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Cornelius Cardew behind the Iron Curtain
Cornelius Cardew derrière le Rideau de Fer

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Article abstract

The article considers the reception of Cornelius Cardew's music at the Warsaw Autumn festival between 1960 and 1970. At that time, the state-backed festival—organized since 1956 in the capital of the People's Republic of Poland—was considered to be an important and liberal showcase of European avant-garde from both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the article, I primarily look at the consequences of programming Cardew's music at the festival held in a country belonging to the Eastern Block of Soviet Satellite States. I discuss further, how music critics and polish intellectuals interpreted Cardew's music, especially his Treatise, *and* The Great Learning, *and condemned it for their allegedly communist, pro-Chinese overtones, and explicit Maoist and Confucianist references. The rejection of Cardew's music in Poland resulted from a bias towards his socialist, collective, and emancipatory tendencies expressed by his music. The article is based on my archival research conducted in the archive of the Polish Composers Union, the Warsaw Autumn archive, Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel and Deutsches Polen - Institute in Darmstadt.*

Cornelius Cardew behind the Iron Curtain

Monika Żyła

Introduction

"Fiasco." It's hard to find a word that could better characterize the initial uneasy reception of the music written by Cornelius Cardew at the Warsaw Autumn festival. Between 1960 and 1970, several pieces by the British composer, a future member of the Communist Party of England and author of the book *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* (1974), were performed at the festival. The Warsaw Autumn, held annually in the capital of communist Poland since 1956, was at that time a leading showcase of European avant-garde music from both sides of the Iron Curtain and a well-attended gathering of the international contemporary music community. On September 22, 1962, Polish conductor Andrzej Markowski premiered Cardew's *Third Orchestral Piece* there with the Cracow Philharmony Orchestra.[1] "The performance of my piece was something of a fiasco," lamented the composer shortly after in a letter to his mother, Mariel Cardew, dated October 6, 1962. Bohdan Pociej, a Polish music critic, wrote in his review that Cardew's piece unfortunately represented "unsuccessful sonic results of ambitious and novel ideas."[2] Another Polish music critic, Kazimierz Rozbicki, also criticized the piece, calling it "ugly."[3] Only Bohdan Pilarski considered the concert program "interesting," although he argued that Markowski had poorly prepared the orchestra to perform it.[4] Other pieces performed by the National Philharmonic during the concert included Igor Stravinsky's *Le Roi des étoiles*, Karol Szymanowski's *Demeter*, Luigi Nono's *Epitaffio per Federico García Lorca*, No. 3: "Movemento, Romanca de la Guardia Civil Española," Franco Evangelisti's *Ordini*, Kazimierz Serocki's *Segmenti*, and Anton Webern's *Kantate II.* op. 31.[5]

1. Tilbury, 2008, p. 134.

2. Pociej, 1962, p. 7. Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Polish into English are by the author.

3. Rozbicki, 1962, p. 9.

4. Pilarski, 1962, p. 12.

5. s.a. 1962, p. 76.

The word "fiasco" next appears in connection with Cardew's music eight years later, in September 1970. "Thank you very much for your moral support apropos the debacle?, scandal?, fiasco?, of the concert at the music school," wrote John Tilbury, one of Cardew's closest collaborators and friends, to the Polish composer Witold Lutosławski.[6] In his letter, Tilbury referred to the scandalous, boycotted concert that had drawn so much comment in the Polish press. During the concert, the pianist, together with the Polish ensemble Warsztat Muzyczny, featuring Zygmunt Krauze (piano), Witold Gałązka (cello), Edward Borowiak (trombone) and Czesław Pałkowski (clarinet), had performed "Paragraph 7" from Cardew's *The Great Learning*.[7]

What Cornelius Cardew proposed was somewhat conflicting. On the one hand, his compositional style in the 1960s still represented the ideals of the Western avant-garde of the time. However, his open form was already heralding his later "more overt political agenda."[8] Its extra-musical concepts challenged the established performance situation and the relationship between the musicians, including the very nature of the proposed model of collaboration with the composer, which combined the implementation and development of graphic notation. Unlike John Cage, whose indeterminacy and experimentalism remained rather politically neutral, Polish observers saw Cardew's *Treatise* and *The Great Learning* as taking a political stance.

These early performances of Cardew's music and the troubled initial reception at Warsaw Autumn from 1960 to 1970 challenged the *status quo* of written and composed contemporary music in Poland. Cornelius Cardew and the musicians affiliated with him deliberately confronted established notions of avant-garde music and questioned the conventional relationships between composers and performers. Despite the negative reaction, this early debate on Cardew's music led to deeper and more incisive public discussions on issues such as the meaning and necessity of politically aware art and music, the limits of art and music, and the changing dispositions of avant-garde music. As a consequence, the presence of Cardew's music at the Warsaw Autumn in the 1960s ultimately contributed to an increased assimilation and popularization of his music and compositional ideas in Poland since the 1990s.

In this article, I analyze the discourse accompanying the reception of the politically and socially charged music of Cornelius Cardew at the still running Warsaw Autumn festival.[9] I particularly focus on the consequences and implications of the introduction and exposure of Cardew's music and his compositional ideas in Poland, a Soviet Eastern Bloc country. I look at how music critics and other members of the contemporary music community in 1970 condemned the performances of his music for its communist and pro-

6. Tilbury, 1970.

7. s.a. 1970, p. 95.

8. Harris, 2011, p. 113.

9. This article is based on archival research I conducted between 2014 and 2018 in various libraries and archives, including the library of the Polish Composers Union in Warsaw, the Warsaw Autumn archive, the Lutosławski Collection in Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, and the library of the Deutsches-Polen Institute in Darmstadt. I closely studied such documents as personal letters, press reviews, festival program books, and reports from the festival's committee meetings from the 1960s and 1970s. Recently, I conducted several interviews with the very first advocates of Cardew's music in Poland, John Tilbury and Zygmunt Krauze.

Chinese overtones, especially its explicit Maoist and Confucian references, calling such a position shallow, disillusioned and detached from the real horrors of the communist regime. I argue that the initial rejection of Cardew's music and æsthetics in Poland had more to do with its ideological associations than its particular stylistic, technical, or sonic features. I contend that it stemmed directly from the harsh political climate prevailing in communist Poland throughout the 1960s, and the bias or scepticism of Polish intellectuals towards the declared socialist, collective and emancipatory tendencies expressed by Western composers that directly ensued. Thanks to these early performances of Cardew's music at the Warsaw Autumn and its subsequent rejuvenation at the festival in the 1990s, his music has been performed relatively often in Poland since the 2000s, with multiple recordings released.

Contradictions and clashing ideals

Although Cardew's music at Warsaw Autumn from 1960 to 1970 was so adversely received, there was also a contradiction, notably that the country's politics at that time favored professional and artistic collectives. Cardew's musical ideas about music performance, production and participation, and especially his leaning to open form, indeterminacy and emancipation of both performers and listeners, were not fully understood at first in socialist Poland. The country's major contemporary music festival helped to establish and support a somewhat particular notion of avant-garde music. Its organizers sought to present music that was free of political leanings towards socialist realism and independent of the dominant cultural policies that were gradually discarded as being normative and constraining to the composers. This tendency was a natural extension of the æsthetic views being expressed by composers in the Polish Composers Union, the festival's official organizer. Since 1952, the Union had been increasingly gaining independence from the party and encouraging individual compositional style.[10] As a result, the discrepancy between Cardew's developing interest in the collectivism and the music-making community, and the individualism and stylistic distinctiveness valued at the Warsaw Autumn significantly widened, especially given Cardew's later experiences in the AMM and the Scratch Orchestra.

10. Tompkins, 2013, pp. 101-102.

While the notion of the individual was highly valued at Warsaw Autumn, it was not really addressed in any detailed or nuanced way. Stefan Kisielewski in his 1963 article "For a socialist concept of the individual," criticized this allegedly inadequate discussion of the concept of individualism in socialism. He asked: "What does the concept of the individual look like in socialism? We know what the concepts of the mass, the rights and the phenomena of

the mass, of the collectives look like—however, the problem of individuality is still not explicitly addressed."[11]

From 1960 on, avant-garde compositions presented at Warsaw Autumn were lauded for being abstract, detached from everyday issues, particularly politics, and thus believed to remain ideologically neutral, independent of any political pressures and æsthetics or socialist realism dogmas. Contemporary music in socialist Poland was supposed to represent an escapist world of artistic and universal ideas, a parallel world existing independently of the daily hardships experienced in the Soviet satellite state. Although Warsaw Autumn was a state-sanctioned festival, its programmers supported autonomous artistic expression and rejected positions that challenged single-authorship. Its balanced programming and equal distribution of composers and compositions from both Eastern and Western countries perfectly reflected its "political neutrality." This programming strategy was what Lisa Jakelski called the policy of an "empty frame."[12]

It is worth noting here that the Repertoire Committee was the main decision-making body at Warsaw Autumn. Meeting on a regular basis, the committee had 10 to 12 members including composers, conductors, and musicologists carefully selected from the members of the Polish Composers' Union (ZKP). A chairman who possessed a double vote chaired the committee proceedings. Witold Lutosławski was the first to be granted this position which he held from 1960 to 1965. Considered a very authoritative figure, Lutosławski was in fact an unofficial leader of the festival. His opinions and suggestions were always carefully considered and respected. In the minutes of the committee meetings, he was systematically referred to as a "Master" and, according to my interviewees who were colleagues on the committee, his presence at the meetings always generated a serious and formal atmosphere.[13]

The committee's policy and decisions were quite transparent—they recorded their meetings and scrupulously collected written minutes—and the minutes were available for consultation upon request to other members of the Polish Composers' Union. However, an open and transparent policy was also a means for the socialist party to control the organization of the festival. Committee members were often writing the minutes mindful that they might be checked at some point. We can be certain that self-censorship took place as a preventive measure. The festival's programming transparency was believed to ensure accountability of the committee's decisions as well as being responsible for the whole music community in the Union. It also meant that the organization could openly criticize the decisions of the repertoire committee. The policy of transparency and openness was a successful leadership strategy at

11. Kisielewski, 2004, p. 81.

12. Jakelski, 2017, pp. 34-62.

13. The following composers subsequently held the position of chairmen: Kazimierz Serocki (1966), Andrzej Dobrowolski (1967, 1970-1972), Tomasz Sikorski (1973-1974), Józef Patkowski (1975-1978), Augustyn Bloch (1979-1987), and Olgierd Pisarenko (1987-1995). After Pisarenko, the additional function of artistic director of the festival was established and in 1995 Krzysztof Knittel became the first artistic director of Warsaw Autumn. He remained in this position until 1998.

the festival and an important part of its professionalization and democratization. In due course, more effective solutions to the festival management were implemented through collaborative efforts of members of the repertoire committee and the Composers' Union.

Regarding the festival programming, Polish composers in the Union saw artistic and moral value in developing and implementing advanced compositional techniques, pursuing stylistic experiments, and developing individual musical languages. They sought novelty, originality, and progress while rejecting more accessible traditional styles propagated and supported by the ruling party as too homogeneous, standardized, conservative, regressive and simply obsolete. What mattered was an individual style of expression and novel approaches to sonic material detached from any political and social reality. "Polish composers before and after the war did not reveal any political ambitions, and during the Stalinist years the lack of 'political awareness' of this community was viewed critically by the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party" wrote Danuta Gwizdalanka in reference to the earlier Stalinist period.[14] David G. Tompkins shows that only between 1948 and 1951 did the Polish Composers' Union exercise "a close cooperation with the party."[15] He notes that in the period immediately after the war, Polish composers associated with the Union enjoyed creative freedom, and that after 1951, they "achieved ever-greater autonomy."[16] Tompkins claims that with the establishment of the Warsaw Autumn festival, Polish composers "emancipated themselves almost completely."[17] This explains why those flirting with communist or socialist ideas met with immediate scepticism and reluctance, and were often openly ostracized by the contemporary music community that rubbed shoulders with the Polish Composers' Union, especially if they were Western composers. "It was hard to expect any leftist sympathies from Polish artists," concluded Gwizdalanka.[18]

14. Gwizdalanka, 1999, p. 243.

15. Tompkins, 2013, p. 98.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Tompkins, 2013, p. 190.

18. Gwizdalanka, 1999, p. 243.

Polish composers univocally viewed communism and its proclaimed æsthetic imperatives negatively. Their Western colleagues and journalists regarded their neutral non-engaged positions as socially regressive, even conservative. "Influenced by Romantic notions of musical autonomy, ZKP—the Polish Composers' Union—members were generally among the least politically engaged of Polish artists," claims Jakelski.[19] Nonetheless, Zygmunt Mycielski soberly observed that in Poland even avant-garde music immediately becomes a public issue.

19. Jakelski, 2017, p. 36.

Gwizdalanka claimed that in the context of the particular Polish political climate, it was nearly impossible for Polish composers to be on the communist side if they aspired to be part of the Polish avant-garde movement:

> On the contrary—they were more eager to take the side of those who, to the representatives of the Western avant-garde, appeared to be the "natural" opponents of the "social progress." Even more so, that in the mid-1960s, when the interests in the innovation slightly diminished, and despite the fact that the situation in Poland has not reached another state of ideological enslavement of the Stalinist years, but—among other problems—it was still subjected to a heavy conflict between the state and the church.[20]

20. Gwizdalanka, 1999, p. 243.

The decade of Cornelius Cardew at Warsaw Autumn

Between 1960 and 1970, music composed by Cornelius Cardew was performed various times at the Warsaw Autumn festival. In September 1960, Cardew's friend, British soprano Josephine Nendick, and British pianist Richard Rodney Bennett performed *Why cannot ear be closed to its own destruction*.[21] In 1962, Andrzej Markowski and the Cracow Philharmony Orchestra premiered the above mentioned *Third Orchestral Piece* with the composer present in the audience.[22] A year later, in 1963, American pianist Frederic Rzewski performed *February Pieces*, while in 1966, Cornelius Cardew, David Bedford, Zygmunt Krauze and John Tilbury performed *Treatise*, which received scant mention in the Polish press.[23]

In 1967, American clarinetist Edward Yadzinski, together with German-American pianist Lukas Foss, performed *Solo with accompaniment*. The critics appreciated the piece for its deliberate sense of humor. Ludwik Erhard wrote: "Thanks to a few Anglo-Saxon composers we are sometimes reminded that music can also be joyful."[24] In his lengthy review, Erhardt praised the piece for its intended comic quality and grotesque and instrumental wit, categories that he could barely find in the contemporary avant-garde music of that time:

> *Solo with accompaniment* makes the audience laugh. Persistently repeated low clarinet sounds against the rich palette of the sounds of the prepared piano create a tension released in nervous laughs. It's not the first time that I observe this phenomenon: tireless, surpassing the limits of the listener's patience, repetition of some of the simplest effects invariably makes you laugh. It's a reaction so obvious that it is certainly intended and expected by the composer.[25]

The above remarks became particularly relevant in light of commentary that appeared following the performance of the *Great Learning* at Warsaw Autumn three years later, in September 1970. At this time music critics accused the emerging young avant-garde musicians performing Cardew's piece, among others—namely, members of the ensemble Warsztat Muzyczny together with John Tilbury—of being overly serious and lacking a sense of humor. These observations, which appeared independently in several published reports, were taken with some concern.

21. The piece was written in 1957, but was never published, and its title seems to exist in three different versions: 1) *Why cannot car be closed*; 2) *Why cannot ear be closed to its own destruction*; and 3) *Voice from Thel's Grave* (from William Blake's *The Book of Thel*). The first, seemingly misspelled, version appears in both Harris and Meredith, 2011, and the Warsaw Autumn program book and index. The second version of the title is certainly taken from William Blake's poem *The Book of Thel* which is also confirmed by the title included in the list of compositions assembled by John Tilbury in his Cardew's biography (p. 1046).

22. Pilarski, 1962, p. 9. See also Mycielski, 1962, p. 3.

23. Kaczyński, 1966, p. 14.

24. Erhardt, 1967, p. 10.

25. *Ibid.*

Why so serious? Striving for legitimacy of the new avant-garde

In many published reviews and commentaries, the notion of sense of humor—and its opposite, "seriousness"—became particularly pronounced. On the one hand, it stemmed from the escapist function ascribed to the avant-garde music of the 1960s. Critics expected composers and performers to assume more distance from their creative output, as if laughter or a lighter stage attitude would better affirm their distance from the performance. This distance became a requirement, especially for performances taking the form of musical happenings. On the other hand, the musicians, to a large extent, identified with their actions on stage, in such a way that their serious attitude betrayed their striving for approval and legitimacy. Analyzing the performance of *The Great Learning*, Stefan Kisielewski remarked:

> James Huneker, the American biographer of Chopin, once commented on the youth of the period: "With what deadly seriousness these young people treated each other!" Likewise presently they treat seriously: each other, their gestures, their beards, fancifully scruffy hairstyles, sweaters and pyjamas they wear onstage, as well as being rebellious against individual, academic music, and the form.[26]

26. Kisielewski, 2012, p. 392.

The weight put on their performances seemed to bother Kisielewski, who noticed: "[…] humor is great, universally human and indeed profound in its nature attitude, but it is also out of fashion nowadays."[27] He called the stage actions presented by the representatives of the young international avant-garde, including Zygmunt Krauze and John Tilbury, a "serious revolution" done "grimly," "performed in the majesty of youthful dignity by longhaired men with beards, wearing jeans."[28]

27. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

28. *Ibid.*

The "seriousness" with which they performed *The Great Learning* did not go unnoticed by another music critic, Paweł Beylin: "What we have seen and heard in the concert hall of the Warsaw Music Conservatoire was so deadly solemn, so rigorous in its seriousness, that if it were not for the foolery of the public, we would have gotten an impression as if we were participating in some religious rite."[29] The more daring the action, the more serious and focused the stage presence of the performers.

29. Beylin, 1970, p. 8.

Such a serious attitude could be, and was indeed, the main defense available to musicians proposing a radical departure from the norms prevailing in classical contemporary music performance at that time if they wanted to be taken seriously by their audiences. Music critics, however, did not appreciate such an approach. "You cannot propose a happening, and at the same time behave as if you were giving a recital with fugues by Bach, or play to the listeners recorded seagulls' noises and make the audience believe they have

something to do with the new art" claimed Beylin.[30] He perhaps delivered the most considered interpretation of the "happening" led by Krauze and Tilbury: "I am afraid that Mr. John Tilbury, presenting us his own version of a happening, proposed something that resembled biting off the ears; his proposal betrayed the intent of liquidating this part of human consciousness that interprets fun as fun."[31]

Nevertheless, what these observations clearly indicate is the genuine striving for legitimacy and acceptance in the established contemporary music community by the young and vulnerable adepts of the musical avant-garde. They stood up for their artistic and political beliefs and wanted to extend the notion of musical composition and performance that manifested itself on stage in the form of serious attentiveness and concentration. But more importantly, they also indicate the severe inability of the music critics, who lacked either the necessary analytical tools, experience, or sensitivity to properly assess and recognize the artistic value and credibility of these new, radical positions.

The limits of art: the scandal around *The Great Learning*, "Paragraph 7" at Warsaw Autumn 1970

What actually happened during the concert—in which the ensemble Warsztat Muzyczny, led by Zygmunt Krauze, performed together with John Tilbury *The Great Learning* "Paragraph 7"—that provoked such heated reaction and sparked ensuing discussion in the Polish press? Why was their version of musical socialism so drastically rejected in Poland, and why was their concert interpreted in such political terms? Why did Tilbury, in his letter to Lutosławski, call the concert a failure, a fiasco? And, finally, what was the role and meaning of failure in light of Cardew's own creativity and musical philosophy? These are some of the most relevant questions that come to mind when reflecting upon the reception of Cardew's music in communist Poland.

The importance of the notion of failure in the case of Cardew's music helps to better grasp his artistic position, while the Polish context provides an explanation for the critical response to his ideas. Indeed, John Tilbury, in his biography of Cardew, wrote that the notion of failure informed the composer's artistic *credo*.[32] He claimed that Cardew's acknowledgment and celebration of human "fallibility" not only set him "apart from the majority of his contemporaries in the late 1960s but also aggravated his relationships with them."[33] This was exactly the case of Cardew's reception in Poland. The concert at Warsaw Autumn in 1970 created the atmosphere of a particular estrangement that was immediately followed by a rather strong rejection of

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Tilbury, 2008, p. 469.

33. *Ibid.*

his proposed artistic ideas by Polish contemporary music circles. The idea of the festival concert featuring Cardew's *The Great Learning* already stemmed from the concept of negating the existing order. It proposed a musical encounter based on compromise and mutual exchange of musical experiences and knowledge.

Furthermore, Tilbury expressed his initial skepticism about the project in his note published in the program book. The proposed prospect of a joint concert with the Polish ensemble Warsztat Muzyczny appeared to him on the one hand too tactical and cunning, and on the other, excessively wary and conservative. He insisted that if their collaborative concert were to happen at Warsaw Autumn, it would have to require compromise and negotiation between the members of the ensemble and Tilbury himself "with a sense of democratic give and take,"[34] but it would also have to be "a confrontation of artistic approaches and attitudes that were shaped by different musical conditions."[35] In his note—which was more like an artistic manifesto than a standard informative concert introduction— he questioned whether Warsztat Muzyczny's motivations for approaching him were out of their genuine artistic conviction and not simply traditional Polish hospitality. It is worth noting here that this was not their first collaboration. Tilbury had already frequently performed with Warsztat Muzyczny after he first arrived in Warsaw in 1961 to study at the Music Academy. Tilbury felt that only such genuine convictions as artistic urge and necessity would constitute essential conditions for the starting point for their next collaboration.

Later on in his text, Tilbury referenced British popular culture, setting it as an example for the contemporary music of his times. He accused the established contemporary music community of being oddly unaware of the contemporary world while proudly reproducing outdated formulas. Even if the radical tone with which Tilbury expressed himself was lost in the Polish translation—since the program book for that year was published in both Polish and French—his note certainly delivered a powerful artistic statement. He wrote it in a manner unusual for composers or musicians living at that time who would normally be featured in the Warsaw Autumn program. Other composers preferred to concentrate in their program notes on the intricacies of their musical language, techniques and material rather than express such critical opinions on how the contemporary music world functioned or call for systemic change.

Tilbury's observations were strikingly sober and perceptive. Even though they sound valid today, they did not resonate adequately in 1970's Poland. Strongly opposed to anything with the slightest hint of socialist implications,

34. *XIV Międzynarodowy Festiwal Muzyki Współczesnej Warszawska Jesień, Warszawa 19-27 Września 1970*. Warszawa: Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, p. 97.

35. *Ibid.*

Polish music critics accused him of lack of sensitivity towards the difficulties and censorship they had to confront on a daily basis. Kisielewski, a Polish composer and music critic subjected to political censorship whose own æsthetic allegiances were quite conservatively neoclassical, immediately called Tilbury's *exposé* nonsense and deemed the whole concert a "pocket revolution of nihilism."[36] He stated: "In 'socialist' Warsaw, young people from the West represent communism. It is indeed a comedy of errors—who will untangle it, and when?"[37] He viewed the political overtones of the concert as aiming to destroy academic music and traditional ways of composing. As such, they were seen as superficial and shallow and hence rejected. They were considered to be "a game for satiate men" that "won't feed the hungry," wrote Kisielewski.[38] He concluded: "The real people are usually traditional and don't appreciate permanent confusion. And the real revolution ought to be people's revolution, not a sitting-room revolution."

The concert—which from the start seemed controversial to many observers—was doomed to end in scandal. And so it did. The organizers interrupted the concert but their exact motivations remain obscure to this day. The numerous press reports that appeared afterwards were inconsistent as to the exact point when the second part of the concert was interrupted.[39]

Nor did these reporters explain what precise concerns incited the organizers to interfere. Some claimed that the performance of *The Great Learning* had already been interrupted and that the performance of *Sticks* by Christian Wolff scheduled to be performed right after never happened.[40]

However, Zygmunt Krauze, in a private e-mail to me, rejected this account. He instead claimed that only the last piece, *Sticks*, was interrupted. Recalling the event, he said the entire concert hall was so crowded with people that some of them had to sit on the stage. He described the scene to me in detail:

> The audience, whose responses were incredibly heated both pro and against, surrounded the musicians. During the break, we continued performing our program according to the plan. The audience did not leave for the break but stayed and listened to the music. The second part of the concert happened afterward. Again, some members of the audience were delighted, while others opposed. At the end we performed *Sticks*. At some point, Prof. Urbański, deputy Dean of the Department of Sound Engineering decided to interrupt the concert. It turned out later that according to him, there was a risk of damage to the sound equipment, especially microphones. Of course, there was no risk, even though the large audience that surrounded the musicians was standing very close to the microphones and to the sound equipment. At some point, Prof. Urbański decided to stop the concert by turning on a very harsh sinusoidal sound that was difficult to bear. The members of the audience started leaving the room in a panic. It was an apocalyp-

36. Kisielewski, 2012, p. 391.

37. Kisielewski, 1996, p. 474.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

39. According to the Warsaw Autumn program book, the following pieces were to be performed. In the first part: Pierre Marietan's *Iniciative I*, Carlo de Incontrera's *For Four and More*, and Gioachino Rossini's *Wilhelm Tell*; during the break: Howards Skempton's *Valtz*, Terry Jennings' Piano Piece No. 1, "Winter Trees," and Giuseppe Chari's *Valzer-Pun-Ta-Ta*; in the second part: Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning*, "Paragraph 7," and Christian Wolff's *Sticks*. See Tilbury, 1970, pp. 95-105. A different program is indicated by Marian Wallek-Walewski in his review published in Odra. See Wallek-Walewski, 2007, pp. 144-152.

40. Kondracki, 1970, p. 8.

tic scene. Some of the audience members, especially foreign, started screaming: "Gestapo!," "Fascism!" This is how this concert ended.[41]

41. Krauze, email to the author, 2018.

At the Warsaw Autumn, the crowds were clearly more authoritative, independent, and powerful compared to those gathered at other music events in Poland. As Lisa Jakelski indicates, "the Warsaw Autumn was […] a relatively safe space for publicity expressing divergent points of view."[42] The above-described event undoubtedly reveals the types of power struggles and confrontations that took place at Warsaw Autumn not only between the composers, musicians and their audience, but also between the organizers and the audience. Their reactions posed a challenge to the limits of the established norms of the concert format, the role of the performances and audience, and music composition itself. They inform the very specific understanding of the social role and meaning that avant-garde contemporary music played in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In his review, Stefan Kisielewski also noted that the audience gathered in the concert hall of the music conservatory at some point started singing the Polish folk song titled *Szła Dzieweczka do Laseczka* as a direct response to Cardew's piece.[43] Such behavior shows the audience's distance and awareness, but also radically confronts the piece. Tilbury claims that the organizers "stopped the concert because of fear and ignorance. They got worried about the safety. The people seemed to be out of their element. There was a tension in there, and the possibility that anything could happen. And they panicked, so they said 'Stop the concert!'"[44] While it was easy to interpret these events as being politically motivated, it is also possible that the organizers were simply concerned for the safety of the audience.

42. Jakelski, 2017, p. 77.

43. Kisielewski, 2012, p. 395.

44. Tilbury, Skype interview with the author, April 30, 2018.

Conclusion: the unsettled reception of Cornelius Cardew in Poland

The concert, which initially questioned the meaning of musical collaboration, resulted in a probing of the entire conception of art and music. After the festival, numerous critics raised questions concerning the limits of music and the arts and the nature of performances and happenings, as well as the meaning, nature, and possibilities of revolution in music.

The notion of the new emerging genre of happening in the contemporary music world also arose at this time, a notion that was negotiated and contested. Polish music critics interpreted Cardew's music in terms of a provocative manifesto directed against the institution of traditional composition, and thus aimed at destroying music. They accused Cardew and his collaborators, on stage and in their presence, of publicly goading a destruction of music composition and its facilitating system, criticizing its flaws and imperfections.[45]

45. Pociej, 1970, p. 4.

Yet, the critics soberly noticed that their agitation failed to turn into a real political protest that would enable a social and political change.[46] What music critics had not come to realize is that it was precisely the audience presence in the concert hall that was decisive for Cardew, and that only by testing his listeners' patience could he transgress the conventions. He partially achieved this goal. In their reports, many critics described the atmosphere in the hall, the actions that occurred on and off the stage and the particularly agitated audience and its direct response to what was going on. Even if not leading to real social and political change, this resulted in a change of emphasis and a departure from the usual discussion of form and overall constructional details of the pieces, towards acknowledging the mood, energy and feedback relationship between musicians and listeners. In other words, they brought in the categories of musical performance that would later typify the discourse accompanying performance art. The fiasco of Cardew's music in the 1960s had more to do with the Polish music critics' disapproval of the leftist ideas of Cardew and his collaborators. They viewed them in terms of "inauthenticity, mass-scale, shallowness and anonymity,"[47] expressing strong personal opposition.

46. Kisielewski, 1997, p. 478.

47. *Ibid.*

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