

## **59th International Composers' Rostrum, Stockholm, 22-25 May, 2012.**

Polish Radio, Warsaw

Composer: Paweł Szymański (b 1954)

Work: *Phylakterion* for 16 voices and percussion instruments (2011).

PAWEŁ SZYMAŃSKI, born in Warsaw, having graduated from the bassoon class at the Karol Szymanowski Secondary Music School in Warsaw, studied composition at the city's State Higher School of Music with Włodzimierz Kotoński (1973-78) and Tadeusz Baird (1978). *Partita II* was his graduation diploma composition. He continued his studies, thanks to a Herder grant, in Vienna under the guidance of Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (1984-85).

Early in his career, he played the recorder in an early music ensemble and took part in the International Early Music Academy in Innsbruck (1976). He participated in the International Summer Courses of New Music in Darmstadt (1978, 1980, 1982).

He worked closely with the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio (1979-81), the Independent Studio of Electro-acoustic Music, which he co-founded (1982-84), the Electronic Music Studio of the Music Academy in Krakow (1983) and the Electronic Studio of the Technische Universität in Berlin, where he stayed in 1987-88 on a scholarship from the Deutscher akademischer Austauschdienst. He lectured at the Department of Composition, Theory and Conducting of the Music Academy in Warsaw (1982-87).

Paweł Szymański has received numerous awards and distinctions, including First Prize at the Young Composers' Competition of the Polish Composers' Union (1979, for *Gloria*, a piece presented at the International Composers' Rostrum in Paris in 1980), a prize at the sacred music competition of the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart (1985, for *Lux aeterna*), a prize at the Louisville Orchestra Competition and an honorary citizenship of the city of Louisville (1987), First Prize at the Benjamin Britten Composers' Competition in Aldeburgh (1988, for *Partita III*) and the main prize in the competition of the International Foundation for Polish Music (1995, for the motet *In paradisum*). His *Miserere* and *Three Songs to Words by George Trakl* were among the recommended works at the International Composers' Rostrum in Paris (1994 and 2007). He is also the recipient of the Polish Composers' Union award (1993), the Grand Prix of the Polish Cultural Foundation (1994) and the Silver Medal of Cultural Merit 'Gloria Artis' (2005). The CD 'Paweł Szymański – Composer's Portrait' was named the Record of 1997 by the Studio magazine and received the 'Fryderyk' Award in the contemporary music category. In 1999 the album 'Piano Concertos by Lutosławski, Panufnik, Szymański' (released by CD Accord) won the 'Fryderyk' Award in the same category.

In 2006 Polish Audiovisual Publishers and Polish Radio organized an all-Szymański music festival. Its programme included almost his entire output (eight concerts) as well as a selection of films and radio plays with his music. Szymański also writes incidental music for the theatre.

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'I have never been to the Nile, where centuries ago there existed the Kingdom of Nubia, and I have never been interested in archaeology. Sometimes when visiting museums, I would look at the excavated crumbs of the past with respect and on occasion with interest, but rarely with emotion. However, when I saw for the first time Maciej Drygas's documentary film *Hear Us All* (to which I wrote the music), which shows a team of Polish archaeologists at work on excavations, my imagination was greatly stirred. The thought that there lies under the surface an unseen world of the past, and that to remove a few layers of earth is all it takes to reveal walls and far more brittle bones, which during the course of excavation crumble into tiny pieces and mix irretrievably with the desert sand (in other words, the thought of a bygone reality recalled from nonexistence), I found to be a great source of inspiration. For this I thank the archaeologists and Maciej Drygas. It would appear that traces of thought are far more enduring than brittle human bones. My composition is woven from fragments of inscriptions which have survived on discovered walls. These inscriptions in ancient Nubian and Greek are being restored to contemporary understanding by Professor Adam Łajtar of Warsaw University, who made available to me selected texts which he transcribed and translated. During the course of our several meetings he told me about his work, about the crypt of Bishop Georgios excavated in Dongola, and about the *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos* inscribed on its walls in Greek (a fragment of which also features in my composition). I thank Adam Łajtar not only for making the texts available and transcribing them, but also for his inspirational conversations.

The whole world of ancient Nubia (without which my ΦΥΛΑΚΤΗΡΙΟΝ would not exist) revealed itself only for an instant. For many months now it has remained flooded by the waters of the Nile, caused by the building of a dam by the Sudanese government. All that remains of it are greater or lesser crumbs exhibited in museum showcases.

I am exceedingly pleased that the work was made possible thanks to its commissioning by the 46th International Festival Wratislavia Cantans. I dedicate the composition to Anna Szostak and the ‘Camerata Silesia’ Singers’ Ensemble who, supported by musicians and percussionists, are giving my work its premiere.’

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The score of the work is based on the central part of a Greek inscription engraved on the north wall of a crypt found beneath Chapel No. 5 of the so-called North-Eastern Annex at the Monastery on Koma (on the Hill) in Dongola, capital of the Christian kingdom of Makuria which existed in the Central Nile delta (today’s Egypt and North Sudan) from the 6th to 15th centuries. The crypt was discovered in 1994 by the Archaeological Mission of Warsaw University’s Mediterranean Archaeological Centre, directed by Doctor Stefan Jakobielski. It was probably built for Georgios, Archbishop of Dongola who died, according to the epithet placed in the doorway to Chapel No. 5, in 1113. The Greek inscription from the north wall of the crypt forms part of a larger collection of texts in Greek and Coptic which cover the entire walls of the crypt. They include fragments of canonical scriptures, fragments of apocryphal works, religious formulations, as well as magical names and signs. The aim of these texts was to protect the soul of the deceased in the neuralgic moment of his passing from this life to the next, as well as to protect the crypt itself.

The Greek inscription from the crypt’s north wall, the source of the score’s inspiration, contains apocryphal texts which function in academic literature under the title *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*, or simply, *Oratio Mariae* (Mary’s Prayer). The prayer belongs to a larger work which tells the story of Matthew who, at some point of his apostolic mission, found himself in the town (or country) of Bartos, where he was imprisoned by its ruler. He was saved from oppression by Mary who was transported from Jerusalem on a cloud. She uttered a prayer as a result of which all the metal elements in Bartos, including Matthew’s chains, door locks of his cell and the arms of his guards, melted. Astounded by the power of prayer, the ruler of Bartos and its inhabitants converted to Christianity, while Mary and Matthew returned to Jerusalem. The inscription in Dongola conveys the text of this powerful prayer that the Mother of Jesus addressed to her Son. At a certain moment the prayer is interrupted, however, by the description of a magic spell intended to turn her into PHYLAKTERION, a protective medium against the powers of evil. This element, absent in the original texts, is undoubtedly connected to the particular function of this and the remaining inscriptions of this type engraved on the walls of the crypt. The apocryphal story about the fate of Apostle Matthew in Bartos and *Mary’s Prayer* contained within it has been known to date only from translations into oriental languages: Coptic, Amharic, Arabic and Syrian. The inscription found in Dongola gives us the Greek original (albeit only of *Mary’s Prayer*, not the whole story) from which these translations have been made.

One can assume that this original Greek text was written during the late antiquity of perhaps the 5th century, somewhere in the Eastern Roman Empire, then rewritten from manuscript to manuscript (none of which survive), only to appear at the beginning of the 12th century in the depths of Africa in the form of an inscription on the walls of a crypt of a local Church dignitary.

Adam Łajtar

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Even though the serial system helped create certain procedures relating to compositional craft and technique, the music that was written on the basis of this system bordered on gibberish. What lay behind the escape into gibberish was an observation that the musical language which has been evolving for several centuries is exhausted, and therefore banal. A contemporary composer moves between gibberish and banality. There can be no golden mean between them. I am interested more in structure than in exploring new sound possibilities, even though, understandably enough, I search for the devices which will allow me to translate my ideas into music as adequately as possible. I just cannot refrain from dealing with the material fabric of the music.

If it would be possible to divide composers into those who take the sound, timbre or sonority as their starting point and subsequently put them into a larger whole in an intuitive or even improvisatory manner on the one hand, and those who follow earlier-developed rules and in constructing their music select the devices which serve to highlight the pre-conceived formal features, I would definitely place myself among the latter.

Paweł Szymański

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Paweł Szymański's compositional idiom consists of two key elements. The first one is heterophony, which has been present for a long time in the history of music (not only professional) and which is being employed by many contemporary composers of various aesthetic views. The other is characteristic of Szymański's individual compositional technique alone. Its hallmark is the creation of music not so much of sounds but of pre-arranged objects or structures which are the elements of the 'deep' (hidden) structure, which is alternately brought to light and hidden. It remains under the matter and moves forward in line with the progress of the musical material, 'reminding' of its existence. This is a pra- (or pre-) composition, written by the composer in the conventional, mostly Baroque, style. Usually, it is a canon at the unison or at the fifth, sometimes a fugue. The procedure can be compared to the use of *camera obscura* in painting, whereby artists employed photographs as a painting's hidden structure, or to an object which has some of its fragments uncovered and some hidden, so that a viewer can use his/her imagination to reconstruct the whole. Such a technique became an element of Szymański's style, which in 1983 he himself dubbed 'sur-conventionality'. Both these elements and the consequences resulting therefrom should be seen in the overall context of Szymański's individual creative poetics, elements that are mutually intertwined and conditioned on one another. Their main consequences are the binary and two-phase character of the scores (realized on many planes), the dialectics in the treatment of the musical material and of the strategy of form-building and the composer's attitude to tonality in the technical sense and to tradition in the sense of ideas.

Andrzej Chłopecki

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*Phylakterion* for 16 voices and percussion instruments (2011).

Commissioned by the 46th International Festival 'Wratslavia Cantans' and dedicated to Anna Szostak and the 'Camerata Silesia' Singers' Ensemble.

Premiered on 16 September 2011 at St Madeleine's Cathedral of the Polish Catholic Church in Wrocław.

Performers: Camerata Silesia' Singers' Ensemble of the city of Katowice, Arkadiusz Kuc, Tomasz Rawski and Bartłomiej Merta (percussion), conducted by Anna Szostak.

All vocalists are equipped with small granite stones which they hit one against the other; the female singers have the wine glasses while the male singers plastic pipes of with wavy sides (by holding a pipe at its end and making a rotating movement in the air they produce aliquot sequences).

Shortened version for presentation at the 59th International Composers' Rostrum in Stockholm – 29:47 (vide pp. 36-48 in the score)

Complete version for radio broadcasts – 33:55

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**Camerata Silesia – The Katowice City Singers' Ensemble**, founded in 1990 by Anna Szostak, is a team of vocalists who sing in a chamber cast and perform solo parts for vocal and instrumental music, as well as *a cappella* choral repertoire.

In a short time Camerata Silesia has become the most instantly recognizable Polish ensemble specializing in performance of both early and contemporary music. In regards to the former, they have been given generous praise; while in regards to the latter, they have had pieces composed specifically for them, dedicated to various singers and the conductor, who were all specially sought out to premiere the works. The ensemble represents the city of Katowice and gives many concerts in Poland and abroad at musical events and venues of the highest prestige: Opéra Comique in Paris, Mei Lanfang Theatre in Beijing (Peking), Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Gran Teatro La Fenice in Venice, to name a few. Their constant presence at such renowned festivals as the Warsaw Autumn, the Beethoven Festival in Warsaw, and Sommerfestspiele in Bregenz not only confirms the ensemble's esteemed level of professionalism, but also provides further opportunities for collaboration with outstanding soloists such as Emma Kirkby and Barbara Schlick.

The choir's discography embraces dozens of CDs, which have repeatedly been honoured with prestigious phonographic awards. Composers' interest in writing for Camerata Silesia has led to premieres of compositions by Rafał Augustyn, Krzysztof Baculewski, Ryszard Gabryś, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Krzysztof Knittel, Stanisław Krupowicz, Krzysztof Penderecki, Zbigniew Preisner, Bogusław Schaefer, Witold Szalonek and Agata Zubeł.

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Text transcribed by Professor Adam Lajtar  
(from the Nubian language):  
O Lord, leader of spirits,  
Come, reveal yourself and hear us all.

(from Greek):  
Father of heavenly and earthly beings,  
Who alone caused that  
The earth is above the waters  
Bless the house.

(from the Nubian language)  
I am Abel,  
Lord, teach me the holy scriptures.

(from Greek):  
Oratio Mariae ad Bartos

17. (...) Peth, Phethath, Sarael, Meladiael, Eriel, Thidael, Sabaoth
18. Zoniza, Chael, Nariel, Misiael, Aschael, Aphiel, Lathammar, Lear, Amaddo, Paddo, Dathammar, Sala, Larmiel, Patriel
19. Saradel, Odiel: these are the names of the prayer of prudence. May the tyrants be seized with trembling
20. and all those who encounter Your holy name; may the impious never say 'there is no help and power'.
21. You who are in heaven, who proceeded through your Father, Iaoth, Sabaoth,  
Eloi, Elimas, Elimanian, Arpaeit, Malaliel, through your power dissolve the  
bonds of your servant.
22. For the six-winged ones sing to You: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Your glory!
23. and holy You are, who is seated upon your holy throne, whose holy chariot is drawn by four holy creatures, each with six wings.
24. Patourouel, the father of what is on the earth and what is in heaven,  
Micharimar, Mourmarnaran, Ermiel, Marma, who called the sea through your power,
25. who subdued its waters through (Your) word: aegioio egiouo eioio iouo ouo uo-o aaaaaa eeeeeee iiiiii ooooooo ÜÜÜÜÜÜÜÜ ooooooo
26. Great God, who are in heaven, grant me today Your seven archangels,  
who were with You before You created the entire race of men, You who are in heaven, so that they come and – through Christ
27. watch over my body and my spirit, (they) whose names are: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Ourouel, Iael, Anael, Zedekiel, that they stand
28. by me. I am Paulos (...)
31. Father of what is in heaven and what is on the earth, I adjure You by  
your great and strong powers, of whom these are the names:
32. Rep, Rita, Ephathath, Choumar, Alrama, Chama, Risin, Gefara, Adonai,  
Beneas, aia; I adjure You by Your veil behind which you are
33. aia, aia, aia (...).
36. (...) I adjure You by your head and two holy right hands and the holy lights, of which these are the names:
37. Maim, chchch, bb, aa, ooo, ie. (...)
39. Regulation: if you perform this as an exorcism and place yourself anew, prepare a pot filled with water and sealed. Pray with the words of  
this exorcism.
40. Make an offering of mastic. If it concerns an evil work: go round in one way only, then go out backwards; and you must give the person  
to drink from the pot of water, pouring out over him
41. and not over you, and arrange in this way the exorcism of Solomon that he spoke about against every illness and all impure spirits and all  
sorcery. Approving
42. that it is a phylactery against the influences of the devil, the seal of the living God:
43. Achae, Banouel, Ganael, Dathiel, Epaiel, Zardiel, Eliel, Thidael, lochael, Kardiel, Lamael, Murophael, Narael, Ksifiel, Ochalhiel, Oithiel,  
Meladiel, Eriel, Thidael, lochael, Kardiel, Lamael, Murophael, Narael, Ksifiel, Ochalhiel, Phithiel Roael, Suroael, Taurouel, Umnouel,  
Philaleel, Chrostouel,
44. Peth, Petha, Pethae, Sarouel, Meladiel, Eriel, Thilael, Kabaoth, Zonesach, Sachael, Nariel, Misiael, Aschael, Lathammar, Lear, Amaddo,  
Paddo, Dathammar, Sala, Larmael, Patrouel,
45. Taurouel, Armouel, Esaiel, Barouel, Esouel, Souel, Sabel, Sinel, Armouel, Enael, Daniel, Garmoutael, Ermouel, Sesiell, Dekiel, Ariel,  
Thermouel, Biwthouel, Eriel, Armoumouel, Therouel, Dekiel,
46. Peth, Betha, Maroum, Marmarouel, Barnoth, Amalathiou, Ouel, Eiriell, Ermael, Chaba, Lome, Acham, Oma, Riman, Sabaei, lel, Sabahi,  
Aladam, Patriel, Phel, Sarouel, Ladoel, Psulaphiel, Olithiel, Sarouet, Seliel, Thanael, Manouel, Meriel, Sanathouel.

(from Latin):  
S A T O R  
A R E P O  
T E N E T  
O P E R A  
R O T A S

(from Greek):  
E-lei-son o The-os  
e-lei-son o Theos  
ka-ta to me-ga su e-le-os

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