uncomplicated and jovial indulgence of D major, recalls the neoclassical insouciance of Poulenc and his contemporaries.

Beatus vir and the Harpsichord Concerto are the only works of the last five years to have been published. The other compositions include folksong settings and a *Miserere* (1981) for unaccompanied choir, *Błogosławione pieśni malinowe* (Blessed raspberry songs, to texts by Cyprian Norwid) for

Example 14 *III Symfonia* 'Symfonia pieśni żałosnych', first movement, bars 325-8

The musical score for Example 14 shows two staves. The top staff is for the vocal line (Soprano) and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment (strings and harp). The tempo is marked 'DOLCISSIMO' and 'p'. The time signature is 2/4. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo markings are J=60 and J=58. The vocal line starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note Bb4. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords: G4-Bb4, G4-Bb4, G4-Bb4, and G4-Bb4. The strings play a sustained modal melody, and the harp plays a series of chords: G4-Bb4, G4-Bb4, G4-Bb4, and G4-Bb4.

Example 15 *III Symfonia*, first movement, bars 339-42

(19) **DOLOROSO** [$\text{♩} = 58-60$] (20)

Roz — dziel z mat — ką swo — ją ra — mi

[octave E₄ held by fg. c.f.g. hn]

p [strings] *pochiss.* *cresc.*

Example 16 *III Symfonia*, first movement, bars 169-76

14. (7) **poco f**

Vh I 2p *Vh II* 2p *VL I* *VL II* *VC I* *VC II* *Vb I* *Vb II*

pochiss. *pochiss.* *pochiss.* *pochiss.*

176

Example 17 *III Symfonia*, second movement, bars 64-8

[*poco f*] (4) (5) *p* **poco più mosso** ($\text{♩} = 58-60$) *ma ben tenuta*

Ma — mo Nie — bios Prze — czys — ta

[*str. hp*] [*pno.*] *p*

Example 18 Concerto for harpsichord and strings,
first movement, bars 27-31

voice and piano (1980), and *Kołysanki i tańce* (Lullabies and dances) for violin and piano (1982). It is not known what Górecki is working on at present, but it is possible that he is continuing with a large cycle called *Sancti tui Domine floreant sicut lilium*, of which *Beatus vir* is intended to be the first part.

In Poland Górecki is widely respected for his undaunted pursuit of his own musical truths. Increasingly these have come to be acknowledged as some of the most potent in contemporary Polish music. His abiding concern for 'putting the most stringently restricted material to maximum use' may mistakenly lead some to think of him as a minimalist. But, with the exception of the tongue-in-cheek Harpsichord Concerto, he has eschewed the seductions of the repetitive rhythmic processes, single *Affekt*, and beguiling timbres of his American contemporaries. For all its apparent simplicity, his music is deeply involved with the psyche of 20th-century man. He shares with the likes of Bruckner and Sibelius the ability to fashion a unique language out of the most traditional materials, a language that is supremely thoughtful and open to anyone who cares to listen.

The passages quoted in Examples 1, 2, 4, and 6-18 are from works published by Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne (British agent Alfred A. Kalmus Ltd.), whose permission to print them is acknowledged with thanks.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the compositions mentioned in the first two paragraphs were all written or completed in 1965.

² See Example 13 in my earlier article.

³ This and all other quotations are taken from 'Composer's Workshop: Henryk Mikołaj Górecki', *Polish Music/Polnische Musik* (1968) no.2, pp.25-8 (interview with Tadeusz Marek). Unfortunately, as is all too common in this periodical, the English translation here is unreliable: the quotation begins 'they do not all tackle . . .', which does not tally with the (correctly) affirmative German translation given in parallel—the original Polish transcript is not given.

⁴ The piece was originally published in Kraków in 1553; it is reprinted in *Muzyka w dawnym Krakowie* [Music in old Kraków], ed. Zygmunt M. Szwejkowski (Kraków: PWM, 1964), pp.63-4, though Górecki must have found it in an earlier publication.

⁵ The manuscript was discovered in the library of the convent of the nuns of St Clare at Stary Sącz in south-east Poland; the piece is published in *Muzyka staropolska* [Old Polish music], ed. Hieronim Feicht (Kraków: PWM, 1966), pp.7-8.

⁶ The piece was originally published by Łasarz Andrysowicz in Kraków, c.1556; it is reprinted in *Muzyka polskiego Odrodzenia* [Music of the Polish Renaissance], ed. Józef M. Chomiński and Zofia Lissa (Kraków: PWM, 1953), pp.228-30; and in *Wacław z Szamotuł: Piśni*, Wydawnictwo dawnej muzyki polskiej [Early Polish music], vol.28, ed. Zygmunt M. Szwejkowski (Kraków: PWM, 1956; rev.2/1964), p.14 (including facsimiles of the original partbooks).

⁷ Confusingly, *Trzy tańce* (1973) and *Amen* (1975) share the same opus number, op.34. *Amen* was published in 1979 (in a facsimile of the autograph, as are the majority of Górecki's published scores) and therefore claims precedence. The earlier *Trzy tańce* was published (in printed format) in June 1983. I have been unable to ascertain the correct numbering, but there is as yet no acknowledged op.35.

Works

This list, which supersedes that in *Contact 27*, 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. Timings are approximate. An asterisk indicates that the work has been recorded and the tape is in the archives of either the Polish Composers' Union or Polish Radio; in most instances these are recordings of performances given at the Warsaw Autumn festivals and were issued, on the Muza label, in limited commercial editions (though they are unlikely to be available outside Poland). The few recordings of Górecki's music to reach the West are cited in full.

- 1955 † Cztery preludia [Four preludes], piano [8']
 * Toccata op.2, 2 pianos (PWM) [3']; Maria Nosowska, Barbara Halska (Veriton, SXV 817)
- 1956 Trzy pieśni [Three songs] (Juliusz Słowacki, Julian Tuwim) op.3, voice, piano (PWM) [4']
 Wariacje [Variations], violin, piano (PWM) [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 García Lorca), voice, piano [mentioned only in Mieczysław Hanuszewska and Bogusław Schäffer, eds., *Almanach polskich kompozytorów współczesnych* (Kraków, rev. 2/1966)]
- 1957 * Concerto op.11, 5 instruments, string quartet (PWM) [11']
- 1958 * Epitafium (Tuwim) op.12, mixed choir, instruments (PWM) [5']; Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jan Krenz (Muza, XL 0391)
- 1959 † Pięć utworów [Five pieces], 2 pianos [8']
 * I Symfonia '1959' op.14, string orchestra, percussion (PWM) [20']
 * Trzy diagramy [Three diagrams] op.15, flute (PWM) [6']; Barbara Świątek (Muza, SXL 0613)
- 1960 * Monologhi (Górecki) op.16, soprano, 3 instrumental groups (PWM) [17']; Joan Carroll, Ensemble für neue Musik, conducted by Arghyris Kounadis (Wergo, WER 60056)
 * Scontri [Collisions] op.17, orchestra (PWM) [17'30"]; Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jan Krenz (Muza, XL 0391)
- 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"]; Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jan Krenz (Muza, XL 0391)
- 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']; National Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Karol Teutsch (Muza, SXL 0586); Polish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Jerzy Maksymiuk (Muza, SX 1256)
- 1964 * Choros I op.20, string orchestra (PWM) [18']
- 1965 * Refren [Refrain] op.21, orchestra (PWM) [16'-17']; Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jan Krenz (Muza, XL 0391)
- 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 op.26, organ (PWM) [12']
- 1969 * Muzyka staropolska [Old Polish music] op.24, orchestra (PWM, S) [23']; National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andrzej Markowski (Muza SXL 0547)
 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']
 * Euntes ibant et flebant (psalms) op.32, unaccompanied mixed choir (PWM) [9']
 Dwie piosenki [Two songs] (Tuwim) op.33, 4-part equal-voice choir [4'30"]
- 1973 Trzy tańce [Three dances], orchestra (PWM) [12']
- 1975 * Amen op.34, unaccompanied mixed choir (PWM) [8']
- 1976 * III Symfonia 'Symfonia pieśni żałobnych' [Symphony of sorrowful songs] (anonymous) op.36, soprano, orchestra (PWM) [54']; Stefania Woytowicz, Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jerzy Katlewicz (Muza, SX 1648); Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Włodzimierz Kamirski (Schwann, VMS 1615)
- 1979 † Szeroka woda [Broad river], folksong for unaccompanied mixed choir
 * Beatus vir (psalm verses), op.38, baritone, mixed choir, orchestra (PWM) [33'-35']
- 1980 † Błogosławione pieśni malinowe [Blessed raspberry songs] (Cyprian Norwid), voice, piano
 * Concerto op.40, harpsichord, string orchestra (PWM) [9']
 † Dwie pieśni [Two songs] (Lorca), medium voice, piano [mentioned only in Mieczysław Hanuszewska and Bogusław Schäffer, eds., *Almanach polskich kompozytorów współczesnych* (Kraków, rev. 3/1982)]
- 1981 † Wieczór ciemny się unia [Dark evening is falling], folksong for unaccompanied mixed choir
 † Wisło moja, Wisło szara [My Vistula, grey Vistula], folksong for unaccompanied mixed choir
 † Miserere, unaccompanied mixed choir
- 1982 † Kołysanki i tańce [Lullabies and dances], violin, piano