Ewa Kowalska-Zając

The Genre of Music Graphics in the Output of Polish Composers in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century

In the avant-garde works the prevailing tendency to overstep the boundaries between particular branches of art resulted in the rise of new hybrid genres: instrumental theatre, music graphics, or concrete poetry. Artists more and more frequently made use of transferring the qualities characteristic of one branch to another one. In the work titled *Point and Line to Plane* Kandinsky (1955, 1986, p. 31–32) already mentioned that "seemingly clear and justified division: painting-space <…>, music-time suddenly turned out to be doubtful at closer (though still superficial) look". The spatial dimension of music, as we know, had been of some interest to composers for ages, while time was taken into consideration by the fine arts much later, in the 'multiphase' pictures painted by Futurists and Cubists, including the most famous one *Nude descending a staircase* by Marcel Duchamp. The painting that both defied current conventions and opened up new perspectives was such a surprising and novel offer for the audience and critics that it caused a scandal in 1913 at the modern art exhibition in New York.

The movement soon began to spread to sculptors' works, too – first attempts were already made in the 20-year interwar period, with the most renowned representative of kinetic sculpture, an American artist – Alexander Calder. 'Mobiles', as they were called by Marcel Duchamp, were spatial compositions made of properly balanced colorful elements, joined together with rods and wire, moving in response to temperature changes or air currents. Calder's works, thanks to their abundance of colors and shapes as well as the idea of mobility, inspired numerous composers including Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Earl Brown and Witold Lutosławski.

For Roman Haubenstock-Ramati his meeting with Calder's kinetic sculpture spurred him to formal experiments and search for new original notational systems. His piece *Mobile for Shakespeare* (Example 1) is a composition "notated on a rectangular plan, with unspecified beginning and direction of performance either clockwise, or anti-clockwise. Linearism organizes the order of structures, while closing of the cycle makes numerous, free repetitions of them possible. Formal ambiguity exists here only thanks to abolishing the synchronization of planes – the composition consists of overlaying, agogically varied vocal and instrumental parts" (Kowalska-Zając 2000, 59).
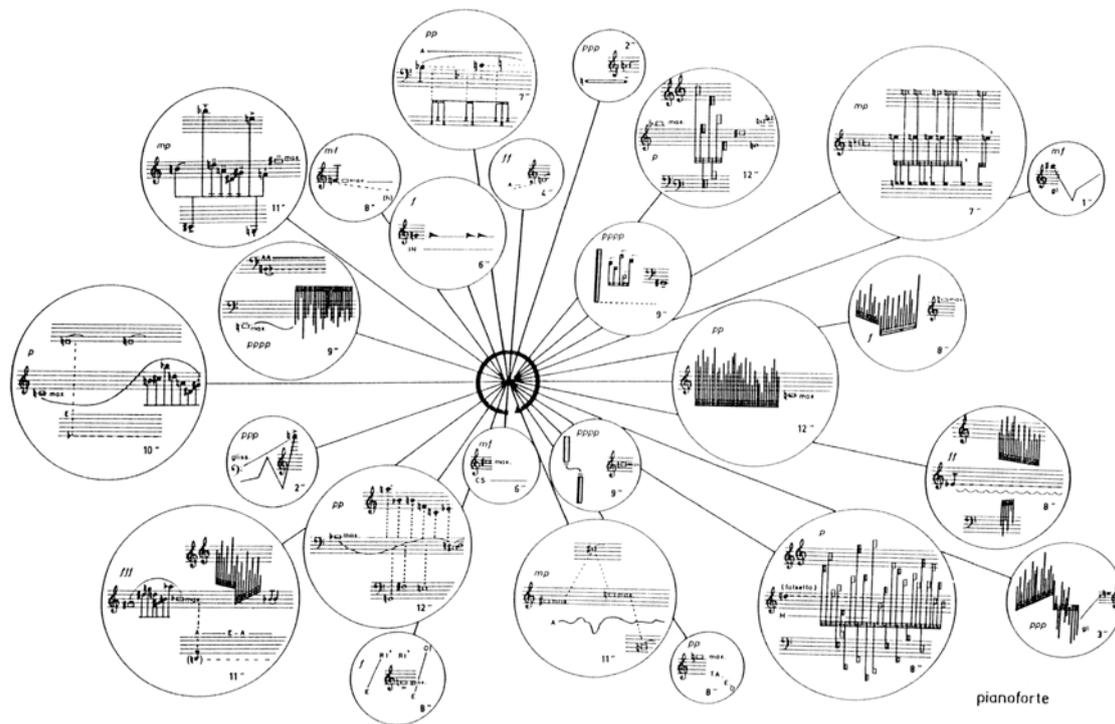
Jeux 6 by Haubenstock-Ramati (Example 2) are, however, a composition notated on a checkered plan, which enables performers to build up sound structures in any direction (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) and the audio result the audience gets is a sum of many independent sound planes.

Another approach to the idea of mobility, in terms of graphics, is represented in *Dwa utwory na skrzypce i fortepian (Two pieces for violin and piano)* by Bogusław Schaeffer (Example 3), where the element of indeterminism is already present at the level of basic sound structures notation, but it also manifests itself through abolishing the synchronization of the piano and violin parts. The prevailing idea behind all those compositions is absence of plane coordination, while removing restrictions, imposed by common beat, from polyphonic structure allowed composers to convey the idea of a free flow of structures and variability of texture.

"Fast, expansive and multi-directional development of music phenomena resulted at some point in the situation in which the existing traditional notation not only failed to meet the needs but became, due to its inaccuracy regarding the phenomena which it was supposed to depict, just an obstacle, impediment, strange tool for the tasks it was meant to complete", wrote Wojciech Michniewski (1969, p. 135) in his article on music graphics. Along with the aforementioned notation of the open-form compositions, it was necessary to take into account other new trends: expanding the material of a composition with the sounds of indefinite pitch, enriching articulation spectrum, introducing new ways of time management and the element of indeterminacy[1].

Music graphics, as a genre of music, should be therefore perceived as the last stage of a dynamic process of changes in notation occurring in the previous century, as well as the climax of a long-term mutual influence of music and fine arts. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (1980, p. 49) mentioned in his article titled *Music and abstract painting* "aesthetic setting of the pieces combining music and graphics in abstract painting" leading to "complete agreement between the two arts that can and should meet". The genre of music graphics, thus,

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[1]   B. Schaeffer (1969, p. 104) emphasizes the fact that new notational systems should be used only when they are indispensable: "by no means should new notation be promoted, since it makes a tool only <…> and out of its functional context it acquires bizarre properties which have nothing to do with music."

Example 1. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati. *Mobile for Shakespeare* © by Universal Edition

Example 2. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati. *Jeux 6* © by Universal Edition

Schäffer - 2 utwory na skrzypce i fortepian (1)

Example 3. Bogusław Schaeffer. *Two pieces for violin and piano* (excerpt) © by PWM

requires from composers particular predispositions, a special type of musical imagination, creativity and open-ness to other areas of culture. A. Schlee (1989) wrote about Roman Haubenstock-Ramati that "thanks to his musical and graphic talents he was particularly predestined to create new rules in terms of a graphic layout of his scores, especially the ones that made reading New Music easier". During his over ten-year collabora-tion with Viennese Universal publishing house he introduced many improvements and modernized musical notation. What was equally important (as far as the development of musical notation is concerned) were new solutions created for the sake of mobile forms, two-way notation of events in micro and macro scale in the *Tableaux* series, or original music graphics inspired by Kandinsky's works.

Versatile talents are also characteristic of Bogusław Schaeffer, the composer who fulfills himself in different fields of artistic activity. "His composition technique [as Jadwiga Hodor (2007, p. 76) writes] develops under the influence of his own experiences as a playwright, music writer and graphic designer as well as wide-ranging interests in other art forms, that is why it is no wonder that he transfers onto music the techniques, or even trends present in the fine arts and painting (collage, sfumato, sgraffito, assemblage, surrealism, happening)".

What speaks in favor of Bogusław Schaeffer's avant-garde approach is his enthusiastic attitude to experi-menting and stressing the role of a creative process itself. The artist is deeply convinced about the necessity of constant broadening the musical mind and strongly believes that inventiveness makes the core criterion of art, and "what really matters in the artistic output are exclusively original works" (Zając 1992, 21). His impressive professional activity comprises mostly composer's output – amazingly rich and varied (at the conference in Cracow in December 2009, Jadwiga Hodor – composer's biographer and the author of his monograph – listed 580 compositions of 28 genres). For all that time he has not got routinized, tirelessly keeps experimenting and ceaselessly tests possibilities of music[2].

Apart from composer's activity Bogusław Schaeffer also pursues academic and journalistic careers that result in the works on theory of music. His book *New music. Problems of contemporary composition technique* published in 1957 is of fundamental importance to the reception of avant-garde ideas. He is an author of numerous articles and essays on the philosophy of music, active performer (he takes part as a pianist in the performances of his own compositions), tutor and publisher. Since 1955 Schaeffer has also been involved in

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[2]   "An apple should be fresh to be good; so should a composer" <…>, "I like to experiment with music, to test it, even to try things that are impossible. My best teachers have been my own experiences" (Schaeffer 1981).

playwriting – he has created about 40 theatrical plays (he also staged and directed some of them). In many theatrical works he turns to the genre of instrumental theatre which, along with music graphics and concrete poetry, represents a natural tendency among avant-garde artists to carry out multimedia activity, to overstep the boundaries separating different art forms.

Bogusław Schaeffer's graphic art and music graphics from the '60s and '70s confirm his versatility. His ample graphic art is not easy to categorize, as the composer goes beyond the bounds of the music graphics genre towards graphic art, but does not restrict himself to graphic techniques only, introducing to his works the elements of painting, collage and, what makes it really unusual, boldly makes use of color. In Schaeffer's music graphics one can see numerous self-quotations both from his compositions: *Piano formula* (Example 4), *Nature and Music* and *Less music* uses the material from *Two pieces for violin and piano*; *Szkic kwartetu w kole* includes a quotation (systems 106–108) from the *8ᵗʰ String Quartet* but also quotations from his theatrical plays (*Teatr BB*; *Mroki*; *Przypomnienie szkicu teatralnego*).

The bounds of the genre are overstepped in the works dominated by the philosophical, reflexive character (*Sens życia – sens twórczości*), or humoristic one, as well as in a series of dedicated

Example 4. Bogusław Schaeffer. *Piano formula* © by PIW

works (for example: *for Ludomira Stawowy*, *for Jadwiga Hodor*, *In memoriam Guillame Schaeffer*, *Errinerung an G. Apollinaire*).

Just like in the case of instrumental theatre, so eagerly used by Schaeffer, performer's creative activity becomes crucial in music graphics – uniqueness of the genre forces composers to move the centre of gravity from intellectual aspect to emotional one and to emphasize spontaneity of performance. In music graphics, similarly to emotivegraphs – a new Schaeffer-made musical genre, often "graphic signs refer to emotional states and means of musical response to them" (Hodor 2007, p. 81).

* * *

The source of nearly all essential ideas developed by Roman Haubenstock-Ramati in his works was fine art. Apart from his early pieces influenced by the music of Chopin, Szymanowski, Stravinsky, Debussy and Ravel as well as Webern (later), what made a significant impact on his artistic idiom were not composers but painters – Wasyl Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, or sculptor and originator of 'mobiles' – Alexander Calder.

The breakthrough moment in the composer's artistic life was a 6-month grant stay in Paris in 1957. After tragic war experiences and a 6-year stay in Tel-Aviv where he felt acutely isolated from contemporary music events, Paris became an important source of information, the place of artistic thrills and creative stimuli. What turned out to be particularly inspiring were two phenomena – kinetic art developing intensively at the time, represented by extremely impressive 'mobiles' by Alexander Calder, and Jackson Pollock's 'action painting' consisting in the exposition of a creative process itself, almost dramatization of the activities leading to the creation of a picture. However, while Calder and Pollock became Haubenstock's inspiration for his formal and textural ideas, it was his fascination with Kandinsky's treatise from 1910 *On spirituality in art* and its continuation in the work titled *Point and Line to Plane* 16 years later that was crucial for his graphic works. The composer referred in his graphic art from the end of the 1950s till the 1980s to the works by Kandinsky created in the 1920s in his architectural period. At that time the artist used simple geometric figures: points, groups of straight and broken lines, circles, ellipses, triangles and squares which served the composer as equivalents of certain musical
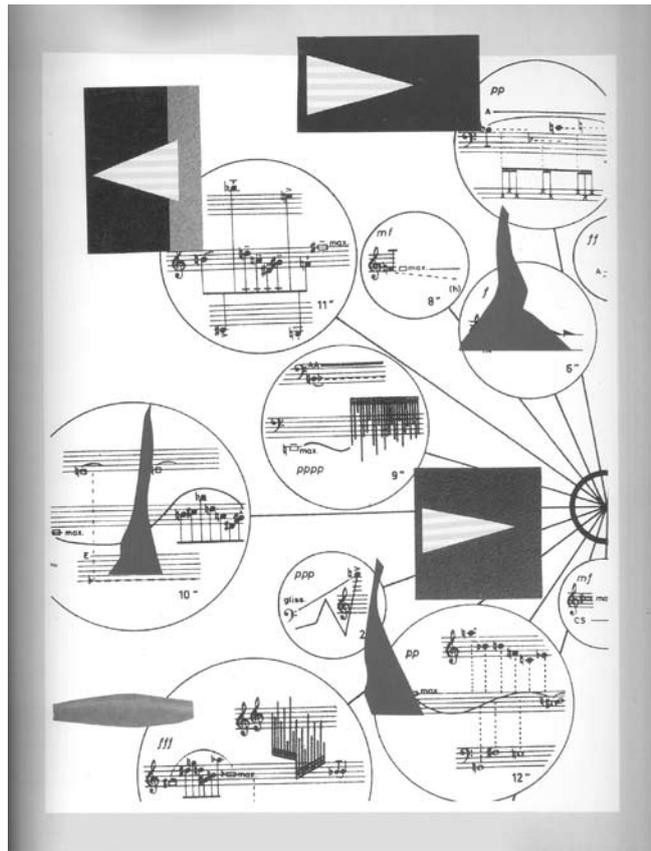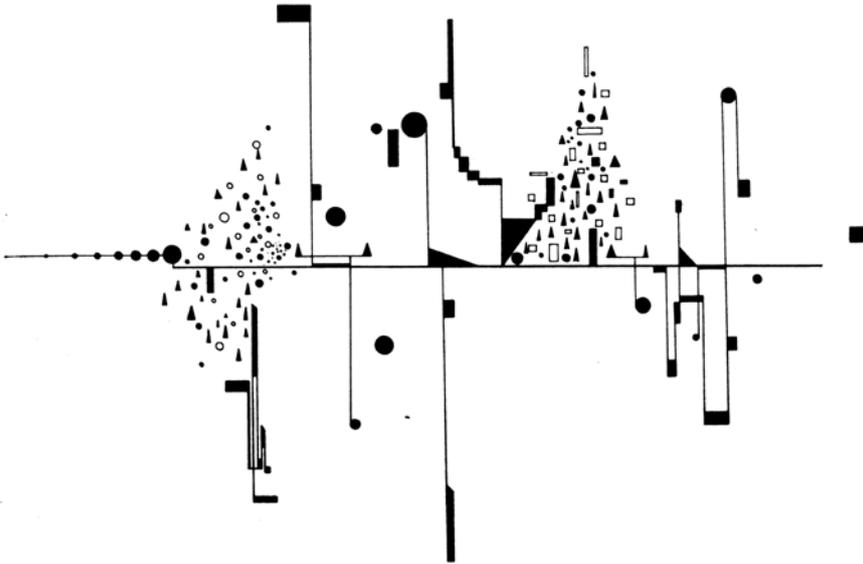
Example 5. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati *Decisions* (excerpt) © by Ariadne
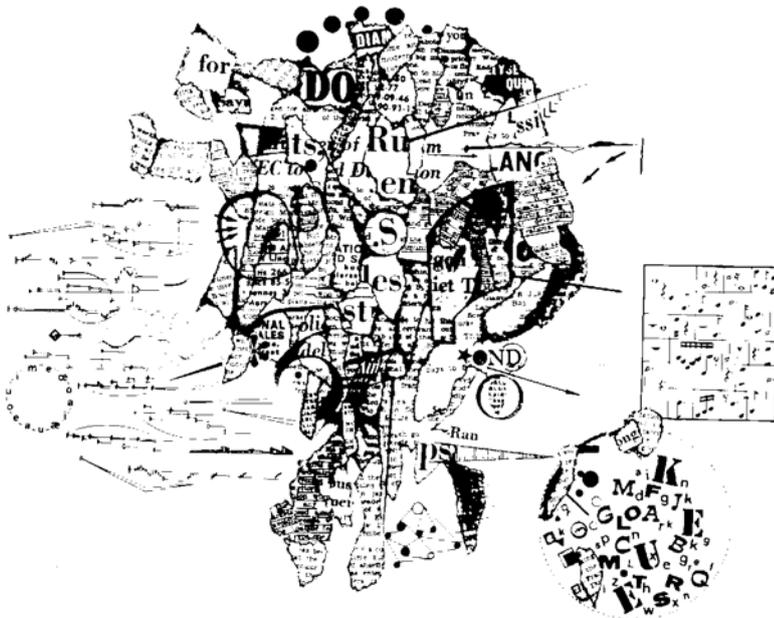
Example 6. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati *Sonans* © by Ariadne

ideas. Graphic asceticism of the means used by Kandinsky, restricting himself almost exclusively to basic geometric figures, on the one hand led to stylistic 'sterility' and on the other one – thanks to simplicity of the means and their evocative style – became the source of evidently musical references.

These references are most obvious in the *Decisions* cycle (1959–61) where Haubenstock-Ramati (Example 5) emphasized relations between verticality and horizontality present in a traditional notation[3]. Linearism of this composition not only permitted to organize the sequence of sounds in time, but also to place them roughly in the musical space still maintaining the appropriate balance between them.

Apart from fascination with Kandinsky's output, one will find among Haubenstock-Ramati's graphic works examples revealing their Dadaist or pop-art origins. Formal discipline was replaced there with free juxtaposition of different elements. The composer gladly turned to the technique of homogenous collage – a graphic reproduction of the torn paper technique used by Surrealists. Along with freely combined pieces of newspapers, passages of texts with various fonts there appeared other, typical of the genre, elements: single letters, fragments of crossword puzzles or excerpts of city maps (Example 6).

Performing the pieces notated graphically the composer compared to playing solitaire and wrote that this was an attempt "to organize something that is disordered" (Haubenstock-Ramati 1980, p. 7), which meant for the composer not exactly disorder itself but the presence of many different meanings. When permitting to interpret the piece freely[4] the composer, on the one hand, showed the performer his trust, on the other one – huge distance, fear[5] as if each performance limited the work through displaying one of the possible meanings hidden in the notation not allowing others to come into being. Traces of such thinking one can observe in the graphics from the *Poetics* series where unambiguous elements having direct associations with traditional music notation present in other works of that genre got eliminated. In this cycle, inspired by Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, the composer wanted to express its ambiguity and untranslatability – as he described it himself: "for me *Finnegan's Wake* was a swansong of the novel and graphic works from the *Poetics* cycle are swansongs of music notation" (Scheib 1994, p. 17). (Example 7)

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[3]   "If horizontal axis of a graphic work is perceived as the time axis, and vertical one as the axis defining pitch <…>, point, line and plane – basic elements of abstract painting – will become basic elements of music" (Haubenstock-Ramati 1980, p. 49).

[4]   "Realisierien" heißt "interpretieren" (Haubenstock-Ramati 1980, p. 3).

[5]   "Aufführen? Realisieren? Im Zweifel, nie!" (Haubenstock-Ramati 1980, p. 9).

In graphic compositions of Haubenstock-Ramati, like in the music graphics by Schaeffer, there are self-quotations (*Alone 2*) and multi-versions which, in terms of structure, manifested themselves through the use of fragments or whole compositions as separate works – a kind of recycling (graphic works *Frame, Duo, Discours, Kreise*).

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In terms of notation novel artistic output of Roman Haubenstock-Ramati inspired Bronisław Kazimierz Przybylski with its richness of graphic solutions that permitted to achieve original sound effects. There was a close affinity between both artists in terms of a composer's idiom as well as similarity of artistic sensitivity. What was common for them, too, was their search for inspiration in the fine arts (Przybylski composed an orchestral piece *Guernica – Pablo Picasso in memoriam* already before his arrival in Vienna)[6].

Example 7. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati *Poetics* (excerpt) © by Ariadne

The source of inspiration for Przybylski became painting (*Guernica – Pablo Picasso in memoriam*; *Tableaux – homage à Vincent van Gogh*: *Les tournesols*, *La nuit étoilée*, *Seigle vert*; *Les sept voeux*; *The Sleep of Reason* after Goya's painting), graphic art (*Triptychon* after Wolfgang Bergner), sculpture (*Metal-Construction – Katarzyna Kobro in memoriam*), architecture (*Katedra w Oliwie*). Along with references to certain art objects there is also a sort of artistic generalization in *Grünes Gewölbe*, *Gemälde Galerie* and *Albertinum*, the compositions conveying artist's impressions from his visit to Dresden museum.

The pieces inspired by painting, graphic art, or architecture and defined by the composer himself as "musical comments" do not constitute musical equivalents of fine art works as, like the composer wrote on the music-fine arts relations, "They are by no means autonomous disciplines and do not translate into each other explicitly, they are impossible to describe verbally in an unambiguous way, too"[7].

Composer's meeting with Haubenstock-Ramati's works also influenced his use of notational solutions. From quite obvious borrowings from *Tableaux*, appearing in the *Requiem* score, to his interest in the genre of music graphics – concerning the fact that Roman Haubenstock-Ramati was the top European representative of the genre at that time. Although graphic notation of music appeared in Przybylski's works already in 1971 in *Canon aenigmaticus,* the piece for 2–50 any wind instruments and in *Guernica* from 1974, he did not become fully aware of formal and expressive potential of the genre until a few years later.

In Vienna he composed a choral piece titled *Bel canto* (1976) and in 1977 – *6 Interludiów na instrument strunowy (6 Interludes for a string instrument)* provided with dedication "für Herrn Prof. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati". A series of six evocative graphic works serving as musical commentaries on Raymond A. Moody's book *Life after life* makes the composition titled *Six for Six – Six Phases for Six Instruments* (1990) which is

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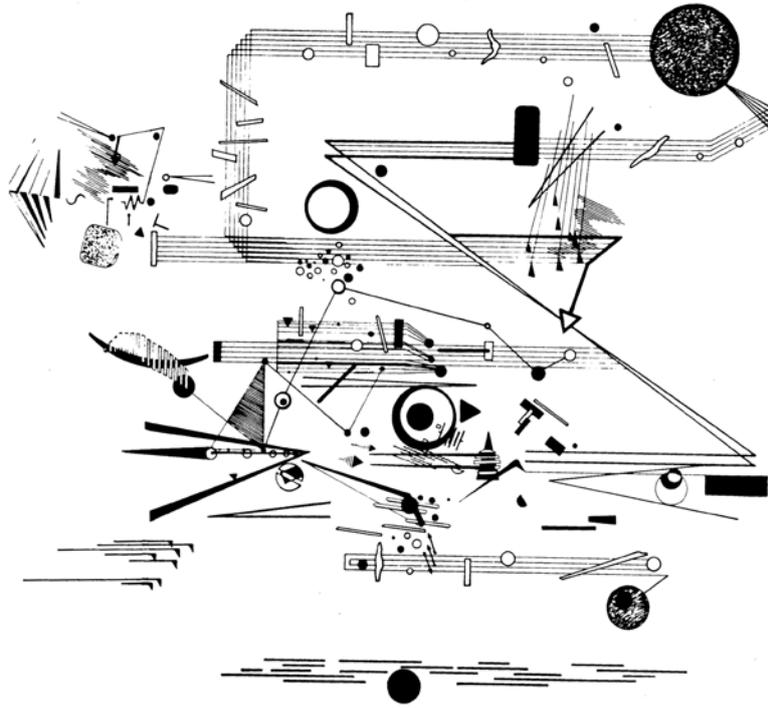
6   In Przybylski's works, along with his fine arts inspirations, there are also many other thematic motifs: martyrdom, holocaust: Requiem. Pamięci dzieci – ofiar wojny, Sinfonia da Requiem, Lacrimosa 2000. Holocaust-Memory; history: A Varsovie; folklore: Suita tańców polskich, Folklore, Cztery nokturny kurpiowskie, Concerto polacco per fisarmonica e orchestra, Return- quasi symphonic poem; sacral sphere: Requiem. Pamięci dzieci – ofiar wojny, Missa Papae Joannis Pauli Secundi; eschatology: Miriam – "Mistero di morte", Concerto della morte e della vita, Six for Six – Six Phases for Six Instruments; cosmology: In honorem Nicolai Copernici; literature: The Night Flight, Miriam – "Mistero di morte", Verwandlung, Autumn-Multiplay, Flashbacks, Sceny biblijne; patriotic and social themes: Sinfonia polacca, Sinfonia-Affresco, Sinfonia Cantata "Myśląc Ojczyzna" (Kowalska-Zając 2012, p. 16–20).

7   Composer's statement taken from: Jacek Szerszenowicz (2008, p. 425).

VI. MORENDO
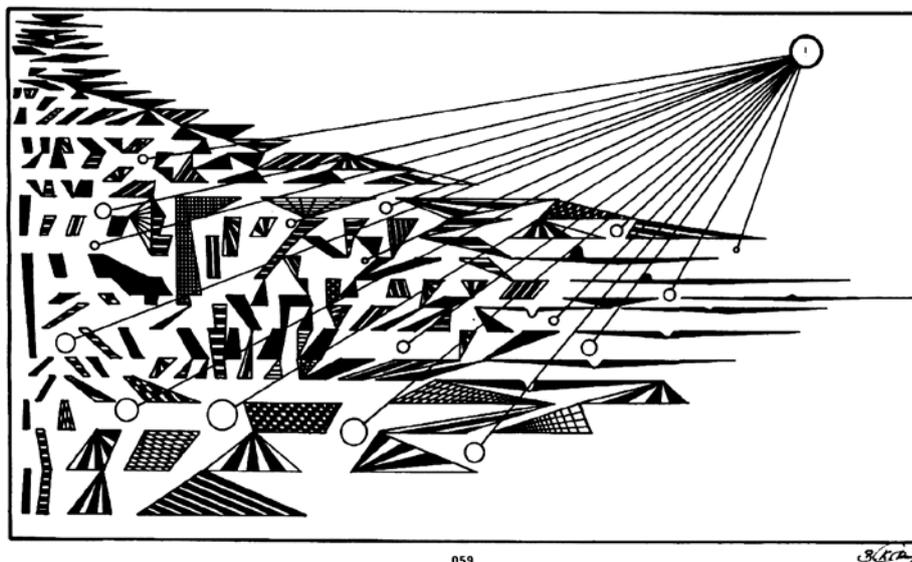
Example 8. Bronisław Kazimierz Przybylski. *Six for Six – Six Phases for Six Instruments* (excerpt) © by Accent Edition

frequently performed by various chamber ensembles (Example 8). In following parts constituting the cycle the composer uses graphic qualities of distinct, unambiguous sonic and textural references, and on the whole they pursue a very clear dramaturgic plan (*Animato, Quieto, Agitato, Ardente, Inquieto, Morendo*) whose formal shape is determined by the pictures and experiences described in Raymond A. Moody's text.
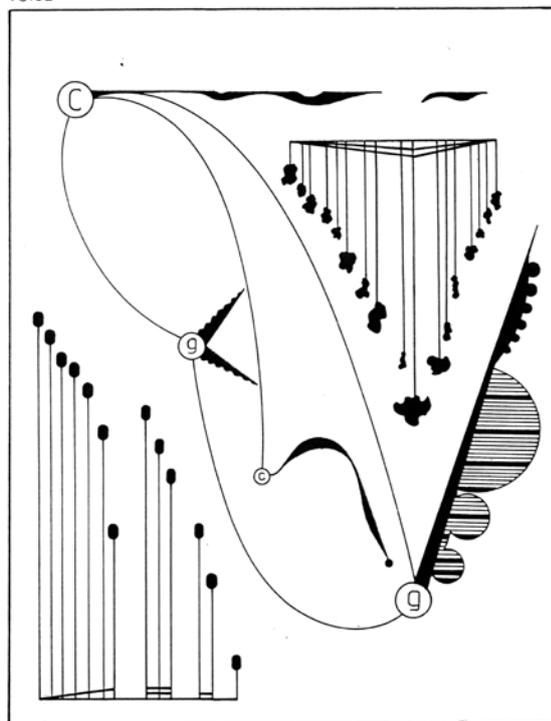
Example 9. Bronisław Kazimierz Przybylski. *Memory* (excerpt)

One of the *Winter-Multiplay* parts – *Memory*[8] – with the first version for voice and the second one for any wind instrument, also belongs to the music graphics genre (Example 9). Dedication "John Cage in memoriam" significantly influences the structure of the work and is also connected with the quotation from Cage introduced into the vocal version only "genau genommen ist mein Komponieren absolut genotig". In both versions (vocal and instrumental one) there is clearly outlined a two-layered structure with the foreground deriving its formulas from the sounds constituting the motif – CAGE signature and the counterpoint background – different in terms of texture and character.

The composer does not determine the order in which particular parts of the cycle should be performed, nevertheless, concerning disposition of the material, the section using 'c' and 'g' sounds could be considered as a kind of introduction, with 'e' sound – ending and the fragments using the whole material – as a middle sector. A different arrangement of sections can also be justified with the part containing the quotation as the final of the cycle.

During the first performance of the piece, which took place in the concert hall of the Academy of Music in Lodz on 26th November 2011, the vocalist – Agata Zubel – made full and bold use of musical potential underlying the graphic notation of the score. The singer drew on Cage's avant-garde activity through dramatizing the performance and introducing elements of happening but at the same time not losing control of the final form of the work.

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[8]   The Winter-Multiplay cycle consists of three parts: Cra-sch for violin and piano, North-West for accordion and percussion and Memory in two versions – for voice and any wind instrument.

For Haubenstock-Ramati music graphics was primarily a manner of notating music as an abstract idea. In the theoretic-aesthetic discussion he pointed out the sources of inspiration for a given composition "existing out of time" ("zeitlose Idee") which often had a graphic form and gained its musical shape just only at the stage of composing. "My graphic works [wrote Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (1980, p. 5)] were created in an attempt (or impulse) to catch the idea of music that I had imagined on the spot, "in flagranti". At the beginning of each piece there is an out-of time idea which has nothing to do with any commonly known notation and whose "image" reminds graphic notation. All that so-called "consequence" is nothing but a play with thoughts similar to playing solitaire. All my warm feelings are on the side of what is unfeasible". Music graphics, basically used as a tool of recording the composition process leading to the transformation of an out-of-time abstract idea into a product, started to function as a message for a performer conveying certain intentions of the composer. Nevertheless, Haubenstock always behaved towards particular musical realizations with definite circumspection.

For Bogusław Schaeffer what mattered most in the music graphics was an opportunity of creative co-operation with a performer. However, to let it happen "a composer must resign from absolute perfection and precision; in other words: an architect's drawing anticipating every single detail of the whole construction must be replaced with a kind of handwritten drawing, a sketch – free, artistic, leaving a lot for intelligence, for possibly the most creative complement. Such an equivalent of drawing in music notation is graphics" (Schaeffer 1969, p. 107–108). In spite of a significant scale of indeterminacy which makes one of the assets of music graphics and which permits the performers to reveal their creativity, graphic works can be used to convey more explicit messages. In a comparable manner to other genres, for instance orchestral ones, it can become a tool for story-telling with clear dramaturgy (*Six for six* by Przybylski) or for making textural, stylistic, or even ideological suggestions (*Memory*). Undoubtedly, there is an enormous artistic potential in the genre both for artists, performers and listeners. We hope, therefore, that it will not pass off as a historical fact known only from illustrations in the works dedicated to the output of the avant-garde of the 2nd half of 20th century and will retain its dynamism, topicality and attractiveness.

Translated by Elżbieta Fesnak-Przybylska

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Santrauka

Muzikos grafikos žanras antrosios XX a. pusės lenkų kompozitorių kūryboje

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama lenkų kompozitorių kūrybos įtaka muzikos grafikos žanrui. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas Romano Haubenstocko-Ramati ir žymaus europinio avangardo atstovo Bogusławo Schaefferio darbams, taip pat aptariamos šio žanro apraiškos Bronisławo Kazimierzo Przybylskio aštuntojo ir devintojo dešimtmečių kūryboje. Nagrinėjant muzikos grafikos įtaką kitiems XX a. antrosios pusės muzikiniams ir vaizduojamojo meno reiškiniams, daugiausia dėmesio skiriama terminologijos, stiliaus, notacijos ir formos klausimams.

Muzikos grafikos žanras pristatomas ir kaip paskutinis pokyčių proceso, vykusio muzikos notacijos srityje, etapas, ir kaip XX a. menui būdingų tarpmedijinių tendencijų padarinys. Šių tendencijų veikiama atsirado ne tik muzikos grafika, bet ir kitos skirtingų meno šakų tarpusavio sąveikos apraiškos – konkrečioji poezija, instrumentinis teatras. Nagrinėjamas ir grafinės notacijos elementų panaudojimas šio reiškinio vizualinio aspekto mobiliose formose ir stilistikoje. Schaefferio, Przybylskio ir Haubenstocko-Ramati muzikos grafikoje galima pastebėti koliažinės technikos bruožų, kai naudojamos popmeno ar dadaistinės kilmės išraiškos priemonės siekiant išgauti netikėtas visiškai skirtingų grafinių elementų kombinacijas. Šių kompozitorių kūriniuose galima rasti ir užuominų į Kandinskio kūrybą, ypač į jo „architektūrinio" laikotarpio (1920–1924) darbus, kuriuose jis naudojo paprastas geometrines formas: tašką, tiesių ir lūžtančių linijų grupes, apskritimus, elipses, trikampius ir kvadratus. Straipsnyje taip pat detaliai nagrinėjami grafinių kūrinių pavyzdžiai ir įdomesnės jų interpretacijos.