

KAZIMIERZ WIELKI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF MUSIC EDUCATION

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**New interpretative trends in the world premieres of works by
Polish composers for *a cappella* ensembles of equal voices and
with instrumental accompaniment.**

The artistic work and its description
carried out under the supervision of
Prof. Katarzyna Sokołowska, PhD

BYDGOSZCZ 2026

PART I The artistic work in the form of an electronic recording

(CD attached to the last page of the thesis)

No.	Composer, title of the piece	Duration of the piece
1.	Zuzanna Konopka – <i>Above all</i>	6'13"
2.	Tomasz Cepiel – <i>O Radix Jesse</i>	5'44"
3.	Aleksander Jan Szopa – <i>Salve Regina</i>	7'50"
4.	Marcin Tadeusz Łukaszewski – <i>Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel</i>	3'28"
5.	Michał Malec – <i>Canticum Zachariae</i>	6'59"
6.	Henryk Mikołaj Górecki / arr. Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski – <i>The Lord Christ Has Risen</i>	2'55"
7.	Henryk Mikołaj Górecki / arr. Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski – <i>To You Be Honour and Glory</i>	2'39"
8.	Henryk Mikołaj Górecki / arr. Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski – <i>Holy, Holy</i>	2'01"
		37'49"

Performers:

Sonus Lumine Choir (artistic director: Rafał Wróblewski) (1–5)

Musica Sacra Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral
(artistic director Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski) (6–8)

Miriam Barcikowska (1–2), Aniela Kachniarz (1) – transverse flute,
Wojciech Komorzycki (3–4) – trumpet, Maciej Biskup (5) – baritone
saxophone

Paweł Chaberski (1–2) – piano,
Sebastian Kuczyński (3–4), Władysław Widłak (5) – organ

Rafał Wróblewski (1–8) – conductor

The recordings were made inside the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral
at 3 Floriańska Street on the following dates: 25 January 2025, 20 May 2025,
28 June 2025 and 7 March 2026

Recording engineers: Aleksandra Koniuch, Dawid Bućko

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*My heartfelt thanks go to my supervisor, Professor Katarzyna Sokołowska,
for her support, patience, and faith in me at every stage of this journey.
You were more than just my supervisor
— you were also a mentor, a source of strength, and, on many occasions, a friend.*

*I would also like to thank the female members of the Sonus Lumine Choir
and the Musica Sacra Choir for every note we sang together, every kind word,
and for your support in moments of doubt.*

*My deepest gratitude, however, goes to my Family,
and especially to my Wife and Son.
Thank you for always being there for me and standing by my side.
Your love, patience, and support gave me the strength to keep moving forward.
This doctoral degree is also, in part, your achievement.
From the bottom of my heart — thank you*

Introduction

Contemporary sacred music is one of the most fascinating and, at the same time, extremely valuable areas of the art of sound. It is a source of profound emotions, artistic experimentation and spiritual experiences. The 21st-century Polish school of composition demonstrates that sacred music is a living, evolving language of contemporary art and an important component of national culture.

The aim of this doctoral thesis was to stage the world premieres of eight works by leading Polish composers of sacred music, primarily from the younger generation, and thereby to present new, original interpretative approaches. The compositions recorded on the CD, which together form an artistic work, are pieces commissioned from specific composers with experience in composing choral music. In these compositions, in addition to the vocal parts, one can discern parts for keyboard instruments, namely the piano and organ, as well as selected wind instruments, namely the trumpet, flutes and baritone saxophone.

Based on the collected material and the prepared artistic presentation, the main research problem took the form of the following question: **What motivates a conductor to undertake world premieres, and do they perceive new interpretative trends in them?**

Based on the experience gained in staging world premieres with various vocal ensembles, a working hypothesis was formulated even before the research for this thesis began: *Undertaking a world premiere is a significant step towards musical maturity, which will be culminated in the performance of the work. The conductor is motivated to prepare and present the work by the thought that their interpretation will serve as a model for other ensembles and conductors; they should therefore derive great satisfaction from undertaking such activities and feel a sense of inner pride at having been able to create their own vision of a newly composed piece. In contemporary compositions, the conductor may discern new trends proposed by the composer in their work, such as borrowings from jazz or popular music, or the introduction of melorecitation or vocalises, which are harmonically rendered by a vocal ensemble.*

Four specific issues have also been identified:

1. What is the conductor's attitude towards world premieres?

2. What performance challenges must a chorister in an in the world premiere of a contemporary composition?
3. What experiences do new performance trends in contemporary?
4. Does the conductor's work on a world premiere require consultation with the composer?

In response to the above questions, the following working hypotheses have been put forward:

1. It is assumed that the conductor's approach to a world premiere is more all-encompassing. Their vision for the performance of the work, whilst naturally adhering to the musical notation in the score, will serve as the foundation, and even the inspiration, for other choral ensembles' performances of the work. By undertaking the world premiere of a work, the conductor is both the initiator and promoter of that composer's work.

2. It is assumed that an amateur vocal ensemble may encounter difficulties with certain elements of a musical work and in interpreting the composer's intentions for its performance. Composers often make use of vocal techniques that are traditional in choral music. The works feature complex harmonies, which may present challenges for an amateur choir.

3. It is assumed that contemporary choral music is characterised by a wide range of emotions and moods. Elaborate harmony, interesting vocal techniques and a wide selection of widely available texts combine to produce an outstanding result. The composers' experience – not only professional but, above all, personal – combined with the work of the conductor and the vocal ensemble, conveys an extraordinary effect to the audience. Thanks to carefully selected text and the accompanying soundscape, the listener can experience a unique feast for the spirit and the body.

4. It is assumed that collaboration between the conductor and the composer during the preparation for the premiere is essential, particularly regarding contentious elements where the score requires further clarification.

The work has been divided into two main parts. The first consists of an artistic work recorded on a CD, included at the end of the dissertation. The material comprises eight pieces, which have been recorded and produced in a manner that mimics a concert

performance, without eliminating any potential imperfections in sound that might occur during a live performance.

Two vocal ensembles, with whom the PhD candidate collaborates on a daily basis, took part in the artistic component: the *Sonus Lumine* Choir and the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral. Fellow musicians, whom the PhD candidate had met during his artistic career to date, were also invited to collaborate.

The main objectives of this dissertation, which describes the artistic work, were: to analyse the eight pieces selected for performance; to document and justify the author's own creative concept from the perspective of the work's principal performer; and to describe the author's concept for the world premieres.

The second part of the thesis constitutes a description of the artistic work and is divided into three main chapters. The first of these discusses contemporary performance trends characteristic of the work of 21st-century composers, with particular emphasis on their application in the world premieres of the works included in this thesis. The second chapter presents a historical overview of the activities of both ensembles and identifies the elements constituting their common artistic denominator. The final chapter contains an analysis of individual compositions, including a biographical sketch of the composer, a study of the works, and a discussion of the performance challenges that may arise during their performance.

CHAPTER I

Contemporary choral music - main trends

1.1. Stylistic trends in 21st-century Polish choral music

21st-century choral music is not a phenomenon radically separate from the achievements of the previous century. Its development has been continuous and natural, whilst maintaining both historical and aesthetic continuity. Contemporary choral composition is characterised above all by an openness to the intermingling of various musical styles and genres. Interaction with the spoken word is key to this type of music. Together, they constitute a shared artistic value. Debussy summed this up as follows: *'Music begins where the word is powerless'*¹. In their works, 21st-century composers employ a variety of compositional techniques and means of expression which not only reflect current artistic trends but also build an individual creative idiom and constitute a recognisable element of their musical language. Paweł Mykietyn rightly observed in one of his publications that today's music is full of freedom that transcends the frameworks taught in schools, and indeed goes beyond specific styles². The diversity of genres and aesthetics present in contemporary choral works leads to them complementing one another, creating rich and multidimensional sonic spaces as well as new artistic qualities³. The Polish conductor – Dr Joanna Maluga, Professor at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music – presented her view of contemporary choral music as follows in an interview: *'Contemporary choral music is developing along at least two distinct paths. On the one hand, we have the traditional strand, drawing on the achievements of previous eras. Works within this strand are composed in a tonal aesthetic, centered on the major–minor system and classical compositional techniques. On the other hand, there is an avant-garde trend, utilising contemporary performance and compositional techniques. This encompasses developed sonorism, as well as the use of non-standard vocal techniques such as whispers, sibilants, speech or other extended vocal techniques. Elements such as electronic interventions, tape layers, live sampling and sound*

¹ K. Kord, *Epizody (Episodes)*, Kraków 2019, p. 55.

² A. Lewandowska-Kąkol, *Dźwięki, szepty, zgrzyty (Sounds, Whispers, Clashes)*, Warsaw 2012, p. 218.

³ K. Wilkoszewska, *Wariacje na postmodernizm (Variations on Postmodernism)*, Kraków 2008, p. 19.

processing are also appearing with increasing frequency. Non-vocal techniques are also utilised, such as body percussion or small percussion instruments played by the choristers. Added to this is the use of contemporary scales and tonal systems, as well as experimentation with tuning and detuning. All these techniques may occur either individually or in various combinations. It seems, however, that despite the development of the avant-garde, in contemporary choral practice we more often encounter works of a more classical than experimental nature”⁴.

Contemporary composers enjoy considerable creative freedom. They make use of a variety of compositional techniques and means of musical expression, whilst remaining faithful to the aesthetic and formal principles characteristic of a particular movement or theme. The author of the article quotes Maria Piotrowska, who stated that a composer may either embrace the traditional canon, along with its entire intellectual heritage and the resulting artistic consequences and obligations, or direct their work towards greater creative autonomy and interpretative freedom⁵. Contemporary music is characterised by a rich and diverse range of means of expression. Extended vocal techniques, which involve using the voice in ways that go beyond its traditional performative functions, occupy a special place within it. Among the most commonly used are: whispering, shouting, melorecitation, glissando and various modifications of vocal timbre, including smooth transitions between the articulation of individual vowels. This kind of control over vocal production significantly broadens the expressive and interpretative possibilities of a piece, enabling the achievement of new sonic qualities and the intensification of the artistic message. In an interview with Anna Rocławska-Musiały, one of the recognised composers of the 21st century, the following statement was made: *‘Some composers remain close to traditional compositional techniques, whilst others treat the choir as an experimental instrument, seeking new ways of vocal production, the organisation of the sound space, or the relationship between performers and the audience. For me, the very development of contemporary choral music is a phenomenon that brings ‘something new’ to the world of music. It is an incredibly vibrant space, open*

⁴ Individual interview conducted on 3 July 2026.

⁵ K. Cyran, „Kanon i postmodernizm” w twórczości religijnej kompozytorów polskich przełomu XX i XXI wieku, [w:] „Teoria Muzyki” (‘Canon and Postmodernism’ in the religious works of Polish composers at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, [in:] ‘Teoria Muzyki’) 2015, no. 7, p. 35.

*to dialogue between tradition and the present day, as well as to the search for new forms of artistic expression*⁶.

An important role in contemporary choral composition is played not only by the musical material itself, but also by the manner of its performance. Increasingly, composers and conductors treat the voice as an autonomous sonic instrument, exploring its diverse expressive and sonoristic possibilities. These explorations include, amongst other things, the use of complex vocal textures, the shaping of sonic relationships between individual voices, and the deliberate utilisation of subtle differences in timbre, vibration and resonant phenomena. Prof. Bartosz Michałowski, director of the National Philharmonic Choir, stated in an interview that: *“Increasingly, the choir is no longer treated solely as an instrument performing written notes. It is becoming a participant in an artistic experience that encompasses space, movement, imagery, light and theatrical elements. Composers are venturing ever more boldly beyond the traditional framework of the concert”*⁷. In one of his publications, Prof. Dariusz Zimnicki noted that choral performances are increasingly enhanced by choreographic elements, naturally tailored to the style and genre of the work⁸. Alongside the vocal layer, rhythmic organisation and metrical variation remain key areas of interest for contemporary composers. Regular and predictable structures are increasingly being replaced by irregular rhythms, frequent changes of metre and polyrhythmic devices. It is also becoming characteristic to employ contrasts between sections of the choir, to juxtapose solo parts with the choral ensemble, and to utilise unconventional harmonic solutions, including, amongst other things, dissonances and non-standard chordal combinations.

Another significant trend in contemporary compositional practice is the reference to elements characteristic of early music. This manifests itself, amongst other things, in the use of Gregorian motifs and techniques specific to the choral tradition. In an article by Father Tomasz Maria Dąbek OSB, we read that Gregorian chant, as an expression of prayer through music, should be used and performed by people with great musical

⁶ One-to-one interview conducted on 14 June 2026.

⁷ One-to-one interview conducted on 12 June 2026.

⁸ D. Zimnicki, *Co lubimy śpiewać?*, [w:] Współczesna Chóralistyka 1. Wartości, Konteksty, Perspektywy, (*What Do We Like to Sing?*, [in:] Contemporary Choral Music 1: Values, Contexts, Perspectives,) Wrocław 2018, p. 137

sensitivity⁹. It is not without reason that 21st-century composers working in choral music – and, more specifically, sacred music – draw upon this genre. Contemporary compositions are also increasingly incorporating elements of folk and ethnic music. At times, musical traditions from both the Far East and the West also serve as inspiration. This trend reflects composers' growing openness to intercultural dialogue and their drawing of inspiration from the diversity of the world's musical traditions; it fosters the creation of new aesthetic and sonic qualities.

Another key feature of 21st-century choral music is the increased accessibility of the repertoire, resulting from the development of digital technologies and the widespread availability of online music resources. There are now extensive digital libraries and online platforms providing access to a wide catalogue of choral compositions. Many composers also maintain their own websites or distribution channels, through which works can be purchased regardless of the listener's location. The development of modern communication tools also facilitates direct contact with composers, enabling listeners to obtain information about works, access sheet music, and, on occasion, commission individual compositions. An additional trend in contemporary compositional practice is the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools, electronic instruments and other modern technologies. Composers incorporate such solutions into their works, expanding their creative and sonic possibilities. It is not uncommon for them, in collaboration with conductors and performing ensembles, to develop compositions of a distinctive character, tailored to a specific ensemble or particular artistic context, which lends them a unique and inimitable dimension. Professor Joanna Maluga drew attention to this point, expressing her view as follows: *'The most pronounced contemporary trend seems to be the increasingly widespread use of electronics. One increasingly encounters works utilising the recording and processing of live choral sound, the duplication of sound material, improvisation performed against an electronic layer or tape, and various forms of interaction between the ensemble and electronics. [...] Unconventional sound sources are also emerging, such as glasses or other everyday objects used as part of the performance. Whilst all these phenomena are interesting, I would consider the*

⁹ Fr. T. M. Dąbek OSB, *Refleksje na temat współczesnych kierunków interpretacji chorału gregoriańskiego* ('Reflections on contemporary trends in the interpretation of Gregorian chant', [in:] *Biblical and Liturgical Movement*), Issue 3 (2004), p. 186.

increasingly widespread presence of electronics to be the most characteristic trend in contemporary choral music”¹⁰.

In response to the limited availability of original compositions intended for homogeneous choirs, adaptations and arrangements of the existing repertoire are becoming increasingly important. Works representing a variety of musical genres, including popular, film and classical music, are being adapted. These efforts enable ensembles with smaller line-ups to broaden their repertoire and adapt existing works to the specific characteristics of homogeneous choirs.

One contemporary trend is the growing interest in ensemble vocal performance, as evidenced by the steady increase in the number of vocal ensembles and choirs. This phenomenon has primarily a social and organisational dimension, reflecting the growing activity of the amateur choral movement and the popularisation of making music together. A significant proportion of the ensembles being formed operate on an amateur basis, focusing their activities on organising local concerts, taking part in competitions and festivals, as well as on making music together, which fosters both the artistic development of the ensemble’s members and the integration of the community centred around the choir. A key factor determining the artistic standard and development potential of such ensembles is the competence of the person in charge. The conductor or artistic director should possess the appropriate substantive, pedagogical and practical training to enable them to consciously shape the ensemble’s performance skills. The importance of amateur choirs in the modern world was also highlighted by the doctoral student’s interviewees, who expressed their views during the interviews.

Anna Ročławska-Musiałczyk stated: *“Choral music today is not exclusively the domain of professional singers. It is, above all, a dynamically developing amateur movement which possesses enormous artistic and educational value, and often displays a standard close to that of professionals”¹¹.*

Prof. Joanna Maluga echoes this view, noting the other benefits that choirs provide: *“In Poland, the vast majority of the choral movement consists of amateur choirs. This does not, however, imply a low standard of performance – many of these groups*

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

perform at a professional level, even though their members are not professional musicians. In this context, choral activity becomes a space for building community, developing musical and social skills, and forging interpersonal bonds. Making music together also has a therapeutic dimension – it provides a sense of belonging, enables the shared experience of emotions, and fosters artistic values. Many such ensembles are formed by groups of friends and local communities. A choir teaches not only how to sing together and create a unified sound, but also how to coexist within a community. It brings together people with different views, experiences and temperaments, who, despite these differences, are able to create a single, unified voice”¹².

Professor Bartosz Michałowski also drew attention to further aspects of choral ensembles: *“We live in a world that rewards individualism, quick reactions and the constant projection of one’s own voice. Meanwhile, the very essence of a choir is based on the opposite. In order to create a unified sound, everyone must learn to listen to others just as attentively as they listen to themselves. That is why I see the choir as a unique school of cooperation and responsibility. It teaches that the quality of collective action depends not on the dominance of the individual, but on the ability to build relationships. In this sense, it is not only an artistic ensemble, but also a model of how a community functions”¹³.*

1.2. Compositional idioms represented in the artistic work

The artistic work forming part of this doctoral thesis comprises eight pieces performed by the *Sonus Lumine* Choir and the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral. The choice of these ensembles stems from the doctoral candidate’s long-standing collaboration with both choirs and from their performance capabilities, which enabled the realisation of the artistic objectives set out.

The selection of compositions included in the artistic work was made deliberately and stemmed from the objectives set out within this project. All the works presented in the thesis were premiered and include both new compositions written for a female choir and original arrangements prepared with this type of ensemble in mind.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

The implementation of this project contributes to the enrichment of the choral repertoire intended for female choirs. Four of the works presented were commissioned by the PhD candidate and were created specifically for the purposes of this project. The composers independently selected the texts and shaped the musical material in accordance with their own creative vision. The remaining four works are arrangements prepared for the project, taking into account the specific sonic and performance characteristics of an all-female choir. A repertoire structured in this way allows for the presentation of diverse approaches to shaping contemporary choral texture and illustrates the composers' differing perspectives on the relationship between text, music and the performance capabilities of a vocal ensemble.

One of the compositional trends evident in the analysed works is the use of whispering and melorecitation, understood as a method of articulating spoken text in close connection with the musical layer¹⁴. In Aleksander Jan Szopa's *Salve Regina*, in bar 71, the first soprano and second soprano parts begin to recite the repeated words 'Et Iesum'. However, the motif, performed by the altos, comes to the fore; they emphasise the text and direct its message towards the listener. This technique continues until bar 74.

Example 1. A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', bars 70–72.

The musical score for Example 1, A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', bars 70–72, is presented in three systems. The first system shows the Soprano 1 and Soprano 2 parts, both marked *mf sussurrando* and *rip. ad libitum*. The Alto part is marked *p* and *Et le - sum*. The lyrics are 'Et le - sum' and 'be - ne - dic - tum'. The second system shows the Soprano 1 and Soprano 2 parts, both marked *mf sussurrando* and *rip. ad libitum*. The Alto part is marked *p* and *Et le - sum*. The lyrics are 'Et le - sum' and 'be - ne - dic - tum'. The third system shows the Soprano 1 and Soprano 2 parts, both marked *mf sussurrando* and *rip. ad libitum*. The Alto part is marked *p* and *Et le - sum*. The lyrics are 'Et le - sum' and 'be - ne - dic - tum'.

¹⁴ <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/88129/melorecytacja>, [accessed on 13 July 2026].

In Michał Malec's *Canticum Zachariae*, a similar compositional technique appears twice. In the first instance (bar 87), there is full melorecitation, in which all choral parts follow an identical rhythmic pattern and declaim the text simultaneously.

Example 2. M. Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', bar 87.

The musical score for bar 87 consists of five staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a half note, followed by a trill. The next three staves are for a chorus, each with a 'sussurando' marking and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass line with a half note and a whole note. The lyrics 'ex i - ni-mi-cis nos-tris' are written below the chorus staves.

The second instance of the melorecitation motif in the same work is of a different nature. In this case, the melorecitation technique is entrusted to a single choral part, namely the second soprano, whilst the remaining voices serve as a harmonic backdrop, contributing to the soundscape alongside the instrumental parts (baritone saxophone and organ). This motif spans three bars (bars 90–92).

Example 3. M. Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', a melorecitation score set against other voices, pp. 90–92.

The image displays a musical score for 'Canticum Zachariae' by M. Malec, spanning pages 90 and 92. The score is written for a vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts feature melorecitation, which is a style of singing that combines elements of melody and speech. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation, often using sustained chords and melodic motifs. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings like *mf*, *mp*, and *p* *sussurando*. The lyrics are in Latin, and the text is set against the melorecitation score.

Page 90 (left):

- Staff 1: *mf mp* *qui o - de - runt*
- Staff 2: *p sussurando* *et de ma-nu om-ni - um, qui o -*
- Staff 3: *mp* *qui o - de - runt*
- Staff 4: Piano accompaniment with sustained chords.

Page 92 (right):

- Staff 1: *nos, o - de - runt nos,*
- Staff 2: *de-runt nos, qui o-de - runt, o-de-runt nos*
- Staff 3: *nos, o - de - runt nos,*
- Staff 4: Piano accompaniment with sustained chords.

A whispering motif, which subsequently transforms into melorecitation, appears in Tomasz Cepiel's work 'O Radix Jesse'. From bar 79, the altos sustain a single note using the legato technique right up to bar 87, whilst employing alternate breathing. The soprano parts, meanwhile, carry the aforementioned melorecitation motif with the text 'veni ad liberandum nos, iam noli tardare'. Against the backdrop of this compositional device, the piano sustains a chord consisting of a single note spread across various octaves, whilst the flute develops its own variation on the melodic material.

Example 4. T. Cepiel, 'O Radix Jesse', notation in the score of *the* melorecitative passage 'veni ad liberandum...', bars 79–84.

79 senza misura ca. 14' *p*

Fl.

ca. 14"

8 1

2. rte *pp*

8 1

S. senza misura ca. 14'

"veni ad liberandum nos, iam noli tardare"

M-s.

A. *p*

O...

82 *al niente A tempo*

Fl.

8 1

2. rte *ppp*

8 1

S. senza misura ca. 10"

M-s.

A.

This motif culminates in the vocal ensemble's joint rendition of the text 'O Radix Jesse', performed without instrumental accompaniment, and thus in a pure *a cappella* choral texture.

Example 5. T. Cepiel, 'O Radix Jesse', the conclusion of the piece, bars 87–89.

sussurando

S.

O Ra - dix Je - sse.

M-s.

O Ra - dix Je - sse.

A.

Ra - dix Je - sse.

Another compositional technique is the fusion of tradition with elements of contemporary musical texture, as exemplified by the use of Gregorian chant. Aleksander Jan Szopa employs this approach in his piece '*Salve Regina*'. The composer has employed a modern musical notation on the staff to make it easier for the performers to read and understand the material. At the same time, the interpretative intention and the phrasing should draw on the traditional performance of Gregorian chant.

In the first example, the well-known melody of the '*Salve Regina*' is used. The main melodic line is entrusted to the altos, whilst the sopranos imitate a motif based on the word 'Salve', introducing it in various rhythmic values and employing temporal displacement.

Example 6. A. J. Szopa, '*Salve Regina*', presentation of the theme based on Gregorian chant, bars 12–15.

The musical score for Example 6 shows the presentation of the theme based on Gregorian chant in bars 12–15. The score is for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Treble Clef (tr in sib), Organ (org), and Pedal (ped). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 50. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score shows the sopranos imitating a motif based on the word 'Salve' with various rhythmic values and temporal displacement. The alto part features the main melodic line. The organ and pedal provide harmonic support. The score is divided into measures with time signatures 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4.

Another passage containing elements of Gregorian chant is found in bars 45–46 of the same piece. The choir performs the modern notation, although the composer's intention remains to draw on the tradition of Gregorian chant. The power of this passage stems from the simplicity of the melodic line and the significance of the text used: '*Eia ergo, Advocata nostra*'.

Example 7. A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', second presentation of the chorale motif, bars 45–46.

Example 7 shows a musical score for three staves, likely representing different vocal parts or instruments. The time signature is 4/4, and the tempo is marked as quarter note = 40. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano). The lyrics are "E - ia er - go, Ad - vo - ca - ta nos - tra,". The score includes a rehearsal mark 7 at the end of the second staff.

The third use of the Gregorian chant appears in the final presentation of the choral part. In the score, this passage is written in unison, and its performance was closely linked to the conductor's gestures, which determined the phrasing and interpretative character.

Example 8. A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', the third presentation of the Gregorian chant motif, bars 90–93.

Example 8 shows a musical score for three staves, labeled S1, S2, and A. The time signatures are 2/4, 3/4, 3/4, and 6/4. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are "Vir-go Ma - ri - a.".

Another compositional technique involves the use of the human voice in a manner that goes beyond traditional performance techniques. In Michał Malec's composition 'Canticum Zachariae', the *glissando* technique is employed. The vocal ensemble's task is to smoothly transition the sound from the high register to a note an octave lower. A key element of the interpretation of this passage is maintaining the correct dynamic balance; specifically, *the glissando* itself should not dominate the initial and final notes, which constitute the most important structural points of this technique. This technique appears in bars 83–89.

Example 9. M. Malec, ‘*Canticum Zachariae*’, excerpt from the musical score featuring the *glissando* technique, bars 83–89.

The musical score for Example 9 shows three vocal staves (S.1, S.2, and A.) for bars 83-89. The lyrics are 'ex i-ni-mi-cis, ex i-ni-mi-cis nos-tris' and 'sa-lu-tem, sa-lu-tem'. The score includes dynamic markings (f, p, mp) and the instruction 'sussurando'. The notation features glissando techniques, indicated by wavy lines and slurs over the notes.

In the same piece, another interesting compositional idea can be observed. In bars 20–27, the composer employs an alternating use of the notes ‘a’ and ‘m’, the correct articulation of which by the vocal ensemble creates an effect reminiscent of an echo.

Example 10. M. Malec, ‘*Canticum Zachariae*’, bars 20–26.

The musical score for Example 10 shows three vocal staves for bars 20-26. The phonetic notations [a] and [m] are used to represent the notes. The score includes dynamic markings (mp, mf). The notation shows a clear alternating pattern of [a] and [m] notes, which creates an echo effect.

The use of this technique requires the vocal ensemble to exercise precise control over their performance techniques, in particular the ability to create dynamic contrast. Appropriate variation in dynamic levels between successive entries of the notes allows for a distinct echo effect, which constitutes an essential element of the musical expression in this passage.

In some of the pieces comprising the work, there are frequent changes in metre. In many cases, these stem from the textual layer, whose accentuation determines the shape of the metrical organisation. The use of varied metre allows the composer to preserve the natural flow of prosody and the appropriate relationship between text and music. At the same time, this technique constitutes a significant element of the composer's language, lending the pieces an individual character and emphasising their contemporary aesthetic.

Also worthy of note is the use of the relationship between the choir and the soloists, which alludes to elaborate vocal-instrumental forms, even though the work under analysis is a choral miniature. This approach was employed in Zuzanna Konopka's composition '*Above all*'. Although the score does not contain separate solo parts, their performance formed part of the agreed interpretative concept. This approach had been agreed upon beforehand, based on a performance of this composition in a version for mixed choir, soloists and symphony orchestra. The solo parts begin in section B, with an upbeat in voice I, and continue until section D. They then reappear from section F, with an upbeat in voice II. Between these sections, and from section G until the end of the piece, the musical material is performed by the entire choir. The alternating presentation of solo and choral parts introduces a distinct contrast in both sound and dynamics. The juxtaposition of the chamber-like sound of the soloists with the full vocal ensemble enriches the work's dramatic structure and emphasises its artistic expression.

The final trend reflected in this artistic work is the creation of arrangements intended for a female choir. This choice stems from the PhD candidate's long-standing collaboration with all-female ensembles, as well as from the need to expand the repertoire intended for this type of ensemble. During the selection of musical material, particular attention was paid to the possibility of enriching the available choral literature with new compositions and arrangements tailored to the specific characteristics of an all-female choir.

As mentioned earlier, four pieces were composed specifically for this project and are being performed for the first time. The remaining four are arrangements of existing compositions, prepared with a female choir in mind.

One of these is the piece '*Above all*', which had been premiered several years earlier in a version for a larger vocal-instrumental ensemble. At the request of a PhD student, the composer prepared a new arrangement for a female choir, flutes and piano.

The change in instrumentation has resulted in a more intimate and subtle sound, whilst retaining the character of the composition. The next three arrangements comprise works by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki from the collection '*Z Pieśni Kościelnych*' ('*From Church Songs*'), originally written for a mixed *a cappella* choir. The arrangements were prepared by Professor Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski, conductor of the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral. The adaptation involved adjusting the parts for a female ensemble without altering the musical material, thereby preserving the original character of the compositions.

The preparation of arrangements for single-voice choirs is now an increasingly common practice. This is due, amongst other things, to the smaller number of works intended for such ensembles compared to the rich repertoire of mixed choirs. Adaptations of this kind make it possible to broaden the repertoire of single-voice choirs, whilst preserving the artistic and stylistic qualities of the original works.

CHAPTER II

The Concept of an Artistic Work

The subject matter of this doctoral thesis stems from the author's own experiences relating to his artistic and teaching activities in the field of choral music. Whilst still a student at the Warsaw Academy of Music, the author began an active career as a conductor and performer. He served as a vocal coach for the SWPS University Choir, leading classes on vocal projection in ensemble work, primarily with female vocal ensembles. This was also due to the specific nature of his own voice, that of *a countertenor*. His initial experiences in this field contributed to a deeper understanding of choral literature, particularly the sacred repertoire, encompassing both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

For this reason, one of the main objectives of this thesis was to present sacred music as a significant area of the author's artistic activity, constituting both the sphere of his professional practice and the subject of his enduring interests, as well as a source of creative inspiration. The world premieres presented in the artistic section of the thesis illustrate the doctoral candidate's innovative interpretative approach and individual artistic vision. A second key objective of the thesis was to emphasise the aspect of innovation, which was reflected in the presentation of the world premieres of selected compositions. These works were composed by artists with whom the doctoral candidate shares artistic and professional ties, having met them both through collaboration and within the musical community. These composers, representing varying stages of creative development, collaborated on the project. The works prepared by the performing ensembles are characterised by a significant degree of technical difficulty, whilst also constituting a key factor in the ensembles' artistic development. The compositions presented enrich the contemporary choral repertoire and constitute a valuable contribution to the development of the literature in this genre, with particular emphasis on the body of work by Polish composers and the importance of collaborative performance between the ensemble, instrumentalists, the conductor and the composer.

2.1. A brief history of the ensembles collaborating on the doctoral thesis

2.1.1. The *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral

The *Musica Sacra* ensemble was founded in 2002, although the first organisational and artistic rehearsals had already taken place a year earlier. By decree of the then Ordinary of the Diocese of Warsaw-Prague, His Excellency Archbishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź, the ensemble was granted the status of the official Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral. In its early years, it operated as a mixed-voice ensemble comprising both female and male voices. For over ten years, however, the ensemble has functioned as a women's choir.

The founder, artistic director and conductor of the choir is Prof. Paweł Łukaszewski. Joanna Łukaszewska, PhD, serves as the vocal coach, responsible for developing the choir's vocal technique and ensuring the cohesion of its sound; she is also a member of the choir in the mezzo-soprano section. The choir also works with the accompanists Łukasz Farcinkiewicz and Paweł Głowiński. The author of this dissertation serves as assistant conductor and also sings in the alto section.

Photograph 1. The *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral, May 2025,
photo: Kinga Karpati & Daniel Zarewicz



The *Musica Sacra* Choir has taken part in numerous international music festivals, including the ‘Festival des Cathédrales’ in Saint-Quentin, France, the ‘Altstadtherbst’ in Düsseldorf, Germany, and the Polish Culture Festival in Rome, Italy. The choir has also taken part in major musical events organised in Poland, such as the ‘Gaude Mater’ International Festival of Sacred Music in Częstochowa, the ‘Wratistavia Cantans’ International Festival and the ‘Laboratory of Contemporary Music’ in Warsaw. Throughout its history, the choir has performed at numerous music venues both at home and abroad, including in Luxembourg, Germany, France, Italy and the United States, as well as in many cities across Poland.

A key element of the ensemble’s artistic activity is the world premiere of contemporary sacred music. The choir has given numerous premiere performances of works by Polish and international composers, including Witold Lutosławski, Marian Borkowski, Stanisław Moryto, Marian Sawa, Łukasz Farcinkiewicz, Łukasz Urbaniak, Sebastian Szymański, Michał Malec, Jakub Szafrński, as well as foreign composers such as Joël Merah, Douglas Pew, Julia Seeholzer, Boris Alvarado and Daniel Luzko. The works of Paweł Łukaszewski, an internationally renowned composer of choral and sacred music who also serves as the choir’s conductor, hold a special place in the choir’s repertoire.

The discography of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral Choir comprises over ten CDs. Five of these have been honoured with the prestigious Fryderyk music award. The choir’s recordings have also been recognised by the Association of Catholic Publishers with the Feniks award. In 2021, to mark the choir’s twentieth anniversary, the then Minister of Culture, National Heritage and Sport, Prof. Piotr Gliński, awarded the choir the Honorary Badge ‘For Merit to Polish Culture’.

In 2026, the ‘Musica Sacra’ Choir celebrated the 25th anniversary of its artistic activity. To mark the occasion, a concert was organised featuring the most significant works from the ensemble’s repertoire, with particular emphasis on sacred music performed throughout the entire period of its existence. As part of the anniversary celebrations, the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral – which is normally an all-female ensemble – briefly returned to its original format, featuring male voices. The choir received a number of awards from Adam Struzik, Marshal of the Mazovia Voivodeship, and Marta Cienkowska, Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

Photograph 2. The *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral, May 2026,
photo: Kinga Karpati & Daniel Zarewicz



In its concert activities, the choir has collaborated with many renowned orchestras and instrumental ensembles, such as the Polish Radio Orchestra, the Częstochowa Philharmonic Orchestra and the Łomża Chamber Orchestra. The ensemble has also worked with outstanding soloists, including Anna Mikołajczyk-Niewiedział, Bożena Harasimowicz, Wojciech Gierlach, Joanna Woś, Urszula Kryger, Robert Cieśla and Jarosław Bręk¹⁵.

2.1.2. *The Sonus Lumine* Choir

The *Sonus Lumine* Choir was founded in 2019. Its founder, conductor and organiser of its artistic activities is the author of this thesis. The impetus for establishing the ensemble came from the doctoral candidate's previous experience as a performer and conductor, as well as the need to create his own vocal ensemble, which would enable to pursue further artistic development and realise his individual interpretative and repertoire concepts.

¹⁵ Joanna and Paweł Łukaszewski, *Kronika 25-lecia Chóru Katedry Warszawsko-Praskiej Musica Sacra (Chronicle of the 25th Anniversary of the Musica Sacra Choir of the Warsaw-Praga Cathedral)*, Warsaw 2026.

The recruitment process for the ensemble followed a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, promotional activities were carried out via social media; on the other, contacts within the artistic community and direct recommendations were utilised. The choir's first rehearsal with the original line-up took place in late September 2019. Some of those who took part in that meeting still form the core of the group and remain one of its most important organisational and artistic pillars.

Further promotional activities, as well as recommendations from choir members already involved, contributed to the gradual expansion of the ensemble's membership. In January 2020, the choir made its first public appearance during a concert of Christmas carols and pastorals, which took place at the Sanctuary of St Faustina on Żytnia Street in Warsaw.

Photograph 3. The *Sonus Lumine* Choir, first concert '*Ej w dzień narodzenia!*' ('Oh, on the Day of Birth'), January 2020, Photo: Private archive



Shortly after this event, the choir's activities coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the music scene. Many choirs suspended their activities at that time or reduced them to a minimum. The *Sonus Lumine* Choir decided to continue its work remotely. A system of regular, weekly online meetings was introduced, making it possible to maintain the continuity of their artistic activities. During this time, they also carried out a recording project using technology that enables the combining of individual vocal recordings, modelled on similar initiatives undertaken by choirs around the world. The published recording was well received by both the audience and the choir members themselves, which provided further motivation for continued artistic development.

In 2020, the choir decided to take part in its first choral competition. They chose the Cantantes Lublinensis National Choral Competition, at which the group won a silver medal and a special prize. This success encouraged the choir to continue participating in competitive events. In the years that followed, the choir won numerous honours, including:

- silver ribbons at the National Christmas Carols and Pastorals Competition in Chełmno (2021, 2022, 2023),
- second place in the National Christmas Carols and Pastorals Competition in Łazy (2022),
- a silver ribbon at the National Choral Competition ‘Wrocław – City of Music’ (2023),
- Grand Prix and a silver medal at the National Marian Song Competition in Niemcz (2024),
- Grand Prix, a gold award and a special prize for the conductor at the 20th National Festival ‘O Warmio moja miła’ (‘O Warmia, My Beloved’) in Olsztyn (2025).

Since September 2022, the *Sonus Lumine* Choir has been collaborating with Terminal Kultury Gocław in Warsaw as part of initiatives aimed at engaging the local community. This collaboration has enabled the choir to make use of suitable facilities and has created the conditions for it to present its artistic work to a wider audience.

Photograph 4. The *Sonus Lumine* Choir, voice projection workshops with Joanna Łukaszewska (PhD), April 2025, photo: Artur Błażewicz



In subsequent artistic seasons, the ensemble has systematically expanded its repertoire, striving for stylistic diversity and a high standard of performance. The choir's repertoire includes works representing various musical genres and traditions, including folk, popular, sacred and patriotic music. The choir members also take part in a variety of vocal and artistic projects, which broaden the scope of their performance experience and contribute to the choir's further development¹⁶.

Photograph 5. *Sonus Lumine* Choir, June 2026, photo by Artur Błażewicz



2.2. A study of collaboration in the process of preparing the core repertoire

The common link between the two ensembles is the PhD student himself. As someone collaborating with both ensembles, he influences the development of his own musical sensibility, deepens his artistic craft and strives to achieve a higher artistic level. Working with ensembles representing varying levels of vocal training and musical experience enables him to gain an in-depth understanding of their specific characteristics and inner workings.

Whilst working with the *Musica Sacra* Choir, a PhD student experiences a unique approach to the interpretation of sacred music. The ensemble's artistic sensitivity and its attentiveness to the conductor's gestures are of a high standard. The choir does not shy

¹⁶ <https://sonuslumine.pl/>, [accessed on 20 June 2026].

away from challenges, undertaking ambitious initiatives involving the preparation and performance of a demanding repertoire. The projects it undertakes are characterised by a significant degree of difficulty and high performance standards. At least once every two years, the choir's director makes efforts to compile material for a CD release. This process involves a great deal of work, a significant time commitment and the mobilisation of the entire choir. In this context, the PhD student selected works by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki. These are three compositions from the collection '*Z Pieśni Kościelnych*' ('*From Church Songs*'), arranged especially for this occasion by the choir's director, Prof. Paweł Łukaszewski, PhD. The selected works have also been incorporated into the ensemble's regular repertoire.

The doctoral candidate's work with the *Sonus Lumine* Choir takes a different approach. Collaboration with the ensemble is based on significant input from the conductor, aimed at ensuring the choristers master the musical material entrusted to them. Groundwork is of particular importance here, involving the preparation of vocal part recordings and their systematic review during subsequent rehearsals. During preparations for the artistic component of the doctoral thesis, the ensemble made significant progress, broadening its musical experience. The doctoral student commissioned five works from composers with whom he had collaborated at various stages of his artistic career. The choir, together with the conductor, tackled a repertoire intended for choir and wind instruments with accompaniment. The solutions employed exemplify an innovative approach, showcasing the beauty of sacred music combined with contemporary compositional techniques.

As the figure bringing all the performers together, the PhD student endeavoured to vary his working methods with each ensemble, taking into account the specific nature of their artistic activities. However, this was not always possible to the full extent. The intended final result, however, was of key importance. The recordings produced are the result of many months of intensive and systematic work. For the *Musica Sacra* Choir, this project formed part of their work plan for the 2024/2025 artistic season. For the *Sonus Lumine* Choir, on the other hand, it was a significant stage in their artistic activity and a major experience in the ensemble's musical life. The results of this collaboration, alongside the recordings, were presented during a closing concert held on 21 June 2026 at St Martin's Church in Warsaw.

CHAPTER III

Analysis of the artistic work

3.1. Zuzanna Konopka – *Above all*

3.1.1. Author's biography

Zuzanna Konopka is a flautist and composer born in Gołdap in Masuria. She graduated in instrumental performance in the flute class of Prof. Andrzej Łęgowski and in composition under the supervision of Prof. Piotr Salaber (having previously also studied under Prof. Zbigniew Bargielski and Marcin Kopczyński, PhD) at the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz. Her compositions and arrangements have been performed in Poland and internationally at venues such as Tivoli Concert Hall and the Warmian-Masurian Philharmonic. She currently teaches general music subjects and leads a flute class at the Grażyna Bacewicz State Music School Complex in Koszalin, whilst also collaborating with numerous performing ensembles¹⁷.

3.1.2. Lyrics

Table 1. Z. Konopka '*Above all*', the full text of the piece with a translation.

Text in English (original)
Above all powers Above all things Above all nature and all created things Above all wisdom and all the ways of man You were there before the world began Above all kingdoms Above all thrones Above all wonders the world has ever known Above all wealth and treasures of the earth There's no way to measure what You're worth

¹⁷ Information obtained from the composer.

Text in English (original)
Above all powers Above all things Above all nature and all created things Above all wisdom and all the ways of man You were there before the world began

The lyrics of the song '*Above All*' are based on a hierarchical structure which emphasises the primacy of the main subject over various dimensions of reality, such as power, nature and human experience. The structure of the text develops from enumerative, affirmative statements towards passages with a distinctly contrasting tone, in which the theme of suffering and downfall emerges.

The repetition of phrases and syntactic parallelism play a significant role, lending the text rhythmic qualities and facilitating the musical organisation of the form. The semantic contrast between the earlier declarations and the subsequent imagery constitutes the text's main dramatic element. The language is characterised by simplicity and directness, which facilitates its perception and adaptation in a performance context, particularly in group settings.

The text was written by Lenno LeBlanc and Paul Baloche, American composers associated with the Contemporary Christian *Music* (CCM) movement. Their work focuses on songs intended for communal performance, characterised by a simple formal structure, repetition and a clear prioritisation of musical clarity over the text. The piece '*Above all*' is one of the most widely performed compositions in this genre, featuring both in liturgical practice and in artistic arrangements.

3.1.3. A study of the piece

Zuzanna Konopka's piece '*Above All*' is an example of a contemporary vocal-instrumental composition of a sacred nature, stylistically rooted in the Christian 'worship' music genre, yet exhibiting the characteristics of a deliberate artistic arrangement that goes beyond the framework of simple liturgical accompaniment. The composition is based on lyrics taken from the song '*Above All*' by Lenno LeBlanc and Paul Baloche, the content of which determines both the formal structure and the course of the musical narrative.

The score is written for four female voices, two transverse flutes and piano. However, this arrangement has been divided into solo parts, performed by four selected choir members, and tutti sections. This ensemble configuration facilitates a bright, clear timbral palette, in which the high register—both vocal and instrumental—plays a particular role. The flutes serve a complementary function to the vocal parts, at times doubling them, whilst also introducing independent ornamental and commentary-like lines.

Example 11. Z. Konopka *'Above all'*, a section of the piece in which the flutes play a joint part with the other choral voices, bars 69–71.

The image displays a musical score for six staves. The first two staves are instrumental, likely for flutes, featuring melodic lines with slurs. The next four staves are vocal parts with lyrics. The lyrics are: 'tram - pled on the gro. - - ound. You', 'tram - pled on the gro. - - ound. You', 'tram - pled on the ground. Tram - pled', and 'tram - pled on the ground. Tram - pled on the'. The lyrics are written in a stylized font, with hyphens indicating syllable placement across notes.

The work has a sectional form, constructed from successive segments corresponding to the successive semantic units of the text. There is a noticeable tendency towards repetition of the musical material, which brings the formal structure closer to a verse-chorus pattern, though without strictly adhering to it. Recurring melodic and harmonic motifs serve to integrate the whole and reinforce the contemplative nature of the work.

The melodic material is based primarily on second and third intervals, with a limited number of interval leaps, occurring mainly at climactic points. The vocal lines have a cantilena-like character and are led in a manner conducive to the natural

declamation of the text. The flute melodies often serve as an extension or variation of the vocal phrases, which blurs the sharp distinction between the instrumental and vocal layers.

The composition is set in a stable tonal centre, utilising functional major–minor harmony. The harmony is consonant in character, with frequent use of extended chords (with added thirds and sixths), which contributes to the softness and homogeneity of the sound. Modulations, where they occur, are local in nature and serve an expressive rather than a structural or developmental function.

The vocal parts are dominated by a homorhythmic texture, which enhances the clarity of the text and facilitates its unambiguous perception. Polyphonic elements appear occasionally, particularly in the interplay between the vocal parts and the flute parts. The piano primarily fulfils a harmonic and rhythmic function, providing the textural foundation of the work and stabilising its formal progression.

The dynamic range of the work lies mainly between *piano* and *mezzo piano*, with clearly marked dynamic climaxes in the passages of greatest semantic significance. The dynamics are developed gradually, which corresponds to the narrative and meditative character of the composition.

The relationship between the musical and textual layers is governed by the principles of musical rhetoric. The elongation of rhythmic values, the densification of the texture and the increase in dynamics serve to emphasise key theological concepts, such as supremacy, sacrifice and transcendence. The music thus fulfils an interpretative function in relation to the text, reinforcing its ideological message.

Above all, it serves as an example of a contemporary sacred composition in which limited technical and stylistic means are subordinated to the clarity of the message and the contemplative function. The work straddles the boundary between functional and artistic music, maintaining a balance between the simplicity of the stylistic idiom and the deliberate organisation of the musical material.

3.1.4. Performance considerations

The piece '*Above all*', in Zuzanna Konopka's choral-instrumental arrangement, serves as an example of the adaptation of popular music into an artistic choral form. It

demands a high level of musical awareness, intonational precision and interpretative focus from the performers.

One of the key performance issues is the high notes, particularly in the soprano parts. These parts are often written in the upper middle register, which requires skilful use of high vocal projection, appropriate breath support and control of laryngeal tension.

Example 12. Z. Konopka, '*Above all*', a passage showcasing the harmony of the sopranos' high notes, bars 94–96.

The image shows a musical score for two soprano voices, V. 1 and V. 2. The lyrics are 'laid be-hind the sto - - ne, You'. The melody for both voices is identical, featuring a high note on 'sto' and a high note on 'ne,'. The notes are written in treble clef on a five-line staff. The notes are: 'laid' (quarter note, G4), 'be-hind' (quarter note, A4), 'the' (quarter note, B4), 'sto' (half note, C5), '- -' (two rests), 'ne,' (half note, D5), and 'You' (quarter note, E5). The notes for 'sto' and 'ne,' are marked with a red dot, indicating high notes. The notes for 'sto' and 'ne,' are also marked with a red dot, indicating high notes.

To maintain a balance of sound between the voices, it is necessary to adjust the dynamics of the other sections of the choir so as to avoid the melodic line being drowned out by the intensity of the middle or lower registers. The work employs a division between solo parts and tutti sections. The solo parts were characterised by a gentle nature, producing a *piano* dynamic, whilst the tutti sections served as a refrain and were performed by the entire ensemble.

The harmonic structure features significant interval distances, particularly between the sopranos and altos, and between the instrumental and vocal parts. This requires not only a keen ear but also an understanding of harmonic functions within a chord. It is recommended to practise in sections (separately for each voice) and then work on controlling harmonies in the vertical plane.

Example 13. Z. Konopka 'Above all', the interval between S1 and A2 is as wide as a *quint-decima*, pp. 117–120.

known. A - bove all wealth and trea - sures of the

known. A - bove all wealth and trea - sures of the

kno. - o - own. A - bo - ve all of the

mf A - bove all we - alth and trea - sures of the

Particular difficulties arise in the transitions between thirds and fourths and fifths, which can cause subtle intonational inaccuracies, especially with longer rhythmic values.

Example 14. Z. Konopka 'Above all', the harmony of the two inner voices (V.2 and V.3) against the outer voices on the words 'above all', bars 72–75.

V. 1 took the fall and thought of me a - bove a - al.

V. 2 took the fall and thought of me a - bo - ve all.

V. 3 on the ground. a - bo - ve all.

V. 4 ground for me. A - bove all.

A common challenge in this piece is maintaining tonal purity over longer rhythmic values. This requires the singers to manage their breath consciously and maintain a stable vocal production, without the pitch 'dropping' due to vocal fatigue. Working on microintonation – controlling the direction of harmonic tension in long sustained chords – yields good results.

Given the piece's calm nature, its extended melodic phrases and, in particular, its homophonic texture, maintaining full concentration poses a significant performance challenge. Every performer, regardless of their role in the ensemble, must maintain active listening and harmonic awareness throughout the entire piece. A lack of concentration can

result not only in intonation problems, but also in a weakening of the uniform contemplative mood, which is key to the character of the composition.

In the context of choral performance, the individual preparation of vocal parts by individual choristers and soloists plays a particular role. Their independent study of their parts enables more effective ensemble work. Individual familiarity with the musical material also allows for a cohesive choral sound and greater interpretative freedom whilst making music together.

The flute and piano parts serve a colouristic and supporting function, but at the same time act as a subtle intonational reference point for the singers. In particular, the flutes, played in the high register, should maintain light articulation and balanced dynamics so as not to dominate the vocal lines, but rather to support their intonational stability. The piano, in turn, provides the harmonic and rhythmic foundation, requiring subtle interaction with the choir in terms of agogics and phrasing.

3.2. Tomasz Cepiel – *On Radix Jesse*

3.2.1. Author's biography

Tomasz Cepiel (born 1998 in Warsaw) is a graduate of the choral conducting programme in the class of Dariusz Zimnicki, PhD at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music. He is currently continuing his studies in choral singing in the class of Krzysztof Matuszak, PhD. He studied composition under Bartosz Kowalski-Banasewicz, PhD and Edward Sielicki, PhD. His compositions have won awards in the 'Marian Sawa in memoriam' composition competition and the 1st Faculty Composition Competition for School Choirs 2023. Since the start of the 2023/2024 season, he has held the post of assistant conductor with the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) Choir. He performs with this ensemble at concerts and choral competitions both in Poland and abroad. In 2024, he began working with the Community Orchestra as a conductor. He developed his conducting skills during masterclasses with Simon Pieronkoff, Jerzy Maksymiuk and Maurizio Colasanti, as well as during conducting competitions (including the 19th National Competition for Choral Conductors in Poznań). As a chorister, he has collaborated with, amongst others, the National Philharmonic, the Gabrielli Consort & Players, the Polish Royal Opera and the Polish National Youth Choir. He cultivated his passion for languages whilst studying linguistics at the University of

Warsaw. He draws inspiration for his artistic work from literature and the surroundings of mountain ridges¹⁸.

3.2.2. Text

Table 2. T. Cepiel *On 'Radix Jesse'*, the full text of the work with translation.

Text in Latin	Translation
O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum populorum, super quem continebunt reges os suum, quem gentes deprecabuntur: veni ad liberandum nos, iam noli tardare.	O Root of Jesse, you rise as a sign to the nations, kings will fall silent before you, and the peoples will pray to You, come and set us free; do not delay any longer.

Before beginning the vocal analysis of the piece, the PhD student asked the composer how he interpreted the words used. The composer drew attention to the text, which became a key point of reference in the discussion of the work. Of particular significance were the reflections on the strength and endurance of the root – the part of the plant which, whilst forming the foundation of its structure and being the most enduring, remains hidden beneath the surface of the earth, invisible to the eye. This metaphor of an invisible yet crucial force proved helpful in interpreting the composition, enabling the identification of subtle, hidden tensions and structural principles that determine the drama and harmonic foundations of the piece ¹⁹.

3.2.3. A study of the piece

Tomasz Cepiel's work '*O Radix Jesse*' was composed in 2024 to a Latin text of an Advent antiphon drawn from the breviary tradition, dating from the 6th century. The text belongs to the so-called 'great antiphons', performed in the Liturgy of the Hours during the final days of Advent. The composer uses the liturgical text not only as a vehicle for semantic meaning , but also as sonic material. Individual words and syllables are fragmented, repeated and superimposed upon one another in different voices.

¹⁸ Information obtained from the composer.

¹⁹ Information obtained from the composer during a conversation on 17 November 2024.

The composition was written for a specific ensemble: flute, piano and a three-part female choir comprising soprano, mezzo-soprano and alto. The instruments serve both a colouristic and a structural function. The flute introduces an element of lightness and spatiality to the sound, whilst the piano helps to shape the harmonic and rhythmic structure of the piece. The instrumental parts are not merely accompaniment, but form an integral part of the musical texture, often engaging in dialogue with the vocal parts. The combination of the female choir with instruments of a bright timbre creates a distinctive sonic idiom, conducive to achieving sonoristic effects and a subtle, contemplative expression.

Example 15. T. Cepiel, '*O Radix Jesse*', an excerpt from the score showing the interplay between the flute part and the choral voices, bars 16–19.

The musical score excerpt shows the interplay between the flute and the three-part female choir. The flute part (Fl.) begins with a melodic line in bar 16, featuring eighth notes and rests. The piano part (P-rte) provides harmonic support with sustained chords. The vocal parts (S., M-s., A.) sing a melodic line with lyrics 'O...' and 'O....'. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *ppp*.

The texture of the work is multi-layered and varied. In some passages, a polyphonic texture predominates, in which the individual voices are led independently. There are also moments of imitation, although the imitation is not strict, but rather a free imitation of short motifs in successive voices.

Example 16. T. Cepiel's '*O Radix Jesse*', a melodic motif based on the title words between the mezzo-soprano and alto, bars 21–24.

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Mezzo-soprano (M-s.), and Alto (A.). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Soprano part (S.) begins with a long note, followed by a melodic line with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking. The Mezzo-soprano part (M-s.) starts with a 'p' (piano) marking and includes the lyrics 'O Ra-dix Je - sse, O...'. The Alto part (A.) starts with a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking and also includes the lyrics 'O Ra-dix Je - sse, O...'. The lyrics are fragmented across the parts, with 'O...' appearing at the end of each line.

An important element of the work's texture is the fragmentation of the text. The composer divides individual syllables amongst the vocal parts, leading to the creation of overlapping layers of text. As a result, a multi-layered structure of verbal expression emerges, in which different fragments of the text are realised simultaneously in the individual voices. The instruments enrich the texture through short motifs, figurations and rhythmic accents. The flute part, in particular, plays a colouristic role, introducing an element of lightness and spatiality to the sound.

The basic tempo of the piece is marked as a quarter note at 85, with the indication '*espressivo*'. Despite this general marking, the organisation of time in the piece is partly free. The score contains sections marked '*senza misura*', in which the performers execute the musical material over an approximate duration. In such sections, the composer allows for a certain degree of interpretative freedom, which results in a quasi-aleatoric effect. The use of markings such as '*repetere simile*' indicates the repetition of specific rhythmic figures for a specified duration, which further enhances the impression of fluidity and rhythmic ambiguity.

The melodic lines in the vocal parts are characterised by a relatively narrow range and frequent use of second-interval motion. The melody is fluid and cantilenic in nature, although the fragmentation of the text means that individual phrases are often short and disjointed.

The harmony of the piece is not functional in the tonal sense. Chords arise primarily as a result of the overlapping of independent melodic lines. There is a noticeable tendency to create chords of a modal and sonoristic nature. In many passages, the timbre arising from the juxtaposition of specific intervals between the voices plays a significant

role. The piano often reinforces selected chords or emphasises their character through the appropriate placement of chords within the register.

Example 17. T. Cepiel, *'O Radix Jesse'*, selected excerpts from the score where the piano reinforces the harmony in the choir, bars 31–32, 40, 56–58 (in that order).

The musical score excerpt shows five staves: Flute (Fl.), Piano (P-rte), Soprano (S.), Mezzo-soprano (M-s.), and Alto (A.). The score is divided into three systems corresponding to bars 31–32, 40, and 56–58. The piano part features various dynamics (mp, mf, pp, p) and articulations (8va, 8va) to reinforce the choir's harmony. The vocal parts include lyrics in Latin: 'po - pu - lo - rum, su - quem'.

One of the most important aspects of the composition is the way the text is treated. The composer employs a technique of fragmentation and repetition, through which the text becomes both a semantic and a sonic element. The treatment of the final section of the antiphon is particularly interesting. The text fragment '*veni ad liberandum nos, iam noli tardare*' is performed without synchronisation between the voices, and the individual parts repeat it in a looped manner. This creates a multi-layered sonic structure reminiscent of a collective prayer, in which individual voices intertwine to form a single sonic space.

The form of the piece is processual in nature, based on the gradual development of the musical material. Several key phases can be distinguished. The first is the introduction of the motivic material, that is, the appearance of the first fragments of the text and the basic melodic cells. The next is the polyphonic development, that is, the intensification of the texture through the overlapping of text fragments and repeated motifs. The third phase is the textural climax, comprising passages characterised by increased sonic density and a free organisation of time. The final phase is the coda, that is, a gradual quietening of the texture, concluding with a passage performed in a whisper

(*sussurando*) and the fading away of the sound (*al niente*). This dramatic structure leads from a clear articulation of the text towards its gradual dissipation within the sound space.

Stylistically, the work combines elements of the choral tradition with techniques characteristic of contemporary music. Of particular significance here are: the sonoristic treatment of the texture, the fragmentation of the text, the free organisation of time, and quasi-aleatoric elements. The use of these devices serves to create an atmosphere of contemplation and anticipation, in keeping with the spiritual nature of the Advent text.

3.2.4. Performance considerations

An important issue to be discussed at the outset is the adjustment to the piece's tempo. The composer did not specify a slowing of the tempo in the score. However, whilst working on the interpretation of the piece, the ensemble and the conductor identified performance difficulties; consequently (with the composer's consent), an appropriate modification was introduced. From bar 34, the marking '*ritenuto*' has been applied, with the aim of adapting the tempo to the ensemble's performance capabilities. This adjustment is temporary, as the tempo returns to '*primo*' from bar 39.

In many choral ensembles, both amateur and sometimes professional, difficulties are observed in the correct production of the vowel 'e'. Its articulation should be located in the front of the mouth, close to the teeth, whilst maintaining a high vocal position. The piece under analysis contains a significant number of instances of this vowel, which may present performance difficulties right from the start. At the same time, the interval leap present in the presentation of the theme facilitates the correct placement and production of this vowel.

Example 18. T. Cepiel, '*O Radix Jesse*', the piece's theme as written for mezzo-soprano, bars 21–22.



The conductor attached particular importance to the correct execution of this vowel. To this end, carefully selected vocal exercises were used to aid the proper articulation and shaping of the vowels.

In the vocal material (bars 35–37), where the alto is the leading voice, the soprano parts create an intentional effect of dissonant tension in the background. Once again, the manner in which the vowel is realised remains a key aspect of the interpretation. It is essential that this vocal layer maintains sonic coherence, both in terms of dynamics and uniformity of articulation. The choir paid particular attention to this passage, striving to reproduce as faithfully as possible the composer’s intention as set out in the score.

Example 19. T. Cepiel, ‘*O Radix Jesse*’: the effect of chaos in the soprano voices throughout the main alto part, bar 35.

S. su - per quem co - nti - ne - bunt re - ges os su - um

M-s. su - per quem co - nti - ne - bunt re - ges os su - um. *repetere simile*

A. su - per

Another difficulty the ensemble faced was the passage (bars 44–47). The high notes in the soprano part, sung on the vowel ‘e’, led to a gradual loss of tension in the following bars, which had a negative impact on intonational stability. Work on breathing and its conscious and economical use proved crucial in tackling this section.

Example 20. T. Cepiel, ‘*O Radix Jesse*’, a section of the piece featuring high notes based on the letter ‘e’, bars 44–47.

f
su - per quem co - nti - ne - bunt

f
su per quem co - nti - ne - bunt

f
su - per quem co - nti - ne - bunt

Throughout its structure, the piece contains numerous instances *of arsis* and *thesis*, which should be appropriately emphasised through both the text and the melody. Right from the stage of studying the score, and subsequently during rehearsals, the ensemble and the conductor attached particular importance to this aspect. Collaboration with the instrumentalists was an essential complement to the realisation of the composer's vision. The dialogue between the vocal and instrumental layers fully captured the nature of the tensions and their release.

3.3. Aleksander Jan Szopa – *Salve Regina*

3.3.1. Composer's biography

Aleksander Jan Szopa is a Polish composer and organist, born on 15 February 1997 in Chicago, active mainly in the field of church and choral music. He studied church music (organ and choral conducting) and composition at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. He has composed over 100 works in various genres: organ, chamber, piano, orchestral, choral and vocal-instrumental. His works are published in print (including by ARS MUSICA) and recorded on CDs. He is the composer of the award-winning works '*Ubi caritas*', '*Missa Brevis*' and '*Missa Papae Benedicti XVI*'. In an article on contemporary sacred music, Szopa discusses the concept of sacred and choral music, defining the 'sacrum' as the realm of holiness and the worship of God, and the choir as an instrument with great expressive potential²⁰. Aleksander Jan Szopa is an active composer of sacred and choral music who combines liturgical tradition with a contemporary compositional language, having gained recognition at prestigious sacred music competitions across Europe²¹.

3.3.2. Text

Table 3. A. J. Szopa, '*Salve Regina*', full text of the work with translation.

Latin text	Translation
Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae, vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.	Hail, O Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail.

²⁰ <https://culture.pl/en/article/meet-your-maker-polish-composers-on-sacred-music?> [accessed on 30 January 2026].

²¹ Information obtained from the composer during a conversation on 12 February 2023.

Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae, Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle. Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte; Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.	To you we cry, exiles, the children of Eve. To you we sigh, groaning and weeping in this valley of tears. Therefore, our Advocate, turn your merciful eyes towards us; And show us, after this exile, Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb. O gracious, O merciful, O sweet Virgin Mary.
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The *Salve Regina* is one of the oldest and most widespread Marian antiphons in the tradition of the Western Church. Its origins date back to the 11th–12th centuries, and Blessed Herman of Reichenau is suggested as a possible author, although the text of the antiphon remains anonymous. Originally sung within Cistercian circles during major Marian feasts and processions, from the 13th century onwards it came to be used at the conclusion of *Compline*, a practice subsequently adopted by the Dominicans and Franciscans as well. The text of the antiphon, written in rhyming prose in the style of an ‘imploing salutation’, presents Mary as the Mother of God and Advocate of the faithful, emphasising her mercy and her intercession with Christ. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the ‘*Salve Regina*’ became a key point of reference for liturgical and theological reflection on the of Mary during the Tridentine period, emerging as one of the central elements of Marian devotion²².

3.3.3. A study of the work

The composition ‘*Salve Regina*’ for female choir, trumpet and organ is an example of contemporary sacred music that draws on liturgical tradition whilst employing the post-tonal idiom and sonoristic techniques characteristic of 21st-century music. The work’s basis in the Latin text of a Marian antiphon places it within a centuries-old tradition of musical settings of religious texts, in which the relationship between the verbal layer and musical expression is of paramount importance.

²² P. Wiśniewski, *Tropowana antyfona maryjna Salve Regina w XV-wiecznym psalterzu oliwetańskim z Łodzi* (‘*The Traced Marian Antiphon Salve Regina in the 15th-century Olivetan Psalter from Łódź*’), John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, COLLECTANEA THEOLOGICA, pp. 123–125.

Contemporary sacred music often plays on the tension between tradition and modernity. The work under analysis represents an integrative model. It retains a sacred stylistic idiom whilst employing a contemporary harmonic and textural language.

The choice of instrumentation serves both a colouristic and a symbolic function. The women's choir – with its soft, homogeneous timbre conducive to the contemplative nature of the narrative – the organ stabilises the harmonic structure and introduces a liturgical context, whilst the trumpet acts as a contrasting element, possessing rhetorical and symbolic potential (majesty, summons). This instrumentation allows for a wide dynamic range, from almost ethereal choral harmonies to full, monumental tutti passages.

The form of the work is segmented, determined by the structure of the antiphon's text. In summary, five dramatic phases can be distinguished. The opening section of the work is maintained at a slow tempo, with low dynamics and static harmony, whilst its texture approaches a chorale-like style, which helps to create an atmosphere of prayerful concentration. Next, the '*Ad te clamamus*' section brings a marked intensification of the dramatic tension through an acceleration of the tempo, increased rhythmic activity and imitative entries by the choral voices, lending the music a supplicatory character.

Example 21. A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*', a section highlighting the dramatic tension in the work, bars 28–29.

28 **più mosso** ♩ = 60 **accel.**

S 1 *mf* Ad te cla - ma - mus, ad te cla - ma - mus

S 2 *mf* Ad te cla - ma - mus, ad te cla - ma - mus

A *mf* Ad te cla - ma - mus, ad te cla - ma - mus

In sl *p*

org *mp*

ped *mp*

The next phase constitutes the climax of the piece. Here, the texture is at its densest and the dynamics reach *forte* and *fortissimo*, whilst the role of the trumpet is emphasised and the harmony becomes more complex, leading to the peak of dramatic tension.

Example 22. A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*', an excerpt illustrating the climax through its dynamic intensity, bars 47–51.

The musical score for Example 22, A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*', bars 47–51, is presented below. The score is for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Trumpet (in sil.), Organ (org), and Pedal (ped). The tempo is marked '♩ = 80, grandioso'. The time signatures are 7/8, 5/8, 6/8, 4/4, and 2/4. The dynamics are marked 'ff' and 'f'. The lyrics are 'il - los tu - os' and 'mi - se - ri - cor - des'.

This is followed by a reflective section in which the reduction in texture, the use of whispered passages (*sussurrando*) and the slowing of the tempo create a mood of introspection that corresponds to the meaning of the text.

Example 23. A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', a passage showcasing the piece's calming nature, bars 69–72.

The musical score for Example 23, A. J. Szopa's 'Salve Regina', bars 69–72, is presented for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Transverse Flute (tr in sib), Organ (org), and Pedal (ped). The time signature is 4/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are 'Et le - sum, be - ne - dic - tum'. The organ part features sustained notes and triplets. The vocal parts have markings for 'mf sussurrando' and 'rip. ad libitum'.

The conclusion takes the form of a gradual quietening and a return to a contemplative character, serving as a kind of prayerful epilogue.

The harmony of the piece exhibits features of extended tonality and modality: a weakening of the dominant-tonic functions, frequent fourth-and-fifth chords, planned harmonic shifts, and the presence of second clusters at low dynamics. A significant role is played by sustained notes in the organ's pedal part, which stabilise the harmonic field and lend the sound a static quality. Here, the harmony does not follow a classical functional narrative, but creates a sonic space subordinated to the expression of the text.

The texture of the piece is varied and closely linked to the dramatic structure of the text. Homophony at climactic moments emphasises the meaning of the words, imitative passages introduce an element of narrative movement, whilst quasi-choral passages suggest a reference to liturgical tradition. The use of contemporary vocal techniques (e.g. choral whispering, dispersed second harmonies) enriches the expression and creates the effect of a mystical soundscape.

A characteristic feature is the variation in metre (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 7/8 and others), which indicates that the rhythm is subordinated to the natural prosody of the Latin text. The regular pulse is replaced by a declamatory quality, whilst changes in tempo serve a dramatic function: accelerandos accompany imploring passages, whilst decelerandos

accompany reflective and contemplative sections. This approach enhances the expression of the text and emphasises the sacred nature of the composition.

Example 24. A. J. Szopa's *'Salve Regina'*, an excerpt illustrating metrical variation, bars 16–23.

The musical score for 'Salve Regina' by A. J. Szopa, bars 16–23, is presented for three voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), and Alto (A). The score illustrates metrical variation, with time signatures changing from 4/4 to 2/4, then 5/4, and finally 4/4. The tempo marking is 'rit. - a tempo'. The lyrics are: 'mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae. Vi - ta dul - ce - do, et spes nos - tra sal - ve. et spes nos - tra sal - ve.'

The composition represents a model of contemporary sacred music in which liturgical tradition is filtered through a modern harmonic and sonoristic language. Its key stylistic features include a segmented form subordinated to the structure of the liturgical text, a post-tonal harmonic language with a distinct modal colouring, a strong correlation between the musical layer and the semantics of the text, a sonoristic use of instrumentation, and a dramatic structure based on the gradual build-up and release of musical tension. The work can be interpreted as an example of a contemporary reinterpretation of the sacred tradition, in which historical stylistic models are preserved at the conceptual level, whilst the technical means belong to the contemporary musical idiom.

3.3.4. Performance considerations

The first significant performance challenge for the choir proved to be the superimposition of irregular rhythms offset by one eighth note. The second sopranos begin their vocal phrase with two triplets, whilst the first sopranos, delayed by one eighth note, present their part consisting of a triplet followed by two eighth notes. The interplay of the two soprano parts, arranged in this way, creates an echo effect and, at times, also gives the impression of a clamour, providing a backdrop for the third voice. The alto line,

on the other hand, follows a phrase reminiscent of the Gregorian chant style. The identified difficulty in the soprano parts was tackled in stages: initially, each voice was practised individually; subsequently, the conductor performed the second voice part in the background, based on an ostinato motif. The final stage of the work involved combining both parts to achieve a cohesive performance.

Example 25. A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*', a delayed triplet rhythm within the main theme in the alto part, bars 12–15.

Example 25 shows the musical score for bars 12–15 of A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*'. The score is for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), and Alto (A). The tempo is marked as 50. The lyrics are 'Sal - ve, Re - gi - na, Ma - ter'. The score includes a delayed triplet rhythm in the alto part, marked with a triplet bracket and 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The tempo changes to 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4 in the subsequent bars.

In bar 16, all the parts converge, which is a crucial moment requiring precise coordination in performance. Consequently, the soprano parts, whilst following their own melodic line, were required to track the alto part, which, by emphasising the text, served as a guide and marked the moment of the joint entry. The last two eighth notes on the word 'Ma-ter' serve as a clear signal heralding the arrival of the shared textual motif.

Example 26. A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*', shared textual motif, bars 16–18.

Example 26 shows the musical score for bars 16–18 of A. J. Szopa's '*Salve Regina*'. The score is for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), and Alto (A). The tempo is marked as 'rit. - a tempo'. The lyrics are 'mi - se - ri - cor - di - ae.'. The score includes a shared textual motif in 4/4 and 2/4 time, marked with a triplet bracket and 'rit. - a tempo'.

Another difficulty for the ensemble was the articulation of vowels, which did not always achieve the correct positioning within the articulatory apparatus. This problem was particularly noticeable in the section bars 28–33, '*Ad te clamamus, ad te clamamus*,

exsules filii Hevae’ (the passage referred to earlier). During systematic rehearsals, this passage, as well as the one following it, ‘*Ad te suspiramus (...)*’, was sometimes performed using only a single, selected vowel – the one causing the greatest difficulty in that particular passage. This type of exercise enabled the choristers to become aware of the nature of the articulation errors they were making. Furthermore, the conductor introduced vowel substitutions, enabling the ensemble to perceive the same musical material with altered textual content, whilst maintaining a similar sonic effect.

The question of the ensemble’s composition also remains a significant performance consideration. At the time of recording, the *Sonus Lumine* Choir comprised 13 members, constituting a chamber ensemble undertaking the premiere performances of contemporary sacred music works. The limited size of the ensemble does not always allow it to fully meet the composer’s requirements, particularly when it comes to performing passages with very high dynamics such as *forte fortissimo*. Nevertheless, the correct performance approach and appropriate preparation of the articulatory apparatus make it possible to achieve a satisfying sonic effect. Despite the small ensemble size during the recordings, the dynamic contrasts between *piano* and *forte* remain clearly audible. During the work on the score, particular emphasis was placed on an awareness of the message and intentions contained within the piece. The choristers consistently marked dynamic and agogic changes in the sheet music, which helped them to identify these more quickly during the performance.

The conductor’s gestures also played a significant role. Both the movement of the hand and that of the whole body were adapted in a clear and unambiguous manner, enabling to achieve the intended interpretative effect. Metric variation did not pose a significant difficulty for the ensemble; what was of key importance, however, was the precision and clarity of the conductor’s gestures, ensuring consistency in the performance.

3.4. Marcin Tadeusz Łukaszewski – *Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel*

3.4.1. Composer’s biography

Marcin Tadeusz Łukaszewski was born in 1972 in Częstochowa. He is a pianist, music theorist and composer. He graduated from the F. Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, having studied under Professors B. Kawalla, J. Ekier, Sz. Esztényi, M. Podhajski

and M. Borkowski. He has taken part in the recording of numerous albums, for which he has received the ‘Fryderyk’ award four times, including recordings of music by Lessel, Moniuszko, Perkowski and Sawa, and songs by Paderewski, Moryto and S. Szymański. He is a recipient of the Gloria Artis Bronze Medal for Merit to Culture and the Honorary Badge for Merit to Polish Culture. He has given numerous world premieres of Polish music. He is the author of books including: *A Guide to Piano Music* (Kraków 2014), *Variational Forms for Piano by Polish Composers 1900–2010* (Warsaw 2013), and *Religious Choral Music by Warsaw Composers 1945–2000* (Lublin 2007). He is a research and teaching staff member at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music. In 2021, he was awarded the title of Professor of Musical Arts. He has twice received the Rector’s First-Class Award. His sacred compositions have been performed by numerous ensembles, including the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral and the Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir²³.

3.4.2. Text

Table 4. M. T. Łukaszewski *Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel*, full text of the work with translation.

Latin text	Translation
Sancte Raphael Archangele, ora pro nobis.	Saint Raphael the Archangel, pray for us.
Custodi nos et cura nos.	Protect us and watch over us.
Familiam meam meque tuae curae commendo.	I entrust my family and myself to your care.
Sancte Raphael Archangele, patronus noster, ora pro nobis.	Saint Raphael the Archangel, our patron, pray for us.
Amen.	Amen.

The text was best described by the author himself, in response to one of the questions asked during the interview. *‘I decided to compose a Prayer to Saint Raphael the Archangel – the patron saint of Rafał Wróblewski – a conductor and PhD student. I also wrote the lyrics myself and then translated them into Latin, and composed the music for this version. In the text, I sought to include requests for the protection and care of St Raphael the Archangel – one of the three Archangels known by name. I also had*

²³ Information obtained from the composer during a conversation on 20 March 2025.

*a personal aspect in mind, so that it might be a prayer for the protection of the aforementioned conductor and his family. The text has a simple structure, consisting of just four lines ending with the acclamation 'Amen'. I endeavoured to give the text centre stage, so the compositional techniques are subordinate to this*²⁴.

3.4.3. Analysis of the work

The work takes the form of a miniature, in which the composer combines a concise form with a variety of harmonic and polyphonic devices, adapted for choral performance.

The composition follows an ABA1 formal structure. The outer sections (A) are characterised by a calm mood, although the later sections of section A are slightly accelerated, introducing a subtle rhythmic tension. The central section (B) exhibits a distinct polyphonic character, based on imitative technique, which increases the textural density of the piece. The conclusion consists of a short coda based on the word 'Amen', serving as both a formal and dramatic conclusion to the composition. The composer states: *'The development of musical tension and tempo modulations are left to the conductor's interpretation, which allows the piece to be adapted to the specific nature of the performance'*²⁵.

The harmony of the piece is based on the major–minor tonal system, though the composer departs from classical harmonic functionality. Characteristic features include bold chord combinations, such as D major–E-flat major, corresponding to the so-called Neapolitan chord. Although such combinations are not new in musical literature, they can pose a performance challenge for an amateur choir. Despite the bold chord combinations, the overall harmony remains within the key, without straying beyond its boundaries.

²⁴ One-to-one conversation held on 20 March 2025.

²⁵ Ibid.

Example 27. M. T. Łukaszewski's 'Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel', chord progression on the word 'nobis', bars 31–32.

molto rit.

o - ra pro no - bis o - ra pro no - bis.

no - bis pro no - bis, o - ra pro no - bis.

o - ra, o - ra, o - ra pro no - bis.

In the outer sections (A), the choral parts are written in the '*nota contra notam*' technique, which ensures clarity of texture and lends the music a calm and balanced character. In the central section (B), an imitative technique is employed, introducing polyphonic density of texture and contrapuntal tension, thereby emphasising the central nature of this section. The instrumental parts serve primarily as accompaniment, reinforcing the work's harmonic and rhythmic structures. In passages where the choir is silent, brief virtuoso runs appear, providing contrast and variety to the texture.

The dynamics of the composition are shaped by the contrast between the solo parts and the tutti sections. The solo parts are characterised by a gentle nature and a piano dynamic, whilst the tutti sections are performed by the full choir, emphasising the communal dimension of the work. This juxtaposition contributes to the expressive variety of the work and allows for the subtle building of dramatic tension.

The piece forms a harmonious whole, combining the simplicity of a miniature with a wealth of harmonic and polyphonic devices. The use of dynamic contrasts, bold harmonic combinations, and contrapuntal and imitative techniques makes the composition both interesting to perform and appealing from an analytical perspective. The ABA1 structure, together with a short coda and flexible interpretative possibilities, makes the piece well-suited to choral performance whilst retaining its dramatic potential.

3.4.4. Performance considerations

The first surprise for the choristers was becoming familiar with the sound of the trumpet, characterised by its fanfare-like, resonant tone. Furthermore, the entry of this

instrument necessitated the ensemble to intonate the notes comprising the first D minor chord with precision. In order to achieve the desired intonation, the ensemble first familiarised themselves with the sound of the chord accompanied by the piano; the trumpet part was then practised, and in the final stage they worked directly with the actual instrument.

Example 28. M. T. Łukaszewski's *'Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel'*, where the trumpet part sets the intonation for the choral parts' entry, bars 1–2.

Example 28 shows the beginning of the piece, bars 1–2. The tempo is marked as 54. The Soprani and Alti parts enter with a half note followed by a quarter note, marked *mf*. The Tromba in sib part enters with a half note followed by a quarter note, marked *f*. The lyrics "San-cte Ra-pha-el," are written under the vocal staves.

Another ensemble challenge was the rhythmic organisation of the analysed section of the piece: first soprano performed the leading part with a clearer and more stable rhythmic pattern, whilst the other voices, serving as harmonic background, moved according to a different, strictly defined rhythmic pattern.

Example 29. M. T. Łukaszewski's *'Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel'*, with the theme carried by the soprano and the remaining voices providing harmonic background, bars 8–9.

Example 29 shows bars 8–9. The Soprano part has a half note followed by a quarter note, marked *f*. The two Alto parts have a half note followed by a quarter note, marked *f*. The lyrics "O - ra pro no - bis, o - ra pro no - bis," are written under the vocal staves.

The entry of the second soprano in bar 16 also posed a performance challenge. It followed immediately after an instrumental bar ending with a different harmonic chord.

The organ part featured a chord consisting of the notes E flat–A flat–C–E flat–G, whilst the beginning of the next bar was already based on a G major chord. An additional difficulty was posed by the trumpet part, which played the note A flat², followed by A flat¹, causing momentary intonation difficulties in the soprano voice and requiring increased concentration on harmonic orientation and pitch stability.

Example 30. M. T. Łukaszewski's '*Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel*', the mezzo-soprano's entry on the words '*Familiam meam*', bars 15–16.

The musical score for Example 30 shows bars 15 and 16. The Soprano (S) part has a rest in bar 15 and enters in bar 16 with the lyrics 'Fa - mi-liam me - am'. The Alto (A) part has a rest in bar 15 and enters in bar 16 with a melodic line. The Trumpet (tr) part has a rest in bar 15 and enters in bar 16 with a melodic line. The Organ (org) part has a rest in bar 15 and enters in bar 16 with a chordal accompaniment. Dynamics include *f*, *mp*, and *p*. A tempo marking of 70 is present.

The final section of the piece also presented a performance challenge, particularly in terms of its dynamics. In this section, the solemn nature of the piece and the words 'Amen' – so be it – should be emphasised. Greater attention should be paid to intonation, dynamic control and correct breathing technique. Despite the small ensemble (13 women), the final result was quite positive. The room's acoustics proved to be a significant asset, as they were, to some extent, conducive to the performance.

Example 31. M. T. Łukaszewski, *'Prayer to St Raphael the Archangel'*, the piece's finale on the word 'Amen', bars 37–41.

3.5. Michał Malec – *Canticum Zachariae*

3.5.1. Author's biography

Michał Malec is a composer and lecturer at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw; he was born in 1995 in Lublin. He graduated from the aforementioned university, having studied composition under Prof. Paweł Łukaszewski, PhD. He also studied composition at the University of Aberdeen under the supervision of Prof. Paul Mealor. He is a member of the Young Composers' Circle of the Polish Composers' Union and the ZAiKS Authors' Association. He has won numerous awards, including first prize at the 'Musica Sacra Nova' International Composition Competition in Cologne in 2019, and third prize in 2016. He is a recipient of the 'Młoda Polska' Scholarship from the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. Michał Malec's compositional output consists mainly of choral works, but also includes instrumental and vocal-instrumental pieces. His compositions have been performed in Poland – in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Wrocław and elsewhere – as well as abroad in Lithuania, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain and Israel. His music has been performed by outstanding ensembles such as: the Symphony Orchestra of the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, the Europäischer Kammerchor Köln, the Katowice City Singers 'Camerata Silesia', the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław, the Polish Chamber Choir, the Polish National Youth Choir and proMODERN. His works have been published by the German publisher Schott Music, Chopin University Press, and featured on recordings by the National Choir of the Music Forum in Wrocław, the Polish National Youth Choir and the vocal ensemble Art'n'Voices. He was nominated for the Fryderyk music award in 2019–2022, and in

2021, the Art'n'Voices album featuring his composition won the Fryderyk Award for Album of the Year – Contemporary Music²⁶.

3.5.2. Text

Table 5. M. Malec *Canticum Zachariae*, full text of the piece with translation

Latin text	Translation
Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel, quia visitavit, et fecit redemptionem plebis suae; et erexit cornu salutis nobis in domo David pueri sui. Sicut locutus est per os sanctorum, qui a saeculo sunt, prophetarum eius: salutem ex inimicis nostris, et de manu omnium, qui oderunt nos. Ad faciendam misericordiam cum patribus nostris, et memorari testamenti sui sancti; iusiurandum, quod iuravit ad Abraham patrem nostrum, daturum se nobis, ut sine timore, de manu inimicorum nostrorum liberati, serviamus illi in sanctitate et iustitia coram ipso omnibus diebus nostris.	Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited his people and brought about their redemption; He has raised up for us a mighty saviour in the house of David, his servant. As he promised long ago through the mouths of his holy prophets: deliverance from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. He has shown mercy to our forefathers and remembered his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham, our father, that he would grant us, once freed from the hands of our enemies, to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before His face all the days of our lives.

The text used by the composer is taken from the Gospel of St Luke (Luke 1:68–79). It is Zechariah's hymn of praise, in which he glorified God for the birth of John the Baptist.

3.5.3. Analysis of the piece

Michał Malec's *Canticum Zachariae* is scored for an SSA female choir, baritone saxophone and organ. The combination of the choral ensemble with the baritone saxophone creates an interesting sonic contrast, blending the tradition of sacred music with elements of contemporary instrumental colour.

²⁶ https://chopin.edu.pl/pracownicy/582_michal-malec [accessed: 12 April 2026].

The work is structured in sections, a feature directly resulting from the division of the liturgical text. Successive passages of the canticle's text mark changes in musical material, tempo and texture. The opening passages are more contemplative and static in character, whilst the latter part features greater dynamism and a denser texture.

The initial tempo is marked as a quarter note equal to 90, suggesting a moderate, calm character to the musical narrative. Throughout the piece, contrasting sections appear with markings such as '*più mosso*', '*ritardando*' or tempo changes, which build the dramatic arc and expressive flow of the whole work.

A polyphonic-imitative texture plays a dominant role, although the composer also frequently employs homophonic passages. The choral parts are conducted in a relatively independent manner, often within repetitive rhythmic structures. In some passages, there is also motivic repetition, particularly evident in the repetition of syllables from the text, which reinforces its rhetorical character. In the opening sections, the composer employs vocalisations on single vowels (e.g. 'u', 'o', 'a'), which serve as a sonic backdrop and draw the listener into a contemplative atmosphere before the actual text appears.

A key feature of the work is its metrical variability. The composer frequently alternates between 2/2, 3/2, 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 time signatures, which creates rhythmic fluidity and enhances the expressiveness of the text. This metrical organisation naturally emphasises the stresses of the Latin language. Repetitive rhythmic patterns, particularly in the choral parts, lend the passages a quasi-ostinato character, which reinforces the formal cohesion of the individual sections.

The baritone saxophone serves a colouristic and commentary function in relation to the choral parts. Its line often operates in the low register, creating a dark timbre. This instrument functions both as an element of the harmonic background and as an independent voice leading short motifs in dialogue with the choir. The composer also employs performance techniques such as *subtone*, *glissando* and whispered articulation (*sussurando*), which enrich the work's sonic palette.

Example 32. M. Malec's '*Canticum Zachariae*', an example of the saxophone part interacting with the choir, bars 27–31.

The musical score for Example 32 shows four staves. The top staff is for the Baritone Saxophone (Bari. Sax.), which plays a melodic line with triplets and slurs, marked with *mf*. The bottom three staves are for the choir: Soprano 1 (S. 1), Soprano 2 (S. 2), and Alto (A.). The choir parts are homophonic, with lyrics 'Be-ne-dic - tus, Be-ne-dic - tus,'. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, with the vowel 'm' in brackets [m] indicating the 'mormorando' technique. The score is in 3/4 time and includes dynamic markings like *mf* and agogic markings like *molto rit.*, *poco rit.*, and *più mosso*.

The score contains extensive dynamic markings covering a wide range from *pianissimo* to *forte*. Changes in dynamics often correlate with the content of the liturgical text, reinforcing its semantic meaning. In many places, agogic markings (*molto rit.*, *poco rit.*, *più mosso*) are also used to shape the musical tension.

Michał Malec's '*Canticum Zachariae*' is an example of a contemporary setting of a sacred text, in which traditional choral texture is combined with modern instrumental colour. Metric variation, rich dynamics and the sonoristic use of the baritone saxophone create a dramaturgically coherent musical structure, subordinated to the rhetoric of the liturgical text.

3.5.4. Performance considerations

The work contains a number of specific performance issues which posed a significant challenge for the choir. As early as the opening passage, the *mormorando* technique is employed on the vowel 'm'. However, in order to achieve a clearer sound, it was decided to replace it with the 'n' sound. This approach helped to improve sound projection, enhance clarity and facilitate intonation control.

Example 33. M. Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', an example with a letter change to 'n', bars 1–4.

Example 33 shows the first four bars of 'Canticum Zachariae' for three voices: S I, S II, and A. The time signature is 2/2, and the tempo is marked as 90. The music features dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo) and *mp* (mezzo-piano) with phrasing slurs. The lyrics are represented by a wavy line.

Another difficulty lay in the rhythmic texture of the piece, particularly in bars 8–9 and 17–18. The metrical variability and the presence of fragmented rhythmic values initially caused uncertainty in the performance. Whilst working through the score, the conductor employed a four-part metrical division, which significantly facilitated the ensemble's rhythmic orientation. Ultimately, these passages were performed in accordance with their actual metrical structure, interpreted as 6/4 and 4/4.

Example 34. M. Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', problematic passages due to differing metre, bars 8–9, 17–18.

Example 34 shows problematic passages from bars 8–9 and 17–18 of 'Canticum Zachariae'. The score is for four staves, likely representing four voices or organ parts. The time signature is 3/2. The music includes dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lyrics are represented by [o] and [u] in the vocal staves.

Following the earlier performance of a D-flat minor chord (in enharmonic notation), supported by the organ emphasising the G note, the choir is required to shape

the new harmonic structure with precision. The difficulty lies primarily in achieving intonational purity and imbuing the sound with fresh energy.

Example 35. M. Malec, '*Canticum Zachariae*', the choir's entry on a G major chord following a D minor, bars 19–24.

The musical score for Example 35 shows the choir's entry on a G major chord. The score includes parts for Bari. Sax., S. 1, S. 2, A., and Org. The tempo is marked *mp*. The lyrics are [a] [m] [a] [m].

An additional challenge is the execution of the vowel 'a', which tends to become excessively broad, which may adversely affect intonation and the cohesion of the sound. In this context, self-control during performance and proper preparation of the articulatory apparatus, supported by correct breathing technique, are of key importance.

Later on, the *mormorando* technique reappears; in this instance, it has been retained in accordance with the score. It enables the choristers to verify the correct placement of the vowel and helps to achieve a sound effect similar to an echo, introducing a momentary release of perceptual tension. At the same time, the organ part harmonises with the choral chords, introducing additional harmonies that enrich the texture and heighten the element of surprise.

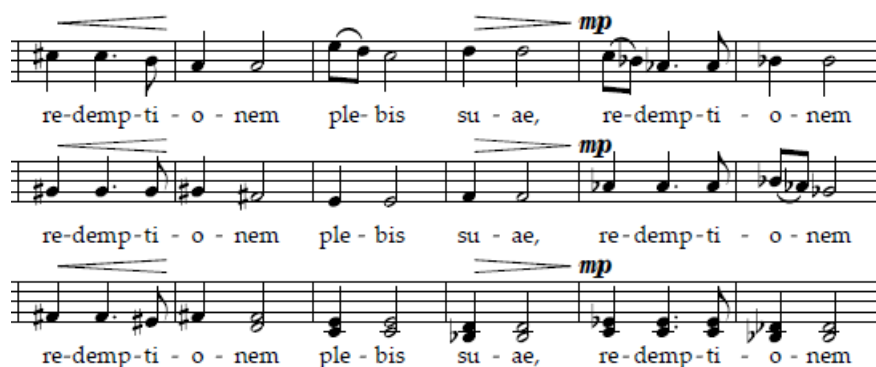
Example 36. M. Malec, '*Canticum Zachariae*', notation of the use of 'mormorando' in conjunction with a vowel, bars 20–26.



The first appearance of the text '*Benedictus, Benedictus...*' (bar 28) is a crucial moment for testing the vocal ensemble's tonal cohesion. Particular attention is once again drawn to the vowel 'e', which is one of the most challenging to perform. Its appearance right at the start of *the* word '*benedictus*' can pose a potential difficulty, especially for amateur ensembles. Consequently, the ensemble focused on achieving the intended sonic effect whilst maintaining intonational stability.

Another passage of increased difficulty, due to the presence of a demanding vowel, is measures 47–53 with the text '(...) *redemptionem plebis suae* (...)'. Maintaining the correct vocal position is of key importance here, as it forms the basis for stable vocal production and intonation. Another essential element of working on the piece is the conscious identification and marking of such passages in the score.

Example 37. M. Malec, '*Canticum Zachariae*', intonation difficulties associated with vowels, pp. 47–53.



From *the* words ‘*sicut locutus est...*’ (bar 65), there is a marked increase in sound intensity, expression and the need for stable breath support. In this passage, despite a natural tendency to expand the sound, the ensemble was required to control the intensity of their performance. A key interpretative element here is the skilful modulation of tension and dynamics, which creates an element of surprise for the listener. *The crescendo* employed serves to gradually intensify the expression, whilst maintaining control over the quality of the sound.

Example 38. M. Malec, ‘*Canticum Zachariae*’, change in the character of the piece, bars 65–69.

The musical score for Example 38, M. Malec's 'Canticum Zachariae', bars 65–69, is presented in a multi-staff format. The staves are labeled as follows: Sax. (Saxophone), S. 1 (Soprano 1), S. 2 (Soprano 2), A. (Alto), and Org. (Organ). The Saxophone part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a fermata. The vocal parts (S. 1, S. 2, A.) enter with lyrics: 'si - cut lo - cu - tus est per os san - cto - rum, qui...'. The Organ part provides harmonic support. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*f*), articulation (accents), and phrasing slurs.

In bar 80, the sustained fermata creates a moment of suspension in the musical flow and introduces a transition to the next motif, which appears in the following bars. Later in the piece, there is a change in tempo and a different approach to articulation. One observes the use of effects such as ‘*glissando*’ and ‘*sussurando*’, as well as the superimposition of two textural layers, which leads to the creation of a distinct episode, characteristic of contemporary performance techniques. The ensemble devoted considerable attention to this passage, working on the variation of the text and the precise shaping of the glissando descents. Intonation and its stability played a key role, which required a great deal of effort and concentration. The instrumental parts provided essential support, helping to maintain intonation whilst also serving to verify the accuracy of the performance.

Example 39. M Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', an example of a *glissando* descent with a change in the piece's tempo, bars 81–85.

The composer employs a variety of compositional techniques in the score. Immediately following a passage of a more chaotic nature, a clear, homophonic structure emerges. The harmonic simplicity maintained over a longer section is broken in bars 105 and 107, where it leads to a resolution in D major with a seventh. This is then followed by a *crescendo*, which reintroduces the previously modified musical material.

Example 40. M. Malec, 'Canticum Zachariae', a homophonic passage concluding this motif on a D major chord, bars 105–108.

The ensemble faced a significant challenge in controlling the articulation of the vowels. Each chorister made individual notes reminding herself of potential performance difficulties. Work on this aspect was assessed through exercises based on singing the vowels themselves or syllables containing more challenging articulatory combinations, which allowed for conscious control and stabilisation of vocal production.

At the end of the piece, a single chord appears in the choir – an incomplete D major, lacking the third. The choristers had to approach this passage with great care, as the ensemble sound must not become unstable or lose its intonational coherence. The organ sustained the harmonic structure and defined the chord, but the vocal ensemble bore the primary responsibility for its strength and resonance. Breathing was deliberately planned and executed economically. Whilst working on the final bars, the duration of the chord was also discussed. As a result of these joint decisions, the vocal ensemble concluded the chord two bars earlier, whilst the instrumentalists performed the passage as written in the score.

Example 41. M. Malec, *'Canticum Zachariae'*, an incomplete D major chord in the choir sustained for nine bars (two removed, in agreement with the composer), bars 143–155.

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: S.1 (Soprano 1), S.2 (Soprano 2), and A. (Alto). The score is for bars 143-155 of M. Malec's *'Canticum Zachariae'*. The lyrics are: "co - ram ip - so om - ni - bus di - e - bus, om - ni - bus di - e - bus" and "nos - tris, nos - tris." The score includes dynamic markings *mf* and *mp*. A large 'X' is drawn over the final bars of the vocal parts, indicating a deletion or modification.

3.6. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki – ‘*Z Pieśni Kościelnych*’ (‘*From Church Songs*’) (selected works)

3.6.1. Biography of the composer

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki studied composition under Bolesław Szabelski at the State Higher School of Music in Katowice. His artistic output is regarded as one of the most original phenomena in contemporary music of the second half of the 20th century. Górecki's works have repeatedly won honours at national and international composition competitions, including first prize for his Symphony ‘1959’ at the Paris Biennale des Jeunes Compositeurs and first place for ‘Ad Matrem’ at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in 1973. Górecki is the recipient of numerous honours and awards. He also served as rector of the State Higher School of Music in Katowice, where he taught a composition class. The work of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki continues to enjoy great acclaim and interest throughout the world. The composer himself admits that *‘music is the result of religious concentration and meditation [...] I rejoice in what I see and I admire the One who created it all’*²⁷. He died on 12 November 2010 in Katowice²⁸.

3.6.2. Biography of the author of the studies

Paweł Wojciech Łukaszewski is a composer, conductor and teacher. He is one of the most outstanding figures in contemporary sacred music in Poland. He graduated from the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw (now the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music), obtaining two degrees: in cello performance and in composition. He also maintains a professional association with the institution, having worked in the Department of Composition since 1996. In 2014, he was awarded the title of Professor of Musical Arts. He also served as Vice-Rector of the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music. Paweł Łukaszewski's work is highly regarded both at home and abroad, as evidenced by numerous awards and honours. The composer has received the Fryderyk Music Award ten times. Łukaszewski's works have been performed at prestigious music festivals in

²⁷ Dyskusja okrągłego stołu w Akademii Teologii Katolickiej (Round-table discussion at the Academy of Catholic Theology), Warsaw 1988, [in:] *Professor Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Doctor Honoris Causa of the Academy of Music in Kraków*, Commemorative publication 2008, p. 44.

²⁸ https://pwm.com.pl/pl/kompozytorzy_i_autorzy/4920/henryk-mikolaj-gorecki/index.html, [accessed on 19 June 2025].

Poland and abroad, and recordings of them have appeared on over 150 Polish and international CDs. His body of work, comprising mainly choral and sacred music, has gained recognition in Europe, the United States and Canada. The composer's works are performed and premiered by leading choral and orchestral ensembles²⁹.

3.6.3. Text

3.6.3.1. '*Wstał Pan Chrystus*' ('*The Lord Christ Has Risen*')

The text of this piece most likely dates from the Middle Ages, and its authorship remains unknown. The composition explores the theme of Easter, focusing on the motif of Christ's resurrection and the associated joy of Easter. The piece has been translated into numerous languages, including Polish. It first appeared in Michał Marcin Mioduszeński's '*Śpiewnik kościelny*' ('Church Songbook') of 1838, whilst the version most commonly used today is the one published in Jan Siedlecki's '*Śpiewnik kościelny*' ('Church Songbook') of 1978³⁰.

Table 6. H. M. Górecki: '*Wstał Pan Chrystus*' ('*The Lord Christ Has Risen*') – a comparison of the work's text with the Latin text.

Original text in Latin	Text used in the composition
Surrexit Christus hodie. Alleluja, Alleluja. Humano pro solamine. Alleluja. Mortem qui passus pridie, Alleluja, Alleluja, miserrimo pro homine, Alleluja.	The Lord Christ has risen from the dead today, Alleluia, Alleluia. He has gladdened his people greatly Alleluia, alleluia. He did not spare his life Hallelujah, hallelujah. For a wretched man Hallelujah, hallelujah.

3.6.3.2. '*Twoja cześć, chwała*' ('*Your honour, your glory*')

All three arrangements are taken from the cycle '*Z Pieśni Kościelnych*' ('From Church Songs') by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, who drew inspiration from existing musical material compiled by Father Jan Siedlecki in his work 'A Songbook containing church songs for use by schoolchildren'. The text of the third piece underwent numerous

²⁹ <https://lukaszewski.org.uk/pl/biogram/>, [accessed on 19 June 2025].

³⁰ <https://www.polskatradycja.pl/piesni/religijne/wstal-pan-chrystus.html>, [accessed on 19 June 2025].

modifications from 1908, when it was first published in Siedlecki's aforementioned collection. The lyrics used by Górecki in his composition are as follows:

Table 7. H. M. Górecki *'Twoja cześć chwała'* ('Your honour, your glory') (All the text of the piece).

Text used in the piece		
Your honour, your glory, our great Lord, for ever and ever may it never cease, for ever and ever may it never cease, May it never cease.	To you today I give with this multitude of people, our homage and our songs, we, Your servants, worship and song, we, Your servants, We, Your servants.	Giving great thanks to Your Highness, for this noble gift of Your omnipotence, for this noble gift from Your omnipotence, Your omnipotence.

3.6.3.3. *'Święty, święty'* ('Holy, holy')

The piece is religious and devotional in nature. Its content focuses on the Eucharistic liturgy, and thus on the veneration of Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. The text used in this piece already appears in Jan Siedlecki's *'Śpiwnik kościelny'* ('Church Songbook').

Table 8. H. M. Górecki *'Święty, Święty'* ('Holy, holy'), full text of the piece.

Text used in the composition
Holy, holy, holy, Holy always, holy. Jesus, you are beyond comprehension, Jesus, you are beyond comprehension. In the Most Holy Sacrament, In the Most Holy Sacrament.

3.6.4. Analysis of the work

3.6.4.1. *'Wstał Pan Chrystus'* ('The Lord Christ Has Risen')

The piece *'The Lord Christ Has Risen from the Dead'* constitutes the third part of the cycle 'From Church Songs', composed by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki between 1985–1989. The original score is written for a mixed choir. This arrangement was written for a female SSAA choir as part of this doctoral thesis, but also to expand the repertoire of the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral in the field of Easter music.

The work reflects his pursuit of simplicity, spirituality and contemplation, whilst maintaining a vivid expressiveness.

Each verse constitutes a distinct micro-motif, within which Górecki subtly varies the rhythmic and harmonic material whilst maintaining overall formal symmetry. The work can be divided into three distinctly contrasting sections, which nevertheless together form a coherent whole of a hymnal character, praising the Risen Christ. The first section may be described as an exposition of the main motif, conducted at a *lento* tempo and maintained in a meditative mood. The second section, ‘Alleluia’, serves as the climax. It is characterised by markedly heightened dynamics, increased intensity of texture and denser harmonies. The final movement, beginning with the words ‘*For the of mankind*’, serves as a quieting conclusion and closes the work with a plagal cadence, symbolising spiritual fulfilment and inner peace.

The piece is based on modal scales, primarily within the Dorian and Aeolian modes. A characteristic feature is the long drone notes in the alto voices, which serve as a stable harmonic foundation. The harmony is based on fourth and fifth chords, lending the whole a archaic, chorale-like character. Cadences, predominantly of the plagal type (IV–I), reinforce this effect. The composer also introduces intervals of heightened tension (seconds, ninths), used in a controlled manner and subordinated to the expression of the text.

Example 42. H. M. Górecki ‘Wstał Pan Chrystus’ (‘*The Lord Christ Has Risen*’), drone notes in the alto voices (d¹, a), bars 1–6.

The image shows a musical score for two alto voices, Alto 1 and Alto 2, in 2/4 time. The lyrics are 'Wstał Pan Chrystus zmartwych'. The score highlights drone notes in the alto voices, which are marked with '3/4' and '2/4' time signatures. The notes are sustained across several measures, creating a harmonic foundation. The lyrics are written above the notes, with some words split across measures: 'Wstał' (Alto 1), 'Pan' (Alto 2), 'Chry' (Alto 1), 'stus' (Alto 2), 'zmart' (Alto 1), 'wych' (Alto 2).

The piece’s range extends from a (low) to d². The gradual ascent of the melodic line creates a sense of spiritual exaltation. The rhythm is based on long note values (quarter notes and half notes) and is subordinate to the natural prosody of the text. The texture is homophonic: the first sopranos carry the main melodic line, whilst the other voices (mezzo-soprano, first alto, second alto) form harmonic verticals. The subtle rhythmic shifts between the voices create a gentle ‘undulating’ effect in the sound.

The dynamics of the piece revolve mainly around *piano*, with *a* gradually building *crescendo* reaching *mezzoforte*. The agogics are varied and serve to emphasise the semantic accents of the text. The expression of the piece is contemplative and prayerful in nature. The repeated ‘Alleluia’ symbolises unceasing Easter joy, reinforced by rhythmic and motivic repetitions. The conclusion, framed by *allargando* and *rallentando*, suggests a transition from the realm of sound to silence, which heightens the sense of spiritual tranquillity.

3.6.4.2. ‘Twoja cześć, chwała’ (‘Your honour, your glory’)

The piece is of a sacred nature, and its textual basis is rooted in a prayerful tradition with a distinct liturgical function. In keeping with the composer’s stylistic idiom, the work represents a movement known as sacred minimalism – an aesthetic based on the reduction of musical means, the subordination of the sound structure to contemplation, and the emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the text. Church music does not constitute a separate, autonomous art form, but fulfils an integrating function within the liturgical celebration. Its appropriate selection for particular parts of the rite or specific forms of prayer fosters a deeper religious experience and facilitates the faithful’s fuller participation in the liturgical mystery³¹.

In the original score, the piece is written for a mixed choir. Here we see an arrangement for a four-part female choir comprising two sopranos and two altos, with occasional *divisi* in the first altos.

³¹ J. Waloszek, *Odnova muzyki kościelnej w świetle Konstytucji o Liturgii Sacrosanctum concilium. Założenie i realizacja*, (‘The renewal of church music in the light of the Constitution on the Liturgy Sacrosanctum concilium. Concept and implementation’), [in:] Introduction to the conciliar liturgical renewal, Opole 1999, p. 193.

Example 43. H. M. Górecki, ‘Twoja cześć, chwała’ (‘Your honour, your glory’), an excerpt from the piece featuring the full choral line-up, bars 7–8.

niech _ nie u _ sta _ je,
 my _ Two - i _ słu _ dzy,
 Twej _wszech - mo _ cno _ ści,

niech nie u - sta - je,
 my Two - i słu dzy,
 Twej wszech - mo - cno - ści,

The piece is in 3/2 time with a tempo of 60 per half-note. In the final system, there are notations intended to slow the piece down, transitioning from ‘*più lento*’ and finally to ‘*allargando*’.

Example 44. H. M. Górecki, ‘Twoja cześć, chwała’ (‘Your honour, your glory’), an excerpt showcasing the tempo changes in the piece, bars 9–10.

9 *più lento* *allargando*

S + A

niech _ nie u _ sta _ je.
 my _ Two - i _ słu _ dzy.
 Twej _wszech - mo _ cno _ ści.

niech nie u - sta - je.
 my Two - i słu dzy.
 Twej wszech - mo - cno - ści.

The texture of the piece is essentially homophonic, with the first soprano part carrying the melodic line, whilst the other voices provide the chordal layer, building stable harmonic verticals and serving as harmonic accompaniment. Within the vertical structure, second intervals appear, used as an expressive device to emphasise the semantics of the text. The harmonic language is based on sustained major and minor triads, supplemented by fifth-and-fourth intervals characteristic of Górecki’s modal idiom.

Despite its apparent simplicity, the voice leading reveals deliberate parallel movements which reinforce the quasi-monodic and contemplative nature of the prayer. The treatment of the text remains consistently syllabic, whilst rhetorical emphasis is achieved by lengthening the rhythmic values on words of particular semantic weight, such

as ‘honour’, ‘glory’ and ‘majesty’. The entire composition is subordinated to a sacred emotional function, highlighting the spiritual and liturgical dimension of the message.

3.6.4.3. ‘Święty, święty’ (‘Holy, holy’)

The text is an excerpt from the Eucharistic acclamation ‘*Sanctus*’, which defines its liturgical function and determines the composition’s contemplative character. The style of the piece draws on the aesthetics of liturgical minimalism, based on the repetition of melodic phrases, an economy of means, and a clear focus on prayerful introspection.

As with the two previous compositions, the original version was intended for a mixed choir, whilst the arrangement under analysis employs a female ensemble in the SSAA formation, with occasional *divisi* passages in the second soprano and first alto parts. The 4/4 time signature and the slow tempo of the musical narrative reinforce the majestic and prayerful character of the acclamation, fostering a contemplative reception of the work.

Example 45. H. M. Górecki, ‘Święty, Święty’ (‘Holy, holy’), an excerpt from the work showcasing the *divisi* arrangement (with particular attention to the last two bars), bars 24–29.

The musical score for Example 45 shows a divisi arrangement for Soprano and Alto (S+A) voices. The score consists of six measures, corresponding to bars 24-29 of the work. The lyrics are: 'je - steś nie po - ję - cie, w Prze - naj - świę - tszym Sa - kra'. The melody is characterized by parallel motion between the voices, with a triplet in the final bar.

The harmony in the piece is modal in character and is characterised by considerable stability, resulting from the predominance of parallel motion between the voices. Consonant chords, based on thirds, fourths and fifths, predominate, which is in keeping with the characteristic sonic idiom of sacred minimalism. Occasional dissonances serve an expressive function and are primarily intended to emphasise the prosody of the text. Phrases are usually organised in four-bar units, and the way the melody is led gives individual sections a clearly defined rhetorical significance. The soprano lines, particularly in passages based on ascending triplet motion by a third, generate tension which is resolved through half-note descents by the same interval. The texture of the composition remains consistently homophonic, which reinforces its contemplative and liturgical character.

Example 46. H. M. Górecki *‘Święty, Święty’* (*‘Holy, holy’*), triplet movement in the sopranos, bars 11–14.

The musical score is for the soprano and alto parts (S + A) of the triplet movement in Górecki's *Święty, Święty*. It is marked *Lento* and in 4/4 time. The lyrics are "Świę - ty, Świę - ty, Świę - ty, ty,". The melody is characterized by long, sustained chords. In the second bar, there is a triplet of eighth notes. The score is divided into four measures corresponding to bars 11, 12, 13, and 14.

3.6.5. Performance considerations

3.6.5.1. *‘Wstał Pan Chrystus’* (*‘The Lord Christ Has Risen’*)

Several significant performance difficulties emerged during the preparation of the work. One of the main challenges proved to be the need to sustain modal chords for extended periods. The duration of a single chord spanning multiple bars demands exceptionally stable intonation from the singers, particularly in the absence of internal melodic movement. Sustaining the chord was therefore not only a technically demanding task but also a perceptual strain, as it required constant muscular and auditory control.

The composition calls for a high degree of sonic homogeneity and subtle tonal differentiation, which necessitated advanced work on vocal production by the choir. The required clarity, devoid of excessive vibration and harshness, demanded that the choristers be highly aware of their resonators, vocal projection and vowel placement. Furthermore, the timbre had to be consistent both within individual sections and across the entire ensemble, which in practice meant the need for precise lateral listening and the constant adjustment of one's own vocal production to the sound of the group.

Due to the modal idiom and the prolonged duration of the chords, even the slightest harmonic change carried structural and expressive significance. The ensemble had to demonstrate a keen awareness of transitional moments in order to maintain fluidity and sonic coherence. This required particular concentration, especially at moments where a harmonic change coincided with a change in the text. Diction, accentuation and correct articulation had to be precisely synchronised with the pitch changes to avoid blurring the formal structure.

Example 47. H. M. Górecki, 'Wstał Pan Chrystus' ('*The Lord Christ Has Risen*'), an excerpt from the work illustrating a harmonic change coinciding with a change in the text, bars 1–6.

The musical score for Example 47 shows four vocal parts: Soprano, Mezzosoprano, Alto 1, and Alto 2. The tempo is marked 'Lento' and 'allarg.'. The lyrics are: 'Wstał Pan Chry-stus zmart-wych ni - nie -'. The Soprano part is the most prominent, with long notes and a clear melodic line. The other voices provide harmonic support, with some parts having longer notes than others.

The role of the first sopranos was crucial in the work. It was they who carried the main melodic line, determining the character of the motifs and the direction of the musical narrative. As the bearer of the text, the soprano had to be at once resonant, precise in intonation and clear in articulation. The leading voice thus became the driving force of the entire ensemble, setting the phrasing and dynamic direction. In practice, this meant that the other voices had to be closely synchronised with the soprano line, which served as the reference point for the harmonic and rhythmic stability of the performance.

Example 48. H. M. Górecki, 'Wstał Pan Chrystus' ('*The Lord Christ Has Risen*'), the main part of the work, bars 1–6.

The musical score for Example 48 shows the Soprano part. The tempo is marked 'Lento' and 'allarg.'. The lyrics are: 'Wstał Pan Chry-stus zmart-wych ni - nie -'. The Soprano part is the most prominent, with long notes and a clear melodic line.

Despite the predominance of long notes, the piece contains subtle rhythmic shifts which proved to be a particular challenge. Their precise execution required the ensemble not only to maintain a high level of temporal control, but also to constantly monitor the relationships between the voices. These changes, though sometimes minimal, had a significant impact on the perception of the texture or rhythmic tension. A lack of absolute synchronisation could lead to an undesirable disintegration of the temporal structure.

The performers' natural reaction to harmonic static and long rhythmic values was a tendency to slow down the tempo uncontrollably. To prevent this, it was necessary to develop greater metrical discipline and to follow the conductor's gestures consciously.

This also required reducing reliance on the musical score whilst singing. Focusing one's gaze on the score made it difficult to respond to agogic nuances and led to delays in the ensemble's response. The singers therefore had to learn the material well enough to maintain full concentration on the conductor's hand movements at the same time.

Example 49. H. M. Górecki, 'Wstał Pan Chrystus' ('*The Lord Christ Has Risen*') the final system with agogic changes, bars 38–42.

The musical score for Example 49 shows the final system (bars 38-42) of 'Wstał Pan Chrystus' by H. M. Górecki. The score is for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), and Tenor (T.) voices. It features agogic changes marked 'allarg.' and 'rall.'. The lyrics are 'Al - le - lu - ja!'. The Soprano part has a melisma on 'ja!' in bar 42. The Alto and Tenor parts have a melisma on 'ja!' in bar 41. The score is written in G major, 4/4 time, and is in the key of G major.

3.6.5.2. 'Twoja cześć, chwała' ('Your honour, your glory')

In the performance of this work, issues relating to sound control, vocal projection and precise phrasing are of key importance, arising both from the nature of Górecki's music and the specific characteristics of the homophonic texture.

The first aspect of performance is maintaining stable harmonies over several bars, which requires the ensemble to have precise intonation and a consistent quality of sound across long harmonic sequences. Such sounds, typical of sacred minimalism, must remain uniform in timbre and dynamics in order to preserve the contemplative nature of the work.

The sonic hierarchy between the voices also plays an important role. The leading line (usually) in the first soprano should remain clearly audible. This requires specific vocal projection, that is, projecting the text 'forward', with clear articulation and 'text behind the tongue', so that the words remain the vehicle for the musical narrative.

Example 50. H. M. Górecki, *‘Twoja cześć, chwała’* (*‘Your honour, your glory’*), an excerpt from the score showing the main melodic line against the other voices, bars 5–8.

5

S + A

na wie - czne _ cza _ sy niech _ nie u _ sta _ je,
 po - kłon i _ pie - nie, my _ Two - i _ słu _ dzy,
 za ten dar _ za _ cny Twej _ wszecz - mo _ cno _ ści,

na wie - czne cza - sy niech nie u - sta - je,
 po - kłon i pie - nie, my Two - i słu dzy,
 za ten dar za - cny Twej wszecz - mo - cno - ści,

In terms of agogic control, the ensemble’s full concentration at the end of each verse is essential. The slowing down (*più lento – allargando*) is precisely controlled by the conductor here, which requires the singers to react in real time, breathe in unison and adapt immediately to the changing tempo. The ensemble must therefore remain highly alert to ensure that the final phrases remain coherent and that changes in tempo are consistent and clear.

3.6.5.3. *‘Święty, święty’* (*‘Holy, holy’*)

The performance of this piece demands particular attention to rhythmic precision, tonal balance and control of vocal projection, owing to its modal harmonic language and static texture.

The triplet rhythm proved to be a significant performance challenge. This required the ensemble to strictly subordinate their phrasing to the rhythmic layer, so as to maintain consistency between the phonetics and the metre of the phrase. It is therefore essential to develop a consistent approach to the execution of triplets and to avoid accidentally shortening or lengthening rhythmic values due to articulation. The conductor ‘separated’ each note of the triplet in order to achieve the intended effect.

Example 51. H. M. Górecki, *‘Święty, Święty’* (*‘Holy, holy’*), triplet notation in the soprano part, bars 11–14.

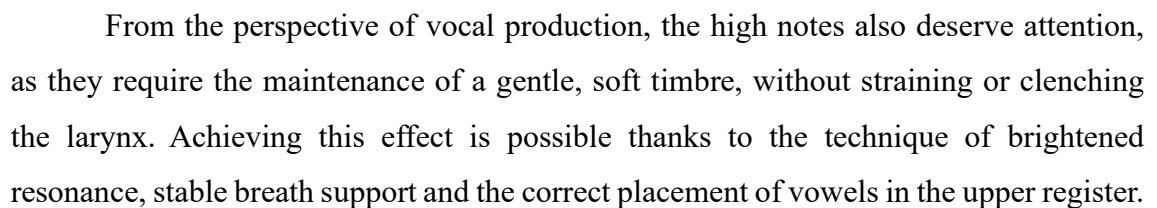
11 Lento

S + A

Świę - ty, Świę _ ty, Świę _ ty,
 Świę - ty, Świę _ ty, Świę _ ty,

In the context of harmony, maintaining the purity of chords takes on particular importance, especially as the composition employs long modal sequences. Intonational stability requires the choristers to exercise aural control, consciously guide their voices in relation to other parts, and maintain intonation in parallel movements.

Example 52. H. M. Górecki, *Święty, Święty* (*Holy, holy*), a change in pitch in the first alto part, bars 19–23.



Summary

The artistic work presented in this thesis constituted a significant element documenting the doctoral candidate's artistic activity. The process of preparing the pieces, encompassing their arrangement, recording and concert performance, provided valuable experience relating to the realisation of world premieres, and also enabled a deepening of knowledge regarding the interpretation of contemporary choral works. The project also provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the creative output of the composers collaborating with the PhD student and the specific characteristics of their compositional language. Furthermore, the artistic work presented has contributed to enriching contemporary choral literature with new compositions, as well as to popularising current performance trends in contemporary music, which are reflected in the musical material presented.

In the introduction to the description of the artistic work, the main research question and four specific research questions were formulated, for which appropriate research hypotheses were proposed. An analysis of the material and the course of the artistic project's implementation confirmed the hypothesis relating to the main research question. The results obtained indicate that the world premiere of a work is an innovative undertaking, establishing the first interpretative model for the work. Although each subsequent performance remains the result of the artist's individual interpretation, the world premiere provides a significant point of reference for future performances, defining the basic interpretative principles and the manner in which the composer's vision is realised.

The hypotheses formulated to address specific issues were also confirmed in the course of the artistic project. The world premiere of a work serves as the first point of reference for subsequent ensembles and conductors undertaking its interpretation. Every performance of a new work also serves as a showcase for the composer's artistry, enabling audiences and future performers to become acquainted with their individual musical language and characteristic compositional approaches.

An important aspect of the project's realisation was the collaboration with amateur choirs. Ensembles of this kind are made up of people with varying levels of musical training, which influences the way the musical score is perceived and performed. The compositions created specifically for this artistic project proved to be demanding in terms

of performance and presented a significant challenge for the choristers taking part in their world premieres, in particular for the members of the *Sonus Lumine* Choir, conducted by a PhD student. The greatest difficulties stemmed from the complex harmony, unconventional agogic and dynamic treatments, and the contemporary musical language employed by the composers. In the initial stages of working on the material, these elements sometimes gave rise to a sense of uncertainty, and even reluctance towards the pieces being performed. Thanks to systematic work during rehearsals and the joint search for interpretative solutions by the conductor and the ensemble, it was possible to gradually overcome the difficulties encountered and achieve the intended artistic effect.

The contemporary means of expression and new compositional trends employed by the composers aroused the performers' interest and were, at the same time, well received by the audience. The process of preparing for a world premiere – involving many months of work on interpretation, intonation, harmony and the cohesion of the performance – remains an experience accessible primarily to the performers, the conductor and, on occasion, the composer. The audience at a concert or listening to a recording, however, experiences only the final result of this work. Audience reactions following concerts and liturgical performances (regarding the *Musica Sacra* Choir of the Warsaw-Prague Cathedral) confirmed the positive reception of the presented compositions and their artistic merits.

The experiments carried out have also confirmed that close collaboration between the conductor and the composer plays a significant role in the process of preparing a world premiere. Direct contact with the composer enables consultation on interpretative issues, the clarification of any doubts regarding the score, and the refinement of the composer's intentions. Where justified, it is also possible to jointly consider editorial or performance-related changes, taking into account the specific characteristics of a particular ensemble. This applies in particular to amateur choirs, whose membership and level of musical preparation often vary, which may affect the practical feasibility of realising the composer's vision.

Innovation in contemporary choral music remains an area open to further artistic and compositional exploration. The development of new means of expression and compositional techniques constantly broadens the scope for interpretation and performance, introducing new aesthetic qualities into choral literature. At the same time, it is essential that the search for innovative solutions remains closely linked to the textual

layer of the work. Maintaining coherence between the semantics of the text and the compositional means employed is, after all, one of the fundamental conditions for the work to achieve its full artistic value.

For the doctoral candidate, the choice of subject matter for this dissertation entailed the need to tackle numerous research and artistic challenges. Carrying out the project required in-depth analysis, systematic work and engagement with the issues surrounding the world premieres of contemporary choral works. The experience gained and the results achieved give reason to hope that the effort undertaken has yielded the expected outcomes.

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