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The Portrayal of Musicians in *Dyrygent* (*The Orchestra Conductor*, 1979), directed by Andrzej Wajda and *Dotknięcie ręki* (*The Silent Touch*, 1992) by Krzysztof Zanussi

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the portrayal of musicians in *Dyrygent* (*The Orchestra Conductor*, 1979), directed by Andrzej Wajda, and *Dotknięcie ręki* (*The Silent Touch*, 1992), directed by Krzysztof Zanussi. It argues that these films are built on contrasts: between a Romantic musician, who creates music to express himself and convey some deeper truth, and a careerist, who makes music to improve his financial and social position, and between a Western musician, who fronts the greatest musical events, and a Polish one who acts as a midwife of this musical delivery, disappearing in the shadow when his or her task is fulfilled. It paints Poles as humble and noble, but ultimately denies them the right to self-expression, which –according to the authors of these films– is the most important human right.

KEYWORDS: Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Zanussi, *Dyrygent* (*The Orchestra Conductor*), *Dotknięcie ręki* (*The Silent Touch*), Romanticism

La représentation des musiciens dans *Dyrygent* (*Le Chef d'orchestre*, 1979) d'Andrzej Wajda et *Dotknięcie ręki* (*Le Toucher silencieux*, 1992) de Krzysztof Zanussi

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article examine la représentation des musiciens dans *Dyrygent* (*Le Chef d'orchestre*, 1979) d'Andrzej Wajda et *Dotknięcie ręki* (*Le Toucher silencieux*,



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1992) de Krzysztof Zanussi. Il prend pour hypothèse que ces films sont construits sur les contrastes – d’une part, entre un musicien romantique qui crée de la musique pour s’exprimer et transmettre une vérité profonde, et un carriériste qui fait de la musique pour améliorer sa condition financière et sociale ; d’autre part, entre un musicien occidental qui est à la tête des plus grands événements musicaux, et un musicien polonais que l’on peut comparer à une sage-femme qui assiste cet accouchement musical et disparaît dans l’ombre une fois sa tâche accomplie. Les Polonais y sont dépeints comme humbles et nobles, mais on leur refuse finalement le droit de s’exprimer librement, ce qui, selon les auteurs de ces deux films, constitue le plus important des droits humains.

MOTS-CLÉS : Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Zanussi, *Dyrygent (Le Chef d’orchestre)*, *Dotknięcie ręki (Le Toucher silencieux)*, romantisme

Polish fiction films representing musicians often have an international dimension. It is understandable in the case of the greatest Polish classical composer, Fryderyk (Frédéric) Chopin, who spent most of his creative life outside of Poland, but this is also true in the case of *Podwójne życie Weroniki (The Double Life of Veronique, 1991)*, directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski, *Dyrygent (The Orchestra Conductor, 1979)*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, *Dotknięcie ręki (The Silent Touch, 1992)*, directed by Krzysztof Zanussi, and, recently, *Zimna wojna (Cold War, 2018)*, directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. This article is devoted to Wajda’s and Zanussi’s films, due to significant similarities in their depiction of their main characters and their assessment of classical music. It is rooted in the concept of “Romantic musician” and a discourse about the Polish relationship to the West.

From “Domestic” to “Romantic”

There are different ways to classify musicians, but for the purpose of this article, a taxonomy offered by Jacques Attali is useful. He maintains that before the advent of capitalism, musicians adopted two principal roles: that of vagabond and domestic (Attali, 1985: 14-18), in which they were completely dependent on their patrons, typically a monarch, a wealthy aristocrat or the Church.

This situation changed when capitalism replaced feudalism. Under capitalism the ownership of music moved from the patron of the musician to the musician himself (Attali, 1985: 54). At the same time, the growth of the bourgeoisie and widening of the circle of potential audiences afforded musicians greater autonomy: by not being « owned » by any single individual or institution, they had more freedom overall. Rather than seeing themselves as servants of monarchs or nobility, they started to perceive themselves as freelance workers, without allegiance to any specific patron, but willing to take commissions from as many sources as possible. A factor in this new attitude was also the ideals of the French Revolution, especially the conviction that a man should be judged on his merit, not his birth. According to Alfred Einstein, such

a new approach to music, more than the kind of music he makes, is a marker of a Romantic musician (Einstein, 1947: 10-19). Vienna is seen as a place where these changes were first implemented and Mozart (1756–1791) is the first widely known composer who tried to become a Romantic musician according to this definition (Einstein, 1947: 12). This is reflected in his extensive travels, to places such as Prague, London, Verona, Bologna, Milan and Rome, and trying his hand in many genres, including writing music for masonic ceremonials and lodge meetings (Sadie, 1982: 108). However, in a material sense, Mozart failed. He was not able to create an audience large enough to sustain him or, to put it differently, Vienna of his times was not ready to host an autonomous, Romantic artist. Alice Hanson explains that

Only meager incomes could be made from the sale of compositions; private subscriptions concerts were both costly and time-consuming for the performer; and private engagements in the homes of even wealthy patrons were often poorly rewarded. Even as a member of a noble household, a musician had difficulties, because, like a servant, he had few rights. A musician was required to compose or perform upon command and he often relinquished all publishing rights of his music to his employer. In addition, he had to gain permission not only to perform outside of the household, but also in order to marry or change residence (Hanson, 1985: 7-8).

However, as Einstein argues, « Where Mozart failed, Beethoven –in the same locale and only a few years later– succeeded. He no longer placed himself in the service of the aristocracy; instead, he placed the aristocracy in his own service [...] Here for the first time appears a musician without any ties to bind him. He took up the position of an individual facing the world, and often even opposing the world » (Einstein, 1947: 10-19; see also Blanning, 2008: 98-101). The gossip says that the genius halted his piano if the audience afforded him less than their full attention. Beethoven's success as an autonomous Romantic artist was facilitated by having a manager, his own brother Carl, who helped him sell his compositions to be published and performed by other artists. During the composer's life the price of his works increased several fold (Cooper, 2000: 123). He also made arrangements and transcriptions of his more popular works for different combinations of instruments (Cooper, 2000: 123-24). Furthermore, at the peak of his career he was able to sell his early work (what will be described today as his back catalogue) for a considerable price (Cooper, 2000: 124). Thus, at a time when there was no copyright, Beethoven did well to protect his rights as a composer.

By the time the musical era of Romanticism started in Europe, c. 1800, there were more musicians who adopted the posture of autonomous, authentic artists. They did not see themselves as servants of the bourgeoisie, but at best servants of humanity (or its specific section), whose main motif in composing music was to express themselves or speak for the « absent others » (Moore, 2002: 220).

This was the case of Chopin, whose music is regarded as a voice of his Polish countrymen, defeated and imprisoned by the empires which participated in partitions of Poland and crushed pro-independence uprisings. However, it was the very popularity of Romantic artists which allowed them to come across as autonomous and aloof. Had they been less successful commercially, they would have been unable to afford such an attitude.

The more music was mediated by such devices as records, radio and television, and the more musicians were distanced from their patrons, renamed « fans », the greater was their opportunity to present themselves as Romantic musicians. This was largely thanks to the economy of scale: the record could be reproduced in millions of copies, while the concert could not be attended by such large numbers of people. Another factor was state patronage, which provided support to artists whose work was more experimental and less commercial.

If we regard the Romantic approach to music as being driven not by economic considerations, but lofty ideas, then the Polish attitude to art and music can be described as Romantic. The greatest Polish writers, painters, musicians, even filmmakers, irrespective of when they lived, are classified as Romantics. The numerous tragedies afflicting Poland, including over one hundred years of non-existence as an independent state and many unsuccessful uprisings to regain sovereignty, resulted in the popular belief that Polish history and fate are essentially tragic, and the role of the artist is to convey this fate. Chopin is a central figure in Polish Romanticism because it is believed that he perfectly expressed it in his music.

Romanticism in Poland after the Second World War

After the Second World War Poland joined the Soviet bloc and by the end of the 1940s socialist realism was proclaimed the dominant style of art (Malinowski, 1993: 54-55; Tompkins, 2013: 2). Superficially, socialist realism was as far from Romanticism as it could be, by rejecting the tragic vision, and asking the artists to show people a path to happiness in as simple terms as possible. However, what socialist realism and Romanticism had in common was a conviction that the artist's role is greater than providing pleasure to his consumers. Moreover, under the state socialist system, a large proportion of artists were saved from the need to earn their living by pandering to the taste of their audiences, because a large proportion of art was nationalised: theatres, operas, philharmonics and cinema production were all supported by the state. That said, after socialist realism moved from a hegemonic to a residual position, the more complex structure of the art world came into existence. In cinema and music, which are of specific interest to me here, there emerged a category of artists, who were generously supported by the state, but they were left mostly to their own devices, rather than being requested to support the state's ideology and policies. They were even allowed to express some criticism of the state, as proof to the world that Polish authorities were open to new ideas and tolerated

dissent. Both Andrzej Wajda and Andrzej Zanussi belonged to this exclusive category of socialist *auteurs*. Their privileged status also included opportunities to travel and make films abroad. Both Wajda and Zanussi made many films abroad, as foreign productions or co-productions. They also cast foreign actors in their « Polish » films. Their foreign productions were typically regarded less highly than their domestic productions. This was especially the case with Zanussi, whose work abroad contributed to the loss of audiences in Poland (Kłys, 1995: 104-105; Kuc, 2014: 275). Tomasz Kłys writes: « [Working abroad] influenced a certain lack of style in the director's later films, and gave a general feeling on the public that the plots of the films, despite their being set in specific locations and specific historical periods, take place in some social vacuum, somewhere beyond time and space » (Kłys 1995: 105).

This privileged group of artists, supported by the state, yet permitted a large margin of artistic and political freedom, and also included classical/experimental musicians, especially composers, whose works were presented at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, which for many years was the only festival of contemporary music in Eastern Europe. Among them were such composers as Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Wojciech Kilar, whose music is used in *The Silent Touch*. The consequences of the relative political freedom such artists enjoyed was respect granted to them by the general public and recognition abroad. This privileged position, as well as blocking certain channels of social promotion, existing in the West, most importantly through entrepreneurship, resulted in their national status being higher than in Western countries, as well as in the Soviet Union, where the artists had to toe the Party line much more closely than in Poland. This high status particularly applied to the last two decades of state socialism, when censorship eased. *The Orchestra Conductor* was made in this period, while *The Silent Touch* shortly after the end of state socialism, when the old attitudes to art and artists still prevailed.

Romantics and Careerists in Wajda and Zanussi's Films

In both *The Orchestra Conductor* and *The Silent Touch* we find musicians who achieved high positions within their professional milieu, despite seemingly not caring about popularity or even eschewing it. In *The Orchestra Conductor* this musician is John Lasocky (which is an Americanised version of a popular Polish name « Lasocki »), an American conductor of Polish origin, who left his country many years ago (possibly before the Second World War) and forged a successful career in the United States and globally. We meet him for the first time after a concert in New York, when he is surrounded by fans, asking for his autographs. He is exasperated by such requests and shows interest in only one person, who does not ask him for an autograph – Marta, who is a visitor from Poland.

Later we see Lasocky in his garden, when he is approached by a film crew, trying to discuss his anniversary celebration. He treats the filmmakers as a pack

of hounds invading his space, confirming that he does not care about fame. To escape from all this unwanted attention, Lasocky relocates to Poland, to the provincial town where Marta's husband Adam is a conductor of the local orchestra. There Lasocky temporarily takes over from Adam, preparing the orchestra for an important concert. This change of places shows different approaches to the musician's work between the Polish and American conductor. For Adam, orchestra conducting is a means to achieve prestige and exert power. For this reason, he is impatient and angry when the players do not follow his orders. He is also oblivious to their individuality, musical interests, skills, abilities and their private lives. We can deduce that part of his contempt stems from the fact that they are provincials, while he comes from Warsaw. Contrary to the socialist rhetoric, which pronounced each part of Poland equally important for its economy and cultural life, in reality Poland was divided into the metropolitan cities and the neglected province. The Cinema of Moral Concern movement of the second half of the 1970s, which this film represents, highlighted this division and the plight of people from the province, especially cultural workers, to have access to the same material and cultural goods, as their metropolitan colleagues¹. Adam's quick temper, unsuited to the profession of a conductor, culminates in him breaking his baton, indicating that he is unable to work with this group of « losers ». At the same time, he is unable to examine his own position as a musician and orchestra conductor. He is thus a typical careerist, frustrated that his career does not develop the way he hoped. Adam's careerist approach to music is subtly linked by Wajda to his class. This happens in a dialogue with Marta when he says that, unlike her, he didn't receive a violin from his parents, but had to discover and develop his talent himself. This disparaging of lower-class people as careerists without higher ideals is a common trait of Wajda's cinema and *The Orchestra Conductor* fits the bill (Mazierska, 2002).

Adam's deficiencies as a man and as an artist come into sharp relief when Lasocky starts to practice with his orchestra. The American maestro motivates the musicians by praising their work. He learns their names and talks about their private lives. It transpires that they are frustrated by their low wages and poor living conditions, as well as demoralised by Adam's unkind attitude. Despite that, they are driven by their love of music and want their orchestra to shine. It comes as a great disappointment when the authorities send musicians from Warsaw, to support the provincial musicians, in a bid to raise the profile of a concert which Lasocky is meant to conduct. The conductor, however, rejects this « shipment » and demands that he continues rehearsing and playing with the provincial musicians, whom he got to know in the meantime. However, the concert, for which the audience is waiting attentively, including many young people camping in front of the theatre, fails to materialise, because Lasocky dies, while taking a stroll in the city.

1 The best known example is *Wodzirej* (*Top Dog*, 1978). The greatest dream of its character, who is a provincial master of ceremonies, is to make a career in Warsaw. It can be argued that *The Orchestra Conductor* tackles the same problem as *Top Dog*, although one film is set in the milieu of artists, engaged in elitist music, while the characters in *Top Dog* work in popular music.

Contrary to many of his earlier works, in which Wajda tried to capture Polish social and political reality in its complexity and nuance, he depicts the characters in *The Orchestra Conductor* in a crude way. This might result from the fact that Lasocky was based on the character of Pope John Paul II, who by this time was seen in Poland as a saint, helping Poland to end the dreaded « communism ». As Janina Falkowska observes, the holiness of Lasocky is conveyed not only through the narrative, but also through cinematography: « The orchestra plays while the camera portrays it lovingly in warm colours; also in warm light, depicted with a sort of halo [in reality a bald patch on Lasocky's head], Lasocky directs the orchestra blissfully » (Falkowska, 2007: 177). Adam, on the other hand, who was compared to a provincial Party apparatchik, has practically no redeeming features. This is, as with Lasocky, conveyed by visual means. Adam is presented in harsher light and we often see him semi-naked, in undignified positions. For example, when he rehearses with the orchestra, he plays with his trouser suspenders, which can be seen as a metaphor of his lack of independence. In Wajda's universe, making music for the sake of expressing oneself or serving humanity is incompatible with seeking fame and money, although, as I argued previously, these two motives came together in the case of historical Romantic artists.

The cherishing of Romanticism is also conveyed by the use of music by Beethoven in the soundtrack, given that this composer was the first in European history to achieve a degree of autonomy and reverse the relationship between the audience and the musician, rendering the latter as somebody above the audience, rather than their humble servant. Moreover, Beethoven's music stands for universal music – music which does not represent a particular person, place or period, but speaks about and for the entirety of humanity. This aspect of Beethoven's music was recognised by the EU, which made *Ode to Joy*, part of his *Ninth Symphony*, based on Friedrich Schiller's poem, the anthem of this institution. The universalism of Beethoven's music is recognised by Adam, who, when conducting his orchestra playing this masterpiece, says to himself « human struggle with fate ». Lasocky also asks about the meaning of Beethoven's symphony, but unlike Adam, does not disclose his interpretation, only saying that this music « tells us something ». Such a claim, on the one hand, affords music great power and dignity, by suggesting that it touches each person differently in a mysterious, spiritual way. On the other hand, however, it renders each interpretation of music, even the most preposterous, equally valid.

Lasocky, in a fashion which can be regarded as Romantic, states the primacy of music over musicians. This means that musicians are only conduits through which a « higher power » speaks, not unlike prophets who carry in them the word of God. Such an approach results in downgrading the role of the audience, as it means that the musician needs to tell the truth, irrespective of who wants to hear it. Not surprisingly, Lasocky dismisses the complaints of members of the orchestra that they lack high quality audience and play for accidental visitors. Of course, only those who have large audiences paying them enough to make their living or have other means to support themselves can be dismissive of

the audience. We can conjecture that Lasocky is in the first category, whilst the orchestra musicians are in the second, thanks to state subsidies. Yet, the issue here is not that the state pays musicians no matter how many people attend the concert, but that it does not pay them enough to afford them a dignified existence.

As mentioned earlier, Lasocky dies before the concert. The death of the main character adds to the drama, but also results in avoiding answering the difficult question of what would happen if the character had lived. On this occasion, the question is what would Lasocky's performance with the provincial orchestra actually achieve. The likely answer is not much. After the concert the audience would go home, Lasocky would return to the United States and the musicians would continue to be trapped as poorly paid cultural workers. It is even likely that their material situation would worsen, given that the 1980s in Poland was a decade of economic and political crisis, resulting in deep cuts to culture budgets.

Henry Kesdi in *The Silent Touch* fits the idea of a Romantic musician even more than Lasocky, if we understand him as an autonomous artist, who makes music not for the enjoyment of the audience or to make money, but to express himself. He is a Danish-Jewish composer in his seventies, who stopped composing after the war; in total, he has been idle for over forty years. The reason for his silence seems to be his belief that it makes no sense to compose music « after Auschwitz », following Adorno dictum that « it was barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz ».

One wonders how this approach allowed him to survive financially, given that Kesdi lives in an opulent mansion, in woods near Copenhagen with his second wife Helena (his first wife perished during the war), whose role is that of nurse and secretary. During an early scene Kesdi is visited by his nephew who tries to encourage him to resume his work, on the grounds that the musician needs money, but Kesdi greets him by throwing crockery at him. Equally, the couple show no desire to downsize by moving to a smaller house or for Helena to get a job. One can conjecture that Kesdi can afford such a lavish lifestyle either because he inherited considerable wealth or he is still paid large royalties from his early compositions. However, this issue is not broached, in line with the premise of the film that money is not discussed among artists, including metaphorically –between Zanussi and the subject of his film.

Kesdi is bad-tempered and demands the constant attention and devotion of his wife, to whom he shows little gratitude. He is also very critical about everything, including the state of contemporary music. In a discussion with a couple of friends he argues that contemporary music lost its way by abandoning the pillars of classical composition, such as melody, harmony and repetition. By the same token, contemporary composers lost their ability to mediate between the « higher powers » and the audience. His 40-year-long silence has been a response to this crisis, as well as to the Holocaust.

Kesdi's attitude changes when he is visited by Stefan, a young musicologist from Poland. Stefan decides to visit the Danish musician when he hears in a

dream some music which, he believes, belongs to Kesdi. He wants the old composer to finish this composition, believing that Kesdi owes it to humanity. He shares this view with his Polish mentor, Professor Kern, who knows Kesdi in person, as the two were fellow students at a music conservatoire in Vienna. This fact is of significance, given that in Vienna the autonomous Romantic musician was born, figuratively speaking. One can conjecture that it was there that these then young musicians got the idea that musicians play a special role in society, being prophets, rather than servants of the wealthy. Kern warns Stefan against trying to reach Kesdi, alluding to his difficult character, but in the end gives him the Danish musician's address and a letter of recommendation.

Kesdi initially dismisses the young man, even tries to shoot him, but he warms to him and invites him to his home, when he finds Stefan walking around his house with a rod discovering water streams under his mansion and advises him to sleep in a different room, which cures Kesdi of his insomnia. This special spiritual power bonds these two men because –it is suggested– Kesdi also has a spiritual power to create music. Following this incident, Stefan becomes Kesdi's confidante. He persuades Kesdi to develop the piece which he heard in his dream and which turns out to be an old Jewish melody. At the same time, Stefan makes Kesdi change his lifestyle, by becoming more active and less dependent on Helena. The final stage of this transformation is him employing a young musical secretary, Annette, who becomes his lover and eventually bears him a child.

Stefan succeeds in his task of making Kesdi work on his late opus magnum and we see its premiere, taking place in an opulent music theatre, where Kesdi himself conducts the orchestra. In reality, the piece which he composes, the true title of which is *Exodus*, was written by Wojciech Kilar (1932-2013), one of the most famous Polish composers of the 20th century and also one of the most renowned composers of film music coming from this country. Kilar's artistic trajectory largely mirrors that of Kesdi –he moved from experimental music to what Andrzej Chłopecki describes as musical postmodernism, marked by a return to the classical structures and musical pleasures of melody and repetition. *Exodus*, Kilar's piece used in this film, was composed according to this formula. Chłopecki describes it as « not even popular, but populist, giving up on any finesse, as in a political poster, with a simple phrase "Domineus" attacking a listener, as street slogans such as "Come With Us", uttered during Solidarity demonstrations » (Chłopecki, 1994: 360). However, to understand the meaning of this music, one needs to place it in the context of the triumph of the first Solidarity movement, as the composer himself wanted to see it. Displaced, it lacks its political power and Zanussi does nothing to locate it in a Danish or universal context. When asked about the meaning of his composition, the composer refuses to answer properly, and instead recycles the cliché that the meaning of music cannot be put into words.

Although Zanussi's likely intention is to show the power of classical music, he ultimately demonstrates its limitations as an agent of political change. The work Kesdi composes and performs is appreciated by the audience, as demons-

trated by its applause, but this happens in the restricted arena of a music theatre, attended by an affluent audience, specially dressed for the occasion. We can guess that when the concert was finished, the guests returned to their homes and got on with their lives, as before. We don't even know if the new composition revived Kesdi's career. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible that Wajda in his film avoided showing Lasocky's concert because he did not want to admit that a concert and especially a concert of classical music, is just an aesthetic experience, rather than a political event, leading to a revolution.

At the same time, for Kesdi's inner circle and the artist himself, the concert has a negative effect. Annette gets sick, although this is due to her pregnancy. Kesdi gets so exhausted by conducting the orchestra, that he ends up in hospital, where Stefan is also taken due to suffering from exhaustion. The suffering of the composer and his assistant can be seen in the context of Kantian morality, according to which moral triumph cannot be achieved without significant effort and suffering.

Actual careerist musicians are absent in Zanussi's films, but careerism exists as a distant horizon, evoked by the figure of Kesdi's nephew cum manager, whom the musician visits, when he needs money to pay for his secretary. His dealing with his nephew points to the paradox that a necessary condition of Romantic posturing is having an economically secure existence. Without money one is reduced to a position of servant, as Attali observed.

When looking at the opposition between Romantic and careerist artists, it is also worth considering another character: Professor Kern, Stefan's mentor and friend. His role in the film is rather small, but he does not fit any models described here. He does not present himself as a Romantic artist, but neither does he advocate treating music as an ordinary profession. He also advises Stefan not to visit Kesdi, suggesting that such a visit will not benefit the young musicologist. This scepticism can be related to his age and experience – maybe witnessing the behaviour of such self-entitled musicians like Kesdi, he now holds a more cynical view of music and its place in the world. Kern's office is adorned by a photo of Chopin, taken near his death. This photo can be seen as a sign of Kern's allegiance to Romantic music (in both senses of this word). However, in this photo, Chopin lacks the Romantic features characteristic of his portraits and monuments, underscoring his spirituality and drama, but instead looks like an unheroic and tired man, which suggests that behind every Romantic musician is an ordinary man.

To make Romantic musicians look more believable, they are played by charismatic actors. In the role of Lasocky Wajda cast John Gielgud, in the role of Kesdi Zanussi engaged Max von Sydow. Each of these actors brought with them the baggage of their earlier roles, which were predominantly in arthouse cinema. Gielgud was especially associated with Shakespearean roles in theatre and television; von Sydow was a favourite actor of Ingmar Bergman, where he often played powerful men, including a character challenging Death to a game of chess in *The Seventh Seal* (1957). The fact that by the time they played in these two films, they were of mature age and famous (Gielgud was 75, von Sydow 63),

added to the impression that they had earned enough cultural capital to afford their arrogance or patronising benevolence.

Poland and the West

The two films discussed look at classical musicians not only through the prism of Romanticism and its opposition, but also through the Poland/the West axis. Such interest in this relationship can be explained by the time when these films were made. *The Orchestra Conductor* was made at the end of the state socialist period, when Poland turned its attention to the West and there was an expectation of its implosion, following the long crisis of state socialism. The choice of Karol Wojtyła as the new Pope in 1978 added to this expectation and hope of Poland's « return to Europe ». *The Silent Touch*, on the other hand, was made shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when Poland started to make efforts to join Western international institutions, such as the EU and NATO. This turn also coincided with an increased emigration to the West, especially by young people, usually in search of employment opportunities, although their true exodus would happen after 2004, when Poland joined the EU, leading to some anti-Polish sentiments in countries such as France and Britain, when Polish immigrants were seen as a threat to the local workforce (Skrodzka-Bates, 2011). This « turn to the West » coincided with rediscovering and recovering Polish pre-communist history, as reflected, for example, in changing the names of streets back to those which they had before 1945, or were associated with this history.

In each film under consideration we find a young Polish musician travelling to the West to meet Western musicians and, in a wider sense, learn about the West. In both cases the Polish musicians are very idealistic and enthusiastic about the place they visit. Unlike the bulk of Polish emigrants who travel to the West to earn money, Marta and Stefan do not plan to get any paid employment: Marta because she got a scholarship for Polish artists from the Kosciuszko Foundation; Stefan because he has no time to work for money, being focused on helping Kesdi to write his opus magnum, and also because he can live on very little, always carrying a tent and a sleeping bag with him and eating mostly fruit. Such representation suggests that, whilst admitted to the West, Poles would not steal resources from the wealthier Westerners, but live off from the crumbs from their guests' table. Even these « crumbs » are repaid handsomely by the Polish guests because they serve and rejuvenate their hosts. In the case of Stefan this revitalising is practically literal, as he passes to Kesdi his magic energy, making him feel younger and curing his numerous ailments. This activity, however, comes at a high price, because the more Stefan helps Kesdi to regain his energy, including sexual power, and improve on his skills as a composer, the weaker he becomes himself. During the premiere of his concert, Stefan feels unwell, collapses and barely avoids death, as if proving that he had to pay a heavy price for Kesdi's rejuvenation. Another price Stefan pays is in repressing his own sexual

desire for Annette and, by extension, denying himself to bear any fruit from his trip to Denmark, effectively becoming sterile. In the end Stefan returns to Poland and takes the place of his old professor Kern, becoming a lecturer in musicology. This proves his subservient position towards music and musicians; his inability or unwillingness to use his time in Denmark to create his own music and compete with Kesdi.

Marta's gift of her youthful energy to Lasocky does not result in such traumatic consequences for her, in terms of health, as for Stefan. However, her encounter with the American conductor has significant repercussions for her private life, because through observing Lasocky she notices the deficiencies in her own husband and loses respect and love for him. At the same time, it is difficult to establish what she gains from Lasocky in her musical education. More or less, she behaves in the same way when working under her husband's direction as under Lasocky. Neither of these two men allow her to gain autonomy and develop as an artist, for example by becoming a solo violinist. Marta's husband loses most due to Lasocky's visit, as it exposes his careerism and mediocrity, and leads to a crisis in both his career and marriage.

What is there thus for a Pole, one is tempted to ask, to sacrifice oneself on the altar of the music made by a foreigner? « Nothing », seems the obvious answer. However, this question should be looked at in the context of Polish cultural history during the period of Romanticism. In this period writers attributed Poland an important role in saving Europe; Adam Mickiewicz proclaimed Poland to be « the Christ of the nations ». At the end of the 20th century such claims would be received with incredulity, but they were revived by Pope John Paul II, who argued that the West had « lost its way », being corrupted by unchecked consumption and in need to be rehabilitated by God-fearing Poles who (in part thanks to several decades of living under « communism ») did not experience this corrupting influence.

Neither of the directors used their films to promote Polish music abroad. In *The Orchestra Conductor* we hear Beethoven's music; in *The Silent Touch* the composition at the centre of the narrative was written, as I have mentioned, by Wojciech Kilar, but it is presented as the property of a Danish-Jewish composer. Wajda's indifference to Polish achievements in contemporary classical music and Zanussi's refusal to attribute Polish music to its proper owner and locate it in a Polish context can be regarded as a metaphor of the price Polish artists are prepared to pay to be invited to Western salons². This position can be especially attributed to Zanussi, who most likely was willing to mis-attribute a Polish composition to a Western composer, to co-produce his film with a Danish partner. If any of these directors wanted to showcase contemporary Polish music, they would have much to choose from, given the esteem Polish serious music enjoyed globally in the second half of the 20th century. Examples are compositions by Górecki and Penderecki, used as soundtracks in many Western films,

² This point is examined in *Cold War* by Pawlikowski, but rather than taking Western superiority for granted, Pawlikowski examines the possible loss experienced by a Polish artist who moves to the West.

for example by Stanley Kubrick. Yet, as I intimated, choosing such music and labelling it as Polish music, would undermine the hierarchy between Poland and the West, established through these films' narratives.

Conclusion

The two films discussed here are built on contrasts: between a Romantic musician, who cares nothing about money, but creates or performs music to express himself and convey some deeper truth, which cannot be transmitted in words, and a careerist, who makes music to improve his financial and social position, and between a Western musician, who fronts the greatest musical events, and a Polish one who acts as a midwife of this musical delivery, disappearing in the shadow (of their own countries) when his or her task is fulfilled. Such representation of Polish musicians can be seen as pre-empting any criticism of Poles taking from the natives more attractive jobs and living space. It paints Poles as humble and noble, but ultimately denies them the right to self-expression, which –according to authors of these films– is the most important human right.

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