

- **POLISH ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC**

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Electroacoustic music in Poland - Brief history

It is rather difficult task to present in short time a history or condition some domain in attractive way. Bombarding the listeners with hundreds facts, names and dates is rather wearisome and causes chaos. On the other hand it is rather doubtful to omit all these facts and names. I will try to present the material more concerning a topic, not chronology, and illustrate it with musical examples. Let me start from Polish Radio Experimental Studio, that has opened electroacoustic music era in Poland. True enough, the first precursors of such music appeared in Poland something earlier, at the beginning of 1957 as applied music for stage and film by Andrzej Markowski and Włodzimierz Kotonski and two music concrete etudes by Andrzej Rakowski and Janusz Piechurski. Polish Radio Experimental Studio at Warsaw was born in October of 1957; 9 years after Paris Studio of Pierre Schaeffer, 6(4) years after Cologne Elektronische Musik Studio, 3 years after Tokyo NHK Studio and 2 years after Milan Studio di Fonologia Musicale. At this time aesthetic difference between musique concrete and elektronische Musik was not so distinct as it was the case in early 50-th and technology was similar. The term experimental music was rather preferred. The founder of Polish Radio Experimental Studio was musicologist and acoustician Jozef Patkowski (1929). He conducted the Studio during 28 years till 1985. At the time the Warsaw Studio was established, (late 50-th), Poland could return to its natural connections to world culture. Warsaw Autumn Festival was the signum temporis. It is to emphasise that development of electroacoustic music in Poland after 1956 was not influenced or limited by authority, as it was the case in some other countries of soviet domination. The only moment, when politics touched Experimental Studio was during martial law, when the head of the Studio - Jozef Patkowski, at this time President of Polish Composer Union as well, incurred authority's disfavour. In reprisal for he was relegated out of Polish Radio, and the Studio was harassed. The first near thirty year period of Polish electroacoustic music is strictly connected with Warsaw Studio. Besides of the fact that the Studio belongs to the radio, the main emphasis of its activity was, and still is, the realisation of autonomous musical works. Till now more as 200 autonomous compositions were produced. It doesn't mean that Studio was far from applied music. Several hundreds titles for film, theatre, TV, radio and various exhibitions came out from the Studio. In the 60-th the main persons of Polish electroacoustic music were: Krzysztof Penderecki, Boguslaw Schaeffer, Włodzimierz Kotonski, Andrzej Dobrowolski, Zbigniew Wiszniewski, Tomasz Sikorski. In the 70-th come new generation: Krzysztof Knittel, Elzbieta Sikora, Andrzej Biezan, Pawel Szymanski, Andrzej Dutkiewicz, Ryszard Szeremeta and others. The 80-th and 90-th that's Marek Choloniewski, Jan Oleszkowicz, Barbara Zawadzka and Anna Zawadzka, Jaroslaw Kapuscinski, Edward Sielicki, Magdalena Dlugosz, Jacek Grudzien and others. Last but not least one must mention of two tonmeisters (sound engineers) Eugeniusz Rudnik and Bohdan Mazurek who while assisting many composers became composers as well. Their works make a fair part of Experimental Studio archive. I have mentioned only some of all who composed in the Studio. There worked 67 composers till now - 36 from Poland, 31 from abroad. This international, open and creative character of Warsaw Studio is undoubtedly the merit of one man - Jozef Patkowski, who knew how to make composers all generations from Poland and 14 other countries all over the world, come to the Studio. So worked in Warsaw Studio: Franco Evangelisti, Roland Kain, Lejaren Hiller, Herbert Brann, Tamas Ungvary, Arne Nordheim, Francois B.Mache, Roman Berger, Christian Closier, Bengt Emil Johnson, Nigel Osborne, Martin Smolka and 19 others. Is there something characteristic, common to the works made in Experimental Studio? It is rather difficult to point out. But essential is the fact of great variety of these works from the very beginning. The first autonomous piece in Experimental Studio in 1959 was Włodzimierz Kotonski's *Etude for One Cymbal Stroke*. Curious in that work was a serial music composition of non electronic material. This was the sound of stroked cymbal recorded on

magnetic tape and then processed. The case like *Vocalise* of Pierre Henry. *dB, Hz, s* by Zbigniew Wiszniewski from 1962 was pure electronic work, composed on serial principle. The composer doesn't allowed any freedom during realisation of piece. The curious is, that continuously decayed sounds were made with spliced versions of the same sound, recorded with stepwise and precisely faded out sound level. *Microstructures* by Włodzimierz Kotonski from 1963 was original idea of creating sound material from very short (ca.25 ms) sound samples chosen by chance. Samples were made by cutting the tape with various kind sounds recorded on it. The piece was realised manually - 20 years before technology of samplers and digital editing. Near 1/5 of the works from Experimental Studio were composed for tape and instrument or group of instruments. We can find here compositions for tape and piano, harpsichord, oboe, flute, clarinet, bassoon, trombone, trumpet, saxophone, violin, cello, viola, accordion, percussion, string quartet, human voices, choir and synthesiser. That is easy to understand composer's interest in such kind of works. It is engaging from compositional point of view and there is more chance for performing. Such piece is often more attractive for listener. The first works that genre in Studio was *Echoes II* for 2,3,4 pianos, percussion and tape and *Antiphons* for soprano, tape and instruments by Tomasz Sikorski from 1963 and *Music for Magnetic Tape and Oboe Solo* by Andrzej Dobrowolski from 1965. This last is an example of homogeneity idea. All sounds in that piece, recorded, transformed and live performed as well come from oboe. Some sound aggregates consist of 30 sounds of oboe. Score for live performer exists for this piece. Here it is to emphasise that 5 scores of music realised in Experimental Studio were published. Compositions for tape and instrument (vocal part included) are popular forms and almost every year one or two such pieces come to the stage. Another group of compositions use human voice, treated in various ways. Near 20 such works were realised. *Psalmus 61* by Krzysztof Penderecki is an example of instrumental like treating of human voice. The percussion sounds come from processing explosive vowels [b], [p], [d], [t], [g], [k], tremolo from repetitive vowel [rrrrrr], a.s.o. Exploiting of *Psalmus* experiences one could perceive in Penderecki's vocal compositions. Unfortunately this interesting idea, that we can discover in music of Luciano Berio as well, doesn't find its full continuation in later works from Experimental Studio. Some echoes one could meet in *Solitaire* by Arne Nordheim, some pieces of Eugeniusz Rudnik and *Antiphonae* by Włodzimierz Kotonski from 1989. Interesting treating of human voice brings radio opera *Monodrama* by Bogusław Schaeffer from 1968. Composer creates complex texture from the voice of actress, interpreted in various ways. Besides of human non articulated sounds - lough, sighs, calls, cry and isolated words prepared the main role plays monologue that in one of parts directly (on electronic way) influence the instrumental sounds. Human voice and speech is often used by Eugeniusz Rudnik, especially in his collage like works. He uses often full sentences or words, but by means of editing, repetition and knocking spoken sounds against other sound events, he creates new qualities. Rudnik uses this collage technique very often till now. Important position among all works of the Studio belongs to the electronic *Symphony* by Bogusław Schaeffer from 1966. It is probably the first such experiment in electroacoustic music. Schaeffer has written a score for performer. The role of performer plays here tonmeister. The graphic symbols at the score have their correspondent comments in the score preface. These comments give only approximate picture of authors' intentions, and are sometimes contradictive. Fulfilment of these symbols with sounds deepens only on imagination of tonmeister. While new performance, the time structure and separate layer of ton mixtures with precisely given frequencies, remain the same. It is some kind of composers' vision realised every time with individual choice. Appearance of Schaeffer's electronic *Symphony* has provoked me to study of composers situation in electroacoustic music studio. In my paper at UNESCO Conference "Music and Technology" in Stockholm in 1970 I gave a proposal of simple categorisation of composer's attitude towards electroacoustic music. One can distinguish three main types of composer - formalist - improvisator - visionary Formalist - a composer who possesses a detailed and formalised idea of his composition, usually in form of a score. Improvisator - a composer who seeks the basic inspirations for his composition in a sound material he found and gathered. He often would like to be presented with a collection of sonic events that he could then either accept, reject or modify. He formulates his intentions during the process of

realisation. Visionary - composer who has only general idea, outline - or "vision" of the composition. He waits for fulfilment, interpretation or performance of his project, giving performer considerable margin of freedom. In 1970 situation of every of this composers' type, concerning the then computer music studio, was different. Composers in these studios, based on mainframes, without human interface, were forced to studying computer programming and defining many detailed parameters. It was the less troublesome for composer-formalist, who assumed such strictness. "Improvisator" and partially "visionary" were rather on weak position. Nowadays even composer-improvisator touching such programs as Max, M or GRM Tools or using digital editing system not have to be a programmer and his freedom is not very constrained. Some years ago I held a belief that in art new techniques do not kill old ones and they could coexist. It was probably true in 70-th. Today facts are rather against such mining. Of course, even to day some composers use a scissors for cutting a sound, and all Moog modules to produce it, but contemporary technology of electroacoustic music is dominated by computer technique. Does however the technology influence and indeed condition the value and originality of a work of art? That is again and again recurrent question. One point of view is that musical idea arises irrespective of the technical means, only its realisation depends on technique. On the other hand musical idea comes often from a gesture, from being in touch with definite instrument, from sound possibilities, and these are closely connected with technology. Where is the true? Coming back to composers' attitudes, we come to conclusion that composer-"formalist" or "visionary" are less dependent from technology. As an example I can mention Boguslaw Schaeffer who in his electronic *Symphony* can be treated as "visionary". From many years I give to my students an exercise - realisation of excerpt of that *Symphony*. First realisations, ten years ago, were made pure manually. To day students make it with advanced computer technique. The shape of the piece remains however the same. Composer-"improvisator" who looks for inspiration in instrument, in machine is in practice technology dependent. Return a keyboard to electroacoustic music studio in late 60-th has changed many in creation of this time. Coming to Polish electroacoustic music - how it looks to day? In 50-th, 60-th, 70-th here was only one full professional electroacoustic music studio in Polish Radio. Its role in musical life of this country was essential. The Studio organised public concerts of electroacoustic music, here was rich library of works composed not only in Poland but in the studios all over the world. It was the only place, where composer had to dispose advanced workshop and professional assistance. Here were taught the students of Warsaw Academy of Music. To day, besides Polish Radio Experimental Studio the studios in Music Academies in Krakow, Warsaw and Katowice exist. These are didactic character in principle but not only student etudes came out from there. All studios apart of synthesisers and samplers are equipped with recording and mixing devices and are computerised with personal computers, mainly IBM and Macintosh. I am talking here about the studios actively participating in musical life of "serious" music. In times when almost everybody can own music studio at his home it is very difficult to estimate their number. Electroacoustic Music Studio in Music Academy in Krakow exists from 1973. In 1989 was modern equipped with help of Fulbright Foundation. Jozef Patkowski was the head of the Studio (1973 - 2000). Besides the students in the Studio worked many invited composers, among others: Boguslaw Schaeffer, Jozef Rychlik, Anna Maciejasz-Kaminska, Joanna Wnuk-Nazar, Marek Choloniewski, Magdalena Dlugosz, Anna Kulenty from Poland and Dennis Anderson, Gloria Coates, Martin Davies, Hector Fiore, Eero Hameenniemi, Charles Lipp, Pekka Siren, Pawel Ziolo from abroad. The Fulbright Foundation enabled work in the Studio as guest professors dr. Ira Mowitz (Stanford University), dr. Richard Boulanger (Berklee College of Music, Boston), dr. Cindy McTee (University of North Texas), Rodney Oakes (San Pedro University). Applied music for theatres and films was realised as well. Computer Music Studio of Music Academy in Warsaw was founded in 1990 at composers department, but electroacoustic music class exists there from 60-th. Wlodziemierz Kotonski is the head of the Studio. Besides the students' works, during 3 1/2 years 14 works were realised by Krzysztof Czaja, Marcin Wierzbicki, Pawel Mykiety, Anna Ignatowicz, Jaroslaw Siwinski, Ewa Gajkowska, Marzena Komsta, Pawel Lukaszewski. Electroacoustic Music Studio of Music Academy in Katowice is the youngest one and was founded

in 1992. Eugeniusz Knapik is the head of the Studio. Main activity of the Studio is didactic till now. Polish and world electroacoustic music is presented on many concerts organised by all mentioned studios and Polish Contemporary Music Society as well. Peculiar opportunities to every year review the present state of electroacoustic music all over the world is Warsaw Autumn Festival. In 2-nd. Program of Polish Radio, from many years Marek Zwyrzykowski has the program Hortus musicus - hortus electronicus, dedicated to contemporary music and electroacoustic music especially. Every year Music Academies in Krakow, Warsaw and Katowice organise together summer (June) courses of electroacoustic music for young composers and tonmeisters (sound engineers). The professors and lecturers from Poland and abroad are invited to teach on courses. Polish Contemporary Music Society gives as well such possibilities on autumn (September) courses for young composers in Kazimierz on the Vistula. Coming to the conclusion it seems that electroacoustic music in Poland is in good condition - composers want to work in studios, the number of studios' growths, there are courses, concerts. On the other hand from some talks, discussion and own thoughts come some shade of nostalgia to "old good times". May be it has no respect to the youngest generation. But what is the reason such feeling? Years ago electroacoustic music was considered as something new, as a fad, as something curies, unusual and avant-garde. Electroacoustic music fascinated its differentia, other way of listening, unusual sound substance. It fascinated its technology known only to initiates. To day, in apoque of multimedia all these things became daily bread. Electroacoustic music moves from music laboratories to our homes. Rock music is so saturated with electronics (which came n.b. from electroacoustic music studios) that there are organised "switch off" concerts. So we should not wonder that this coming from Pierre Schaeffer and Herbert Eimert electro? acoustic music don't remain in th centre of attention. It became something normal, one of possibilities in a workshop of contemporary composer. It seems to be so in Poland, and seems to be the same in other countries.