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ART ATTRACTIVE FOR THE MASSES  
OR FETTERS OF THE ARTISTIC FREEDOM?  
ELEMENTS OF FOLKLORE IN THE MUSIC  
OF POLISH SOCIALIST REALISM

**A b s t r a c t.** The aesthetic of socialist realism, which was imposed on Polish composers after the conference in Łagów Lubuski (1949), has never been precisely defined. One of the recommended elements of creative activity—apart from intelligibility of musical language—was folk inspiration. Paradoxically, the way the folklore was seized could mean both the compromise with the ideological pressure and confirmation of the artist's sovereignty (when the artist creatively continued national tradition). Polish composers chose this neutral source of inspiration willingly. Therefore, the turn of the 40s and 50s was the time of multitudinous folkloristic stylizations in Polish music. The purpose of this paper is to recapitulate the attitude of chosen Polish composers to folk music as the source of inspiration, as well as to a general socio-political situation during the Polish socialist realism. Resuming briefly the subject matter of folklore in the Polish socialist realism four categories might be distinguished: it could be a phase of evolution of musical language (in the works of W. Lutosławski, A. Panufnik and G. Bacewicz), a continuation of pre-war idea of popularization of national music (S. Wiechowicz or B. Woytowicz) or a sort of compromise and a factor which was able to withdraw the accusations of formalism, as in the case of Perkowski, Serocki and all the 49'Group. Finally, in its most barest form, folklore was just an instrument of propaganda, quickly and willingly forgotten after the arrival of new artistic trends in 1956.

**Key words:** folklore, folk music, Polish music, Polish contemporary music, Polish composers, socialist realism, socialist realism in music, music and politics.

*We would like our composers to undertake the great task of the mass-oriented creativity, to elaborate for our nation new works, which would gladden and strengthen Polish folk*—postulated in the late 40s the then

Minister of Culture and Art, Stefan Dybowski.<sup>1</sup> In the socialist state the art should use a simple language to be touching and comprehensible to the possibly widest audience.<sup>2</sup> What could better counterweight the bourgeois art considered decadent than egalitarian and intelligible folk art?

Undoubtedly, because of politics, the turn of the 40s and 50s bore many folkloristic stylizations, what have been featured by i.a. I. Pacewicz, M. Pintał et al.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, the way the folklore was seized could mean both the compromise with the ideological pressure and confirmation of the artist's sovereignty (when the artist creatively continued national tradition). The purpose of this paper is to recapitulate the attitude of chosen Polish composers to folkloristic stylizations, as well as to a general socio-political situation during the Polish socialist realism.

At the end of the 40s, in the political and theoretical discourse the notion of socialist realism occurred more and more often. This concept, implemented in the Soviet Union already in 1934, was described as *a conscious attitude towards ones' works as a product of specific society's needs*.<sup>4</sup> Those works should be expressed in an explicit language, including folk colour and national climate. In the opposition to the realism the authorities would place creativity striking with formalism, i.e. creativity being far from the truth and *consciously or unconsciously detached from real historic processes*.<sup>5</sup> The confusion of the artists was intensified by the lack of unequivocal definition of neither *realism* nor *formalism*. Minister Włodzimierz Sokorski even warned against imagination of realism in music *as a fixed current or*

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<sup>1</sup> Stanisław DYBOWSKI, "O muzyce ludowej" [On Folk Music], *Ruch Muzyczny* 1949, 9: 2. Every quotation used in the article was translated by the author.

<sup>2</sup> See Zygmunt MYCIELSKI, "O zadaniach Związku Kompozytorów Polskich" [On the Association of Polish Composers' Duties], *Ruch Muzyczny* 1949, 14: 8.

<sup>3</sup> Izabela PACEWICZ, "Socrealizm w muzyce polskiej" [Socialist Realism in Polish Music], in *Kompozytorzy polscy 1918-2000*, vol. I *Eseje* [Polish Music. Polish Composers 1918-2000, vol. I Essays], ed. Marek PODHAJSKI (Gdańsk-Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej im. S. Moniuszki w Gdańsku, 2005), 241-247 and Małgorzata PINTAŁ, "Muzyka ludowa w twórczości kompozytorów polskich w latach 1945-1956 w kontekście realizmu socjalistycznego i neoklasycyzmu" [Folk Music in the Works of Polish Composers in the Years 1945-1956 in the Light of Socialist Realism and Neoclassicism], in *Polscy kompozytorzy emigracyjni. Szkice i interpretacje* [Polish Emigration Composers. Drafts and Interpretations], ed. Jan KALINOWSKI and Marek SZLEZER (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2014), 21-33.

<sup>4</sup> Włodzimierz SOKORSKI, "Formalizm i realizm w muzyce" [Formalism and Realism in Music], *Ruch Muzyczny* 1948, 23-24: 4.

<sup>5</sup> See "Konferencja kompozytorów w Łagowie Lubuskim w dniach od 5 VIII do 8 VIII 1949. Protokół" [The Composers Conference in Łagów Lubuski, 5-8 August 1949. The Report], *Ruch Muzyczny* 1949, 14: 20.

*established musical expression and formalistic—and thereby mistaken— attempts to settle with formalism.*<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly, composers tried to explain these notions for their personal use, like Andrzej Panufnik, who claimed that any work considered worthless in political propaganda would be formalistic. Some composers, like Witold Lutosławski, admitted later on that they had never really understood what in fact formalism was.<sup>7</sup>

Restriction of artistic liberty became obvious already in 1949, after Łągów Lubuski Composers Conference.<sup>8</sup> Selection of works<sup>9</sup> and use of intelligible musical language was regarded as an indication of ideologically appropriate attitude of the composer. It was recommended to use the folklore as an element which not only truly reflects the reality, but also is beyond classes and rather close to amateurs. The reception of the socialist realism among Polish composers varied greatly. What prevailed was evasive attitude: compromise or creative adaptation of folklore as an important element of compositional technique. Both enthusiasts of socialist realism idea and its zealous opponents were definitely less numerous. This last group, valuing freedom of art above all, decided to emigrate.<sup>10</sup>

In this context extremely distinctive personage was **Andrzej Panufnik** (1914–1991), a composer who initially rested his hopes in government's commitment in the renewal of the national culture.<sup>11</sup> He was convinced that, despite the Russian influence on almost every sphere of life, Poland still re-

<sup>6</sup> Statement of W. Sokorski quoted in the report of the Łągów conference, see: "Konferencja kompozytorów w Łągowie Lubuskim," 13.

<sup>7</sup> Statement of W. Lutosławski quoted in: Irina NIKOLSKA, *Muzyka to nie tylko dźwięki. Rozmowy z Witoldem Lutosławskim* [Music Is More than Sounds. Conversations with Witold Lutosławski], (Kraków: PWM, 2003), 20. Furthermore, A. Panufnik claimed: *From this moment we had to work exactly according to the socialist realism rules. It was a thankless task, because the exact meaning of this ominous expression (. . .) remained misterious and unclear. Nobody understood what precisely those expectations were* (Marta GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie* [Andrzej Panufnik about Himself], (Warszawa: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1990), 196.

<sup>8</sup> It should be emphasized that socialist realism in Poland was far more gentle in its repercussions than it was in the Soviet Union. Polish musicians could gain privileges or lose the right of being published and played, but they seldom risked their life.

<sup>9</sup> The advocates of aesthetic proclaimed in Łągów assumed the primacy of the political programme, therefore giving priority to the vocal music, especially cantata, opera and mass song.

<sup>10</sup> Their names were censored, in official records there were only anonymous reproaches, like the one below: *There were those who have not endured a difficult period of searching of the ties with their own nation, for whom the patronage of People's Poland and its demands became unbearable burdens* (see Józef M. CHOMIŃSKI and Zofia LISSA, *Kultura muzyczna Polski Ludowej 1944-1955* [Musical Culture in People's Poland], (Kraków: PWM, 1957), 12.

<sup>11</sup> See the composer's statement in: GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie*, 162.

mained a distinct country. Therefore, he was determined to loyally serve his government, even if it was under political pressure.

At the turn of the 40s and 50s A. Panufnik held many official functions, he was among others the vice-chairman of the Association of Polish Composers in 1948–51 and 1952–54. In Łagów Lubuski his works were proclaimed the best examples of the advisable creative evolution. What is more, he remained the leading Polish composer and was generally considered as the courageous innovator. Nevertheless, only his elaborations of old music, such as *Gothic concerto* for trumpet, string orchestra, harp and timpani (1951) and alike could be heard in Polish concert halls. His other works were played only abroad, since they were considered examples of artistic freedom of Polish composers. For instance, *Heroic Overture for orchestra* (1952) became a success in Helsinki,<sup>12</sup> but after rehearsal in Katowice was denied and *excommunicated as being unsuitable for Polish audience*.<sup>13</sup>

The composer, being unable to display any enthusiasm towards politically involved music, was at the same time aware that rejection of socialist realism would cause accusations of formalism and practising the art of the “corrupted West.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, at the end of the 40s he turned to advisable folklore stylizations. But his creative imagination surpassed foundations of socialist realism, making invention of easy and comprehensible works quite intricate. In consequence, he made out of folklore a starting point for his experiments, which in theoreticians *eyes not always led in a good direction*.<sup>15</sup>

As Tadeusz Kaczyński writes, folklore is ubiquitous in A. Panufnik’s music, being present in almost every piece (though rarely in a form of any direct quotation).<sup>16</sup> It is audible in a very distinct shape in *Kołysanka* [Lul-

<sup>12</sup> It was awarded first prize in Pre-Olympic Composing Competition in Helsinki in 1952.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 219.

<sup>14</sup> From composer’s memories: *I was feeling that acceptance of the basic assumption, that music had to be national in form and socialist in matter, would be immoral and artistically dishonest*, *ibid*, 199.

<sup>15</sup> Zofia LISSA and Józef M. CHOMIŃSKI, “Zagadnienie folkloru w twórczości współczesnych kompozytorów polskich” [The Question of Folklore in the Works of Contemporary Polish Composers], *Muzyka* 1951, 5/6: 10.

<sup>16</sup> See Tadeusz KACZYŃSKI, “Inspiracje folklorem w twórczości Andrzeja Panufnika” [Folklore Inspirations in the Works of Andrzej Panufnik], in *Inspiracje w muzyce XX wieku: filozoficzno-literackie, religijne, folklorem* [Inspirations in the Twentieth Century Music: Philosophical, Literary, Religious, Folkloristic], ed. Alicja MATRACKA-KOŚCIELNY (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ZKP, 1993), 198.

*laby*] for string orchestra and two harps (1947) and—above all—in *Sinfonia rustica* for eight brass instruments and two string orchestras (1948), inspired by folk music and art from north Poland. As far as folklore is concerned, the *Sinfonia rustica* is a peculiar experiment because of the treatment of folk material as an element of intervallic series, which causes its dispersion and nullifies any resemblance to the original. Because of this procedure the composer was accused of expressing *music material* instead of Polish folk life.<sup>17</sup> When Tichon Chriennikov, secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, attacked *Sinfonia* as formalistic, he was supported by the head of the same jury that awarded the work the first prize during the Frederic Chopin Composers Competition a year before. What is more, the Minister of Culture, Włodzimierz Sokorski, stated that the piece itself ceased to exist.<sup>18</sup> Even *Polish suite* for soprano and piano (1949) was criticized. Firstly, vocal line without any concrete lyrics was condemned and secondly managing the folk material was found improper.<sup>19</sup>

In 1954 Panufnik, tired with politics, eluded the position of the president of the Association of Polish Composers. He admitted, he was *annoyed with the precious time wasted on the public appearances as a pawn in politicians' hands*, time which he could have spent composing.<sup>20</sup> In the course of time the composer struggled more and more. He recalled having been *dragged into the propaganda machine, which opened and closed his mouth, depriving of any right to independence*.<sup>21</sup> The constant political pressure made him nearly stop composing. In the same year he chose to emigrate at the cost of being entirely erased from the Polish cultural scene.<sup>22</sup>

Another composer, whom the authorities would gladly see as the main representative of the Polish socialist realism was **Witold Lutosławski** (1913–1994). In 1949 he was awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in a mass song competition. Afterwards minister Sokorski suggested that he should write a mass song inspired by the Shostakovitch's *Song of the Forest*. In 1952 Lutosławski was given the State Prize despite the fact that he had never written such a song.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> LISSA, CHOMIŃSKI, "Zagadnienie folkloru," 20.

<sup>18</sup> GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie*, 203.

<sup>19</sup> LISSA, CHOMIŃSKI, "Zagadnienie folkloru," 11.

<sup>20</sup> GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie*, 186.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>22</sup> The Association of Polish Composers caused the annulment of censorship on Panufnik's music not before 1977.

<sup>23</sup> See NIKOLSKA, *Muzyka to nie tylko dźwięki*, 22.

According to Panufnik, Lutosławski did not let himself be dragged into the unending struggle with bureaucracy.<sup>24</sup> He worked in privacy as a composer (mainly for Polish Radio), gradually retiring from active participation in the Association of Polish Composers. However, some unpleasant incidents occurred as well. In 1949, during the performance of the *First Symphony* (1947) Soviet jurors walked out of the inaugural concert of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition. Afterwards, minister Sokorski stated that the work *should be thrown under a tram along with its composer*.<sup>25</sup>

It should be emphasized, that folklore has been present in Lutosławski's works since the 30s. However, for the sake of this paper the author will discuss works only from the 40s and 50s. Already in 1945 Lutosławski wrote *Melodie ludowe* [*Folk Melodies*] for piano (the collection of easy pieces on folk themes), but his leading and more often played works were *Mała suita* [*Little Suite*] for chamber orchestra (1950) and *Tryptyk śląski* [*Silesian Triptych*] for soprano and symphony orchestra (1951), both using folk lyrics with musical stylizations of the composer himself. Because of their intelligibility and folk inspirations, musicologists instantly gave them an exceptional ideological meaning, which was not ascribed neither to Andrzej Panufnik's *Symphony for peace* for choir and symphony orchestra (1951), nor to Tadeusz Szeligowski's *Wesele lubelskie* [*Lublin Wedding*] for soprano, mixed choir and small symphony orchestra (1948), both for being not "realistic" enough. Stefania Łobaczewska praised *Little Suite for overpower an inclination to formalism*,<sup>26</sup> whereas both *Suite* and *Triptych* were nothing else but a continuation of previous trend in Lutosławski's creativity. However, Lutosławski himself admitted after many years that he could not stand neither *Suite* nor *Triptych* and described them as potboilers of Stalinism.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, his most praised piece became *Concerto for Orchestra* (1954).<sup>28</sup> Various folk motives were treated there as rough material to create quasi-baroque construction, which puzzled the critics greatly. *Concerto* was

<sup>24</sup> See GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie*, 167.

<sup>25</sup> See NIKOLSKA, *Muzyka to nie tylko dźwięki*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Danuta GWIZDALANKA and Krzysztof MEYER, *Lutosławski*, vol. I *Droga do dojrzałości* [Lutosławski, vol. I The Path to Maturity], (Kraków: PWM, 2003), 247.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> The work, intended for the emergent National Philharmony Orchestra, was created on suggestion of Witold Rowicki.

deemed exceptional and the huge effort was made to elaborate a reliable ideological justification. The same aspects which in case of other composers could cause the accusations of formalism, here—in the face of the unquestionable talent of the composer—became an advantage. Zofia Lissa passed over in silence even the lack of a clear programme and admitted that *although Concerto does not directly support the ideology of socialist realism, it remains the music fighting for the enrichment of internal life of the Polish audience.*<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the reviewers stressed with approval the maturity of style, whereas the composer judged the *Concerto* technique as far from his ultimate one. Lutosławski himself stated repeatedly that none of his works was intended to be socialist realistic piece and his utilitarian music did not arise as a result of any political pressure, but as an attempt to disseminate valuable music among the amateurs (as he had already been doing since the 30s). As he later reminisced, he was aware that *this was not the path which would lead him anywhere; nevertheless the language which would fulfil his true expectations was not ready yet.*<sup>30</sup>

Socialist realism in Poland converged with the time when Lutosławski searched for a new musical language. Since suspension of his work was not possible, he wrote intelligible, straightforward music,<sup>31</sup> which turned out to be confluent with the authorities' expectations.

Among artistic circles Lutosławski was regarded as one of the most independent Polish composers, just as **Artur Malawski** (1904–1957), whose attitude towards “the realism quarrel” was contentious. It is necessary to emphasize that Malawski had gained quite specific education. Late studies and unfamiliarity with many crucial contemporary music pieces—those features strongly influenced both the individualization of his compositional technique and stylistic radicalism of his music. It seems probable at first sight that the composer implemented the assumptions of socialist realism. His music was replete with emotions, suggestive and safely remote from dodecaphony. Moreover, Malawski derived from folk material, which—as he admitted—he

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<sup>29</sup> Zofia LISSA, “Koncert na orkiestrę Witolda Lutosławskiego” [Witold Lutosławski’s Concerto for Orchestra], *Studia Muzykologiczne* 5(1956): 295.

<sup>30</sup> NIKOLSKA, *Muzyka to nie tylko dźwięki*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Mainly old music and folklore stylizations, as well as music for children. That stagnation period appeared to satisfy the authorities, which triggered the later exaggerated opinions on Lutosławski’s cooperation with the Polish United Workers’ Party.

liked immensely.<sup>32</sup> In 1949–50 he created *Wierchy* [Summits], inspired by Polish highlander folklore and devised as a ballet-pantomime for soprano, tenor, baritone, choir and symphony orchestra, though never performed in such a version. The composition, despite distant connotations with Karol Szymanowski's national works, is highly original and daring. Malawski found his own language rather than imitated his predecessor. In 1950 he continued the highlander motives by writing *Highlander Triptych* for small orchestra, based on the synthesis of folk rhythmic and harmonic language typical for the composer.

After many successes, at the turn of the 40s and 50s Malawski's good fortune ended quite abruptly. To his astonishment, his works were defined as formalistic and incomprehensible. As Bogusław Schaeffer wrote—he *was not able to compose in any other way than by emphasizing clearly audible, melodic expression*.<sup>33</sup> According to the theoreticians, radicalism and innovative style of Malawski's musical output drove him away from socialist realism.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the same reasons gained him the benevolence of socialist realism antagonists. Stefan Kisielewski described Malawski as *a musical number one hero of the resistance to destructive artistic absurdities of the socialist realism*. He claimed that Malawski's attitude was so strong, that *even the term intransigence would be inadequate, "absolute indifference" would be better*.<sup>35</sup> Composer's response to the humorous suggestions of Kisielewski that this force was allegedly a result of incomprehension of socialist music theory, was: *Of course I don't understand. And I don't want to. Why should I? I know what to do*.<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, the argument about Malawski's aesthetics developed aside from the composer's intentions. He felt firm certainty about the rightness of his own artistic attitude<sup>37</sup> and did not treat notions of realism and formalism as qualitative terms. He was convinced that the artist *walks away from the*

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<sup>32</sup> See Małgorzata KARCZYŃSKA, "Elementy folkloru w twórczości Artura Malawskiego" [Elements of Folklore in the Works of Artur Malawski], in *Artur Malawski: życie i twórczość* [Artur Malawski: Life and Works], ed. Bogusław SCHÄFFER (Kraków: PWM, 1969), 72.

<sup>33</sup> Bogusław SCHÄFFER, "Portret kompozytora" [The Composer's Portrait], in *Artur Malawski*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> According to the socialist realism theory the artist should think within the categories of his society rather than individual.

<sup>35</sup> Stefan KISIELEWSKI, *Z muzycznej międzyepoki* [From Musical Between-Periods], (Kraków: PWM, 1966), 196–197.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>37</sup> According to B. Schaeffer he was interested not in the music itself, but "in his own music."

*reality in order to create it in his own way instead of copying it.*<sup>38</sup> The imperative of fidelity towards his own theory was a priority for him.

Since his “passive resistance” proved to be invincible, Malawski was eventually left alone and continued his work in the Music Academy in Katowice. Nevertheless, for many years he did not travel abroad and an anathema was put on his works: they were not published and played only—if played at all—in Cracow, the composer’s hometown.<sup>39</sup> Finally, after Malawski as one of the few composers was refused to participate in important festivals, he realized what had caused this anathema and tried to rehabilitate himself by proving the authorities wrong. In 1953 he created *Piano trio*, emphasizing that his music was now free from the faintest taste of formalism. Nevertheless, the exculpation of the composer took place only after the political thaw, not long before the Malawski’s death.

While Malawski during his last years vainly tried to redeem himself from the accusation of formalism, works of **Grażyna Bacewicz** (1909–1969) were fully accepted by the theorists. It could be surprising, especially as even with unclear definition of formalism, her music was full of formalistic elements. According to the composer, music expressed *no normal, vital feelings*—the only thing it did express was itself and its own emotions.<sup>40</sup> The fact—as she wrote in 1947 to her brother Witold—that the artist could *have paced rather alone, in her compositions taking care mostly about the form*<sup>41</sup> was probably entailed by her established international position. In 1949 her *Piano concerto* received the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Frederic Chopin Composers Competition. The jury stressed the proper use of folk elements and withdrawal of formal experiments to the background. Since 1950 Bacewicz was a member of the board of the Association of Polish Composers and in 1951 her *String Quartet no. 4* was awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the International Competition for Composers in Liège (Belgium).

Grażyna Bacewicz was brought up in a spirit of positivism, she believed in a gradual social development towards common justice. However, her attitude towards the situation of Polish artists at the beginning of the 50s was

<sup>38</sup> Artur MALAWSKI, “O komponowaniu” [On Composing], in *Artur Malawski*, 363.

<sup>39</sup> As wrote S. Kisielewski: “His works were rarely published, he did not travel abroad, the bulb of silence closed over him” (KISIELEWSKI, *Z muzycznej międzyepoki*, 198).

<sup>40</sup> Words spoken by G. Bacewicz during the talk with S. Kisielewski (Stefan KISIELEWSKI, “Rozmowa z Grażyną Bacewiczówną” [The Talk with Grażyna Bacewicz], in KISIELEWSKI, *Z muzycznej międzyepoki*, 207).

<sup>41</sup> Małgorzata GAŚSIOROWSKA, *Bacewicz* [Bacewicz], (Kraków: PWM, 1999), 178.

interpreted variously. From her correspondence<sup>42</sup> one can discover that not only did Bacewicz struggle with socialist realism but also was against the prohibition of performing formalistic music. On the other hand, she also approved—maybe because of the censorship—of a public protection of the composers and condemned the avant-garde, stressing her own sincerity in simplifying her musical language.<sup>43</sup> Her statement eventually became true – the composer found a solution in softening her neoclassical stylistic with noticeable folk elements.

Specific scales and harmonics applied by the composer at the turn of the 40s and 50s were not surprising in her works. Many elements of folklore were present in her output already in the 30s (as in *String Quartet* no. 1 from 1937). Folk inspired motives and above all the ludic humour tinged with irony were natural components of her technique. In a folk model of dance or song Bacewicz found lively themes with expressive melodies and simple rhythms, as well as melancholic kujawiak-like lullabies.<sup>44</sup> Highly characteristic for her folk-inspired works was “an oberek idiom.” Stylizations of this Polish dance are present in many pieces, for example in the finale of *Piano Concerto* (1949). Bacewicz not only processed folk themes, but also joined them with her own ideas, aiming to the crystallization of her lyrical style.

In 1948 Bacewicz wrote the *Violin Concerto* no. 3 with a stylization of the Polish Tatra Highlands folklore. Stefan Kisielewski describing the *Concerto* admitted that he had suspected this folk-inspired piece of having been a product of an artificial, enforced idea. Nevertheless, he finally stated that *at the beginning of that piece there was a thoroughly sincere impulse, which resulted in the work organically uniting folk elements melted in a crucible of the mature compositional technique.*<sup>45</sup> The folksiness allowed the composer to lent his wings instead of being a burden. Kisielewski’s opinion was confirmed by other theorists, who stressed that folk inspiration is in Bacewicz works a natural process, a way of overcoming the schemes of neo-classicism, coming not from the political pressure, but creative necessity. In 1952 the composer wrote *String Quartet* no. 4, described by Maria Pio-

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<sup>42</sup> Mainly from the correspondence with her brother Witold and close friends (Maria Dziewulka among them).

<sup>43</sup> See GAŚIOROWSKA, *Bacewicz*, 185.

<sup>44</sup> See Małgorzata GAŚIOROWSKA, “Folklorizm w twórczości Grażyny Bacewicz – inspiracja czy konwencja?” [Folklore in the Works of Grażyna Bacewicz – Inspiration or Convention?], in *Inspiracje w muzyce XX wieku*, 205.

<sup>45</sup> S. Kisielewski, quoted after: GAŚIOROWSKA, *Bacewicz*, 174.

trowska as a *rhapsody on the folk themes*.<sup>46</sup> At the same time Bacewicz created many pedagogical and utilitarian pieces, like suite *Pod Strzechą* [*Under a Thatched Roof*] for small orchestral ensemble (1945) and *Suita tańców polskich* [*Suite of Polish Dances*] for orchestra (1950).

Nevertheless, in the middle of the 50s her interest in folklore faded and her works evolved into avant-garde and sonorism. After 1956, with the arrival of political thaw, the style of the composer underwent profound changes. To sum up, it should be stressed that the composer avoided commitment in postulated matters, as long as they have not been consistent with her own creative path.<sup>47</sup> The folklore inspiration was a natural element in her technique and therefore was willingly used at the turn of the 40s and 50s. However, it was pushed aside as soon as the evolution of musical language and the prevalence of avant-garde became possible.

On the other hand, the postulate of popularization of folklore, which was compatible with the foundations of socialist realism, found its spokesman in **Stanisław Wiechowicz** (1893–1963). The composer—*invisible, though influential*<sup>48</sup>—was involved in the mass-oriented amateur singing movement since the pre-war time. In the middle of the 40s Wiechowicz declared, that he would like to work for the good of Poland, *for the masses by the masses as he said*,<sup>49</sup> praising educational elements in the programme of *the great, historical stage of Polish People's Republic*.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Wiechowicz's attitude was uncompromising. The above mentioned approval of the system ended whenever it was divergent from his own convictions. He stressed both the absolute freedom of creation and dualism of musical culture and warned against flattering the masses and the loss of individuality by incorrect use of folklore. As he emphasized: *Almost no one is sinless when it comes to the treatment of Polish folklore, maybe with the exception of Szymanowski*.<sup>51</sup>

The folklore idea in Wiechowicz's works is a very extensive issue. Folk music, which he treated in a particularly subjective and familiar way, was his source of inspiration in the scope of his entire compositional creativity.

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<sup>46</sup> Maria PIOTROWSKA, *Neoklasycyzm w muzyce XX wieku* [Neoclassicism in the Twentieth Century Music], (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1982), 97.

<sup>47</sup> The composer was brave enough to create *Symphony no. 4* (1953)—the work being supposedly a camouflaged pastiche of socialist realism rhetoric.

<sup>48</sup> Adam MRYGOŃ, *Stanisław Wiechowicz*, vol. I *Działalność* [Stanisław Wiechowicz, vol. I Activity] (Kraków: PWM, 1982), 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

This had started as if incidentally, while he was preparing adaptations of folk songs for his choir. Among his important works from the late 40s and early 50s is suite *Kasia* [*Kate*] for string orchestra and two clarinets (1946). The popular character and intelligibility of this work were appreciated during the Polish Music Festival in 1951. In the following years Wiechowicz wrote *Kantata żniwna* [*Harvest Cantata*] for choir (1947), awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the National Olympic Competition<sup>52</sup> and the sketch for choir and orchestra, entitled *A czemu żeś nie przyjechał* [*Why haven't you come*] (1948).

The folklore trend in Wiechowicz works manifested itself as a synthesis of folk material and his own musical ideas. The composer claimed, that the elaboration of folk melodies would not be enough, they had to be absorbed, become an element of true, individual creation instead of imitation.<sup>53</sup> To a large degree, he succeeded in realisation of the above. In his late works, despite the lack of literal quotations the character, the way of shaping the material, the harmonic and rhythmic layers are closely connected with folklore. The harmonical depiction of the folk material is crucial here. Wiechowicz, in contradiction to the majority of composers using folk elements, was aiming to the fusion of folk melodies with the harmonic layer, thereby avoiding deformation of the original material. In consequence, the simple style of the composer, lively and humorous, often lyrical, is described as *one of the most interesting variety of the national style in the Polish contemporary music*.<sup>54</sup>

Judging Wiechowicz's attitude cursorily could lead to a conclusion that he readily applied socialist realism aesthetics, even outrunning its premises. The theorists praised him as a most distinguished composer of the folk-inspired choral music.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it should be stressed that his works were imbued with folklore already in the 20s, while the author himself since the beginning of his work was an advocate of the educative art responding to social demands. Moreover, at the turn of the 40s and 50s Wiechowicz did not succumb to the political pressure but wrote less, mainly the alternate versions of his older works.

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<sup>52</sup> And a bronze medal on the International Olympic Art Competition.

<sup>53</sup> MRYGOŃ, *Stanisław Wiechowicz*, 154.

<sup>54</sup> Adam MRYGOŃ, *Stanisław Wiechowicz*, vol. II *Twórczość* [*Stanisław Wiechowicz*, vol. II Works], (Kraków: PWM, 1989), 119.

<sup>55</sup> LISSA and CHOMIŃSKI, "Zagadnienie folkloru," 6.

The attitude of **Bolesław Woytowicz** (1899–1980), the laureate of many state prizes and the member of the board of the Association of Polish Composers was also presented as an exemplary. In his works Woytowicz operated with stylizations of folklore and his aesthetics was consensual with Karol Szymanowski's postulates. He focused mainly on cantata as a form which is communicative and gives a direct message. Woytowicz' works were praised for a national character and proper display of the new style. According to the sources Woytowicz, aiming to approach his art to the new system, was one of the first composers who applied realism in music.<sup>56</sup>

As he stated: *When the artist become an instrument expressing most profound desires, hopes, anxieties and delights of his age, when he is able to subsume and close them in the simplest works, in the bright and straightforward form—only then we can talk about his greatness.*<sup>57</sup> This quotation seems to be an affirmation of socialist realism, however in the later words of Panufnik it can be read as an artful excuse, meaningless and devoid of any definite declaration. Panufnik mentioned Woytowicz as a man who had avoided political involvement on the basis of health argument.<sup>58</sup>

In fact Woytowicz managed to preserve considerable extent of independence along with approval of the authorities by creating works with national colour (which became a continuation of the Young Poland heritage) and formulating politically correct—although unspecific—statements. However, his attitude was evasive, which was proven after 1956—after the political thaw he turned towards dodecaphony.

Similar lightness of style, seized in classical forms was characteristic to the works of **Tadeusz Szeligowski** (1896–1963) as well. This composer—as a student of Nadia Boulanger—was brought up in neoclassical opposition towards modernism. For that reason, he easily found his way in the new stylistics. His works dating at the turn of the 40s and 50s (among them *Wesele lubelskie* [*Lublin Wedding*] from 1948 and *Bunt żaków* [*Students Rebellion*], opera from 1951) were shown as an exemplar of folklore inspiration and simplification of technique.<sup>59</sup>

While both Woytowicz and Szeligowski were in favour with the authorities, **Piotr Perkowski** (1901–1990) was among the composers accused of formalism during the Łagów Conference. What is more, accusations were

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<sup>56</sup> Eugenia WYBRANIEC, *Bolesław Woytowicz* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo ZKP, 1981), 12.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>58</sup> See GLIŃSKA, *Andrzej Panufnik o sobie*, 192.

<sup>59</sup> See LISSA and CHOMIŃSKI, "Zagadnienie folkloru," 12, 21.

made against the *Violin Concerto*, whereas its melodic material is partially based on folklore stylizations. The composer tried to defend his work stressing unfavourable circumstances of the performance, like too high temperature. Nevertheless, in the following years Perkowski wrote mainly pieces interchangeably praised as ideological and emphasizing merits of the working class. At the turn of the 40s and 50s he composed numerous songs, among them *Pięć pieśni ludowych z suity weselnej* [*Five Folk Songs from the Wedding Suite*] for soprano, tenor, choir and orchestra, where folk stylizations caused definite simplification of a musical language.

However, Perkowski's political attitude was not entirely unequivocal. He admitted that composers were the ones who were responsible for the shape and condition of Polish musical culture. Simultaneously, that *the Ministry of Culture and Art cannot be considered as an intelligent centre, which would act reasonably—the Ministry works from suggestion to suggestion*.<sup>60</sup> In the light of the above it is highly probable that Perkowski acknowledged the necessity of paying a tribute in the form of “realistic” works—which were often folk-inspired—but never treated that kind of creativity seriously.

Important voice in the discussion on the future of Polish socialist realistic music belonged to the younger generation of composers, with **Kazimierz Serocki** (1922–1981) in the first place. In his works this composer combined new musical language with traditional elements and in post-war Poland became one of the leading representatives of the folklore trend. Serocki became interested in folk music because of his individual predispositions (along with inclination to the simplicity of language) rather than enforcement of the normative aesthetics which occurred in the same time. Already in 1949 his folk-inspired<sup>61</sup> *Piano Sonata* was given a prize in the Frederic Chopin Composers Competition. In the same year he wrote *Trzy melodie kurpiowskie* [*Three “Kurpian” Melodies*] for instrumental ensemble and *Cztery tańce ludowe* [*Four Folk Dances*] for chamber orchestra, both being a synthesis of folk motives and modern sound setting.<sup>62</sup> At the beginning of the 50s Serocki composed the cantata *Mazowsze* [*Masovia*] with lyrics by

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<sup>60</sup> Piotr Perkowski, quoted after: Mieczysława DEMSKA-TRĘBACZ, “Piotr Perkowski i jego czasy” [Piotr Perkowski and his Times], in *Piotr Perkowski. Życie i dzieło* [Piotr Perkowski. Life and Works], ed. Marian BORKOWSKI (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo AMFC, 2003), 19.

<sup>61</sup> Mainly in the melodic layer.

<sup>62</sup> Wawrzyniec Żuławski in his review of the first compositional concert of the 49<sup>th</sup> Group described Serocki's *Four Folk Dances* as *given in a modern, extremely colourful and elaborate harmonic setting*, [www.serocki.polmic.pl](http://www.serocki.polmic.pl) (accessed May, 2015).

Władysław Broniewski.<sup>63</sup> One exception was *Symphony no 1* (1952) with coexisting elements of dodecaphony and modal melodics (close to the rough folklore). Serocki redeemed himself already in 1953 by creating *Symfonia pieśni* [*The Song Symphony*] for soprano, baritone, choir and orchestra, the outstanding work as far as folk inspiration is concerned. In 1954 the composer wrote also simple Sobótkowe zaśpiewki [*Sobótka bonfire sing-songs*] and *Suita opolska* [*Opole Suite*], just to radically change his style after 1956.

While recalling Serocki it would be an oversight not to mention **the 49'Group** which Serocki formed with **Tadeusz Baird** (1928–1981) and **Jan Krenz** (born in 1926) in Łagów in 1949 (hence the name).<sup>64</sup> Officially, they postulated a total agreement with the authorities as they stated in their programme: *According to the young, the new, bright and simple music will soon arise. Thus the young decide to reject craft for the craft itself and write listening intently to their simple, profound feelings.*<sup>65</sup> However, further sentences revealed their actual aim, i.e. creation of music which would not blandish bourgeois tastes nor resign from any achievement of modern harmonics. The formation of the 49'Group—approved by politicians and enthusiastically received by the press—gave the composers an established position and allowed them to propagate their music with permission (and in the custody) of the authorities. Moreover, the declared aims of the group were described as almost unattainable, thus giving them an excuse from some formalistic elements.<sup>66</sup>

Radical acceptance of socialist realism was represented only by a marginal group of Polish composers which nowadays are scarcely remembered.

<sup>63</sup> Observers indicate the deliberate game with authorities pursued by Serocki. Initially, the cantata had been planned to base on heavily politically marked texts of Tadeusz Borowski. Nevertheless, the composer finally chose rather neutral, patriotic text of Władysław Broniewski. See [www.serocki.polmic.pl](http://www.serocki.polmic.pl) (accessed May, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Tadeusz Baird later described the moment of the 49'Group foundation: *Kazimierz Serocki, Jan Krenz and I met in the haven of one of the Łagów lakes and there, after the long discussion, we decided to stick together and join our forces, talents and other skills in order to retrieve ourselves in this difficult, foreign and dangerous world*, accessed May, 2015, [www.serocki.polmic.pl](http://www.serocki.polmic.pl).

<sup>65</sup> As wrote Stefan Jarociński framing the official programme of the 49'Group. Quoted after: Tadeusz ZIELIŃSKI, *Twórczość Kazimierza Serockiego* [The Works of Kazimierz Serocki], (Kraków: PWM, 1985), 10.

<sup>66</sup> According to W. Żuławski, *one could not expect that the 49'Group realized its venture-some programme at once. Because of that, their musical language (. . .) is basically consistent with the one used by their older colleagues*, accessed May, 2015, [www.serocki.polmic.pl](http://www.serocki.polmic.pl).

Among them was **Alfred Gradstein** (1904–1954), one of the few members of the Association of Polish Composers who in fact belonged to the Party. This composer's attitude toward folk music was a result of the eager realisation of artistic assumptions of socialist realism. Gradstein understood folklore in the same way as politicians did: as a mean to reduction of the class structure of art and education of a new listener. In 1952, not long before his death, Gradstein was given the State Prize for the cantata *Słowo o Stalinie* [*A Word about Stalin*], an exemplary realization of socialist postulates. However, after the change of 1956, the cantata was roundly criticized.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Gradstein's works shared the future of socialist realism aesthetic—after the political thaw it was considered as a mistake of the *conceptual confusion* age and—afterwards—promptly forgotten.<sup>68</sup>

Since any inference drawn from elliptical rhetoric of socialist realism would be uncertain, drawing straightforward conclusions from the above presented material is no easy task. The truth must be read between the lines, and a considerable distance towards both possibilities of propaganda and smooth words covering veiled resistance of composers must be kept. Official records from the beginning of the 50s bring an optimistic picture of the composers whose works eagerly supported the progress of socialism. The magnitude of this propaganda was surprising even for the artists themselves. Lutosławski found at the exhibition in the House of Polish Army his own song with lyrics extolling Stalin that he had never seen before. On the other hand, Panufnik was surprised to read the review in which he purportedly praised the people of new, truly democratic Poland. More reliable conclusions can be drawn only from later sources, especially biographies or memoirs of composers living either on emigration or in free Poland after 1989. Resuming briefly the subject matter of folklore in the Polish socialist realism four categories might be distinguished.

First of all, the postulate of music based on folklore could be the only element of socialistic music theory which was acceptable for independent composers, like Lutosławski, Panufnik or Bacewicz. It could be adapted to

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<sup>67</sup> The cantata *Słowo o Stalinie* was later described by S. Łobaczewska as “an artistic mistake.”

<sup>68</sup> In 1956 Z. Lissa wrote: *Fortunately those years, when ignoramus could stigmatise new works of our composers with one flap of the pen, by thoughtlessly gluing to them “the formalism” label, are over. It was a period of conceptual confusion, when (. . .) one’s own limited imagination became a definite and objective norms of musical shaping.* See LISSA, “Koncert na orkiestrę,” 197.

one's art without any conscience conflicts. Moreover, those composers had already been using folklore before the normative aesthetics was promulgated. In the works of Lutosławski and Bacewicz folk inspiration was a phase of evolution, treated in accordance with their possibilities, whereas Panufnik made it a base for harmonic, geometrical and constructivist experiments. Nevertheless, in those cases folklore was always a starting point and never the aim itself. What is more, as one of the few clearly defined elements of socialist realistic art, it caused almost automatic official acceptance of works and allowed to avoid cultural exile.

Secondly, the folk-inspired art could be the continuation of the pre-war noble idea of popularization of national music, as it was in the works of Wiechowicz or Woytowicz. Thirdly, it could constitute some kind of a tribute, a factor which was able to justify mistakes and withdraw the accusations of formalism, as in the case of Perkowski, Serocki and all the 49'Group.

Finally, in its barest form, combined with the simplicity of means and other components of the model work of socialist realism, folklore was just an instrument of propaganda, quickly and willingly forgotten after the arrival of new artistic trends. This last aspect proved to be the most destructive for the Polish folk-inspired art. After the 1956 thaw, as soon as the first signs of new western music became visible and acceptable, most of the Polish composers radically turned away from folk sources, which they later associated not with the valuable tradition of Frederic Chopin or Karol Szymanowski but with the distorted reflection of that idea, looming in the false-mirror of socialist realism.

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SZTUKA DLA MAS  
CZY PRAGNIENIE ARTYSTYCZNEJ WOLNOŚCI?  
ELEMENTY FOLKLORU  
W MUZYCE POLSKIEGO SOCREALIZMU

Streszczenie

Estetyka socrealizmu, narzucona polskim kompozytorom po konferencji w Łagowie Lubuskim (1949 r.), nigdy nie została precyzyjnie zdefiniowana. Jednym z promowanych elementów twórczości artystycznej, obok prostoty wypowiedzi, była inspiracja ludowa. Paradoksalnie, sposób ujęcia folkloru mógł oznaczać zarówno kompromis wobec presji ideologicznej, jak i potwierdzenie suwerenności artysty, który odwołując się do narodowej tradycji, twórczo ją kontynuował. Polscy kompozytorzy, wśród których przeważała postawa unikowa, chętnie z owego neutralnego źródła inspiracji korzystali, ze względów politycznych przełom lat 40. i 50. był więc w polskiej muzyce czasem licznych stylizacji folklorystycznych. W artykule podjęto próbę podsumowania stosunku wybranych kompozytorów do muzyki ludowej jako źródła inspiracji oraz do ogólnej sytuacji społeczno-politycznej czasów polskiego socrealizmu. Wyróżniono cztery podstawowe kategorie obecności nurtu folklorystycznego: jako etapu twórczości (u W. Lutosławskiego, A. Panufnika i G. Bacewicz), jako kontynuacji międzywojennej idei upowszechnienia muzyki narodowej (jak to miało miejsce w twórczości S. Wiechowicza czy B. Woytowicza), jako rodzaju kompromisu, czynnika odsuwającego groźbę oskarżenia o formalizm, jak w przypadku P. Perkowski, K. Serockiego i całej „Grupy 49” oraz – w najbardziej ogołoconej formie – jako narzędzia propagandy, szybko i chętnie zapomnianego wraz z nadejściem nowych prądów artystycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** folklor, muzyka ludowa, muzyka polska, polska muzyka współczesna, kompozytorzy polscy, socrealizm, socrealizm w muzyce, muzyka i polityka.