

Editorial

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR. Following the more-or-less explicit neglect, by musicological research, of Polish modernism and its contextualisation within the dialectics of power management during the last century, in more recent years this area of study has become multidimensional. The diverse and complex cultural world of the Polish *fin de siècle* has received increased musicological interest, with an international dimension that has transcended the boundaries of Polish universities; this new research has investigated, with scientific precision, the work of Karol Szymanowski, Ignacy Paderewski and Mieczysław Karłowicz¹, bringing these figures to the forefront of attention. Scholars from around the world have provided a series of studies paving the way for a multi-faceted understanding of the contribution of Polish culture within a newly perceived Europeanism, in the context of the increasing theorising of the concept of 'nation'; a larger epistemological context has emerged that explains the function of that all-important nation within a globalised, European political environment throughout the century. This was a multi-dimensional phenomenon, as Szymanowski observed:

Paneuropeism is an evolutionary symptom: unheard of refinement of the culture of some individuals, increasing sensitivity on the one hand and intellectual on the other, encompassing more and more wider horizons of a mutual past (historical), and as a result it erases and minimizes the present differences, bringing them down to 'provincialism'².

So, the 'common past', the 'erosion of differences', has elicited a wide-ranging interest in the 'political' and largely intellectual environment viewed in relation to the dissolution of a socio-cultural ostracism of nationalism, to which the followers of the Polish *fin de siècle* movement have contributed variously. Consequently, as Alistair Wightman has observed concerning Szymanowski: «[t]he destruction of both nationalist sentiments and traditional religiosity was a result of the progressive free-thinking which had become so fashionable in recent decades»³. From this has developed a renewed notion of an 'institutionalized' Europeanism as a 'symptom of real evolution', progressing towards a newly discovered sense of identity; this has formed an ideological connection between nationalism arising from late Romanticism and a new trajectory within European modernism towards cultural globalisation. In this manner, during the first half of the new century, Poland was able to delineate original, varied forms within a diversified cosmopolitan philosophical and aesthetic movement, including a purely

¹. Among others, DOWNES, Stephen. *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; *European «Fin-de-siècle» and Polish Modernism: The Music of Mieczysław Karłowicz*, edited by Luca Sala, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2010 (Ad Parnassum Studies, 4); VAN MOERE, Didier. *Karol Szymanowski*, Paris, Fayard, 2008; WIGHTMAN, Alistair. *Karłowicz, Young Poland and the Musical Fin-de-siècle*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1996.

². SZYMANOWSKI, Karol. 'Efebos', in: *Karol Szymanowski Pisma. Tom 2: Pisma literackie*, edited by Teresa Chylińska, Kraków, PWM, 1989, p. 193, cited in CHYLIŃSKA, Teresa. *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Works*, translated by John Glowacki, Los Angeles, University of Southern California Press, 1993 (Polish Music History Series, 5), p. 135.

³. WIGHTMAN, Alistair. 'Religious Elements in Young Poland Music', in the present issue.

‘political’ dimension. These are correspondences that have been able to unify the previously fragmentary Polish national sentiment as a model for an emergent European unity; at that time Poland was pressed between the two world wars, and by developing ideologies that have silenced (via a regressive evolution) the premise of a global emergence of European politics, Poland has been able to contribute the identification of a new concept of nation and patriotism to the twentieth-century ideological crisis. Both idealistic and national Szymanowski’s theater engaged Paderewski’s ideological *opus*, differing from the disenchanting pantheism and irony of Karłowicz’s symphonic world; it has provided the most sophisticated example of that re-evolution — on the basis of renewed Wagnerian thought, as well as existing on the cusp of a political and cultural change, based on a strong critique of positivistic reformism. The Polish *fin de siècle* legacy therefore realised a new convergence between Romantic impulses and new modernism, achieving, during the century, a genuine synthesis of the new modernity.

There is, however, still much to do in order to formulate a renewed and coherent vision of the problem that embraces the full range of aspects within an overarching analysis. Broaching this will add further momentum to the study of neglected figures such as Ludomir Różycki, Apolinary Szeluto, Grzegorz Fitelberg, Emil Młynarski and Felicjan Szopski, including the ‘peripheral’ but by no means marginal contribution of authors such as Ludomir Rogowski and Adolf Chybiński, and many others who were direct and active witnesses of this intense period. Furthermore, and above all, there is a need to develop new methods in recording these phenomena by embracing multiple points of view, via renewed methodological approaches; this should lead to a reformulation of the hermeneutic syncretism between historical occurrences and musical meanings. I believe that it is important to re-evaluate the aesthetic category of the ‘genius’ within modern sociology, in order to identify existing authorial dynamic influences with a new awareness concerning the role of different socio-cultural incidences, contributing to the etherogenesis of a complex musical identity. From this standpoint, the Polish *fin de siècle* unveils an increasing system of language patterns arising in all its different facets and different representations — by a metamorphosing production involving either instrumental or operatic musical genres, via a rich and varied *opus*. The legacy of the Polish *fin de siècle* was able to restore continuity between the two centuries on the basis of a strong identity.

As always with this journal, the aim of the current issue is to bring to the attention of its readers studies and prospects aimed at synthesizing a body of research representing the current stage of the new debate. The issue opens with a contribution by Alistair Wightman focusing on the value of the ‘religious’ as a feeling of sacredness in the production of the Young Poland movement, referring in particular to the work of Karol Szymanowski and Mieczysław Karłowicz; without deploying any real liturgical music material, this feeling of sacredness may be described as the sensation of a strong and potent spiritual dimension, closely connected with human experience. For example, in the early works of Karol Szymanowski, namely *Sketch for my Cain* (1903–1904) and *The Last Farewell* (1906), one can discern a broadly pantheistic attitude; or in the Symphony ‘*Odrodzenie*’ (1900–1902) by Mieczysław Karłowicz, one can detect a programme that is essentially ‘positivist’, modified in the light of a strong religious symbolism. The subject of Karłowicz is resumed by the last two articles, the first of which, by Michael Murphy, examines the personal act of *conceiving* in relation to the conception of his own work, in the sense of authorship, in the context of entire spectrum of artistic, literary and intellectual Polish musical culture: an attitude that probed the aesthetic dynamics when the imperatives of

EDITORIAL

a Messianic Romanticism was at odds with the aspirations of a more individualistic modernism. The final article, by the present writer, analyses the discussion of aesthetic reformulation that the first real symphonic work *Bianca da Molena* (1899–1900). By embracing the logic of expanded drama, a more remarkable modification of extra-musical signifiers constitutes the point of arrival and the decantation of the aesthetic reflection of Karłowicz. In *Bianca da Molena* a kind of epistemological metamorphosis takes place in which all participating elements are wed in continuously changing signification. In this way the theater, in its multidimensional facets, becomes a powerful, harmonious container, capable not only of expressing itself but also of delving into itself with new approaches and new viewpoints. This is an expansion of the forms of musical content that are redefined in a new syncretism and in an ‘extended’ mysticism of the concept of the art object’s ‘individuality’, as in the instinctive formulation of a new spiritual syllogism, but remaining well within the framework of modernist secular thought, to which *Bianca da Molena* returns us in pointed manner. Through this, that initial, unfinished *opus* of Karłowicz’s youth reveals a particular method in the deployment of the techniques of the symphonic poem.

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