

Tam. Music for Violin, Voices and Instruments: Orchestra in the Eyes of Rafał Augustyn

Abstract. This paper focuses on the work *Tam/Tu* [There/Here] by Rafał Augustyn (b. 1951 in Wrocław, Poland) who is a composer of classical music, a pianist, music critic, writer and scholar of Polish philology. *Tam/Tu. Music for violin, voices and instruments* is a diptych, which has been composed for sixteen years (2002/13/18) and is dedicated to a Danish violinist Christine Pryn. In this paper, a special attention is paid to the first movement of this piece called *Tam* [There]. In this *concerto*, Rafał Augustyn decided to replace string section with a five-part mixed choir. The choir is seated in the place normally used by string sections (first and second violins, violas, cellos and basses respectively). The purpose of the work is to show the changes in the instrumentation that composer introduces and, consequently, how he interprets the genre of the *concerto*. By changing the setup of the orchestra, introducing specific sounds, and rethinking relation between the solo instrument and the orchestra, the composer realizes particular semiotic meanings. He initiates such changes to express what lies beyond the surrounding reality. In this connection, attention is paid to the role of a choir and the relationship that the solo instrument creates with a new medium (which is the choir). In addition to this, Polish language plays a considerable role in *Tam/Tu*, which appears at all available levels of structure and content. In this sense, it is perhaps even more important material than non-linguistic sounds as well as its relation with the instrumental parts, including the solo one. While using the texts of Polish poets, Augustyn employs linguistic peculiarities in order to generate timbral qualities of the orchestra. In this way, Augustyn creatively integrates unconventional means and sounds into the Western orchestral tradition. All these features allow us to distinguish *Tam/Tu* by Rafał Augustyn as a unique instance of *concerto* genre in the context of contemporary music.

Keywords: Rafał Augustyn, contemporary orchestra, *concerto*.

Introduction

The setup of the symphony orchestra has evolved throughout the history of music along with the development of musical instruments, and thus how musicians are arranged on the stage. It was also related to the need to adapt to the newly emerging theaters, opera houses and concert halls, as well as innovative, bold and creative concepts of composers or conductors, and the changing role of habits and traditions. Some of the old arrangements of musicians have vanished from contemporary music, and they are only visible today in historical reconstructions. The modification of traditional modern symphony orchestra arrangements is usually used to highlight certain spatial aspects (e.g., *Tuba mirum* from Requiem by Giuseppe Verdi, Requiem by Hector Berlioz, *Gruppen für drei Orchester* by Karlheinz Stockhausen, including Polish examples, such as *Scontri* by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki or *Epizody* by Kazimierz Serocki), or attempts to create a new method of music perception (e.g., *Terrétektorh* by Iannis Xenakis), or is a creative experiment in search of unknown qualities and sounds. An example of the latter is the composition *Tam/Tu. Music for violin, voices and instruments* of Rafał Augustyn [*Tam/Tu. There/Here*].

Rafał Augustyn (born in Wrocław, Poland, in 1951) is a composer of contemporary music, pianist, music critic, writer, and scholar of the Polish language. All this indicates an erudite personality pursuing wide horizons, which are reflected in his music as well. Especially, the composer's work is closely related to his interests in literature. Augustyn refers to various cultures as well as styles typical of particular eras and artists. In his works, one can notice the richness of inter-textual and inter-semiotic connections. The artist uses quotations, associations, references, allusion, grotesque, parody; his music is characterized by a complex system of musical symbols. The essence of Augustyn's music lies in meanings and significations that go beyond the world of sounds. It often expresses longing and metaphysical aspirations.

Augustyn started composing *Tam/Tu* in 2002 and finished in 2018. Why was such a long period needed? In 2002, the first version of *Tam* was created as part of a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, but despite many attempts it was not completed then. The composer revised the work in 2013, and the results were presented a year later during the 56th Warsaw Autumn (the International Festival of Contemporary Music held in Poland). As the composer said, "The current version is actually a completely new composition"¹. It was dedicated to the violinist Christine Pryn, who performed this piece. The second part of the diptych *Tu* was composed periodically and finished in 2018. The premiere of the entire *concerto* took place at the 31st Musica Polonica Nova festival at the National Forum of Music

¹ The author's conversation with the composer (November 2019).

(NFM) in Wrocław in 2018 performed by musicians of the NFM orchestra and the NFM choir under the artistic direction of Agnieszka Franków-Żelazny. The solo part was performed by Christine Pryn to whom the work was dedicated.

In the programme notes to the composition *Tam/Tu*, Augustyn repeatedly uses the term concerto. Let's have a short look at the definition and history of the development of this music genre. In the *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Hutchings et al. 2001), concerto is defined as:

An instrumental work that maintains contrast between an orchestral ensemble and a smaller group or a solo instrument, or among various groups of an undivided orchestra. Before 1700 the term was applied to pieces in a variety of forms for an even greater variety of performing media, voices as well as instruments; it was also used in the sense of 'ensemble' or 'orchestra'. Not until the beginning of the 18th century was it applied consistently (though not exclusively) to works in three movements (fast–slow–fast) for soloist and orchestra, two or more soloists and orchestra (concerto grosso) or undivided orchestra. In the late 18th century and during most of the 19th and the solo concerto was a prominent form of virtuoso display, while, in the same period, the concerto grosso fell out of public favour; some of its aspects were subsumed by the short-lived form of the *Symphonie concertante*. During its long history, the concerto has built on forms and procedures adopted by Corelli, Torelli, Vivaldi, J.S. Bach and later composers, particularly Mozart, to develop into a form that ranks with the symphony and the string quartet in the range of its artistic expression.

In Latin, *concertare* means to compete, and this is how I would like to base my understanding of the term concerto in the context of the Rafał Augustyn's piece. The instrumental concerto genre was formed in the Baroque period and even at that time took various forms, reaching its peak during the Classical Period. Then it continued to evolve, first towards romantic virtuosity and deepened emotionality, and then revisited its past in neoclassical works. However, what remained unchanged was the principle of contrast between soloist and orchestra; a dialogue between two groups with different operating rules – agility in the solo part and the orchestra serving as the background for the self-presentation of this expressive unit.

1. Formal and instrumentation aspects of *Tam/Tu*

With the above considerations about the changes in the genre of the concerto, I would like to present how Rafał Augustyn's work *Tam/Tu* fits within this context. *Tam/Tu. Music for violin, voices and instruments* does not have a typical three-movement (fast–slow–fast) structure. It is a two-movement concerto that can be divided into smaller sections (episodes), and each movement can be performed as an independent piece.

The orchestra of the *Tam/Tu* concerto consists of:

3 Flauti (2. anche Flauto alto)	2 Trombe
2 Oboi	4 Corni
2 Clarinetti	3 Tromboni
1 Clarinetto basso	1 Tuba
2 Saxofoni (alto, tenore)	
2 Fagotti	

Batteria percussion (5 esecutori)

- I: 4 Timpani, Wood chimes, 5 Almglocken, Sizzle cymbal, Triangolo, Catene
 II: Campana tubolare, Tamburo militare, 3–5 Blocchi di legno, 3 Piatti sospesi, Metalli
 III: Tam-tam profondo, 3 Piatti sospesi, Flessatono, Sand block, Chiavi
 IV: Vibrafono, 3 Gonghi (cinesi), Cow-Bell, 5 Temple blocks, Triangolo
 V: Marimbafono, Gran casa, Maracas, Crotali, 3–5 Bols japonais, Lastra
-

Arpa	Coro (tutti divisi a 3):
Pianoforte	Soprani
	Mezzosoprani
	Alti
	Tenori
	Bassi

In the analysis of the above instrumentation, one can see that Augustyn used wind instruments, a very rich group of percussion instruments and a choir, but there is lack of string instruments. Surprisingly, in place of the strings, the composer introduced a five-voice choir, which occupies space on the stage traditionally dedicated to the strings in an orchestral setup (as he indicated in the explanations to the score).

Putting it in the composer's words, the first part of the diptych *Tam* corresponds to "looks' beyond the surrounding reality", "views into reality available only in special moments"², which the composer refers to in the selected texts as well. It consists of five episodes that match the corresponding fragments of Bolesław Leśmian's poems selected by the composer.

2. Analytic inquiry into *Tam*: Innovative solutions in regard of the concerto genre

In order to show the way Rafał Augustyn uses the orchestral ensemble, I will present it based on the first part of the concert (as mentioned before, both parts of the concerto can be treated as independent compositions). In the further part of the article the form of the work, the role of the choir versus the solo instrument and innovative solutions in regard of the concerto genre will be presented.

The first episode (b. 1–98)

*Coś tam mignęło dalekiego
Wbrew niedalekiej wodzie, –
Coś tam wezbrało rosistego
W ogrodzie – w ogrodzie!*³

Bolesław Leśmian – from the cycle *Mimochodem*

The first episode starts with a 16-bar introduction. From the very beginning, the violin part emanates with virtuosity; it is a show of a sophisticated figurative game in motoric rhythm. Triplets, quintuplets and sextuplets predominate. The soloist is accompanied in the background by the sounds of wind instruments and percussion, which play a coloristic role. These are single notes, three-, four- or five-note motifs, juxtaposed with longer two-, three-bar phrases. Augustyn begins by using just a part of the instrumentation, which he gradually develops. In bar six, the choir appears – these are alto voices in unison, realizing the sound "o" on the motif of the decreasing minor second in the dynamics from *pp* to *mp*. This is how the concerto genre comes into being – via the virtuosity of violin and its contradistinction to the static choral part.

Such an appearance of a choir can be noted in the introduction twice more: firstly, sopranos are introduced with a more varied melody, but still working within a minor second; secondly, they appear singing long sounds on the vowel "o". In the next bar, mezzo-sopranos join the violin in an ascending half-tone motif within a diminished four.

What is characteristic in this episode, it is the use of the tritone interval, which occurs quite often in both ascending and descending directions repeatedly with halftones filling the space. When Augustyn uses such a motif, he most often introduces it in both the violin and the choir parts, what strengthens the emotional weight of this interval.

It is followed by a fragment indicated with the rehearsal mark "A" in the score – this is where the first episode starts. In this passage, Augustyn uses the first four verses of the poem titled *Coś tam mignęło dalekiego...* [Something flashed away...] from the volume *Napój cienisty* [Shady beverage] by Bolesław Leśmian. In addition to the meaning it carries, the lyrics in this concerto also has sonic qualities. After the first listening to the concerto, the recipient can hardly understand the meaning of the poem. The composer uses individual words, which he sometimes separates into syllables, or stretches single-syllable words on vowels. All this distorts the understanding of the text, but adds sonoristic qualities. The first episode ends without using the last verse of the poem. Augustyn chooses the texts whose authors penetrated the constructive and expressive possibilities

² The author's conversation with the composer (November 2019).

³ Something flashed away
Despite the nearby water, –
Something was rising over there
In the garden – in the garden! [transl. AM]

Example 2. Rafał Augustyn *Tam*, the second episode, b. 111–115, p. 17.
Solo violin, 1–3 Soprani, 1–3 Mezzosoprani, 1–3 Altii, 1–3 Tenori, 1–3 Bassi

Subsequent words are repeated by individual voices like a dialogue; e.g., a question by sopranos – “*mgłąbyłeś?*” [Have you been a fog?] – is followed by an answer in basses – “*bywałem*” [I’ve been]. Some words are repeated, which strengthens their meaning. The second episode ends with the word “*zgon*” [death]. In order to emphasize the importance of this word and saturate the ending of this fragment with drama, the composer uses the descending tritone, long sounds in the choir part, built up by subsequent voices and performing a fast tremolo on the sound “o”. Alongside this background, the other instruments build the sound, which gradually increases and introduces the next episode.

The third episode (b. 142–180)

*Na gwiazdach, na dnie jezior, na pagórów szczycie,
W łwach paszczykach, w kłach wężów i w snu pozawzroczach,
W jamach krecich, w łzach ludzkich, i w wargach, i w oczach,
Nawet w miazgach padliny, w tumanach bez treści
Jeszcze coś się mocuje, krząta i szeleści!*⁵

Bolesław Leśmian – *Eliasz* (fragments)

⁵ On the stars, at the bottom of the lakes, on the top of the hills,
In the mouths of lions, in the fangs of snakes, and in the sleep of eyesight,
In the mole cavities, in human tears, and in the lips and eyes,
Even in the pulp of carrion, in the clouds without content
Something else is fastening, busy and rustling! [transl. AM]

The third episode can be called the culmination. This is definitely the most densely orchestrated part. The 4/4 meter returns; in the solo violin part the semiquaver triplets based on the arpeggiated chords predominate. The piano part corresponds to the violin, in which there are semiquavers and semiquaver quintuplets. Wind and percussion instruments contribute to overall colour and timbre of the section. Again, the choir part deserves attention. The fragment of the poem *Eliasz* [Elijah] used in this episode shows the richness of the Polish language. There are words containing soft sounds, e.g. “ś, ć”, hard sounds, e.g. “p, g, w”, rustling sounds, e.g. “sz, cz”, voiced sounds, e.g. “g, w, z, d, ź, ł”, and voiceless sounds, e.g. “k, ch”. Moreover, most of these sounds form words of exceptional sound, e.g., *szczyt, paszczękach, kłach, wężów, pozawzroczach, tżach, war-gach, jeszcz, krząta, szeleści*. Almost every word in this fragment of the poem is extremely vocally exposed.

Example 3. Rafał Augustyn *Tam*, the third episode, b. 167–171, p. 26.
Solo violin, 1–3 Soprani, 1–3 Mezzosoprani, 1–3 Alt, 1–3 Tenori, 1–3 Bassi.

The composer uses sounds both sung and spoken in various registers. Augustyn deliberately chooses such a fragment to bring these sonic qualities to the forefront. Here, thanks to replacing the string section with a choir the competitive nature of the concerto genre can be clearly perceived. It is achieved via juxtaposition of human voice, so different from the sound of strings thus bringing the audience to the alternate reality, and violin, which consequently sounds like being “beyond the surrounding reality”.

The fourth episode (b. 181–239)

Episode four is a purely instrumental section. The ensemble is gradually dismantled. Calming follows, which leads to the violin cadenza.

The fifth episode (b. 240–281)

*Coś się spełniło skrzydlatego
Nad przynaglonym kwiatem! –
Coś tam spłoszyło się bożego
Pomiędzy mną a światem!..⁶*

Bolesław Leśmian – from the cycle *Mimochodem*

⁶ Something winged has come true
Over the rushing flower! –
Something frightened God away
Between me and the world!.. [transl. AM]

The last, fifth episode is a bookend to the first movement, given that the poem used in the first episode returns (*Coś tam mignęło...* [Something flashed away...] from the volume *Napój cienisty* [Shady beverage] of Bolesław Leśmian) – this time the last four verses are brought up. However, the choir returns in a completely different setting. After the “intense”, extremely sounding third episode, Augustyn now very subtly presents the choral part by introducing long sounds often ending in spoken and whispered sounds. A dialogue is introduced between voices using single syllables or between individual voices on different single-syllable words. The “calmed down” part of the solo violin in this passage most clearly “competes” with the ensemble. The etymological competition or cooperation manifests itself in the dialogue of lyrical and nostalgic solo violin part counterpointed with individual sounds in the choir part appearing as if from beyond the surrounding world. This dialogue perfectly illustrates the mutual complementation: relation between the violin and the choir parts alludes to a baroque concerto. It can therefore be said that “something came true” (referring to the words of the poem), because the idea of the concerto – competition, dialogue, contrast – is realised. In this section, the concept of the concerto genre is most clearly presented.

Example 4. Rafał Augustyn *Tam*, the fifth episode, b. 271–281, s. 37.
Solo violin, 1–3 Soprani, 1–3 Mezzosoprani, 1–3 Altii, 1–3 Tenori, 1–3 Bassi.

Concluding remarks

In the eyes of Rafał Augustyn, the orchestra is a tool for exploring sound, playing with colors and searching for innovative solutions. The instruments used in *Tam/Tu* testify to the emphasis on the sonoristic values, which is particularly reflected by replacing the string section with a five-voice choir. This procedure stipulates to perceive the choir in an instrumental sense. Because the choir is treated like an instrument and is featured heavily in the work, it bears a weight tantamount to the solo violin in its significance to the composition. By substituting the string section with a choir, the composer eliminates timbral cohesion between the soloist and (perhaps) the most prominent section of the orchestra, thus emphasizing the conflict, which is inherent to the concerto genre. Furthermore, the composer says: “these are ‘looks’ beyond the surrounding reality”, “views into reality available only in special moments”. This substitution may be treated as the embodiment of this quote, as the soloist interacts with a string section from a sort of alternate reality. This adds a deep semiotic

layer to the realization of the principles of concerto to this particular composition. It is a carrier of both sound and meaning. Although the lyrics of poems when heard live is hardly possible to understand, after familiarizing oneself with the selection of poetry and following the recording of the score, one can observe the way in which the composer uses sound to emphasize the importance of individual words. *Tam/Tu. Music for violin, voices and instruments* by Augustyn is undoubtedly an innovative approach to the concerto genre and the way the orchestra is treated – an experiment in the search for unknown qualities and sounds.

References

- Augustyn, Rafał (2016). „On tam musi być”. Próba przeglądu relacji tekstowo-muzycznych w moich kompozycjach [„He must be there”. An attempt to review textual and musical relations in my compositions]. In: *Res Facta Nova*, volume edition: M. Gmys, D. Lisak-Gębala, A. Lubońska, S. Wieczorek, No. 17 (26). Kraków: Polish Music Publishing House.
- Bristiger, Michał (1986). *Związki muzyki ze słowem: z zagadnień analizy muzycznej* [Connections of music with the word: issues of musical analysis]. Kraków: Polish Music Publishing House.
- Dziadek, Magdalena (2005). Augustyn Rafał. In: *Kompozytorzy polscy 1918–2000* [Polish composers 1918–2000], Vol. II. *Bio-grams*, ed. Marek Podhajski. Gdańsk-Warszawa: The Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music / The Fryderyk Chopin University of Music.
- Granat-Janki, Anna (2005). Symboliczny świat muzyczny Rafała Augustyna [The symbolic music world of Rafał Augustyn]. In: *Twórczość kompozytorów wrocławskich w latach 1945–2000* [Works of Wrocław composers in 1945–2000]. Wrocław: Karol Lipiński Academy of Music.
- Hutchings, Arthur, Michael Talbot, Cliff Eisen, Leon Botstein, Paul Griffiths (2001). *Concerto*. Accessed 7 December 2019 from Oxford Music Online / Grove Music Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040737?rskey=bL2xvc>.
- Szulakowska-Kulawik, Jolanta (2011). Symbolika, barwa i humanizm obrazów dźwiękowych Rafała Augustyna – Ekfrazja „Gatunków zmaconych” [Symbolism, timbre and humanism of sound images by Rafał Augustyn – Ekphrasis “Disturbed Genres”]. In: *Kultura muzyczna na Śląsku* [Musical culture in Silesia], ed. Monika Bieda, Hanna Bias, Katowice.
- Zduniak, Maria (1998). Augustyn Rafał. In: *Encyclopedia of music PWM*, ed. Elżbieta Dziębowska, Vol. *ab – Supplement*, Kraków: Polish Music Publishing House.

Tam [Ten]. Muzika smuikui, balsams ir instrumentams: orkestras Rafało Augustyno akimis

Santrauka

Per ilgą Vakarų muzikos istoriją simfoninio orkestro struktūra kito kartu su muzikos instrumentų evoliucija. Kartu keitėsi ir atliekėjų išsidėstymas scenoje. Dabartiniiais laikais tradicinės orkestro sudėties modifikacijos gali būti laikomos kūrybiniu eksperimentu, rodančiu nežinomų kokybių ir garsų paieškas. Tokio kūrybinio eksperimento pavyzdys – Rafało Augustyno kompozicija *Tam/Tu* [Ten/Čia]; tai muzika smuikui, balsams ir instrumentams. Kūrinio komponavimas truko kone 16 metų (2002–2018); opusas dedikuotas smuikininkei Christine’ai Pryn. Nors kompozitoriams dažnai būdinga vengti savo gimtosios kalbos, šiuo atveju taip nėra. *Tam* [Ten], pirmojoje diptiko dalyje, pasitelkiamos lenkų poeto Bolesława Leśmiano (1877–1937) eilės. Antrojoje dalyje *Tu* [Čia] naudojami Tymoteusza Karpowicz (1921–2005) tekstai. Lenkų kalba kūrinyje skleidžiasi visais turinio ir struktūros lygmenimis. Šiuo požiūriu kalba galbūt yra netgi svarbesnė medžiaga už nelingvistinius garsus, t. y. instrumentų partijas (tarp jų ir smuiko solo). Lenkų poetų tekstais ir choru generuojamos tembrinės orkestro kokybės.

Tam/Tu yra dviejų dalių *concerto* žanro kūrinys; kiekviena dalis gali būti traktuojama ir kaip atskira kompozicija. Šiame straipsnyje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama pirmosios diptiko dalies formai, struktūrai ir orkestruotės sprendimams. Ji sudaryta iš penkių epizodų pagal atitinkamus Bolesława Leśmiano eilių fragmentus. Vienas inovatyviausių Rafało Augustyno sprendimų – styginių sekcijos pakeitimas penkiabalsiu mišriu choru. Negana to, choras yra traktuojamas labiau kaip instrumentinis, o ne vokalinis ansamblis. Ši procedūra sukuria gilų semiotinį sluoksnį: smuikas solo ir choras sąveikauja tarsi iš skirtingų alternatyvių realybių. Tokiu būdu pateikiamas originalus požiūris į koncerto žanro esmę – konfliktą tarp solo ir ansamblio, išryškinant tembrinį jų kontrastingumą. Šios savybės leidžia Rafało Augustyno *Tam/Tu* išskirti kaip unikalų *concerto* pavyzdį šiuolaikinės muzikos kontekste.