

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's *Music for Winds*

College Band Directors National Association
National Conference
March 25, 2015 - 3:00pm
Lowes Vanderbilt, Symphony I
Nashville, TN

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PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski is perhaps best known in the United States as the former, long-time Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra, but many also consider him a world-class composer. Skrowaczewski's *Music for Winds*, written in 2009, is viewed by many prominent wind ensemble conductors as one of the most significant pieces written for winds in the last fifty years. The piece, which the composer describes as a "symphony or concerto for winds," shares many compositional ideas with symphonic compositions from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. This presentation will provide conductors with a thorough investigation of the work, and will present various programming possibilities for the piece.

PROGRAM NOTE

Music for Winds (2009)

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski
(b. 1923)

For *Music for Winds*, I was commissioned by a consortium of nine orchestras in four countries (the United States, Germany, Austria, and Japan). The initiator of this project is Dr. Frederick Harris, director of the wind orchestra at MIT in Boston. He knew that I had long since wanted to write a kind of symphony or concerto for winds, or more precisely for symphonic winds, the wind instruments that appear in the symphonies of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, from Beethoven to Shostakovich and beyond. The repertoire for the instruments is rather scarce, compared to the great repertoire for strings. I added three saxophones, of which two are less common and less often played, soprano and baritone saxophone. They enrich the wind section by extending the possibilities of sound quality. And to that I brought in percussion, very gently along with piano, celesta, and harp.

The work has four movements, which continue from one to the next without pause. There is a primary theme played at the beginning by clarinet and celesta and this weaves itself through all four movements, either in its original form or slightly modified. The listener may find the character or tone of the piece to be sad, mysterious, or even tragic. This could be my own reaction to the state of our world, in which great art is slowly disappearing and being replaced by superficial semi-culture.

- Program Note by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

PREMIERE PERFORMANCES

World Premiere:

December 11, 2009
Deutsche Radio Philharmonie
Saarbrücken, Germany
Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, conductor

US Premiere:

February 4, 2010
Minnesota Orchestra
Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, conductor

Program

Skrowaczewski: *Music for Winds*
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4
Brahms: Symphony No. 4

Program

Skrowaczewski: *Music for Winds*
Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3, K. 216
Brahms: Symphony No. 3, op. 90

COMMISSIONING ENSEMBLES

Bruckner Orchester Linz, Linz, Austria
Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, Saarbrücken, Germany
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Wind Ensemble, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
Minnesota Orchestra, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
New England Conservatory Wind Ensemble, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Orchestra of Indian Hill, Littleton, Massachusetts, USA
University of Minnesota Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
University of Southern California Thornton Wind Ensemble, Los Angeles, California, USA
Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo, Japan

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski commands a rare position in the international musical scene, being both a renowned conductor and a highly regarded composer. He has conducted all the top orchestras during his long and distinguished career, and now, in his 91st year, Skrowaczewski is the oldest working major conductor.

Born in 1923 in Lwów, Poland, Skrowaczewski began piano and violin studies at the age of four, composed his first symphonic work at seven, gave his first public piano recital at 11, and two years later played and conducted Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. A hand injury during the war terminated his keyboard career, after which he concentrated on composing and conducting. In 1946 he became conductor of the Wrocław (Breslau) Philharmonic, and he later served as Music Director of the Katowice Philharmonic (1949-

54), Kraków Philharmonic (1954-6) and permanent conductor of the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra (1956-9).

Skrowaczewski spent the immediate post-war years in Paris, studying with Nadia Boulanger and co-founding the avant-garde organization, *Groupe Zodiaque*. In 1948 he conducted the Paris premiere of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony with L'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. After winning the 1956 International Competition for Conductors in Rome, he was invited by George Szell to make his American debut, conducting the Cleveland Orchestra in 1958. This led to engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony orchestras and, in 1960, to his appointment as Music Director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (now the Minnesota Orchestra), a position that he held for 19 years. During the 1960s he made his debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony, Philadelphia, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras, as well as with the Vienna State Opera and Metropolitan Opera (New York). In particular, he became a regular guest-conductor of the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras and the Berliner Philharmoniker.

From 1984 to 1991 Skrowaczewski was Principal Conductor of The Hallé. With The Hallé, he gave concerts across England, led tours throughout Europe and the USA and recorded extensively. In 2007 Skrowaczewski was appointed Principal Conductor of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra for three highly successful seasons, during which time many of his performances were recorded live for Columbia Records.

Guest engagements continue to take Skrowaczewski across North and South America, Europe and Japan. Highlights last season included the London Philharmonic, Berlin Radio Symphony and Galicia Symphony orchestras. Skrowaczewski is currently Conductor Laureate of the Minnesota Orchestra, which he conducted in their much-anticipated 'homecoming' concerts in February 2014 and where he returns in May 2015. 2014/15 takes him across Europe, including to the Frankfurt Radio Symphony and Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Basel Symphony, National Polish Symphony and Warsaw Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic and Gothenburg Symphony orchestras, Bruckner Orchester Linz and the Hallé.

In Autumn 2014, Skrowaczewski returns to conduct Bruckner with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo as their Honorary Conductor Laureate and conducts two weeks with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra.

Still an active composer, Skrowaczewski's works have recently been performed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Bruckner Orchester Linz,

Yomiuri Nippon Symphony and Minnesota orchestras. His *Concerto for Orchestra* (1985) and *Passacaglia Immaginaria* (1995) were both nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Earlier award-winning compositions include *Overture 1947*, which won the Karol Szymanowski Competition in Warsaw, and *Ricercari notturni* (1977), which received the first Kennedy Center Friedheim Award. *Music for Winds* (2009) was commissioned by a consortium of nine orchestras from the USA, Germany, Austria and Japan. Recordings of Skrowaczewski's music are found on Oehms Classics, Reference Recordings, Albany Records and Innova.

The recipient of numerous accolades, Skrowaczewski was recently awarded the Knight's Cross of Polonia Restituta, one of Poland's highest decorations, and has six Honorary Doctorates, awarded most recently by the universities of Minnesota and Wrocław, the New England Conservatory of Music and the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music, Katowice. Skrowaczewski's interpretations of Bruckner have earned him the Bruckner Society of America's Kilenyi Medal of Honor and the Gold Medal of the Mahler-Bruckner Society, and his programming of contemporary music at the Minnesota Orchestra was acknowledged with five ASCAP Awards and the Ditson Conductor's Award, bestowed by Columbia University, New York. He is the recipient of the 2004 McKnight Foundation Distinguished Artist Award, one of Minnesota's highest cultural recognitions. In 2013 the University of Minnesota established the Stanislaw Skrowaczewski Endowment in Conducting in honor of his remarkable contributions to music and to Minnesota.

Of particular note within his extensive discography are Skrowaczewski's complete recordings of Bruckner's and Beethoven's symphonies with the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (now Deutsche Radio Philharmonie) for Arte Nova Classics (now Oehms Classics), which received enormous critical acclaim. The Bruckner set won the 2002 Cannes Classical Award in the 'Orchestral 18/19 Century' category and was also included in *BBC Music Magazine's* 'Top Ten Discs of the Decade'.

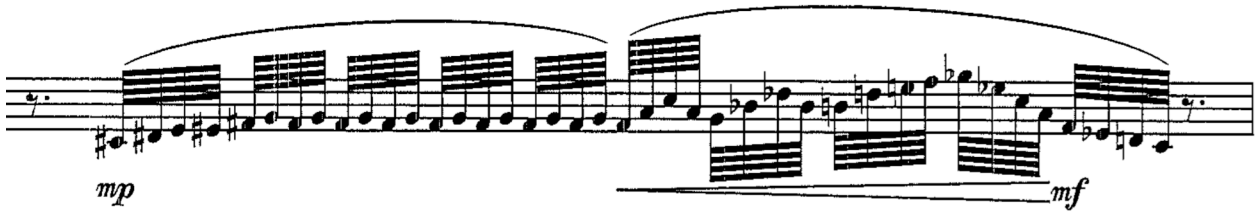
Published in 2011, a comprehensive account of Skrowaczewski's life and work can be found in *Seeking the Infinite: The Musical Life of Stanislaw Skrowaczewski*, by Frederick Harris, Jr. Currently, two documentary films about Skrowaczewski are in progress in Poland and the United States.

- 2014/2015 Composer Biography provided by Intermusica

Movement 2: Aria

- Lyrical
- Contrasting textures
- Use of tritones, thirds and diminished triads

A Motive



Musical notation for the A Motive, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of chords. Dynamics markings include *mp* and *mf*.

Theme



Musical notation for the Theme, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of chords. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' below it.

B Motive



Musical notation for the B Motive, featuring a melodic line with a slur and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of chords.

Notes:

Movement 3: Presto Tenebroso

- Three-part form
- Motivic
- Connection to Tenebrism in visual art
 - Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio
 - Jusepe de Ribera

A Section

- mm. 1-27
- A Motive
- Restatement of 016 chords
- Chromatic scale passages

"A" Motive



B Section

- mm. 28-84

B Motive



Descending four-note chromatic motive



Closing Section

- mm. 85-end
- Combination of A and B motives

Notes:

Movement 4: Molto Allegro (Finale)

- Sonata form
- Harmonies utilizing 016, tritones, sevenths and diminished chords

Exposition m. 1	Development m. 34	Recapitulation m. 110	Coda m. 142
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Primary Motive



Secondary Motive



Notes:

PROGRAMMING POSSIBILITIES

Concert #1: "Connections" (62 minutes)

Brahms	Begräbnisgesang, Op.13	7'
Skrowaczewski	<i>Music for Winds</i>	20'
Bruckner	Mass No. 2 in E minor	35'

Concert #2: "Music from Slavic Composers" (56 minutes)

Shostakovich	Prelude, Op. 34, No. 14 (arr. Reynolds)	3'
Skrowaczewski	<i>Music for Winds</i>	20'
Lutoslawski	<i>Dance Preludes</i> (Third Version) (1111/1000/1.0.1.1.1)	8'
Dvorak	Serenade in D minor, op. 44	25'

Concert #3: Symphonies for Wind Instruments (55 minutes)

Bernstein	"Profanation" from Symphony No. 1 (arr. Bencriscutto)	8'
Gounod	Petite Symphonie	25'
Gabrieli	Canzon Septimi Toni No. 2 From <i>Symphonie Sacrae</i>	2'
Skrowaczewski	<i>Music for Winds</i>	20'

SKROWACZEWSKI DISCUSSING *MUSIC FOR WINDS*

On March 19, 2015, I interviewed Stanislaw Skrowaczewski about *Music for Winds*, and his compositional process. The quotations below are from that interview, and help to shed light on his thoughts about the piece.

- **About the main motive, and the construction of the work:**

"The motive repeats in many forms. When composing, I have a plan of composition, but I'm not cooking any specific plan. I just start to write freely and see how it develops. I do not write with a plan, so things come as my fantasy goes. It is very free. What is important to me is the beauty of certain chords, certain notes, certain materials, especially in a thematic sense, and the overall atmosphere of the piece."

"I am not writing with any specific plan. I'm just going from one idea to another. I was just trying to play on the possibilities of the wind instruments of a symphony orchestra, either as solos or in groups. It's like improvisation."

- **About the use of saxophone in *Music for Winds*:**

"It was suggested to me that I use saxophones, which at first I didn't want, and then I found it quite interesting. Right now, I regret that I did not use them more! If I had time, I would review this piece again, using much more saxophones. I don't have time for this, so I leave it as it is."

- **About the influence of other composers on *Music for Winds***

"I never think of other composers when I compose, but they are in my head! I am trying to produce something meaningful in this moment. In this case, I am using the winds of the symphony orchestra to present certain materials, in as many colors as possible."

- **On his programming of *Music for Winds***

"I use it to contrast a symphony for strings. As a conductor, on the first half of my programs, I used a piece for string orchestra, along with this piece for winds. The second half would be a piece that uses the entire orchestra. This contrast is very interesting to me, and very interesting for the audience."

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY

Adam Fontana is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Conducting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City's Conservatory of Music and Dance, where he studies conducting with Steven D. Davis, and serves as a graduate teaching assistant of the Bands at the Conservatory. At UMKC, Adam has served as the manager of the Conservatory Wind Symphony and Conservatory Wind Ensemble, assisted with the instruction of undergraduate conducting courses, and taught undergraduate woodwind methods. In addition to his studies, Adam is in his second year as the Conducting Fellow of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City's Symphony Orchestra.

Prior to his studies at UMKC, Adam was the conductor and founder of the Hudson Valley Chamber Winds (HVCW), a professional chamber wind ensemble based in New York's Hudson Valley. Under his direction, HVCW was selected to perform at the 2012 CBDNA Eastern Division Conference at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Adam has recently appeared as guest conductor of the UMKC Conservatory Wind Symphony, UMKC Conservatory Wind Ensemble, Hartford Independent Chamber Orchestra, and the Cortlandt Chamber Orchestra. In May 2015, he will conduct UMKC's Musica Nova Ensemble for the world premiere of David Stock's Chamber Concerto for Saxophone, with UMKC Professor, and PRISM Quartet Member, Zachary Shemon as soloist.

As a clarinetist, he is a three-time performer in Carnegie Hall, performing with the Juilliard Orchestra (under the direction of Marin Alsop), The Hartt Wind Ensemble, and the National Collegiate Wind Ensemble. He also appears as a clarinetist on the Hartt Wind Ensemble's Naxos recording, "Dragon Rhyme." He has studied clarinet with Dr. Alan Woy and Thomas Scott.

Adam has nine years of public school music teaching experience. He holds degrees in Music Education and Conducting from The Hartt School, Columbia University, and SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music. He has previously studied conducting with Glen Adsit, Dr. Dino Anagnost and Dr. Timothy Topolewski.