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Mazurka: Dance of a Polish Soul

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the characteristics of a mazurka dance, and its complexity. The dance has been in existence since the 15th century and has been transcribed and stylized by a number of composers, most notably by Chopin and Szymanowski. Although it is impossible to separate the ancient version from the modern stylized form, it is essential for musicians to know the dance's origins and characteristics. This paper explores older forms of Polish folk music, and explains traditional performance practice in relationship to its stylized, modern form as it appears in the music of Chopin, Szymanowski and Górecki.

This paper is submitted for publication in the 5th Singapore International Piano Pedagogy Symposium 2011 (June 20-24) Proceedings.

Mazurka: Dance of a Polish Soul

The interpretation of mazurkas presents significant challenges to a performer not familiar with Polish folk music. The dance itself is no longer present in the everyday life of Poles, and the existing versions of the folk mazurka are not free from foreign influences and modifications imposed by composers, performers and transcribers. It is almost impossible to separate the folk mazurka of the past from today's stylized and modified version. I would like to emphasize that Chopin's *Mazurkas* do not portray the folk dance, *Mazur*, in its entirety, but rather are stylized forms of several of the Lowland dances: *Mazur*, *Kujawiak* and *Oberek*. Szymanowski's *Mazurkas*, on the other hand, represent a mixture of influences from Chopin's model as well as from the folk music of the Highlanders of the Podhale region. Gorecki, on the other hand, combines the achievements of the two composers in a new twentieth century style, and adds minimalistic techniques to the list of modifications.

I will first explain geographical, linguistic and cultural issues relevant to understanding the traditional forms of Polish folk music, before beginning my discussion of the innovations by Chopin, Szymanowski and Gorecki.

The Polish State was created in the second half of the tenth century by

“tribes, which shared a fundamentally common culture and language and were considerably more closely related to one another than were the Germanic tribes.”¹

Nonetheless, geographical differences were evident in many aspects of the Polish population. As Czekanowska notices:

“ The people from the open country of lowlands communicated and behaved differently from the forest-, marsh-, or mountain-dwellers.”²

¹ E. Lippman, in Anna Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 3.

² Anna Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music*, 8.

“ Moreover, people from isolated enclaves and scattered settlements displayed a mentality and sensitivity different from that of the inhabitants of crowded villages. The people (..) from the mountains and the forest were long accustomed to greater space, in all aspects of their lives, and they seem to have felt a greater need for freedom.”³

The geographical, social-ethno-historical aspect of the music should be taken into careful consideration. Remarkably, Polish culture is very homogenous despite its extraordinarily diverse background.

The folk music of Poland on the other hand, is heterogeneous and represents one of the most fascinating phenomena in European culture.

“It should be pointed out” Czekanowska writes, “that the most characteristic features of Polish folk music seem to be rooted in the patterns of accentuation and phrasing of the spoken Polish language, and in the basic patterns of movement and communication. Recently this pattern has clearly been articulated by paroxytonic stress, accompanied by the musical phenomenon of syncopation. The musical pattern indicated is additionally reshaped by a tendency to shift the accents within a phrase by *tempo rubato*.”⁴

In addition:

“Polish Folk music structure has a definite downbeat and a falling sequence of rhythmic phrase which distinguished it from western and central European structures (...) Unlike most European languages, the Polish language does not stress the differences between accented and non-accented syllables, and it is governed by strong syllabism. A correspondence between the sequence of syllables and their time units is strictly preserved. In the final result, the system has more quantitative than qualitative

³ Ibid..

⁴ Ibid.,109.

character; and the rhythmic motifs are structurally fixed in the frame of the bars, starting on the strong beats and finishing on the weak. Most characteristic, however, is the tendency to divide the narration into equal time units while groups of language accents preserve a similar quantity.”⁵

Paralleling the economical developments, Polish folk music can be divided into two categories: the lowland and the highland folk music, each being unique and distinct from the other. The major characteristic that distinguishes the music of these two regions, is metric structure. It is significant that the majority of folk music from the lowland region is in triple meter, while the music of the Highlanders is almost exclusively in duple meter.

A. Lowland Region

The Lowland region is represented by Great Poland (Wielkopolska), Silesia (Slask), Pomerania (Pomorze), and Mazowsze. While it is far beyond the scope of this presentation to address all of the varied characteristics, it is necessary to discuss the major dance forms of the region, which were stylized by Chopin and later had a great influence on Szymanowski’s *Mazurkas* and Gorecki’s compositions.

Kujawiak, *Mazur*, and *Oberek* are the three major folk dances of Polish lowland music, and which are present in their stylized form in Chopin’s *Mazurkas*. The central characteristics of these dances are their rhythms, called ‘Mazurkowe’ rhythms and the triple meter (3/4 or 3/8 time).

Ex. 1. *Mazurka* rhythms. Kwasnicowa p. 11, Folk *Mazurka*.



⁵ Ibid., 193.



Known as a “turning couple dance,” the *Mazur*, or *Mazurek*, is the oldest and the most popular dance of the Lowland region. It has been in existence since the 15th century when it was referred to as the:

“folk songs and Christmas carols of Mazowsze. Some of these melodies were written down in organ and lute tablatures as early as the 16th century.”⁶

The dance took its name from its region of origin, *Mazowsze*. Mistakably, the name “Mazur” was adopted outside of Poland in its incorrect version *Mazurka* (meaning “a female from the Mazowsze region,” not “a dance.”⁷) In the 17th century, this dance became very popular and was adopted at the courts. It should not be forgotten that in the 18th century Wybicki composed a marching song for the Polish Region fighting under Napoleon Bonaparte, which was based on folk *Mazurek*. It became Poland’s National Anthem in 1926. Not surprisingly, *Mazurek* is considered to be a national dance.

Example 2. Early *Mazurka* Kolberg *Mazowsze II*, *Nuta No. 433 P. 73*.



Mazuris usually danced by a minimum of four, and up to a dozen and more couples. The dancers maintain an erect posture and their movements are reminiscent of those of a rider

⁶ Ada Dziewanowska, *Polish Folk Dances and Songs: A Step-by- Step Guide* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997), 514.

⁷ Marian and and Jadwiga Sobiescy. *Polska muzyka ludowa.*(Polish Folk Music.)(Krakow: PWM, 1973), 389.

on horseback. They stamp their feet in an imitation of the sound of horse hoofs. One of the figures has a man genuflect on one knee and holds the female partner's hand as she whirls around him. Chopin was the first composer who transported the folk *Mazur* from little villages to artistic salons and public concerts. His *Mazurkas* are a stylization of Lowland folk music rather than an exact adaptation. Sobiewscy found the following folk genre in Chopin's *Mazurka* Op. 24 no. 1.

Example 3A and B. Sobiewscy (Example 250 and 251)

A a) Chopin *Mazurka* op. 24 no. 1.

b) Kolberg *Od Czarska Piesni ludu polskiego* Vol.1 (*Folk Songs of Polish People*)
1857 No. 313.

a) Chopin *Mazurka* op. 24 no. 1.

b) Kolberg *Od Kruszwicy (Polonowice) Piesni ludu polskiego* Vol. 4 (*Folk Songs of Polish People*) *Kujawy II*. 1867 No 451.

While outlining the mazurka's characteristics, it is also worth mentioning that the executions of the mazurka's dance steps exclude a fast tempo. In addition, the variable accents, which usually fall on the last part of the measure, but also may fall anywhere,

embody the most crucial feature of the dance. Furthermore, the phrases end with a characteristic accented note on a weak beat:

Example 4. Sobiescy p. 393.



Ada Dziewanowska gives detailed descriptions of the dance steps in the *Polish Folk Dances and Songs: A Step-by- Step Guide*.

The *Kujawiak* is slower and more lyrical than the *Mazur*; it is a turning couple dance. The *Kujawiak* often written in a minor mode, differs from the *Mazur* or *Oberek* not only because of its lyrical, more romantic quality, but also by virtue of the *rubato* tempo and *ritartando* endings.

Example 5. Kaczynski.



Although the rhythmic structure of the *Kujawiak* varies, the following rhythmic pattern can be distinguished:

Example 6. Sobiescy p. 392



It is noteworthy that unlike the *Mazurek*, the *Kujawiak* dance does not require jumping and kicking legs from its performers, and has a rather simple rhythmic structure.

The *Oberek* is the most exuberant, vigorous, noisy and fiery of the lowland dances. It is usually written in 3/8 time, and consists of a 4 or 8 measure phrase structure. The term itself is derived from the verb, *obracac sie*, which means to turn or to spin, and there is a tendency to gradually accelerate the tempo of the dance.

Unlike the *Mazur* or *Kujawiak*, the *Oberek* is the only dance that does not appear in vocal music; it is clearly an instrumental dance. Additionally, it is considered to be the dance in which the authentic elements of peasant dance are most clearly preserved. The rhythmic structure of the *Oberka* dance is very often based on the following rhythmic patterns:

Example 7. Sobiescy p. 397.



It is also significant that the *Oberka* dance is often preceded by a four-measure introduction:

Example 8. *Oberek*, Sobiescy p. 398 (Example 231.)

It is important to note that the lowland dances were often performed in succession: kujawiak, mazur and oberek, starting in a slow tempo of kujawiak and finishing in a fast whirl, mazur.

B. Highland Region

The discussion of the Highland region will be primarily concentrated in the Podhale region and its characteristics. The Podhale region lies in the shadow of the highest elevation of the Sudeten-Carpathian Range on the southern border of Poland, and its name translates as “below mountain pastures.” The people of Podhale are called *Gorale*, and they are known for their purity, distinctiveness and independence. As Czekanowska notices:

“None of the Polish territories presents such a close ethnic entity as the mountain region of Podhale. In the Podhale region the folk culture still retains a fresh power and creativity, which defends itself successfully against any standardizing trends. This is a consequence of the function of the music in the life of the ethnic

group, and of the strong sense of ethnocentricity among the inhabitants. The distinctive character of Podhale can be explained by the isolation of the people living in the highest mountain areas, and by their loyalty to the traditional work of the shepherd.”⁸

Nowadays the isolation and unstained culture of Podhale is considered to be a myth, contrary to beliefs in Szymanowski’s time. However, some aspects of Podhale folk culture still remain alive today. For example, the majority of the Podhale population, *Gorale*, continue to hand-build wood houses in the old style with ornamentation consisting of interior woodcarvings. They still continue shepherding, and often wear their traditional folk attire. It is also significant that traditional folk music is still played at weddings and other special occasions, but not in its purest form as from the beginning of the twentieth-century. Surprisingly, *Gorale* still continue to speak in their old Podhale dialect called *Gwara*. It differs dramatically from literary Polish, and is often not understood by lowland Poles due to the fact that it inherited foreign influences (Wallachian, Rumanian, and Hungarian) that did not reach other regions of the country.

Additionally, in *Gwara*, the shifting of stress from the next to the last syllable (as it is in literary Polish), to the first syllable creates a ‘different rhythmic’ feeling and brings a special kind of dance-like quality to the language. This shifting of accent coupled with a special ‘softening’ in the means of pronunciation (in which the ‘sz’ and ‘cz’ sounds are diminished to just ‘s’ or ‘c’) create a new manner of speech, identified by outsiders as *Gwara*.

The music of Podhale differs dramatically from the music of other regions. The most striking differences are the duple meter and the vocal performance style, which is a well-known phenomenon: male voices sing in a loud high-pitched tone, sometimes singing falsetto along with female voices. This highly individual technique, utilized mostly in multi-part

⁹ Czekanowska, 84.

singing, has a harsh, raw timbre, which sometimes makes a strange impression on outsiders, who often interpret Highlander singing as shouting. As Dziewanowska writes:

“It is the ambition of every male singer to reach the highest possible note.”⁹

One might speculate if this performance practice has its root in *Gwara* itself, where the ‘lower’ and smoother’ sounds of ‘sz’ and ‘cz’ are replaced with ‘s’ and ‘c’, making the dialect sound harsher and ‘higher’ in timber. It is also worth mentioning that usually only one singer begins each stanza, and then, after two or three measures, others join in a free harmonization manner after which they all end in unison.

As Karol Szymanowski wrote in his preface to a collection of Podhale music collected and transcribed by Mierczynski:

“Either one understands *Goral* dance music and has a feeling for it by way of the, so to say, mysterious instinct of race: then one loves it, yearns for its vigor, pulsating with a rapture latent in its rugged, angular form, seemingly fashioned from stone. Or else one does not understand it (...) and then one cannot bear it.”¹⁰

He also talks about the Podhale musical structure and the *Gorale’s* love for shape and structure:

“Undoubtedly *Goral* dance and music are a symptom of the customs of *Goral* life; melodic core being a rhythmically re-organized, but in essence ‘singable’ song. It is striking however, that both their dance and music transcend those customs thanks to their formal values. (...) Each *Krzesany* or *Zbojnicki* is vigorously shaped and formulated within a vivid framework embracing not only melody and rhythm, but also a full, characteristic harmony.(...) Only when one comprehends the *Gorale’s* passion for investing artistic shapes on everything which surrounds him, only when one

⁹ Dziewanowska , 270.

¹⁰ Karol Szymanowski, *Writings*, Vol. 1, 251-52.

penetrates these (...) forms, will one perceive in this music the true face of the unyielding, hard, specifically *Goral* ‘lyricism.’(...) ¹¹

The music of the Highlanders may be categorized into several types of melodies and a couple of dances:

Sabala Melodies.

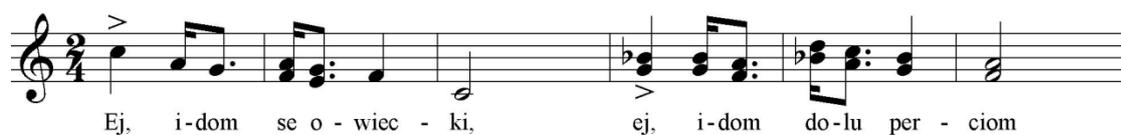
The *Sabala Melody* is one of the most famous melodies, and one that inspired many artists: Szymanowski in *Harnasie* and *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 1.

Example 9. Mierczynski ¹² *Sabala Melody No. 9*; m. 1-5.



The *Wierchowe* (Mountain Melodies), often referred to as *ciagnione*-drawn out, are songs for many voice parts; sung in falsetto by male voices, and in a natural chest voice by women, without instrumental accompaniment. They are also known as *Przyspiewki*, one-stanza couplets that usually depict the beauty of nature and describe the life of the shepherds. It is always sung in a slow and drawn-out manner.

Example 10. Kotonski ¹³ *Wierchowa* “Ej idom se owiecki”; p. 22.



¹¹ Ibid., 252.

¹² Stanislaw Mierczynski, comp., and Karol Szymanowski, ed., *Muzyka Podhala* (Music of Podhale,) (Krakow: PWM, 1949).

ej, ju-ha - sow nie wi - dno, ej, i-no zwon-ki zbyr - com,
 ej, ju-ha - sow nie wi - dno, ej, i-no dzwon-ki zbyr - com

Ozwodne and *Krzesane* are well known mountaineers' melodies used as short couplets of folk dances. The term *Ozwodne* comes from 'ozwodzic,' meaning to spread the melody out broadly, and is considered to be one of the most difficult dance steps, while the term *Krzesane* stands for "stricken melodies".

Example 11. Kotonski¹⁴ *Ozwodny No. 5*.

A. Przypiewka.

B. Dance (m.1-8.)

¹³Włodzimierz Kotonski, *Goralski i zbojnicki: tance gorali podhalanskich* (Goralski and Zbojnicki: The Dances of Podhale Highlander) (Krakow: PWM, 1956).

¹⁴Włodzimierz Kotonski, *Goralski i zbojnicki: tance gorali podhalanskich* (Goralski and Zbojnicki: The Dances of Podhale Highlander) (Krakow: PWM, 1956).

As Jan Gustowy explains:

“Krzesane-tunes for dancing are characterized by rapidity and the execution of difficult, quick dance steps on a small surface area, almost in place (derived from shepherds’ dances, which were originally danced in a very limited surface on the mountain.)”¹⁵

Example 12. Kotonski. *Krzesany Po Cztery No. 7. A. Przyspiewka*

¹⁵ Jan Gutt-Mostowy, *A Companion Guide to the Polish Highlands*, Maria Gieysztor De Gorgey, trns. (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1998), 91-92.

B. Dance. (m. 1-8)

It is significant that Szymanowski considered *Ozwodne* along with the *Sabala Melody* to be the most original and direct expression of *Goral* music.¹⁶

Wierchowe melodies are sung in parts and are performed for listeners, whereas the *Krzesane*, *Ozwoode* and *Zbojnickie* melodies accompany the dances and are associated with the very specific steps of *Goralski* dance. *Wierchowe* and *Ozwodne* (Example 11.) are often based on a 5-measure phrase structure.

Example 13. *Kotonski Wierchowe*, p. 23.

¹⁶ Jerzy Mieczysław Rytard, *Wspomnienia o Karolu Szymanowskim (Recollections about Karol Szymanowski)* (Krakow: PWM, 1947), 9.

The majority of Podhale melodies are sung in parts, except for *Przyspiewki* (one stanza couplet) to *Goralski* dance. The performance practice of Podhale singers is to add thirds below and/or above the main melody, or both. Sometimes, an emerging unison can be observed. Regardless of the number of voices, each verse is initiated by only one, solo voice, which is then joined and accompanied by others singing in parts after a couple measures.

Example 14. Kotonski *Ej, Janicku Serdenko*.

Przyspiewka

Ej, Ja-ni-cku, Ser-de-cko, - ka - zes - po-dzial pio - rec - ko cok ci da - la.

Kiek se je-chal do woj - ny u - pa - dlo mi do wo - dy, du - so mo - ja.

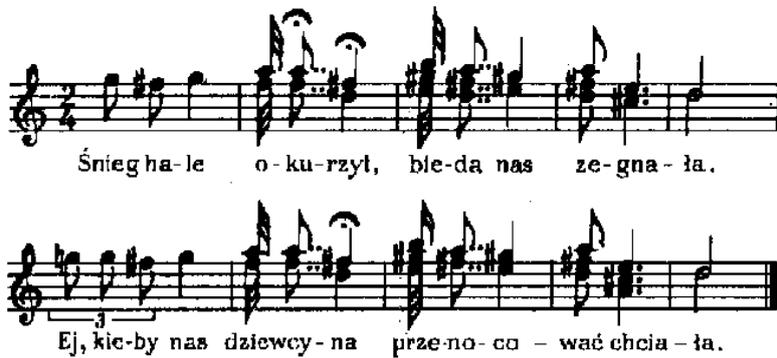
Interestingly enough, the crossing of voices is a well-known and frequently used technique in Podhale due to the high register of the melodies. The technique of constantly interchanging and mixing the parts became a performance practice, which in some cases contributed to a lack of continuity in the melodic line, and in others shifted the emphasis to the chordal harmony. As Kotonski writes:

“Every Podhale song is sung in a special rhythmic manner. It is a kind of tempo *rubato*, which is spread out across the entire 5-measure phrase. Usually, the beginning of the phrase is accelerated, the middle part is slow, and starting in the middle of the 3rd measure an *accelerando* can be observed. Additionally, within each measure, rhythmic values are altered as well. The strong, accented beats are usually shortened, while the weak beats are prolonged.”¹⁷

Example 15. Kotonski *Snieg Hale Odkurzyl*.

¹⁷ Kotonski, 27.

Śnieg hałe okurzył



Śnieg ha- le o- ku- rzył, bła- da nas ze- gna- ła.
Ej, kie- by nas dziewcy- na prze- no- ca - wać chcia- ła.

There are only two surviving folk dances of Podhale: *Zbojnicki* ('Robbers' Dance') and *Goralski* (the word is an adjective derived from *Gorale*- mountaineers.)

Goralski is a cycle of several dances in 2/4 time for a solo couple, in which partners touch only during the final spin where they turn together. The vocal *Nuty* (tunes) sung in a 'free' rhythm and *rubato* technique are incorporated into the cycle of *Goralski* dances.

The usual order of the *Goralski* dance runs as follows: *Nuty Ozwodne* (Example 11), *Drobne* (Example 16) and *Krzesane* (Example 12). The set is concluded with the *Zielone* (Example 15) dance in which the dancing couple spins around rapidly. It is worth noting that this dance is performed by only one couple at a time. It is considered by outsiders to be a very difficult dance to learn due to its quite unusual and untraditional movements. It calls for a "quick, almost staccato movements of legs"¹⁸ which need to be executed very rapidly.

Example 16. Mierczynski *Zielolone* 90.

¹⁸ Dziewanowska, 273.

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in treble clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The music features a melodic line in the top staff with various ornaments and a steady accompaniment in the lower staves.

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves, continuing the piece from the first system. It includes repeat signs at the beginning and end of the system. The notation and instrumentation are consistent with the first system.

Example 17. Mierczynski. *Drobny Zakopianski* 64.

Zbojnicki (“Robbers’ Dance”) is a men’s dance used as an exhibition dance rather than a dance used for family celebrations or social parties. The dancers are required to wear traditional outfits and hold *ciupagas* in their right hands (the *Ciupaga* is a wooden ax with a handle, which served to aid in mountain climbing, or as a weapon against wild animals). The most popular tune of the *Zbojnicki*, which is well known in Poland, is “Tancowali Zbojnicy.”

Example 18. Mierczynski *Zbojnicki*.



Tańcowali zbójnicy

Musical score for the song "Tańcowali zbójnicy". The score is written in 2/4 time and includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Tań-co - wa - li zbój - ni - cy w mu - ro - wa - nej piw - ni - cy, ka - za - li se pi - knie grać i na nóż - ki po - zi - rać."

Another famous *Nuta Zbojnicka* (Zbojnicki Tune).

Example 19.

Musical score for Example 19, a Zbojnicki Tune. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of two staves of music.

The Highlanders' dances are as widely known for their acrobatic character as for their complex and raucous rhythmic patterns. Traditionally, performances of these dances are

organized into established sequences, where the diverse tempos, volumes and characters are introduced in cycles. In *Zbojnicki* No. 62 from Mierczynski's collection, one finds a polyrhythmic structure, in addition to a fast tempo ($\text{♩} = 164$.)

Example 20. Mierczynski *Zbojnicki* No. 62.

The musical score for Mierczynski's *Zbojnicki* No. 62 is presented in two systems. Each system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (top) and a bass clef staff (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8 for the top staff and 2/4 for the bottom staff. The top staff features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including accents and slurs. The bottom staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The first system spans six measures, and the second system spans six measures, ending with a double bar line.

“ The cycle usually begins with the moderate tempo of *Ozwodna* melodies performed relatively freely and richly embellished by the first violinist; the final sections of these pieces are augmented in a typical fashion, thereby transforming a four-bar phrase into one of five bars. The following sections of the cycle are individually identified (*Krzesane*, *Zielone*) and present different tempi and other performance attitude. In all parts of the cycle, however, the basic idea remains the

same. The accompaniment by the second violin-often performed by two violinist- and the double base maintain the basic pulse.”¹⁹

The music of Podhale is not limited, however, to collective performances. Various forms of solo instrumental songs (shepherds’ pipes and trumpets) and vocal calls are widely used; one of which, *Wyskanie*, was undoubtedly used by shepherds as a communication signal.

Example 21. Bielawski *Wyskanie*.



The Podhale folk group, called *Kapela*, consists of 4 instrumentalists: 3 violins (1 primo and 2 secundo), and a cello with only 3 strings called a *basy*. The primo violinist plays the main melody, which is highly ornamented with various figurations, and is highly improvised. The parts of the two secundo violinists consist of a constant ‘filling in’ of the harmonies, using the strings G and D, or D and A. Sometimes, rhythmic variations or changes in articulation are used.

Example 22. Kotonski p. 30.



The *Basy*, on the other hand, provides the rhythmic and harmonic support for the band.

Staccato articulation is frequently used in *Ozwodne* and *Krzesane*.

Example 23. Kotonski p. 31.

¹⁹ Czekanowska, 87.



It is also necessary to include the region of Krakow City as part of the Highland region while discussing Polish folk music. Even though Krakow is not located in the mountain, its southern position and close relationship to the Podhale region brings it into the category of Highland folk music. Also, characteristics of the majority of music from the Krakow area, especially the presence of duple meter, signify its close relationship to the Highland region.

The most popular dance of the old Polish capital takes its name from this city (Krakow): *Krakowiak*. It is characterized by syncopation, duple meter, and the accentuation of the weak beats.

Sobiescy²⁰ distinguished four types of this dance with the following rhythmic structure:

Example 24. Sobiescy, p. 221.

No.1



No. 2



No. 3



²⁰Sobiescy, *Polish Folk Music*, 384-385.

No. 4



One of the most famous *Krakowiaks* was used by Chopin under the same title:

Example 25. Sobiescy p. 418 (Example 248.)

- a) Chopin *Krakowiak op. 14.*
- b) Waclaw z Oleska *Muzyka do piesni polskich i ruskich (Sheet Music for Polish and Russian Songs) 1833 No. 3.*
- c) Kolberg *Piesni Ludu Polskiego (Polish Folk Songs) 1842 No. 24.*

Szymanowski adopts Chopin's stylized form of mazurkas, but adds a new and undiscovered style of Highland music unknown to Chopin. This constant blending of rhythmic patterns results in a rhythmic structure, which consists of both 'old' and 'new' elements. He uses both the folk music of both Lowland (in triple meter) and Highland (exclusively in duple meter) of Poland.

The diversity and the complex nature of the rhythmic patterns used by Szymanowski is enriched by the notion of shifting accents, through the use of slurs and ties that is new for the mazurka genre. The importance of slurs and their influence on metric and rhythmic patterns is truly remarkable.

Example 26. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 3; m. 9-12.



Ornamentation and the use of variation techniques are further examples of the influence of Podhale music on the mazurkas. It is a well-known phenomenon that the *Goral* music is based on improvisation upon a given tune. For example:

Example 27. Kotonski. *Ozwodny 12. Ej, Janicku Serdenko.*

Przyspiewka



Ej, Ja-ni-cku, Ser-de-cko, - ka - zes - po-dzial pio - rec - ko cok ci da - la.



Kiek se je-chal do woj - ny u - pa - dlo mi do wo - dy, du - so mo - ja.



Alternatively, the improvisation in Szymanowski's *Mazurkas* is transformed into a compositional technique, namely variation technique. The most interesting example is found in the first *Mazurka*.

Example 28. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 1.



The symmetry of phrase structure typical of Chopin's models is rarely present in Szymanowski's compositions. Once again, Szymanowski adopts the structure of Podhale music, frequently basing his compositions on a 5-, 6- or 7-measure phrase model.

The four-measure phrase structure, which dominates Chopin's *Mazurkas*, is present in Szymanowski's collection only in the A section of *Mazurka* nos. 1, 2, 13 and 15, and in the B section in *Mazurka* nos. 1 and 16, and with some modification in no. 17. It is remarkable that both Szymanowski and Chopin use the two-measure parallel structure along with a four-measure structure. That is especially prominent in the first *Mazurka* from op. 62, which is exclusively built upon such a design.

Parallel Structure.

Example 29. Chopin *Mazurka* op. 7 no. 2; m. 1-2.

It is remarkable that most Polish folk songs are sung either by a solo voice²¹ or in unison²², and that the multi-part singing is present only in the Highland region of Poland.

It is a well-known fact that multi-part singing previously existed in two practices in the past. The first was in a middle-aged form called *organum*, where the second voice was added at a fixed interval of a fifth from the melody, or in a form called *cantus gemeluuus*, where the second voice could be added above or below the melody in the fixed interval of a third, constantly crossing its register. The second practice was much more common in *Goral* music, and has survived up to the present day with the rare addition of the use of fourths. Not surprisingly, its characteristic voice crossing in addition to unison singing can be easily found in Szymanowski's compositions. (Voice crossing: example 85; Unison, example 88.)

Example 30. Choral singing and unison singing in Podhale Music. Kotonski.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The first staff is marked 'solo' and '♩ = 69'. The second staff is marked 'tutti' and '♩ = 69'. The third staff is marked '♩ = 76'. The lyrics are: 'Sio - daj ku - nia, sio - daj, ej, po - je - dzie - my pod gaj, pod gaj, pod zie - lo - ny, ej, tam se rąc - ki da - my,'. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 31. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 17; m. 1-2.

²¹ Ludwlg Bielawski, . *Tradycje ludowe w kulturze muzycznej*. (Folk Traditions in Music.) (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Pan, 1999), 203.

²² Bobrowska, Jadwiga. *Polska folklorystyka muzyczna* (Polish Musical Folklorism.)(Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna im. K. Szymanowskiego, 2000), 288.



Szymanowski's *Mazurkas* demonstrate, if anything, the potential hidden within the simplicity of folk dances, and their powerful authenticity. Undoubtedly, Szymanowski's new way of working with the dances was driven and inspired by the *Goral* music that was all around him. The music surrounded him and was constantly present in both instrumental and vocal settings. One of his friends, Jerzy Mieczyslaw Rytard, describes one of the many evenings Szymanowski spent with one of the most famous Podhale musicians, Bartek Obrochta:

“Karol walked around the room, listening, looking at the musician's fingers, trying to catch every interesting and original moment, digesting and analyzing every element of the music and the performance. He and Stas Mierczynski were having fun.”²³

Not surprisingly, this fascination with instrumental music and its featuring of a clear three or four-part texture are frequently evident in Szymanowski's *Mazurkas*. For example: Example 32. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 11; m. 13-16.



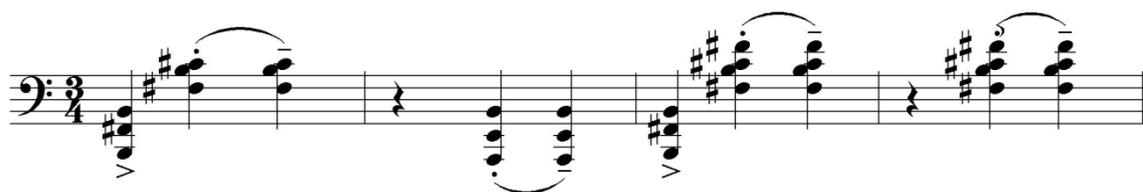
²³ Jerzy Mieczyslaw Rytard *Wspomnienia o Karolu Szymanowskim (Remembering Karol Szymanowski)* (Krakow: PWM, 1947), 13.

In Szymanowski's *Mazurka*, one perceives almost instantly the variety and richness of the sound-making process expressed by the great number of articulation signs. It is remarkable that, unlike in Chopin's *Mazurkas*, the articulation becomes one of the most distinctive and prominent elements of Szymanowski's compositions. The majority of the sounds are designed to be produced in a very specific and fixed way, for example:

Example 33. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no. 5; m. 1-4.



Example 34. Szymanowski *Mazurka* op. 50 no.16; m. 1-4.



Szymanowski has enriched piano articulation by incorporating the various techniques of string instruments. It leads one to wonder if the *Mazurkas* are really meant to be played on a piano at all, or rather by a Podhale string band. It should be pointed out, however, that traditional Podhale music does not involve such a great variety of articulation, but instead is simply based on three or four static layers, each contributing an independently articulated line. Yet the technique and articulation of string instruments differ greatly from those of the piano. In addition, Szymanowski combines the four parts of the string instruments into one, trying not to lose the intensity and variety of the sounds and expression.

Example 35. Kotonski *Zbojnicki* No. 13.



For Szymanowski, folk music became his vehicle of familiarity, the medium which led him to modernity and to the rebirth of Polish music worldwide. Inspired by the folk references in the Russian period works of Igor Stravinsky, Szymanowski incorporated into his works the music of his people, and demonstrated the importance of one's own cultural heritage in doing so. His friend and writer, Jerzy Rytard, summarizes his and Szymanowski's thoughts about folk music:

“The folk cultures, along with other culture, seem to be the ash in which the sparks of past lives are still present, but they also represent an enormous energy that has not yet reached the level of consciousness in society.”²⁴

Szymanowski adopts Chopin's stylized form of mazurkas, but infuses them with a new and undiscovered style of Highland music unknown to Chopin. Henryk Mikołaj Gorecki uses Szymanowski's model with a new minimalistic “twist.” The combination of the two kinds of Polish music, one in duple and one in triple meter, along with their variety in tempos and characters, adequately portrays not only the richness and of Polish folk music but also the complex character and culture of the Polish people. It is absolutely crucial for a performer to be familiar with all the aspects of the Polish folk music when interpreting mazurkas.

²⁴ Jerzy Mieczysław Rytard, *Wspomnienia o Karolu Szymanowskim (Recollections about Karol Szymanowski)* (Krakow: PWM, 1947), 15.

Szymanowski calls his compositions *Mazurkas*, but in reality they are simply a collection of polish folk music from both lowland and highland regions, pieces that can be viewed, in the end, as a musical portrait of Polish souls.

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