

POLISH FOLKLORE IN CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Cambridge Dictionary folklore are ‘the traditional stories and culture of a group of people.’¹ Folklore can be expressed by music, visual arts and everything what the people create living in a community.² In the 19th century song collecting was a popular phenomenon across the whole Europe. One of the most famous song collectors was Béla Bartók. He saw folklore as a result of the natural processes, something as obvious in existence as an animal or a plant.³

I decided for this topic for my research, as I am Polish. Folklore was always a part of my life. I am proud of whom I am, but that is not a manifest of nationalism. There are uncountable cultures and traditions across the World, all very different, but all very unique, and equal. I want to demonstrate that folk music is a versatile material which can be used in various contexts and still being relevant. My work is also a tribute to my ancestors.

Polish composers started using folk material in the 19th century. According to Polish composer and theoretic Krzysztof Baculewski there are four main approaches used in composing with folk material:

- Stylisation of the folk music,
- Using the existing material, arranging it on a particular set of instruments and giving it a shape of a musical piece in understanding of the Western Classical Music standards,
- Using the ready musical citations and integrating them into the composition,
- Creating folklore character in the piece using only compositional techniques without using the actual already existing melodies.

The composers tended to use them exclusively or combined.⁴ The Baculewski’s delineation is particularly good as it helps to systematise the different approaches and understanding, what kind of creative processes the composers and the compositions went through:

- what inspired the composer,
- how where the sources used,
- how much of interference happened when the composer interacted with the folklore material,
- to what extend was it an original work (using already existing melodies, or rather creating them).

¹ Cambridge Dictionary, ‘FOLKLORE | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary’ (*Cambridge.org*, 20 November 2019) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/folklore>.

² Jadwiga Romana Bobrowska, *Polska Folklorystyka Muzyczna* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna im Karola Szymanowskiego w Katowicach 2000).

³ James Bennet, ‘Béla Bartók’s Evolutionary Model of Folk Music’ (ProQuestSeptember 2016) <<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1871544766?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>> accessed 25 June 2023.

⁴ Bogumiła Mika, *Elementy Podhalańskie I Kurpiowskie W Wybranych Kompozycjach Polskich XX Wieku* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2015).

In this research I will explore the question how I can use these four methods mentioned above to present Polish folklore in the environment of the contemporary composition. I will look at the other Polish composers who worked with folk material and try to provide my own contribution.

Among Polish composers working with folk material was Grażyna Bacewicz. In her *Violin Concerto No. 3* from 1948 she used authentic folk melodies from the highland region of Podhale. She used musical citations by featuring melodies of folk songs and integrated them into her composition. Fryderyk Chopin sourced great inspiration from folk in his *mazurkas* recreating the national dance using stylisations.⁵ Among living composers worth mentioning is Maria Pomianowska. She reconstructed Polish folk instruments like *suka bilgorajska* and *fidel plocka*. Based on the extensive research she created pieces for those instruments. *W polu lipieńka* is a piece for vocal, marimba, bilgoraj suka and cello in which the existing vocal melody was used and arranged for the ensemble of the instruments.⁶

I chose four different Polish folk musical traditions and wrote five pieces inspired by them. I used two dances slow *Kujawiak* and lively *Zbójcecki*. For *Kujawiak* I referenced Henryk Wieniawski's *Kujawiak in A – minor* (1853) as I wanted my *Kujawiak* to be the most traditional piece from all of the portfolio. For *Zbójcecki* I referenced Wojciech Kilar who wrote *Orawa* in 1985.⁷ In *Orawa* he used minimalism and I wanted to achieve a similar effect with my *Zbójcecki*. Kurpie is another very rich folklore region of Poland. To write music inspired by this region I looked at Karol Szymanowski as he dedicated many composition to this tradition.⁸ John Cage is one of two non Polish composers which I referenced in my research, because I was fascinated by the musical language he created. His piece *4'33* is an interesting exploration of acoustics.⁹ I wanted to demonstrate that I can also use the acoustic space in my folk composition. I close my piece with *Lament* which after dances and songs about love and marriage has a more transcendental meaning. I looked at Wojciech Kilar's *Lament* to see how he worked with a medieval text and how he adapted it to the contemporary composition. I also drew inspiration from La Monte Thornton Young. He is another composer who experimented with sound. He introduced to music the different understanding of time. In his *Trio for strings* (1958) he nurtures the timing of the sound waves and their evolutions.¹⁰ I found this approach particularly effective as it helped me to create a musical landscape for me piece.

⁵ Anna Brożek and Jacek Jadacki, *Fryderyk Chopin* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper 2010).

⁶ Ewa Dahlig-Turek and Maria Pomianowska, *Polskie Fidele Konalowe (Re)Konstrukcja* (Warszawa-Lublin-Kraków: TeKa Lubelska 4 2014).

⁷ Maria Wilczek-Krupa, Kilar. *Geniusz O Dwóch Twarzach* (Kraków: Znak 2015).

⁸ Teresa Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski I Jego Epoka* (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica 2008).

⁹ Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (Northwestern University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists : La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (Cambridge University Press 2002).

KUJAWIAK

Kujawiak is one of the 5 Polish national dances. It comes from the Kuyavia region in Poland. It is a slow dance performed in the time signature 3/4, in rubato, usually in a minor key. It is very often accompanied by a short folk song.¹¹ I decided to write a composition based on the form of *Kujawiak*, because I used to perform this dance in my childhood (and I was familiar with its form.) I looked at *Kujawiak in A-minor* by Henryk Wieniawski. Considering the fact that the composer lived in the 19th century I knew that I had to look on ways to make my composition sound modern. I also needed to look at ways in which I can present the composition while using the approach of creating the folklore character of the piece using only compositional techniques without existing melodies.

I set my piece in D harmonic minor key as the *kujawiak* dance is always set in the minor key. I also added 3/4 time signature as it is a standard key signature for this dance.¹²

Kujawiak
For string orchestra and voice
Klaudia Chmielewska

♩=65
mf

Voice
Ja - sień-ko!_ Ja - sień-ko!_ Za wo-dą mi pójdz! Zy-wa wo-do, zy-wa wo-do_

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

1. First system of the full score presenting the key and time signature of the piece for the voice and all the instruments.

¹¹ Tomasz Nowak, *Taniec Narodowy W Polskim Kanonie Kultury. Źródła, Geneza, Przemiany* (Warszawa: BEL Studio 2016).

¹² Ibid.

I needed a musical motive which I could develop throughout the piece. I haven't used any existing musical motive from any folk song. Instead in order to achieve the folklore character of the piece I created my own musical theme.

Voice *mf*

Ja-sień-ko! Ja-sień-ko! Za wo-dą mi pójdz! Zy-wa wo-do, zy-wa wo-do_ zdro-wie mi_ wró!___

2. The main musical motive in *Kujawiak*.

To maintain the folk character of my *Kujawiak* through the compositional techniques I invented the second motive. I intertwined it with the main musical theme to reference the similarity to the original structure of the dance.

50 *mf*

Jaś-ko! Jaś-ko! Jaś-ko! Jaś-ko!

arco *mp* arco *sfz* *sfz* *f*

sfz arco *mp* *sfz* arco *f*

sfz arco *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *f*

sfz arco *sfz* *f* *pizz.* *mp*

sfz *mp* *sfz* *f* *mp*

3. Second musical motive in *Kujawiak*.

Wieniawski's *Kujawiak* takes around 3'26. My composition takes 6'07, as I wanted to have time to provide more compositional techniques. Wieniawski starts his piece with a musical introduction. I omitted this part, as my composition is a song, based on the form of *kujawiak*, not the dance itself. Wieniawski repeats all of his musical material, apart from intro, but introduces some changes, to make it more variable. I also add variations to the main motive by introducing pizzicato, glissando, adding variations in the melody. However the structure of my piece is different. I have two intertwining motives but they are not of an equal length. Thanks to that I achieved the element of surprise. In the standard *kujawiak* the structure is ABAB.¹³ In my piece the motives are played one after the other, or the same motive repeats in variations.

58

The musical score for measures 58-62 consists of five staves. The first staff is empty. The second and third staves play a melody starting with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second staff includes a mezzo-piano (*mp*) section marked 'pizz.' and an arco section. The fourth and fifth staves play a bass line, with the fifth staff including an arco section marked 'mf'.

4. The main musical motive played pizzicato and glissando.

¹³ Tomasz Nowak, *Taniec Narodowy W Polskim Kanonie Kultury. Źródła, Geneza, Przemiany* (Warszawa: BEL Studio 2016).

64

5. The main motive with variation played by strings in pizzicato technique.

In the bar 90 the new musical motive is introduced. In doing so I expanded beyond the genre of *kujawiak* dance. This new motive is an imitation of a style the old ladies in Poland used to sing in. They would sing very fast, on equal note values, repeating it a few times. That kind of singing was used during rituals like weddings and it used to convey a folk wisdom.¹⁴

90 *mf*

Ja - sień - ku, Ja - sku! Pójdź - ze za wo - dą O - na u - ra - cy zdro - wiem, u - ro - dą!

6. Imitation of the ritual singing performed by elderly women in Polish villages.

In this part of my composition I used the approach also present in the *Symphony of the Sorrowful Songs* by Henryk Górecki.¹⁵ The composer uses one instrument (double bass), and then he adds string instruments one by one until he reaches climax. After achieving that he takes away the instruments until he is left with the one he started from. This technique is effective to build tension and add the feeling of advancement.

¹⁴ Tomasz Nowak, *Taniec Narodowy W Polskim Kanonie Kultury. Źródła, Geneza, Przemiany* (Warszawa: BEL Studio 2016).

¹⁵ Henryk Górecki - *Symphony No. 3 'Symphony of Sorrowful Songs'*, Op. 36, YouTube, uploaded by invertedninthchord, 6 October 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFKVjM1iMVU>

Górecki started from the lowest instrument. I however started from the vocal line and added the other instruments as I wanted to preserve the character of the ritual song.

After achieving the climax I take of the instruments as did Górecki. However I finish with the Violin II and Viola instead of the vocal line, which I started from, as it makes more sense rhythmically. I also wanted to give the singer performing the difficult, fast vocal part time to rest.

110

Ja-sień-ku, Ja-śku! Pójdź-ze za wo-dą O - na u - ra - cy zdro-wiem, u - ro - da!

7. Climax in the part imitating the ritual song.

I haven't used any existing lyrics from any folk song. Instead I wrote my own words, as I wanted to create a new story. I used my regional dialect from Małopolska. The song tells a story of a girl which sends her beloved to look for the *żywa woda - aqua vitae*. I used the motive of *aqua vitae* as it is popular in the Slavic and European folk tales. Living water was believed to have supernatural properties.¹⁶ Using the folk motive in a storytelling helped me to achieve the folk character of my composition.

In this way I created a folklore character of the piece using different compositional techniques.

¹⁶ Jacek Woźny, *Symbolika Wody W Pradziejach Polski* (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej 1996).

ZBÓJNICKI

Zbójnicki is a vigorous dance performed with *ciupaga* (traditional ax) in the Polish region of Podhale by male Highlanders. The accompaniment is played by the traditional band usually consisting of violins and bassetla. The first violin plays the melody while, the other violin and bassetla provide the accompaniment on the same pitch with repeated *détaché* bows. It all stays monotonous through the whole duration of the dance with repeating patterns.¹⁷ I chose *zbójnicki* to enrich my portfolio with a fast and lively piece. I found that using minimalism for *zbójnicki* will reflect the character of the dance. I wanted to write the piece through stylisation of the folk music.

I set the fast tempo 110 crotchets per minute to resemble the vigorous feature of *zbójnicki*. I use quavers and semiquavers for the main motive. These quick note values dominate throughout the whole piece and help achieve the feeling of rapid dance movement characteristic for the genre.



8. Main musical theme written mostly using quavers and semiquavers.

The traditional *zbójnicki* has a fixed loud dynamics.¹⁸ While there are moments in my composition which start from piano or mezzo piano in order to develop the phrase and achieve the contrast, I set most of the piece in louder dynamics, from mezzo forte to forte fortissimo, especially the main motive.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso, measures 45-48. The score shows a full orchestral texture with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo). The notation consists of five staves with various clefs (treble for Violins, alto for Viola, bass for Violoncello and Contrabasso) and a key signature of one flat. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many quavers and semiquavers, creating a dense and energetic sound.

9. Main musical theme played in cannon in forte fortissimo dynamics.

¹⁷ Grażyna Władysława Dąbrowska, *W Kręgu Polskich Tańców Ludowych* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 1979).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The main motive is played by one instrument and then it's pasted to another. As accompaniment I used the traditional constant *détaché* bowing characteristic for *Zbójnicki*.

10. *Détaché* bowing serving as accompaniment in different sections, while the main music theme is passed from Viola to the Violin II.

Zbójnicki is usually built on the Podhalian scale *skala podhalańska*. It consists of seven sounds, with semitones between the fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh degrees of the scale.¹⁹ I added elements of this scale in a few places of my composition to reference the folk character of my *Zbójnicki*.

11. Motive built on the *Podhalian scale*.

¹⁹ Grażyna Władysława Dąbrowska, *W Kręgu Polskich Tańców Ludowych* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 1979).

Using the measures mentioned above I was able to stylise my piece in the folklore character.

In 1989 Wojciech Kilar wrote *Orawa* using the minimalism. *Orawa* is the last of the four pieces from the *Cykl tatrzański*, a cycle of four works inspired by Highland folk music from Poland. It is a piece for a string orchestra.²⁰ I chose it as an inspiration, because it reflects the spirit of the music of Podhale very accurately.

In the first notes of *Orawa* Kilar introduces the main musical motive, to make the listener familiar with it. I instead decided to start from a rhythmic base for the motive which I was about to introduce. Kilar starts from the Violin I, but he passes the motive to different sections of instrument, while the other instruments provide the rhythmic layer. I also pass the motive to different instruments. Yet unlike Kilar I introduce the main motive with the double bass to add more bellicose character. Then the motive is passed to the higher instruments up to the Violin I. Kilar also adds more voices. In doing so he creates interactions between different instruments. That is exactly what I try to do. I change the instruments and I pair them up in different ways, playing in octaves, but also in different intervals. I also change the rhythmic layers and added more voices.

30

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

12. The main musical motive played by Violin I and Viola.

²⁰ Wojciech Kilar, 'Orawa for String Orchestra' *YouTube*, uploaded by Guillom, 11 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzwHLVglbqk> (accessed 15/08/2023).

In bar 64, I introduce a new musical approach. Having in mind that leading the similar material for two minutes may become boring, I try to engage the listener with the new, contrasting content. It's also very rhythmical, and as in Kilar's case it is based on repeated groups of notes, in this case semiquavers. I however don't expand the musical phrases as the composer does it.

Musical score for measures 74-76. The score is for five instruments: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score shows a rhythmic pattern of semiquavers (eighths) in groups. Dynamic markings are *mf* for Vln. I, *f* for Vln. II, *mp* for Vla., *p* for Vc., and *mp* and *f* for Cb. There are also crescendo and decrescendo hairpins.

13. Continuation of contrasting, rhythmic musical material based on semiquavers.

Around 4'20 Kilar uses glissando performed on 9 different pitches. That brings an element of surprise and changes the colouristic of the piece. I wanted to achieve the same effect, but instead of distributing the glissando between a few instruments simultaneously I assigned it for each instrument at a time to slow down the tempo. After that I use a short canon to provide the listener with an intriguing acoustic experience.

Musical score for measures 93-96. The score is for five instruments: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score shows a glissando effect on each instrument, indicated by a diagonal line with the word 'gliss.' written above it. The glissando is performed on 9 different pitches.

14. Glissando distributed between different sections of instruments.

From 7'20 to 7'48 Kilar uses drastic contrast where he suddenly differentiates two musical contents. It adds freshness to the piece and stimulates to more active listening. That is why I used the same approach in the bars 156 to 182. I used the main motive and the rhythmic sequences from the previous bars of my piece. However, unlike Kilar I give more sudden contrast of the material setting bar against the bar.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is divided into three measures. Measure 168 starts with a dynamic of *f* and a crescendo hairpin. Measure 169 features a dynamic of *mf* and a crescendo hairpin. Measure 170 shows a dynamic of *f* and a crescendo hairpin. The Viola part has a dynamic of *mp* and a crescendo hairpin in measure 169, and *f* in measure 170. The Violoncello part has a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo hairpin in measure 169, and *f* in measure 170. The Contrabass part has a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo hairpin in measure 169, and *f* in measure 170. There are also some triplets and slurs in the Violin II part.

15. Drastic contrast between two musical materials.

At the end the composer uses the whole orchestra and I also use the whole set of instruments repeating the main motive to add more impact and to signalise that this is the ending of the piece. I also enforce it with the dynamics and then I close it with *accelerando* because I repeat the last part of the musical phrase.

KURPIE

Kurpie is a region located in the North East of Poland. It is covered with wild forests. Thanks to its isolation from the rest of the country, this region maintained its rich and unique folklore. A vital source of information about this region, and its music in particular provides a catholic priest Władysław Skierkowski. In 1913-1923 he collected 2178 songs in 10 volumes titled *Puszcza Kurpiowska w Pieśń*.²¹ Karol Szymanowski described Kurpian Songs as 'perhaps the most beautiful Polish folk song.'²²

²¹ Henryk Gądomski, 'Ks. Władysław Skierkowski - Wybitny Badacz Kurpiowszczyzny' (2004) 18 Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego. pp.211-222.

²² Ibid.

In 1930-32 Karol Szymanowski composed *Kurpian Songs for voice and piano*.²³ Having only a voice with accompanying instrument allowed him to provide the more intimate experience of Kurpian melodies for the listener. I decided to follow the Szymanowski's approach.

I replaced the piano with the harp as I play harp myself and its delicate sound would marry well with the characteristic melancholic melodies of the Kurpian songs.

MÓJ ŚWECIE

From the first volume of *Puszcza Kurpiowska w Pieśni* I chose a song number 53 - *Mój świecie*.²⁴ This song was usually performed on the way back from church to the wedding house. It is a form of a lament of a girl who feels sorrowful that she needs to leave her mother. I wanted to write this piece by using the existing material and arranging it in the Western Classical Music standards.

I used the existing musical material from the *Puszcza Kurpiowska w Pieśni*. I borrowed the melody of the vocal but I slightly modified it. I also changed the rhythm. I split one phrase and by adding an empty bar between I created two musical phrases to add more narrative character to the piece.

Nr. 53.

Larghetto $\text{♩} = 88$.

Pieśń śpiewana przez 24 l. Zosię z Witego Mostu, w sierpniu r. 1916.

Mój świecie, mój świecie! cy - ja ja tyz teraz! Spoj - rzo

moje ocki do matu'li nie-roz.

16. The original song *Mój świecie*.

$\text{♩} = 60$

p

Mój świecie mój świecie! cy - ja ja tyz te-roz!

5

pp

Spoj - rzo mo-je o - cki do - matu-li nie - roz!

17. Modified vocal line with changes in rhythm and melody.

²³ Bogumiła Mika, *Elementy Podhalańskie I Kurpiowskie W Wybranych Kompozycjach Polskich XX Wieku* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2015).

²⁴ Skierkowski W, *Puszcza Kurpiowska W Pieśni. Część Pierwsza* (Płock: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego, 1928).

The approach I undertook to compose this song was inspired by the *Kurpian Songs for Voice and Piano* by Szymanowski. I looked at the 3rd song *Uwoż mamó Roz*.²⁵ The lyrics tell a story of a girl, who begs her mum to make a right choice when picking a husband for her.²⁶

I decided to reference this song as *Uwoż mamó roz* and *Mój Świecie* have a similar motive of a young girl which is anxious to get married.

Szymanowski makes no interventions in the vocal line and he also uses it in accompaniment. In the vocal line there is a melisma in the shape of triplet. It is present at the end of every phrase of the song. In *Mój świecie* there is no such figure. Unlike Szymanowski I decided to modify the vocal line in my song. I decided to invent a melisma, as it would make the song more memorable. I did not use triplet. Instead I applied six semiquavers. They are also reflected in the accompaniment.

Nr. 377.

Larghetto ♩ = 69. Śpiewała też sama, co wyżej.

U - woz ma - mo roz, ko - mu cór - ke dos, nie daj ze ji

za la - da je - ki - go, jej u - ro - dy zol.

18. Vocal line used by Szymanowski featuring the characteristic melisma.

²⁵ Karol Szymanowski, 'Uwoż mamó' *YouTube*, uploaded by ymket, 28 November, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqSvLFQqpb0&list=RDyqSvLFQqpb0&start_radio=1 (accessed 23/07/2023).

²⁶ Władysław Skierkowski, *Puszcza Kurpiowska W Pieśni. Część Pierwsza* (Płock: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego 1928).

4

Voice

Spoj-rzo mo-je o - cki do - ma-tu-li

Hp.

7

Voice

pp *mp*

nie - roz! Spoj-rzo u-ny nie-raz,

Hp.

pp *p*

19. Melisma in the bar 6 and also in the accompaniment in the bass clef in bar 8.

Szymanowski starts the accompaniment with the E-major scale in the bass line. Then he gradually adds other voices ending with the counterpoint. I decided to use the same approach to set the archaic folk song in the frame of Western Classical Music standards. I featured counterpoint in the harp accompaniment. I also decided to raise the dynamics from pianississimo through crescendo ending in fortissimo. The advancing scale and rising dynamics give my composition a feeling of development. They also reflect the emotions of the girl.

27

Voice

sio-strzy-cka mło-dziuch-na. Star-sy brat na_ wo -

Hp.

ff

20. Counterpoint with four voices in the accompaniment and raising dynamics.

To integrate the folk material in the Western Classical Music composition I decided to use the original text without any changes. Unlike Szymanowski I used the whole song to present the whole story and preserve the character of the piece.

In the Kurpian tradition every sung verse would end with an apocope.²⁷ It can be observed in the performance by Artur Struga, when he sings *U jeziorecka* omitting the last syllable.²⁸ Unlike Szymanowski I used the apocope at the end of every phrase (apart from the final exclamation) signalling it with the quaver and piano pianissimo.

21

Voice

te-roz mnie ni - ma po - za - ło-wać ko - mu.

Hp.

gliss.

pp

pp

20. Musical phrase finished with the apocope in bar 23.

In these ways I used the existing material and arranged it to create a new song.

JEK JA JECHAŁ

This is my second composition inspired by the Kurpian folklore. Here I also wanted to use the ready citations and integrate them into the composition. This time I haven't used any written material. Instead I worked with the raw acoustic material. As I had no opportunity to travel to Kurpie, I used a recording. *Jek ja jechał* is a Kurpian song from the album *Pieśni kurpiowskie śpiewa Stanisław Sieruta*. Sieruta was a merited Kurpian artist who popularised the Kurpian songs in Poland and abroad. *Jek ja jechał* can be heard from 6'24 to 8'50.²⁹ It tells a story of a boy, who wants to visit a girl in secrete, but the household creates sounds which betray his arrival. The melody of this piece is simple but yet ethereal. At the same time the words are very straightforward and the boy doesn't disguise the intentions of his visit.

²⁷ Henryk Gadowski, 'Ks. Władysław Skierkowski - Wybitny Badacz Kurpiowszczyzny' (2004) 18 Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego pp.211-222.

²⁸ Adam Struga, 'U jeziorecka', *YouTube*, uploaded by MuzykaJestJedna, 3 February 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ9usslT9vg> (accessed 23/07/2023).

²⁹ Stanisław Sieruta, 'Pieśni kurpiowskie śpiewa Stanisław Sieruta. Związek Kurpiów', *YouTube*, uploaded by Związek Kurpiów, 24, May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7TheFaAgGM> (accessed 23/07/2023).

I decided the original melody line and the story should be preserved, and that is why I cited the whole song and integrated it into my composition.

Firstly I wrote down the melody of the vocals in the original pitch. Then I transposed it an octave higher so it could be performed by a countertenor. I thought that countertenor would sound well with the harp accompaniment.

$\text{♩} = 75$
 8 *mp*
 Jek ja je-chał do dziew-cy-ny to wro-ta skrzy-psia
 12
 iy. Po-lej wro-ta zimn-ą wo-dą, niech te wro-ta ci-cho cho-dzą dziew-cy-no mo
 16
 ja!

21. *Jek ja jechoł* vocal line transposed an octave higher.

I set the accompaniment in contrast to the previous Kurpian song in terms of dynamics, harmony, and the amount of the musical material. There is a minimal amount of sounds and the approach which helped me to shape this piece came from a composition called *4'33*. *4'33* was written by experimental composer John Cage and it had its premiere in 1952. This piece is controversial as it contains only rests. All that can be heard is silence. But even in the silence there are always some sounds. Cage was an advocate of the idea, that every random sound can create music.³⁰ Sitting in silence stimulates the acoustic fascination of the surroundings.³¹

I used two peripheral sounds in my compositions and that is why the main motive in the accompaniment performed by harp contains high pitches set against low pitches. At times they are at the both ends of this instrument. As I play the harp I checked that it is physically possible to perform. The two contrasting colours of the sounds also reflect the Kurpie themselves. When Skierkowski came to Kurpie first time his impression of the region was dark, black forests - like the dark tone of the lowest harp note, and the white sand, which is not suitable for farming crops - as the shrill, bright sound of the highest harp note.³²

³⁰ Hermes W, 'The Story of '4'33'' (NPR8 May 2000) <<https://www.npr.org/2000/05/08/1073885/4-33#:~:text=T>> (accessed 27/08/2023).

³¹ Cage J, *Silence : Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Hanover: New Hampshire Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

³² Władysław Skierkowski, *Puszcza Kurpiowska W Pieśni. Część Pierwsza* (Płock: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego 1928).

50

Voice

Hp.

Jek ja je-chał do dziew-cy-ny

22. Accompaniment with the peripheral sounds in the harp section.

The time signature is 3/2 and the tempo is very slow. The minims played on the harp are not as firm in their longevity as if they would be played by woodwinds or strings. That provides the breaks, the moments of silence, which help the listener to hear more than just the melody of the piece. It invites the listener to the contemplation of the acoustics. There are also moments in my piece, where I added notes which aren't in the original song. However I heard them in the silence, which was between the long, peripheral notes and that is why I wrote them down.

I wrote the lyrics down directly from the recording. In the last bar I have added two words which were the repetition of the previously used words *Zapondz* and *Dziewcyno*. I added these words to write melisma on them and to finish the piece with an element of surprise and contrast to the previously monotonous melody of the vocal.

Voice

mp

Za - - - pondz! - - - Dzie - - - - - wcy-no!

23. Added notes in the vocal line with the melisma.

In that way I used the ready musical citations and integrated them into my composition.

LAMENT

Lament is a form which has been present for centuries in the Polish literature and music.³³ The oldest surviving lament comes from the 15th century and it is called *Dusza z ciała wyleciała* (Soul flew out of the body). The song tells a story of a soul which has just left the body and arrived on the green meadow. The soul is frightened not knowing where to go. The soul meets Saint Peter and he takes it to Paradise. According to the Slavic beliefs green meadow was a place on Earth, where all the souls which were not ready to approach the Paradise, could rest after their departure from their bodies. In the 19th century songs inspired by *Dusza z ciała wyleciała* started being used by folk during the funeral ceremonies, for example in Podlasie.³⁴

I chose the oldest surviving *lament* on the Polish soil as I wanted to demonstrate that even century's old relict can be integrated into contemporary composition and through that it can gain new aesthetics and become relevant. I cited the lyrics without any editing from Szepiszczak which sources it from the *Skarga umierającego* a manuscript which is stored in the Bernardine monastery in Cracow, Poland.³⁵ There is no surviving record of the original melody of *Dusza z ciała wyleciała*. It meant that I had to write the melody of the vocal from the scratch. The melodies for the laments during the funeral would usually be very simple with long syllables so anyone can participate in performing them.³⁶ That is why I wrote a simple melody for the vocal based on the degrees of the G-minor harmonic scale so it is easier to follow. I was also mindful of the fact that the instrumental layer which I provided is very rich with dissonances and I wanted the vocal part to fit in.

³³ Jadwiga Romana Bobrowska, *Polska Folklorystyka Muzyczna* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna im Karola Szymanowskiego w Katowicach 2000).

³⁴ Angelika Szepiszczak, 'Dusza Z Ciała Wyleciała - Inspiracja XV-Wieczną Pieśnią Wykorzystaną W Utworze Wojciecha Kilara' (2021) 9 Rocznik Muzeum 'Górnośląski Park Etnograficzny w Chorzowie <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglefindmkaj/https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-issn-2353-2734-year-2021-volume-9-issue-9-article-0e59491e-4837-306a-95cf-550982595f85/c/articles-2078087.pdf.pdf> (accessed 1/09/2023).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

7 **51** *f*

Du - sza zcia - ła wy - le - cia - ła!

63

Na zie - lo - nej łą - ce sta - ła. Du - sza!

69

Wy-le - cia - ła! Wy - le cia-ła!_ Sta - wszy,

76 *mf*

Sil - na, ba-rzo rzew-no za - płą-ka-ła. Czemu du - szo rzew-no płą-cesz?

24. Excerpt from the part of the soprano demonstrating its simplicity following the degrees of the G harmonic minor scale.

Wojciech Kilar also used *Dusza z ciała wyleciała* in his composition *Lament* for a choir SABT in 2003.³⁷ The 8 voice harmony sources from the plain chant traditions. In Kilar's composition text plays the main role. The main characteristics are syllables carried on long notes, very often on the same pitch. I wanted to preserve the same simplicity in my piece. However in my *Lament* text doesn't play the main role, but in contrast it is the melody that tells the story. Text adds up to the composition.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is written in 3/4 time. The first two measures show a melodic line in Violin II and Viola, with a triplet of eighth notes. The third measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The rest of the score consists of sustained chords and single notes in all instruments, also marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

25. Instrumental part with long notes playing the main role in the piece.

³⁷ Wojciech Kilar, 'Lament', *YouTube*, uploaded by Camerata Silesia – Topic, 6 February 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJu9kHw1gjM> (accessed 1/092023).

Kilar leads the melody in the way that it is hostile and conveys the fear which the soul feels. However there are moments of relief and happiness within the scope of tonal harmony. I try to use the same approach in my compositions by playing with the two moods - fear and internal torment contrasting with the sense of relief and piece. Unlike Kilar I move beyond the tonal harmony. There is a search between the dissonances and consonances.

The image displays a musical score for a string ensemble, consisting of five staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is written in a common time signature and features a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) at the beginning of each staff. The music begins with a series of chords that are atonal or dissonant. As the piece progresses, the chords gradually resolve, culminating in a clear C-major chord. A triplet of eighth notes is visible in the Viola part towards the end of the excerpt. The overall structure suggests a narrative of tension and release, moving from a state of atonality to a sense of tonal resolution.

26. Atonal harmony resolving into C-major chord providing a feeling of relief.

In his *'Trio for strings'* La Monte Young uses long notes played by the strings to produce overtones and he slowly changes the intervals between the notes. By doing so he achieves a richness of overtones and acoustic events.³⁸ I got intrigued by this approach and decided to undertake it in my composition. That is why I set long notes against each other and slightly change the intervals, so they can produce a sound wave full of overtones. The effect also refers to the state the soul which is somewhere beyond the space and time.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet. It consists of five staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). Each staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score is divided into two sections by a double bar line. In the first section, each instrument plays a long, sustained note. In the second section, the instruments play in divisi (divided), with each staff containing multiple notes, creating a complex texture of overlapping sounds and dissonances.

27. Strings playing divisi providing 10 independent musical sounds and creating dissonances.

³⁸ La Monte Young, 'Composition19601960 #7' & 'Trio for Strings'(Electric Bass Bow Arrangement), *YouTube*, uploaded by G9 LUV, 26 May 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIfyN6ZJgeA> (accessed 2/09/2023).

In the book *Bunt i wyzwolenie* (Revolt and Liberation) Krzysztof Penderecki talks about the revolting he would take in his compositions. He had revolted against the Communism which was the political system of Poland. He was also revolting against himself. He would write a piece which was a rebellion against his previous self as a composer.³⁹ This final piece in my portfolio is my rebellion against all of the ideals I set for myself and I could never achieve. I set a medieval, old piece in the musical environment of notes which create a sonoric sound landscape. The piece ends with the C-major chord, the basic chord in Western Classical music and closes up the piece and the whole portfolio, as the musical journey is finished and it comes back to its origins - harmony. In this way I demonstrated that even very old pieces can be presented in a new form and be relevant in the context of the contemporary composition.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The score is divided into three measures. In the first measure, Vln. I has a long note with a slur, Vln. II has a quarter note, Vla. has a quarter note, Vc. has a quarter note marked 'pizz.' and 'p', and Cb. has a whole rest. In the second measure, Vln. I has a long note with a slur, Vln. II has a quarter rest, Vla. has a quarter rest, Vc. has a quarter rest, and Cb. has a quarter rest. In the third measure, Vln. I has a long note with a slur and 'ord.' above it, Vln. II has a half note with a slur, Vla. has a half note with a slur and 'arco' above it, Vc. has a half note with a slur and 'arco' above it, and Cb. has a half note with a slur and 'p' below it. The final notes in the third measure form a C-major chord.

28. *Lament* ending on the C-major chord and coming back to the functional harmony.

³⁹ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Bunt I Wyzwolenie Rozpętanie Żywiółów* (Warszawa: PWM 2008).

CONCLUSION

In this portfolio I presented Polish folk traditions from different parts of Poland and I put them in the context of contemporary compositions. I demonstrated four different approaches of working with folklore material in composition also used by other Polish composers. Using different techniques helped me to rediscover the pieces and give them new meaning. I also showed that the traditions are not the relics of the past, but are relevant to the present times and bring in new value.

My main obstacles I faced were deciding what pieces I should choose and which traditions should I focus on. I chose the folk music traditions which I was most familiar with. I found it difficult to work with the folk material as I know that I still don't have the satisfactory knowledge of music theory which would help me shape my ideas more clearly. It was also challenging for me to demonstrate my points and communicate my ideas through the language of music and the English language.

All of the achievements and obstacles which I have mentioned above helped me to expand my musical horizons and taught me discipline and perseverance. They inspired me to continue my musical journey in the field of composition. I will keep studying music theory, and other composers. I will talk to the musicians who play the instruments and perform the genres of music I want to work with so I can understand them better and write my compositions more accurately. While working on this project I rediscovered Polish folklore and the achievements of the Polish composers. I will source more from my own heritage to create my voice as a composer and musician in general.

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APENDIX

LYRICS AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Kujawiak⁴⁰

Jasieńko! Jasieńko! Za wodą mi pójdź!
Zywa wodo, żywa wodo zdrowie mi wróć!

Jaśko! Jaśko! Za wodą pójdź!
Wody! Wody mi dej!
Jaśko! Jaśko! Pójdź za wodą!
Ta mi życie obficie da!
Jasieńku, Jasieńku! Pójdźże za wodą!
Ona uracy zdrowiem, urodą!

Johny, Johny! Go, fetch me water!
Living water, living water bring me back my health!

Johny, Johny! Go, fetch water!
Water! Give me water!
Johny! Johny! Go, fetch water!
It will give my life of plenty!
Johny, Johny! Go after water!
It will gift you with health and beauty!

Mój świecie⁴¹

Mój świecie, mój świecie! Cyja ja tyz teraz!
Spojrzo moje ocki do matuli nieroz.

Spojrze uny nie roz, a zapłaci nie dwa,

Bo ja u matuli była sama jedna.

Byłam sama jedna, jak różycka w polu,
Teraz mnie ni ma pozałować komu
Matula starzuchna, siostrzyczka
młodziuchna,
Starsy brat na wojnie, i ten nie zi o mnie.

My world, my world, whose am I now then?
My eyes will look back at my mum sometimes.

They will look not once, but they (the family of the groom) will pay not two (twice as much as the bride's worth).

Because my mum had only me/ I was the only one there for my mum.

I was the only one, like a rose in the field.

Now there is no one to pity me.

My mum is old, my sister is too young.

My old brother went to war and he does not care for me.

⁴⁰ Lyrics written by Klaudia Chmielewska

⁴¹ Władysław Skierkowski, *Puszcza Kurpiowska W Pieśni*. Część Pierwsza (Płock: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego 1928).

Jek ja jechał⁴²

Jek ja jechał do dziewczyny to wrota skrzypiały,	When I was coming to my girlfriend, then the door was cracking.
Polej wrota zimną wodą, niech te wrota cicho chodzą dziewczyno moja. X2	Pour the water on the door, so it doesn't make more sound, my girl!
Jek ja jechał do dziewczyny to gęsi gęgały.	When I was coming to my girl, then the geese were squawking.
Zapondz gęsi do sadu, niech się nazrom poślada dziewczyno moja. X2	Put the geese to the orchard, so they can eat fodder, my girl!
Jek ja jechał do dziewczyny to kacki kwakały.	When I was coming to my girlfriend, then the ducks were quacking.
Zapondz kacki do rzeki niech się nazrom Porzecki dziewczyno moja. X2	Lead the ducks to the river let them eat currants, my girl!
Jek ja jechał do dziewczyny to woły rycaly.	When I was coming to my girlfriend, then the oxen were roaring.
Zapondz woły do łobory, sama z Jonkam do komory na łóżecko spać. X2	Lead the oxen to the barn. You go with Jonek (the boy, who sings) to the chamber, to sleep on the bed.
Zapondz! Dziewcyno!	Lead them! Girl!

Lament⁴³

Dusza z ciała wyleciała.	The soul flew away of body.
Na zielonej łące stała.	It was standing on the green meadow.
Stawszy, silna, bardzo rzewno zapłakała.	Standing it cried very much.
Czemu, duszo, rzewno płaczesz?	Why do you cry, oh soul?
Nie wola mi rzewno płakać,	I do not want to cry,
A ja nie wiem, kam się podziać.	But I don't know where to go.
Podzi, duszo moja miła!	Come, my dear soul!
Powiodę cię do rajskiego,	I will guide you to Paradise,
Do Królestwa Niebieskiego	To the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁴² Stanisław Sieruta, 'Pieśni kurpiowskie śpiewa Stanisław Sieruta. Związek Kurpiów', *YouTube*, uploaded by Związek Kurpiów, 24, May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7TheFaAgGM> (accessed 23/07/2023).

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