

ARS MUSICA

INTERDISZIPLINÄRE STUDIEN
Herausgegeben von Elżbieta Szczurko und Tadeusz Guz



ANTONI SZAŁOWSKI

PERSON AND WORK

Elżbieta Szczurko

Introduction

1.1. Defining the subject

“It is the duty of Polish musicologists to know more or less as much about us as they do about the composers who live in Poland”¹. These words come from Roman Palester’s letter to the organisers of a symposium devoted to the works of Polish émigré composers which took place in Warsaw in 1988, a project initiated by the Musicology Section of the Polish Composers’ Union. The conference was an exceptional event, and the first one of its kind. The papers to be presented there were to combine critical and aesthetic interpretation with artistic evaluation of the works, and some of them were to be devoted to Antoni Szalowski². Unfortunately, the achievements of Szalowski, one of the main representatives of Polish Neoclassicism, were, after all, omitted from the conference programme. Roman Palester described this as “something of a scandal”³. Referring to the title of the symposium, “Music wrongly

¹ R. Palester, *Prawda źle obecna* [Truth Wrongly Present] [letter sent in December 1988], in: *Muzyka źle obecna* [Music Wrongly Present], ed. K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, I, Warszawa 1989, p. 28.

² According to Krystyna Tarnawska-Kaczorowska the paper on Szalowski was to have been written by Adam Walaciński. She also mentions Władysław Malinowski, who was planning a presentation on the influence of the émigré community on the evolution of creative paths, using the music of Palester, Panufnik, Spisak and Szalowski as examples. Cf. K. Tarnawska-Kaczorowska, *Na rozpoczęcie* [To Start with], in: *Muzyka źle obecna*, op. cit., p. 10.

³ R. Palester, op. cit., p. 28.

present”, he remarked that it was neither accurate nor adequate in relation to the subjects listed as conference topics, for a number of reasons⁴. Some of the artists (such as Michał Spisak) used to visit Poland and maintained continuous contact with their native community; they could also expect to have their work published and performed. Others, a minority, were repressed, since the “wrong presence” implied a ban on the performance and publication of the works, as well as on writing about their authors. Alongside Andrzej Panufnik, Tadeusz Kassern and himself, Roman Palester also included Antoni Szałowski in this second group. He wrote:

“Szałowski is the only composer [...], whose punishment befell him by way of ricochet. His views were more or less the same as mine or Panufnik’s, but he did not make them public all that often. The administrative ban hit him simply because during the 1950s the three of us were regarded as the official group of émigré composers”⁵.

Drawing attention to the shared artistic enterprises which turned out not to be conducive to creative artists settling in Poland, Palester also pointed out that during the mid-1960s Szałowski’s music again began to appear in his homeland, albeit sporadically, and that all of Szałowski’s manuscript legacy found its way to Poland after his death. Taking this into account, Palester appealed to performers to take greater interest in the music of the Polish neoclassicist, while addressing to scholars his belief that Szałowski’s oeuvre deserved in-depth research⁶. The present volume is part of the response to that suggestion.

⁴ The conference papers discussed the music of the following composers: Roman Berger, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Tadeusz Z. Kassern, Michał Kondracki, Szymon Laks, Roman Maciejewski, Roman Palester, Andrzej Panufnik and Michał Spisak.

⁵ R. Palester, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

1.2. Objectives, premises and method

The aim of this dissertation is to define the characteristics of Szałowski's work in the context of twentieth-century music. An appreciation of the technical and aesthetic attributes of his works should lead to recognising Szałowski as one of the representatives of Polish Neoclassicism whose output reflects the norms of the Nadia Boulanger school of composition. The research presented here is also intended to facilitate the identification of the individual features of his compositions, and to emphasise their lasting value and significance in the development of twentieth-century music.

The methodology adopted to meet the objectives described above uses the framework developed by Janusz Sławiński. It takes into account three levels of research: analysis of the *œuvre* (the most elementary stage of which is its description), its interpretation and finally its evaluation⁷. The analysis stage constitutes an attempt to “reach the initial state of the work” through “deconstructing the non-standard whole into its standard elements”⁸. Going beyond the description, which is limited to recognising, distinguishing and listing the set of elements as “textual units categorised as types”, the author tries in her analysis “to capture and characterise the kinds of interdependencies by which they are linked – hierarchical ordering, structural relations and functional groupings”⁹. Analytic procedures, directed at “the manner in which the work of art exists” rather than its “essence”¹⁰, lead to a purposeful stripping the work of its uniqueness, its “dissimilarity”, thus allowing one to include it in a specific greater whole¹¹.

⁷ J. Sławiński, *Analiza, interpretacja i wartościowanie dzieła literackiego* [Analysis, Interpretation and Evaluation of a Literary Work], in: Idem, *Próby teoretycznoliterackie* [Essays in Literary Theory], in: *Prace wybrane Janusza Sławińskiego* [Selected Works of Janusz Sławiński], ed. W. Bolecki, in: *Klasyki współczesnej polskiej myśli humanistycznej* [The Classics of Polish Humanistic Thought], ed. A. Nowakowski, vol. 4, Kraków 2000, pp. 9-38.

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 10-11.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 18.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 21.

The interpretation, which to some extent overlaps analysis, is an attempt to define the meaning of a work through placing it in context. In the “work – context” relationship, the work is perceived as one of the components of the whole (biographistic interpretation), or is expressed in the relationship between the “actual” and the “potential” (“genological interpretation”¹²). In the latter case the context creates a system of directives (an area of “eventualities” – rules and dispositions) taken up or negated by the author¹³.

The third area of research – the evaluation – should, in the words of Roman Ingarden, represent a “response to value”¹⁴. Here it is essential to establish the criteria enabling the differentiation between various types of value ascribed to a work of art, and to define both the idiosyncratic and the main criteria¹⁵. A work is not assigned to just one historical-artistic whole, which is why the evaluation should take into account the creative artist’s point of view, the culture of the period and the cultural environment in which the work was created, as well as criteria beyond the artist’s perspective which might apply to the evaluation¹⁶.

This volume is the first extensive study of Szałowski’s creative achievement; however it is not as yet a full monograph of his life and works, although by adopting a particular research approach it includes some of the significant features of a monograph. According to the definition of monographs proposed by Maria Żmigrodzka, the subject of analysis is a collection of works created during different periods, representing different genres, with varying aesthetic value and rank in the history of literature¹⁷. Such a collection represents a sequence within

¹² In the Polish language: *Interpretacja genologiczna*.

¹³ J. Sławiński, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

¹⁴ R. Ingarden, *Uwagi o estetycznym sądzie wartościującym* [On Aesthetic Evaluation], transl. by M. Turowicz, in: R. Ingarden, *Studia z estetyki* [Studies in Aesthetics], vol. 3, Warszawa 1970, p. 158.

¹⁵ J. Sławiński, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷ M. Żmigrodzka, *Osobowość i życie pisarza w monografii historycznoliterackiej* [A Writer’s Personality and Life in Historical and Literary Monographs], in: *Problemy metodologiczne*

which we find interdependencies, but at the same time it constitutes a whole which justifies formulating general conclusions about it, thus making it possible to define the composer's oeuvre from the axiological point of view, and to demonstrate his/her contribution to the development of musical culture¹⁸.

Distancing itself somewhat from the ergocentric approach, which views a given work of art without any consideration of "external" factors¹⁹, the present study follows the monographic approach in examining the relationships which bind a work and its creator. Drawing attention to the composer's personal subjectivity is regarded as justified on the grounds that biographical facts sometimes have a fundamental effect on the substance of creative output, and provide an important perspective on its specific features. According to the ideas of Janusz Sławiński, the procedure consists in distinguishing particular segments in the composer's full biography, and stems from the need to make a selection of the composer's life experiences in order to examine their role in the artist's creative activities²⁰. However, an interest in the anthropological thread does not entail undertaking a diachronic presentation of the composer's life experience and creative process. The musical composition – its essence, and its stylistic and aesthetic features – remain the centre of attention, while the "external" aspects play an auxiliary role.

The research approach adopted here also makes use of the concept of integrated interpretation, developed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski. This approach regards it as necessary to take into account two dimensions in order to fully examine a work of art: the first dimension assumes an immanent perspective (investigating the "internal" relationships in the existential structure of a work of art, interpreted as a creation *per se*); the

współczesnego literaturoznawstwa [Methodological Problems in Modern Literary Studies], ed. H. Markiewicz, J. Sławiński, Kraków 1976, p. 83.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 84.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 82.

²⁰ J. Sławiński, *Myśli na temat: biografia pisarza jako jednostka procesu historyczno-literackiego* [Some Thoughts about the Writer's Biography as a Unit in the Historical-Literary Process], in: Idem, *Próby teoretycznoliterackie*, op. cit., pp. 178-182.

second, contextual dimension, points to the “external” relationships, the relevance of the biographical, historical, technological and cultural, genological and stylistic contexts²¹. In the latter perspective, which in Tomaszewski’s view supplements the first, a musical composition is perceived as an actual entity, which “exists in the space of its own time and place, in other words, in an historical and cultural space”²².

In view of the particular character of the œuvre of a composer who wrote outside his homeland, the biographical context has not been limited to the issue of his artistic personality. While the latter is recognised as fundamental and examined in the categories of philosophical and psychological determinants of creativity and an artist’s social function²³, this perspective is expanded to include factors which would allow one to define the mechanisms involved in the composer’s artistic development (Chapter 2). It seems important to acknowledge the factors which stimulated or limited Szałowski’s creativity in order to understand the motives behind his artistic choices, the processes involved in shaping his ideas, and to take into account the factors which conditioned the social acceptance of his work. The analysis of this issue is based on the theoretical ideas of Marian Golka concerning the nature of the “mechanisms of an artistic career”²⁴.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the essence of Szałowski’s creative development. The first works to be analysed are those from his student period (Szałowski studied with Kazimierz Sikorski in Warsaw and with Nadia Boulanger in Paris), which allow one to trace the composer’s creative

²¹ M. Tomaszewski, *Muzykologia wobec współczesności* [Musicology in Contemporary Perspective], in: Idem, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego. Rekonesans* [Integral Interpretation of a Musical Composition. Reconnaissance], Kraków 2000, p. 11.

²² M. Tomaszewski, *Utwór muzyczny w kontekście swego czasu i miejsca* [A Musical Composition in the Context of its Time and Place], in: *Dzieło muzyczne, jego estetyka, struktura, recepcja (I)* [A Musical Composition, its Aesthetic, Structure and Reception (I)], ed. A. Nowak, in: *Prace zbiorowe*, No. 21, publ. Akademia Muzyczna im. Feliksa Nowowiejskiego w Bydgoszczy, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 11.

²³ Possible approaches to solving the problem of the writer’s personality are discussed by Maria Żmigrodzka, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-90.

²⁴ M. Golka, *Socjologia artysty* [The Sociology of the Artist], Poznań 1995, pp. 141-149.

path, from his fascination with the music of Karol Szymanowski and the sound qualities of the music of Debussy and Ravel, to his developing an interest in, and acceptance of, the stylistic and aesthetic principles of Neoclassicism, acquired at the school of Nadia Boulanger.

Further sections, which concentrate on the composer's mature works, undertake a synchronic analysis, in view of their stylistic cohesion. An analysis of the tonal-harmonic properties (using the method of Paul Hindemith, which consists in distinguishing, through melodic reduction, the superordinate two-voice counterpoint, defining the harmonic profile and establishing the tonal centres), orchestral technique, metro-rhythmics and form, all serve to characterise Szałowski's compositional craft.

The subchapter which confronts the aesthetic as opposed to the technical qualities examines the devices used by the composer to achieve the aura of *sérénité*, understood as an expressive category, and his ways of introducing musical humour. This part of the volume also analyses those works which may be presented in the heteronomic perspective through their extra-musical inspirations (verbal text, painting).

In accordance with the title of this volume and the monographic principles adopted here, a context for the work being analysed is sought not only in the artist's biographical experiences or the social conditions related to them, but primarily in the works of other composers who follow the particular norms and conventions involved. Thus Chapter 4 serves to confront Szałowski's work with the compositional school of Nadia Boulanger. The point of reference for Szałowski's music is provided, on the one hand, by the œuvre of selected Polish and American composers who during the relevant period formed the largest group of Boulanger's pupils, and on the other hand, the views of Boulanger herself, who at that time was a "devotee" of neoclassicist music. Other perspectives from which Szałowski's work is examined (also in other sections) are the work and the aesthetic views of Igor Stravinsky, whose poetics of music and language were interwoven with the idea and form of classical art in Boulanger's school.

The research undertaken here aims to establish the extent to which Szałowski's works identify with the rules of Neoclassicism acquired at the

school of Nadia Boulanger, and the degree to which their special and individual features function within the chosen model.

The main aim is to determine the axiology of Antoni Szałowski's creative achievement and, by examining it as an intellectual-aesthetic whole, to fill in the gaps in our picture of the music of Polish twentieth-century émigré composers, which for a long time was unjustly regarded as "music wrongly present"²⁵.

1.3. *The sources and current state of research*

Antoni Szałowski's creative output has not as yet been fully examined in Polish musicological literature. Scant knowledge of the music of that composer results primarily from the fact that immediately after completing his studies at Warsaw Conservatory in 1931, Szałowski left Poland for Paris, and remained there for the rest of his life. Although the continuous expansion of musicological research into the work of the émigré composers has established Szałowski's position as one of the best Polish neoclassicists, descriptions of his music have not gone beyond fragmentary approaches.

1.3.1. *The manuscripts*

A year after Antoni Szałowski's death († 1973), the National Library in Warsaw purchased from his widow, Mme Teresa Szałowska²⁶, all the composer's manuscripts and drafts. The collection of original drafts contains 81 manuscript items, among them 62 independent works and 6 notebooks of drafts. Particularly valuable is the sixth notebook, from 1932, which contains the composer's first attempts at orchestral and chamber compositions and which have not been preserved in manuscript. The earliest original drafts are *Two songs* for voice and orchestra to words by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, dating from 1927, while the

²⁵ Cf. *Muzyka źle obecna*, op. cit.

²⁶ Now Teresa Gourmaud.

last one is *Six sketches* for chamber orchestra, a work completed in 1972. All the manuscripts are in the composer's handwriting, very legible and almost always dated. Some of the original drafts contain additional information, such as the history of the given work's origins, or the number of its performances. Judging by the presence of numerous stamp marks of French Radio and Television on the scores, Szałowski's compositions must have often been heard on Paris radio waves. A number of his chamber compositions are missing from the manuscripts held at the National Library in Warsaw: *Sonatina No. 1* for piano, *Andante* for violin and piano, *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano, *Duo* for flute and clarinet, *Study in C minor* for piano and *Suite* for harpsichord. However, these manuscripts (with the exception of *Andante*) are to be found in the collection of the National Library in Paris.

The lost compositions, which are included in the catalogue of works on the basis of information provided in the composer's notes, comprise only 5 items: *Trio* for violin, cello and piano, *Mazurka* for chamber orchestra, *Sonnet* for voice and chamber orchestra, *String Quartet No. 4* and *Folk song* for voice and piano.

A comparison between the collected and ordered manuscripts and a number of existing lists of Szałowski's compositions has made it possible to produce a full list of his works, which includes instrumental works (for symphony orchestra, instrument with orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instrument and instrument with piano accompaniment), vocal-instrumental compositions (for voice or choir with orchestra, for voice with piano or organ accompaniment), as well as a composition for the stage and music for radio programmes.

1.3.2. Publishers of Szałowski's music and his phonography

The majority of Szałowski's works were published by foreign companies: French (Max Eschig, Amphion, Éditions Françaises de Musique, Rideau Rouge and Pierre Noël), English (Augener and Chester) and American (Omega Music). A dozen or so of his compositions which were published abroad are to be found in Poland, mainly in the collections of the

National Library in Warsaw, Warsaw University Library and the Library of the Polish Composers' Union. Only six works were published in Poland: *Overture*, *Violin concerto*, *String Quartet No. 3*, *Aria and Burlesque* for cello and piano, *Three folk songs* for voice and piano (PWM) and *Mazurka* for piano (National Library in Warsaw). Even fewer compositions have been recorded on disc in Poland: *Overture*, *Suite* for violin and piano, *Divertimento* for oboe, clarinet and piano, *Three folk songs* for voice and piano and *Trio* for oboe, clarinet and bassoon. The collection of Polish recordings is supplemented by the archive material of the Polish Composers' Union (alongside the works referred to above this includes *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano and *Suite* for violin and piano) and of Polish Radio in Warsaw (*String Quartet No. 3*, *Aria and Burlesque* for cello and piano, *Wind Quintet*, *Sonatina* for oboe and piano, *Suite* for harpsichord, *Prelude* for violin and piano, *Andante* for violin and piano, *Mazurka* for piano, *Duo* for flute and clarinet, *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano, *Suite* for orchestra, *Trio* for oboe, clarinet and bassoon, and *Symphony*).

It is more difficult to establish exactly which recordings of Szałowski's music were made abroad. It is known that his *Overture* was recorded for EMI in London, and that many of his works, particularly orchestral ones, were also recorded for Paris Radio; however, in view of the time which has elapsed and the conservation work carried out since, gaining access to this material has become harder²⁷. In recent years it has been possible to come across recordings of some of Szałowski's chamber works (e.g. *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano and *Duo* for flute and clarinet)²⁸.

²⁷ While carrying out research in Paris, at Radio France Phonothèque I was only able to hear the concert version of the ballet *The Enchanted Inn*, *Aria and Toccata* for string orchestra and *Partita* for chamber orchestra. The library of Radio France is in possession of twelve compositions by Szałowski: *Trio* for oboe, clarinet and bassoon, *String Quartet No. 3*, *Aria and Burlesque* for cello and piano, *Overture*, *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano, *Sonatina* for oboe and piano, *Concertino* for flute and orchestra, *Amethyste* for harpsichord, *Wind Quintet*, *Allegretto* for bassoon and orchestra, *Music for strings* and *Six sketches* for chamber orchestra.

²⁸ A. Szałowski, *Sonatine pour clarinette et piano*, performed by Reginald Kell (cl), Brooks Smith (fp), 1957 recording, Reginald Kell Original Masters, Deutsche Grammophon