

Andrzej Czajkowski

In the footsteps of Edward Stachura's "lifewriting," but not with words. With sounds. With peculiar features of Andrzej Czajkowski's music, whose 25th anniversary of his death was on 26th June 2007. He was a great pianist. A real sensation of the 1950s in the XX century, a musical genius, charismatic personality, tremendous repertoire, favoured by the outstanding pianists, great agents, travels, interviews, and records. Career. But still, the conflict between such a haughty personality and politically correct bourgeois coterie, hardly ever comes up roses. It can be a lesson of humility, appreciation of the gifts of nature that are not indifferent. The drama of opposition between an individual and community has always accompanied a man. Sometimes it can be a tragedy. In case of Andrzej Czajkowski it was a startling tragedy. Its meaning is symbolic for the history of the XX century. He was one of those who decided to run away, both from and to.

Born on 1st November 1935 in Warsaw in a Jewish family, he suffered the same lot as his kinsmen sentenced by dehumanized mutation of European culture to reset the deepest layers of memory concerning contemporary culture. His lot was favourable to some extent for it saved his life but on the other hand he lost all that is essential for a child - the feeling of safety. So, deprived of that priceless capital in his childhood, having that particular lot, both favourable and ruthless, he fought it all his 46 years long life. He used to live at 1 Przejazd street (now there is a fountain in front of "Muranow" cinema), he was smuggled from the ghetto and was kept in several places in Warsaw. As a seven years old child he lived in a wardrobe in a stranger's flat. His grandmother was the only person who took care of him. She dyed his hair, eyebrows and eyelashes blond in order to disguise him. In such inhuman conditions he had to get used to his distinctness, pain and fear. His father who had established his new family before the war had left little Andrzej. And his mother left him, choosing to stay in the ghetto, and that probably saved his life. She died in the Treblinka concentration camp.

Andrzej grew up with the feeling of loss and alienation. Due to unusual sensitivity of a musical genius his awareness of lacking the basis for emotional development was even greater. In 1945 he started his piano lessons at Emma Alberg in Lodz, and five years later after two years course at famous Lazare Lévy, being only fifteen, he won the Grand Prix of Paris Conservatoire. There are some similarities with other rapid careers as for example the one of Henryk Wieniawski who won Grand Prix of the same school at the age of eleven, Józef Hofman, Artur Rubinstein who started his seventy two years long career as a teenager, and also Jascha Heifetz, Artur Benedetti Michelangeli, Glenn Gould, Martha Argerich or Georgij Sokolow. Young and world famous Czajkowski came back to Poland where he studied the piano at Prof. Stanislaw Szpinalski and composition at Prof. Kazimierz Sikorski.

He participated in the 5th Chopin Competition in 1955. A year later he appeared at a very prestigious Competition of Queen Elisabeth of Belgium where he won the third prize and was particularly appreciated by Arthur Rubinstein one of the jury members. Maestro Rubinstein fascinated with the personality of a young musician helped him later at his first steps to the pianists' Parnassus. In the years 1956 - 1959 he gave over 500 concerts what makes an amazing average - a concert almost every second day! That record-seeking routine was possible due to impossibly receptive mind. His memory became legendary. His repertoire was unparalleled, he learned the scores on the airplanes, he could recite poems for hours (he knew Hamlet by heart), and transcriptions of quartets, symphonies or operas into the piano came in an endless flow. The anecdotes could be multiplied.

Andrzej's career seemed to be bed of roses. But instead of enjoying that and getting inspiration Czajkowski started to walk on the thorns, gracefully and with perfection of a masochist; he played with his pain, derided it, confusing his surroundings and causing disgust. He broke off relationships, caused nervous breakdown of his closest friends, played with their feelings, and treated his career in a lighthearted manner. He provoked, mocked, behaved as an iconoclast. He was a rebel.

Did he have his reason? The trauma connected with his disturbed childhood started to be a nuisance. And homosexuality, he had never been ashamed of, on the other hand he dreamed of having a family and children. Playing the piano became his livelihood. He used to say that he liked it ("a bit resigned and patient"). And yet composing became his true passion "that devoured him like the greatest love" as he wrote in one of his letters to Halina Sander (a cult book consisting of correspondence between Andrzej Czajkowski and Halina Sander [Anita Janowska], *My Guardian Devil - Letters of Andrzej Czajkowski and Halina Sander*, published by PIW 1988, the first edition; and by Siedmiogród, 1996, the second edition). Czajkowski started creating his works early, but with age it dominated his life.

Giving up the feeling of safety he had never experienced before, he did not want to be a reasonable Dedalus; he chose "Va Banque" flight of desperate Icarus. All his exuberant personality, his peculiarity and individuality could be seen in his own music, not in others' compositions he could not play wholeheartedly any more. What is Andrzej Czajkowski's music? At the first glance the traces of fascination with Bartok, Berg, Prokofiev, Shostakovich or maybe Britten or Schönberg, for sure Lutoslawski and Serocki, can be noticed.

But what is that music in its core, in its original and final aspect? When listening to Sonata for clarinet, String quartets, Inventions for the piano, The Seven Sonnets of Shakespeare, Concerto for the piano or Trio Notturmo there is an inevitable impression of resemblance to Stachura's "lifewriting." Czajkowski had never been the avant-garde artist; he did not have the need to experiment as many other artists of that epoch. His life was an experiment, the experiment with his own sensitivity, endurance and resistance. In art he desired to settle and strengthen this what had been stolen by unfavorable Providence to Czajkowski - the man and given back to Czajkowski - the artist in the form of creative imagination. He could see clearly things that most people do not sense and only few are able to perceive.

Listening to his music we cannot guess the sources of inspiration for the creative force that real giant possessed. It is filled with compressed emotions, passion, schizophrenic changes of mood; it can be drawn with a whimsical, unruly or even shocking line; it is a rough provocation. We cannot guess because thinking is here good for nothing. "There are more things in heaven and earth..." We can only try to feel that kind of energy, which remorselessly pulled the artist. It did not let him get reconciliation with the world; it made him point, notice and judge the disgusting, false and conformist face of the world. As Hanna Krall put it shrewdly in her short story devoted to Czajkowski and entitled Hamlet: "accusing the world of bare existing, that it dares to exist after what it had committed" (Hanna Krall - *Proof of Existence*, edition I, 1995, and *Regret*, Swiat Ksiazki, 2007).

Czajkowski was fascinated with words and theatre. He was devoted to theatre. Knowing that his cancer was "incurable", as he wrote to Zygmunt Mycielski, he made his will and bequeathed his skull to Royal Shakespeare Company to be used as a skull of Hamlet's jester Yorick. On his deathbed he finished his opus magnum: an opera *The Merchant of Venice* (still awaiting its premiere). Every stage performance of Czajkowski is full of theatre. It is the art of pain, the pain of solitude in the crowd of fellowmen, the fellowmen hurting both with indifference and obtrusive will to help. This is the art of giving in to pain, but also making an attempt to overcome it. Successfully? Kofta wrote "that what is good in us is wet: Blood. Sweat, and Tears."

Czajkowski's music is piercingly physiological. It is a dramatic, desperate self-therapy after the time of degeneration, bestiality, contempt and darkness, the time of inventing scrupulously entered in the books items with ghastly label "Death." After the experience of damned land, it is a confession of a child, longing for love, the child Andrzej Czajkowski had always been.

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