

THE SACRAL SPHERE IN PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI'S RELIGIOUS MUSIC

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Summary. *Paweł Łukaszewski (born in 1968) is considered to be one of the most interesting authors of Polish religious music. His works evoke increasing interest not only in Poland, but also abroad. Łukaszewski's world-view, although shaped by various life experiences, clearly stems from Christian roots, whereas religion and Catholic faith remain a beacon for the composer in all his artistic operations. The author often emphasises that he dwells on questions connected with the depth of musical message and mapping out a way for the quest which lead to "sacrum". The composer's interpretation of the sacrum category results from two principal sources: the teachings of the Church and inspirations with the ideas of a Polish musicologist, Bohdan Pocij. It is the researcher's opinion that while the category of sacredness in music is grounded in the works' substance, the music matter itself may be the "carrier" of sacrum. Łukaszewski assumed a position similar to the musicologist regarding the musical means instrumental to "cracking the door" to a different reality. He himself admits: I try to find such sounds, rhythmical values and harmonies which, when combined in the right proportions, just as in an alchemist's laboratory, will result in an effect difficult to define with words.*

The author of the article intends to point out those strategies of the composer (often connected with the musical representation phenomenon) which serve to visualise the sacral sphere acoustically and as a result, evoke religious experiences and an exposure to mystery. However, it should be emphasised that the composer's technique, although significant, is not the author's final objective; it merely plays a service role towards the

superior super-aesthetic values (the term of a Polish philosopher, Władysław Stróżewski). Łukaszewski stressed many times that perhaps, sacrum begins where a workshop ends.

Keywords: Paweł Łukaszewski, polish religious music, sacral sphere.

Introduction

Music inspired by religious motifs constitutes a phenomenon of contemporary Polish culture, an interesting and specific appearance conditioned by many factors, including historical, political, and social situations. Undoubtedly the dominant tone of Polish sacral art was set by such outstanding composers as Krzysztof Penderecki and Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, who through their work once again pointed to fundamental and transcendental values.

The religious compositions of Paweł Łukaszewski (born 1968) arise from the spirit of that tradition. His music is known and popular not only in Poland, but also abroad. The multiple commissions and performances by renowned ensembles or phonographic publications (awarded many times, e.g. *Musica sacra*) are proof to that popularity. The debut of Łukaszewski's generation took place in 1989, following principal political changes enveloping both all of Poland as well as Western Europe. Thus, the religious music of younger composers is no longer a "statement" in the name of the whole nation and to the nation, but rather bears personal or universal messages. These may be connected to the turn of the century and the need to return to the Christian origins of European civilisation in the face of new cultural threats – laicisation and profanisation.¹

Łukaszewski's worldview, stemming from Christian roots, was shaped above all at his family home (the prematurely deceased father-composer appears as an important figure), although a significant impression was also made by his place of birth – Częstochowa with Jasna Góra Monastery (the spiritual capital of Poland). Thanks to that, the young music adept became a witness to important religious and historical events (including the pilgrimages of the Polish Pope). A significant role in forming a creative attitude was also played by the home town's musical life (including the International Festival of Sacra Music "*Gaude Mater*"). The thoughts of the Second Vatican Council are also not without significance.

1. The *Sacrum* Category

In 2012, Łukaszewski admitted that: *Writing sacral music is a way of life for me.*² The *sacrum* category takes up a considerable part in the divagations and works of the author. He emphasises many times that he is bothered by questions *connected with the depth of musical message and setting out the path of the search leading*

1 See: Kiwała, K. *Problematyka Sacrum w polskiej muzyce współczesnej na przykładzie wybranych utworów związanych z osobą Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*. diss., Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2002, p. 42.

2 *About sacred music by Łukaszewski - Chciałbym być lepszym człowiekiem*. Conversation with Piotr Matwiejczuk. Polish Radio. 23rd August 2012 [accessed 2016-02-08]. <www.lukaszewski.org.uk-reviews>.

to “*sacrum*”. The mentioned phenomenon constitutes the subject of research of many science branches, and the concept itself is interpreted diversely. It is enough to mention a few of the most significant names in the field of theology (R. Otto), philosophy (M. Scheler, G. van der Leeuw, and in Poland, W. Stróżewski, among others), religious anthropology (M. Eliade), sociology (E. Durkheim), including the study of fine arts as well as Polish musicology and music theory (*inter alia* B. Pocij, M. Tomaszewski). As it is mentioned by K. Kiwała: *Religious phenomenologists, above all Rudolf Otto, and then Mircea Eliade, emphasise the irrational dimension of sacrum, i.e. the aspect of the “other” so significant for understanding this art category, the “other” than that which is known and assimilated, a mystery evoking a certain reaction – fascination and awe at the same time (from Latin mysterium tremendum et fascinans).*³ Further categorisations brought about, however, many discrepancies and resulted in numerous discussions whose primary source of discord became *the nominal and adjectival understanding of the sacrum category.*⁴

*In the circles of Polish musicology, two opposing concepts may be observed pertaining to the nature of musical sacrum – understood as an independent phenomenon or quite the opposite – strictly resulting from particular qualities of the music itself (e.g. B. Pocij). Łukaszewski seems to accept various points of view. In an interview with Barbara Schabowska he stated: “Sacrum” is the depth, space, a view from a distance. Sound, harmony, and chords help us find our own place in that “sacrum”, but they are only means.⁵ The artist emphasises many times that sacrum might start where the workshop ends.⁶ Thus, although the composer’s technique is important, it is not the final objective, but only plays an auxiliary role to superior supra-aesthetic values (to use Stróżewski’s term). The composer’s interpretation of *sacrum* results from two principal sources: the thoughts of the Catholic Church and the inspirations of the Polish musicologist, Bohdan Pocij.*

2. The Sphere of Sacrum in Łukaszewski’s Works

2.1. The Church Perspective

For me, sacral music should be connected with a word and it should be that word which draws its boundaries.⁷ The sphere of sacrum connected with a text is the closest to my heart.⁸ The above statement of Paweł Łukaszewski allows an understanding of the artist’s predilections towards a cappella choir music and to vocal and instrumental

3 Kiwała, K. Muzyka i świętość. Rekonesans. *Ethos*. 2014, 1 (105), p. 197.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Schabowska, B. Nie każda muzyka religijna jest sakralna. *Ruch Muzyczny*. 2014, 4 [accessed 2016-02-08]. <www.ruchmuzyczny.art.pl>.

6 Łukaszewski, P. *Moja muzyka. Funkcja elementów muzycznych i układów formalnych w kształtowaniu kontinuum formy w II Symfonii „Festinus amare homines”*. Lublin: Polihymnia, 2006, p. 65.

7 Młynarczyk, B. *Dotknąć głębi. Dysonanse*. 1998, 4: 28.

8 Schabowska, B. Nie każda muzyka religijna jest sakralna. *Ruch Muzyczny*. 2014, 4 [accessed 2016-02-08]. <www.ruchmuzyczny.art.pl>.

music, which account for the most significant portion of the composer's achievements. This is clearly connected with the teachings of the Church which assume (especially in reference to liturgical celebration) the precedence of singing over instrumental music and focus on a word's strict integration with sound. This word, in the case of the composer's works, is carried by musical language accessible to the listener and stemming from the tradition of European music, and the sound's subordination towards text is particularly expressed through the reduction of means, sound euphony and neotonal type of sound organisation.

The used texts are usually introduced in Latin because, as the composer stresses himself: *Latin is the language of prayer, which continues to carry meaning and is still alive thanks to the Church.*⁹ Only sometimes, in order to accept a given cultural circle, does the author convey verbal contents in national languages.

Liturgical tradition, with its cyclical experiencing of time, clearly resonates also in the compositions' subject-matter. The composer says: [...] *I think that writing sacral music dissociated from reality – a specific liturgical year or generally religious reality – is pointless.*¹⁰ *That is why composition texts point to the most important church year periods, which for the composer himself constitute a special time of experiencing faith: Advent and Christmas, Lent and the Resurrection (as the culmination point), All Souls' Day together with contemplations over death of man. Specific compositions may be connected with individual phases or events. The subject-matter of compositions is also focused around the character of Mary, saints, and Christian angelology. Through his selection of texts, Łukaszewski would like to recall and accept the revealed truths, point to the Triune God whose name is identified with the term Sanctus, and also direct attention towards sacrum understood as that which is offered to God, i.e. a prayer addressed to Him. As the author says: Sacral music should move the listener and should be a prayer which reaches God.*¹¹

2.2. Musical Perspective

The composer's perception of *sacrum* also results from being inspired by the concepts of B. Pocięj.¹² Thus, *sacrum* perceived as a supernatural sphere, *mundus spiritualis*, is associated with such categories as time and space, light and brightness, and sacral sound. In order to bring the sphere closer and to visualise it, Łukaszewski applies strategies referring to the phenomenon of musical representation. In the context of the composer's music, it seems most valid to adapt the concept of Peter Kivy, who

9 From private correspondence with the paper's author with the composer (2013-10-15). Compare also: Schabowska, B. *op. cit.*

10 Schabowska, B. *op. cit.*

11 *About sacred music by Łukaszewski - Chciałbym być lepszym człowiekiem.* Conversation with Piotr Matwiejczuk. Polish Radio. 23rd August 2012 [accessed 2016-02-08]. <www.lukaszewski.org.uk-reviews>.

12 Łukaszewski often refers to the systematisation, prepared by the Polish musicologist, of levels of authors delving into the issue of *sacrum*. Four "investigation degrees" include: the religious subject, the religious mood, sacral time and sound, and the sacral form. See: Pocięj, B. *Sacrum w polskiej muzyce współczesnej. Przemiany techniki dźwiękowej, stylu i estetyki w polskiej muzyce lat 70.* Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, Sekcja Muzykologów ZKP, 1986, p. 50.

understands representation as *an expression of certain opinions regarding an object or a phenomenon where a significant role is played by a subjective element, including a possibility for an artist to take a position towards a question discussed in the work.*¹³ As part of the representation types listed by the musicologist-philosopher connected with the nature of a phenomenon as the type of analogy of music and non-musical sphere (see Table 1¹⁴), the representation of non-sound phenomena may be observed in Łukaszewski's compositions, although indications of intentional representations can also be encountered.

Table 1

Representation type	Characteristics	
Representation of the “sounds like” kind	Analogy between nature phenomena and music	Musical representations devoid of direct mimicry , requiring additional clarifications from a verbal text or a title involving two types of sound representations: *men or animals *inanimate nature.
Representation of non-sound phenomena	Analogies pertaining to non-acoustic physical parameters and musical qualities	Representation by conventional association i.e. simple analogies connected, among others, with the category of time, direction, movement and stillness Essentials representation (internal representation) i.e. more elaborate and subtle ways being a description of non-acoustic elements where the principle is: synaesthesia of associations, combining media disregarding and generalizing the nature of the process or event.
Intentional representation	Pertains solely to notation (tradition of Medieval <i>ars subtilior</i> and Renaissance <i>music for the eyes</i>)	No explicit musical sensations , however, the representation idea is visible in the notation.

Sacral time and space should be combined with various ontological characters. In cases regarding the representation issue, it is about their symbolical form above all, connected with the cultural, world-view and aesthetic significances. Time and space are God's attributes, *as eternal and infinite as He, constituting the boundless nature of the universe and all-being.*¹⁵ Thus, sacral space is associated with the concepts of vastness and endlessness, and sacral time is defined as atemporal, constant, unchangeable and referred to as “the eternal present”.

13 Golianek, R.D. *Muzyka programowa XIX wieku. Idea i interpretacja*. Poznań: UAM, 1998, p. 75.

14 Prepared on the grounds of: Kivy, P. *Sound and Semblance. Reflection on Musical Representation*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991, p.28-60 and Golianek, R.D. *Muzyka programowa XIX wieku. Idea i interpretacja*. Poznań: UAM, 1998, p. 77–79.

15 Szymańska-Stułka, K. *Idea przestrzeni w muzyce*. Warszawa: UMFC, 2015, p. 54.

The composer himself refers to a few other definitions of time in religious music, combining them with nothing more than the concept of sacral time (unreal time, without beginning and end, spherical, transformed into space, of mystical rapture, contemplation, inner experience, prayer, and the time of Divinely revealed and absolute truth¹⁶).

Sacral time and space receive representation as a result of defined organisational musical time and space (determined by such elements of a composition as texture, metro-rhythmics, harmonics, dynamics and forces). The composed slow motion or immobility idiomatic of Łukaszewski's works makes musical time perceived as "eternal lasting", prayerful contemplation. Such creation of timing also influences the structure of the internal musical space¹⁷ and in consequence – its auditive experience (so-called audio space) in the category of width, extent, length, and infinity. Operating within similar timbre shades is not without significance for obtaining the discussed effect. The Polish author creates an illusion of ever distant, stretched out space opening upwards (so-called "height space") through the ascendental direction of the melodic line, *gradatio*, and a multiplication of chord components leading to the extension of an ambitus. Sometimes these actions are supported by casting and dynamic procedures (increasing the level of music intensity up to forte reinforces the sense of depth spatiality).

Thanks to the applied strategies, a symbolical limitless space of heavenly expanse opens before the listener.

Sacral light emanates above all from texts of eschatological subject-matter. The Resurrected Christ brings people hope for eternal light (e.g. *Vesperae pro defunctis, Requiem*). The light of Christ shines after the victory of God's Son over death (*Resurrectio*), and its splendour fills the vision of St. Faustyna (*Symphony No. 4*). In Łukaszewski's compositions, the sacral light appears to be bright and flickering, spilling and all-embracing. In order to imitate the phenomenon of brightness, the composer frequently reaches for a rhetorical convention – the *antitheton per tonum* figure. The illumination effect is achieved with the use of a major chord written into a priori different harmonic context (e.g. *Requiem*, the text talks about "the eternal light" – a juxtaposition of G minor chords with E-flat major and G major chords with added notes (see ex. 1).

16 Łukaszewski, P. *Moja muzyka. Funkcja elementów muzycznych i układów formalnych w kształtowaniu kontinuum formy w II Symfonii „Festinemus amare homines”*. Lublin: Polihymnia, 2006, p. 67.

17 The internal (essential) space refers to relations, dimensions, proportions that may be set between the composition's co-factors. It is a specific "interior of an organism, an almost biological or cellular space". The external (surrounding) space refers to the acoustic sphere, it is determined by the architecture of a place in which the composition is created or in which it resonates. Talking about musical space one should remind that it is most of all realised in dimensions which define it as a quantity closed by such co-ordinates as: length, width, and depth, direction, movement. See: Szymańska-Stulka, K. *op. cit.*, p. 25-26, 28, 49-52, 89.

volume (register, using vocal and instrumental voices, dynamics) and spatiality. As part of the polygenic texture, he uses constant notes or slower values with a rippling melic image that he often combines with momentary “flashes” in the form of condensed motifs resembling ornaments or figuration. The effect is completed with low dynamics, at least at the beginning, and a “widening and deepening” of the musical space accomplished by an ascending direction, increasing from piano do forte, as well as by a gradually accelerating motion. It is remindful of the musical interpretation of “Eicon” opening and closing the “Resurrectio” (see: ex.2).

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Eicon" by Paweł Łukaszewski, dated 1968. The score is divided into two main sections. The first section, starting at bar 1, is marked "Grave" with a tempo of quarter note = 40. It features staves for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, 2 Bassoons, 2 Corni tubolari, Tromba, Tromboni, Fagotto, Contrabbasso, and 2 Violini. The second section, starting at bar 22, is marked "Allegro" with a tempo of quarter note = 95. This section includes staves for 2 Violini, 2 Violoncelli, 2 Contrabbassi, and Piano (1 and 2). The score is written in a complex, multi-layered style with many notes and dynamic markings.

Ex.2. P. Łukaszewski, *Resurrectio, Eicon*, bars: 1-7 and 22-25.

The sacral sound is, most of all, the sound of instruments associated with *mundus spiritualis*. In his compositions, Łukaszewski uses both sounds consolidated by hundreds of years of European tradition, as well as those that appear to be specific and individual. The latter ones result from the use of non-obvious instruments frequently taken from non-European cultures as well as specific juxtapositions.

The traditional instruments used include: organs, bells (tubular) and Mass bells (*da messa*) often resounding during liturgical ceremonies, as well as brass instruments, whose sounds usually indicate the power and might of the Creator. Among less conventional sounds representing the sacral sphere, one may compile several lists (see Table 2).

Table 2

UNCONVENTIONAL SOUNDS	
Harp + organs + celesta Harp + piano + bells	brings to mind the idiom of Górecki's music
Percussion sounds of European instruments	e.g. cmp+ptto+tt connection from <i>Resurrectio</i>
Percussion sounds of eastern instruments, e.g. Chinese quigong balls, Tibetan campanelli	Miserere, Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis, Symphony No. 3, Missa de Maria a Magdala

The “unreal” sound of the ocarina also plays a significant role in the scene of Christ’s death in *Via Crucis* (possibly inspired by *Canticum Canticorum* or *The Awakening of Jacob* by Krzysztof Penderecki) and sometimes the soft and lyrical tones of a saxophone (see: ex 3).

Ex.3. P. Łukaszewski, *Via Crucis* – station XII: Jesus Christ dies on the Cross.

Instrumental sounds referring to a non-musical reality – the heavenly sphere – most certainly allow the separation of real time from the time of inner experience, a

One more sign refers to the sphere of sacrum, the divine harmony of cosmos. It has its origins in medieval music – the perfect fifth. In combination with certain contents, apart from structural values, its sound evokes strong symbolical connotations. It is worth keeping in mind that since the Middle Ages, the fifth interval operated in the Christian culture as an immanent symbol of perfection, purity, holiness and faith (e.g. the beginning of Symphony No. 3). Whereas due to intentional representation, the name of the one who sanctifies is emphasised. The composer creates the sign of the cross (Symphony No. 3, see ex. 5) falling on the words referring to God, impossible to hear, but visible in the score.

The image displays a page of a musical score for P. Łukaszewski's Symphony No. 3, part I, specifically bars 118-123. The score is presented in a grand staff format, with multiple systems of staves. The top system (bars 118-123) features a complex orchestral texture with woodwinds, strings, and brass. The middle system (bars 124-129) shows a choir with vocal lines for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), along with a piano accompaniment. The bottom system (bars 130-135) continues the orchestral texture with woodwinds, strings, and brass. The lyrics "Ae - li - De - us - Spi - ri - tu - in - u - m" are written under the vocal lines.

Ex.5. P. Łukaszewski, *Symphony No. 3 – Symphony of Angels, part I* – bars: 118-123.

Conclusion

In one of the interviews the composer admits: *It is my goal to write sacral music. And sometimes it is possible to achieve, rarely in the whole composition, more often the "sacrum" spheres, to touch measures, phrases, fragments...*¹⁸ In the context of the quoted words, it is worth recalling an important thought of Władysław Stróżewski regarding "the possibility of sacrum in art": *We cannot eliminate the possibility that the phenomenon of "sacrum" might appear in some composition irrespective of its author's intentions, just as an opposite may be possible, namely that it may not appear at all despite the author's designs and regardless the means the author might have used to evoke this phenomenon.*¹⁹

Łukaszewski's stylistic language is most certainly among the clearest ones and moreover, it has been defined as perfect for contemporary sacral music.²⁰ The opinions of his listeners explicitly indicate that the composer's music allows bringing them closer to *sacrum*. Their opinions stress its interpretative, kerygmatic and contemplative functions. In listening to the author's works, the audience experiences a state of so-called "transposition to a different realm" (after Huber, one may talk about a so-called spherical experience), while undergoing a strong religious experience and thus, an experience of the Mystery. That is how Łukaszewski's intentions as presented in his artistic credo are fulfilled: *I would like my music to inspire people to reflection, slowing down the tempo of their lives and helping them to focus and contemplate, and in creating it, maybe I will become a mediator in conveying the Truth.*²¹

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18 *Muzyka i modlitwa.* Daniel Cichy's Conversation with Paweł Łukaszewski, 27th August 2012. *Tygodnik Powszechny.* 2012, 36 [accessed 2016-02-08]. <www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/muzyka-i-modlitwa-16941>.

19 Stróżewski, W. O możliwości sacrum w sztuce. *Sacrum i sztuka.* Kraków: „Znak”, 1989, p. 27.

20 Olędzki, S. *Prawykonanie "Via Crucis" Pawła Łukaszewskiego* (review of the concert, 2002-03-08) [accessed 2012-03-08]. <www.pwm.com.pl/pl/kompozytorzy_i_autorzy/5060/pawel-lukaszewski/otherinfo.html>.

21 Łukaszewski, P. *Moja muzyka. Funkcja elementów muzycznych i układów formalnych w kształtowaniu kontinuum formy w II Symfonii „Festinemus amare homines”.* Lublin: Polihymnia, 2006, p. 67.

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PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKIO RELIGINĖS MUZIKOS SRITIS

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Santrauka. Pawełas Łukaszewskis (gimė 1968 m.) – vienas įdomiausių religinės muzikos kūrėjų Lenkijoje. Jo darbai skatina augantį domėjimąsi ne tik Lenkijoje, bet ir užsienyje. Łukaszewskio pasaulėžiūra, nors ir suformuota įvairiapusės gyvenimo patirties, ryškiai sietina su krikščioniškomis ištakomis. Kompozitorius yra vedinas religijos ir katalikų tikėjimo tarsi kelrodžiu švyturiu visose savo kūrybos raiškose. Kūrėjas dažnai pabrėžia, jog jis kontempliuoja muzikinės raiškos gylį ir kokiū būdu ji atskleidžia sakralumą. Kompozitoriaus skaralumo kategorijos interpretacija kyla iš dviejų pagrindinių šaltinių: bažnyčios mokymų ir Lenkijos muzikologo, Bohdano Pociėjaus, idėjų. Mokslininko nuomone, sakralumas muzikoje skleidžiasi jos substancijoje, o muzikinė materija gali būti suvokiama kaip sakralumo „laidininkė“. Łukaszewskio nuostata dėl muzikos, kaip priemonės, „prakertančios“ duris į kitas realijas, panaši į muzikologo poziciją. Jis pripažįsta: „...stengiuosi surasti tokius garsus, ritmines raiškas ir harmonijas, kurias, maišant tinkamomis proporcijomis kaip alchemiko laboratorijoje gimsta rezultatas, kurį sunku įvardinti žodžiu.“

Straipsnyje kreipiamas dėmesys į tas kompozitoriaus strategijas (dažnai susijusias su muzikinio reprezentavimo fenomenu), kurios akustiniu būdu vizualizuoja sakralinę sritį ir taip sudaro galimybę išgyventi religinę patirtį bei priartina prie Misterijos pajautimo. Tačiau reikėtų pabrėžti, kad kompozitoriaus technika, nors ir svarbi, nėra pati savaime kūrybos tikslas, ji atlieka tarpininkės vaidmenį atskleisdama aukščiausiąsias superestetines vertybes (Lenkijos filosofo, Vladislovo Strózewskio terminas). Łukaszewskis dažnai pabrėžia, kad sakralumas randasi ten, kur baigiasi kasdieniškas triūsas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Paweł Łukaszewski, lenkų religinė muzika, sakralinė sritis.*

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