

A black and white portrait of Henryk Bacewicz, a man with dark, wavy hair, looking slightly upwards and to the right. The portrait is centered in the upper half of the image.

CHANDOS

BACEWICZ

ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOL. 2
SYMPHONY NO. 2 • PIANO CONCERTO
CONCERTO FOR LARGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SO **BBC**
Symphony
Orchestra

SAKARI ORAMO



Andrzej Zborski, Collection of Alina Biernacka (daughter of Grażyna Bacewicz);
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Grażyna Bacewicz, 1960s

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909 – 1969)

Orchestral Works, Volume 2

Symphony No. 2 (1950 – 51) 21:12 Witoldowi Rowickiemu

- | | |
|-----|--|
| [1] | I Con passione – Allegro ma con sentimento – Poco meno – Più mosso [Allegro] – Più mosso – Meno mosso – [Allegro] 6:42 |
| [2] | II Lento tranquillo – Poco più mosso – Tempo I 5:48 |
| [3] | III Scherzo. Vivo – Più mosso 3:50 |
| [4] | IV Finale. Allegro moderato – Poco meno – Poco più mosso – Poco meno – Energico – Energico – Più mosso – Tempo I – Più mosso 4:35 |

Concerto (1949)* 20:16 for Piano and Orchestra Witoldowi Rowickiemu

- | | |
|-----|--|
| [5] | I Allegro moderato – Un poco meno – Allegro (Più mosso) – Più mosso – Allegretto – Cadenza. [] – Poco meno – Più mosso – Energico – Meno – Più mosso – Energico 7:49 |
| [6] | II Andante – Allegretto – Tempo I 5:59 |
| [7] | III Molto allegro – Poco meno – Ancora meno mosso – Un poco più mosso – Sostenuto – Tempo I – Meno – Meno mosso – Tempo I 6:17 |

Concerto (1962) 22:22

for Large Symphony Orchestra

Witoldowi Rowickiemu

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 8 | I Allegro – Più mosso, molto ritmico – Poco più mosso –
[Tempo I] – Molto energico – Poco meno mosso | 4:47 |
| 9 | II Largo – Poco più mosso, ma molto tranquillo – Più vivo –
Meno mosso (Tempo I) | 6:32 |
| 10 | III Vivo (giocosso) – Poco meno mosso – Tempo I – Poco sostenuto –
Tempo I – [] – Tempo I | 4:23 |
| 11 | IV Allegro non troppo – Poco più mosso – Più mosso –
Poco meno mosso – Meno mosso – Più mosso –
Presto – Poco sostenuto – Accelerando | 6:23 |

TT 64:04

Peter Donohoe piano*

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Igor Yuzefovich leader

Sakari Oramo

Bacewicz: Orchestral Works, Volume 2 – Walking the boundary between two worlds¹

Introduction

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909 – 1969) is acknowledged as the composer who 'in the first post-war decade made the greatest contribution to shaping the modern orchestral texture' in Polish music.² At the same time she still 'remains an enigma'.³ Her works contained in this recording by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Sakari Oramo, which is a continuation of the series begun with the previous disc (CHSA 5316), corroborate both of these statements, while the circumstances in which they were composed allow for a deeper understanding of the extraordinary phenomenon of Bacewicz's intense artistic personality and its development.

¹ Grażyna Bacewicz: 'Ja kroczę na granicy dzielącej dwa światy', in sketch published after her death in the journal *Ruch Muzyczny* 1969 No. 7, p. 4, quoted after Małgorzata Gąsiorowska, *Bacewicz*, Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1999, p. 405.

² Krzysztof Baculewski, *Polska Twórczość kompozytorska 1945 – 1984*, Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1987, p. 126.

³ Adrian Thomas, *Bacewicz*, Los Angeles: Polish Music History Series, University of Southern California, p. 115.

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

All three of the compositions on this CD are dedicated by the composer to Witold Rowicki (1914 – 1989), which shows her confidence and her devotion to this eminent Polish conductor. The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra – here in a brilliant performance by Peter Donohoe – was written in 1949 in response to the Frederic Chopin Composers' Competition announced by the Polish Composers' Union (Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, ZKP) to commemorate the centenary of Chopin's death. In the category of works for piano and orchestra it received the second prize; no first prize was awarded at all. The jury, already working under the strict conditions of Stalinist control, could hardly have better expressed their lack of enthusiasm. What were the reasons behind such a decision? It may be presumed that whereas the Concerto could be interpreted as conforming to the ideological principles demanded of the composers – such as the 'proper use of Polish folk elements' and the 'rejection of formal experimentation' – the degree of 'simplification of means of expression' on display could be viewed as

questionable.⁴ After five decades, 'the poetics of this work still remains a riddle', the author of the most comprehensive monograph on Bacewicz wrote, in 1999.⁵

It may be so even to this day. It seems that the composer indeed, in this work, encoded hidden meanings. By the time she composed her Piano Concerto, Bacewicz was already painfully familiar with the persecutions and the censorship that had been introduced in occupied Poland by the German Nazi authorities, and becoming familiar with those in post-war Poland imposed by the USSR and its Stalinist officials. In the case of literary works, especially ones written from 1949 onwards, the main tactic to be employed against what she herself described as 'the burden of pressure and restriction' that 'weighed so heavily on us during this period',⁶ was allusion. Bacewicz, in

possession of an acute intelligence as well as a marked literary talent – she was the author of a collection of essays entitled *Znak szczególny* (Peculiar Sign) – knew well how to use this tactic in music. Thus, one key to Bacewicz's riddles may be the allusions to the well-known Polish song *Pije Kuba do Jakuba* in the first movement of the Concerto.⁷ Cheerful and energetic, its repetitive pattern and clear-cut melody suggesting a sort of musical merry-go-round, the tune is not easily recognisable thanks to the polytonal superpositions, which displace the tonal centres and ingeniously transform its character. This robust song itself is a riddle. Its seemingly authentic folk text was in fact written by the romantic poet Stefan Witwicki (1801 – 1847), a close friend of Chopin's. On the surface, the widely known first strophe makes it a jolly drinking song; however, the second one evokes the beating of the former lords who used to eat traditional Polish dishes but now have frogs and snails on their menu.⁸ Chopin wrote several songs

⁴ These ideological premises of the jury were described in *Ruch Muzyczny* 1949 No. 11 / 12, p. 46 – 47. Quoted after Gąsiorowska, p. 187. In the original: 'właściwe wykorzystanie polskich pierwiastków ludowych, pogłębienie emocjonalne, uproszczenie środków wyrazu, odrzucenie na plan dalszy eksperymentów eksperymentalno-formalnych'.

⁵ Gąsiorowska, *Bacewicz*.

⁶ Bacewicz's memories included in the series of recollections of her fellow composer Artur Malawski: 'Wspominając Artura Malawskiego', *Ruch Muzyczny* 1958 No. 6, p. 13. Quoted after *Ibid.*, p. 184 – 185. In the original: 'brzęmię nacisku i skrępowania', które 'tak ciężko dokuczało nam w tym okresie'.

⁷ It was observed by another Polish researcher, Anna Nowak, see *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁸ 1. *Pije Kuba do Jakuba*

Jakub do Michala
Pijesz ty, pije on
Kompanija cała
A kto nie wypije
Tego we dwa kije
Łupu! Cupu!

to Witwicki's words – for instance, the famous 'Życzenie' (A Wish), published in the collection *Piosenki sielskie* (Idyllic Songs), while still in Warsaw, in 1830. At that time, Witwicki, seemingly as much of a dandy as Chopin, was called 'Mister Mery'. This nickname derived from the name of the greyhound which accompanied him during walks in the centre of the city. Like Chopin, Witwicki emigrated to Paris for political reasons. He described the tragic defeat of the November Uprising in his book *Muscovites in Poland or the Content of a Diary Written in Warsaw for Ten Months: from 8 September 1831 to 8 July 1832*:

On 8 September 1831, owing to the return of the army of the sole ruler of Moscow [...] to the capital of ancient Poland [...], Asia invaded Europe again. The horror, misfortune, mourning of Warsaw is indescribable.⁹

2. Indyk z sosem, zraz z bigosem

Dawniej jadły Pany
Dzisiaj żaby i ślimaki
Jedzą jak bociany,
Kto żabami żyje
Tego we dwa kije
Łupu! Cupu!

This text is quoted from the 1879 setting for four voices by the eminent composer Władysław Żeleński, entitled *Humoreska 'Pije Kuba do Jakuba'*.

⁹ Stefan Witwicki, *Moskale w Polsce albo treść dziennika pisanego w Warszawie przez ciąg dziesięciu miesięcy: od 8 września 1831 do 8 lipca 1832 roku*, Paris, 1833. In the

Such sensations, even if felt by Polish people also from 1944 onwards, could not be expressed, even in private correspondence, owing to the tight censorship control. And even if Chopin did not write a Polish opera based on folk material, of which Witwicki was a strong advocate, he dedicated mazurkas to his talented friend. It was the next generation of composers, mainly Stanisław Moniuszko, who fulfilled the task of composing a national opera. Grażyna Bacewicz introduced characteristics of Polish tradition into her 'abstract' music, in fact weaving a much more subtle web of references than 'appropriately using Polish folk elements'. Instead of a 'simplification of means of expression', she achieved her transformation through a refined modal thinking inherited from Debussy, Szymanowski, and Bartók, opening views to new horizons thanks to her astounding knowledge of instrumental possibilities.

From the moment of the piano's entrance, the sheer beauty of the *Andante*, the second movement of her only Piano Concerto, is vaguely reminiscent both of the middle

⁹ original: 'dnia 8 Września 1831 roku, przez powrót wojska jedynowładcy moskiewskiego [...] do stolicy starożytnej Polski [...] znowu Azja wtargnęła do Europy. Przeróżenia, nieszczęścia, żaloby Warszawy, nie trzeba, niepodobna opisywać'.

movements of Ravel's concertos and of Szymanowski's folklore-inspired lyricism; however, the transformative power of the composer's imagination finds a distinctly individual, warm tone. Here again, Bacewicz evokes a traditional Polish song, ancient and widely known, 'Oj chmielu' (Oh, Hop),¹⁰ and, again, it is not easily recognised.

The third movement represents a sublimation of the most inspiring Bartókian pages and – above all – of the Polish traditional dance *oberek*, the incantational qualities of which Bacewicz knew profoundly well – both as a composer and a violinist (the beautiful archival recording of 1952 in which she performs her *Oberek* for violin and piano with her brother Kiejstut is on YouTube).

Symphony No. 2

Bacewicz began work on her Second Symphony in 1950. The introduction, *Con passione*, features a highly expressive motif of an ascending major seventh, which brings about a sense of startling gravity and beauty, and a modal tone reminiscent of Bartók. The following section, *Allegro ma con sentimento*, is livelier and the emotional colour suddenly brightens, string motifs serenely answered by horns and wind, and evolves toward

the lush glamorous sonorities of mediant (C to A, eventually landing deceptively on F minor) played by trombones, with horns and bassoons, and enhanced by double-basses. The *Più mosso* second theme group is clownish and mechanistic; listen to the awkward ascending leaps of a minor seventh by the horns, like the paralytic march of a colossus with feet of clay. These are followed by a dramatic passage that presses forward to reach a point of culmination, after which the classical atmosphere is restored and the serene theme returns *a tempo*. The lovely coda builds cathartically from a *Meno mosso* passage, in which the mechanistic theme fleetingly reappears but is then cut short, and leads to a breathtakingly triumphant end, underpinned by ecstatically syncopated timpani.

The triple metre and rocking calm of the second movement, *Lento tranquillo*, forms an idyllic contrast and offers a space of emotional rest. The Scherzo, on the other hand, is the embodiment of dancing energy: a piercing piccolo edges the textures and here and there violins and violas engage in witty dialogue, exchanging chromatic *staccato* figures, occasionally played *glissando*. But the composer – probably internally rebelling against Stalinist guidelines and withdrawing to a more classical tradition – does not

¹⁰ Gąsiorowska, p. 187.

underline any specific folk elements, she only mischievously nods towards the censors: 'Can you see, it *is* folk-like!' The Finale opens *Allegro moderato* with an original, dramatical, almost cinematic gesture: slightly menacing chords in horns and trombones contrast with exclamations in the strings. The music evolves, further contrasting winds and strings, and the Finale ends in an energetic motoric vein similar to that of the first movement. Only short moments in which strings play *sul ponticello* and the lone voice of solo oboe sings its sweet song, stand out in opposition to the power of the collective.

The Second Symphony, finished in January 1951, was performed for the first time at the opening of the First Festival of Polish Music later that year. It is in fact the composer's third symphony, Bacewicz having discarded the first one. She described her four-movement, perfectly balanced work as referring to the tradition of the great classical masters and encompassing her own musical discoveries.¹¹

Concerto for Large Symphony Orchestra

The beginning of the Concerto for Large Symphony Orchestra (1962) is startling – as is the whole composition itself. It presents a cluster-like, long-lasting sonority, built of two

semitones (D sharp – E – F) played *fortissimo* by horns, trombones, and percussion, as well as harp and piano, and slowly fading. This signal of a new era in her aesthetics reappears towards the end of the composition (B flat – B – C). Bacewicz herself regarded the work as part of the evolutionary process that led to the third stage of her compositional path.¹² The Concerto was also termed 'the first of the works of the great, last [...] synthesis', which was attained by means of new technical means.¹³ Whereas in the first movement we can occasionally observe traces of her earlier musical language, referring as far back as to the Overture (1943, CHSA 5316), the atmospheric second movement, *Largo*, fascinates with a new, timbral way of thinking. The motivic development is no longer the main driving force; instead, the composer is opening her imagination to the whole palette of abstract shapes and new colours obtainable through the sounds of vibraphone, xylophone, celesta, two harps, and piano, as well as tam-tams, bells, and other percussion instruments. Her inherent rhythmic temperament is freed to explore novel ways of percussive expression; the result could be

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 405.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 339

thought of as an almost ritualistic or theatrical use of sound events. It could have been inspired among others by Xenakis whose music she would describe with admiration in a letter to her brother Witold on 6 February 1963:

I know for example a work by Xenakis which is entirely in 2 / 4 [metre]. And what is not happening there! And what a final result! No musical phrases at all. Everyone is popping something, more or less frequently, one is completely independent of the other, etc., and all in all, it is interesting.¹⁴

However, both the second and the third movement are extremely individualistic. The third, *Vivo (giocoso)*, opening once again with an astonishing mixture of passages that are almost micropolyphonic and aleatoric, features at the beginning two harps with violins and spells different charms, bongo drums adding yet another novel rhythmic energy. The fourth movement, modestly termed *Allegro non troppo*, expands spatially to an unforeseen *avant-gardist* realm; it seems close to Witold Lutosławski's way of thinking, yet it amounts again to an absolutely free exploration of new and exciting possibilities.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 351 – 352.

Conclusion

In these three orchestral works, which create three distinct musical spheres, we observe how relentlessly Grażyna Bacewicz worked to propel her artistic and moral values through a dense net of obstacles – not only the political ones, but also those which she addressed in her ironic essay 'Dear Mister Grażyna Bacewicz'. After the performance of her Piano Concerto played by Stanisław Szpinalski in Vienna, a critic wrote that 'it is known that in the shadow of Grażyna Bacewicz stands the man who writes all the compositions for her'.¹⁵ Asking herself the question how to defend oneself in such a situation, she answers it in the last sentence of the essay: it is the proof that her music had found its way in the world independently, on its own terms.

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Born in Manchester in 1953, **Peter Donohoe** CBE studied at Chetham's School of Music and Leeds University before going on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time,

¹⁵ Grażyna Bacewicz, 'Dear Mister Grażyna Bacewicz', in her *Znak szczególny*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1974, p. 38.

for his musicianship, stylistic versatility, and commanding technique. He has performed with all the major London orchestras and, across the European continent, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Münchner Philharmoniker, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, Wiener Symphoniker, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and Berliner Philharmoniker. In the United States, he has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Cleveland Orchestra. In recent seasons he has appeared with the London Symphony Orchestra, Dresdner Philharmonie, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Symphony Orchestra, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Conductors such as Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Christoph Eschenbach, Daniel Harding, Neeme Järvi, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Sir Simon Rattle, Yevgeny Svetlanov, and Robin Ticciati have all sought to work with him. He has performed at festivals worldwide, among them the Edinburgh International Festival, Festival International de Piano de

La Roque d'Anthéron, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, made more than twenty appearances at the BBC Proms, and given concerts as far afield as South America, China, Hong Kong, and South Korea. As a chamber musician he gives numerous recitals internationally, continues working with his long-standing duo partner Martin Roscoe, and has collaborated with artists such as Raphael Wallfisch, Elizabeth Watts, and Noriko Ogawa. Peter Donohoe is in high demand as a jury member for international piano competitions around the world, his sizeable discography has won numerous awards and critical accolades, he is an honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities, and he was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the New Year's Honours List 2010.

At the heart of British musical life since its foundation, in 1930, the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** plays a central role at the BBC Proms, at the Royal Albert Hall, during which it performs at the First and Last Nights and appears regularly with leading conductors and soloists. It undertakes an annual season of concerts at the Barbican, where it is Associate Orchestra. Its commitment to contemporary music is demonstrated by a range of premières each season, as well as Total Immersion days,

devoted to specific composers or themes. Its richly varied programming includes well-loved works at the heart of classical music, newly commissioned pieces, collaborations with highly regarded musicians from the world of pop, and, in recent years, evenings of words and music featuring readings by well-known authors. The Orchestra maintains close relationships with its roster of conductors and guest artists: Sakari Oramo, Chief Conductor; Dalia Stasevska, Principal Guest Conductor; Semyon Bychkov, Günter Wand Conducting Chair; Sir Andrew Davis, Conductor Laureate; and Jules Buckley, Creative Artist in Association. It also makes regular appearances with the BBC Symphony Chorus. The vast majority of performances are broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Attendance is free to a number of studio recordings each season; these often feature up-and-coming new talent, including members of BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme. All broadcasts are available for thirty days on BBC Sounds and the Orchestra can also be seen on BBC TV and BBC iPlayer and heard on the BBC's online archive, Experience Classical. The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers, and BBC Proms, also offer enjoyable and innovative education and community activities and take a leading role in the BBC Ten Pieces and BBC

Young Composer programmes. [bbc.co.uk / symphonyorchestra](http://bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra)

The performances of **Sakari Oramo** combine crystalline structural cohesion with authority, elegance, and passion. Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Laureate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Honorary Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Partner with Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, guest conductor at the highest international level, and a prolific recording artist, he has also held the positions of Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1998 – 2008) and Principal Conductor of the West Coast Kookola Opera (2004 – 18). He is also an accomplished violinist who originally served as leader of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He has made notable appearances with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Wiener Symphoniker, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Staatskapelle Dresden, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

He continues to champion new and rarely performed works with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducting works by Carlos Simon,

Kaija Saariaho, Dora Pejačević, Grażyna Bacewicz, Doreen Carwithen, and Grace Mary Williams. He is a regular conductor at the BBC Proms – during the summer of 2024, he presented several Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, including The Last Night of the Proms and a collaboration with the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, and Royal College of Music, London, alongside performances of Holst's *The Cloud Messenger*, Kaija Saariaho's *Mirage*, and Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*. The 2024 / 25 season saw him newly announced as Artistic Partner with

the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln and embark on a tour with it to Japan. He returned to the NDR Elbphilharmonie, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra amidst his ongoing collaborations with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The prize-winning discography of Sakari Oramo includes recordings of Dora Pejačević's Piano Concerto and Symphony in F sharp minor with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the complete symphonies of Sibelius, Nielsen, and Schumann, as well as works by Busoni, Ravel, Ruud Langgaard, Kaija Saariaho, and Magnus Lindberg.

Sim Canetty-Clarke Photography



Peter Donohoe



Peter Donohoe during the recording sessions

Alexander James



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Sakari Oramo conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra during the recording sessions

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BACEWICZ: ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 2

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GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ (1909–1969)

ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 2

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Peter Donohoe piano*
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Igor Yuzefovich leader
Sakari Oramo



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