

In Memoriam (1963)

One of the compositions in my portfolio was **In Memoriam...** for orchestra. It was a work of protest against the horrors of oppression, especially fascism and communism. Every week students at the Music Lyceum had to take a course in paramilitary training. Every week the message of imminent nuclear war was hammered at us. Every week one had to listen to the nonsensical communist propaganda and the threats of war. On the heels of the horrors of WW II, the students were being brainwashed to believe that death was coming back, and, this time, in large numbers.

In Memoriam..., in part, was a statement on this lamentable reality. It was one of the works that I decided not to disclose to my then composition instructor.

Three years later, while a student of Woytowicz, I decided to seek advice and, possibly, help in securing a reading. Woytowicz asked me to do two things: to shorten the work and to change the title. The second request had to do with some obvious implications of the title and the danger and repercussions it might provoke.

The thirtieth anniversary of Szymanowski's death was approaching, and, Szymanowski being one of my favourite composers at the time, I did not need much persuasion to change the title. Changing the duration was something of a challenge, as in doing so, I also chose to drop some instruments from the orchestra. Thus, the title became *In Memoriam Karol Szymanowski*.

The anniversary had passed, but the work still did not get performed. In fact it did not get premiered until 1977 - fourteen years after its completion.

Curiously, it started receiving performances from this point on. Its appeal seems to rest in the fact that, musically speaking, the work represents a rebellion against all the things that one was required to do or not do at the time. This work brings together the mutually exclusive (at the time) techniques, like the music of clusters in conjunction with extended tonality and the twelve tone method. It even delves into aleatory processes, while maintaining some of the strictest canonic procedures, where warranted.

Living in Poland

During the three-year-period of studies at the academy and in the few years preceding, I accumulated a volume of works, many of which were performed in concerts, recorded and broadcast

on the radio. My music was modern, well crafted, avant-garde at times. I had good reviews and my reputation in Poland seemed secure. I co-operated with visual artists, actors, other musicians, and poets. I was not a stranger to a happening nor to total theatre. I remained, nevertheless, somewhat ill-at-ease with the orthodoxies of the day. I yearned to embrace all of what was new within a broader perspective. I became a combatant against a doctrinaire thinking - as much in music as in politics.

For many years I was a follower of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, where I heard the newest compositions of Berio, Lutoslawski, Boulez, and others.

I attended the newest plays by Beckett, Mrozek, and Ionesco. I saw Stravinsky in concert and witnessed his works on stage. At the same time, my desire for political and social justice drove me towards political rebellion. People were being imprisoned, they were being harassed and physically abused. I realized that for me staying in Poland would require an active political presence and therefore imprisonment and, possibly, an end of the freedom to create, while to my family - dire consequences. The dichotomy of the political suppression on the one hand, and a phenomenal cultural sophistication on the other, almost tore me apart. I could not envision a passive existence. I decided to stay loyal to music and, therefore, leave the country. I did not know anybody abroad, had no sponsor and had no money to pay my way.

Nazi thought returns

In 1983, from the marriage contracted a year earlier, a daughter was born. At my current location, as much in my social life as in my general surroundings, I experienced prejudice, racism and intolerance. I declared that the only way not to allow my daughter to be touched by any of it, was to move again - to Ottawa, a capital city known to be tolerant and open minded.

I took a substantial cut in salary, moved the family and commuted 1200 kilometres every two weeks to the place of my employment. The times were tough and my health suffered. I believed that any loving parent would do the same. I declared that living in fear again was not an option. I was once again escaping the relentless Nazi thought and intolerance, the two "gremlins", this time set on taking over the life of my daughter. I became sombre, constantly looking over my shoulder.