

LUTOSŁAWSKI'S FIRST SYMPHONY IN RELATION TO NEOCLASSICISM:

Musicologists often point to Witold Lutosławski's First Symphony (1941-1947) as the consummation of his early period.¹ Many have also labeled the work and the period it embodies as "neoclassical."² While this term has proven useful as a catch-all in generalized discussions of Lutosławski's music, its use has also created much confusion and even lively debate as to its exact meaning and limitations. Such is the case with its application to the First Symphony. While a small number of writers have addressed the neoclassical label in relation to the symphony, their references are invariably in passing or serve other analytical agendas.³ To date, no author has examined the entirety of this important work in relation to any clearly defined norms of neoclassicism.

The development of neoclassicism under the influence of Stravinsky is thoroughly detailed by Scott Messing.⁴ In his book, he also outlines characteristics that are prevalent in neoclassical works, such as traditional sectional form, independence from programmatic influences (opera excluded), free interchange of major and minor thirds, and the addition of

¹This includes Stanisław Bedkowski, "Witold Lutosławski (1913-1994)," In *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*, edited by Larry Sitsky, 282-90 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 283; Charles Bodman Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1994), 30; Gertruida Maria Steyn, "The Evolution of Witold Lutosławski's Style From 1936 To 1983: A Study of Various Stylistic Facets Displayed In His Three Symphonies," Ph.D diss. (University of South Africa, 1988), v; and Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and His Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 129.

² Most notable are Jadwiga Paja (-Stach), "The Polyphonic Aspect of Lutosławski's Music," *Acta Musicologica* 62 (1990): 183; and Steyn, "The Evolution of Witold Lutosławski's Style," 21. The neoclassical label most likely originates in Stefan Jarocinski, "Polish Music After World War II," *Musical Quarterly* 51:1 (1965): 244-58.

³In passing: Arnold Whittall, "Between Polarity and Synthesis: The Modernist Paradigm in Lutosławski's Concertos for Cello and Piano." In *Lutosławski Studies*, edited by Zbigniew Skowron, 244-68 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 258; and Bayley, Amanda, "Past and Present," review of *Lutosławski Studies*, edited by Zbigniew Skowron, *The Musical Times* 144, no.1882 (2003): 71. Other analytical agendas: Paja (-Stach), "The Polyphonic Aspect of Lutosławski's Music," 183. Neoclassicism is also a major component in Jadwiga Paja-Stach, "The Stylistic Traits of Lutosławski's Works for Solo Instrument and Piano." In *Lutosławski Studies*, edited by Zbigniew Skowron, 269-86 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴ Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 106-17.

pitches to the diatonic collection. The inextricable bond between neoclassicism and Stravinsky is discussed by Joseph Straus, Eric Salzman and Mosco Carner.⁵

The most complete analysis of the First Symphony is by Gertruida Steyn.⁶ She examines the work's construction, cites contemporaneous and current criticism, and discusses neoclassicism as relevant to Lutosławski's early period. Both Charles Rae and Steven Stucky analyze sections of the First Symphony, focusing on Lutosławski's chord structures and use of canon.⁷ In their respective writings, Rae and Stucky argue against applying "neoclassicism" to the symphony, each saying that this work is too modern to warrant the label.⁸ Stefan Jarocinski and Arnold Whittall acknowledge the problems the term creates but do not offer any argument for or against its use.⁹ In a 1974 interview with Bálint Varga, Lutosławski himself speaks of the composers who influenced his early pieces, though without recourse to "neoclassicism."¹⁰ The major proponent of neoclassicism in relation to Lutosławski's music is Jadwiga Paja-Stach, who cites sections of the First Symphony as examples of neoclassical counterpoint.¹¹ In a separate publication she provides a more detailed description of neoclassicism in Lutosławski's works but fails to include the symphony.¹² Lutosławski's connection with neoclassicism in popular print is evidenced by John Rockwell's article for *The New York Times*.¹³

⁵ Joseph N Straus, *Remaking the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1-20; Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), 45-59; and Mosco Carner, "Music in the Mainland of Europe: 1918-1939," In *The New Oxford History of Music, vol. 10*, edited by Martin Cooper, 208-10 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) 217-22.

⁶ Steyn, "The Evolution of Witold Lutosławski's Style," 1-191.

⁷ Charles Bodman Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, 25-33; Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and His Music*, 23-33.

⁸ Rae, *The Music of Lutosławski*, 25; Stucky, *Lutosławski and His Music*, 33.

⁹ Stefan Jarocinski, "Polish Music After World War II," 248; Arnold Whittall, "Between Polarity and Synthesis," 258.

¹⁰ Bálint András Varga. *Lutosławski Profile: Witold Lutosławski in Conversation with Bálint András Varga* (London: Chester Music, 1976), 15-20.

¹¹ Jadwiga Paja, "The Polyphonic Aspect of Lutosławski's Music.

¹² Jadwiga Paja-Stach, "The Stylistic Traits of Lutosławski's Works," 269-74.

¹³ John Rockwell, "Appreciating a European Avant-Gardist," *New York Times*, March 18, 1979, D29.

This document explores the tenuous link between Lutosławski's First Symphony and neoclassicism. Using the traits set forth by Messing, I will provide a theoretical justification for labeling the First Symphony neoclassical. I will employ Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* to demonstrate the neoclassical paradigm. Through comparisons with Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and *The Firebird* I will also argue that as it applies to the First Symphony, neoclassicism has been broadened to simply mean, "bearing the influence of Stravinsky."

Chapter 1, "Introduction," sets forth the issue of neoclassicism in relation to the First Symphony, and includes the label's proponents and detractors. Chapter 2, "A History," is a history of Lutosławski and the First Symphony. Chapter 3, "Neoclassicism," presents Messing's neoclassical traits and includes examples from widely acknowledged neoclassical works. Chapter 4, "The First Symphony and Neoclassicism," analyzes the symphony and relates it to the traits discussed in chapter 3. In this chapter, aspects of the symphony will also be compared to sections of Stravinsky's Russian-period *Petrouchka* and *The Firebird*, as well as the neoclassical *Symphony in C*. Here, I will argue that while the term neoclassical is permissible, it must be applied with acknowledgment of its broader meaning. Chapter 5 will serve as the document's conclusion.

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