



CLASSICAL MUSIC IN POLAND

FAMOUS COMPOSERS

1. Stanisław Moniuszko



was born 1819 in Ubiel near Mińsk Litewski and died in 1872 in Warsaw. He was a Polish composer, organist, author of many operas, ballets, church music as well as over 268 songs. His music is filled with patriotic themes and includes expressive elements of Polish folklore (melodies and folk dances).

His most important operas are:

- *Halka* 
- *Haunted Manor* 
- *The Spinning Girl* 

Moniuszko is one of the most prominent composers of Polish Romantic period. He is called “the father of Polish national opera”

2. Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin

was born in 1810 in Żelazowa Wola and died in 1849 in Paris. From 1831 on, he lived in France. He was the most renowned Polish composer and virtuoso pianist of Romantic period.

Chopin is the most famous Polish musician worldwide and one of the most popular composers of all time. The works of Fryderyk Chopin include a huge collection of musical pieces written mainly for the piano. Most of them are for solo piano, though he also wrote two piano concertos, a few chamber pieces, and many compositions influenced by the Polish folklore.

His most popular compositions are:


- - *Revolutionary Etude (c-moll etude)*
- - *Polonaise (g-moll)*
- - *Funeral March*



3. Karol Szymanowski

was born in 1882 in Tymoszkówka and died in 1937 in Lausanne. He was Polish composer, pianist and writer, member of the early 20th century modernist movement in music called Young Poland. He is widely viewed as one of the greatest Polish composers. His family was musically talented. His father played cello and piano, his brother was a pianist, and his sister an opera singer. His compositions include among others symphonies, violin concertos, ballets, operas, as well as piano and violin music.

His most famous works are:

- *ballet Highlanders*
- *opera King Roger*
- *prelude b-moll op. 1 no. 9* 



4. Henryk Wieniawski

was born in 1835 in Lublin in a family of Jewish origin and died in 1880 in Moscow. He was Polish composer and one of the most famous violin virtuosos of the 19th century. His works are an integral part of each contemporary violinist's repertoire.

In 1859, he composed the famous *Legende* for his future wife, Izabela Hampton. After listening to this work, the father of Izabela, who initially didn't want his daughter to be married to a musician since he considered this profession as unstable, gave his consent to the wedding. He decided that this piece of music was the true expression of love. His compositions include violin concertos, etudes, as well as pieces of music inspired by Polish folk dances.

His most known works are:

- *Grand Caprice Fantastique, Op. 1*
- *Legende*
- *Kujawiak a-moll (based on a Polish folk dance)*



5. Witold Lutosławski

was born in 1913 in Warsaw and died in 1994 in Warsaw. He was a Polish composer and conductor, one of the major European composers of the 20th century. He developed his individual musical language based on Schoenberg's twelve-tone harmonic and melodic structures, his own version of aleatorism and the original concept of musical form. During World War II he made a living by playing the piano in Warsaw bars and was involved in the fundraising campaign for musicians that were hiding from the Nazis, such as Władysław Szpilman, the main character of Steven Spielberg's film "The Pianist".

His compositions include symphonies, concertos, a string quartet, instrumental works and orchestral song cycles.

His most famous works are:

- *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*,
- *Double Concerto for Oboe, Harp and Chamber Orchestra*
- *Subito for Violin and Piano*



6. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki

was born in 1933 in Czernica (Silesia) and died in 2010 in Katowice. He was a Polish composer of contemporary classical and religious music. He was a leading figure of the Polish avant-garde in the second half of the 20th century. He was largely unknown outside Poland until the mid- to late 1980s, and his fame arrived in the 1990s. In 1992, 15 years after it was composed, a recording of his Third Symphony, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* released to commemorate the memory of people murdered during the Holocaust became a worldwide commercial and critical success, selling more than a million copies and vastly exceeding the typical lifetime sales of a recording of symphonic music by a 20th century composer.

His most famous works include:

- *Symphony No. 2, "Copernican"*
- *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*
- *requiem Good Night*



7. Krzysztof Penderecki

was born in 1933 in Dębica, near Cracow. He is the greatest living contemporary Polish composer and conductor. He was the leading representative of the Polish composer school in the sixties of the 20th century. His early works show the influence of Anton Webern, Pierre Boulez and Igor Stravinsky. His international recognition began in 1959 but the piece of music that truly brought him to international attention was Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima.

His other internationally acclaimed works include among others:

- Operas: *The Devils of Loudun* and *Paradise Lost*
- *Symphony No. 7 "Seven Gates of Jerusalem"*
- *Polish Requiem*

Music composed by him was used by many famous film directors, such as Stanley Kubrick (*Shining*) or Quay Brothers (*Maska*).



8. Andrzej Panufnik

was born in 1914 in Warsaw and died in 1991 in Twickenham (Great Britain). He was one of the leading Polish contemporary composers. During the German occupation of Poland Panufnik formed a piano duo with his friend and fellow composer Witold Lutosławski, and they performed in cafés in Warsaw. This was the only way in which Poles could legitimately hear live music, since they were forbidden to attend concertos at music halls.

In that time he composed some illegal *Songs of Underground Resistance*, *Tragic Overture* and his second symphony.



After World War II he lived in Poland and was appointed Music Director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, but became more and more frustrated by the communist regime, emigrated in 1954 to the United Kingdom, and obtained British citizenship. In 1957, he became chief conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra but two years later gave up this post and devoted all his time to composition. Panufnik refused to return to Poland until democracy was restored in 1990. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1991.

His most important works include:

- *Sinfonia Rustica*
- *Old Polish Suite*,
- *Katyń Epitaph*



9. Wojciech Kilar

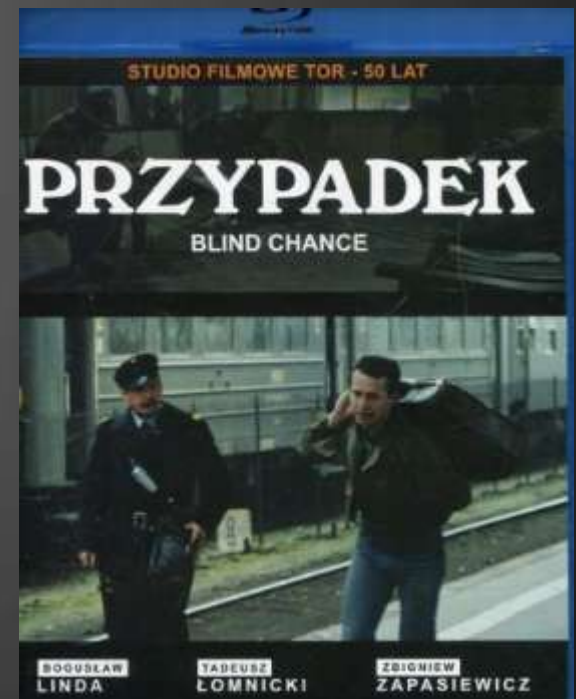
was born in 1932 in Lemberg and died on December 29, 2013 in Katowice. He was pianist and composer of both classical and film music. His father, Jan Franciszek Kilar, was a physician and his mother Neonilla a theater actress. As a child, Wojciech Kilar didn't like attending his piano lessons with his private teacher, Miss Reiss.

In 1948 he moved to Katowice, where he settled permanently. In that city he met his future wife, the pianist Barbara Pomianowska (later, he compared the first meeting with her to a strike of a lightning). He studied piano and composition at the State Academy of Music in Katowice, graduating with top honors and the award of a diploma in 1955.

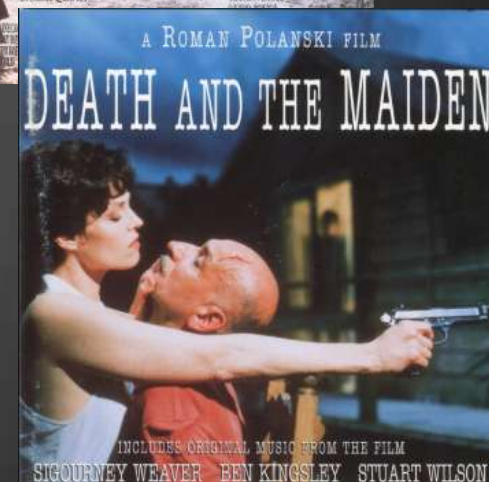


Together with Bolesław Szabelski, Henryk Górecki and Krzysztof Penderecki, Wojciech Kilar was member of the Polish Avant-garde music movement of the Sixties, sometimes referred to as the New Polish School.

Having received critical success as a classical composer, Kilar started writing music for some of Poland's most acclaimed film directors, including Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Zanussi, and Andrzej Wajda. He worked on over film 100 titles in Poland plus several others worldwide.

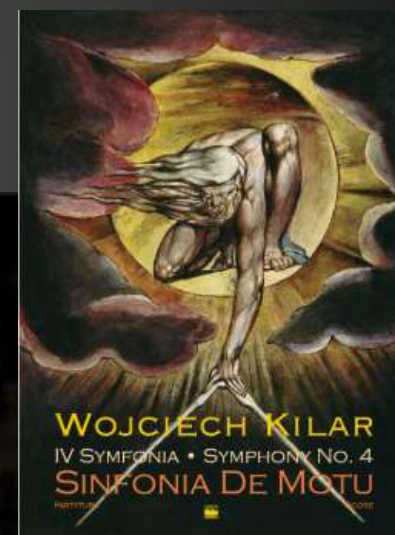


- He made his English-language debut in 1992 with Francis Ford Coppola adaptation of *Dracula*. His other English language film compositions include among others *Death and the Maiden* (1994), *The Pianist* (2002) by Roman Polanski and *The Portrait of a Lady* by Jane Campion (1996). His 1984 composition *Angelus* was used in the motion picture *City of Angels*; *Orawa*, from 1988, found its use in 2003 in the Santa Clara Vanguard's production, "Pathways".



His major works from that period are:

- *Lament* (2003) for unaccompanied mixed choir,
- *Symphony No.4 Sinfonia de Motu* from 2005 written for large orchestra, choir and soloists,
- *Magnificat Mass* from 2006,
- *Symphony No.5 Advent Symphony* from 2007 and another large mass, *Te Deum* premiered in November 2008.



Wojciech Kilar said once that he believed he had "discovered the philosopher's stone, and that "there was nothing more beautiful than the solitary sound or concord that lasted eternally, that this was the deepest wisdom, nothing like our tricks with sonata allegros, fugues, and harmonics."



Kilar's works have been performed by several major international orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic.

Wojciech Kilar received numerous awards including the Award from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Producers in Los Angeles.



Interesting facts about Wojciech Kilar:

- The first musical fascination of the future composer was the piece *On the Persian Market* by Albert Ketelbey, performed on the piano by a neighbor from his tenement house in Lemberg.
- The most popular polonaise performed by students at Polish high school pre-graduation balls is the *Polonaise* by Wojciech Kilar from the film *Pan Tadeusz* directed 2000 by Andrzej Wajda and based of the Polish national epic poem; it deposed the previously performed polonaise *Farewell to the Fatherland* by Michał Kleofas Ogiński.



- The *Ballad of the Little Knight* composed by Wojciech Kilar for the TV series *Adventures of Sir Michael* and based of the most popular Polish historical novel *Pan Wołodyjowski* by Henryk Sienkiewicz became the anthem of Polish volleyball fans.



The composer's passion was fast driving. His favorite car brand was Mercedes Benz. On the license plate of one of his cars he placed the name of his beloved wife (S1 BASIA).



„I am most grateful to our Lord that he has made me capable of love ...”

- Wojciech Kilar -

THE END

Thank you