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A Tribute to Benny Goodman

Andrzej WOJCIECHOWSKI - clarinet

Gdańsk Academy of Music Chamber Orchestra

Łukasz BOROWICZ – conductor

Beniamin BACZEWSKI (*1991) : Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra (2015)

Aaron COPLAND (1900-1990) : Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra,
with Harp and Piano (1948)

Artur GUZA (*1982) : Suite The Cursed Forest for Clarinet and Orchestra (2014)

DUX Małgorzata Polańska & Lech Tołwiński ul. Morskie Oko 2, 02-511 Warszawa

tel./fax (48 22) 849-11-31, (48 22) 849-18-59

e-mail: dux@dux.pl, www.dux.pl

Aleksandra Kitka-Coutellier – International Relations kitka@dux.pl

The clarinet, as a both solo and chamber music instrument, was introduced to European music salons in the mid-18th century. Gradually, it was being improved and it was gaining more and more interest of the audience, as well as of composers, who were conscious of its unusual sound qualities. After some time, the instrument became a regular component of the symphonic orchestra; its popularity increased notably in 19th century, mainly thanks to the works of Carl Maria Weber. During that time, first clarinet virtuosos appeared, for whom solo concertos were composed. However, probably the greatest achievement in the career of this instrument was crossing the boundaries of the concert halls and its expansion towards jazz and entertainment music in a broad sense, which occurred in 20th century. The role of the instrument in the traditional music is also not to be underestimated; nowadays, it is hard to imagine a real klezmer band or a Rom one in the Balkans without clarinet. We probably owe the extraordinary success of this instrument to its specific charisma and its universal character.

Therefore, we are very happy to welcome a new CD, on which the clarinet plays the leading part. It is a special CD, inspired by crossing boundaries, looking for the universal music language, and referring to the notion of pure beauty. The recording was dedicated to the memory of Benny Goodman, a legend of the American jazz and the 'King of Swing', who elevated the clarinet playing to the rank of art. Similarly to Elvis Presley, Goodman significantly contributed to the popularization of 'black' music among the white audience in the times of race segregation proving that the art and beauty are able to cross the boundaries between people dictated by disdain and prejudices.

The pieces on the CD were created in different periods of time. Chronologically, the first piece is the **Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra with Piano and Harp** by **Aaron Copland**. The composer was born in the United States of America, and, similarly to Goodman, he originated from a family of Jewish emigrants from Europe. His artistic links with the old continent were strong throughout all his life, mainly due to the education he received from Nadia Boulanger and almost two-year stay in Europe. However, he is generally considered as the first American composer of classical music; a composer that was able to adapt the European legacy in the New World, mainly thanks to the elements drawn from the rich repository of native tradition, mainly jazz. Nevertheless, the echo of the European emigrant's heritage was to stay with him forever; he was a representative of an American 'Other', as one of his biographers wrote, and his connections with jazz constitute a link symbolically combining the uprooting of a Jew and a black inhabitant of Africa. Perhaps it is exactly the eclecticism and breaking stylistic conventions that show the American style of Copland's works, as the aforementioned features are sometimes perceived by the Europeans as superficial and chaotic. Yet here we have to do with a completely different music language, which is not afraid of experiments and, first of all, wants to be understood by the audience. Hence Copland's broad interest for film music and his stage works (opera, also for children, and numerous ballet plays). The intention of reaching the highest possible number of the audience and the social meaning of the music were always a priority for him, of which the *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942) was a flagship artistic declaration.

The Concerto was created around 1948 on a special commission of Benny Goodman. Back then Copland was already a renowned and appreciated composer, especially liked for his popular music to the ballet *Appalachian Spring* or for his Symphony no. 3. Therefore, he accepted the challenge and that is how an uncommon for that times piece was created; nowadays, a basic position in the repertoires of outstanding clarinetists. The concerto comprises two movements, slow and fast, divided by a *cadenza*. The first one is deeply lyrical, as the composer himself described it: 'bitter-sweet', marked with the impression of being isolated from the society. *Cadenza*, which immediately follows the first movement, is the time for the performer to boast his virtuoso skills. In this fragment, we are going to hear echoes of numerous inspirations that the composer drew from the Latin American jazz. In turn, the second movement is a vivid and dynamic rondo ended in coda, which first version proved to be... too difficult for Goodman and it was changed according to the directions of the instrumentalist. The 'stunt-like' arpeggios were moved to the piano part, however, the last fragment still preserves its virtuoso character. The motivic and stylistic references to the popular music of both Americas can also be heard, e.g. the quotation of a popular Brazilian melody. Copland composed the concerto during his stay in Rio de Janeiro, where he worked as a conductor, so he drew inspiration directly from his surroundings.

The idea of a music language that would be universal for a broader audience and at the same time would not lose its artistic qualities is the creative motto of another great artist. **Beniamin Baczewski** was born in Gdańsk, where he graduated from the Academy of Music in the class of clarinet and started composition studies. He has tried many various genres and styles, concentrating for a period of time on vanguard solutions. However, after some time, he reached a conception that is closest to his artistic personality: the idea of a music telling emotions and appealing to the ones of the audience. At the same time, he is not afraid of talking about beauty in music, a category, which many contemporary composers shelved long time ago, as they are afraid of being accused of simple solutions or practicing spiritual beauty

in art. Meanwhile the example of Baczewski proves that one can create both beautiful and ambitious music, which can be heard in the **Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra** written in 2015.

The composition was created especially for **Andrzej Wojciechowski**, an outstanding virtuoso of this instrument, who wished for a piece that would be artistically challenging to him. Therefore, it is not without a reason that the composer chose the form of concerto, in which the instrumentalist has a number of opportunities to show his technical and interpretational skills. The degree of performance difficulties, which an interpreter of Baczewski's composition has to overcome, is very impressive. However, not only does it serve the exhibition of technical possibilities, but it also constitutes an attempt to establish a conversation with the audience, to transfer the intensity of emotions with live and colourful music. Perhaps due to that the Concerto draws close to the stylistic idiom of film music, not only thanks to its illustrative sound qualities, but mostly by realizing the idea of accompanying the audience in experiencing the feelings told by the music and provoked by it. The artist has emphasized a number of times that it is exactly the contact with the audience that is the most important to him; moreover, music can express the needs that sometimes cannot be satisfied in the real life: longing for beauty, for living intensively each moment of the life.

The third composition that we have a pleasure to present to you is the suite **The Cursed Forest** by **Artur Guza**, who is also a graduate of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk, a composer, arranger and vocalist, as well as an actor of music stages. Versatile interests of this author translate into an impressive list of artistic achievements bordering classical music, jazz, folk, and entertainment music, appreciated and awarded a number of times by both the audience and critics. Drawing inspiration from different sources and searching a universal music language that could be understood by the audience and reach their hearts seem to be the priority of this composer, similarly to Copland and Baczewski. Music created in such way does not exclude, does not close the doors, just the opposite, it invites to its world, to the story about it, and to the shared experience. The narrative element in Guza's works is very visible, perhaps it is an echo of his acting activity and engagement in the art of telling stories. In the presented piece, the composer develops his stories in the cyclical form of suite referring to the tradition of the Baroque.

Even the title and the names of the single movements suggest the programme character of the piece. Our imagination brings to our minds a mysterious forest at dawn, a game of shadows, elf dance, thickening darkness, or finally a pale morning light. These are not static images reminding colourful sound spots; melody and movement play an important role entrusted to the clarinet, which performs the role of the narrator. The drama of the first movement is built by constantly repeated motif, accentuated with syncopated rhythm. In turn, in the second movement, a similar mood was achieved by a gradual tension resulting from growing dynamics of sound surfaces contrasting with the solo parts of the clarinet and the effect of the echo. In the third movement, the composer presents to us a refined forest dance in a triple, proper of waltz, rhythm, whereas the melody is imitated by the subsequent instruments: a music image that is half bucolic, half alarming, as if it were extracted from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn... The last movement presenting a dusk in a mysterious forest is constructed on the basis of dynamic contrast between quite static sound surfaces and solo parts of the clarinet, with a very active participation of percussion. The illustrative, sometimes even onomatopoeic role of the clarinet is particularly important for the narration and the unusual mood of this beautiful composition.

Agnieszka Jeż

Translated by *Żaneta Pniewska*

Artur GUZA – composer, arranger, conductor and music producer. He composes songs, classical, film and theatre music, music to radio dramas and TV productions. He graduated with honours in Composition and Jazz Arrangement of the Department of Choir Conducting, Church Music, Music Education, Rhythmics and Jazz at the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk.

Beniamin BACZEWSKI – born May 14, 1991 in Gdańsk. Composer, multi-instrumentalist. He is a laureate of 11 composition competitions, inter alia, 1st prize for the music to the silent movie *Le Spectre Rouge* at the 20th International Composition Competition '2 Agosto' in Bologna in 2014; 1st prize ex aequo for the piece *My Homeland* at the Music Competition for composers in Europe EU Play in Genoa in 2014; 2nd prize at the Composition Competition 'Symfonia Gdańska' organized by the Radio Gdańsk in 2013 for the work *Bursztynowa Rapsodia (Amber Rhapsody)* for symphonic orchestra illustrating the city of Gdańsk; 2nd and 3rd prize at the 1st P. Perkowski National Composition Competition in Toruń for the pieces: *Wysiłek (Effort)* for child choir and piano and *Poprawa (Improvement)* for mixed choir a capella in 2012.

He has received twice the scholarship of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for outstanding artistic achievements, he is a laureate of the scholarship Młoda Polska (Young Poland) in 2016, as well as a receiver of the audience award in the plebiscite Young Creators in Culture of the city of Gdańsk in 2015.

His most significant compositions, apart from the *Clarinet Concerto*, comprise: *Triple Concerto* for 2 clarinets and piano, of which the Polish premiere took place at the 4th European Clarinet Congress in Katowice in 2014, whereas the international one in the Royal Conservatory in Brussels in March 2015; *Serenada Łąkowa 1-2 (Meadow Serenade 1-2)* for an octet of woodwind instruments (2 oboes, oboe d'amore, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons) in the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk at the jubilee concert celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Chair of Woodwind Instruments and Percussion in October 2014.

Beniamin Baczewski also carries out artistic and social activities in the broad sense in Trójmiasto (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot). His piece *Nonet* could be heard in July 2015 at the exposition 'Nie widząc' ('Not seeing') prepared by PhD Julia Kurek in Gdańsk Science and Technology Park in Gdańsk, where the art works of sightless and visually impaired people, who painted them inspired by the piece, were exposed.

Andrzej WOJCIECHOWSKI is a graduate of the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk in the class of prof. Bogdan Ocieszak (diploma with honours). He has participated in numerous masterclasses conducted by such personalities as: Andrew Marriner, Jean-Marc Fessard, Walter Vitek, Wojciech Mrozek, Brenno Ambrosini, Joseph Fuster, Nicolas Baldeyrou, Antonio Saiote, Alessando Travaglini, and Gábor Vaga. In 2002-2003, he studied in the master class of Joan Enric Lluna under the aegis of the Conservatori Superior De Musica in Castello.

He has won a significant number of awards and honourable mentions at clarinet and chamber music competitions both in Poland and abroad.

He has been awarded with the scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage twice.

As a soloist and chamber musician he has given concerts in Germany, Italy, France, England, Sweden, Monaco, the United States of America, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Holland, the Czech Republic, South Africa, China, and many cities in Poland.

Currently he is the first clarinetist of the Polish Baltic Fryderyk Chopin Philharmonic in Gdańsk. He also constantly works with the Polish Chamber Philharmonic Sopot. The artist is extremely active on the ground of chamber music. Together with Sławomir Wilk (piano) he creates a formation Inspiro Duo. He is also a member of the Mozart Bassethorn Ensemble, Gdańsk Reed Trio, and of an uncommon ensemble Zagan Acoustic, which specializes in performing music that borders on jazz, folk or world music.

Since 2014, Andrzej Wojciechowski has been an Assistant Professor of the clarinet class in the Academy of Music in Gdańsk. In the same year he joined a creditable circle of 'Selmer Musicians'. Since 2015, he has been a Visiting Professor of the Ning Xia University in Yin Chuan.

Lukasz BOROWICZ (b. 1977) studied with Bogusław Madey at the Fryderyk Chopin Music Academy in Warsaw where he received a doctorate in conducting under Antoni Wit. In the years 2007-2015 he was Chief Conductor of the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 2006 he was appointed Chief Guest Conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra, a title he retains.

A prolific recording artist, his recordings have been awarded two Diapason d'Or Prizes, two Fryderyk Chopin Prizes and were nominated for the Midem Classical Awards (2008) and the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik (2009). They also featured as the BBC Orchestral and Opera Choice on several occasions. His collaboration with Piotr Beczala on the Deutsche Grammophon recording of "Heart's Delight - Songs of Richard Tauber" (with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra) was met with critical and public praise. Borowicz's symphonic recordings include the Complete Violin Concertos by Bacewicz for Chandos, two volumes of Romantic Piano Concertos for Hyperion (with Jonathan Plowright and BBCSSO) and the Complete Symphonic Works by Sir Andrzej Panufnik (Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Konzerthausorchester Berlin for CPO). The final installment of the Panufnik cycle was "Editor's Choice" in Gramophone magazine and Borowicz received the ICMA Special Achievement Award in 2015 for his pioneering work on the cycle.

GDANSK ACADEMY OF MUSIC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA was created in 1999 as an initiative of Prof. Krzysztof Langman, the then Dean of the Department of Instrumental Studies of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk. The orchestra comprises the best musicians of the Chair of String Instruments.

Initially, the orchestra was led by conductor Jacek Rafał Delekta, then by Andrzej Kacprzak and Paweł Kukliński, and for several years the functions of concertmaster and supervisor are held by Andrzej Kacprzak.

The main assumption that sanctioned the creation of the ensemble was the need of enabling the academic youth the cooperation with the most prominent concertmasters (first violinists) of Polish chamber ensembles such as: Sinfonia Varsovia, Sinfonietta Cracovia, Chamber Orchestra 'Amadeus', and Concerto Avenna.

In recent years, the ensemble has worked under the direction of both Polish and foreign artists, among whom it is worth mentioning such musical personalities as: Jan Stanienda, Robert Kabara, Wiesław Kwaśny, Marek Moś, Andrzej Mysiński, Adam Klocek, Andrzej Bauer, Thanos Adamopoulos (Belgium), Agnieszka Duczmal, Jonathan Sirs, Paul Esswood, Jean-Marc Fessard, Miloslav Gajdoš, Mieczysław Szlezer, Brigide Lang, Stefan Kamasa, Mirel Jankovici, Dominik Połośki, Sławomir Grenda, Łukasz Długosz, Giampiero Sobrino, Juri Gilbo, Claudio Desderi, Przemysław Stanisławski, recently also Sigiswald Kuijken, Tomasz Tomaszewski, and Miloslav Jelínek.

In 2002, the orchestra performed under the direction of Jan Stanienda with a huge success at the Mozart Festival in Lucerne (Switzerland). In 2005, under the direction of Thüning Bräm, it repeated its accomplishment in this city participating in a performance project carried out by the local Conservatory of Music in one of the most renowned concert halls in Europe – Konzertsall KKL Lucern.

The ensemble performs on a regular basis in the Concert Hall of its Alma Mater, as well as on many various stages of Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia.