

Krzysztof
MEYER

Piano Quartet • Piano Quintet

Silesian String Quartet
Piotr Sałajczyk, Piano



Krzysztof Meyer (b. 1943)

Piano Quartet • Piano Quintet

Krzysztof Meyer was born in Kraków on 11th August 1943 and commenced formal studies when he was eleven at the Kraków Academy – first with Stanisław Wiechowicz then with Krzysztof Penderecki (he received his diploma in 1965), while also participating in courses with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He himself taught at the Kraków Academy from 1965 until 1987, after which he became professor in composition at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. Equally active as a pianist, he was a member of the new music ensemble MW2 during 1965-67, and also served as President of the Polish Composers' Union during 1985-89. From 1974 to 1988 he served on the committee of the Warsaw Autumn Festival, having first appeared in 1965 as the youngest composer in its history. His many awards for composition include first prize at the Prince Rainier of Monaco competition in 1970 and the prize of the Polish Composers' Union in 1992. His two-volume study of Witold Lutosławski (2003/4: co-written with Danuta Gwizdalanka) remains the most extensive yet undertaken in Polish, while his monograph on Dmitry Shostakovich (1973, new edition in 1994) has been translated into several European languages and his completion of the latter's opera *The Gamblers* staged in various countries.

In his own music, Meyer has shown an acute awareness of the stylistic paths in music after 1945 and a conviction in using them for his own ends. Serial and sonorist as well as aleatoric means have periodically informed his compositions, yet, as he himself stated in an interview over four decades ago, "Applying various techniques is for me only a means to composition, and it is by no means an exaggeration ... to say that I have entered some regions of my inner soundscape using any technical means available and that I will still arrive at a result that I had aimed at from the start, regardless of the means applied". Although his sizable output takes in the broad spectrum of musical genres, the twin series of eight symphonies and fourteen string quartets stand at the centre of his achievements – with this latter covering 51 years (thus far) of his composing career [of these, *Nos. 5, 6* and *8* appear on Naxos 8.570776, while *Nos. 9, 11* and *12* are on 8.572656, *Nos. 7, 10* and *13* on 8.573001 and *Nos. 1, 2, 3* and *4* on 8.573165].

Composed in 2009, the *Piano Quartet* was first performed in Berlin on 27th June 2010, by the Aperto Piano Quartet. Unlike the majority of Meyer's larger scale chamber works, this is structured as a single movement whose several contrasting sections are afforded unity by a transformation of the initial motifs in what amounts to a process of continuous variation. The piece opens with a declamatory gesture on piano, followed by an equally volatile gesture from the strings. Gradually a melodic polyphony unfolds on lower strings, twice alternating with returns of the initial gestures, before a scurrying motion on piano and pizzicato strings brings a change in perspective. Elements of the earlier polyphony are soon drawn into the prevailing activity, then there is a passage of more elegiac cast, prior to a capricious episode in which piano and strings trade fugitive exchanges. At length the music gains in expressive intensity on the way to a brief climax which subsides into a ruminative section for the strings; its inwardness shattered by the return of the piano's opening gesture, then an urgent motion for the strings in rhythmic unison. The previous momentum having been regained, the music surges forward via an intensifying interplay between piano and strings – the latter's restless trills offset by the former's chordal interjections – before a climactic 'cadenza' passage on piano spills over into a more reflective passage for strings. From here a plangent statement from the strings in rhythmic unison leads into a wistful episode with gently rocking strings and pensive piano chords, but the hectic activity briefly re-emerges prior to a calm rejoinder on piano – the music then heading into a sustained threnody whose gradual intensification brings about the passionate culmination, with a final headlong surge to the impetuous close.

Composed during 1990-91, the *Piano Quintet* stands firmly in the lineage of large-scale such pieces dating back to Brahms. It was first performed in Cologne on 25th May 1992 by the Wilanów Quartet (which has given the premières of several of Meyer's string quartets) with the composer at the piano. The four movements together outline an outwardly Classical trajectory, though the follow through between them is by no means orthodox, while a number of salient motifs reappear over the course of the piece to endow

it with a measure of unforced cohesiveness. The first movement begins with peremptory exchanges between the piano and strings such as are complemented by a more pensive dialogue from which gradually forms an increasingly elaborate texture. Gaining all the while in expressive intensity, the music eventually returns to its earlier understatement – piano unfolding a fragmented chordal sequence over sustained strings – then a sudden and strenuous renewal of activity builds to a climax that fails to occur. Instead piano and strings resume their initial exchanges, prior to the calm yet uncertain close. The second movement is almost entirely derived from the ruminative interplay of piano and strings heard at the outset, with the music passing through a continuous sequence of mainly introspective passages that makes resourceful use of some archetypal ‘piano quintet’ textures. At length a sustained and fervent climax is reached, with a notable recourse to stark chordal writing on piano and sustained rhythmic unisons from the strings, before this subsides into a calm resumption of the opening mood and from which emerges the regretful closing gesture. With only minimal pause, the

third movement commences in much the same expressive vein – though a sudden outburst from piano and strings confirms the greater animation henceforth. The music proceeds restively and often quixotically, with occasional yet strategic gestures as serve to maintain focus, before a final jagged outburst brings a rapid disintegration of texture. It is a not dissimilar gesture which launches the finale, here combined with elements of ideas from the first movement as ensure the formal as well as expressive unity across this work as a whole. At length more active ideas gain the upper hand, and a strenuous evolution of salient motifs unfolds in which the interplay between piano and strings is heard at its most dextrous. All the while the emotional intensity of the music is increasing, albeit with periodic passages of calm, on the way to a powerful culmination which draws on the full resources of the five instruments. From here unfolds the gradual descent into a fugitive calm, as piano and strings trade ever sparser gestures, which serves to bring about the pointedly ambivalent conclusion.

Richard Whitehouse

Photo: Radoslaw Kazmierczak



Piotr Sałajczyk

The pianist Piotr Sałajczyk appears as a soloist and a chamber musician. He graduated with honours from the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, where he studied under Józef Stempel, and continued his studies at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in the piano class of Pavel Giliov. Currently, he holds a post of assistant at his Alma Mater. In 2011, Dux released his début album of Beethoven's *Sonata, Op. 111* and Schubert's *Sonata, D.960*. The CD was greeted enthusiastically by music critics and was awarded the Maestro Prize of the French magazine *Pianiste* and the Supersonic Award of *Pizzicato* magazine (Luxembourg). Piotr Sałajczyk devotes much attention to music of the 20th and 21st century. He has a significant number of first performances in his portfolio and has worked closely with Piotr Pławner, Urszula Kryger, Agata Zubel, the Apollon Musagète Quartet and the Silesian Quartet. He appears as a soloist with leading orchestras, including the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonia Juventus. He has also taken part in many music festivals, including the Warsaw Autumn, Beijing Modern Music Festival in China, Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, Budapest Spring and Musique et Neige in Switzerland.

Silesian String Quartet

Szymon Krzeszowiec, Violin • Arkadiusz Kubica, Violin • Łukasz Syrnicki, Viola • Piotr Janosik, Cello

One of Poland's leading chamber music ensembles, the Silesian String Quartet, in its early years, developed under the supervision of musicians from such quartets as the LaSalle, Amadeus, Juilliard, Smetana and Alban Berg. Today it enjoys international fame, giving concerts throughout the world. It has performed in such venues as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Schauspielhaus in Berlin, the Tivoli in Copenhagen, the Salle Pleyel in Paris, Carnegie Hall in New York, Jordan Hall in Boston, Hoam Art Hall in Seoul and the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. The quartet performs the canon of great chamber music masterpieces, but also dedicates special attention to the music of our time. The extensive discography of the quartet includes music from many different periods, with particular emphasis on Polish music from the last three decades. Their recordings have been released on more than forty CDs, three of which won the Fryderyk Award of the Polish Phonographic Academy for the Best Chamber Music Album. The quartet has organised the annual International Chamber Music Festival *The Silesian Quartet and Its Guests*, gathering dozens of outstanding Polish and foreign artists together over a period of some twenty years.



Photo: Magdalena Jodłowska

The twin series of symphonies and string quartets stand at the centre of Krzysztof Meyer's achievement as one of the most renowned composers of our time. His mastery of the chamber medium is also revealed in the two works presented here. The *Piano Quartet, Op. 112*, heard here in its world première recording, is unusual in Meyer's output for its one-movement structure with several contrasting sections. Elegy, threnody and caprice co-exist in an intense interplay of great passion. In its scale and impact the *Piano Quintet* recalls similar such pieces dating back to Brahms.



**Krzysztof
MEYER**
(b. 1943)

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| 1 | Piano Quartet, Op. 112 (2009)* | 24:34 |
| | Piano Quintet, Op. 76 (1991)† | 40:05 |
| 2 | I. Maestoso – Più mosso – Tempo I | 10:43 |
| 3 | II. Misterioso | 13:51 |
| 4 | III. Inquieto | 4:27 |
| 5 | IV. Adagio – Presto – Tempo I | 11:00 |

*** WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

Silesian String Quartet
Szymon Krzeszowiec, Violin I • Arkadiusz Kubica, Violin II †
Łukasz Syrnicki, Viola • Piotr Janosik, Cello
Piotr Sałajczyk, Piano

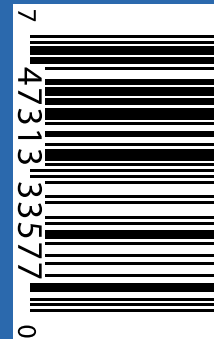
Recorded at the Concert Hall of the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music, Katowice,
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Playing Time
64:45



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