

## Chapter 2

# The Diversity of Artistic Work as a Response to the Needs of Contemporary Culture: On Adam Walaciński's Oeuvre

Ewa Czachorowska-Zygor

*My art is very simple: I speak to the viewer in my own language  
and I can only wish for it to be understood.*

(Andrei Tarkovsky)

**Abstract** The multitude of stimuli and impulses “attacking” the modern man most often than not exposes him to the risk of getting lost in the labyrinth of various experiences. What should the artist’s attitude be in that situation? Should he choose the path of increased “specialization” in his work or maybe quite the opposite—attempt to express his own personality in the most diversified way possible, thanks to medium diversity reaching—potentially—a larger number of listeners? The second of the above-mentioned solutions was chosen by Adam Walaciński. As a composer of autonomous and functional music (theatre and film), a publicist, a music critic and a teacher, he acquired the ability to adapt the type of an artistic statement and the applied workshop solutions to the listener. The multitude of creative interests and the readiness to take up new challenges made his achievements—creating an artistic integrity—stand out within many fields. It can be an attempt to provide a creative answer to the needs and challenges of contemporary culture. Expressing himself with the use of various means, Walaciński tries to find the listener making him aware of the abundance of reality that surrounds us.

In the contemporary world, one can sometimes feel lost. The relativity of values, along with virtualization, media and technology impacting almost every field of life, make it increasingly difficult to correctly evaluate the information and stimuli which reach us. The perspective of conflict between a drive towards specialization and the common expectation of vast and varied knowledge leads to the search for an answer to these challenges. Contrary to what may seem, this situation refers not only to science and technology, but also to art in a broad sense. What is the artist’s

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E. Czachorowska-Zygor (✉)  
Academy of Music in Kraków, Kraków, Poland  
e-mail: ewaczach@poczta.onet.pl

position in the contemporary world? What makes him distinct; what are his methods of reaching a potential audience? We can assume that in the era of *multi-* and *inter-*, there are many possible answers. Adam Walaciński's artistic work depicts one of them.

## 2.1 Adam Walaciński: A Few Biographical Facts

The composer, publicist, music critic and teacher, born in Kraków in 1928, was interested in music since childhood. Initially, he became a violinist in the Kraków Radio Orchestra, directed by Jerzy Gert (from 1948), but he soon discovered his own path, which led to composition; yet his "restless spirit" wouldn't allow him to take up regular compositional studies. Walaciński found a soul mate in Stefan Kisielewski—one of the most distinct figures on the Polish music scene of the time, known for his sharp mind and contrary sense of humor. Private lessons and meetings led to a long-term friendship between the pair. The freedom which Kisielewski granted his student corresponded with Walaciński's variety of interests, and the need for the new and avant-garde in music. Thanks to his mentor, the young artist entered the world of film (*Winter Twilight* by Stanisław Lenartowicz, 1956), which as a consequence began the dual-track activity typical for the composer (that soon extended further, to music for theatre). The beginning of the 1960s revealed yet another sphere of interest for Walaciński—a love of writing. He began cooperation—as it later turned out, long-term—with PWM (Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne/Polish Music Publishing House), and also became known for his observations and reviews of musical life (in *Dziennik Polski* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*).

With such vast experience, his next developmental step seemed natural: Walaciński became a lecturer. His potential was noticed by Krzysztof Penderecki, who worked as rector of the Academy of Music in Kraków at the time; he invited Walaciński to cooperate with the Academy in 1972. Practical knowledge of theatre and film music also led to cooperation with the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków. Working with young people helped the artist develop a new perspective and a full synthesis of theory and practice.

## 2.2 Composing—The Essence of Life

### 2.2.1 *Autonomous Music*

Walaciński's road to his own artistic identity was long, and despite various turns, one may discern a distinct leading thread. Its most characteristic qualities are—on the one hand, the coexistence of two seemingly different, but in fact complementary worlds—autonomous and incidental (film and theatre) music. On the other hand,

the artist had, in his own words, “an easiness of entering various styles” accompanied by reaching for diverse techniques and solutions. Over the course of time, these two qualities developed along parallel tracks, though in the 1960s and 1970s, film and theatre music prevailed. The gradual loosening of these connections in the 1980s enabled the composer to focus on his autonomous work. Its distinct quality was its inability to be framed within a particular style. It begins in the 1950s with broadly defined avant-garde fascinations; by the mid-1980s, the musical language gradually became simplified. The first period of Walaciński’s artistic activity is marked with twelve-tone technique and serialism (e.g. *A Lyric Before Falling Asleep* for soprano, flute and two pianos, 1963; *Canzona* for cello, piano and tape, 1966), sonorism (e.g. *Sequenze per orchestra con flauto concertante*, 1963; *Dichromia* for flute and piano, 1967), and aleatorism (e.g. *Allaloo* for piano, 1970; *Ariel* for flute and harpsichord, 1970). In the second period, the composer returned to melodicism and broadly defined tonality (exemplified by *Time’s Spiral* for winds and percussion, 2000; *Garden Symphonies* for orchestra, 2003; *Canti notturni* for alto saxophone and cello, 2008).

Despite the aforementioned diversity, one can define a set of qualities describing Walaciński’s compositional individuality, which built his stylistic idiom. A **preference for chamber music** and the **avoidance of grand musical forms** are the most noticeable of these. The artist describes himself as a “natural born chamber composer”, and his oeuvre seems to confirm this. Among almost 60 compositions, 30 were written for various chamber ensembles, 10 for solo instruments, while only 14 are orchestral works.

*Musica da camera*—in various instrumental guises—is the core of his work. But even when he operates with large line-ups, Walaciński seems to think in a chamber manner, dividing the ensemble into reduced, complementary groups. This helps when working in smaller forms, and in the case of larger ones he creates segmented constructions based on juxtaposition, or arranged sequential elements without forming a coherent dramatic continuum.

**Timbre** plays a special role in Walaciński’s compositional thought, which in the avant-garde period (the 1960s and 1970s) corresponded with sonorism, which developed in Polish music of the time. Yet Walaciński was far removed from the radicalism of early Penderecki or Górecki. The centre of his attention remained non-traditional methods of extracting sound, searching for new sound qualities through the contrast of articulations (e.g. *A Lyric Before Falling Asleep*, *Dichromia*, *Allaloo*), or gathering instruments into groups of unconventional sound quality—both as independent ensembles, and as instrumental sets within larger orchestrations (e.g. *Sequenze per orchestra da camera con flauto concertante*, 1963; *Divertimento interrotto* for 13 musicians, 1974).

A fascination with the Second Viennese School, noticeable even during studies with Kisielewski, soon developed into a practical interest in **twelve-tone technique** and **serialism** (during the 1960s and 1970s). Yet Schönberg’s concept was only a starting point for Walaciński: theoretical interest determined his own model, far from rigid and with a distinctly free nature. Serial sequences appear there only in particular voices or short sections, without becoming the base for total organization

of the composition (*A Lyric Before Falling Asleep, Sequenze per orchestra da camera con flauto concertante, Canzona*). For practical reasons, the composer decided to introduce his own terms, like “diverging series” or “constellations of limited transposition”. In the post-avant-garde period, using full twelve-tone material led him to the development of neotonal, neomodality or tone centre-based thinking. The motifs appearing in Walaciński’s music of the time include using certain intervals which enabled him to build “sound constellations”, crucial for vertical and horizontal thinking (*Dramma e burla* for symphonic orchestra, 1988; *Canti notturni* for alto saxophone and cello, 2008).

One of the strongest elements of Walaciński’s attitude is **polystylism**, often including musical humor or grotesque (*Valsette a la carte* for cello and double bass, 1990; *Duo facile* for violin and viola, 1994; *Un poco di Schubert* for string orchestra, 2001). Openness for various styles and musical conventions allowed him not only to freely utilize elements of various techniques within one composition, but also to use seamless, subtle allusions and references. Correct reading of these allows for recognition of the basic sources of inspiration which shaped the artist’s personality and his aesthetic and technical attitudes (Bartok, Webern and Boulez).

### 2.2.2 *Incidental Music*

Walaciński’s first film soundtrack came into being—quite accidentally—in 1956. Stefan Kisielewski received an offer to compose music for one of the Polish *New Wave* school films. “Kisiel” could not accept the commission for various reasons, so he recommended his student instead. Stanisław Lenartowicz’s *Winter Twilight* received very good reviews; critics were particularly approving of the young composer’s music, which soon brought Walaciński closer to the world of film. Incidental compositions prevailed in his work for a number of years, which resulted in numerous commissions, diverse in genre and style. Among over 120 compositions, one can find music for feature films, short animations (including those for children), experimental shorts and TV productions (feature films and series).<sup>1</sup>

Long-term collaboration with both cinema and theatre allowed the artist not only to create his individual style within the medium of incidental music, but also define his views on the subject, on the method of implementing music in a film or stage play, and on its position in the work. In an interview, he said:

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<sup>1</sup>On the film set, Walaciński had the opportunity to work with some of the most important Polish directors, including Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Lenartowicz, Jerzy Passendorfer and Jan Batory; he participated in the creation of films now considered classics of Polish cinema (e.g. Kawalerowicz’s *Mother Joan of the Angels*, *Pharaoh* and *Death of a President*). His music received many awards, including 1st Degree State Group Award for *Pharaoh* by Kawalerowicz (1966), the special award of the Second Biennial of the Arts for Children in Poznań for the music to animation *Behind the Seventh Fairytale* by Lidia Hornicka (1975).

I think that music in film is functional, hence we judge it according to different criteria than an independent piece of music. The issues of musical language and of its innovativeness are secondary. [...] I don't think that one should forcibly impose avant-garde means onto film music [...] yet one shouldn't also remain in a narrow stylistic frame. [...] If there's such an opportunity, I like to use means as close as possible to concert music, but I still maintain that the composer's leading principle should be blending into the entire film (Walaciński 1965).

In the light of these words, and with awareness of the interdependence between the spheres of his activity, one can understand better the connection between autonomous and incidental music in Walaciński's work.

Due to the specificity of a film work, remarks about its sound dimension can be twofold: either referring to the music itself, or to the music in connection with the image. An attempt to point out the essential features of incidental music (in its musical aspects) would be similar to enlisting the features of a composer's style for autonomous music. In the first place, the noteworthy elements are the **instrumental** and **textural richness**, alongside the **polystylism**. These qualities play an especially important role in film compositions for larger ensembles, written with grandeur, which are usually accompanied by textural and stylistic variety. In such situations, Walaciński uses very different means within the same film: fragments based on traditional solutions appear alongside those relating to the avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s; there also occur elements of stylization and archaism, inspirations from jazz, and distant echoes of impressionist, expressionist and neoclassical thinking (e.g. *The Real End of the Great War*, dir. Kawalerowicz, 1957; *The Depot of the Dead*, dir. Czesław Petelski, 1958). This proves that Walaciński understands the visual dimension as a stimulant for the choice of means in the auditory dimension; his effortless use of these means confirms his mastery of composition.

From a film point of view, the most important things seem to be the relationships and connections between the visual and the sound layers. In this respect, Walaciński's incidental music seems to refuse a simple **illustration** (aside from in the animations for children), instead connecting music and image in the sphere of dramaturgy. Due to such an understanding of music, both on a macro- (in reference to the film in its entirety) and micro-level (in reference to particular scenes), it becomes an element co-shaping the dramatic continuum of the film. The means by which image and sound are connected is also worth drawing attention to, as this can work on many levels: from the simplest state, in which music plays a diegetic role (as part of the depicted world), through a more advanced level, on which sound aids development of the emotional dimension of the image (through parallel or counterpoint means), or even the situation where the sound dimension enriches the semantic sphere of the film, thereby referring to the viewer's own interpretation.

Among the many functions of music in film, Walaciński often employed it as means of **pinpointing the time and space** of the action, which seems to be of particular importance in the historical genre (e.g. the *a cappella* psalms in *Mother Joan of the Angels*; the anthem chants for a *cappella* male choir in *Pharaoh*). The aim of achieving a possibly suggestive message, developing a **common concept between director and composer**, seems to have been of importance. The films

made together with Kawalerowicz (*Mother Joan of the Angels*, 1960; *Pharaoh*, 1966) are exemplary: in both of them, construction of the sound and visual layers was subject to the same principle of limiting the means. For the music, this determined the utilization of only vocal forms, accompanying just some of the scenes (so in this way the music was also limited by time constraints).

In the search for new forms of self-expression, Walaciński developed an interest in other areas of art. As a consequence, this led him to experimental short films, which are an interesting example of the merging of autonomous and incidental music. They led the composer to disclose his individual preferences of style and technique. Music here could develop more independently from the image than in the case of feature films, thus building its own narrative (Andrzej Pawłowski's *Cineforms*, 1957 and *Here and There*, 1957).

### 2.3 Journalism: Walaciński's "Pendant for the Pen"

From the beginning of his artistic activity, Walaciński tried to express himself through various media. Music—in different guises—was certainly the most important of these, but the written word soon followed. Almost simultaneously with his first composing experiences, the artist began his cooperation with PWM (early 1950s), co-edited the *PWM Journal (Informator PWM)*, and later—the *20th Century Composers* section in the *PWM Music Encyclopedia*. He also wrote for *Forum Musicum*. At the other end of his activity appear his reviews for *Dziennik Polski*, columns and essays in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Życie Literackie* and *Gazeta Krakowska*, concert programmes, and columns written for the Kraków Philharmonic and Kraków Radio Orchestra. Thanks to these undertakings, Walaciński became recognized not only in the narrow musicological community, but also among popular readers. Aware of his readers' diverse expectations, he used various forms of expression—reviews, columns, essays, theses and polemics.

Even though the subject range of his articles remained broad—which attests to the range and scope of his oeuvre—certain topics seemed to attract Walaciński's special attention: the Second Viennese School and twelve-tone technique, Karol Szymanowski's works, Polish violin music from the mid-19th and 20th centuries, and mid-20th century music. Specialist critique was always accompanied by thoughtful and coherent argumentation: the author's opinions were presented with care for language—its stylistic and aesthetic values. Accurate observations, a colorful style, and the ease of a "natural born storyteller" seem to be crucial to his reviews and columns, determining their accessibility and communicativeness. The discourse was enriched with many digressions, a note of humor—even irony. The context built around the main topic proved the author to be erudite, with vast general knowledge, which made him able to convey the wider context of a particular subject.

The fact that Walaciński's interests as a composer emerged in his writing is proof of the interrelation of both areas of expression. The artist's active search for

theoretical and practical solutions in both indicates that he was aware of their interconnectivity and complementation, which became necessary for developing a coherent aesthetic and philosophical attitude.

## 2.4 Walaciński's Diversity in Creativity

Walaciński's variety of artistic activities makes it difficult to, plainly speaking, "pigeonhole" him. The artist is aware of this—in an interview, he said:

I've always done various things. I could have played violin all my life, I had a secure job, but sitting at the stand was not enough for me. I decided to jump into the unknown and start composing. I became recognized thanks to film music, but I didn't let myself be dragged into it up to my ears. I was invited to Łódź, so I could stay closer to the film milieu, but I refused it. I maintained a certain distance. My next springboard was academic work. I also kept writing, not only reviews and columns, but serious stuff, too; I collaborated on Szymanowski's collected works, I ran the *20th Century Composers* section in the *PWM Music Encyclopedia*. Some people joked that this duality was Kisielewski's heritage (Baran 2001: 35).

Was a career consisting of so many complementary paths accidental, or rather a conscious choice made by a young, but already experienced composer? Walaciński's words seem to suggest the former. Multi-layered activity, which marks his work from the beginning, was followed by the refusal of imposing limitations on himself, or cutting off past experiences, even though—naturally—accents were put on various things, depending on the period.

In search of the means which would express his vision in the most accurate way, the artist was not afraid to "head in an unknown direction". As the first composer to, he joined the Grupa Krakowska [Kraków Group], which consisted of young painters (1959). In that milieu, the idea of Pawłowski's experimental films emerged—these were an attempt to capture moving images displayed on a screen by a special projector built by the director. Cooperation with artists from different fields opened new horizons for Walaciński, and allowed him to reach new audiences. It shaped his artistic personality to a large extent: his music accompanied e.g. the opening of Grupa Krakowska's 3rd exhibition in 1962 (*Intrada* for chamber ensemble) and an exhibition of Grupa Alfa's sculptures in Wrocław, 1969.

Among his numerous artistic initiatives, composing remained key. The artist expresses himself in the fullest manner through this medium, which can be confirmed by his own words:

For me, composing remained a personal need, without which my life would seem empty [...] (Baran 2001: 35).

The two complementary spheres of autonomous and incidental music were always mutually stimulating, utilizing similar means and technical solutions, which Walaciński himself pointed out:

I never drew a distinct line between these two parallel currents. I think that they both contribute to the entirety of my work [...] my musical language is a conglomerate of all my experiences (Woźniakowska 2008: 147, 149).

At the same time, his autonomous work is most closely tied to his work as a writer, often becoming its inspiration.

Even if multithreaded attitude and readiness to pick up the new challenges seem to be quite common in the contemporary world, it is a bit hard to find the artists who would be able to combine different spheres of interests in the harmonious way without losing their own individual style. Dynamics of evolving culture, changing expectations of the audience being used to almost flying life and expecting the same in the world of art, force the artist to meet new requirements. The ease with which Adam Walaciński metamorphosis from a serious artist composing with the concert hall in mind, into the author of the most famous ballad in Polish cinema [*Deszcze niespokojne* (Restless rains) from the TV series *Czterej pancerni i pies* (Four tankers and a dog), dir. Konrad Nałęczki], the observer of Kraków's musical life, or a demanding teacher, makes him one of the most original names of the Kraków Composers' School, as well as an artist searching for various ways to communicate with an audience. His diverse artistic faces have something in common—the composer's personality. Its integrity, based on the idea of “unity in diversity”, complements the works' messages. It seems that for Walaciński, such an attitude forms his attempt to answer the challenges of contemporary culture.

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