

NAXOS

**Artur
MALAWSKI**

Orchestral Works

Symphonic Études

Mountaineers' Triptych

Popular Suite

Beata Bilińska, Piano

**Artur Malawski
Podkarpacka
Philharmonic**

Mariusz Smolij



Artur Malawski (1904–1957)

Orchestral Works

Artur Malawski was born in Przemyśl on 4 July 1904. From the age of eight he learned the violin, then, in 1920, began eight years of study on that instrument at the Conservatory of the Music Society in Kraków with Jan Chmielewski, besides taking music theory with Bernardin Rizzi. From 1927 to 1933 he gave concerts in Kraków and elsewhere as well as on Polish Radio. An injury to his left hand forced him to abandon his career as a virtuoso to focus on teaching and composition. He taught violin and music theory at the Conservatory of the Music Society in Kraków from 1928 to 1936, violin at Silesian School of Music in Katowice from 1929 to 1930 and at the Female Teachers' Seminary in Kraków from 1930 to 1932. He was co-founder of the Association of Young Musicians in Kraków in 1932 and, in 1936, began studies at the State Conservatory of Music in Warsaw, where he took composition with Kazimierz Sikorski and conducting with Valerian Berdyaev. He graduated in 1939 with a distinction for composition. In 1940 he taught violin at the music school in Tarnopol and, from 1941, settled first in Lviv then in Lublin. From 1945 he taught conducting and composition at the State Higher School of Music in Kraków (now the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music), and later ran the opera section of its vocal department, becoming head of the department of conducting in 1957. From 1950 to 1954 he taught at the Academy of Music in Katowice, becoming associate professor there in 1955.

From 1945 to 1957 he worked sporadically as a conductor and gained increasing recognition for his compositions. In 1948 his *Symphonic Études* for piano and orchestra was performed at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Amsterdam. From 1945 to 1948 he was a member of the Higher Education Programme Committee at the Ministry of Culture and Art, then, from 1948 to 1951 and also in 1957, he served as president of the Polish Society for Contemporary Music. From 1951 to 1954 he was a member of the Main Board of the Polish Composers' Union (ZKP). He died suddenly in Kraków on 26 December 1957, and is buried at the city's Rakowicki Cemetery.

Malawski's own works were frequently heard in Poland and awarded numerous prizes during both the inter-war and post-war eras. The roster of his students, moreover, features many of those who duly established Poland as a force in contemporary music after the death of Stalin, including the composers Bogusław Schaeffer, Krzysztof Penderecki (his *Epitafium Artur Malawski in memoriam* for strings and timpani is one of his earliest acknowledged works) and Wojciech Kilar, along with the conductors Jerzy Katlewicz and Jerzy Semkow. The Artur Malawski Composition Competition took place biannually in Kraków from 1962 to 1982.

With its bracing instrumentation and the resourceful use of folk elements as found in the later pieces of Szymanowski (such as the *Fourth Symphony* and the ballet *Harnasie*), the orchestral works included here find Malawski pursuing a not dissimilar course to that of his younger contemporary Lutosławski. Indeed, the *Overture* from 1948 can be compared with an eponymous work the latter composer wrote a year later. Emerging intently out of lower strings, the main theme unfolds as a rumbustious workout for brass and woodwind replete with tuned percussion. Its rhythmic incisiveness is rather offset by a more speculative idea on brass and drums, but the underlying energy continues to accrue prior to a climactic restatement of the secondary idea, followed by a steady, though inexorable, build-up towards a peroration whose animation is summarily curtailed with a gong strike.

As mentioned, the *Symphonic Études* from 1947 was one of those few pieces by Malawski to be heard abroad in his lifetime and that, in its lively repartee for piano and orchestra allied to an unorthodox formal design, makes it one of his most appealing works for today's listeners.

The *Intrada* starts with measured chords in the piano's left hand, over which woodwind and horns intone an ominous chorale. This is soon offset by a lively dialogue for piano along with numerous other instruments, continuing until an allusion to that earlier chorale brings closure. The *Romanza* centres on highly expressive music for upper strings, against which the piano unfolds a plaintive chordal sequence which accentuates the rapt but often ominous aura. The *Toccata* then lives up to its designation with a vaunting motion between piano and orchestra, maintained across highly chromatic writing until its brusqueness is brought up short by harp. The *Notturmo* is much the longest movement and, as its title implies, the most introspective – its initial exchange between upper woodwind and piano opening out expressively as strings make their entry prior to the most powerful climax of the whole work. From here, the music subsides back towards its earlier reticence until reaching a conclusion of musing uncertainty. The *Burlesque* is more an interlude than a movement with its hectic or even brittle interplay. The *Finale* picks up on this quality in what becomes a fugato of no mean decisiveness, with piano and orchestra briefly finding accord in a more expressive theme which barely has time to unfold before the earlier animation is resumed on route to an unequivocal closing flourish.

The actual manuscript of *Mountaineers' Triptych* did not survive complete, seemingly having been destroyed by the composer, and this work as it now stands was realised from surviving sources in 1988 by the cellist, conductor and composer Kazimierz Wilkomirski. The opening movement starts with a winsome melody for woodwind against strings, its poise summarily denied by a trenchantly rhythmic idea and, while there is an affecting passage for divided violins, the outcome is a succession of aggressive unison chords. The slow movement begins with warmly expressive writing on cellos that continues pensively on woodwind, the two groupings alternating until finding a tentative accord near the close. The finale returns to the earlier vitality, its forcefully accented theme drawing in the orchestra and briefly pausing before a culmination that repeats the work's initial melody for an unexpectedly calm ending.

The *Toccata* for small orchestra from 1947 typifies something of that overall adventurousness of spirit which was still possible in Poland before the rapid Stalinisation of culture thereafter. Despite its title, this is a piece not always in constant motion and its impetuous opening soon makes way for a relatively languorous theme as resourcefully as it is evocatively scored. Both ideas are modified on restatement, elements from both being combined as the music accrues energy on the approach to a conclusion where the 'toccata' element is undeniably to the fore.

Despite being written during the most repressive phase of Soviet influence, the *Popular Suite* (a.k.a. *Suite in the Popular Style*) of 1952 has Malawski finding an accommodation between the necessity for his music to be immediately accessible and the exigencies of his own idiom. The result is music that is appealing yet also personal, both being qualities the composer pursued in his major works of this period such as his *Second Symphony 'Dramatic'* from four years later.

The *Capriccio* opens proceedings with an insouciant theme on upper woodwind and strings, contrasted with a rhythmically incisive idea which latterly makes way for the earlier theme to resume its eventually decisive course. The *Intermezzo* is likely one of this composer's most haunting inspirations, unfolding ruminatively and in rhythmic unison on woodwind with the strings then brass entering belatedly to instil a warmer expression before leaving woodwind with the final word. The *Scherzino* launches with a perky and not a little sardonic theme for woodwind and strings, soon taking on greater impetus as it draws in the whole orchestra then migrates to the arresting combination of tuba and piano, before solo violin initiates a close of gentle poise. The *Canzona* continues this mood with its mournful dialogue on woodwind, to which strings add a modal colouring that enhances the searching quality of this movement overall. The *Finale* takes the form of a series of brief variations on the phrase stated by solo viola, its forceful rhythmic contours persisting as this music opens out expressively and heads with unflagging resolve to a peroration that rounds off the whole work in a decisive fashion.

Richard Whitehouse

Beata Bilińska



Over the past three decades leading Polish pianist Beata Bilińska has performed in symphonic concerts and solo and chamber recitals all over the world. A Doctor of Musical Arts, she is currently a professor at her alma mater, the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, where she studied with Andrzej Jasiński. Bilińska also sits on the jury of international piano competitions and conducts masterclasses. She is a laureate of numerous international competitions, including the 1st International Competition for Young Pianists 'Arthur Rubinstein in Memoriam', the 46th Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition and the 17th Rina Sala Gallo Monza International Piano Competition. In 2003 she made her debut at the Isaac Stern Auditorium in Carnegie Hall, receiving an enthusiastic review in *The New York Times*. Bilińska's recording credits include 13 albums. In 2015 she received a Fryderyk Award for her recording of Wojciech

Kilar's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, and she is also the recipient of numerous other phonographic awards, including the *Pizzicato* Supersonic Award (twice) and the 2008 MIDEM Classical Award.

www.bilinska.pl

Artur Malawski Podkarpacka Philharmonic in Rzeszów, Poland



The Symphonic Orchestra of the Artur Malawski Podkarpacka Philharmonic in Rzeszów, Poland celebrated its 70th anniversary in the 2024/25 season. The orchestra has given concerts worldwide, and presented ten acclaimed performances at the Golden Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna. The ensemble conducts cyclical orchestral activities both at the Philharmonic's headquarters and in the Subcarpathian region as part of the Space Open for Music project; undertakes the popular series BOOM (Ballet, Opera, Operetta, Musical); and performs frequent concerts dedicated to children and young people. The orchestra's repertoire includes classical masterpieces, with a special emphasis on Polish music. The ensemble has performed and

recorded many world premieres, including an album featuring Seyfried's *Missa solennis*, which was awarded a Golden Orpheus (Paris, 2016). Each year, the orchestra participates in the renowned music festival in Łańcut, organised by the Filharmonia Podkarpacka. Marta Wierzbieniec has been the director of the Podkarpacka Philharmonic since 2008, with maestro David Giménez currently serving as the orchestra's first conductor.

filharmonia.rzeszow.pl

Mariusz Smolij



Photo: Laura Pedrick

Mariusz Smolij (b. 1962) has led over 140 orchestras on four continents, appearing at some of the world's most prestigious concert halls. In North America he has collaborated with the Houston Symphony, Lyric Opera Orchestra of Chicago and the New Jersey Symphony among many others. Elsewhere, he has directed concerts at the Tonhalle (Zurich), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), National Centre for the Performing Arts (Beijing), and Warsaw National Philharmonic Concert Hall, to name a few. A founding member of the Penderecki Quartet, he has served as associate conductor of the Houston Symphony and music director of the NFM Lutosławski Philharmonic, International Festival Wratistavia Cantans and Toruń Symphony Orchestra (Poland), and is currently music director of the Acadiana Symphony in Louisiana and Riverside Symphonia in New Jersey. For Naxos, he has recorded music by Andrzej Panufnik, Tadeusz Szeligowski, Miklós Rózsa, Eugene Zádor, Ernest Bloch and Romuald Twardowski. His album of works by Polish composer Grazyna Bacewicz won a 2015 Fryderyk Award (Naxos 8.573229). In 2019 the president of Poland awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit for the promotion of Polish culture.

www.mariuszsmolij.com

Having sustained an injury to his left hand, Artur Malawski had to abandon his career as a virtuoso violinist and went on to become a successful teacher and composer in his native Poland. The *Symphonic Études* of 1947 brought him international recognition with its unorthodox design and powerful expression. The *Overture* shares something of his younger contemporary Lutosławski's resourcefulness, while the *Toccata* shows a similar adventurousness of spirit. The manuscript of *Mountaineers' Triptych* has not survived complete – it is heard here in a realisation by Kazimierz Wiłkomirski.

Artur MALAWSKI

(1904–1957)

1 Overture (1948)	7:37	Tryptyk góralski	
Etiudy symfoniczne		(‘Mountaineers’ Triptych’) (1949)	
(‘Symphonic Études’) (1947)	17:56	(arr. Kazimierz Wiłkomirski	
2 No. 1. Intrada	3:13	[1900–1995], 1988)	11:15
3 No. 2. Romanza	2:09	8 I. Andante – Allegro con brio	3:45
4 No. 3. Toccata	3:11	9 II. Andante	3:18
5 No. 4. Notturmo	5:08	10 III. Vivo	4:12
6 No. 5. Burlesque	1:09	11 Toccata for Small Orchestra	
7 No. 6. Finale: Fugato	3:06	(1947)	7:14
		Suita popularna	
		(‘Popular Suite’) (1952)	15:15
		12 I. Capriccio	2:48
		13 II. Intermezzo	3:33
		14 III. Scherzino	3:17
		15 IV. Canzona	2:27
		16 V. Finale: Variations	3:10

WORLD PREMIERE

COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS

Beata Bilińska, Piano **2–7**

Artur Malawski Podkarpacka Philharmonic
Mariusz Smolij

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