

# Agustin Anievas

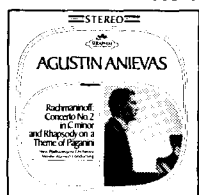
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## More From Poland

by OLIVER DANIEL

Undoubtedly, the esthetic suppression enforced on the Poles by both Hitler and Stalin for over a quarter of our century is responsible for their avid preoccupation with the doings of the international avant-garde. As late as the period between 1949 and 1955, the "highest commandment" for the composer was to make his music distinctly national and align it with national cultural policy. Today, however, the Poles are emphatically independent, esthetically if not politically.

Josef Patkowski, a young musicologist who recently visited many American electronic centers and participated in the International Music Congress of UNESCO held in New York and Washington this past September, opened the first experimental electronic studio in Poland in 1958. It was immediately used by practically all of the younger composers—and Polish music will never be the same again. Two years later, when Penderecki produced his *Hiroshima Threnody*, its quasi-electronic string glissandi and aleatoric manipulation of blocks of sound seemed new and arresting then, but frightfully easy to copy. Some of his followers seem to be content to turn them into national clichés. But it is still a relief to be spared the tedium of the dodecaphonic doldrums that the Poles seem to avoid successfully.

There is a set of five records chronicling the Eleventh Autumn Festival held in Warsaw last year that is currently available from SESAC, 10 Columbus Circle (mono only, \$20). Among the fifteen works, by as many composers, we find such regulars as Tadeusz Baird, Grazyna Bacewicz, Tomasz Sikorski, Witold Lutoslawski, and Wojciech Kilar. Among the newer names of particular interest we find Zbigniew Rudzinski, Jan Hawel, and Andrzej Dobrowolski. Penderecki, whose spirit seems to permeate much of what his colleagues are doing, is curiously omitted.

From the newcomers we have *Movements Musicaux II* for Orchestra by Rudzinski. While its impact at first hearing is considerable, it does not hang together musically. It is theatrical and dramatically suggestive, and whatever the Polish equivalent of Hollywood might be, that is the descriptive word for this music. As an orchestrator, Rud-

zinski is first-rate, and our own manufacturers of such musical yardage might pick up some useful ideas from him.

Spawned by the late Viennese school, Tadeusz Baird's Four Songs for Mezzo-Soprano and Chamber Orchestra are rich as a Sacher torte and as filled with yearning as Alt Wien itself. The vocal line is far more natural than much recent music woven on Berg's loom, and it is sung intensely by a good but slightly hooty mezzo named Krystyna Szostek-Radkova. Poland's enormously gifted woman composer, Grazyna Bacewicz, offers a big side-filling work called *Contradictions* for Chamber Orchestra. She is, unfortunately, always at the mercy of inherited ideas, but she handles them so well that they ring with the deceptive sound of newness.

The second disc is a grab bag of odds and ends. First a Quartettino for Mezzo-Soprano and Strings by Krzysztof Meyer that, despite, its title, includes both flute and piano. It is in the current international style and is quite undistinguished. Its chief virtues lie in some expert flute playing by an unidentified member of the Zagreb Ensemble and some fine flutelike singing by Anna Malewicz-Madey.

Two piano works follow. First a sonata by Tomasz Sikorski, son of the distinguished Kazimierz Sikorski, which is so involved with sonic effects and delicate pedal changes that it fails to sustain interest. It is performed dedicatedly by the composer, but he seems to be more concerned with the means than the message. Composer-pianist Zygmunt Krauze performs his *Esquisse* with intense brilliance. With Messiaen-like flourishes he tackles the opening, simultaneously rattling out rapid flutters on the highest and lowest notes of the keyboard—a kind of duet for wren and elephant. He alternates his phrases, which are extended sound segments, with abrupt silences, and achieves both mind- and ear-catching quality. Its chief defect is its extended length and interspersed improvisational doodling.

A work for soprano and orchestra, the *Solonne* by Wojciech Kilar picks things up considerably. His fusion of various timbres on a single tone, a device used brilliantly by Elliott Carter, comes on like festive declamations punctuating washes of string sound. It is terse, dramatic, and arresting, and to that add the splendid performance of Orchestre Philharmonique de l'ORTF de Paris, which uses soprano Malewicz-Madey like an in-

strumentalist. Kilar is one of the more exciting composers, and his *Solenne* is decidedly worthwhile.

The excellent orchestra of Bratislava does superbly with the bright, flashy *Contrasts* of Jan Hawel. It is a clever piece, in which he momentarily lets all orchestral hell break loose, then meanders about as bewildered as Alice in some over-orchestrated rabbit hole. And, believe me, that indicates contrast. If composer Hawel has not accomplished all he intends to, we need not worry. He is still one of the younger ones and, obviously, one of the musically bright ones. He bears watching.

Kasimierz Sikorski, born in Zurich in 1895, is one of the older composers and sounds anachronistically among the younger and more venturesome Poles. But in his own way he is a brilliant professional. His Clarinet Concerto, written in 1947, is a virtuoso showpiece, played admirably by Sawa Dymitrow, who possesses a quite spectacular technique. Its stylistic allegiance is to Shostakovich and Prokofiev, and it can take its place beside works by these Russian colleagues without any mock modesty. Clarinetists who are looking for a big display piece to show their technical wares might give attention to Sikorski. And, by way of information, he has also written concertos for flute, horn, and trumpet.

Boris Schaffer, a composer born in 1929 who is credited with having written the first Polish dodecaphonic work, presents here a Trio for Flute, Harp, Viola, and Tape, which sounds at moments as much like an air-raid signal as anything we find in Penderecki's *Threnody*. Schaffer has listened well to the sounds going on all about him and has appropriated them aptly. The question that plagues one is where sound effects begin and music leaves off, and even whether music is not merely an innocent bystander. But he catches one's attention forcibly at times by doing many things that our own younger composers seem to be doing much better.

Earlier works by Henryk Gorecki have not particularly impressed me. He has seemed like such an obvious band-wagon jumper that I have tended

to discredit him. In this current series he is represented by a really powerful piece, *La Musiquette II*, which seems far more original and personal than his earlier works. It proclaims itself loudly and vigorously; it is strong without being ugly, and brawny without being brutal. Its brevity is appropriate, and that does not mean "Thank God it's over!" It deserves the word "outstanding."

Wlodzimierz Kotonski's *Play of Sounds* for magnetic tape is like so much other tape music. Playful, yes, but it is too long and, save for an amusing bucolic section that sounds quite like rutting sows and kindred denizens, the piece lacks individual flavor. Only slightly more interesting is another post-Penderecki sally, this time by Andrzej Dobrowolski. The piece is Music for Two Wind Groups and Two Loudspeakers. The combined use of instrumental layers, overlaying pre-taped sounds and noises, is theatrically effective but musically superficial and somewhat juvenile in its thundering background. It's rather frightening how easily much of this can be done and how difficult any qualitative assessment becomes.

Lutoslawski picks this series up considerably. His Second Symphony does it. He is a masterful writer and has a profile of his own. What seem like

unrelated experimental effects when used by his lesser colleagues fuse into viable musical material when he employs them. The work is in two movements. The first is marked "Hesitant," the second "Direct"; both indications expressively cue in the listener. The first, while altogether free and unbound, has inherently a sense of form; the second, which opens with a protracted aleatoric boiling of sounds evoking the controlled chaos of Hovhaness and the roaring confusion of Ives's Fourth Symphony, extends itself beyond its suggested content. Since many of the aleatoric segments are dependent durationally upon the conductor, one might suggest that Lutoslawski, who conducted this performance, got lost in the wonder of his own confusion. Yet his work has a sense of coherence, logic, and breadth that raises it above most of his Polish colleagues. Lutoslawski may well become one of the most significant European composers of this century's declining days.

#### LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1b, 2j, 3h, 4d, 5a, 6n, 7m; 8e, 9c, 10f, 11g, 12k, 13l, 14i.

Answer to Wit Twister, page 40: salver, slaver, ravel, lavers.

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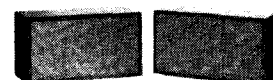
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## Festival at Royan

Few sites appear less predestined for a festival than the small Atlantic town of Royan, which has little to offer visitors but sandy beaches, wide expanses of ocean, and tall dunes covered with broom and pine.

It has always been a popular summer seaside resort, but in April few Parisians would consider bathing in the icy waters of the Atlantic. In consequence, the streets of the town were deserted at Easter until six years ago, when a former mayor decided to start a music festival. Audiences were sparse at first. When the Parrennin Quartet performed there in 1964, only twenty people were present, and for several more years, only specialists—critics, composers, and publishers—attended. How, then, did the present miracle come about, filling the halls to overflowing with enthusiastic and mainly young audiences?

The Paris Domaine Musical has undoubtedly succeeded in creating a new audience in search of more and more new music. This breakthrough seems to have amazed some of those visiting Royan for the first time—particularly the Americans. But both the latest festival and the Journées de Musique Contemporaine held in Paris last October have revealed that there are in France many young people who may be acquainted with baroque music (because of its “popular” arrangements and its easy rhythms), but who know nothing of classical music and so stay away from it. To them, the contemporary musical idiom seems as natural as pop or op art. They will listen to Xenakis, Berio, and Stockhausen as readily as to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, or the Mothers of Invention. Whether or not so-called serious musicians approve, there is no denying it.

A common trend of European music festivals at present is to select a dominant theme or personality on which the whole program is built. This year's themes were the dance and Italy. Together with an excellent Hindu dancer, Yamini Krishnamurti, making her first appearance outside India, the main festival attraction was undoubtedly Maurice Béjart, one of the most forceful personalities in the world of dance. Béjart has become a legend in France, especially since, like Boulez, he has gone into exile (in Brussels).

Royan's four Béjart premieres can best be described as “chamber” ballets, especially devised for the casino's small stage. In one of them, Rosella Hightower, performing with her daughter, Dominique Robier, made a comeback in a *pas de deux* based on the theme of motherhood. Despite the high artistic level of the evening, and the fabulous solo danced by Paolo Bartoluzzi to Xenakis's *Nomos Alpha* for cello solo, Béjart's most impressive contribution was probably his color TV film, the star of which was the superb Argentinian dancer Jorg Donn, and an hour-long morning session during which the entire troupe improvised on themes suggested by the audience. Breathtaking precision, iron discipline, flawless technique, and a complete unity of style—which only a strong personality such as Béjart can create—made this a memorable experience.

In the realm of music, the star was Luciano Berio. Twelve of his works were performed, most of them already known both in the U.S. and in France. It was fascinating to witness the amazing evolution from his early, post-Webernian, extremely intellectual style to the expansive, highly colored, dramatic intensity of his latest works, such as *Sinfonia*. It is also irritating that such an extraordinarily gifted musician should have succumbed to facility and performed half-finished works such as *El Mar La Mar* (for two voices and five instruments), *Sinfonia* (which, despite its tremendous and fascinating vitality, clearly lacks a finale), and the new *Cela veut dire que* (for three voices, vocal ensemble, and magnetic tape), which stretches to forty-five minutes material adequate for a five- or ten-minute work.

Although Yannis Xenakis is not in the main stream of contemporary European music, as exemplified for many years by the Domaine Musical (Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, Pousseur, Amy), he scored one of his first major public successes at Royan with *Terretektorh*, a “specialized” work conducted there in 1966 by Hermann Scherchen. Though much has been written, especially by Xenakis himself, on the technique of “stochastic” music, most of it is utterly unintelligible to the layman. Yet, the effect of Xenakis's music on the public is immense, immediate, indisputable. Last year *Nuits* (for thirteen solo voices), this

year *Nomos Gamma* (for ninety-eight musicians, grouped around the conductor in star formation, with the public seated between the branches of the star) aroused great enthusiasm and was immediately encored. *Nomos Gamma* is a musical cataclysm, a kind of primeval earthquake, a contemporary *Rite of Spring*. It stirs, it shatters, it terrifies the listener with its stony grandeur and its cosmic loneliness. Like much of Xenakis's work, it has little in common with any other music; it does not expose a sequence of musical ideas, but uses a logic of its own. It is conceived—and should be listened to—as a complete whole, not in time, but in space; not the space of a concert hall, but interplanetary space, which man has just started to explore.

While Xenakis has inherited the tradition of Greek philosophers, who extended human thought to the dimensions of the universe, Sylvano Bussotti, true to Italian humanism, searches for the universal within man himself. In *Tre Frammenti all' Italia* he proves himself to be a true descendant of Monteverdi and Gesualdo.

Berio's *Sinfonia* provided an excellent example of the “collage” which some composers like to practice nowadays. Xenakis brilliantly demonstrated his stochastic techniques in *Nomos Gamma*, while in *Archipel II* for string quartet, André Boucourechliev remained faithful (like Luis de Pablo in his brilliant *Imaginario III* performed at Royan last year) to the aleatory principle used by him in *Archipel I* (for two pianos and percussion). Bulgarian born, but naturalized French, Boucourechliev is a discerning critic who specializes in Romantic music, about which he has written several books. He is also an intensely personal composer. In his new quartet, much is left to the performers. In turn, they decide which course to follow—that is, the order of the printed elements and sometimes even the tempi and dynamic nuances. Although it does not strike the ear immediately, Boucourechliev has quoted a number of phrases from quartet literature (Beethoven, Webern, Bartók, and Berg) and alternated compulsory passages with others from which the players may choose at will, each one indicating his choice to the others. This might have resulted in disorder and confusion, but, in fact, the elements are so devised and their possible combinations so well planned that all remains clear, transparent, highly expressive, and intellectually as well as aurally satisfying. Boucourechliev is a new name to keep in mind and one of the revelations of Royan.

—H. L. DE LA GRANGE.