

Grażyna
Bacewicz –
The Polish
Sappho

MAŁGORZATA GAŚIOROWSKA


Email: malgorzata.gasiorowska@vp.pl



Ministry of Science
and Higher Education

Republic of Poland

This publication has been financed from the funds of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education allocated for the promotion and dissemination of science under agreement 730/P-DUN/2019.

Open Access. © 2019 Małgorzata Gaśiorowska, published by Sciendo.  This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 License.

ABSTRACT

The paper is an attempt at a synthetic presentation of the Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz's (1909–1969) musical output and artistic career, presented against the background of events in her personal life, and of major events in Polish and European history in the first seven decades of the 20th century. Bacewicz was called 'the Polish Sappho' already in the years between World Wars I and II, when there were very few women-composers capable of creating works comparable to the most eminent achievements of male composers. Her path to success in composition and as a concert soloist leads from lessons with her father, the Lithuanian Vincas Bacevičius, to studies at the Łódź and Warsaw Conservatories (violin with Józef Jarzębski, composition with Kazimierz Sikorski), and later with Nadia Boulanger at the École Normale de la Musique, as well as violin lessons with André Tournet. Her oeuvre has for many years been linked with neoclassicism, and folkloric inspirations are evident in many of her works. Her crowning achievement in the neoclassical style is the *Concerto for String Orchestra* of 1948, while influences from folklore can distinctly be heard in many concert pieces and small forms. The breakthrough came around 1958, under the influence of avant-garde trends present in West European music, which came to be adapted in Poland thanks to the political transformations and the rejection of socialist realism. In such pieces as *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion* of 1958, Bacewicz transforms her previously fundamental musical components (melody, rhythm, harmony) into a qualitatively new type of sound structures, mainly focused on the coloristic aspects. Grażyna Bacewicz also applied the twelve-note technique, albeit to a limited extent, as in *String Quartet No. 6* (1960). Her last work was the unfinished ballet *Desire* to a libretto by Mieczysław Bibrowski after Pablo Picasso's play *Le désir attrapé par la queue*.

Keywords: Grażyna Bacewicz, neoclassicism, folklorism, Polish composers

The Polish Sappho – Grażyna Bacewicz earned this appellation early in her career, still before World War II. She continued to be called this way after the war, in her heyday as a composer. The phrase emphasises the unique character of her talent, which successfully rivalled those of the much more numerous male composers who dominated in the music world at that time. Obstacles did not disappear all at once with the emergence of a group of gifted women-composers who managed to overcome the prejudice expressed by the (admittedly less and less numerous) sceptics. Highly characteristic is a statement by composer, writer and journalist Stefan Kisielewski, Grażyna Bacewicz's friend, who wrote after the world premiere of her *Concerto for String Orchestra*, presented on 18th June 1950 at the Polish Composers' Assembly in Warsaw:

One may claim in all conscience that the honour of Polish composers has this time been saved by a 'petticoat', namely, by Grażyna

Bacewicz. Her *Concerto for String Orchestra*, written with energy and panache, abounding in fluid invention and excellent ideas in the field of orchestration, has finally stirred us up from lethargy. The piece looks back to some Bach or Handel and is a kind of modern *Brandenburg Concerto*. [...] We have finally received a 'vibrant piece' of sound and tasteful music which demonstrates a truly masculine creative potential¹.

The categories of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' were part and parcel of writing and thinking about art, not merely as metaphors defining the character and status of a given piece, but as a tool to analyse some more or less concealed qualities of a composer's personality. During a conference held at the Polish Composers' Union's Warsaw seat in 1989 and dedicated to Grażyna Bacewicz's life and work on her 80th birth and 20th death anniversary, along with memories and papers dedicated to specific works, one more issue was polemically taken up by her friend, the eminent composer Witold Lutosławski. He criticised the words of an (unnamed) UK critic quoted by Judith Rosen, who referred to Bacewicz as "the first lady of music."²

The fact that commentators constantly distinguished between men- and women-composers immensely irritated Grażyna. She believed that it made no sense, and was totally unjustified in her case, since one could hardly find a more masculine type of music written by a female composer than her own works³.

Masculine music, feminine music... The US critic Milton Berliner wrote (in Kisielewski's vein) after a performance of the same concerto (which he called *Concerto grosso*) by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington: "Actually, there was nothing feminine about Miss Bacewicz's piece."⁴

1 S. Kisielewski, 'Zjazd Kompozytorów' ['Composers' Assembly'], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 28, 1950, p. 5.

2 Cf. J. Rosen, *Grażyna Bacewicz – Her Life and Works*, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1984, p. 15.

3 W. Lutosławski, a statement made during the musicological conference: *O Grażynie Bacewicz. Materiały z Konferencji Muzykologicznej: Grażyna Bacewicz – człowiek i dzieło [On Grażyna Bacewicz. Proceedings of a Musicological Conference "Grażyna Bacewicz – The Person and Her Work"]*, L. Zielińska, M. Gąsiorowska and R. Augustyn (ed.), Warsaw, 9th – 10th January 1989, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Muzyczne Breviis, 1998, p. 15.

4 M. Berliner, *Washington Daily News*, 31st December, 1952, p. 19.

The outstanding Polish conductor Jan Krenz, who frequently led orchestras in works by Bacewicz, took up Lutosławski's comment made at the Warsaw conference by referring to Otto Weininger's controversial treatise *Geschlecht und Charakter* of 1903, whose author postulates the objective existence of a masculine and feminine element present in every human regardless of gender⁵. If we assume (while preserving due distance to many of the Austrian philosopher's claims, and having translated his theses into the language of art criticism) that the masculine element is defined by power, vitality and logic, while the feminine one – by non-logical forms of thinking, passivity and sentimentalism, then labelling Bacewicz's music as 'masculine' might seem to some extent justified. The polemic started by Lutosławski and Krenz was aptly commented upon by Professor Zofia Helman, who said that 'feminine' aesthetic in music does not exist, at least in our century [i.e. the 20th – note by M.G.], and the theories concerning the lack of artistic talents in women are sheer nonsense⁶.

Referring to numerous publications on the situation of artistically gifted women in the male-dominated world – a situation which still affected those women in the 1st half of the 20th century – Helman said:

The problem concerns the presence of some social barriers, obstacles, mistrust toward women, suspicions and prejudice. On the other hand, it is the problem of mental strain, of a discrepancy between the wish to create (the masculine sphere) and fulfilment in the feminine sphere. Women's rights advocates claim that some of the women's [social] functions put women at a disadvantage. The example of Grażyna Bacewicz shows that this need not be true. A woman can also find fulfilment in the purely feminine sphere (of love, maternity, and the household) and neither wants nor is able to give up this sphere [of her life]⁷.

Bacewicz, who pursued her artistic career in the situation described above, did not need to face the choices and dilemmas that affected such figures as Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and Clara Schumann, who constantly had to confront their musical output with the works of their brother (in the former case) or husband (in the latter)⁸. This does not mean, however, that being a woman did not create obstacles in her way.

⁵ J. Krenz, in *O Grażynie Bacewicz. Materiały z Konferencji*, op. cit., pp. 171–172.

⁶ Z. Helman, in *O Grażynie Bacewicz. Materiały z Konferencji*, op. cit., pp. 167–168.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁸ Cf. M.J. Citron: *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2000.

She was born on 5th February 1909 in Łódź. Her father, Vincas Bacevičius, was Lithuanian. He graduated from a teacher training college in his home country, and was also educated as a violinist. His arrival in Łódź in 1899 was caused by historical-political circumstances. The Lithuanian independence movement then emerging in Veiveriai (in what was then called *Litwa zaniemieńska*, Lith. *Užnemunė*, the Trans-Nemunas Region, situated east and north of the Neman River) was persecuted by the authorities of tsarist Russia. The potential activists of this movement were forced to settle far from their homeland. In Łódź, Vincas Bacevičius met Maria Modlińska, daughter of an engineer from Warsaw, who, following the death of both her parents, took up a job in administration and became a suffragette for a short time. As a woman coming from a family of high social status, she had received basic musical education and could play the piano. Music, as Grażyna Bacewicz recalled, was part and parcel of her family's life. She and her three siblings – Kiejstut, (1904–1993), Witold (1905–1970), and Wanda (1911–2011) – learnt the piano and the violin from their earliest childhood (Kiejstut also played the cello). Their first teacher was their father, who, having completed supplementary music studies, worked as a music teacher at schools in Łódź. The next stage was Helena Kijewska-Dobkiewiczowa's Music Conservatory, as well as secondary schools where the young siblings received their general education. Grażyna entered the Conservatory in 1919 at age 10. One of her tutors in that school was Kazimierz Sikorski, her would-be composition teacher at Warsaw Conservatory; in Łódź he taught foundations of music, solfeggio, harmony, counterpoint, and musical forms. The Bacewicz children gave concerts from their earliest years. The preserved posters announce 7-year-old Grażyna's display of skills on the violin and the piano. The first to demonstrate a composer's talent was Vytautas. The young violinist and pianist also felt the urge to write music at an early age (as a 13-year-old). In 1964 she recalled in a radio interview:

I attended classes of harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatory at that time. Composition was not obligatory, if I can put it this way. My attempts in this field were therefore spontaneous and voluntary. I neither could nor wanted to withstand this urge. From the time of those very first attempts I already knew that my chief aim in life would be to write music⁹.

⁹ G. Bacewicz, 'Wypowiedź Grażyny Bacewicz dla radiowej Redakcji Współpracy z Zagranicą w 1964 r.' ['Grażyna Bacewicz Speaking for Polish Radio's Foreign Relations Unit in 1964'], *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 3, 1989, p. 7.

Those first ‘attempts’ include *Preludes* for piano and small pieces for violin and piano, destroyed in later years by the composer herself, who personally saw them as immature and abortive. Those that survive are *Theme with Variations* for piano (1924) and a few pieces from the last years of secondary school (mainly from 1927 and 1928). Despite their evident technical immaturity, what is striking in those early attempts is the young artist’s predilection to create polyphonic constructions both within strict musical forms and as a broadly understood technique; the rationality of her composition concept manifesting itself in treating the work’s architecture as a pre-conceived abstraction; a certain self-restraint in the use of material, and the schematic development. The young composer resolutely rejected the convention of neo-Romantic compromise, though she could easily be tempted to follow this route, which offered easily verifiable models that appealed to the imagination. The harmonic language of these early compositions, completely liberated from the regime of the major-minor system, as well as the principles that she applied to structure her music material – prove her artistic instinct which allowed the teenage composer, most likely with her teacher’s help, to come close to the current trends and to the explorations of the European new wave.

Of interest in this context are the *Two Preludes and a Fugue* for piano of 1927, based on the principle of the unity of material, which is defined by a small musical cell being elevated to the status of the fundamental thematic unit of this work. This initial concept, deprived of the possibilities for development provided by the elaborate harmonic-functional system, could easily get diluted under the influence of other tectonic forces. In order to legitimise it as the guiding principle of any given work, the composer applied various formal devices, the most pervading of which is sequential structuring. Her other pieces from that period, such as *Prelude* for piano (1928), consist, like many of her mature compositions, of loosely juxtaposed phrases built of heterogeneous material, but preserving an element of internal unity that links those fragments together into one logical energetic process. Bacewicz’s ability to introduce unity in musical structures in which the development process has been radically reduced and replaced by variability – is a key feature of this composer’s technique, and a trademark of her style, which was built on similar, in a sense, ‘natural’ – principles of growth, change, and ‘tailing off’.

Though “composition was not obligatory” for the Conservatory student, she presented some of the fruits of

her “voluntary” effort at student concerts held at the school. Among others, in 1925 she performed the already mentioned *Theme with Variations*, and in 1927 – *Two Preludes and a Fugue*. Objectively speaking, there was no impediment for a young girl to share her compositions with an audience. Problems came from quite a different sphere of life.

The life of the Polish-Lithuanian Bacewicz family, filled with learning and work, continued in the shadow of the war then fought in Europe. In nations that had hitherto remained under foreign authority, such as Poland (partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary) and Lithuania (divided between Russia and Prussia/Germany), the Great War inspired hopes for a regained independence. Changing military fortunes on the various war fronts, diplomatic efforts, finally the disintegration of the three empires (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia) led to major transformations on the political map of Europe. Poland and Lithuania regained their independence, but no longer as one united country, of which they were a part for several centuries, but as separate states. Not everyone accepted such a solution to historical dilemmas. The growing conflict between Poland and Lithuania was also fuelled by the activity of the Russian Bolsheviks, who were then gaining strength. The Poles took military action and seized Vilnius, which meant that Kaunas had to play the role of the capital of the Lithuanian Republic for more than 20 years.

At first the Bacewicz family went on with their daily routines despite the historical changes taking place, but soon hidden hopes and emotions came to the fore.

Vincas Bacevičius, a dedicated school teacher in Łódź and a model educator for his own children, never tried to conceal his patriotic feelings, and even identified with the views of the Lithuanian nationalists of that period. Though he did not engage openly in political activity, he was ready to confirm his national identity at any time. In 1923 he decided to return to his revived fatherland. He illegally crossed the border and settled in Kaunas, hoping that the whole family would soon follow – which did not happen. In Kaunas, he returned to teaching.

Kiejstut, in a sense, paid his debt to his father’s country when after completing his piano and composition studies at Warsaw Conservatory in 1924-26, and obtaining a master of philosophy degree from the University of Warsaw in 1931, he worked for a few years as a music teacher at the Lithuanian State Secondary School in Kaunas (1931-35). However, it was only the younger son, Witold, who discovered his Lithuanian identity and in 1926 (having passed his matriculation exams in Łódź and completed

his education at the Conservatory) he followed his father to Kaunas. He thenceforth assumed the name of Vytautas Bacevičius. He was very active as a pianist, composer, and music journalist; he also studied philosophy.

Grażyna herself visited Lithuania several times, both during her music studies at Warsaw Conservatory and after their completion. She gave recitals there, frequently playing with her brother Vytautas and with symphony orchestras, and received excellent reviews. She cherished some hopes as to taking up a post in Kaunas, but as a result of some still unexplained intrigues, no orchestra and no school accepted her application.

The Lithuanian chapter in her life thus came to an end. I will not assess Maria Modlińska's eventual decision to separate from her husband; formally they were still a married couple. Grażyna never mentioned her Lithuanian roots, at least in official memories, because her music would frequently make use of Lithuanian motifs. We do not know whether this silence originated in a resentment, or resulted from her inherent loyalty to the official authorities. In the years when Lithuania was conceived as a purely ethnographic entity, and politically was part of the Soviet Union – Grażyna was that the mention of her Lithuanian roots had better be avoided.

She corresponded with her father until his death in 1952. Nevertheless, she focused on what Stefan Kisielewski once called the *ostinato*¹⁰ of her life – on music. In 1928-1932 she studied at Warsaw Conservatory, originally taking up three disciplines of study: violin with Prof. Józef Jarzębski, piano with Prof. Józef Turczyński, and composition with Prof. Kazimierz Sikorski. She also followed in the footsteps of her brother Kiejstut in entering the Philosophy Department of the University of Warsaw, but gave up these studies after one and a half years because she had too many other duties. Her cognitive passion did not diminish with the passage of time, though, as evident from a letter sent in 1950 to Tadeusz Ochlewski, first director of PWM Edition, in which the composer partly defines her worldview:

I am an adherent of the theory of determinism. I don't believe in the human free will. Every life has been planned down to minutest detail. Just as we can imagine the past as something real, so, if we had a third eye, we would be able to see all our life ahead of us¹¹.

10 S. Kisielewski, *Grażyna Bacewicz i jej czasy* [*Grażyna Bacewicz and Her Times*], Kraków, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1964, p. 6.

11 G. Bacewicz, letter to Tadeusz Ochlewski, 7th April 1950 (manuscript).

After two years Bacewicz also gave up her piano studies, which took up too much time and effort. As a pianist she was competent enough to premiere her own *Piano Sonata No. 2* many years later (in 1953), which is by no means an easy piece and has been compared to Prokofiev sonatas.

Bacewicz was the only woman in Kazimierz Sikorski's composition class. Her memory of first contact with the fellow students of composition – Roman Palester, Marian Neuteich and Antoni Szałowski – can be taken as an anecdote. They greeted her with the words: "Lady, have you lost your way? It's a class of composition here!" Though her creative aspirations were soon recognised as legitimate, she was still viewed for many years as primarily a violinist.

She herself tried to reconcile both her musical passions, proof of which can be seen in the fact that when (after years of endeavour) she finally managed to leave for Paris to continue her studies with Nadia Boulanger at the École Normale de la Musique, she also took up lessons with André Tourret in order to develop her violin technique.

On her departure for Paris, Bacewicz already had a substantial output of compositions to her name. Most of those early pieces were not included by the composer in the official catalogue of her works. Still, Wanda – the youngest of the Bacewicz siblings – had the foresight carefully to catalogue all of her sister's scores. One of those that have been preserved to our time is the *Symphoniette* for string orchestra of 1929, which already demonstrates the composer's neostylistic preferences. Of note is the consistent chromatisation of sound space, both as a basis for shaping the themes and as a field for developing musical forms. In Bacewicz's works from that period, the twelve-note material is applied freely not as an extension of, or supplement to, the diatonic scale, but as a kind of Ur-source and principle of all the later relations and formal solutions, including the possible presence or not in a given piece of centralising tendencies. Another feature of her early technique is the alternation of polyphonic writing with homophony, as in the *String Quartet* signed with the date 1929/1930.

The young composer's artistic explorations involved many different styles, example of which can be found among pieces composed during her first year-long stay in Paris. The most important of them are *Wind Quintet* of 1932 and *Children's Suite* for piano of 1933. In the four-movement *Quintet* Bacewicz succeeded in combining folkloric elements with a typically neoclassical way of moulding music material into one whole. Quasi-folk

themes become in this piece part and parcel of an overall, meticulously thought-out structure. Worth emphasising is also the composer's sensitivity to sound qualities, and the fact that she contrasts elements in her work by varying not only textures, but also types of sound colour. *Children's Suite*, written in 1933, can be considered as her response to Claude Debussy's *Children's Corner*. Unlike its possible model, the *Suite* has a simpler texture, but does not feature euphonic sound and follows the neostylistic experimental trend (characteristic of the 1st half of the 20th century) instead. Both of the compositions described here had their concert performances in Paris. At the competition of the 'Aide aux femmes de professions libérales', held in 1933, Bacewicz received the 1st prize for her quintet, jointly with the now forgotten French composer Béatrix Helque. This was a huge success, and the piece still features in the repertoires of many ensembles.

Bacewicz thus took the music world by storm. She became a member of the Association of Young Polish Musicians in Paris, which brought together Poland's most outstanding musicians. She won recognition in the French music environment. This helped her establish numerous contacts, both as performer and composer, as well as making friends with many people. As a composer she frequently surprised her growing audience, which saw her as a typical representative of the European neoclassicism. In 1932 she composed a brief piece for violin and piano which she entitled *Vitrail (The Stained-Glass Window)*. This music sounds quite unique in the context of the composer's output from that time. Ephemeral (a mere 30 measures!) and swinging, full of Art Nouveau ornaments and colours, this music seems to draw on the 'impressionist-exotic' style of Karol Szymanowski, who was the vice-chancellor of Warsaw Conservatory for some time during Grażyna's studies in that city.

Bacewicz's composing passion did not stop her from making plans for a career as a violinist. In 1935 Adam Wieniawski, nephew of the famous violinist-composer Henryk Wieniawski, organised an international violin competition, named after his famous uncle. Bacewicz entered this competition, and, in order to polish her skills, travelled to Paris again to take lessons with Carl Flesch. After her performance in the 1st stage, she was expected to win a top prize, but the day before the 2nd stage auditions her flat was robbed. Long hours spent at the police station, the stress – all this contributed to a slump in form, and she ended up with a mere honourable mention. This

did not put her off, however, and other successes, both professional and private, soon compensated her for this one less fortunate attempt. In 1936 she won the 2nd prize in the Polish Music Publishing Society's competition for her *Trio* for oboe, violin and cello. The 1st prize was not presented, and the 3rd went to her colleague from Sikorski's composition class, Marian Neuteich, whose later tragic fate was related to his Jewish origin. After the Nazi invasion of Poland, Neuteich found himself in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1943 he was transported to Trawniki SS labour camp, where he perished during a group execution.

Bacewicz made the acquaintance of the eminent Polish conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg, promoter of young composers, who exerted an impact on many spheres of her life. Fitelberg persuaded her to transcribe Karol Szymanowski's ballet *Harnasie* for two pianos, since such a version was needed to rehearse the spectacle in Prague and Paris. In 1935 this transcription was published in Paris by Max Eschig. The conductor also encouraged Bacewicz to join the Radio Symphony Orchestra which he organised, and to establish a string quartet. One of Bacewicz's colleagues once brought a young physician, Andrzej Biernacki, to a concert, and introduced him to Grażyna. It was love at first sight. But they were both ambitious persons, and when Andrzej won a year-long scholarship to gain clinical experience in several European countries, Grażyna did not give up her own plans. They exchanged love letters, full of amorous confessions, but also containing comments on the more and more alarming events in Europe and on the rise of fascism. The composer's granddaughter Joanna Sendłak used those letters as material for her novel entitled *With Fire*. In one rather surprising letter made public by that author, Bacewicz, usually viewed as a person of extremely strong character, confessed her innermost thoughts after the premiere of her *Sinfonietta* for orchestra of 1935:

Frankly, I listened to that piece as though it weren't mine at all, but written by some very wise composer. I can't believe I wrote it. It's so extremely lively and cheerful and witty, with not a single second of waffle. I can't understand, in truth, how such an embodiment of pessimism as myself could write such merry music¹².

Grażyna Bacewicz and Andrzej Biernacki got married in 1936. They both continued their professional activities.

¹² J. Sendłak, *Z ogniem. Miłość Grażyny Bacewicz w przededniu wojny [With Fire. Grażyna Bacewicz's Love on the Eve of War]*, Warsaw, Skarpa Warszawska, 2018, p. 409–410.

Grażyna's husband would go on to become an eminent cardiologist, professor of Warsaw's Medical Academy (now the Medical University of Warsaw), member of numerous academic bodies and author of many publications. After her wedding Bacewicz worked on new compositions just as intensively as before. She wrote more songs: *Mów do mnie, o miły* [*Speak to Me, O My Beloved*] to words by Rabindranath Tagore in Polish translation by Jan Kasprówicz, and *Three Songs* to 10th-century Arabic poems translated by Leopold Staff (the latter – in two versions, for voice with piano and with orchestra). Her most important works from the last years before the outbreak of World War II include *String Quartet No. 1* and *Concerto No. 1* for violin and orchestra, both officially acknowledged by the composer herself. The *1st Quartet* was her last composition to include Lithuanian motifs. Thanks to my correspondence with Austė Nakiėnė of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, I managed to establish the source of the theme used for the variations in the 2nd movement. It is the Lithuanian song *Vai žydėk, žydėk* (*Bloom, oh Bloom, White Apple Tree*). I printed this information in my monograph on Grażyna Bacewicz published by PWM Edition in 1999. Based on my publication, Maja Trochimczyk made this discovery known to the Anglo-Saxon world, and thus available to all scholars writing about the Polish composer's oeuvre.

String Quartet No. 1 was first performed on 26th April 1939 by Le Quatuor Figueroa at a concert held in Paris and dedicated to Bacewicz's music. A year earlier, in February 1938, Grażyna herself played the solo part in her *Violin Concerto No. 1* in Warsaw, with the Polish Radio Orchestra (of which she was a member) under the baton of Grzegorz Fitelberg. The illustrated daily *Kurjer Czerwony* [*Red Courier*] announced this concerto as "the first work of this kind in the world's music history written by a woman."¹³ The *Concerto* was heard again

13 [anon.] 'Pierwszy koncert skrzypcowy skomponowany przez kobietę' ['The First Violin Concerto Ever Written by a Woman'], *Kurjer Czerwony*, year 17, no. 59, 28th February 1938. In 1926–1927 British composer and suffragette Ethel Smyth wrote her *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra*. *The Double Concerto* was first performed on 5th May, 1927, in the Queens Hall, London by Aubrey Brain (horn), and Jelly d'Aranyi (violin), with Sir Henry Wood conducting. A trio version of this *Concerto* was published by J. Curwen & Sons Ltd in 2015. Smyth's *Concerto* was recorded by Sophie Langdon (violin), Richard Watkins (horn), and the BBC Philharmonic under Odaline de la Martinez, and released by Chandos in April 1996 (CHAN9449). Smyth represents a generation half a century older than Bacewicz. As we can see, the information printed in *Kurjer Czerwony* was

in June 1938 at Warsaw's Teatr Wielki at a concert of Polish women-composers' music accompanying the 1st Congress of Women's Social and Civic Work, held in Warsaw between 25th and 30th June 1938.

Bacewicz's tripartite *Violin Concerto No. 1* is an example of neoclassicism 'à la française', characterised by well-balanced form, clearly delineated themes and a spectacular narration, with a proper dose of folklore-tinged lyricism (in movement two). Despite its initial success, Bacewicz was reluctant to return to this work in later years. She obsessively eliminated her early compositions, which she considered immature. She did not include this and many other pieces, such as the first three piano sonatas and the *Symphony* of 1938, in the official catalogue of her works. The scores were carefully collected and preserved by her sister Wanda, while the already famous artist pursued her concert career.

Until the mid-1950s, Bacewicz led a very intensive concert life, performing not only her own chamber music, but also the international violin repertoire, among others – concertos by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Kabalevsky, as well as Saint-Saëns's *Introduction and Rondo capriccioso*, Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*, sonatas by Grieg, Tartini's *Sonate des trilles du Diable*, Handel's *Sonata in D Major*, Ravel's *Tzigane*, and many other pieces. Her performance style was described in an article entitled *Grażinos Bacevičiūtes koncertas* by the newspaper *Rytas* after one of her performances in Lithuania in 1932:

Grażyna Bacewicz is a modernist *par excellence*. If anyone expected fabulously delicate tones, graceful and warm nuances charged with emotion – they may have been rather disappointed. Her performance was distinctive, fiery and clear, devoid of lingering romantic plaintiveness, cool and un sentimental. Her temperament is 'upright' and expressive, her reflexes – fast, her movements – resolute¹⁴.

Equally eagerly as in Lithuania, this artist with an 'expressive temperament' performed in France. In 1933

not quite true and Bacewicz was not the first woman to write a full-size violin concerto. Cf. J.M. Luedeke, *Dame Ethel Smyth's Concerto for Violin, Horn, and Orchestra: A Performance Guide for the Hornist*, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses 6747, LSU Digital Commons, 1998, https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/6747 (accessed 4th December 2019).

14 V. 'Grażinos Bacevičiūtes koncertas', *Rytas*, 14th April 1932, p. 2.

she took part in a concert held in Nice by ‘Les Amis de la musique de chambre’ [The Society of Friends of Chamber Music], and in the same year appeared with Manuel de Falla in the so-called Chopin’s cell during the Chopin Classical Music Festival in Majorca. Her last prewar trip to Paris took place in 1939, and was occasioned by a concert of her music organised at the École Normale de Musique. She also appeared on Radio France, playing works by Karol Szymanowski and Henryk Wieniawski. Little did she know at that time that the route to Lithuania would soon be closed for many years and that she would never play with her brother Vytautas again. That Lithuanian pianist-composer was playing concerts in Argentina when the war broke out. Unable to return to Europe, he settled in the United States, where he continued to pursue his musical passions with varying luck. He only met his family again in Paris in 1961. Before that time, letters were their only form of contact for many years.

Grażyna Bacewicz spent the years of the German occupation in Warsaw with her family, which now included also her daughter Alina (born in 1942). Despite the horrors of war, people strove to live normal lives. The Central Welfare Council, a charity operating also during WWI, helped the civilian population. The German authorities permitted the organisation of concerts, albeit under strict control and with very limited repertoire. Since Polish music was banned, underground concerts were held in private houses, and Bacewicz took part in them, as well as having her own works performed on such occasions: *Piano Sonata* in 1942, *Suite* for two violins, and *String Quartet No. 2* – in 1943. Her *Overture* for orchestra, also written during the war, was premiered already after it came to an end, at the 1st Festival of Contemporary Music held in Cracow in 1945. Its energetic and rhythmic character (with a slightly calmer, brief central section) took the audience by surprise, since they clearly expected a sombre elegiac piece corresponding to the tragedy of the war. But Grażyna belonged to a generation of musicians brought up on emotionally balanced, classical models. Throughout her life she remained true to the conviction that “music does not express anything; no ordinary emotions from human life. It simply expresses itself and its own affections.”¹⁵ To what extent this conviction resulted from the anti-Romantic atmosphere in Europe after WWI, and how

much it might reflect the composer’s natural mental predispositions and aesthetic views – we cannot be sure. She most likely did not know Eduard Hanslick’s famous treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* of 1903, translated into Polish by Stanisław Niewiadomski. Her above-quoted claim concerning the autonomy of music comes from an interview that she granted her friend, the composer and journalist Stefan Kisielewski. Still, as it frequently happens in both life and art, many of her later works, sometimes strongly charged with emotions, seem to question this self-imposed principle.

Wartime experiences did find a reflection in her... literary works. Writing was, after music, the second, long-concealed passion pursued by that extraordinary woman. Her only published texts of this kind are: the collection of autobiographical stories *Znak szczególny* [*A Distinguishing Mark*], and the detective story *Sidła* [*The Snare*] recently printed by PWM Edition.

In the years that followed the wartime trauma, the relocation from Warsaw after the fall of the 1944 Uprising, and the stay in Pruszków transition camp, Bacewicz engaged in very intensive work in many fields. For the second time in her life she took up a post at her *alma mater* in Łódź, where she taught a violin class (1945/46) and theoretical subjects. Similarly as in 1933, she only worked there for a year. She was again in demand as a violinist in Paris, where she gave performances in various venues in 1946 and 1947. Possibly the greatest experience was her concert on 9th May (in letters to her brother, Grażyna gives two dates: 5th and 9th May) with the Lamoureux Orchestra under Paul Kletzki, where she played the solo part in Karol Szymanowski’s *Concerto* for violin and orchestra. She wrote with evident excitement to her brother Vytautas in New York, but not really about the music: “The concert went great. They said I looked excellent (I have a pretty new dress), and I felt no stage fright, imagine this. I got six curtain calls.”¹⁶ At the same time, she asked her brother to send her steel strings for her violin, because in Paris after the period of wartime destitution such goods were exceedingly hard to obtain.

In her other letters to Vytautas, Bacewicz writes about being on excellent form as a violinist, about invitations to play more concerts and appear in broadcasts on Radio France. These successes made her consider the possibility of settling in Paris for some time, which was impossible,

¹⁵ S. Kisielewski, ‘Rozmowa z Grażyną Bacewiczówną’ [‘A Conversation with Grażyna Bacewicz’], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 9, 1960, p. 5.

¹⁶ This and all the other quotations from letters to the composer’s brother Vytautas, after: G. Bacewicz, Letters to her brother Vytautas, unpublished, deposit at the National Library of Poland (Biblioteka Narodowa) in Warsaw, shelf mark: Rps akc 13509.

however, since in Poland she had left behind her family: mother, daughter, husband, sister, and her brother Kiejstut, with whom they had already scheduled concerts. The new Polish authorities tried to attract artists with scholarships and commissions for new works.

On coming back to Warsaw, she resumed composition with immense momentum, though in fact she had also continued to write music in Paris. When after her return to Poland a reporter of *Ruch Muzyczny* asked her whether in France she had found time to compose music, she replied: “I wrote there my *String Quartet No. 3*, of which I am proud. Paris has some ineffable quality which is favourable to creative work.”¹⁷

The *Third String Quartet* is one of the most internally balanced works in Bacewicz’s entire output, and possibly the closest to the ideal of *sérénité* characteristic of the Romanesque type of spirituality. Its first and last movements emphasise motion as the main creative force. The music comprises no expressive and technical extremes. The element of motion is controlled by the logic of relations between motifs and by the internal order and regularity of formal development. The composition demonstrates one more quality of Bacewicz’s style from that period; linear structures dominate over the vertical ones, and the latter, though harmonically quite subtle, seem to result from interactions between independent melodic lines.

The already mentioned, frequently awarded *Concerto for String Orchestra* of 1948 was undoubtedly one of the composer’s greatest achievements in the 1940s, along with the *Violin Concerto No. 3* (1948), *Piano Concerto* (1949), and *Sonata No. 4* for violin and piano (1949/50). *Concerto for String Orchestra* is also Bacewicz’s most frequently performed work, and the audience’s favourite. Its movement one (*Allegro*) combines the formula of a Baroque *concerto grosso* (with its mutually interdependent *ripieno* and *concertino*, represented here by the solo violin and cello) with that of the early Classical sonata form, which still preserved many Baroque qualities. The sweeping main theme, which has since then nearly become emblematic of the composer’s style, is based on pendular movement with a constant base on *d*₁ (opening of the theme in the Dorian *d*), but contained in a cyclic structure and more prone to motivic work than to classical thematic development. This theme, performed by the 1st violins, in accompanied by a counterpoint of the

cellos and the double-basses, which play the descending degrees of the scale. This counterpoint provides material for the *concertante* sections of the solo violin.

The 2nd theme, though different in structure, is of the same exuberant character, and transforms into a fluid phrase in its second section. In the reprise, the main theme returns in the Dorian *g*. Apart from the 2nd theme, we also hear (in an abbreviated form in relation to the exposition) a motif based on tremolos, which plays the role of theme three.

The 2nd movement of the *Concerto (Andante)* demonstrates Bacewicz’s ability to conjure up lyrical moods and harmoniously mete out emotions, as well as her sense of the cantilena, derived from the spirit of the Romantic song tradition.

The 3rd movement (*Vivo*) is a cross between a rondo and sonata form. The composer returns here to her favourite understanding of music as an expansion of pure motion materialised in the form of themes-figures, which exhibit infinite possibilities of motivic transformations.

In the same year (1948), Bacewicz also wrote her *Concerto No. 3* for violin and orchestra, in which she returns to folk inspirations that she had neglected for many years. This surprised many of her friends, who suspected her of subordinating to ideological postulates which, though not openly announced yet, could nevertheless already be felt ‘hanging in the air’. It was suggested that her use of Polish highland folklore was influenced by the music of Karol Szymanowski, though Bacewicz’s repertoire as a violinist only comprised the *First* of his concertos, but not the *Second* one, which was actually based on folk motifs. The composer herself was normally reluctant to reveal the secrets of her technique and style, but this time her personal notes contain a detailed description of the piece: “My *Third Concerto* is based on the folklore of Podhale, from which I tried to borrow, apart from the overall atmosphere, also typical melodic turns, harmonic combinations, and elements of rhythm.”¹⁸

The *Piano Concerto* (1949) was written for the Fryderyk Chopin competition for composers held by the Polish Composers’ Union to mark the centenary of that brilliant artist’s death. Nevertheless, Bacewicz’s piece contains no references to Chopin’s music whatsoever. Bacewicz, though respectful of the great Romantic’s achievements, felt no affinity with his music. The only link between her

¹⁷ J.K., ‘Rozmowa z Grażyną Bacewiczówną’ [‘A Conversation with Grażyna Bacewicz’], *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 12, 1947, p. 9.

¹⁸ M. Gąsiorowska, ‘Bacewicz’, in *Kompozytorzy polscy XX wieku*, Kraków, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1999, p. 175–176.

Koncert na orkiestrę smyczkową

I

Allegro $\text{♩} = 66$ GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ
(1948)

pesante

Violini I *ff* *sim.*

Violini II *ff*

Viole div. *ff*

Violoncelli *ff* *sim.*

Contrabassi *ff* *sim.*

Vni I *ff*

Vni II *ff*

Vle div. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Cb. *ff*

© 1951 by PWM Edition, Kraków, copyright assigned to ZAIKS, Warszawa. Printed in Poland.

Musical Example 1. The first five pages of the score of *Concerto for String Orchestra* (PWM Edition).

4

①

Vni I

Vni II

Vle div.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is the first system of a musical score. It consists of six staves. The top staff is for Violin I (Vni I), the second for Violin II (Vni II), the third and fourth are for Violins divided (Vle div.), the fifth is for Violoncello (Vc.), and the sixth is for Contrabass (Cb.). The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure of the Vni I staff has a 'v' marking. The second measure of the Vni I staff has a circled '1' above it. The Vni I staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, marked with '0' and '3'. The Vni II staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vc. and Cb. staves have a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vle div. staves have a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vc. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Cb. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vni I staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vni II staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vle div. staves have a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vc. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Cb. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure.

Vni I

Vni II

Vle div.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is the second system of a musical score, continuing from the first system. It consists of six staves: Violin I (Vni I), Violin II (Vni II), Violins divided (Vle div.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The music continues in 4/4 time. The Vni I staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vni II staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vle div. staves have a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Vc. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure. The Cb. staff has a 'v' marking in the first measure.

PWM-4901

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

cresc. ff *molto diminuendo*

Vni I

Vni II

Vle div.

Vc.

Cb.

div.

unis.

②

Vno I solo *p*

Vni I div.

Vni II div.

Vle *pp* *sul ponticello*

Vc. solo *p* *altri*

Cb. *pizz.* *pp*

PWM-4901

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Musical score for measures 1-3. The score includes staves for Solo Violin I, Violin I (altri), Violin II (altri), Viola, Solo Violoncello, Violoncello (altri), and Contrabasso. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first measure features a solo violin line with a half note and a quarter note, while the other instruments play chords. The second measure introduces a violin I part marked 'sul ponticello' and 'p' (piano), with a dynamic increase to 'mf' (mezzo-forte) in the third measure. The violin I part includes a 'div.' (divisi) instruction. The viola part has an 'ord.' (ordinario) instruction in the third measure. The cello and double bass parts feature a 'cresc.' (crescendo) instruction leading to a 'f' (forte) dynamic in the third measure.

Musical score for measures 4-6. The score includes staves for Solo Violin I, Violin I (altri), Violin I (div.), Violin II (tutti), Viola, Violoncello (tutti), and Contrabasso. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first measure features a solo violin line with a half note and a quarter note, while the other instruments play chords. The second measure features a violin I part marked 'div.' (divisi) and a dynamic of 'mf'. The violin II part is marked 'tutti' and 'f' (forte). The viola part is marked 'f'. The cello and double bass parts feature an 'arco' instruction and a dynamic of 'mf'. The third measure features a solo violin line with a half note and a quarter note, while the other instruments play chords. The violin I part is marked 'div.' and 'mf'. The violin II part is marked 'tutti' and 'f'. The viola part is marked 'f'. The cello and double bass parts feature an 'arco' instruction and a dynamic of 'mf'.

PWM-4901

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

The image shows three systems of musical notation for a string ensemble. The first system, labeled with a circled '3', includes staves for Vni I (tutti div.), Vni II, Vle, Vc., and Cb. It features dynamic markings of *ff*, *unis.*, and *rit.*, and a 2/4 time signature. The second system, labeled with a circled '4', includes staves for Vni I, Vni II, Vle, Vc., and Cb. It features dynamic markings of *f* and *pizz.*, and the instruction *L'istesso tempo*. The third system includes staves for Vni I, Vni II, Vle, Vc., and Cb. It features dynamic markings of *f* and the instruction *arco*.

PWM-4901

Musical Example 1. (Continued)

Piano Concerto and Chopin are the folkloric elements, present in many different forms, and embedded in a late Romantic texture. The folkloric tendency is the strongest in the final rondo, whose refrain features a theme in the form of a dynamic dance entitled ‘oberek in 3/4 time’.

There are more oberek stylisations in Bacewicz’s output. They can be found in the 1st movement of her *Piano Quintet* (1952) and in the *Toccata* from *Piano Sonata No. 2* (1953), as well as in the form of independent pieces – obereks for violin and piano.

The Conference of Music Composers and Critics held between 5th and 8th August 1949 in Łągow Lubuski, a town surrounded by forests and lakes, is considered as the formal inauguration of the period when the postulates of socialist realism were introduced in Polish music. This doctrine, imposed on artists in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, depended on the slogan of “music socialist in content, and national in form,” and constituted a directive for every artist who wished to avoid accusations of ‘formalism’ and of imitating the ‘bourgeois’ music of the West. The concepts of ‘realism’ and ‘formalism’ were never precisely defined, but it was clear that composers were to abandon all experimentation, and embrace what Andrei Zhdanov, the chief promoter of the movement, called ‘the new revolutionary romanticism’, which was to lead to the emergence of a ‘classless’ art, capable of attracting the interest of the wide masses without compromising its high artistic standards.

This sociotechnical attempt to deprive artists of their freedom was misconceived for historical reasons. The concept of a national art drawing on regional achievements had been exploited in European culture from the mid-19th century or earlier, and led to the rise of national schools in music. The popularisation of music among the wide audience had also been an urgent project in many circles. In the interwar Poland, the Music Movement Organisation ORMUZ had held concerts in towns and villages situated far from all centres of culture. Bacewicz took part in those concerts and contributed to the musical education of young people by writing educational pieces for various complements of instruments. Her position in Poland’s music life was high enough for her not to fear possible restrictions to her work, especially since her folkloristic pieces had already brought her success, also ‘in the West’ (the Polish term for the countries which then remained behind the ‘iron curtain’). Evidence of her international recognition can be

seen, for instance, in the 1st prize she received for her *String Quartet No. 4*, abounding in folk stylisations, in the International Competition for a String Quartet (Concours International pour Quatuor à Cordes) in Liège (Belgium, 1951). All the same, the atmosphere of the ‘Zhdanovshtchina’ clearly must have felt oppressive also to this ostensibly independent artist, since she wrote to Vytautas (on 16th February 1952):

Music is a fine art, but what was written then was ugly. Anyway, I began to feel and experience music in a different manner, and I came to the conclusion that I must find a new way. Simplification of my musical language seemed most important to me. Simplification, but not going back; not a return to classicism in the sense of the major-minor system, but finding something new and simple in its place, naturally – without rejecting the achievements of the part period, by which I mean the 1st half of the 20th century. Besides, composers were ashamed of their emotions. I have decided to reject this shame, and I am now writing emotional music¹⁹.

Examples of a partial subordination to the principles of socialist realism can be found, according to some theorists, in Bacewicz’s four symphonies, written in the years 1945–1953. The composer herself was reluctant to accept later attempts to revive those works. Today, when we venture into previously unexplored territories of music history, performers return especially to the last two of her symphonies: the 3rd (1952) and 4th (1953).

Bacewicz’s four-part *Symphony No. 3* is extremely motivically integrated and demonstrates her ability to transform some initial thoughts so consistently that the whole work seems nearly monothematic. Movement one begins with a bombastic *Drammatico* introduction, whose elements play a major role throughout the piece. The 2nd theme, entering in the horns and trumpets, clearly derives from the material of this introduction. Comparison to the opening of Johannes Brahms’s *Symphony No. 1 in C Minor* seems legitimate, and indeed there are many Brahms-like elements in the orchestration, though the harmony is evidently that of the 20th-century in many passages. The expressive aura of the symphony inevitably brings to mind Shostakovich, with his oscillations between drama and grotesque, lyricism and pathos. Indications for performers, such as *con passione* and *espressivo*, suggest a certain mood that possibly also accompanied the process of composition – a pessimistic one, which was frequent in those difficult times.

¹⁹ G. Bacewicz, letter to her brother Vytautas, 16th February 1962 (manuscript).

78

①

I
Flg.
II

I
Cr.
II

I
Trb.
II

I
Trbn.
II

Imp.
Tmb.
Gr.C.

Pft.

I
Vl.
II

Vla

Vcl.

CB.

①

PW11
443

Musical Example 2. A page from the 3rd movement of *Piano Concerto* (PWM Edition).

Symphony No. 4, in turn, alludes to Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Despite the unequivocally neo-Romantic expressive aura of Bacewicz's symphony, one can find, scattered on its cards, some suggestions of a new, sonoristic way of thinking, which point to the direction of the composer's further artistic development. The influence of normative aesthetic on Polish composers has recently been to some extent exaggerated, especially by those who did not themselves participate in this dubious-quality experiment. Socialist realism was a kind of exoticism employing folklore as an indispensable element, but folklore has been present in the music of many composers over the centuries. In his detailed harmonic analysis of the opening bars of Bacewicz's *Sonata No. 4* for violin and piano, Hui-Yun Chung comments:

As expected of Bacewicz's second compositional period the piece emphasizes folk-line elements. For example: in the beginning of the first movement the pentatonic scale played by piano obviously demonstrates folk-like elements. The frequently changing modes are shown in the beginning of the eight-measure passage. The main theme is played by piano with F pentatonic scale (F-G-A-C-D) and violin joins four measures later with E pentatonic scale (E-F-G#-B(H)-C#)²⁰.

The author correctly observes that Bacewicz builds the music progressions out of many scales, which creates a special sound aura characteristic of her music in that period. But the very use of a pentatonic scale is not sufficient to prove quasi-folkloric inspirations. The context, the character of the music, the expression (which has nothing to do with folk stylisation) – all this is significant. Among the interesting remarks on the relations between harmony, texture and interpretation, the author also divides and analyses the form differently, while agreeing that it is based on the sonata form.

In the US-Japanese pianist's Takako Tokuda's analyses of Bacewicz's two *Piano Sonatas* (of 1949 and 1953), the author locates both these works within the sphere of socialist-realist influences, but emphasises the greater formal freedom in the *Sonata No. 2*, and a harmony liberated from the functional relations: "While the first sonata tends to employ functional harmonies, the second sonata utilizes non-functional harmonies and

frequently treats harmony as color."²¹ Tokuda's very careful and meticulous analyses of both pieces also reveal the heightened expression of the 1953 *Sonata*, which the scholar explains as follows:

The drastic range of expression in the second sonata presents a stronger individual voice not seen as vividly in the first sonata. Her music may have expressed her own agony of living in a country in which creative activity was so severely restricted and checked by the government²².

As we can see, Bacewicz's music from this period has frequently been analysed from many perspectives, which proves the importance of these works, constituting an indispensable part of 20th-century music. The composer herself already in the early 1950s, despite the oppressive political system in which she lived, felt an enormous creative potential, which led her to the radical decision of ending her career as a concert violinist. She gave her last concert with Cracow Philharmonic Orchestra on 21st February 1952, playing her own *Violin Concerto No. 4* under the baton of Bohdan Wodiczko. The *Fifth Violin Concerto*, first presented on 17th January 1955 during the large-scale 2nd Festival of Polish Music, was already premiered by a pupil of Bacewicz's friend Eugenia Umińska – Wanda Wiłkomirska, who was then embarking on an international career. Umińska herself gave the following, highly positive assessment of Bacewicz's violin style and technique:

Bacewicz had an amazing technical ease, confidence and dexterity in both hands (she was an outstanding representative of Professor Jarzębski's school); strong and unfailing fingers; crystal-clear intonation; robust and energetic rhythmic feel; perfect memory and interpretative organisation²³.

Grażyna Bacewicz returned to perform in public once more, but... as a pianist. At a Polish Composers' Union's concert on 17th December 1953, she premiered her own, already mentioned *Piano Sonata No. 2*. She was last heard as a violinist on 9th March 1959 in Cracow, performing her *Sonata No. 2* for solo violin (1958), whose intriguing finale makes use of the *glissando spiccato* technique.

Of Bacewicz's seven violin concertos, the best known and most frequently performed is the *Third*, already

²⁰ H.-Y. Chung: *Grażyna Bacewicz and Her Violin Compositions: From a Perspective of Music Performance*, Tallahassee, The Florida State University, 2011, p. 30.

²¹ T. Tokuda, *Grażyna Bacewicz and Social Realism. A Stylistic Comparison of Piano Sonata No. 1 and 2*, Coral Gables, University of Miami. 2016, p. 58.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

²³ E. Umińska: statement in: 'Numer poświęcony pamięci Grażyny Bacewicz', *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 7, 1969, p. 9.

1

III SYMFONIA

I GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ
(1952)

Drammatico $\text{♩} = 55$ a_2

Flauti I
Flauti II
Flauto picc.
Oboi I
Oboi II
Clarinetti in B I
Clarinetti in B II
Fagotti I
Fagotti II
Corni in F I
Corni in F II
Corni in F III
Corni in F IV
Trombe in C I
Trombe in C II
Trombe in C III
Tromboni I
Tromboni II
Tromboni III
Tuba
Timpani
Tamburo
Gran Cassa
Piatti
Tam-Tam
Violini I
Violini II
Viole
Violoncelli
Contrabassi

PWM
1833

Musical Example 3. The first three pages of the score of *Symphony No. 3* (PWM Edition).

2

5 *a²* *ff cresc.* *fff*

Fl. I

Fl. p.

Ob. I

Cl. in B

Fg.

Cor in F

Trbn. in C

Trbn. I

Trbn. II

Timp.

G.C.

Ptt

ff cresc. *fff*

ff

c. bacch. d. Timp.

ff cresc. *fff*

div.

PWN
1958

Musical Example 3. (Continued)

3

poco rall. *molto allegro energico* *(sempre ff)*

Fl. I
Fl. p.
Ob. I
Cl. in B
Fg.
Cor. in F
Trbn. in C
Trbn. e Tb.
Timp.
Ptti

poco rall. *molto allegro energico* *(sempre ff)*

Vni.
Vle.
Vc.
Cb.

PWM
1833

Musical Example 3. (Continued)

Kiejstutowi Bacewiczowi
IV SONATA
I

GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ (1949)

Moderato (♩=80)

VIOLINO

PIANOFORTE

pp

cresc. pp

poco a poco cresc.

8

cresc. mf

cresc. rit.

cresc.

8

① *poco più mosso*

f

p

cresc.

mf

②

Allegro non troppo (♩=120)
sul G

ff con passione

ff

Copyright 1952 by Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Kraków, Poland. Printed in Poland. Copyright assigned to SESAC, Inc. New York, N. Y. Właczne przedstawicielstwo na Stany Zjednoczone A. P., Dominia, Kanadę i Meksyk. — Przedstawicielstwo Wydawnictwo Polskich PWP, Warszawa

Musical Example 4. The first page of the score of *Sonata No. 4* for violin and piano (PWM Edition).

discussed above. Her *Sixth*, composed in 1957, was premiered on 6th December 2019 at Warsaw Philharmonic, thanks to a permission granted by the composer's family. Grażyna herself did not agree to a public presentation of this work, but used its fragments in her other works. Apparently observation of changes taking place in music in the mid-1950s, partly due to the invalidation of socialist-realist postulates following the political transformations in Poland after 1956, and the emergence of a new generation of composers – led Bacewicz to reject some of her own works as too traditional.

She wrote to her brother Vytautas about her artistic dilemmas on 19th October 1957:

Personally I remain a 'conservative' (I put this term in inverted commas, because in Poland my music is considered wild). I naturally try to be *au courant* of all that is happening in the world. But I will not follow in the footsteps of those gentlemen [Bacewicz refers here to Boulez, Stockhausen, and Nono – note by M.G.] because it would not be sincere of me, and sincerity is most important in art. My music is perhaps emotional in the traditional sense, while the avant-garde music builds emotions in a completely different way, for instance, by carrying a series through in a perfect manner – something that is of no interest to me whatsoever²⁴.

The composer was intrigued, though, by the new system of musical organisation, and in several of her letters to Vytautas she wrote about the advantages of the twelve-note technique and serialism as a final liberation from the major-minor system and an element of discipline, which she herself valued highly. In a letter of 23rd October 1958, she frankly admitted, however, that “Dodecaphony does not really suit me – I am sitting now and working on my own system.” What kind of system, then? Bacewicz used the serialist technique deliberately only once – in her *String Quartet No. 6* of 1960. In a letter to Vytautas of 5th February 1963, she confessed:

I have worked out a 'little system for myself, derived from serialism, depending on never repeating in the course of the music and in the resulting harmonies any of the notes that have already been used. It is a kind of free serialism. The chords never comprise doubled notes. I am aware that this little system concerns only and exclusively harmony, but thanks to this I have finally managed to depart from tonality²⁵.

24 G. Bacewicz, letter to her brother Vytautas, 19th October 1957 (manuscript).

25 G. Bacewicz, letter to her brother Vytautas, 5th February 1963 (manuscript).

The modernisation of Bacewicz's technique was gradual and evolutionary. In this process, the composer preserved the principal constants of her work, namely, a logical aprioristic form and a clear-cut dramatic development. In the first analytic monograph dedicated to Grażyna Bacewicz's music, Adrian Thomas put it this way:

The customary division of Bacewicz's music into four periods (1932–44; 1945–54; 1955–60 and 1961–69) clearly acknowledges the major turning points in post-war Polish musical history. Yet any assessment of Bacewicz's oeuvre has to recognize that her compositional aesthetic remained remarkably stable. Only the last period, which properly dates from the *Sixth String Quartet* (1960), is clearly defined through her attempts to square her established style with the avant-garde sounds and techniques that were beguiling so many of her younger colleagues. [...] the latter half of the 1950s assumes the role of reflective transition, broadly in tune with the preceding ten years and occasionally prophetic of the music of the final decade²⁶.

This gradual transition to a new style began with a dramatic event. In September 1954, on their return from a holiday, Grażyna and her family were involved in a serious accident when a truck hit the car in which they were travelling. Grażyna suffered the gravest injuries and lay immobilised for weeks, but her will to return to active life eventually took the upper hand. This moment marks a smooth passage in her music to a style in which there was no longer any room for folk stylisations (they appeared for the last time in the last movement of her *Violin Concerto No. 5* of 1954). Her neoclassical period came to a symbolic close with the *Partita* of 1955 (*Prelude, Toccata, Intermezzo, and Rondo*), which she composed simultaneously in two versions: for violin and piano, and for orchestra. The *Partita* is dominated by neoclassical vitalism (*Toccata, Rondo*), but the strongly contrasted *Intermezzo (Andantino melancolico)* is lyrical-impressionistic. The *Intermezzo* itself is quite a puzzle. Its central theme had appeared in several of the composer's earlier works, including the *Wind Quintet* (1932) and *Cello Concerto No. 1* (1951).

After the *Partita*, the composer used the same theme in her *Viola Concerto* (1968) and in the ballet *Desire* (1968). What did that simple melancholy phrase mean to the composer? We will probably never get to know. The topic of self-quotations in her musical output is not limited to this one theme. It has been analysed

26 A. Thomas, *Grażyna Bacewicz. Chamber and Orchestral Music*, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1985, p.25.

Presto J-144 *glissando spiccato* 9

ppp

glissando

glissando

E

A

A

D

D

G

1/2

pp

E

A

D

D

G

2

1

p

(D) (C)

E

A

D

D

G

mf

A

D

E

A

D

D

G

p

mf

p

mf

A

D

D

G

E

A

D

D

G

mf

mp

PWM - 6518

Musical Example 5. The first page of the *Presto* from *Sonata No. 2* for solo violin (PWM Edition).

by Adrian Thomas, who demonstrates the use in some of her works of the ‘patchwork’ technique, as if she were looking for the best solutions for musical ideas which she had already exploited before. Some of the self-quotations may have had an iconic, totem-like significance to the composer, while others offered a kind of refuge in an already familiar world, which prepared her for her never completed journey in search of new sound worlds²⁷.

In Bacewicz’s oeuvre we can also find ‘twin’ pieces making use of similar music material, such as the *Trio* for oboe, harp and percussion and *Incrustations* (1965), or *Piano Quintet No. 2* (1965) and *Concerto* for two pianos and orchestra (1966).

The year 1956 saw the organisation of the 1st International Festival of Contemporary Music in Warsaw, which two years later received its present name: the Warsaw Autumn. Obtaining the political authorities’ permission for such an event was preceded by long efforts and negotiations undertaken by the music circles, primarily – by the Polish Composers’ Union’s Managing Board, of which Grażyna Bacewicz had been a member from 1950. Her contribution to the initial negotiations was significant. By that time, she had become a well-known and much-admired personage, member of the juries of many international competitions. In 1956 she was part of an official delegation sent to India in order to establish closer cultural cooperation with that country. At the same time in the private space of her study she strove to solve her artistic dilemmas, which became even more acutely felt when she was looking for her place in the constantly changing world after the joke of socialist realism had been cast off, Poland opened up to Western (and later to all the world’s) music, and a new generation of composers began to mark their presence. She realistically described her situation in a letter to her brother:

Since music is making very fast progress thanks to the young composers, I know that I can only take the back seat now, because I can’t outdo myself, and the truly novel things will be invented by the young ones, not by me. But this doesn’t worry me at all. Everyone has their place in the world. I do, or rather I would like to do, what I can do best – and that’s all²⁸.

27 A. Thomas, ‘Self-Quotation in the Music of Grażyna Bacewicz’, in L. Zielińska, M. Gąsiorowska and R. Augustyn (eds.), *O Grażynie Bacewicz...*, pp. 88–95.

28 G. Bacewicz, letter to her brother Vytautas, 8th December 1962 (manuscript).

The first symptom of changes comes in the *Symphonic Variations* of 1957, on which Maryla Renat wrote:

In the *Variations* we can observe a transformation of the correspondence of motifs into one of textural states, still rather uniform internally. This composition is a bridge between the neoclassical and sonoristic style in Bacewicz’s symphonic music²⁹.

The *Variations* exemplify a new treatment of orchestral texture, which is conceived here as a naturally polygenous structure, in which the various orchestral sections gain equal importance, and the composer attempts to bring out new qualities in the orchestra by differentiating the registers, faster changes, autonomous treatment of the individual instruments, and by demonstrating evident distance to the earlier types of narration.

The real breakthrough in Bacewicz’s progress toward her new sonoristic musical language came, however, with her *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion* of 1958. The sonoristic technique, elements of which can be found in many of her earlier works, here becomes the main driving force that propels the development of each of the three sections of the piece. Composed in the same year as Lutosławski’s *Musique funèbre*, Bacewicz’s *Music* also brings to mind associations with Béla Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. Affinities with the work of the Hungarian genius are evident in the close resemblance between the formal concepts of the two compositions. The orchestra has been divided into three *concertante* groups, and individual instruments are distinguished within those groups. There are also some analogies with regard to technique, such as developing a motif from a germ, the limited use of polyphony, and the types of frequently parallel voice leading. These analogies only exist, however, on an elementary technical level, while the language, dramaturgy and expression are very different in either case.

Despite the innovative language, the piece does retain some (neo)classical elements, especially in its formal concept. Movement I (*Allegro*) is a sonata form based on two themes presented in the exposition, the first of which bestows its characteristic style of expression on

29 M. Renat, ‘Wybrane zagadnienia idiomu kompozytorskiego Grażyny Bacewicz’ [‘Selected Aspects of Grażyna Bacewicz’s Language of Composition’], in M. Popowska (ed.), *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Edukacja Muzyczna I* [Scientific Works of the Academy Jan Długosz in Częstochowa. Musical Education I], Częstochowa, Wydawnictwo Akademii im. Jana Długosza, 2005, p. 50.

III Intermezzo

4/4 *Andantino melancolico* ♩ = 70

Flauti I
Flauti II
Oboe I

Campanelli

Arpa

Violini I div.
Violini II div.

Viola div.

Contrabassi div.

1

PWM
3310

Musical Example 6. The first two pages of two movements of the *Partita* and the *Viola Concerto* (PWM Edition).

Musical score for Musical Example 6 (Continued), page 47. The score is arranged in a system with the following parts from top to bottom: Fl. I, Ob. I and II, Cmphi, Ar., Vni I div., Vni II div., Vle div., and Cb. div. The Fl. I part begins with a circled '2' above the staff and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Ob. I and II parts have a circled '2' above the staff, with dynamics of *p cresc.* and *mp* respectively. The Cmphi part has dynamics of *pp* and *p*. The Ar. part has dynamics of *pp* and *p*. The Vni I div. part has a dynamic of *pp*. The Vni II div. part has dynamics of *pp* and *p*. The Vle div. part has dynamics of *pp* and *p*. The Cb. div. part has dynamics of *pp* and *p*. A circled '2' is also present below the Cb. div. part. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

PWM
3310

Musical Example 6. (Continued)

II

Andante ♩ = 58

4

cr 1 c. s. *pp*

vbf *pp*

tmt *pp*

cel *p*

ar *mp*

vla sola c. s. *pp*

cl b *pp*

fb 1 *pp*

cr 1

tmt *mp* *pp*

cel

ar *mf* *doł* *mp*

vla sola

cb 2 soli *pp*

PWM - 7126

Musical Example 6. (Continued)

36

Musical score for measures 36-40. The score includes staves for vibraphone (vbf), tam-tam (tmt), cello (cel), arpeggiator (ar), viola (vla sola), and double bass (cb unis.).

- vbf:** Measures 36-40. Pedal (ped.) is indicated. A fermata is placed over the final note. A large number '5' is written above the staff.
- tmt:** Measures 36-40. A fermata is placed over the final note.
- cel:** Measures 36-40. A fermata is placed over the final note.
- ar:** Measures 36-40. Pedal (ped.) is indicated. A fermata is placed over the final note. A large number '4' is written above the staff.
- vla sola:** Measures 36-40. A fermata is placed over the final note.
- cb unis.:** Measures 36-40. A fermata is placed over the final note.

Musical score for measures 41-45. The score includes staves for vibraphone (vbf), tam-tam (tmb), cello (cel), arpeggiator (ar), viola (vla sola), and double bass (cb unis.).

- vbf:** Measures 41-45. Pedal (ped.) is indicated. A circled '1' is written above the first measure.
- tmb:** Measures 41-45. *pp* dynamic.
- cel:** Measures 41-45. *f* and *p* dynamics.
- ar:** Measures 41-45. *mf* dynamic. Chordal notes: *do♭, re♭, mi♭, sol♭, la♯* and *(do♯, re♯)*.
- vla sola:** Measures 41-45. *f* and *pp* dynamics.
- cb unis.:** Measures 41-45. *p* dynamic. *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking.

PWM - 7126

Musical Example 6. (Continued)

Janowi Krenzowi
Muzyka na smyczki trąbki i perkusję
 Musique pour cordes, trompettes et percussion

I
 GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ (1958)

4/4 Allegro ♩ = 108

Violini div. a 2 parte

Viole

Violoncelli div. a 2 parte

Vni div. a 2 p.

Vle

Vc. div. a 2 p.

Copyright 1960 by P. W. P. Przedstawicielstwo Wydawnictwo Polskich, Warszawa, Poland. Printed in Poland. Copyright assigned to SESAC, Inc. N. Y.

Musical Example 7. The opening of Movement I of *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion* (PWM Edition).

6

Musical score for measures 6-7. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves: Vni div. a 2p., Vle, and Vc. div. a 2p. The lyrics are "- scen - - - do". The Vni part has a fermata over the first measure. The Vle part has a fermata over the first measure. The Vc. part has a gliss. marking over the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Musical score for measures 8-9. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves: Vni div. a 2p., Vle, and Vc. div. a 2p. The tempo marking is *poco accelerando*. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The Vni part has a fermata over the first measure. The Vle part has a fermata over the first measure. The Vc. part has a fermata over the first measure. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

PWM
6524

Musical Example 7. (Continued)

Violin and Viola parts, first system. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is marked with a large '2' and a circled '2'. The second measure is marked with a large '4', 'poco più mosso', and a tempo marking of quarter note = 120. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf marcato* (mezzo-forte marcato). Performance instructions include *pizz.* (pizzicato) for the strings. The system concludes with a circled '2' and a double bar line.

Violin and Viola parts, second system. This system continues the musical material from the first system, showing measures 4, 5, and 6. It maintains the same instrumentation, key signature, and tempo. The dynamics and performance instructions are consistent with the previous system.

PWM
6524

Musical Example 7. (Continued)

8

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 8-10) features Violins (Vni) and Violas (Vle) in the upper staves, and Cellos (Vc.) and Double Basses (Cb.) in the lower staves. The Violin parts are marked 'div.' and 'a 2 p.'. The Viola part is marked 'div.' and 'a 2 p.'. The Cello part is marked 'div.' and 'a 2 p.'. The Double Bass part is marked 'div.' and 'a 2 p.'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *f*, and *più f*, and performance instructions like *pizz.* and *non div.*. A circled '3' with a '2' above it and a '1' above it indicates a triplet of eighth notes. The second system (measures 11-13) continues the same instrumentation. The Double Bass part includes a *più f* marking and a *pizz.* instruction. The score concludes with a double bar line.

Vni div. a 2 p.

Vle div. a 2 p.

Vc. div. a 2 p.

Cb.

FWM 6524

Musical Example 7. (Continued)

Violin I (Vni div. a 2p.) and Violin II (Vle div. a 2p.) parts. The Violin I part features a melodic line with fingerings 4 3 2 1 and 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1, and a circled measure 4. The Violoncello (Vc. div. a 2p.) part has a bass line with a circled measure 4. Dynamics include *pp* and *mf*.

Trumpet (Tr.) and Violoncello (Vc. div. a 2p.) parts. The Trumpet part includes a section marked "con sord." with a *p* dynamic. The Violin I (Vni div. a 2p.) and Violin II (Vle div. a 2p.) parts continue with their respective parts. The Violoncello part includes a section marked "div." with a *mf* dynamic.

PWM
6524

Musical Example 7. (Continued)

the whole movement. Neither of the themes is a closed melodic segment, though in the 2nd theme's section we hear a sophisticated canon by inversion in the violins and the cellos, with imitation at the distance of a quaver, which preserves the direction of the melody, but does not strictly reproduce the precise intervals. The form develops through dynamic motion, alternation of textures, and diversification of sound types.

Movement II (*Adagio*) exemplifies Bacewicz's peculiar type of impressionism, in which the interplay of motifs and rhythms is largely replaced by that of colours, musical levels and textures. Movement III (*Vivace*) is a genuine kaleidoscope of ideas, of successive events, both elements from the past (ostinatos, pendular figures, parallel progressions) and quite new ones. All these ideas are subordinated to a certain type of order, based on a fusion of *concertante* form with sonata rondo form.

In 1960, *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion* won the 3rd prize (the highest among orchestral works) at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. The piece has frequently been choreographed, for instance by Pierre du Villard (*Quadriga*, 1965), David Earle (*Witness of Innocence*, 1967), and Hans van Manen (*Three Pieces*, created in 1968 for the Nederlands Dans Theater, and later revived by other companies, including Polish performers at Warsaw's Teatr Wielki, 1988).

The next milestones on Bacewicz's path of stylistic transformations were: *Pensieri notturni* for chamber orchestra (1961) and *String Quartet No. 6* (1960). The composer spoke of that latter piece:

It constitutes a turning point in my work. I wrote it for a long nine months. In this quartet, I drew on serialism in order to depart from tonality, which had determined my [earlier] music. I reached this *Quartet* by way of evolution, via my 5th *Quartet* and *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion*³⁰.

Grażyna Bacewicz's new musical language was largely formed through a transformation of the hitherto fundamental components of her music, such as melody, rhythm, and harmony – into qualitatively new type of sound structures, mainly focused on the coloristic aspects. Diversifying the ways of articulation, primarily in the strings, played a major role in this process, analysed in

detail by Steffen Witting, who sums up his article as follows:

Not so much the decline of the role of the sound pitch as that of the freeing of the interval, which factors are a priority for Bacewicz's composing technique, is related to an increasing importance of the factor of the sound tone-colour, which becomes a special element of the formal shaping of composition, treated as a means to enhance the expression³¹.

In the last decade of the composer's life, her most creative year was 1965, which brought a cornucopia of works such as *String Quartet No. 7*, *Violin Concerto No. 7*, *Piano Quintet No. 2*, *Musica sinfonica in tre movimenti*, and *Divertimento* for string orchestra. In his posthumous tribute printed in *Ruch Muzyczny*, Witold Lutosławski dedicated particular attention to the 7th *String Quartet*:

Her style went through many phases of development, until in her last period – when she applied the most recent achievements of composition technique – her music struck, as it were casually, a long-forgotten note, first heard in her [...] early *Stained-Glass Window*. I can hear it in the extremely subtle sonoristics of her *String Quartet No. 7*, which provides new evidence for the existence of many hitherto unforeseen possibilities latent in this apparently so well-known type of ensemble. Since the time of Bartók, few composers have managed to fathom out the secrets of quartet texture as thoroughly as Grażyna did³².

The piece bearing the neutral title of *Musica sinfonica in tre movimenti*, written in the same year, brings (with the exception of the final *Gioco*) dark, glassy colours devoid of euphonic warmth and creating a sense of tension, which results from the lack of any longer phrases in the narration, as well as of interrelations between the successive musical sequences.

The final element of Bacewicz's output in that unfinished decade was the ballet *Desire*, to a libretto by Mieczysław Bibrowski after Pablo Picasso's surrealistic play *Le désir attrapé par la queue*. The librettist translated the existential anxieties of the war into the realities of contemporary times, presenting Picasso as a hero capable of defending humanity from all kinds of enslavement. This idea is expressed in the closing section, in a dance entitled *The Picassienne*, conceived as a homage to the

³⁰ J. Hordyński, 'Polscy Kompozytorzy Współcześni: Grażyna Bacewiczówna' ['Polish Contemporary Composers: Grażyna Bacewicz'], *Życie literackie*, no. 42, 1960, p. 3.

³¹ S. Witting, *Aspekte der Klangfarbe in den Werken der letzten Schaffensperiode Grażyna Bacewicz (1960-69)*, English Summary, quoted after: *Rodzeństwo Bacewiczów. Materiały z Międzynarodowej Sesji Naukowej*, M. Szoka, B. Dowlasz and M. Flis (eds.), *Zeszyt Naukowy 24*, Łódź, Akademia Muzyczna w Łodzi, 1996, p. 152.

³² W. Lutosławski, statement in: 'Numer poświęcony...', p. 5.

VII Kwartet smyczkowy
 Streichquartett
 String Quartet
 Quatuor à cordes

I

Allegro ♩ = 108

GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ (1965)

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

ppp

pizz.

saltando

pp

sul tasto gettato

p

come percussione

gliss.

pp

mp

ord. sul G

p

mp

sul C

mp

Copyright 1967 by Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Kraków, Poland; for Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Republic of Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Chinese People's Republic, Cuba, North Korea, North Viet-Nam.

© 1967 by Moeck Verlag, Celle/FRG; for the rest of the world.

Musical Example 8. The first two pages of *String Quartet No. 7* (PWM Edition).

6

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows a melodic line with slurs and a bass line with chords. The second system features a 'saltando' section with triplets and sixteenth notes, and an 'arco' section. The third system includes a 'come percuss.' section with a 3/4 time signature change and a 'gettato' section with a 4/4 time signature change.

PWM - 6219

Musical Example 8. (Continued)

great artist and to free, world-liberating art. Picasso, who was indeed the great ‘father of contemporary art’, but at the same time a member of the French Communist Party and a participant of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace, held by Poland’s communist authorities in Wrocław (1948), was a (politically) welcome protagonist for a new Polish composition. The librettist’s staging concept suggests a truly modern ballet making use of state-of-the-art technologies. Bacewicz distanced herself from the temptation of literally illustrating the stage action by musical means. She went more in the direction of grotesque or comic exaggeration, but drew on tradition in a way by introducing leitmotifs. She reflected the stage events indirectly, using a vast palette of coloristic possibilities inherent in the various instruments, from playing in extreme registers to different techniques of articulation (for instance, percussive treatment of the strings or playing behind the bridge), to untypical juxtapositions of instruments with strong participation of percussion, to a type of narration that could well be compared to montage technique, as well as the introduction of some aleatory passages.

Bacewicz’s ballet music remained unfinished. Notes left behind by the composer suggest that she still had the last five or so minutes of the music to write before the score would be complete. Despite the missing fragment being supplemented by Bogusław Madey, the work was staged once only, on 18th March 1973 in Warsaw. The ideological entanglement and naivety of the libretto does not preclude the possibility of rethinking the whole nowadays and staging the ballet in a modern form which would reflect the new global fears of our present, 21st century. The question once asked by Barbara Cisowska remains open:

Did the ideology [contained in the libretto – note by M.G.] find its most suitable counterpart in the music, and, conversely, did the composer choose a libretto that truly suited her artistic individuality³³?

Grażyna Bacewicz was working on her ballet in a state of extreme nervous tension, as her sister Wanda recalls. Intense work in her last years undermined her health. In 1963 she had to cope with her husband’s death (following a long illness). In 1966 she agreed to teach a composition class at the State Higher School of Music (now the Fryderyk Chopin University) in

Warsaw, actively participating in work on the course syllabus.

Toward the end of 1968, despite her poor physical and mental state, and leaving the unfinished score of her ballet behind on her desk, she travelled with a group of guests to the Festival of Polish Music in Armenia. After her return, her health rapidly deteriorated. As a result of complications following influenza and probably a heart attack, despite good medical care, Grażyna Bacewicz died on 17th January 1969.

“I walk along the boundary between two worlds,” she once wrote, in an attempt to define her place in the landscape of music in the 1950s and 60s. But she also remarked: “Much is happening in my music – it is violent and lyrical at the same time.”³⁴

This self-definition goes very far beyond attempts to define her oeuvre in the spirit of theses put forward by the so-called feminist musicology. What is certainly true is that the achievements of the author of *Pensieri notturni* paved the way for other Polish women-artists. This aspect of Bacewicz’s impact was once emphasised by the late Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, whose works, just as those of Grażyna Bacewicz, have frequently been performed at the Warsaw Autumn. Today Sikorski’s rebellious pupil has many successors, who, free from complexes, write works which traditionalists would surely label as ‘masculine’, but which can simply be hailed as excellent music.

REFERENCES

- [anon.] ‘Pierwszy koncert skrzypcowy skomponowany przez kobietę’, *Kurjer Czerwony*, year 17, no. 59, 28th February 1938.
- Bacewicz, G., Letters to her brother Vytautas, unpublished, deposit at the National Library of Poland (Biblioteka Narodowa) in Warsaw, shelf mark: Rps akc 13509.
- Bacewicz, G., draft of a response to an unidentified questionnaire, found among her papers, printed in: ‘Numer poświęcony pamięci Grażyny Bacewicz’, *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 7, 1969, p. 4.
- Bacewicz, G., ‘Wypowiedź Grażyny Bacewicz dla radiowej Redakcji Współpracy z Zagranicą w 1964 r.’, *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 3, 1989, pp. 7–10.

³³ B. Cisowska, ‘*Pożądanie – ostatnie dzieło Grażyny Bacewicz*’ [‘*Desire – Grażyna Bacewicz’s Last Work*’], *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 13, 1973, p. 5.

³⁴ G. Bacewicz, draft of a response to an unidentified questionnaire, found among her papers, printed in ‘Numer poświęcony...’, p.4.

- Berliner, M., *Washington Daily News*, 31st December 1952, p. 19.
- Chung, H.-Y., *Grażyna Bacewicz and Her Violin Compositions: From a Perspective of Music Performance*, Tallahassee, The Florida State University, 2011.
- Cisowska, B., 'Pożądanie – ostatnie dzieło Grażyny Bacewicz', *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 13, 1973, p. 5.
- Citron, M.J., 'Chapter 1: Canonic Issues', 'Chapter 2: Creativity', in *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2000, pp. 15–43, pp. 44–79.
- Gąsiorowska, M., 'Bacewicz', in *Kompozytorzy polscy XX wieku*, Kraków, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1999.
- Hordyński, J., 'Polscy Kompozytorzy Współcześni: Grażyna Bacewiczówna', *Życie literackie*, no. 42, 1960, p. 3.
- [J.K.], 'Rozmowa z Grażyną Bacewiczówną', *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 12, 1947, pp. 8–9.
- Kisielewski, S., 'Zjazd Kompozytorów', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 28, 1950, p. 4–5.
- Kisielewski, S., *Grażyna Bacewicz i jej czasy*, Kraków, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1964.
- Kisielewski, S., 'Rozmowa z Grażyną Bacewiczówną', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 9, 1960, p. 5.
- Luedeke, J.M., *Dame Ethel Smyth's Concerto for Violin, Horn, and Orchestra: A Performance Guide for the Hornist*, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses 6747, LSU Digital Commons, 1998, https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/6747 (accessed 4th December 2019).
- Renat, M., 'Wybrane zagadnienia idiomu kompozytorskiego Grażyny Bacewicz', in M. Popowska (ed.), *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Edukacja Muzyczna I*, Częstochowa, Wydawnictwo Akademii im. Jana Długosza, 2005, pp. 35–72.
- Sendłak, J., *Z ogniem. Miłość Grażyny Bacewicz w przededniu wojny*, Warsaw, Skarpa Warszawska, 2018.
- Szoka, M., B. Dowlasz. and M. Flis (eds.), *Rodzeństwo Bacewiczów. Materiały z Międzynarodowej Sesji Naukowej*, Zeszyt Naukowy 24, Łódź, Akademia Muzyczna w Łodzi, 1996.
- Rosen, J., *Grażyna Bacewicz. Her Life and Works*, Polish Music History Series, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1984.
- Thomas, A., *Bacewicz. Chamber and Orchestral Music*, Polish Music History Series, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1985.
- Tokuda, T., *Grażyna Bacewicz and Social Realism. A Stylistic Comparison of Piano Sonata No 1 and 2*, Coral Gables, University of Miami, 2016.
- Umińska, E., statement in 'Numer poświęcony pamięci Grażyny Bacewicz', *Ruch Muzyczny*, no. 7, 1969, pp. 8–11.
- V., 'Grażinos Bacevičiūtes koncertas', *Rytas*, 14th April, 1932, p. 2.
- Wittig, S., *Aspekte der Klangfarbe in den Werken der letzten Schaffensperiode Grażyna Bacewicz (1960-69)*. English Summary, p.152.
- Zielińska, L., M. Gąsiorowska and R. Augustyn (eds.), *O Grażynie Bacewicz. Materiały z Konferencji Muzykologicznej: Grażyna Bacewicz – człowiek i dzieło*, Warsaw, 9th–10th January 1989, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Muzyczne Brevis, 1998.

Małgorzata Gąsiorowska graduated from the State Higher School of Music (now the Fryderyk Chopin University) in Warsaw. For nearly 40 years she worked for Polish Radio Channel Two, with which she still collaborates. She has authored monographs dedicated to the music of Grażyna Bacewicz (1999, 2009) and Stefan Kisielewski (2011), and co-authored the script for a documentary film on Grażyna Bacewicz entitled *Dla ludzi mam zawsze twarz pogodną* [*I Always Have a Cheerful Face for Other People*] (1999). She regularly collaborates with the Chair of Music Analysis and Interpretation at the Academy of Music in Cracow.