

GENERATION '51

Knapik | Krzanowski | Lasoń
AUKSO – Chamber Orchestra of the City of Tychy
Marek Moś



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Współwydawca:
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GENERATION '51

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Malke
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Realization

The 1970s in music were an era of the post-war modernism and ‘terror of the avant-garde’ diminishing in significance. Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Wojciech Kilar (Witold Lutosławski to a lesser extent), instead of conquering new (desert?) lands unknown, began to look back – they decided, as Penderecki once put it, ‘to open the door behind them’.

It was in that atmosphere of weariness with experiment and nostalgia for forgotten values that Eugeniusz Knapik, Andrzej Krzanowski and Aleksander Lasoń, three composers related to the State Higher School of Music in Katowice, rose to prominence. All born in 1951, all presenting their significant works during the Młodzi Muzycy Młodemu Miastu [Young Musicians For a Young City] festival, initiated by Krzysztof Droba, taking place in Stalowa Wola from 1975 to 1980. Their appearance marked a whole era in the history of Polish music. They never constituted a formal artistic group, each of them was going his own way from the start. They were, however, brought together by a providential coincidence and a romantic faith in music being able to express matters of superior import.

Eugeniusz Knapik, *Islands*

The composer's commentary for *Islands* (1983) says all that is significant: "It is a single-movement composition of rather complicated internal structure. The two major constituents the form is based on (symbolising two states of matter: water and earth) are preceded by violin and double bass cadenzas.

The leading 'theme', which appears at moments of particular importance for the development of the form, is the 'unisono theme' with the characteristic minor sixth and semitone. The theme, however, never returns in the same version. I would wish for the title of the composition not to be associated with a geographical phenomenon exclusively, but to be understood more broadly. As a matter of fact, we are all situated on an island drifting somewhere in the universe. Every human being, individually, is an island as well."

What is there to be added? That the liquidity of water manifests itself as rich openwork polyrhythm, looped in the micro-returns of tiny motifs, and the astonishingly clear distinctions between the states of the aquatic movement are emphasised by the contrasting timbres of the subsequent harmonic fields. That the solidity of earth is expressed, in turn, in the perspicuous and dry repetition of chords, towering like heaps of rocks breaking with a rumble and sliding down pushed by their own mass. That after the exposition of the two wide planes of 'water' and 'earth', there appears what might seem a dialogue – or maybe a confrontation – of the two elements, this time meeting without the mediation of the cadenzas which announced them before.

In this music of vibrating sonic masses, Knapik seems to be paying a tribute to György Ligeti. However, the similarities with the author of the *Atmosphères* are only superficial: *Islands* are a melting pot filled with embers, to be found in Knapik's work only. The 'unisono theme' – opening and closing the piece longingly, weaved around the so-called 'Knapik's sixth' (which, in this piece, repeats the sixth opening Richard Wagner's '*Tristan and Isolde*') – introduces the lyrical tone, probably the most important one here, the melody of 'everlasting longing'. As Bohdan Pociąg once wrote: 'For what is nostalgia? Most briefly – a longing for a lost homeland.' This is probably how one can understand the sense of the 'new romanticism'. And maybe even that of, as Pociąg suggested, a 'romanticism without borders'?

Eugeniusz Knapik studied at the State Higher School of Music (now the Academy of Music) in Katowice, tutored by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (composition) and Czesław Stańczyk (piano). His composing debut was the performance of the *La flûte de jade* (1973) song cycle on the stage of the National Philharmonics on 7th June 1974. It was not much later that a number of Knapik's pieces were presented at the Młodzi Muzycy Młodemu Miastu [Young Musicians for a Young City] festivals in Stalowa Wola (1975–1980). Currently, his works are performed on leading stages globally. As a pianist, he performs both solo and in ensembles, predominantly with 20th-century repertoire. In the 80s, Eugeniusz Knapik collaborated with the Silesian Quartet. He was the first Pole to perform the whole of Oliver Messiaen's cycle *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. The recording won the Fryderyk award in Poland and the Diapason d'Or in Paris. Eugeniusz Knapik

has also performed in numerous premieres of pieces by Polish and foreign contemporary composers. In 1976, he began working at his alma mater, where he served as rector from 2002 to 2008. From 1996 to 2020, he was head of its Composition and Theory of Music Department.

Knapik's work can be divided into two extensive phases, before and after establishing collaboration with Jan Fabre. The Flemish artist contacted Knapik in 1987 – at a time when the composer was fascinated by the opportuni-

ties offered by the live electronics at the Südwestfunk Experimental Studio in Freiburg – and proposed a monumental operatic trilogy with his libretto. The first chapter of Knapik's work is filled with chamber and orchestral compositions of compact structure (*La Flûte de jade* for soprano and orchestra, 1973; *Corale, interludio e aria* for flute, harpsichord, and string ensemble, 1978; String Quartet, 1980; Partita for violin and piano, 1980; *Islands* for chamber string orchestra, 1983–84]). The second chapter is dominated by monumental forms (predominantly vocal-instrumental) requiring huge numbers of performers (*The Minds of Helena Troubleyn* opera trilogy, 1987–95; *Up Into the Silence* song cycle for soprano, baritone and orchestra, 1996–2000; *Moby Dick* opera-mystery play,



Photo Michał Ramus

2010; *Concerto of Song Offerings* for piano, mixed choir and orchestra, 2014; *Canticum puerorum oratorio* for soprano, baritone, choir and orchestra, 2016; *Blessing Gentle Breeze* for choir and orchestra, 2017-18).

The aesthetic of this artist's works is primarily dominated by the ethical dimension – related to „composing ethics” (the categories of creative freedom, responsibility, and honesty), but also to general ethics (the classical ideals of beauty, good and truth). While facing the sphere of fundamental values and problems of philosophical and moral nature, Knapik undertakes to discuss threads abandoned by the apologetes of the artistic avant-garde. He places the concept of originality, so crucial for his work, entirely outside of the categories of eccentric difference at any cost. This is because he understands originality, following the maxim *nomen est omen*, in its etymological sense, as grasping the essence, roots, and source of things and concepts.

Major prizes and honours:

- 1976 prize of the Polish Pianistics Festival in Słupsk
- 1978 1st prize at the Young Musicians for a Young City festival in Stalowa Wola
- 1984 1st Prize (selected piece) at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in Paris for *the String Quartet*
- 1997 Polish Composers' Union Prize
- 2005 Silver Medal for Merit in Culture 'Gloria Artis'.
- 2008 Knight's Cross of the Polonia Restituta order,
- 2019 Gold Medal for Merit in Culture 'Gloria Artis'

Andrzej Krzanowski, *2nd Symphony for 13 string instruments*

In his early works, Andrzej Krzanowski was deeply rooted in the traditions of the avant-garde. In the *Symphony no. 2* (1984), however, the explosion of youthful energy yields to a manner of expression which is sophisticated and controlled, yet of no lesser intensity.

The work consists of three movements, concisely presented in the composer's commentary: „The first, *Con vigore*, constitutes a colourful introduction; the second, *Commodo*, is composed in the free sonata allegro form (three themes); The third, *Lento appassionato*, beginning with a violin solo, is a concerto grosso, in which the concertino group is formed by two violins.”

The score contains two types of rhythmic notation: ordered in bars and freely proportional (in the culminations of the second and the third movements turning into 'mobile' aleatoric repetitions). The latter type dominates in the final movement, in its extremes encompassing all the 13 systems and rendering the music similar to a continuous and homogenous stream of gradually increasing power. If the two initial movements were a system of lesser and greater streams, the finale is a wide river, with its mouth open to an endless and quiet sea: the narrative of the whole is governed by a rule of merging and evolving smithereens, once scattered, as if a magnet was introducing order, but rather in time than in space. The time is a time open towards the future. At the end, instead of the cadential dot or exclamation mark, there appears a long pause – a dash – an ellipsis...

Attention to detail is paired with a sense for the whole: lines of melody surface here and there, only to be submerged in the scorching mass of harmony a while later. Witold Lutosławski pointed to the sophisticated harmonies of this *Symphony*: „With his work, Krzanowski proves that he is one of the rare advocates of the view that it is high time sensitivity to harmony came back to life in the psyche of the contemporary composer, and for this sensitivity to oppose a reduction of harmonies to a few primitive, endlessly repeated consonances”.

Krzanowski's harmonic technique owes a great deal to Lutosławski – in the *Symphony*, „cold” (semitone-tritone) harmonies are juxtaposed with „warm” ones (dominated by thirds). However, Krzanowski does not refrain from using diatonic scales either – particularly at the end of the second movement, when one can hear echoes of works by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, his professor.

Andrzej Krzanowski (1951–1990)

Polish composer, accordionist and pedagogue. He completed his composition studies under Henryk Mikołaj Górecki at the Upper State Music School in Katowice (1971–1975, diploma with distinction). He also studied playing the accordion under Joachim Pichura. As a composer, he debuted at the Young Musicians For a Young City of Stalowa Wola Festival and the Musical Meetings festival in Baranów Sandomierski. His most important

works include: a cycle of six *Programmes*, string quartets, nine *Reliefs*, *Salve Regina*, cycle of five *Studies*, *I Symphony*, *II Symphony*, *Winds carry echoes across meadows* and accordion pieces which represent more than half of the works produced by Krzanowski, who discovered previously unknown soundscape possibilities, articulations and used them for new musical narrative means. His work was appreciated by jurors at composition competitions, who awarded him more than ten prizes and distinctions. In addition, his works created for children and young adults were given an award by The Polish Prime Minister in 1985, and he was the recipient of prestigious scholarships from Witold Lutosławski and the Scottish Arts Council, while the Accordion Festival and Competition *Alkagran* in Czechowice-Dziedzice is dedicated to him.



Photo Julian Gembalski

Aleksander Lasoń, *Aukso*

Aleksander Lasoń's music sounds like a myth captured at the moment of its constant birth. We do not know yet/already what the story is about, we do not know yet/already what it is going to do to us, but we do know that it carries a message 'for all and none'.

The first movement of *Aukso* (2006), although it begins, does not have a beginning proper. It is as if the ear had suddenly opened to something that has existed eternally: a sea of harmonic timbres swaying lazily, breathing boundlessly and widely, rising and falling in two majestic and constant high and low tides – only at times rippled by the wind of orientalisating melismas, at other times motorically rhythmised. Nonetheless, those differentiations are but bubbles, the fancy of the superficial foam. In the deep, there is only pure and timeless duration.

The pole of the energetic rhythm and difference only surfaces in the second movement. Its consecutive segments are first modelled after robust Polish highlanders' dance, later (after the only general pause) joyous in quasi-baroque figurations (Czesław Miłosz: „I search for what is most strongly opposed to *smrt.* / I think it is music. Of the Baroque.”), in its central section yet again immersed in an ocean of euphony, later to return to a fiery verve, which at a certain point reaches a state of triumphal and bravado-filled ecstasy, at the end quieting in the half-shade of A-minor/A-major, so much beloved by the composer (maybe this is his encrypted signature: A. La(soń)?).

The third movement is described in the score as *mistico*: there is a return of the atmosphere of the first movement, but with a different shade – the leaven of the motion (the melismas, the motorics), which has just ‘had its fling’ in the second movement, wanes entirely. We descend into an ocean of gleaming water, a wavy light, a great silence, timelessness. Catharsis. When (after the only general pause) the first bar of this movement returns, the reprise will be placed two semitones higher, and the music will slowly liven up, headed for the final chords. What is the hymnic power which reveals itself in the last bars? The Lasonian myth remains open, incomplete. Maybe it will be at some other time and in some other language that we will find some other answer.

AUKSO

One of Europe’s best chamber orchestras; an unquestioned leader in this field in the Polish music scene; Poland’s flagship ensemble, representing its country worldwide for nearly 20 years. Founded by a group of graduates from the Katowice Academy of Music and by Marek Moś – an eminent violinist, conductor



Photo Justyna Kowalska Lasoń

Aleksander Lasoń was born in Siemianowice Śląskie, on 10th November 1951. He studied composition under professor Józef Świder's at the State Higher School of Music (now the Music Academy) in Katowice. After gaining his diploma, with the highest distinction, he took part in Burgas' Courses under Ton de Leeuw, Marin Goleminov and Andrey Eshpay. In 1984 and 1988 he participated in the International Summer New-Music Courses in Darmstadt.

Aleksander Lasoń was initially active as an improvising pianist (winner of the 4th Piano Improvisation Contest in 1972) but over time he devoted himself to composing and directing. He has received numerous awards and commissions, with one of the most important The Beethoven Prize of the City of Bonn in 1980 for *Symphony No. 2 "Concertante"* for piano and orchestra. He received three coveted awards at the UNESCO's International Tribune of Composers in Paris: in 1980 he was awarded first place for his *Symphony No. 1* for brass instruments, percussion and two pianos, and in 1988 his *String Quartet No. 2* and in 1997 *Concerto festivo* for violin and orchestra, were distinguished. He twice received the Witold Lutosławski Scholarship-Awards (1987 and 1989), as well as The "Exclusiv" scholarship-award of Tonos Music Publishers in Darmstadt (1988/1989). For

eminent achievements in the field of composition and long-time involvement in the propagation of new music he received Polish Composers' Union Award (2002). In 2008 *String Quartet No. 7* and in 2009 *Called Back* were among the seven final nominees to the prestigious OPUS Award given by Polish Public Media.

Apart from composing, after 1975 Aleksander Lasoń has been actively involved in teaching. The title of Professor of Musical Arts was conferred upon him in 2000. He is professor at the Silesian University in Cieszyn and at the Katowice Academy of Music. In 1996 he was the initiator of the New Music Orchestra in residence at the Music Academy in Katowice. The orchestra's aim is to promote most recent compositions, as well as 20th-century classics. In 1986-1989, Lasoń was the Vice-President of the Polish Society for Contemporary Music in Warsaw (the Polish section of ISCM), and the President of the Katowice Division of the Association of Polish Composers in 1990-1993. His compositions are published by PWM Edition, EUTERPE in Cracow and TONOS Music Publishers in Darmstadt.





Photo Grzegorz Krzysztofik

AUKSO means 'growing' (from Greek). The word is also the Orchestra's motto, reflects the aspirations of its members and the direction of their professional progress. The orchestra's name stands for self-improvement, determination, openness and the acceptance of ever new challenges. AUKSO's educational projects are part of this programme. The AUKSO Summer Philharmonic, organised and hosted by the ensemble since 2000 in the region of Podlasie (Podlachia), in the unique atmosphere of one of Poland's most splendid destinations, offers master classes, open rehearsals and concerts which attract musicians and music lovers from all over the country.

The Orchestra's repertoire comprises works from the classics to contemporary, with special focus on Polish music. Composers such as Wojciech Kilar, Zbigniew Bujarski, Aleksander Lasoń, Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil, Piotr Moss, and Cezary Duchnowski have entrusted the Orchestra with the task of presenting the world premieres of their new compositions. AUKSO's highly regarded interpretations of Polish music include numerous albums of works by Grażyna Bacewicz, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Witold Lutosławski, Wojciech Kilar, Zbigniew Preisner, and others. AUKSO has also scored successes with its recordings of film music (by such world-famous composers as Elliot Goldenthal) as well as soundtracks for computer games.

The musicians take special interest in crossover projects, combining classical music with jazz, alternative music and rock, and attempting to find a common denominator for all these genres or conversely – playing with and clashing opposed, separate types of musical language. In this field, AUKSO has performed with such great music personalities as Leszek Możdżer, Tomasz Stańko, Urszula Dudziak, Michał Urbaniak, and Motion Trio.

AUKSO's much publicised joint projects with Aphex Twin and Jonny Greenwood, presented as part of the European Culture Congress in Wrocław (2011), earned the Orchestra the "Coryphaeus of Polish Music" Award for "Event of the Year 2011", as well as bearing fruit in the form of the well known album 'Krzysztof Penderecki / Jonny Greenwood', released a year later by the cult US label Nonesuch, which presents works by Professor Penderecki side by side with pieces by Jonny Greenwood inspired by the music of the Polish composer.

AUKSO's album in the series 'Chopin. The National Edition', recorded with pianist Janusz Olejniczak, won the 2011 Fryderyk Award of the Polish Phonographic Academy for the Best Recording of Polish Music.

The Orchestra's numerous tours have taken the musicians throughout Europe, as well as to Asia and South America. AUKSO boasts numerous excellent collaborations with artists of such calibre as Jerzy Maksymiuk, Marc Minkowski, Rudolf Barshai, Howard Shelley, Jacek Kasprzyk, Władysław Kłósiewicz, Daniele Alberti, Piotr Anderszewski, Andrzej Bauer, Kaja Danczowska, Agata Szymczewska, Janusz Olejniczak, Olga Pasichnyk, The Hilliard Ensemble, and others.

The Orchestra has played at Poland's most important festivals, such as the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival, the Wratislavia Cantans, the Warsaw Autumn, Sacrum Profanum, Film Music Festival, Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival, Jazz Jamboree, and the International Festival of Stars in Międzyzdroje. Abroad, AUKSO has performed, among others, at the Barbican Centre, SESC São Paulo, Auditorio y Palacio de Congresos in Zaragoza, Teatro de Caja España-Duero in Salamanca, and the festival Armonie sotto la Rocca.

AUKSO – Chamber Orchestra of the City of Tychy:

Marek Moś – *conductor*

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Marta Huget-Skiba* – *concertmaster*

Mateusz Moś*

Anna Drabicka*

Marcin Sidor*

Mirosław Nowosad*

Joanna Zagajewska

Magdalena Zima

Violins II

Bartłomiej Bunio

Przemysław Duda*

Kinga Rębisz-Duda

Gabriela Kubarska*

Władysław Kołodziejczyk

Violas

Marta Werner

Ewa Sidor*

Jarosław Samson*

Anna Grzybała*

Cellos

Joanna Urbańska-Mikszta

Michał Bańczyk*

Aleksandra Steczek*

Krzysztof Krawczyk

Double basses

Barbara Oruba

Dominik Polak*

* musicians participating in the recording of *2nd Symphony*
for 13 string instruments by Andrzej Krzanowski



Photo Dorota Koperska

Marek Moś

An eminent Polish conductor, violinist and chamber musician; founder and artistic director of the AUKSO Chamber Orchestra of the City of Tychy; artistic director of the AUKSO Summer Philharmonic festival in Wigry.

He studied with Kazimierz Dębicki and Andrzej Grabiec in Bytom and Katowice. He was the founder and long-time first violinist of the Silesian Quartet, which soon won a reputation as

one of Europe's best string quartets. With the Silesian Quartet Moś performed at prestigious festivals and on the world's major stages, such as Vienna's Konzerthaus, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and IJsbreker, Utrecht's Vredenburg, Berlin's Schauspielhaus, Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens, Düsseldorf's Tonhalle, Antwerp's deSingel, New York's Merkin Hall, and Boston's Jordan Hall.

With the Silesian Quartet, Marek Moś premiered about 30 new Polish and foreign compositions, the vast majority of which were specially dedicated to that ensemble. He has also recorded extensively for Polish Radio and Polish state television TVP, as well as such record labels as CD Accord, Olympia, Partridge, Thesis, and Wergo, among others. Many of his albums won record awards. For instance, his CD dedicated to the music of H.M. Górecki was a Fryderyk-winning album in 1995.

He received another Fryderyk in 1997 for the recording of quartets by K. Szymanowski and W. Lutosławski.

The artist's other accolades include: prizes in the International Contemporary Music Competition in Cracow (1979), the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris (1984, 1988); the Award of the Polish Composers' Union (1994, 2005), the Silver Medal for Merit to Polish Culture 'Gloria Artis' (2005), the Marshal of the Silesian Province Award (2005), and an honorary citizenship of the City of Tychy (2009).

Apart from his intense concert and recording activity, Marek Moś is a lecturer on the faculty of the K. Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice.



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*The publisher of Islands by Eugeniusz Knapik,
Symphony No. 2 by Andrzej Krzanowski as well
as Aukso by Aleksander Lasoń is PWM Edition*

GENERATION '51

Eugeniusz Knapik

1. *Islands* 15'14"

Andrzej Krzanowski

Symphony no. 2 for 13 string instruments 18'24"

2. *Con vigore* 3'16"

3. *Comodo* 7'34"

4. *Lento appassionato* 7'33"

Aleksander Lasoń

AUKSO for string orchestra 22'58"

5. *Aukso I: tranquillo, ma poco piu espressivo* 7'53"

6. *Aukso II: deciso e energico con enfasi* 8'07"

7. *Aukso III: mistico* 6'57"

TT: 56'44"



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