



ŁUKASZEWSKI

NOCTURNES

MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI, *piano*

PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI (b. 1968)

NOCTURNES

MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI, *piano*

Catalogue Number: GP953

Recording Dates: 30 and 31 January 2023

Recording Venue: Filharmonia Częstochowska im. Bronisława Hubermana, Poland

Producer and Engineer: Wojciech Marzec

Editor: Weronika Kwiecińska-Kurek

Piano: Steinway, Model D

Piano Technician: Paweł Kochanek

Booklet Notes: Dr Anna Stachura-Bogusławska

English Translation: Andrzej Wątroba

Publisher: Chopin University Press

Artist Photograph: Piotr Dłubak

Composer Photograph: Bartek Barczak

Cover Art: *Starry night sky with aurora over the hills* by Rastan (iStock 540582612)

This recording was made with the support of the research and development subsidy of the Jan Długosz
University in Częstochowa

Special thanks to the Częstochowa Philharmonic

NOCTURNES (2020)

1	No. 1. Alsephina	04:24
2	No. 2. Thiaki	04:27
3	No. 3. Larawag	04:30
4	No. 4. Aljanah	02:39
5	No. 5. Kraz	04:28
6	No. 6. Hassaleh	03:43
7	No. 7. Athebyne	02:58
8	No. 8. Imai	04:09
9	No. 9. Paikauhale	03:20
10	No. 10. Fawaris	04:07
11	No. 11. Fang	03:44
12	No. 12. Tianguan	02:15
13	No. 13. Xamidimura	03:19
14	No. 14. Pipirima	03:51
15	No. 15. Heze	09:07

TOTAL TIME: 60:53

PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI (b. 1968)

Paweł Łukaszewski graduated from the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw (currently the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music) in cello (1992, diploma in Andrzej Wróbel's class) and composition (1995, a *summa cum laude* graduate in Marian Borkowski's class). In 2000, he received his Doctor of Music degree, and in 2006, he was given a post-doctoral degree. In 2014, he was awarded the academic title of Professor of Musical Arts. In 2016–24 he held the position of Vice-Rector at his alma mater.

Paweł Łukaszewski is considered one of Poland's most outstanding creators of sacred music. The core of his achievements are vocal-instrumental and choral works. He was granted several awards and distinctions for his compositional work, including a distinction in 1992 at the Tadeusz Baird Young Composers' Competition for his orchestral piece *Arrampicata*; second prize at the Second Forum of Young Composers in Kraków for *Winterreise* for string orchestra; in 1995, first prize at the Music Academy Competition in Warsaw, also for *Arrampicata*; in 1998, second prize at the 27th International Florilege Vocal de Tours Competition in France for his piece *Crucem tuam adoramus, Domine* from the *Two Lenten Motets* cycle for mixed choir a cappella.

He is a winner of the Fryderyk Phonographic Industry Award, and has been honoured with the Award of the Mayor of Częstochowa for his compositional work (1995), the Knight's Cross (1998) and Officer's Cross (2025) of Polonia Restituta, the Award of Saint Brother Albert (2006), Bronze Medal 'Gloria Artis' (2011), Primate of Poland Award (2011), Choc de Classica (2014), Orphee d'Or – Prix Hector Berlioz (2014), Award of the Pontifical Council for Culture Per Artem ad Deum (2020), the Medal of the Centenary of Regained Independence (2021) and the Silver Medal 'Gloria Artis' (2022), and the Medal of the 100th anniversary of the Polish Association of Writers and Composers for the Stage (ZAIKS) (2022).

Paweł Łukaszewski's compositions have been performed at over a hundred festivals in Poland and abroad, and have been recorded on over 150 Polish and international albums released by labels such as Hyperion, Polskie Nagrania Edition, Acte Préalable, Musica Sacra Edition, DUX and Signum Records. Over 60 works have been published by Chester Novello, PWM, Edizioni Carrara, Walton and Lorenz Corporation, Edition Ferrimontana and Pana Musica Japan, among others.

NOCTURNES

Paweł Łukaszewski is associated primarily with religious works, and his choral and vocal-instrumental compositions are recognised and appreciated both in Poland and internationally. His compositional portfolio also includes instrumental pieces, including piano works such as *Akwarele* (1984–86), *Souvenir II* (1999, 2007), *Stadium* (2002), and *Nocturnes* (2020).

Completed in 2020, the *Nocturnes* for piano are a series of fifteen miniatures that can be performed separately. The titles of the individual pieces are inspired by the names of newly discovered bright stars. However, their sound layer is based on the material of earlier choral works (for example, the first nocturne *Alsephina* is based on the choral piece *Nunc dimittis*). The *Nocturnes* were dedicated to the composer's brother, Marcin Łukaszewski, pianist and composer, who first performed them in the autumn of 2022.

The *Nocturnes* are short compositions inspired by the poetic mood of the night. They transport the listener to this extraordinary time, shrouded in an aura of mystery – on the one hand, romantic and beautiful, but on the other, filled with melancholy and anxiety of the heart. The first examples of this genre in Polish piano music are two nocturnes by Maria Szymanowska: *Le murmure* ('The Whisper'), which is closer to a quiet prelude, and *Nocturne in B flat major*, marking the start of Romanticism with its mood and range of emotions. Some of the most beautiful examples of these

piano pieces, which are the quintessence of Romantic expression and deep feeling, can be found in the works of Fryderyk Chopin. The master from Żelazowa Wola wrote nocturnes almost throughout his entire life, bringing them to the heights of 'night' poetry. Chopin's nocturnes, including the most famous, the *Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1*, continue to delight and are perennial favourites among pianists worldwide.

Gazing at the billions of years of stars and fascinated by the vastness of the sky, Łukaszewski decided to take his 'songs of the night' to the cosmos. The individual miniatures of this 'stellar cycle' received titles derived from the names of stars: as many as five from the Scorpius constellation (Larawag, Paikauhale, Fang, Xamidimura, Pipirima), two from the Cygnus constellation (Aljanah and Fawaris) and one each from the constellations Vela (Alsephina), Grus (Tiaki), Corvus (Kraz), Auriga (Hassaleh), Crux [Southern Cross] (Imai), Taurus (Tianguan) and Virgo (Heze).

Rendering the night atmosphere with piano sounds, the composer was as far away as possible from fairy-tale illustrations full of luminous flashes. Therefore, it is fruitless to look for spectacular and impressive virtuosity on the pages of the score. These *Nocturnes* are intimate and atmospheric paintings, drawing the listener into the world of poetic expression, depth of expression, and the beauty and contemplation of space, achieved thanks to the subtle, often even neo-tonal harmony, the predominance of chord textures, the melodic lines, and the narrative's moderate dynamics and calm pace.

The musical journey begins with *Alsephina* – the second brightest star in the Vela constellation. This miniature is like lifting one's head and being amazed by the cosmic view for the first time. Almost all of the composition space is filled with chord verticals with diatonic contours, only occasionally coloured by second chords. They sound unhurried, with long values and delicate dynamics, allowing us to listen to each multi-sound structure.

Contemplation of sound, both a single sound or interval, or a vertical structure saturated with multiple sounds, will be present in each subsequent miniature. The composer paints a cosmic landscape with pastels of freely flowing diatonic chords, empty fifths and even single sound lines. Because of this, the listener is immersed in the piano's bright, almost unreal colours and is subjected to the unhurried flow of the narrative. However, there is also a darker, more disturbing side to the cosmos. It is woven of multi-sounds with an almost cluster density and flickering courses filled with groups of irregular values, often violently interrupted by moments of silence.

The work ends with the final sequences of the miniature *Heze* – a white star almost twice as large and eighteen times brighter than the Sun. Multi-sound constructions repeated in long values gradually die out in increasingly quiet dynamics, finally dissolving into the abyss of cosmic vastness.

Paweł Łukaszewski's *Nocturnes* give the listener the impression of a highly emotional, even intimate, musical experience, as if touching the sacred part of the universe.

Dr Anna Stachura-Bogusławska
English translation: Andrzej Wątroba

MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI ON PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI'S *NOCTURNES*

I am fascinated by Paweł Łukaszewski's *Nocturnes* for several reasons: these works continue and develop the tradition of masters of piano music such as John Field, Fryderyk Chopin and Gabriel Fauré; they are inspired by Łukaszewski's own religious music which gives them an added depth; and the composer's references to outer space in the titles inspire both performer and listener to expand their imagination.

However, what turned out to be the most fascinating thing for me later on was the discovery of the sound world of the *Nocturnes* – the emerging chords, motifs or individual sounds that Łukaszewski had created.

The basic material of this cycle, however, is not the piano sound itself, but the time in which it takes place. It may seem that the lazily flowing music is devoid of action, but this is only an appearance – each nocturne is named after a star. Within an hour the listener undergoes a cosmic journey covering a distance of light years... or maybe it is just a quiet night walk, combined with observing the stars in the sky?

Łukaszewski entrusts the piano with conducting the narrative in several layers of sound at the same time, which encourages flexible treatment of the tempo allowing each motif to be presented with slightly different energy. Additionally, in many of the nocturnes there are singing phrases, as if from the era of the piano cantilena, combined with structured, quasi-choral chords. This can be heard most clearly in *No. 6. Hassaleh* and *No. 14. Pipirima*.



PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI
© Bartek Barczak

MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI

Maciej Zagórski is a pianist and teacher, and is a laureate of the Paderewski Piano Competition in Bydgoszcz (1986) and the Polish Piano Festival in Słupsk (1990). He has a particular interest in Polish piano music from the pre-Chopin era and in contemporary works, with a repertoire that also includes numerous pieces by Chopin, the complete transcriptions by Bach/Busoni, and a selection of sonatas by Schubert, as well as others. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras including the South Bend Symphony, Sinfonia Varsovia, the Warsaw Philharmonic and the Częstochowa Philharmonic, and in solo and chamber music recitals in Europe, Japan, Palestine, Russia and the United States. He has recorded two recitals of French, German and Polish songs with mezzo-soprano Katarzyna Suska.

Maciej Zagórski studied in Częstochowa at the Music School, in Warsaw at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music, and in Vienna at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst. His teachers were Henryka Zasempa-Kozera, Kazimierz Gierżod, Maria Stojek, Krystyna Borucińska and Walter Fleischmann. He also attended piano masterclasses with Peter Eicher, Wiktor Mershanow, Rudolf Kehrer, Lev Natochenny and Arkady Aronov.

For ten years, Zagórski has worked with the Piano Department of the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. He has been associated with the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa since 1991 (a university professor since 2008) where he currently serves as President of the Music Council.



MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI
© Piotr Dłubak

PAWEŁ ŁUKASZEWSKI (b. 1968)

NOCTURNES

Award-winning Polish composer, Paweł Łukaszewski, is one of today's most distinctive creators of contemporary sacred music. The *Nocturnes* for piano, based on some of his own sacred pieces, are inspired by the cosmos, with each nocturne named after a newly discovered bright star in constellations including Vela, Scorpius and the Southern Cross. Łukaszewski takes the listener on a journey through the beauty of the night sky with these intimate and atmospheric sound paintings.



MACIEJ ZAGÓRSKI

NOCTURNES (2020)

1	No. 1. Alsephina	04:24	9	No. 9. Paikauhale	03:20
2	No. 2. Thiaki	04:27	10	No. 10. Fawaris	04:07
3	No. 3. Larawag	04:30	11	No. 11. Fang	03:44
4	No. 4. Aljanah	02:39	12	No. 12. Tianguan	02:15
5	No. 5. Kraz	04:28	13	No. 13. Xamidimura	03:19
6	No. 6. Hassaleh	03:43	14	No. 14. Pipirima	03:51
7	No. 7. Athebyne	02:58	15	No. 15. Heze	09:07
8	No. 8. Imai	04:09			

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 60:53



© & © 2025 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd. Manufactured in Germany. Unauthorised copying, hiring, lending, public performance and broadcasting of this recording is prohibited. Booklet notes in English. Distributed by Naxos.

The Polish booklet note and artist bio can be accessed online at www.naxos.com/notes/GP953.htm
Tekst komentarza i biografia artysty w języku polskim dostępne online: www.naxos.com/notes/GP953.htm

Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd, 3rd Floor, Forum House, 41-51 Brighton Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6YS, UK. info.NREU@naxos.com
Contact: Naxos Deutschland Musik & Video Vertriebs-GmbH, Gruber Str. 46b, DE-85586 Poing, Germany. info@naxos.de

GP953

