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The Problem of Orientalism in the Music of Karol Szymanowski

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Introduction

The oriental inspirations of Karol Szymanowski have been the subject of numerous penetrating studies, in which we read that the composer succumbed to influences from the musical-poetic tradition of the East, on the foundations of which he consciously built his own compositional idiom, referred to as oriental-impressionistic.¹ Szymanowski's oriental interests supposedly sprang from his early contacts with Eastern music in Ukraine, which may well have made him perceptually more open and spiritually more sensitive to musical exoticism.² The direct inspiration for a new stage on the composer's creative path, meanwhile, is said to have been his pivotal journey to Tunisia and Algeria, during which he came into direct contact with the music of the East.³ Scholars also stress the crucial significance of the artistic predilections and experimentation of modernism — a period marked by a lively interest in exotic cultures.⁴

The shaping of Szymanowski's individual style, initiated under the influence of the Orient, is generally accepted to have taken place during the years 1914–1918, although the earliest traces of the composer's new interests lead us to 'Zulejka', from opus 13 (1905–07), and to 'Z maurytańskich śpiewnych sal' ['From Moorish songful rooms'], from opus 20 (1909).⁵ In 1911, he wrote the *Love Songs of Hafiz* (Op. 24), instrumented in 1914 (Op. 26), and a year later the *Songs of a Fairytale Princess*, Op. 31, also ascribed to his

‘oriental’ song output. The ‘Eastern cycle’ also includes the Third Symphony (‘Song of the Night’), Op. 27, from 1916, as well as the Four Songs, Op. 41, composed in 1918, and *Songs of the Infatuated Muezzin*, Op. 42. *King Roger*, Op. 46 (1918–1924) ends the list of works marked by that air of exoticism which scholars generally opine to have been the most weighty factor in the transformation of Szymanowski’s style.

Yet a close reading of studies devoted to the composer’s ‘oriental’ works, and also of his own published writings and preserved notes, including his Arabistic notes held in Warsaw University Library, incline one to ponder the legitimacy of the accepted interpretation of Szymanowski’s links with the Orient. This problem requires interrogation with regard to the composer’s awareness, his erudition, interests and artistic motivations, and also to the way he employed so-called ‘Eastern’ elements. This concerns poetical references conveying an ‘exotic’ imagination and symbolism, as well as their musical realisation.

Szymanowski’s journey to North Africa and his Arabistic reading matter

In the spring of 1914, Karol Szymanowski spent almost a month in North Africa with his friend Stefan Spiess. Teresa Chylińska comments on the significance of this trip as follows:

In 1911, travelling around Sicily, [Szymanowski] noticed above all ‘ruins’ which made a profound ‘impression’ on him and aroused his ‘delight’. Now he discovered an indefinable ‘beauty’, ‘wondrousness’ and ‘fabulousness’ — in other words the exotic. Then, Sicily showed Szymanowski that which he sensed was at the root of European culture, and so of his own culture too. Now, he was experiencing something new, unknown, and at the same time hugely appealing. He was experiencing the East. [...] It may be assumed that this journey, culturally so distant, exotic [...] revealed to Szymanowski a world which turned out to be his world. [...] Szymanowski undoubtedly came away with the great ‘theme’ of the subsequent years of his life and his art.⁶

This description of Szymanowski's initiation into the world of Eastern culture seems not to be borne out by the available sources and materials. There are many arguments in favour of a somewhat more circumspect wording of conclusions regarding the depth of experience of the composer's first contact with the world of Arabic culture and his later creative experimentation. One should note above all the scant and extremely laconic news dispatched from his travels — just three postcards with greetings sent on 4 April from Algiers, 11 April from Biskra and 20 April from Tunis to Zofia and Zdzisław Jachimecki.⁷ The enthusiastic phrases 'it's simply wonderful here' and 'it's fabulously beautiful here' may be treated, not so much as manifesting the composer's awakening to the phenomenon of cultural exotica, as rather expressive of the satisfaction of a tourist who is enchanted by the landscape. The photographs preserved from this expedition⁸ are standard souvenirs, in which one would be hard pressed to discern a documentary passion on the part of the travellers. On photograph 210 we see a typical image of a European tourist in the picturesque company of 'natives', furnished with the tropical helmet that was used in those times by Europeans in the hot climate of Africa.

The postcards from this African expedition are the only documents written by the composer himself, and as such their value as sources is doubtless slightly overestimated. Apart from this, we possess Stefan Spiess's three memoir-impressions from this journey, cited many times in the subject literature. The first relates to the chanting of the muezzins at sunset in Tunis, the second concerns the songs and dances performed at the end of Ramadan in Biskra, and the third evokes impressions of the atmosphere of that city. We shall return to the musical part of Spiess's account further into this article. Here, it is worth drawing attention to the description of a certain district of Biskra, which seems to confirm the superficiality of contacts and incomprehension of the realities of the visited culture that were typical of many travelling Europeans:

The atmosphere of Biskra was most extraordinary, particularly in the evening. On the quiet, unpaved little streets, abounding in restaurants and wide-open houses, colourful lights, shining from the depths of interiors and also from the lamps placed

above the doorways, fell with restless streaks on the soft earth beneath a starry sky. In front of every house sat beautiful Ouled nail girls (from the Kabyle people) in pastel attire of mostly white-blue and pink, with trinkets adorning their hair and ears, their eyes painted about with blue kohl (pencil), some with charshafs veiling part of their face. And moving around them in complete silence — like phantoms — were the figures of men in white linen burnouses. From the homes only the delicate tuning of citterns reached us. When one stood at the open doorways of these houses, one could see beds covered with colourful cushions. All of this — filled with exotic charm — struck one as utterly unreal, and by the same token brought no associations with any debauchery.⁹

It is clear from this account that the friends saw café-brothels inhabited by the celebrated Nailijat — dancers and high-class courtesans in one, hailing from the Ouled Nail tribe of the Berber people.¹⁰ We may, with a great deal of probability, assume that they divined the character of the place they found themselves in and the profession of the ‘beautiful girls’ sitting in front of the houses. The author of the account seems embarrassed by the scene, decidedly suggestive of debauchery, perceived most dimly by the respectable European. So he preferred to believe in its unreal quality and exotic charm, through which it adhered to the stereotype of the fairytale Orient. This interpretation from a European perspective was completely at odds with the realities of the Ouled Nail culture, in which prostitution not only was not forbidden, but constituted socially acceptable behaviour on the part of young women, who were taught the profession from an early age. Let us add that from Stefan Spiess’s account it appears that the two travellers were wholly unaware of the musical aspects of the profession of the Nailijat, whose dance, performed to the accompaniment of an instrumental ensemble, was characterised by high artistic and technical qualities. We may therefore cautiously presume that they did not see such a dance.

There is no doubt that the trip to Algeria and Tunisia aroused Szymanski’s genuine interest in Arabs and Arabic civilisation. On returning to Tymoszkówka ‘by the last normal train’, he began reading relevant studies, making notes on the pages of four notebooks.¹¹ This text, written alternately in Polish and in French, is very difficult to read — indeed, all but illegible. The material gathered there represents a sort of survey of the li-

terature and reveals neither the composer's views nor his special interest in any particular aspect of the history or culture of the Arabs. The notes show a desire to systematically grasp the 'whole' of Arabic civilisation, its history and religion — one of the key factors of cultural difference between the Arabic East and the European West. The notebooks also contain entries on Arabic philosophy, learning, architecture, medicine and, to a small degree, art and craft. Particularly notable is the absence of music, which is given hardly any mention whatsoever. Interestingly, neither do we encounter any attempt to gather even the most rudimentary information on Arabic poetry.

This lack doubtless reflects the profile of the books, or perhaps the encyclopaedic entries, read by Szymanowski, the authors, titles and publication dates of which he essentially omits. Let us add that around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, oriental studies, particularly in France, was an extremely dynamic academic discipline; the Arabistic literature abounded in works of a fundamental character from which the composer could have chosen at will. It would certainly be worth discovering which items from this literature were read by Karol Szymanowski, although the lack of certain bibliographical data in his notes makes it impossible to satisfactorily reconstruct the list of works he studied.

On analysing the contents of the notebooks, including their arrangement and the authors' names that sporadically appear, we can state that Szymanowski consulted almost exclusively literature in French, the few remaining items being in Polish. The main source of his knowledge was almost certainly *La civilisation des Arabes* by Le Bon,¹² a French sociologist and anthropologist who made his name chiefly as the author of a work on mass psychology¹³. His grand, richly illustrated work has the character of a compendium and represents a general, but not generalising, survey of all aspects of Arabic civilisation. Based on solid scholarly foundations, Le Bon's book subscribed to the evolutionary scheme of the development of humanity, in which the Arabs, with their history, religion and social institutions, played a very important role. It is worth adding that the French scholar's work is decidedly social, rather than humanistic, in character, which explains the very cursory treatment

of Arabic literature, poetry and art, as well as the complete lack of music, as reflected in Karol Szymanowski's notes.

Also appearing in the notes is the name of L.-A. Sédillot,¹⁴ author of a large, two-volume *Histoire générale des Arabes*, translated in the twentieth century into Arabic and very well received in Arabic intellectual circles. Despite the passage of time, this work is quite highly esteemed by specialists for its scholarly objectivity, free from oriental-leaning distortions. It contains a very good historical outline of the Arabs' civilisation, with particular account taken of their scientific achievements, above all in the field of astronomy.

Besides these two items, Karol Szymanowski is likely to have read the Koran in the French translation by Wojciech Kazimirski, with an extensive introduction devoted to Muhammad¹⁵ and translator's notes. If the composer did indeed use this translation, which we cannot say for sure, then we may only wonder at the lack in his notes of any mention of the Polish edition of the Koran in the translation by Buczacki.¹⁶ The only explanation that comes to mind is that, in making use solely of the family library, Szymanowski failed to find Buczacki on the bookshelves, the only version being Kazimirski's translation, which, for a long time the only French translation, was highly regarded in France.

We also find in Szymanowski's Arabic notebooks evidence that he read another, considerably older, French work, namely Michaud's famous *Histoire des croisades*, first published in the years 1812–17.¹⁷ Despite its numerous gaps and its romantic-leaning treatment of the relations between East and West during the period of the Crusades, Michaud still enjoys a certain interest among contemporary readers. An abridged version was published in 1970.¹⁸ The composer may possibly have been drawn to the history of the Crusades under the influence of Le Bon, who devotes to them a large chapter of the third part of his book.

Another book perused by Szymanowski might have been the Larousse encyclopaedia, in which the Arabistic entries, such as 'Mahoment', 'Coran' and 'Arabe' were given a most extensive and competent treatment.¹⁹ A very high standard of scholarship also characterises the entries 'Arabia' and 'Arabska literatura' in the Polish *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna*.²⁰ It is highly pro-

bable that Szymanowski read these through, although we cannot be absolutely certain.

The Arabistic notebooks constitute an exceptionally interesting element in the problem of oriental influences in the work of Karol Szymanowski. His interest in the East was not, perhaps, an isolated phenomenon in the modernist period, but the way he approaches Arabic culture reveals an original, independent mind, resistant to facile stereotypes of the oriental exotic. The works he consulted were of an eminently scholarly and objective character, far removed from the oriental-leaning notions and interpretations which filled the *belles lettres* and a large part of the orientalist studies of his times. Szymanowski could not have found — though nor did he seek — artistic inspirations in these books. His aim was to obtain well-documented knowledge about the civilisation with which he came into contact as a tourist during his brief trip to Algeria and Tunisia.

Oriental allusions in the song texts

The poetical texts of Karol Szymanowski's songs are considered to be one of the key signposts along his creative path,²¹ and so the turning of his interest towards Eastern poetry can certainly be treated as a new stage in his artistic explorations. And yet the matter of Szymanowski's literary choices and of the exotic content of the texts he set to music — so crucial in respect to the problem of orientalism of interest to us here — is extremely complex and eludes unequivocal evaluation. In his article 'Szymanowski a literatura', Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz expressed a telling opinion which throws some light on this question:

A crucial significance is usually ascribed to Szymanowski's travels to Sicily, Africa and Italy. Yet whilst these journeys were undoubtedly important events in his life, they were not unexpected events and were prepared by Szymanowski's whole inner evolution. Now — as regards the texts — the time had come for Szymanowski's exotic works. He chooses texts from Hafiz, from Rumi, from Tagore. He discusses and commissions texts to the *Infatuated Muezzin* and *King Roger*. In literary terms, these might be very heterogeneous genres, yet they are linked by some common features; they are all marked by a startling, characteristic mysticism.²²

Iwazskiewicz suggests that, contrary to the common opinion, the travels to Africa cannot be ascribed a fundamental significance in the shaping of Szymanowski's creative outlook. He sees the experimentation at this stage of Szymanowski's artistic development as autonomous-internal and independent of external factors. He does draw attention, meanwhile, to the 'startling mysticism' of the texts preferred by the composer, without elaborating on the question of their oriental exoticism. This omission does not seem accidental. Rather, it results from the conviction that it was not the Eastern flavour that determined the peculiar qualities and the atmosphere of the poetic texts set by Szymanowski, but above all their content, centred around religious mysticism and eroticism. Indeed, even a quite cursory reading of the works used by the composer allows one to notice their very loose ties with the Orient. Can a profound 'oriental mysticism', expressed by means of a sophisticated language of symbols, be found in the *Songs of the Infatuated Muezzin*? Iwazskiewicz's erotic poems bear no resemblance to the poetry of the East, and the only 'sign' of the Orient in them are the words *Allah akbar* (God is great), *Bismillah* (in the name of God) and *muezzin*, that is, the one who calls Muslims to prayer with his chants. As an ordinary functionary of the religious cult, the muezzin does not descend into 'infatuation', associated in some Sufic schools with the religious ecstasy of a mystic filled with love for God.²³ Thus the figure of the 'infatuated muezzin' comes from the imagination of a poet who is evidently rather poorly acquainted with the realities of the Muslim religion. Szymanowski, for his part, is interested, not in cultural-ethnographical faithfulness, but above all in the 'mystical and erotic lyricism' of Iwazskiewicz's works, which aroused in him a 'fundamental attraction' and creative 'appetite'.²⁴

The *gazalas* of Hafiz, that 'boundless poet' as Goethe called him, undoubtedly constitute a splendid page in the Persian mystical and poetical tradition that employs a captivating lyricism and a host of symbolic allusions centered around the idea of the Sufic spiritual path and inner experience of God. As we know, in his *Love Songs of Hafiz*, Szymanowski employed Hans Bethge's paraphrases in a translation by Stanisław Barańcz, which admittedly 'cast Allah himself into his hands', but which are only very loosely tied to

the great Persian poet's original texts. Without embarking here on an assessment of the literary qualities of these texts, it is appropriate to stress their remarkably 'unoriental' character and the care taken by the author to remove any traces leading to associations, symbols, places and artefacts of Persian culture and spirituality that would be incomprehensible to the European. Thoroughly processed and Europeanised, the *gazalas* of Hafiz/Bethge have lost their Eastern atmosphere and Persian identity, which may have been the main reason for Szymanowski's interest in them. After all, it would be difficult with the utmost conviction to deem *Love Songs of Hafiz* a manifestation of oriental inspirations in the composer's oeuvre, similarly, moreover, to the text by Rumi in Tadeusz Miciński's beautiful translation, which was given a profoundly emotional setting in the Third Symphony.

A completely different case are the *Songs of a Fairytale Princess*, written for Szymanowski by his sister Zofia and ascribed, together with *Love Songs of Hafiz*, to the 'Eastern cycle'. Devoid of mystical exaltation and erotic associations, these modest poems about love are filled with a subtle lyricism and the romantic yearning of the princess, who could be from any fairy tale, not only Persian, as Adam Neuer suggests.²⁵ What is more, the works of Zofia Szymanowska seem wholly bereft of any trace of the 'Orient'. This is a world of inner experiences and dreams, which cannot be unequivocally linked to a poetical representation of the East.

The connection between Szymanowski's 'oriental' works and the Orient is so indistinct, blurred and uncertain that it may be deemed more the product of a certain interpretational tradition than an attempt to reflect any aspects of Eastern tradition. The foundations of this tradition in the musicological literature seem to have been laid down by Stefania Łobaszewska in her monograph of Szymanowski:

The Eastern subject matter was a product of that kind of collective and individual psyche that is particularly close to the type represented by Szymanowski. The most characteristic sort of emotions linked to it are those of a contemplative type, devoid of any connection with acts of volition, a passivity and staticity of spiritual life, or, on the other hand, a rampant eroticism and a captivating ecstasity [...]. In contrast to modern European art, we almost never encounter there individual feelings, constituting the subjective experiences of the individual, but feelings of

a more general character. [...] To a much greater degree than modern European subject matter, it communicates by mean of images, and again these are images with a more general than individual content — strictly speaking relating to humanity in general.²⁶

Łobaczewska's explanations pertain to the western European topos of the Orient, which is a collection of references, a conglomerate of features, taken from fragments of various texts and from notions and fantasies about the Orient.²⁷ This imagined Orient is a land of souvenirs, imposing ruins, lost secrets and hidden meanings.²⁸ It is harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancers and scents.²⁹ It is the emanation of sensuality, sex and ecstatic eroticism. It is despotism, languid passivity, 'staticism', tacit indifference and a penchant for vagueness. This Orient is not even a distinct place in the geographical and cultural sense; it may be Egypt, with its antiquities, Persia with its mystical religiosity, or fairytale India. It became the convention to explain the watershed in Karol Szymanowski's creative output in terms of the universal topos of the Orient, including on the level of the poetical texts, his artistic inspirations and the direction of the changes in his style.

However, Eastern references and motifs were actually of no greater significance in the texts of Szymanowski's songs. The composer seems to have been fascinated above all with the imagined, unreal world portrayed in the 'eerie dreams' described by Tadeusz Miciński in *Orland Szalony [Orlando furioso]*. The image of the paradisiacal houri running out 'with a black flaming silk scarf hanging from her loins' is one of many dream visions in which the soul of the artist 'flies like a white flame over the sea into the distance'. In the strophes used by Szymanowski in the fifth song of Op. 20, the Moorish houri does not belong to the repertory of means of orientalisation; rather, she is a figure from the terrifying episode of a spiritual journey into other realms of reality.

Music

Szymanowski's musical language in works inspired by the East poses just as complex a problem as the orientalisation of their verbal layer. We know for

certain that the composer did not carry out ethnographic research into any kind of music of Asiatic cultures. Neither did he seek knowledge about this music in the already substantial ethnomusicological literature to which he could have referred without any great difficulty, suffice it to name Guillaume-André Villoteau's celebrated and universally read study *De l'état actuel de l'art musical en Égypte*,³⁰ R. G. Kiesewetter's *Die Musik der Araber*,³¹ Abraham Idelsohn's *Die Maqamen der arabischen Music*³² and Fétis's *Histoire générale de la musique*³³. What is more, the Polish composer was not at all interested in the documentational material from early field research carried out in Arabic countries. In 1860 an *Album de Chansons arabes, maueresques et kabyles*³⁴ was published in Paris in a transcription by Francesco Salvador-Daniel, with a French text and piano arrangement. The second album of Arabic music was the wonderfully illustrated work by Alexandre Christianowitsch, *Esquisse historique de la musique arabe*,³⁵ which contained forty Arabic melodies with piano accompaniment. Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov drew copiously on both these sources, not only correcting the awkward harmonisations of Salvador-Daniel and Christianowitsch, but 'improving' the Arabic melodies in terms of metre and rhythm, ornamentation and dynamics, as well as adding, of course, suitable instrumentation in symphonic works.³⁶

Even assuming that these two collections did contain source versions of Arabic melodies, which in some cases raises doubts among scholars,³⁷ they were subjected to far-reaching transformation in the process of compositional elaboration. Modified in the melting-pot of the European intervallic, tonal, metric, motivic-melodic system, tailored to the needs of European instruments, the Arabic songs, the poetic meaning of which was lost in translation from the Arabic into Russian via French, became set in stereotypical formulas symbolising the Orient. And this is just what Karol Szymanowski wanted to avoid. He was immune to the 'mawkish East of the Rimskys e tutti quanti', and did not tread the path of the fashionable stylisation of oriental music, the sound and compositional techniques of which did not, in any case, particularly interest him. So it is difficult to judge that the fleeting 'touristic' contact with the chanting of the muezzins and with Tunisian dance music noted in the memoirs of Stefan Spiess³⁸ could have been profoundly reflec-

ted in his new stylistic idiom, dubbed ‘oriental’. This doubtless explains the difficulties encountered in the interpretation of works from the ‘exotic’ group and the fact that the analysis and arguments put forward are not always convincing. It is worth adding that the ‘orientality’ readily seen by analysts in Szymanowski’s works is hardly, if at all, confirmed by the experience of the listener, as Alistair Wightman mentions in his discussion of *The Songs of the Infatuated Muezzin*:

It is true that little connects the processed soundworld of Szymanowski with its true Tunisian equivalent. In spite of this, one can discover in contemporary Tunisian calls to prayer and in Szymanowski the characteristic chromatic ajna of the contemporary system of maqams. [...] In other words, Szymanowski unerringly found a way into that culturally distant world.³⁹

This ‘culturally distant world’ is supposedly represented in Szymanowski’s music by a set of characteristic technical means drawn from oriental music, or at least by similar principles governing the organisation of the musical material to those of the Eastern archetype. This concerns, above all, the shaping of melody and, to a lesser extent, rhythm and instrumentation.⁴⁰ The melodics of Szymanowski’s ‘oriental’ works is characterised by the dominance of structures based on minor or augmented seconds, often in the characteristic sequence minor second – augmented second, which is supposed to imitate the micro-intervallic character of the music of the East. The downwards direction of motifs with a small compass, confined to a fourth, fifth or major third, the figurations and the coloratura vocal technique ‘undoubtedly constitute an allusion to some exotic world’. The melismatics and ornamentation, including chromatic alterations, sobbing-like effects, mordents, runs, trills and staccato articulation, express ‘the mythical, bewildering richness of the east’. The repetitiveness of the melodic formulas, coloratura vocalises and rhythmic and harmonic structures supposedly imitates ‘an oriental means of expression, including the trait of monotony’, similarly to some peculiarities of metro-rhythmic organisation (polyrhythm, polymetre). The composer supposedly achieved an Eastern colouring to his songs through the instrumentation (e.g. triangle, celesta, bells, cymbals and tambourine in the *Love Songs of Hafiz* with orchestra).⁴¹

Zofia Helman calls the use of 'oriental' technique the 'orientalisation' of the musical layer, which should be distinguished from stylisation, and which involves reference to general principles of structuring and 'the adoption of just some of the characteristic elements of the essentially alien tonal system and exotic performance practice'. A similar assessment of the part played in Szymanowski's music by exotic elements is offered by Adam Neuer:

Szymanowski did not make use of source material in either the Muezzins' songs or the two previous vocal sets on oriental themes. He simply trusted to his artistic intuition, which unerringly suggested to him the tonal shape of a work, inspired only by the composer's general notion of the music of the East, and at the same time so aptly generalising features of the Arabic or Persian original.⁴²

Passing over that 'general notion' in the composer's mind, of which we know little, it should be pointed out that the linking of an 'oriental'-like technique with any actual musical tradition of the East raises justifiable doubts. Of course, some of the shaping of the musical material can be found in Arabic music, although we must remember that the notion of 'Arabic music' encompasses a great variety of styles and genres over the extensive area of the Near East and North Africa. In all Arabic cultures music exists in both folk and professional-classical traditions, each of which displays further historically and ethnically determined stylistic and generic stratification. The traditional folk music which Szymanowski heard at the end of Ramadan is not only wholly dissimilar to the classical Tunisian *nauba*,⁴³ which the composer did not have occasion to hear, but it also in no respect corresponds to a general model of 'oriental music'. Universal oriental music, generally defined in terms of 'melismata', 'coloraturas' and similar means of compositional technique, does not actually exist, but is rather a topos originating in Western notions of the music of the East. Employing these notions in constructing a language for the analysis and description of Szymanowski's highly individualised style that arose at the transition between the first and second periods of his oeuvre is a different matter.

Conclusion

Like many creative artists of the modernist period, Karol Szymanowski was interested in the Orient, which formed an integral part of European literature and art. Yet there is much to suggest that his attitude towards the Orient was intellectual, characterised by a sympathetic distance and free from exalted artistic expectations. This state of affairs would appear to be confirmed, not only by the composer's matter-of-fact notes on the Arabistic sources he read, but also by his views on 'exoticism'⁴⁴ in music, expressed in the article 'Zagadnienie «ludowości» w stosunku do muzyki współczesnej'.⁴⁵

The underlying thesis of this article is the idea that the use of musical traditions from the East, whilst admittedly bringing to European music some interesting artistic impulses, did not go beyond its superficial, external layer. Exotic melodies and rhythms remained alien to European musical thinking, without helping to deepen its aesthetic expression:

However, these efforts were aimed primarily at a sort of assimilation into European music of fresh foreign melodic and rhythmic elements, in order to lend it an interesting, spicy seasoning. A typical example of academic 'exoticism' is Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, based on original melodies of the African Americans.

A more promising source of musical 'exoticism' was traditional folk music, although, according to Szymanowski, incorporating this into a professional musical language immediately gave rise to an 'academic' folklore — an artificial style devoid of artistic depth. Cold, academic 'exoticism' was exemplified by the music of Ferenc Liszt, who drew on folk music in a 'deft, indifferent and bland' manner.

The schematic 'exotic' style that was characteristic of music around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did, however, become a point of departure leading from an aesthetic academicism to true art, the source of which were the deeply felt and creatively processed spiritual values and properties of a nation ('race'). Their purest manifestation is folk music, 'that eternally beating heart of the race [...] which the creative artist tied to the soil of his culture should newly recreate in the form of an excellent work of art understandable to all':

For we are dealing here with the psychological sphere — mysterious and difficult to analyse — of the inner dependency of the creative individual on the properties of his race, on the immutable foundation which in every individual work of art, in the most objective manifestation — expressed in inviolable form — of inner life, nevertheless allows distinct traits of style to be discerned.

Taking these views into account, it should doubtless be considered that Karol Szymanowski could not, with the utmost conviction, consciously and with faith, have ‘orientalised’ his compositional style. The ‘fascinating, rich, mysterious’ culture of the Orient forever remains alien and as such cannot be realised in a true aesthetic experience and be processed in an excellent work of European art.

Notes

- 1 Zofia Helman, ‘Pieśni Karola Szymanowskiego’ [‘The songs of Karol Szymanowski’], in Z. Helman (ed.), *Pieśń w twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego* [*Song in the oeuvre of Karol Szymanowski*] (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2001), pp. 11–21; see also Paolo Emilio Carapezza, ‘Król Roger między Dionizosem i Apollinem’ [King Roger between Dionysius and Apollo] *Res Facta* 9 (1982), p. 51.
- 2 Teresa Chylińska, introduction in *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja* [*Correspondence*], i, 1903–1919, ed. T. Chylińska (Kraków: PWM, 1982), p. 14.
- 3 Tadeusz A. Zieliński, *Szymanowski. Liryka i ekstaza* [*Szymanowski. Lyricism and ecstasy*] (Kraków: PWM, 1997), p. 83.
- 4 Z. Helman, ‘Pieśni Karola Szymanowskiego’, op. cit., pp. 12–13.
- 5 Stefania Łobaczewska, *Karol Szymanowski. Życie i twórczość* [*Karol Szymanowski. His life and work*] (Kraków: PWM, 1950), p. 227.
- 6 Teresa Chylińska, ‘O poetyckim charakterze wyobraźni Karola Szymanowskiego’ [‘On the poetical character of Karol Szymanowski’s imagination’], in *Karol Szymanowski, Pisma* [*Karol Szymanowski. Writings*], ii: *Pisma literackie* [*Literary writings*], ed. T. Chylińska (Kraków: PWM, 1989), pp. 37–38.
- 7 *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja*, i, pp. 432–433.
- 8 As above, photographs 206–212.
- 9 Stefan Spiess and Wanda Bacewicz, *Ze wspomnień melomana* [*From the memoirs of a music-lover*] (Kraków: PWM, 1963), pp. 57–58.
- 10 The Nailijat wore exceptionally rich and beautiful garments, comprising many layers of skirts and a huge amount of heavy jewellery, which constituted their personal — often quite substantial — fortune. Their faces were covered with tattoos and highly distinctive make-up; their hair was oiled, plaited and intricately pinned up. The dance they performed was of an openly erotic character, involving — in the most general terms — special movements of the hips. A crucial element of what nineteenth-century French legionnaires called their ‘belly dance’ was the gradual removal of the layers of clothing until the dancer was completely naked. The dance was accompanied by a

- group of five instruments: gaita (oboe), mizwid (bagpipes), bendir (frame drum), darabukka (vessel drum) and tar (small tambourine with five groups of thin jingles). Leona Wood and Anthony Shay, 'Dance du Ventre: a Fresh Appraisal', in *Dance Research Journal* 8 (1976), pp. 18–30.
- 11 Held in the Archiwum Kompozytorów Polskich [Archive of Polish composers] at Warsaw University Library are twelve notebooks containing various notes made by Karol Szymanowski. Four of these contain notes on the history and culture of the Arabs: 1. a notebook with shelf-mark T-III/7, dated by S. Golachowski at 1917, which contains several pages devoted to the Arabs, pp. 61; 2. a notebook with shelf-mark T-III/10, dated at after 1914 and titled by S. Golachowski 'Kultura arabska I', pp. 66; 3. a notebook with shelf-mark T-III/11, dated by S. Golachowski at after 1914 and titled 'Kultura arabska II', pp. 120; 4. a notebook with shelf-mark T-III/12, titled by S. Golachowski 'Historia arabska' and dated at after 1914, Szymanowski's title 'Historyczne zapiski tyżące się Arabii', pp. 16.
 - 12 Gustave Le Bon, *La civilisation des Arabes* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884).
 - 13 Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologia tłumy*, trans. Bolesław Paprocki (Warsaw: PWN, 1994); Fr. orig. *Psychologie des foules* (Paris: 1895).
 - 14 L.-A. Sedillot, *Histoire générale des Arabes* (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve, 1877).
 - 15 Muhammad. *Le Koran*, trans. M. Kazimirski (Paris: G. Charpentier et E. Fasquelle, 1875).
 - 16 *Koran*, trans. J. M. T. Buczacki (Warsaw: Aleksander Nowolecki, 1858).
 - 17 Joseph François Michaud, *Histoire des croisades*, repr. 4th edn (Turin, 1830).
 - 18 Joseph François Michaud, *Histoire des croisades*, abr. and ed. Robert Delort (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1970).
 - 19 Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle*, v (Paris, 1869), x (Paris, 1873).
 - 20 *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana*, iii (Warsaw: S. Sikorski, 1890).
 - 21 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, 'Szymanowski a literatura' ['Szymanowski and literature'], in *Karol Szymanowski. Księga Sesji Naukowej poświęconej twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego. Warszawa 25–26 marca 1962* [*Karol Szymanowski. Book of the academic conference devoted to the oeuvre of Karol Szymanowski. Warsaw, 25–26 March 1962*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1964), p. 129.
 - 22 As above, pp. 126–135.
 - 23 Henri Corbin, *Historia filozofii muzułmańskiej* (Warsaw: Dialog, 2005), p. 177; Fr. orig. *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Fayard, 1964).
 - 24 Karol Szymanowski to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in Warsaw, 27 Oct. 1918, in *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja*, i, p. 561.
 - 25 Adam Neuer, introduction in *Karol Szymanowski. Dzieła* [Works], xix: *Pieśni* [Songs] (Kraków, 1981), p. XVII.
 - 26 Stefania Łobaczewska, *Karol Szymanowski*, op. cit., p. 278.
 - 27 Edward W. Said, *Orientalizm* (Warsaw: PIW, 1991), 264; Eng. orig. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
 - 28 As above, 254.
 - 29 As above, p. 281.
 - 30 *Description de l'Égypte: état moderne*, i (Paris: E.F. Jomard, 1809).
 - 31 Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, *Die Musik der Araber* (Leipzig, 1842).

- 32 Abraham Idelsohn, 'Die Maqamen der arabischen Musik', in *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musik-Gesellschaft* 15 (1913–1914), pp. 1–63.
- 33 François-Joseph Fétis, *Histoire générale de la musique: Depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu'à nos jours*, ii (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1869).
- 34 Francesco Salvador-Daniel, *Album de Chansons arabes, mauresques et kabyles* (Paris: Richault, 1860).
- 35 Alexandre Christianowitsch, *Esquisse historique de la musique arabe aux temps anciens avec dessins d'instruments et quarante melodies note et harmonisé par Alexandre Christianowitsch* (Cologne: Libraire de M. Daumont-Schauberg, 1863).
- 36 Gerald Abraham, 'Arab Melodies in Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin', in *Music and Letters*, 56/3–4 (1975), pp. 313–318.
- 37 As above, p. 318.
- 38 'We heard on a number of occasions in Tunis the chanting of the muezzins from the minarets at sunset. [...] We heard then songs and dances performed on traditional folk instruments — on the darabukka, zorna, flute, cittern and drums.' Stefan Spiess and Wanda Bacewicz, *Ze wspomnień melomana*, p. 57.
- 39 Alistair Wightman, 'Elementy egzotyczne w pieśniach Karola Szymanowskiego' ['Exotic elements in the songs of Karol Szymanowski'], in Z. Helman (ed.), *Pieśń w twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego [Song in the oeuvre of Karol Szymanowski]* (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2001), p. 152.
- 40 Some authors suggest that Szymanowski consciously referred to the Arabic seventeen-degree tonal system (Z. Helman, 'Inspiracje orientalne w muzyce Szymanowskiego' ['Oriental inspirations in Szymanowski's music']. In *Šymanovskij i Ukraina / Szymanowski a Ukraina*, Kirovogradske deržavne vidavništvo, Kirovograd – Elisavetgrad 1998, p. 60) and employed maqamy, that is, Arabic modals scales (A. Wightman, 'Elementy egzotyczne w pieśniach Karola Szymanowskiego', p. 151). However, such references seem most unlikely, as they would require advanced knowledge of Arabic music theory and practice, which the composer did not possess. On the other hand, the use of tonal material organised according to non-European principles and intended for a non-European performance apparatus encounters huge technical difficulties and demands special compositional procedures.
- 41 The 'model' of the orientalisation of technical means in works by Karol Szymanowski presented here is based on the following works: Z. Helman, 'Inspiracje orientalne w muzyce Szymanowskiego'; Z. Helman, 'Pieśni Karola Szymanowskiego'; S. Łobaczewska, *Karol Szymanowski. Życie i twórczość*; A. Neuer, introduction in *Karol Szymanowski. Dzieła [Works]*, x: *Pieśni z orkiestrą [Songs with orchestra]* (Kraków: PWM, 1978); A. Szymańska, 'Tryptyk orientalny Karola Szymanowskiego' ['Karol Szymanowski's oriental triptych'], typescript of MA dissertation. Institute of Musicology of Warsaw University, 1997; A. Wightman, 'Elementy egzotyczne'.
- 42 Adam Neuer, introduction in *Karol Szymanowski, Dzieła [Works]*, x: *Pieśni z orkiestrą [Songs with orchestra]*, p. XVI.
- 43 The multipartite, complex and internally differentiated form of classical Arabic music that occurs in two basic versions: the eastern version, performed mainly in Egypt and Syria; and the western (Andalusian) version, divided into the Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian strands.
- 44 Szymanowski has a broad and 'anthropological' understanding of the notion of

exoticism, as all manifestations of music which is 'alien' in relation to professional, European musical output. This encompasses both Eastern ('oriental') traditions and folk traditions.

- 45 Karol Szymanowski, 'Zagadnienie «ludowości» w stosunku do muzyki współczesnej (Na marginesie artykułu Beli Bartóka, U źródeł muzyki ludowej)' ['The issue of 'folk tradition' in relation to contemporary music (on the margins of Béla Bartók's article 'At the source of folk music')], in *Karol Szymanowski. Pisma muzyczne* [*Musical writings*], i, ed. Kornel Michałowski (Kraków: PWM, 1984), pp. 168–175.