

ROMUALD TWARDOWSKI

Romuald Twardowski was born on the 17th of June, 1930, in Vilnius, where he spent his childhood and youth. In the times of the German occupation he was learning to play the violin, and after the war he also learnt to play the piano and the organ. In February 1945 he became the church organist at the Vilnius churches, inter alia at the St. John's University Church, famous for the organ recitals given one hundred years before by the renowned Polish opera composer, Stanisław Moniuszko. In the years 1952 – 57 he studied piano and composition in the class of Julius Juzeliūnas in the State Conservatory of Lithuania in Vilnius. After the studies in 1957 he shortly worked in the music school in a Lithuanian town Poniewież, and then he moved, together with his mother, to Warsaw. There he started to continue studies in the Warsaw State Higher Musical School under professor Bolesław Woytowicz, and after winning the contest of the Union of Polish Composers he left for Paris in 1963 to study further under Nadia Boulanger. He was in Paris twice: he went there again in 1966 to study Gregorian chorale and polyphony of Middle Ages. While studying in France he also travelled to Italy and Africa. After coming back from France he settled first in the Silesian town Bytom where he staged his first opera "Cyrano de Bergerac" (1962) composed to his own libretto based on E. Rostand's comedy. He soon left for Warsaw where he has been living up to now, and where he was cooperating in the years 1972 – 2010 with the F. Chopin Music Academy (actually called University of Frederick Chopin).

While living in Vilnius he had good contacts with sacral culture – numerous churches, both catholic and orthodox, had a considerable influence on the character of the composer's work. It resulted in quite a fruitful trend of religious music represented by such compositions as: *Psalmus 149 per coro misto* (1962); *Small Orthodox Liturgy* for vocal ensemble and three groups of instruments (1968); *Laudate Dominum*, a dialogue for two mixed choirs (1976); *Sequentiae De Ss. Patronis Polonis* for baritone, choir and instrumental ensemble (1977); *Chwalite Imia Gospodina* for mixed choir (1990); *Tu Es Petrus* for baritone, mixed choir and symphonic orchestra (1991); *Hosanna I* for mixed choir (1992); *Virgin Mary Songs* for soprano and small symphonic orchestra (1993); *Canticum Canticorum* for soprano, flute, clarinet, and violin (1994); *Regina Coeli* for mixed choir (1996), and *Hosanna II* for mixed choir (1997). Among those works a special attention should be paid to *Small Orthodox Liturgy* referring to orthodox music, as well as to "Kiev" *Liturgy of St. John Chrisostom*. An important inspiration in the field of orthodox music was a vivid and unbroken composer's contact with this music at the International Festival of Orthodox Music in Hajnówka (moved recently to Białystok) in which Romuald Twardowski has been a Chairman of Jury since 1982.

The years 60-ies and 70-ies were very creative as far as the stage works are concerned which constitute a very important field of composer's creativeness. And so, after "Cyrano" there were composed: two operas *Tragedyja czyli rzecz o Janie i Herodzie* (*A Tragedy of John and Herod*) (1966) and *Lord Jim* (1971) – both premiered in the Grand Theatre in Łódź; two ballets: *A Naked Prince* (1960) – premiered in the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, and *Monuments of Wizard* (1963); and his most outstanding opera *Mary Stuart* successfully performed in Łódź in 1981. The last work is *Historyja o św. Katarzynie* (*St. Catherine's Story*) (1981), a chamber opera which had its well received premiere in the Grand Theatre in Warsaw in 1985. At the same time Romuald Twardowski's works started to be noticed more widely and appreciated: he gained numerous awards both in Poland and abroad, among others: twice Grand Prix in Monaco, First Prize at the Festival "Prague Spring", the first place at UNESCO Composers' Platform in Paris, the second prize for his choir works in Skopje; two prizes in Tours, and the prestigious prize of the West-German Federation of Choirs (AGEC) awarded for a *Small Concert* for mixed choir.

Besides Romuald Twardowski is the author of the orchestra, chamber, soloist, vocal-instrumental, and choir compositions. Quite an important factor of his work is so called “pedagogical” music, constantly performed by students, choir and orchestra ensembles of the Polish music schools. The contemporary composers were given an important inspiration by the All-Polish Festival of Music Composition for children and young people called DO-RE-MI in Łódź. During those festivals almost all Romuald Twardowski’s compositions created for music schools were performed. In 2012 in appreciation of all his creative works in the field of music for children and young people the State Music Primary School in Puławy was named after Romuald Twardowski.

On the occasion of his 70th birthday in 2000 his memoirs entitled “*Było nie minęło*” (*It Happened but It still Exists*) were published by “Pani Twardowska” Publishing House (www.twardowska.com.pl). In this autobiography Romuald Twardowski sums up his creative experience and also presents a colorful description of events and people from pre-war and contemporary Vilnius.

However modern, the work of Romuald Twardowski is at the same time communicative, full of internal drama and individual trait. It has been an original phenomenon in the post-war Polish music. His works do not surrender too much to fashion or vanguard but still he creates music in the spirit of restrained modernity, palatable for the listener’s ears – due to the composer’s principle idea.

All young musicians and theoreticians of music face a grand task to analyze more thoroughly both the composer’s life and his rich and outstanding music which has won fame all over the world in recent times. It is enough to mention *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano* which is very popular in America. In 2006 Romuald Twardowski was awarded a prize as an outstanding Polish composer from the American Foundation of I. J. Paderewski. In 2010 on the occasion of his 80th birthday he was awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage a Gold Medal of the Order of Gloria Artis. In October 2011 the composer took part in the promotion of a compact disc with his compositions for violin, organ and vocal issued by the Lithuanian Centre of Culture and the Polish Culture Institute in Vilnius.

It seems impossible to enumerate the Artist’s hundreds of prizes, awards, diplomas and medals. But still it is necessary to mention numerous radio, television and compact disc recordings both in Poland and abroad where his choir works are being recorded even in Chinese and Japanese languages. In recent years many of the latest works appeared on the *Acte Prealable* records.

The creative composer’s life has been going together with his fondness of travelling all over the world, thus he realized his dreams visiting Europe, Asia, Africa and Russia. While travelling abroad he has always remembered to popularize the Polish music.

Romuald Twardowski is a composer of a unique personality: he is able to combine erudition with an outstanding intelligence and with tender sensitiveness and perceptivity. He combines fondness of reading books with passion of a keen observer. His profound knowledge of history of art and general history is astonishing. Besides he is also a perfect story-teller able to keep listeners’ notice for many hours with his colorful stories and – or first of all – his music; a rarely met quality today. He loves children, animals and flowers.

At present, in 2017, the first documentary film about the composer, directed by Alicja Twardowska and Grzegorz Czerniak: “*Romuald Twardowski. Composer in the mirror of music*”. Time. 60 minutes.

The film documents the artistic life of the composer: the beginnings of learning in Vilnius,

characterizes the various genres of his music, evokes the opinions of prominent artists on the composer's music and character, and also shows fragments of his work and music.

Elaborated by Alicja Twardowska
Translated by Elżbieta Pastecka

Most important awards:

1. First Prize at the Young Composers' Union Competition for Antiphons for a group of instruments (1961);
2. 2nd place at the UNESCO International Composers' Tribune in Paris for Ode to Youth (1963);
3. First Prize at the International Composers' Competition in Prague for Sonnet Petrarki for tenor solo and two a cappella choirs (1966);
4. I prize at the International Composers' Competition Im. Rainier's Duke Monaco for ballet-pantomime Statues of the Wizard (1965);
5. 1st Prize at the International Composers' Prince Rainier in Monaco for musical drama Lord Jim (1973);
6. AGECE Award - Western European Federation of Choral Societies for Small Concerto for Mixed Choir (1993);
7. Annual Award of the Polish Composers' Union for Outstanding Achievement in Composition (1995);
8. Award at the International Choir Competition in Tours for Alleluja Choir (1999);
9. American Idol Foundation Award. Ignacy Jan Paderewski for outstanding artistic achievements (2007);
10. Prize for them. Jerzy Kurczewski in Poznań for his contribution to choral works (2015).

Elaborated and translated by Alicja Twardowska