

**THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI  
ACADEMY OF MUSIC  
IN KRAKÓW**

**Linglong Li**

**Stylistic transformations in the saxophone works of Maciej Jabłoński in  
the context of the composer's complete oeuvre**

**Submitted as part of the proceedings  
for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the field of Arts,  
artistic discipline: Musical Arts**

**Supervisor: prof. PhD Andrzej Rzymkowski**

**Kraków 2025**

# THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN KRAKÓW

## ARTISTIC WORK

### Programme:

- 1) **Maciej Jabłoński** – *UI* for alto saxophone and electronics
- 2) **Maciej Jabłoński** – *Saxosphere* for alto saxophone and electronics
- 3) **Maciej Jabłoński** – *Soliloquium II* for alto saxophone and electronics

### Performer:

alto saxophone – Linglong Li

### Recordings:

Kamil Madoń, MA

### Mastering:

Kamil Madoń, MA

Recorded in the Concert Hall of the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków

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Selmer Concept; reeds: Selmer premium reeds 3,5.

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## Introduction

Maciej Jabłoński is a Polish composer and pedagogue, born in 1974. Between 1993 and 1998 he studied composition at the Academy of Music in Kraków under Prof. Marek Stachowski. Since 1998 he has been employed at his alma mater, serving as assistant professor (adiunkt) from 2004 and full professor since 2024. He currently leads his own composition class.

The output of Maciej Jabłoński comprises approximately 190 works in various genres. More than twenty of them are orchestral works, generally following traditional forms such as the symphony or instrumental concerto. According to the composer, these pieces are the most representative of his style. Elements of Jabłoński's style extend from his large-scale orchestral works into his chamber music, where he often experimented with his ideas. These traits generally form the aesthetic foundation of his chamber music, as is also evident in his works for saxophone. Notably, the saxophone is among Jabłoński's favored instruments, and the works featuring this instrument are regarded by the composer himself as important entries in his catalogue of compositions.

Although clear stylistic periods are difficult to define in Jabłoński's music, an aesthetic turning point is observable around 2002–2003. At that time, the composer moved away from traditional means and forms toward a modernized musical language. From 2004 onward, this language developed continuously, though the composer distanced himself from contemporary trends and avoided reusing solutions developed by others.

Until 2003, Jabłoński's music employed simple forms and a clear harmonic language based on the octatonic "semitone–whole tone" scale. Rhythmically, his early works exhibited little complexity. Feeling confident within modal and traditional harmonic structures, he undertook bold creative experiments, composing his first three symphonies while still a student. In retrospect, the composer evaluates these early works critically, particularly as they earned him a reputation as a traditionalist. Representative examples of his early style include *Concerto grosso No. 1* and *Symphony No. 4 "Sinfonia Ultima"*. In both works, motoric patterns and simple rhythms dominate, while their unsettling character stems from the consistent use of the octatonic mode.

After more than a year of compositional silence (2002/2003), Jabłoński entered a new creative phase. His first work after this breakthrough, *Barbapapa* for string orchestra,

already demonstrates entirely new techniques and approaches. The texture is far more refined and diverse, while motoric movement appears in a specific form – as *accelerando*. Diversity and non-schematic narrative, as well as more sophisticated orchestration, also characterise the *Symphony No. 5* (2004). From the point of view of formal shaping, the first movement is a collage of different ideas which, barely introduced, quickly vanish. In the second movement the narrative is clearer and develops fluidly. Numerous formal ideas introduced in the first movement of the symphony find their counterparts in the chamber works composed during the same period, including the saxophone pieces *Labirynt umysłu* and *Ikonki*.

Jabłoński's subsequent orchestral works share similar traits. Elements common with the *Symphony No. 5* can be found in all musical parameters except form; the composer never again employed such a strongly disjointed structure, fragmented into seemingly unrelated episodes separated by pauses. In terms of harmony, he continued to combine the "semitone – whole tone" scale with elements of free twelve-tone thinking, and the tonal system. A significant novelty in Jabłoński's musical language became the "bundle melodies" – quite characteristic of this composer beginning with *Concerto grosso No. 2* and the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra* (both 2006). A bundle melody consists of several melodic lines constructed from the same pitch material but differing slightly in rhythm. As a result of minute rhythmic displacement among the voices, a kind of heterophony emerges. This yields a unique sonic effect, as if the melody had its own shadow or trail following it.

The adoption of new compositional techniques did not, by any means, entail abandoning the solutions favored before this turning point. Jabłoński continues to employ motoric patterns, although after the *Symphony No. 5* they appear less frequently and often take on a more coloristic character. Extensive motoric passages occur in substantial fragments of the cello concerto *Déjà vu* (2007). Unlike in earlier works, the motoric writing in *Déjà vu* is far less schematic, subject to frequent changes, and accompanied by more sophisticated timbral devices. Composed around the same time, *Concerto grosso No. 3* "...patrz, nic unosi kosze gwiazd i tak jak ryby puszcza w błękit..." ("...look, nothing lifts baskets of stars and just like fish releases them into the blue...") for violin, oboe, and chamber orchestra is almost entirely devoid of motoric motion. It is noteworthy that *Concerto grosso No. 3* is an isolated example of Jabłoński's use of twelve-tone technique. The solo parts are based on a rather unusual row composed of several groups of tones forming tonal structures. The result is a variable harmony that shimmers with various

colors. It evokes a very similar strategy as in *Labirynt umysłu*, although twelve-tone technique is not employed in that work.

Arguably the “record-breaking” work of Jabłoński is *Fuori* – a concerto for two pianos, orchestra, and fixed media. It is his longest composition, with a duration exceeding forty-five minutes. Internally it is divided into three developmental phases. The first is built on contrasting combinations of fast, restless episodes with nearly static segments. In the fast passages, rapid scalar runs dominate, while in the slow ones – chords. This is highly significant, as the second piano is retuned thirty-three cents lower, which, when combined with the first piano, creates a unique timbre. In the central section, all movement ceases – here, the primary sound source is the fixed media layer, with the orchestra merely adding color to the aforementioned piano dialogue. The way the electroacoustic layer generates a specific atmosphere is almost identical to that in the saxophone work *UI*, composed two years later.

In 2015 Jabłoński completed the monumental *Symphony No. 6*, whose essence is the world of dreams. *Symphony No. 6 “Oneirophrenia”* consists of four movements. Elements of the symphonic tradition – present in the construction of the work and in the functions of its individual sections – are here combined with more recent compositional means, particularly textural ones. Similar techniques can be found in works composed during this decade. Although no symphonic works were created after 2015, the largest forces appear in *Concerti grossi No. 4* (2016) and *No. 5* (2018), as well as *Panta rhei. Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra* (2019), which employ a chamber orchestra. These works are united by a highly developed texture and restless narrative. Analogous solutions can be observed in *Saxosphere* (2019) and, to some extent, in *Soliloquium II* (2022).

Many of the techniques and solutions employed in the larger works were drawn from chamber compositions created in the same period. Indeed, Jabłoński’s chamber works often functioned as an “experimental laboratory.” This tendency was present in the composer’s output until roughly 2015; thereafter, his chamber music became a more autonomous phenomenon, although it still exhibits many similarities with the larger works. Since it is impossible to construct such complex textures or achieve the same dazzling variety of timbres in chamber music, it necessarily represents somewhat different ideas. Generally, Jabłoński focuses on melody and formal issues, integrating them with timbral concerns. In this way, certain sound qualities (often sonoric) become the principal form-generating element. Equally often, the composer employs melodic

counterpoint, which frequently emerges as the dominant textural element.

The year 2025 brought two new and significant works by Jabłoński. The first is the *Chamber Symphony “Epizody i refreny”* (“*Episodes and Refrains*”), composed for the Orkiestra Muzyki Nowej and its director, Szymon Bywalec. The final symphonic work by Jabłoński is titled *Himmlisches Leben. Hommage à Gustav Mahler* (2025). This is a peculiar piece, as over 90% of its musical material is borrowed from Mahler. In fact, *Hommage...* is a fantasia constructed primarily from fragments of the first movement of the Austrian composer’s *Symphony No. 4*, with Jabłoński’s own material appearing only as supplementation or development of Mahler’s ideas.

Following Maciej Jabłoński’s compositional trajectory, one can conclude that he is a composer in constant search, avoiding reliance on past formulas. His style is highly versatile; it is sometimes difficult to identify common elements between two works from the same period. Although he often employs favored compositional means, he always seeks new contexts for them. These means include dense contrapuntal textures, bundle melodies, motoric patterns, modal harmony, and distinctive coloristic effects. Jabłoński combines these techniques with new solutions, achieving a different effect each time.

This doctoral dissertation was undertaken with the aim of thoroughly defining the stylistic and musical language traits of Maciej Jabłoński in his saxophone works, through the study of selected compositions. The author also intends to demonstrate the stylistic convergence between his chamber and orchestral works and to confirm that Jabłoński’s pieces for saxophone are representative of the composer’s overall aesthetic.

## Chapter I

### Maciej Jabłoński – Profile of the composer

Maciej Jabłoński, a Polish composer, was born on 29 July 1974 in Golub-Dobrzyń. Between 1993 and 1998, he studied composition at the Academy of Music in Kraków under the supervision of Prof. Marek Stachowski, graduating with distinction. Since 1998, he has been teaching theoretical subjects at his alma mater; since 2004 as an assistant professor (adiunkt), and since 2024 as full professor. In 2012, he obtained the degree of doctor habilitated, and since 2015 he has led his own composition class at the Academy of Music in Kraków.

Jabłoński further developed his compositional skills through participation in numerous international courses: in 1997 at the Young Composers Meeting in Apeldoorn (under the guidance of Rodney Sharman, Robert HP Platz, and Louis Andriessen), the Sommerkurse für Neue und Computermusik in Stuttgart, and the International Summer Composition Courses in Radziejowice (with Peter Michael Hamel, Alejandro Iglesias Rossi, and Paul Patterson); in 1998 at the Buckower Sommerwerkstatt in Buckow; and in 2006 at the Darmstadt Summer Course, where he studied with Helmut Lachenmann and Georges Aperghis.

Maciej Jabłoński is a laureate of several composition competitions. In 1995 he received an honorable mention for *Psalm 138* for soprano and string orchestra (1994); in 1996 he was awarded second prize (with no first prize awarded) for *Psalm 23* for soprano and string orchestra (1995) at the Adam Didur Composition Competition in Sanok; in 1997 he received third prize for *Zaczarowany ogród (The Enchanted Garden)* for orchestra (1997) at the Ryszard Bukowski Competition; and in 2009 he was awarded the Grand Prix for *Logorhea* for computer (2008) at the Sound Screen Festival competition in Bydgoszcz.

In addition to his compositional activity, Jabłoński is actively involved in music outreach, particularly among children and young audiences, through educational concerts and school presentations. He is also engaged in music journalism and criticism, collaborating with journals such as *Ruch Muzyczny* and *Glissando* as a reviewer and essayist. He is a co-author of *Przewodnik po muzyce koncertowej (Guide to Concert Music)*, PWM 2003/2004).

Since 2006 he has been a member of Związek Kompozytorów Polskich (the Polish Composers' Union), and since 2024 of Polskie Stowarzyszenie Muzyki Elektroakustycznej (the Polish Society for Electroacoustic Music).

In Jabłoński's creative output, it is difficult to distinguish clear stylistic periods and stages, the composer's aesthetic has been subject to constant and continuous transformation from the very beginning. This process is highly diverse, non-linear, and meandering. There is also no single, uniform developmental line – Jabłoński's style evolves along multiple and parallel paths. This results from the fact that for each new composition, the composer prepares an entirely new set of technical and stylistic means, thus constructing every piece “from scratch”. A side effect of this approach is the absence of a clearly defined, recognizable personal style; it is difficult to identify unambiguous and permanent features of this style or its structural foundations. It is easier, however, to indicate certain preferred compositional strategies, such as heterophony or a specific type of modality, as well as a tendency toward a dynamic and dramaturgically transparent narrative. Yet, these are very broad and inclusive categories, each of which can be realized in many different ways.

The intense evolution of Jabłoński's aesthetic partly stems from his industriousness – on average, he completes between five and seven new works each year. As of late 2025, his catalogue approaches two hundred compositions. The vast majority of these works were written on commission, most often at the request of performers, but also from concert and festival organizers. By writing for specific musicians, Jabłoński can make the fullest use of their individual preferences and technical abilities, while also ensuring the performance of the piece. Many of his works were created at the initiative of Professor Andrzej Rzymkowski, thanks to whom the saxophone has become the most frequently featured instrument in Jabłoński's solo and chamber compositions. The aforementioned aesthetic characteristic of Jabłoński's music can also be observed in those works, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Jabłoński began his compositional career during his studies with Professor Marek Stachowski at the Academy of Music in Kraków (now the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music). Under the aesthetic influence of his teacher, he initially composed music that was texturally simple and formally transparent. His early works reveal a clear inclination toward modal harmony, with a particular predilection for the octatonic scale (alternating semitone–whole tone). Another important source of inspiration was twentieth-century symphonic music, especially the works of Dmitri Shostakovich. This influence is

reflected, among other things, in the arch-shaped formal design, with the principal climax occurring approximately two-thirds into the duration of a work.

Jabłoński made his compositional debut in 1995 with *Piano Sonata No. 1*, which he performed himself; in the same year, *String Quartet No. 1* and *Piano Sonata No. 2* were also premiered. These works, now withdrawn by the composer, differ considerably from his later style, although they already exhibit certain traits that would become characteristic of much of his output – most notably a strong narrative impulse, the construction of a sonic “story,” and a pronounced sense of formal continuity. During his student years, Jabłoński also composed three symphonies: *Symphony No. 1* (1994), *No. 2* (1996), and *No. 3* (1998/2015). His graduation piece was *Piano Concerto No. 1* (1998), a work of exceptional formal clarity, largely based on symmetrical principles. Although symmetry would later be abandoned, the concerto already reveals features frequently encountered in Jabłoński’s music: intensity of musical progression and a certain monumental character.

Up to 2002, a number of symphonic works were composed, including *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1998), *Concerto grosso No. 1 “31.12.1999”* (1999), *Symphony No. 4 “Sinfonia Ultima”* (2000), and *Piano Concerto No. 2<sup>1</sup>* (2002). These works display a significant connection with tradition, which manifests itself in their architectural design, their resemblance to classical genres (such as sonata form or scherzo), and their clear dramaturgy. In *Concerto grosso No. 1* for trombone and chamber orchestra, a modified version of the three-movement model is employed, with the outer movements being fast and the central one slow. Throughout the work there prevails a constant sense of anxiety, evoked by the obsessive repetition of the soloist’s glissando motif.

The influence of tradition is also evident in *Symphony No. 4*. Although the composer did not divide the score into movements, its narrative distinctly conveys a three-part structure. *Symphony No. 4* is largely based on motoric motion, which subsides only in the central section. This middle episode is constructed in the form of an arch: the dynamics gradually increase to a deafening climax and then diminish to a minimum. The work concludes with an accelerando and crescendo leading to an extremely powerful strike on two tam-tams.

The composer himself commented years later on his stylistic attitude of that period in the following words: “Many years ago, my aesthetic stance remained in close relation

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<sup>1</sup> *Piano Concerto No. 2* constituted the doctoral dissertation.

to tradition, belonging to a current of continuation and, in a certain sense, conservatism. In many statements [about my music] I have noticed the existence of a certain point of view that places my achievements within the sphere of traditional art (...) Undeniably, I bear some responsibility for this, although at present I regard it as an encumbrance that obscures the actual state of reality. To a great extent, this is the effect of the influence of my earlier works, especially *Symphony No. 4*, performed at the opening of the 45th ‘Warsaw Autumn’ Festival in 2002. Indeed, the Symphony is a highly traditional work, which I am neither able nor willing to deny – just as with the majority of the pieces composed before 2004 (including *Concerto grosso No. 1*). Their “traditionalism” consists in the use of simple means, often of neoclassical provenance, as well as motoric motion, uncomplicated rhythmic divisions, a not very developed coloristic or instrumental sphere, and a clear architectural design. These features, dominant before 2004, were, however, ‘diagnosed’ as disadvantageous and led me to serious self-reflection. It resulted in a significant stylistic breakthrough, which was the outcome of work on *Barbapapa* and *Symphony No. 5*. Consequently, everything I had composed earlier lost its value as a representation of my aesthetic stance; thus, I can, with a clear conscience, declare that *Concerto grosso No. 1*, *Toccata*, and *Symphony No. 4* are works of purely historical value, having little in common with my current state. They cannot in any respect be considered representative of my style, which at present cannot be described as dependent on neoclassicism – because of the presence of means unknown to neoclassicism, as described below.”<sup>2</sup>

The aforementioned *Symphony No. 5*, composed in 2004, is a two-movement work lasting approximately twenty-six minutes. The first movement consists of a sequence of larger and smaller episodes, unfolding over the span of several dozen seconds. Hardly does something begin before it ends. Only after reaching roughly the midpoint of the movement does a clear drive toward a climax emerge; this climax arrives relatively quickly and is followed by a dispersed coda. In the second movement, the musical narrative is far more cohesive. The composer entrusts the presentation of the principal melodic layer successively to different instruments. In the initial phase of this movement’s development, a dramatic – indeed, almost despairing – expressive character predominates. After several minutes, however, this gives way to a series of static, as if “frozen,” episodes. The emotional profile of the second movement results from the use

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<sup>2</sup> Maciej Jabłoński about himself, Glissando 10/2013

of modal harmony, associated both with free atonality and with elements of the major – minor system. While the opening passages are marked by a mood of despair and pronounced dramatic tension, calmer episodes gradually come to the fore, evoking a sense of emotional suspension and resignation. The work concludes with two powerful tutti crescendos.

Regarding *Symphony No. 5* and his subsequent works, Jabłoński wrote: “The leading role of texture in *Symphony No. 5* results from the search for new possibilities of shaping musical narrative within a symphonic work. In comparison with the previous *Symphony No. 4*, the regularity of pulsation and the characteristic motion marked by a tendency to form a kind of ‘perpetuum mobile’ play a much smaller role here. On the other hand, the importance of the textual sphere has increased. Works composed after *Symphony No. 5* are likewise characterized by a focus on textural nuance. In later compositions – such as *Δe (Concerto for Trumpet and Chamber Orchestra)*, *Whose are those fingerprints??* for chamber ensemble, *...à cinq (Concerto grosso No. 2)* for five pianos and orchestra, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*, *Somnos* – a poem for choir and orchestra to texts by Thomas Bernhard – and *Labirynt umysłu* for five saxophones – despite their textural diversity, a greater continuity of musical flow is maintained. This approach to formal construction is also evident in *Concerto grosso No. 3*, *Déjà vu* for cello and orchestra, and *Fuori, Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*. In all of these works there are numerous solutions first employed in *Symphony No. 5* – from detailed textural ideas or individual methods of exploiting the coloristic potential of instruments to concepts connected with formal architecture.”<sup>3</sup>

The works composed after *Symphony No. 5* often referred, however, to elements of the earlier musical language – among others, to motoric motion and exhaustive climaxes. Highly energetic are *Concerto grosso No. 2* for five pianos and orchestra (2005) and the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra* (2006). The latter has not yet been performed, but its content can be partly imagined, as it shares some material with *Concerto grosso No. 2*. These works possess very similar middle movements (of three in total), while the finale of the *Concerto grosso* has much in common with the first movement of the *Concerto for Saxophone*. The first movement of the *Concerto grosso* is essentially an introduction – a four-minute prelude based on a series of imitations in the solo parts. The constant semiquaver motion of the five pianos creates the impression of a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

perpetuum mobile. The second movement of the work is built upon sequences of repetitions in various instruments, including the solo parts. In the finale, following an initial textural accumulation at high dynamics, the narrative unfolds interwoven with distinctive, lively motifs in the woodwind section.

A separate position in Jabłoński's oeuvre is held by the short *Źe – Concerto for Trumpet and Chamber Orchestra*. Composed for the eminent trumpeter Bartosz Gaudyn, it is distinguished by a delicate texture and a considerable dose of humour. The solo trumpet playfully teases the orchestral instruments, occasionally displaying its virtuosity. In the final minutes of the piece, certain allusions to the music of Alfred Schnittke can be discerned. The humorous mood gradually transforms into a dramatic outburst, after which the dynamics return to pianissimo.

Between 2005 and 2007, Jabłoński composed the symphonic poem *Somnos* for choir and orchestra commissioned by the National Philharmonic in Warsaw. It was originally intended to become *Symphony No. 6*, however, Jabłoński ultimately abandoned this idea, stating that at the time he did not yet possess a sufficiently developed compositional technique to realize his concept adequately. In this work, the composer frequently uses the choir as a specific kind of instrument – an extension of the orchestra. The piece evokes the atmosphere of a strange dream: the narrative, meandering and convoluted at first, eventually finds a clear developmental line leading to the climax, which occurs at the golden section (approximately two-thirds of the total duration). In the subsequent episode, static music predominates, the essence of which is a major ninth chord without a fifth. The work ends rather unexpectedly.

The single-movement Cello Concerto *Déja vu* (2007) is often characterized by lively motoric motion. The narrative takes the form of a struggle between soloist and orchestra – at times almost a battle. Its diversified course, like a winding river, ultimately leads to a chaotic climax followed by relaxation. Over the span of fourteen minutes, a dramatic process unfolds – in the midst of the motoric texture, motifs of lament, somewhat oriental in contour, gradually appear. They come to the fore after the climax, and their presence radically alters the expressive character of the music which gradually transforms into a lament.

A somewhat different formal conception characterizes *Concerto grosso No. 3* “...patrz, nic kołysze stada gwiazd i tak jak ryby puszcza w błękit...” (“...look, nothing rocks herds of stars and, like fish, releases them into the blue...”) for violin, oboe, and chamber orchestra (2008). Here a tone row appears, treated rather freely – the individual

motifs shaped by the intervals of the row are separated by pauses. The first movement of the piece consists of a gradual build-up of momentum, which dominates in the central section. The soloist engages in a duel with the orchestra – a duel that remains unresolved. The narrative seems to be “fragmented” into small motifs exchanged between the soloists and the orchestra. In the final movement, a gradual relaxation occurs, and the melodic motifs are progressively lengthened. The work fades away slowly, disappearing into silence.

In 2010, Jabłoński completed his longest work to date: *Fuori*, a concerto for two pianos, electroacoustic (fixed-media) layer, and orchestra, lasting over forty minutes. The piece unfolds internally in three developmental phases. The first phase is constructed through the contrastive juxtaposition of rapid, restless episodes with passages that are nearly static. Fast sections are dominated by rapid scalar figurations, while slower ones emphasize sustained chords. This contrast is of particular importance, as the second piano is tuned 33 cents lower, which – when combined with the first piano – produces a distinctive composite timbre. Within this phase, a tension emerges between two idioms: a nervous, fast-tempo dialogue among the instruments, and a state of sonic suspension, within which electronic sounds surface and accompany the repetitive figures of both pianos. The culmination of this phase is marked by the withdrawal of the orchestra, with the climax unfolding exclusively within the fixed-media layer. This is followed by a brief reminiscence of the opening material, after which a long, approximately twenty-minute static section begins. In the middle phase, all motion gradually comes to a halt. Both the orchestra and the electroacoustic layer sustain a G-major chord on the fifth, retuned downward by 33 cents. As a result, the orchestra adapts to the tuning of the second piano, which slowly introduces successive motifs consisting primarily of repetitions. The pitch levels of these motifs correspond to successive tones of the melody from Robert Schumann’s miniature *Von fremden Ländern und Menschen* (Album für die Jugend). The third phase emerges elusively: over the course of several minutes, the G-major chord transforms into an F-major seventh chord. Almost imperceptibly, the first piano re-enters, and the atmosphere acquires a sense of tension and anticipation. The soloists engage in a dialogue based on the exchange of small, ornamental motifs. The fixed-media layer becomes the principal sound source, while the orchestra merely colors the piano dialogue. The final episodes create an impression of unreality. *Fuori* concludes with a ninth chord and a forceful plucking of the subcontra B string in Piano I. The compositional experiences gained in *Fuori* were subsequently employed by Jabłoński in *UI* for solo alto

saxophone and fixed media, particularly with regard to the dense, iridescent texture of the electroacoustic layer.

In 2015 Jabłoński worked on two symphonies. He first completed the monumental *Symphony No. 6*, the essence of which is the world of dreams. *Symphony No. 6* “*Oneirophrenia*” is constructed in four movements. The tensions in the first movement undergo fluctuation; they are correlated with smoothly changing sound planes and with the undulation of a very dense yet fluid texture. There is no distinct climax; the method of narrative development recalls Nørgård’s *Symphony No. 6*. The second movement, scherzo-like in character, is distinctly sonoristic, consisting of sections of different timbre – though all of them remain multilayered and texturally complex. In the third movement, the orchestra falls silent, giving way to a monologue heard from tape (an auto-ironic text – a diagnosis of the artist’s problems), while the final movement was constructed in accordance with Rimsky-Korsakov’s maxim that “the finale should be luxuriant”. At the conclusion of the finale, against a piano ostinato, the members of the orchestra gradually rise from their seats and softly sing the word “oniro” (Greek for “dream”). The elements of the symphonic tradition, evident in the work’s overall design and in the functions of its individual movements, are here combined with more contemporary means – particularly textual ones.

In the same year the composer made substantial revisions to the material of his *Symphony No. 3*. In this second version, overlapping ascending legato scale passages dominate; the considerable density of the texture gives an impression of stickiness and viscosity. Against the background of this variable texture, quotations from Charles Ives’s *The Unanswered Question* appear. The climax of the entire form occurs near the end – it is brief, sudden, and unexpected, like a lightning strike. The subsequent coda emanates sadness and longing. Similarly wistful and melancholic is the second movement of *Tao* – the second chamber concerto with a solo part for alto saxophone (2015). The first movement of this work, in contrast, has a very dynamic character, at times even aggressive – particularly in the solo part. Certain echoes of *Tao* can be discerned in *Soliloquium II*: the rich, meandering melodic line of the soloist in both works exhibits closely related characteristics, pointing to a degree of stylistic affinity.

After 2015 no new symphonies were composed; the largest performing forces appear in *Concerto grosso No. 4* (2016), *Concerto grosso no. 5* (2018), and *Panta rhei* (2019). *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra*. Whereas the latter *Concerto grosso* for contrabass clarinet, marimba, and sinfonietta-type chamber orchestra maintains an

atmosphere of continuous, restless motion, the *Clarinet Concerto* contains many subdued and even static fragments. A kind of suspension of time occurs in the middle movement of *Panta rhei* – the solo clarinet unfolds lyrical melodies against a background of natural harmonics in the orchestral parts. It is worth noting that in *Concerto grosso No. 5* the contrabass-clarinet part is largely improvised, which blurs the impression of material repetition. In this composition, the climax takes place near the end; afterward the narrative clearly tends toward calmness and silence. By contrast, *Concerto grosso No. 4* for guitar, double bass, and string orchestra is based on the free development of various motifs; the soloists engage in dialogue with the orchestra and with one another. There is no distinct climax – the apparent high point seems to be a grotesque ritardando during the soloists' cadenza – a slowing down of the tempo to complete standstill. Both of the aforementioned *Concerti grossi* are distinguished by textural richness and the complexity of their melodic lines – features that are likewise characteristic of *Saxosphere*, composed during the same period.

A very complex, disassociated texture also characterizes the work *Avatars. Concerto da camera No. 3* for sinfonietta-type chamber orchestra (2020). Its form takes the shape of a sequence of clearly differentiated, mutually unconnected episodes. The timbral color plays an especially significant role here – changes in tone color are, to a large extent, the primary agents of formal development. Whereas in *Concerto da Camera* the individual episodes remain rather autonomous, in the *Chamber Symphony (Episodes and Refrains)* (2025) they merge into a logically and dramaturgically coherent sequence of events. In fact, this is a symphony in the strict sense, as indicated by the type of narrative, full of motoric drive (entirely absent in *Avatars*), as well as of dramatic tensions and outbursts. The course of the work is intense; most of its duration is filled with fast-tempo music. Only in two places does the music undergo a reduction in tempo and dynamic intensity. In this work, the composer draws on a concept derived from Witold Lutosławski's *Symphony No. 3*, adapting it in a personal manner. The result is a form composed of more than a dozen differentiated fragments (episodes), frequently separated by a gesture of a descending cascade (refrain). Despite the contrasts between the episodes, they form a convincing and coherent narrative, characterized for the most part by a brisk and restless character. Motoric writing – and even a dance-like quality – is clearly present. An underlying sense of unease can also be felt in the slow, static episodes. The emotional dimension of the *Chamber Symphony* is further intensified by its harmonic language, predominantly modal (modified octatonic scales), though elements of free atonality as

well as references to the major–minor system are also present. The composer himself regards the *Chamber Symphony* as one of his most successful works.

The first symphonic work by Jabłoński after a ten-year hiatus – in the course of which no such piece was composed – is *Himmlisches Leben. Hommage à Gustav Mahler* (2025). It is a singular composition, for its musical content is 90 percent borrowed from Mahler's music. In essence, the *Hommage* is a fantasy constructed from fragments of the first movement of the Austrian master's *Symphony No. 4*, with Jabłoński's own material appearing solely as a supplement or elaboration of Mahler's ideas. These modifications manifest themselves primarily on the level of texture, which is quite characteristic of Jabłoński's compositional approach. The orchestral sounds intertwine with material emitted from loudspeakers – the tape also contains distorted fragments drawn from Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*, subjected to intense reworking. The collisions between the orchestral sound and the fixed-media layer mark specific nodal points of this fourteen-minute composition.

Andrzej Mądro, the author of an overview of Jabłoński's works in the article *Young Kraków Composers* (*Ruch Muzyczny*, No. 13/2011), wrote: "Maciej Jabłoński is a composer who searches intensely, constantly setting himself new artistic challenges. His explorations focus on developing means of musical expression that would be comprehensible to the listener yet would not obscure the individuality and stylistic preferences of the author. Beyond what in Jabłoński's music is continually evolving, one can easily discern certain unchanging features: expressiveness, vitalism, motoric drive, and the diversity and directness of means, sometimes leading to irony and grotesque."<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, the same author writes: "The composer rarely turns to lyricism and keeps a distance from sentimentalism. His music is vivid and "rough", though full of technical and timbral nuances – the refined instrumentation at times overwhelms with its abundance of ideas (*Symphony No. 5, Somnos*). These find justification only within the formal construction, whose shape for Jabłoński constitutes the supreme value."<sup>5</sup>

Maciej Jabłoński also frequently employs means of postmodern provenance. His music often evokes associations with other music; allusions or quotations are more or less perceptible, and at times the quotation or paraphrase forms the very essence of the work (*Raftman's Adventures, Himmlisches Leben. Hommage a Gustav Mahler*). Yet even in

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<sup>4</sup> Maciej Jabłoński, Andrzej Mądro *Young Kraków Composers*, *Ruch Muzyczny* 13/2011, pages 7 – 8

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

entirely autonomous, fully “original” compositions. Jabłoński sometimes creates the impression of borrowing. After the premiere of the *Chamber Symphony*, the composer repeatedly heard that listeners sensed stylistic references. Jabłoński explained his interest in postmodern compositional “devices” in the following way: “No composer exists in a void. Every artist – to a greater or lesser extent – is dependent on what the contemporary world of art offers him. Regardless of one’s approach to preexisting music, one can always discern elements of confrontation with the music and ideas of other composers. Sometimes this manifests as imitation, sometimes as creative opposition; in each case there is kind of ‘inspiration’ by what takes place in the artist’s surroundings.”<sup>6</sup>

The question of the dependence of a contemporary composer’s music on the “preexisting” musical tradition has preoccupied Jabłoński for many years. In an autobiographical article published in *Glissando*, he expressed it as follows: “In my opinion, the situation in which the music of one composer clearly resembles that of another is artistically ‘suspicious’. It is not desirable when a work ‘smells of’ a particular composition – when one can even point to the prototype of the imitation, even if it is a work of a great master. Reproducing ideas and solutions without attempting to create an individual context is considered by me to be uncreative and derivative. It is a fact that many pieces – often written with flair and attractive in sound – are, in reality, compilations of preexisting technical devices. Despite the often-high level of such works, the sense of derivativeness arouses in me justified irritation, for it is dishonest – just as dishonest as impersonating someone else’s style. It is also an impersonation of the influence of another’s ideas – if, therefore, a composer deliberately imitates the successful concepts of another composer, he commits a kind of plagiarism. He becomes the creator of someone else’s music. This does not, however, mean my general condemnation of artistic references and allusions. If a composer draws upon the ideas of others but processes them and builds his own, original context, and in doing so creates a work that is successful, fascinating, and valuable, he deserves praise. Moreover, the creation of a ‘metadialogue’ with other music is, in my view, desirable, as an important culture-forming element. The search for various planes of such ‘metadialogue’, for artistic interaction, is an integral component of my aesthetic stance – one oriented toward ‘probing deeply’, toward the investigation of the meaning and message of art. In such an approach I see an important aim of artistic activity, which coexists with my personal conviction that art is not merely

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<sup>6</sup> *Maciej Jabłoński about himself*

a form of intellectual or emotional entertainment, but also one of the ways of posing questions about human nature, about the mystery of humanity. Since such inquiry and a broadly understood anthropocentric focus are essential features of the greatest musical works, I regard dialogue with their various interpretations as extremely significant. Inevitably, such dialogue manifests itself with selected phenomena – those whose content and message are closest to me.”<sup>7</sup>

The music of Maciej Jabłoński is so rich and diverse that a synthetic presentation of its constitutive features is a rather difficult undertaking. Andrzej Mądro, in his article devoted to Jabłoński’s compositions, wrote: “(...) On one hand, the composer cares for logic and coherence; on the other, he creates a kind of collage of emotions – opposing dense, lively, and fluctuating textures with thin, transparent, and almost static ones (*Fuori, V Symfonia, Barbapapa*)<sup>8</sup>. Motivic work also plays an essential form – shaping role – even when the composer layers numerous sonic planes, they are usually woven from rhythmically related and homogeneous motifs. Persistently repeated and compressed into heterophonic bundles, they form polytextural networks (*Déjà vu, Fuori*).”<sup>9,10</sup>

In the conclusion of his overview of Maciej Jabłoński’s oeuvre, Andrzej Mądro stated: “Jabłoński’s characteristic attention to detail is not limited merely to demonstrating his technical skill. Beneath the surface of the sonic entities, he brings into being, there lies a second, symbolic layer. Importantly, this underlying message often refers to the composer’s personal experiences – as if Jabłoński, through musical gesture, were giving vent to a storm of emotions, while through compact form he sought to tame the turmoil of his own thoughts. As if, in sound, he wished not only to express but also to discover himself.”<sup>11</sup>

The features of Maciej Jabłoński’s musical language are worth considering with reference to the individual elements of music. The composer himself did so in the article already cited, published in *Glissando* in 2013. Although that text refers to works composed prior to that date, over the past twelve years the composer’s style has not undergone major changes.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> To the works mentioned above one should add *Pantha rhei* and *Episodes and Refrains. A Chamber Symphony*.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to these works, one should also mention later ones – *Concerto Grosso No. 5*, and *the Chamber Symphony*.

<sup>10</sup> Andrzej Mądro, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Jabłoński began his discussion of musical layers with texture and sound, which indicates the priority role of these elements. Let us give the floor to the composer himself:

## I.1 TEXTURE

“The form-shaping influence of the textual sphere has become a priority factor in constructing musical narrative. Together with color, it has replaced [to a certain extent] the melodic-rhythmic plane, or rather created a new, integrated form-building element. Among the many models, the heterophonic texture plays the most important role (with a slightly lower degree of material polymorphization compared with the polyphonic type), whose numerous constituent elements (‘voices’, melodic lines) most often exhibit analogous intervallic construction, though they are introduced at different pitch levels, asynchronously (with slight displacement), or differ in rhythmic treatment. In this way, multi-voiced ‘bundles’ of melody are also created – variants of the same melody superimposed on one another, producing the effect of a ‘micro-stretta’. The interlocking of the melodic and textual planes produces an entirely new layer, whose impact combines the clarity of melody with the multidimensionality of various textural approaches. Smooth fluctuations of textural models superimposed upon the emergence of more or less distinct melodic lines I regard as an immanent feature of my style, as the most ‘attractive’ means of shaping the musical flow. Naturally, this cannot exist without careful development of the sonic sphere-color thus becoming an element strictly cooperating with texture. It therefore becomes a form-shaping factor.”<sup>12</sup>

## I.2 COLOR

“Coloristics, in my aesthetic worldview, is just as important as the melodic-harmonic level in its traditional sense. The sonoristic conception that elevates the sonic layer to an emancipated autonomous plane – essentially detached from other components – is alien to me (cf. Penderecki’s *Fluorescences*, Schaeffer’s *Little Symphony “Sculptura”*, or Zubel’s *Symphony No. 2*). I consider both “pre-existing”, traditional sound categories and new, unconventional ones to be equally legitimate, and the mutual “play” between

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<sup>12</sup> Maciej Jabłoński about himself, op.cit.

inherited and novel coloristic qualities constitutes one of the key factors shaping musical narrative. Non-traditional timbres and effects are not an “addition” but function on an equal footing with conventional sounds. It is a fact that, regardless of the composer’s efforts, new (typically sonoristic) coloristic means are always a kind of sonic jewelry; hence, their abundant use without a clear concept of form-building function may be compared to excessive ornamentation with trinkets. It is, quite simply, in poor taste. Yet it is possible to construct valuable music from refined timbres – just as it was possible to create, for instance, the Amber Room solely from precious stones. Everything depends on context and on how these solutions function within the overall form. The key to achieving artistic success lies in careful selection and a well-considered concept for the choice and use of innovative means. In other words, for the coloristic sphere to function meaningfully and contribute to form, one must ensure its dramaturgical impact – something clearly demonstrated by the masterpieces of Berio, Ligeti, Nørgård, Lachenmann, Grisey, Romitelli, and many other composers. I emphasize: the greatest musical works clearly suggest that the “equal status” of traditional and non-traditional timbres, as well as their integration into the process of building narrative dramaturgy, forms the foundation for the creation of a valuable artistic statement.

Many coloristic ideas are subordinated to the notion of contrast, which also manifests itself through the concept of a dialogue of colors and textures – a device that, in a sense, replaces the classical juxtaposition of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic qualities. Another tool for shaping musical narrative lies in the juxtaposition of timbres based on the principle of mutual complementarity, often through the method of smooth transition from one sound category to another. This is frequently connected with gradual modification of sound production techniques – for example, a progressive change in embouchure, a transition from traditional to unconventional playing, shifting the bow’s position relative to the bridge, or transforming the sound from “normal” to, for instance, a harmonic or muted tone (as in the horn). In general, it involves microevolution of timbres and subtle modification of the coloristic quality of sound. Naturally, this is linked to the microevolution of texture and results from an internal need to sustain tension continuously and to avoid static situations. Even within “sustained” sounds, constant variability is perceptible – almost always based on gradual gradation or modification of timbral quality (as in the second movement of *Symphony No. 5*, ...*look, nothing rocks the flocks of stars and releases them into the blue like fish* – *Concerto grosso No. 3, Fuori, Transitions*). Mastery over sonority – essential for achieving the aforementioned results

– also required delving into spectralist experience, although I treat elements of spectralism quite instrumentally, rather than imitating the characteristic use of means inherent in that technique.”<sup>13</sup>

### I.3 MELODY

“In my aesthetic conception, I do not reject the potential of melody. However, it is of great importance to me to find my own, individual, and at the same time captivating method of employing melodic material. Both the way music is perceived and its potential to capture the listener’s attention make melody, in a sense, a privileged element – something Alban Berg had already observed in the 1920s. It should be noted that the presence of linear thinking and even simple melodic solutions does not diminish the value of Nørgård’s or Ligeti’s music. Thus – melody, yes, but what kind? The use of melodic means in the manner of composers from 100 or even 50 years ago, I consider possible only within a new textural and coloristic context. I have deemed it crucial to combine linear, melodic thinking with vertical thinking – not in a harmonic, but in a textural dimension. This led to the crystallization of the concept of the “melody-texture,” whose simplest manifestation lies in melodic bundles and heterophonic textures, already mentioned above.

In this way, “diagonal” relationships arise among various musical elements. They also appear at the level of the connection between textural and rhythmic layers. In my aesthetic approach, such “interlocking” of layers often occurs – for instance, heterophonic textures coexist with a kind of polyrhythm and polychrony. The latter term (coined by J. M. Chomiński) was aptly employed by Paweł Hendrich to describe a specific superimposition of rhythmic models – related yet differing in detail. The creation of such “diagonal” relationships – texture plus melody, texture plus rhythm, color plus harmony (in which the influence of spectralist thinking is evident) – enhances the expressive power of each individual element, while simultaneously allowing the composer to avoid both banality (e.g., simple melodic linearity) and confusion (in the form of a chaotic, polysonic block). In the organization of harmonic verticals, spectralist experience has proven highly fruitful, since the use of the potential of harmonic partials (overtones) significantly

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<sup>13</sup> *Maciej Jabłoński about himself*, op.cit.

enhances the effect of vertical sonorities (chords). This explains the growing presence of harmonics, especially natural ones, as well as the use of natural microtonality. In the most recent orchestral works, these means have acquired an important form-building function, most clearly visible in *Fuori*. The interplay between equal temperament and natural tuning constitutes one of the key factors shaping the narrative in that composition.”<sup>14</sup>

## I.4 MICROTONALITY

“Quarter-tone progressions, analogous to those found in the music of Lutosławski and, following him, Zych, have appeared in my compositions since *Barbapapa* and *Symphony No. 5*. Non-tempered but regular divisions occurred as intermediary pitch levels between tempered semitones; these were exclusively quarter tones. The interplay between a tempered sound and the seventh partial became one of the leading motifs in *Déjà vu* for cello and orchestra; in this work, microtonal oscillations (usually in the interval of one-sixth of a tone) appear both in harmonic verticals and in melodic lines. Harmonically, they create a suggestive illusion of space, while melodically they considerably intensify expressiveness and serve as a means of musical expression. Although I employed here the possibilities offered by the seventh and eleventh partials in harmonic usage (string section, solo cello), it is difficult to speak of a fully spectral dimension of microtonality in this context.

Microtones derived from the use of the seventh, eleventh, and thirteenth partials, presented within a spectral perspective, appeared for the first time in *Fuori* – a concerto for two pianos, electronic layer, and orchestra. The very fact of the second piano being permanently retuned one-sixth of a tone lower generated a completely new harmony, atypical in the context of my previous experiences. As I wrote when discussing micro-gestures in Zych’s string quartet, similar models in *Fuori* also operate at the junction of melody and sonority. Particularly striking are the echo effects that arise from the heterophonic succession of identical structures in the parts of the first and second pianos. At the same time, the retuned second piano is perfectly aligned with the seventh partial, so that when it appears against the background of string harmonics corresponding to those same pitch levels (the seventh partial), an astonishing harmonic concordance occurs. In

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<sup>14</sup> Maciej Jabłoński about himself, op.cit.

fact, a kind of “retuning” of the entire orchestra – through, among other things, the use of these harmonics – creates the distinctive atmosphere of the second (static) movement of the piece. *Fuori* contains numerous natural microtones – intervals of one-sixth of a tone – that differ clearly from regular quarter tones, which Per Nørgård aptly called “ugly.” Quarter tones lack the expressive power of the one-sixth-tone interval in enhancing the emotional color of harmonic verticals; their effect always requires the context of a tempered background or, melodically, a tempered neighborhood. In other words, they do not function independently of equal temperament and thus represent an element whose qualities are revealed almost exclusively in the sequential ordering of successive pitches. The interval of one-sixth of a tone, by contrast, “camouflages” itself beneath the analogous (that is, nearest) tempered pitch, significantly intensifying expressiveness through an apparently imperceptible deformation. In the use of individual types of microtones within my works, a certain functionalization of instrumentation also becomes evident – quarter tones appear more frequently in wind parts, while one-sixth tones occur mainly in the string section. This naturally results from the technical capabilities of the instruments. A very similar method was adopted when composing the piano quintet *Awakening*.<sup>15</sup>

In recent times, Maciej Jabłoński has paid particular attention to the harmonic sphere. This resulted from the disappointment he experienced following the premiere of *Avatars. Concerto da camera No. 3* in April 2024. In that work, a rather advanced sound color palette was juxtaposed with atonality, which prevented the full realization of its expressive potential. Earlier, Jabłoński had felt a similar disappointment after the premiere of *Spaces – Textures – Figures* for string orchestra in spatial arrangement. The rich textural and motivic content of the latter composition, combined with the absence of a harmonic system, produced a dense music of emotionally neutral expression. This, in turn, led to listener fatigue, since the work lasts twenty-six minutes – considerably long for a contemporary piece replete with diverse ideas. In *Avatars*, fortunately, the coloristic diversity of the sinfonietta-type ensemble played a positive role, allowing for a much richer palette of timbres than would be possible with a string orchestra. Nevertheless, this colorism is accompanied by a certain emotional coolness; as a result, the piece was received more as a sonoristic-textural study than as a musical statement possessing a defined dramaturgy.

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<sup>15</sup> Maciej Jabłoński about himself, op.cit.

The composer decided to digest the conclusions drawn from both of these works and, in his subsequent compositions, employed a much more distinctive harmonic language. It played a positive, form-shaping role in *Festina lente* for two accordions and string quartet. The harmony of this piece is relatively free, yet the presence of distinct tonal centers and a kind of refrain, within which A-major nonachordal and D-minor sonorities are emphasized, ensures that even the rather liberal atonality of many passages does not obscure the emotional impact of the entire work. Moreover, Jabłoński constructed a gradual, relentless progression toward the climax, unfolding over an extended accelerando lasting more than three minutes. After the culmination, there appears a figure of gradually descending consonances built from thirds, sometimes lowered by quarter-tones – a gesture of homage to Paweł Mykietyn, who employed a similar device in his *Passion*.

In the *Chamber Symphony “Episodes and Refrains”*, Jabłoński made use of his favorite “semitone – whole tone” scale, though here it is modified. After every fifth pitch of the scale, a semitone is inserted, thus avoiding the schematic quality and potential monotony of the original mode. After this modification, the intervals between successive notes of the scale follow the pattern: 1 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 1... Regardless of the horizontal intervallic structure, in the vertical dimension the composer continues to employ the pure “semitone – whole tone” mode. He most often constructs chords consisting of a diminished triad supplemented by a note a perfect fourth below the root of the triad. Consequently, the resulting series of intervals is: fourth - minor third - minor third.

Jabłoński frequently draws upon tonal structures enriched by an additional element (for example, a Lydian fourth or a minor ninth). *The Chamber Symphony* is also noteworthy for its formal ideas: individual episodes often overlap and interpenetrate, forming a dramaturgically coherent sequence of events. A lively texture predominates, often taking on a motoric character. There is no shortage of timbral invention; the composer combines the sounds of various instruments to achieve strikingly attractive effects. He does not, however, employ advanced performance techniques (such as multiphonics); rather, the coloristic dimension is built from natural instrumental timbres. The density of texture in most episodes often causes the fifteen-member ensemble to sound like a full symphony orchestra.

In 2021, Ewa Szczecińska, a journalist known from the Second Programme of Polish Radio, dedicated one episode of her series *Nowa Polska* (“New Poland”), which

presents recent achievements of Polish composers, to Jabłoński. In the conclusion of that broadcast, Szczecińska drew attention to the special role of expression in Jabłoński's music, calling him an outright expressionist. Meanwhile, Jan Topolski, a frequent commentator on contemporary Polish music, described Jabłoński as a "restless spirit" – a composer in constant search. The act of creating music in each new work represents, in a sense, a new beginning: Jabłoński rarely repeats his ideas, focusing instead on adapting his palette of means to the specific character of each composition. For this reason, the composer's style is difficult to define – works written during the same period often differ radically. Jabłoński himself refers to himself as a "composer without a style," though this is not entirely true: stylistic elements lie deeply embedded within the musical fabric – in the specific intervallic construction of his melodic lines, his timbral preferences, his propensity for motoric motion, and his narrative sensibility.

The composer himself has repeatedly emphasized that the context of his music encompasses not only the musical present, but also the entire tradition of European music. This tradition manifests itself in his works to varying degrees and in diverse ways. Undeniably, one can trace in Jabłoński's compositions the influences of Mahler and Shostakovich, although these are well "masked" by the composer's innovative texture and harmony. The influences of contemporary composers, however, are more transparent. A particularly important experience for Jabłoński was his encounter with the music of Per Nørgård. This influence is perceptible in his orchestral works as well as in *Labyrinth of the Mind* for five saxophones, whose essential feature is the pronounced variability of timbral colors – a kind of constant "flowing" or "melting" of sounds. The starting point for the concept of "color motion" was Nørgård's *Symphony No. VI*, especially its first movement. The fluctuation of colors creates an impression of fluidity; unexpected surges and impetuous gestures of the narrative alternate with moments of complete suspension, almost a "submersion" into a state of static sonority. Expansive spaces of rhythmically indeterminate motion are interwoven with moments of total stillness or sudden eruptions of energy. Similar solutions may be found in Nørgård's earlier *Symphonies – Nos. III and IV* – which, though less explicitly directed toward specific ideas, served as important sources of inspiration for Jabłoński (for example, in string textures, wind timbres, microtonal usage, and the frequent employment of glissandi). It should be mentioned that, independent of the "infinity series" technique developed by Nørgård in the late 1960s, the Danish composer has continued to explore new ways of employing tonal manifestations of harmony. This encouraged Jabłoński to experiment with his own ideas – distinct from

Nørgård's but partly derived from functional harmony.

Another concept borrowed from Nørgård's works is a kind of coloristic counterpoint. Of course, this device – dating back to the emancipation of tone color as an autonomous and independent musical parameter (as in Debussy, Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, and others) – is not new; it is in fact an integral part of the orchestral tradition. Yet, in Nørgård's approach, such coloristic counterpoint acquires a highly distinctive character. Compared, for instance, with the music of Lutosławski, in which the construction of timbral relationships by analogy to counterpoint occurs within clearly delineated formal sections (thus facilitating their identification), in Nørgård's symphonies the relationships between layers undergo constant and unpredictable fluctuation. Consequently, the boundaries between the layers – analogous to voices in traditional counterpoint – are often blurred. Through the skillful control of this technique, the listener's perception is sharpened and intensified. Naturally, such energetic states do not dominate; they are complemented by stages of stasis, suspension, and anticipation. These elements have also left their mark on Jabłoński's music; however, unlike Nørgård, in Jabłoński's *Symphony No. V, Déjà vu*, or *Fuori*, such static states usually undergo gradual transformation.

From Nørgård's oeuvre also derive numerous technical inspirations – for instance, the manner and function of harmonics, the expressive use of muted brass timbres, and the treatment of the percussion ensemble. The most “Nørgårdian” of Jabłoński's works is *Somnos*, and to a lesser extent *Déjà vu*. The influence of Nørgård's textural thinking is most evident in *Fuori* – in general, compositional devices akin to those of the Danish composer play a significant role in Jabłoński's musical language.

To conclude this overview of Maciej Jabłoński's work, let us cite his own words closing the self-commentary published in *Glissando*: “Whatever I do, I do with conviction, striving for as full an awareness as possible of why I am doing it. In my view, the act of composing requires an answer to the question of its purpose. I believe that the mission of music is to metaphorically reflect the inner life of the human being and the surrounding reality. Through metaphor, music bears witness to that which is often inaccessible to verbal expression. Personally, I seek to convey through sound the image of the human psyche in particular states and moments, while maintaining a concern for moving the listener, offering beauty, and inspiring reflection. I endeavor to employ the most appropriate artistic means, regardless of whether they are innovative or traditional. Since, in my opinion, the impact of music lies in the evocation of associations, the

preservation of cultural context is of great importance. Art, after all, operates at the intersection of what is universally known and what is individual and subjective. Balancing between these spheres interests me most deeply. In my view, music cannot exist detached from its anthropological dimension; otherwise, it becomes an excessively abstract babble. Yet it should not simply replicate existing approaches or interpretations, for then it becomes barren and dull. (...)

I neither reject nor condemn the ‘technistic’ approach to music, in which the primacy of purely technical manipulation and exploration of material properties prevails. An experimental attitude toward composition, often dominant in many cases, may yield new and valuable ideas and solutions. I hold deep respect for those composers for whom the technical dimension occupies the highest position in the artistic hierarchy, and I am impressed by the inventiveness that characterizes the modernist view of artistic creation and its aims. However, as I have observed, many composers regarded as revolutionaries and experimenters (Varèse, Webern, Cage, Grisey) ultimately reached the anthropological meaning of art, offering in their music a vision of humanity and its inner world. With time, what were once seen as pure experiments have proven to be profound testimonies to the metaphorical perception of music, emotion, gesture, and behavior. *Ameriques* by Varèse is, for me, an allegory of a deeply solitary individual in an unfriendly world (rather than a poly-cacophony of sounds alien to the music of its time), while Webern’s *Symphony Op. 21* is not merely a brilliant construction of pitch organization but a subtle study of human thought. I therefore dare to assert that the value and timelessness of a musical work depend largely on its anthropological dimension and cultural rootedness. For this reason, in every composition I attempt to find my own path to express that aspect.

Music speaks to me – it reveals essential issues, evokes associations and questions, including those that reach the deepest core of humanism: who we are and why we exist.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Maciej Jabłoński about himself, op.cit.

## Chapter II

### Analysis of selected works by Maciej Jabłoński

#### II.1 *UI*

The composition *UI* for alto saxophone and electroacoustic layer (fixed media) was written in 2012. Maciej Jabłoński composed it at the request of saxophonist Michał Knot, who commissioned the work for performance during the Saxfest 2013 festival organized by the Privatkonservatorium in Vienna. The premiere took place at that institution on 13 March 2013 – the solo part was performed by Michał Knot, while the fixed-media layer was directed by the composer himself. Knot has performed *UI* numerous times since, including in Kraków. Later, the work attracted the attention of Krzysztof Guńka, who also presented it successfully on multiple occasions in various venues.

The musical material of *UI* shows significant affinity with Jabłoński's earlier work *Labyrinth of the Mind* for alto saxophone and saxophone quartet (2008). In *UI*, one can even identify direct references to *Labyrinth...* The reason for these clear connections is easy to explain: Michał Knot, the dedicatee of *UI*, was a member of the ensemble that premiered *Labyrinth of the Mind*.

The solo saxophone part is continuously accompanied by the fixed-media layer. This layer serves as a background – a kind of sonic environment that substantially contributes to the concentrated and somewhat oneiric atmosphere of the work. The background is multi-layered and never comes to the foreground of the narrative; instead, it blends perfectly into the overall sound image. This is possible because the composer constructed the fixed-media layer almost entirely from the sounds of the alto saxophone. It takes the form of subtle opalescence and meandering motion, with the use of echo and looping effects, which make the background closely adapt to the solo part at virtually every moment of its duration. The composer did not impose a strict temporal synchronization between the two layers, so the soloist does not need to follow the fixed-media track precisely. According to Jabłoński, desynchronizations of even several seconds are acceptable and do not negatively affect the sonic integrity of the work. This

flexibility allows the performer a considerable degree of interpretative freedom, even the possibility of partial improvisation.

The origin of the title is quite distinctive. In his music, the composer wished to evoke in the listener an association between the sound of the piece and the movement of water – he himself compared the music to the gentle undulation and free floating on the water's surface. Jabłoński sought to express this idea in a title that would be appropriate both semantically and phonetically, regardless of language. Since in his youth he had studied Finnish, he noticed that the verb “uida” means “to swim.” In the third-person singular, it becomes “ui”, which the composer found the most suitable title for both the idea and the sonic content of the work.

The piece is marked by a strong degree of internal coherence and lacks an explicit division into sections, although six formal segments can be distinguished. The solo part in *UI* consists primarily of two types of melodic material: motifs built from long sustained tones, and textural motifs with a rhythmically fragmented character. Within each of the six formal segments, various transformations of these motifs can be identified – their shaping determines the identity of each segment. In terms of pitch organization, the work contains no regularity or systematic approach – the composer employs free atonality enriched with quarter tones. The harmony, though lacking tonal centralization, is subtly colored with emotion. Through the abundant use of microtones, the specific approach to pitch material, and the characteristic sound, a distinctive type of expression emerges. Despite the predominance of dissonant intervals and the presence of quarter tones, the overall impression is one of softness and a certain dreamlike quality. At the same time, the sound of the music is highly individual and intriguing – an impression further enhanced by the electroacoustic layer.

The opening section of the work (bars 1 – 46) is built primarily from longer note values (in most cases ranging between a quarter note and a half note at a tempo of quarter note = 92). The dynamic range remains within piano pianissimo to piano. There is no rhythmic regularity, which renders the pulse imperceptible; this effect is reinforced by irregular rhythmic groupings (triplets, quintuplets, etc.). The succession of pitches does not create a distinct melody, due to the aforementioned rhythmic irregularity and the presence of wide intervals (including sixths and sevenths). Initially, the melodic line shows a tendency to ascend, reaching the altissimo register as early as bar 7. Slightly later (bars 13 – 16), shorter rhythmic values appear alongside the long tones – mainly eighth notes – while the intervallic span is significantly reduced (a predominance of seconds).

The pitches oscillate between the second and third octaves, eventually settling in the altissimoregister (bar 17 and onward).

As the first section progresses, additional figures and effects are introduced, many of which foreshadow material from later parts of the work. In bar 17, a motive of quarter-tone oscillation in a quarter-note septuplet rhythm appears, anticipating the opening of the second section (see bars 47 – 52). Shortly thereafter, following a pause in the narrative on the three-lined G, a *bisbigliando* effect occurs (bars 21 – 22), with similar gestures returning in bars 27 and 36. In bars 30 and 32, trill-like motives appear within irregular sixteenth-note groupings (septuplets, sextuplets, quintuplets), anticipating the fifth section (cf. especially bars 129, 133, and 137). In bar 38, a *frullato* effect is introduced, followed in the next bar by a *pianissimo* multifonic. Other multifonics – also at low dynamics – occur in the closing measures of the first section (bars 44 – 46). Finally, in bars 42 – 44 a motive of recurring sevenths in quarter-note septuplets (see Example 1) appears, clearly prefiguring the fourth section (cf. bars 99 – 125). It should also be noted that in bars 41 – 44 a brief *accelerando* leads to a tempo of quarter note = 108, after which the initial tempo returns in bar 46.

Example 1 – *UI*, bars 41 – 46

The second formal segment of *UI* is only slightly shorter than the first (bars 47 – 85). It, too, unfolds at a very soft dynamic level (*ppp* – *p*). It opens with the quarter-tone oscillation motifs in quarter-note septuplets, presented three times (bars 47, 50, and 52), juxtaposed with long altissimo tones. Initially, the pitch material is confined to the lower half of the second octave, with other registers introduced only later in the section. The irregular repetitions in sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets (bars 56 – 61) are

likewise restricted to the second octave. The changes of the repeated pitch within these figures do not follow any regular rhythmic pattern. In the subsequent bars (62 – 68), small descending glissandi alternate with microtonal oscillations in quarter-note septuplets – these develop the motives presented at the beginning of the segment. The difference lies in the fact that instead of alternating between two repeated notes, the successive pitches vary; they are separated by small intervals, often enriched with quarter-tone inflections.

The continuation of the second section shows greater diversity of material. In bars 69 – 70, long trills appear (half notes within quarter-note quintuplets), preceding a series of frullato sounds (bars 71 – 75). The successive pitches are mostly separated by small intervals (quarter-tone-modified seconds and major thirds), while only at the beginning and end of the series do wider intervals appear (a fifth and a tenth). The passage concludes with a sixteenth-note sextuplet (descending repetitions in the altissimo register). At the junction of bars 76 – 77, descending glissandi return, leading into sustained tones of indeterminate but as high as possible pitch (bars 78 – 79). These reappear in bars 80 – 81, interspersed with short tremolos. In the final measures (83 – 85), short glissandi and small, fragmented chromatic motives in *accelerando* are present.

The third segment (bars 86 – 98) begins with a descending motive of longer note values followed by two multifonics. In bar 90, a brief sixteenth-note quintuplet appears, foreshadowing the subsequent development of the section. After two longer tones and a short rest, ascending chromatic figures in sixteenth-note septuplets follow (bars 92 – 94), with *accelerando*. Their range remains within the one-lined octave. Unexpectedly, the melodic line then leaps to the three-lined octave, where short, fragmented chromatic motives appear in various directions (bars 94 – 98) at a tempo of quarter note = 108.

The fourth section (bars 99 – 125) opens with a kind of introduction based on tremolos, complemented by a series of altissimo notes in quarter-note septuplets (bars 99 – 102). The intervals between them are small, often modified by quarter tones. The core of this segment is a motive consisting of two alternating notes separated by a major seventh, set in a rhythm of quarter-note septuplets or sextuplets. This clearly recalls the motive from bars 41 – 43. Many of the septuplet figures are preceded by a grace note (and at the junction of bars 105 – 106 even by two). The motive begins with a striking step of a major second between quarter-tone-modified pitches, followed by a brief suspension on the upper note. Completing the seventh-motive is a descending sequence of mostly quarter-tone pitches in eighth-note or eighth-note-quintuplet rhythm. These three components together form an extended gesture of marked emotional intensity. It first

appears in bars 104 – 107 in a slightly different variant (lacking the initial major-second step and closing with a descending figure in the three-lined octave). In bars 108 – 124, this gesture is presented four times in identical form. Its dynamics swell gently from *pianissimo* to *mezzopiano*, then subside to *piano*. The clear emotional charge of this passage makes it an expressive culmination of the work, all the more so since the distinctive gesture is repeated four times.

The fifth section (bars 126 – 151) overlaps with the previous one: following the sixteenth-note quintuplet in bar 126, the closing motif from the fourth segment returns. At first, the narration displays a certain hesitancy, as though unable to begin in earnest. Short figures in the rhythm of sixteenth-note quintuplets, sextuplets, or septuplets-interspersed with rests-appear; these are rhythmic ornaments, primarily trills. Minor seconds dominate, and occasional repetitions occur. In bar 132, a continuous flow of the segment finally begins – the ornamental motives merge into longer, winding chains. The pitch range here spans the second and third octaves; dynamics remain consistently at *piano pianissimo*. Unexpectedly, in bar 147, wider intervals appear – the saxophone's melodic line finally reaches the beginning of the four-lined octave, where it halts on an oscillation between two notes a semitone apart. The rhythm calms, while the dynamics suddenly increase to *forte* (see Example 2).

During the preparation for the performance of the work, I proposed to the composer that the material of this section be replaced by a free improvisation. My idea met with his approval, and therefore the recorded version includes this improvised passage. In performing it, I make every effort for it to be perceived as a natural continuation of the musical narrative rather than as an alien intrusion. On the one hand, part of its material corresponds in some sense to the original motivic content of the work (for instance, trills and tremolos); on the other, I wished to enrich the music with elements hitherto absent or only minimally present (such as multifonics). My concept of improvisation received the composer's full endorsement.

Example 2 – *UI*, bars 144 – 147

The last, sixth segment of *UI* (bars 152 – 173) introduces nothing new. It begins with a short passage of staccato repetitions organized in sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets (bars 152 – 156), which may be regarded as a distant echo of the material from bars 56 – 61. This time, however, the repetitions are confined mainly to the one-lined octave and proceed at a tempo of quarter note = 104. They precede a reminiscence of the material presented at the beginning (bars 157 – 161, cf. bars 13 – 17). The final passage (bars 164 – 172) also contains a reference to earlier motives: its material recalls bars 140 – 141, and the motives found there are repeatedly invoked in various configurations throughout the last segment. This section (bars 164 – 171) is marked with repeat signs – the composer intended it to be performed several times. The reminiscence of the meandering motion in irregular rhythmic groupings from the fifth segment is complemented by a very short descending dotted figure, which simultaneously marks the conclusion of the fixed-media layer.

*UI* is among Jabłoński's most frequently performed works for saxophone. Its material allows the soloist to display the best aspects of their performance technique – and, above all, their musicality. At the same time, the piece is somewhat atypical and occasionally unconventional, which adds to its appeal for potential performers. *UI* also fits well within the composer's overall style, highlighting above all his focus on the textural and timbral dimensions of sound. Certain analogies can be observed with the orchestral work *Fuori*, particularly in the manner in which the electroacoustic layer is shaped in terms of timbre. A close affinity can also be identified in a specific type of ornamental, texture-generating motifs, which appear in the final developmental phase of *Fuori*.

## II.2 SAXOSPHERE

Nearly a decade separates *Saxosphere* from *UI*. The work was composed in 2021 at the request of Łukasz Nędza, with the intention of being performed during the 2nd Polish Saxophone Congress in Poznań. Compared with its predecessor, its material is far more diverse, and its atmosphere – considerably more restless. This results from the greater variability of the musical flow, which presents the performer with a different kind of challenge, even though the aim remains the same: to construct a coherent, internally unified form. Following the solo part, the fixed-media layer is likewise more varied than in *UI*. Although it still functions primarily as a background, its content includes more distinct, at times even assertive elements that occasionally compete with the soloist for narrative prominence. For this reason, brief moments of conflict-lasting only a few seconds-may occur. As in *UI*, the electroacoustic layer is based largely on looping and echo effects. There is no strict temporal correlation between the saxophone and the tape: although the composer provides approximate timings for the successive systems in the score, he does not treat them rigidly, allowing for desynchronizations of several or even a dozen seconds. The vast majority of the fixed-media sounds are derived from the timbre of the alto saxophone itself, which reinforces the overall coloristic unity. The prevailing tempo is quarter note = 54.

*Saxosphere* is a single-movement work whose internal structure reveals a rather indistinct division into developmental phases. There are nine such phases of unequal length; unlike in *UI*, the individual sections are not sharply differentiated from one

another. They are usually separated by short pauses in the solo part, and their boundaries are sometimes marked by contrast.

The opening of the work in the solo part is deliberately understated – the first segment (bars 1 – 17) gives the impression of the saxophone sound gradually emerging from the fixed-media texture. The soloist enters progressively, presenting mostly long tones in low dynamics (not exceeding mezzo piano in three places), within the two-lined octave. The dynamics of these tones tend to swell and then subside. This section also features a single multiphonic (bar 10; diminuendo) and four short, gentle glissandi (bars 7, 8, 15, and 16). A decelerating trill figure (from thirty-second to sixteenth notes within a quarter note) in bar 6 provides the only moment of animation in this opening passage for quite some time. The next brief increase in activity occurs in bars 13 – 14, where accelerating motives appear (with rhythmic values progressing from sixteenth to thirty-seconds), together with a sixteenth-note triplet (a short flourish ascending to the altissimo register). The two-minute introductory segment, however, closes once again with sustained tones (see Example 3).

The musical score for Example 3, *Saxosphere*, bars 9–18, is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a Saxophone (Sxf) part and a Computer (Comp) part. The first system (bars 9–12) is marked with a time signature of 1'49". The Sxf part begins with a *ppp* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic, then *ppp*, *pp*, *p*, and *mp*. A multiphonic is indicated in bar 10, and a decelerating trill figure is shown in bar 6. The second system (bars 13–16) is marked with a time signature of 2'06". The Sxf part features dynamics *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, and *ppp*, with glissandi marked in bars 15 and 16. The third system (bars 17–18) shows a *n* dynamic in the Sxf part. The Comp part is mostly silent, with some activity in the second system.

Example 3 – *Saxosphere*, bars 9 – 18

The second segment (bars 18 – 31) brings a noticeable enlivening of the narrative. The saxophone's melodic line is capricious here – short rhythmic values alternate with longer ones, the melody moves in opposing directions, and the intervals are highly varied (ranging from a minor second to a minor ninth, and even a major tenth). The changes occur rapidly and unexpectedly, showing no regularity and thus creating an impression of restlessness. Among the faster motifs one can find thirty-second-note repetitions (both regular and irregular, within eighth-note triplets or sixteenth-note quintuplets-bars 19, 21, 23, and a longer series in bars 28 – 29), short runs in the rhythm of thirty-second-note quintuplets or sixteenth-note triplets (bars 20, 25, and 28), as well as chromatic progressions (mostly in thirty-second notes, bars 22 and 24). These are interspersed with somewhat longer tones lasting between an eighth note and a half note, with sixteenth notes appearing only sporadically. The overall dynamic level remains low (mostly piano), with occasional mezzo piano - mezzo forte moments, and a crescendo to forte in bar 28. The narrative of this section leads to a climactic point at the junction of bars 28 – 29, followed by a suspension of motion in the altissimo register and a brief descending line with glissando elements (bar 30).

The third segment encompasses bars 32 – 49. It is exceptionally organized in terms of material: its structure alternates between rapid thirty-second-note motion and sustained tones lasting from a half note to two whole notes. The only deviation occurs in bar 34, which includes an eighth-note triplet, a sixteenth, and a dotted eighth. Within the three appearances of this thirty-second-note motion-covering spans of 9, 2, and 6 quarter-note beats-occur microtonal stepwise movements in changing directions, separated by larger intervallic leaps and, at times, short pauses (bars 32 – 34, 37, and 48 – 49; see Example 4). In the remaining measures (bars 40 – 47), long tones appear in the three-lined octave, sometimes complemented by small descending glissandi (bars 40 – 43). In bars 45 – 47 these sustained tones take the form of various multiphonics, preceded by a frullato crescendo at the junction of bars 44 – 45.

This time the transition to the next formal segment is rather smooth-after a short fermata, a slightly modified version of the material from the initial developmental phase returns, along with the idea of dynamic swelling and subsiding. The content of bars 2 - 13 forms the basis of the reminiscence in bars 50 – 61, which constitute the fourth section of the work. Compared with the original, several subtle modifications are evident: additions (for example, the sustained tone in bar 51, where the corresponding place in the first segment contains a rest), harmonic changes (including transpositions, such as a minor

third higher in bars 54 – 55), and timbral differences (a frullato in bar 60 replacing ordinary tone production in bar 12). This section concludes with a rapid ascending chromatic passage in thirty-second notes grouped as eighth-note triplets.

The fifth section of the composition (bars 62 –70) likewise draws upon earlier material. After a subtle opening (a long tone followed by staccato thirty-second-note repetitions within an eighth-note triplet in the altissimo register), the content of bars 19 – 24 (second segment) returns in bar 62. The original material is here enriched by looping motifs consisting of three descending tones separated by tritones and fourths (bar 65), later by thirds and fifths (bar 68; rhythm of sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets).

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Saxophone (Sxf) and Compressor (Comp). The score is organized into four systems, corresponding to bars 32 through 37 of the piece 'Saxosphere'.

- System 1 (Bars 32-33):** The Sxf part begins with a series of thirty-second notes, marked *pp* (pianissimo). A crescendo hairpin leads to a *p* (piano) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo back to *pp*. The Comp part is silent. A time stamp of 3'24" is shown at the end.
- System 2 (Bars 33-34):** The Sxf part continues with similar rhythmic patterns, marked *p* and *pp*. A decrescendo hairpin is present. The Comp part remains silent. A time stamp of 3'29" is shown at the end.
- System 3 (Bars 34-35):** The Sxf part features more complex rhythmic figures, including eighth-note triplets, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano), *pp*, and *f* (forte). A crescendo hairpin leads to the *f* dynamic. The Comp part is silent. A time stamp of 3'42" is shown at the end.
- System 4 (Bars 35-37):** The Sxf part continues with complex rhythmic patterns, marked *ppp* (pianississimo) and *mp*. A crescendo hairpin leads to the *mp* dynamic. The Comp part is silent.

Example 4 – *Saxosphere*, bars 32 – 37

Bars 71 – 77 form the sixth segment of *Saxosphere*. It recalls the material of the third section (cf. bars 32 – 34), now enriched by analogous ornamental chromatic figures and tremolandi (e.g., bars 74 – 75). At the end of this short segment, thirty-second-note repetitions return (as triplets or sixteenth-note quintuplets), preceded by short descending glissandi.

The seventh segment (bars 78 – 94) introduces a change in articulation to frullato, accompanied by a degree of harmonic centralization (suggesting a D minor scale). In bars 81 – 90, material from the second section is recalled (cf. bars 19 – 28), but transposed up by a major second. The intervallic and rhythmic structure remains unchanged, except in bar 88, where the regular sixteenth notes from bar 26 are transformed into Lombard rhythms. This reminiscence is preceded by a brief introduction that flows seamlessly into the main section. It leads to a series of increasingly dense diaphragmatic accents (rhythms ranging from eighths to sixteenth-note sextuplets) in a crescendo. This passage should be regarded as the climactic point of the entire work. Immediately afterward, the dynamics subside from forte to mezzo piano, and in the conclusion of this segment, increasingly longer diatonic ascending figures in sixteenth notes appear.

After a fermata in bar 94 begins the eighth section (bars 95 – 116). Initially, it presents an alternation of different motifs: diaphragmatic accents in the rhythm of sixteenth-note quintuplets, frullato tones, and agitated ascending figures (in sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets; see Example 5). In bar 98 the motion subsides, and the narrative shifts to long tones in the altissimo register. At first these include short descending glissandi, but from bar 105 onward, sustained tones (in the upper three-lined octave) are exposed.

Example 5 – *Saxosphere*, bars 95 – 98

The final segment (bars 117 – 128) opens with a series of thirty-second notes arranged as eighth-note triplets. This motion forms chromatic-diatonic meanders built on seconds in the upper half of the two-lined octave. Just before bar 118, the line drops into the one-lined octave, continuing its meandering motion between  $c^1$  and  $g^1$ , and concluding on the instrument's lowest tone. The ending recalls twice a long F-sharp in the two-lined octave (spanning eleven quarter notes), followed by a brief eighth note at the same pitch. Simultaneously, the fixed-media part should gradually fade out, so that both components of the musical narrative conclude at approximately the same time. *Saxosphere* shows a number of similarities to Jabłoński's works from the years 2015 – 2020. Compared to his earlier output, its harmonic language is more strongly inclined toward atonality, while the formal course of the piece is noticeably more discontinuous and agitated. The solo part is characterized by an improvisatory quality, evoking in particular *Concerto grosso No. 5*.

### II.3 SOLILOQUIUM II

*Soliloquium II* was composed in 2024 at the request of the present author. When addressing the topic of Maciej Jabłoński's solo works for alto saxophone with electroacoustic layer, I hoped that he might agree to compose one more substantial piece

of this kind for inclusion in this doctoral dissertation. Professor Andrzej Rzymkowski undertook to convey my request and mediate with the composer – however, this proved to be no difficult task, as Jabłoński willingly fulfilled my expectations. Since the new piece was intended to be recorded on the same album as his earlier works, it was reasonable to maintain a certain stylistic coherence so that the collection would form a unified whole. Indeed, *Soliloquium II* largely develops the ideas present in *UI* and *Saxosphere*, together forming a world of shared aesthetic solutions.

In comparison with its predecessors, *Soliloquium II*<sup>17</sup> is a considerably more extensive work. It lasts roughly as long as both earlier compositions combined – over twenty minutes. The fixed media layer performs a similar function to that in *UI* and *Saxosphere*, though its form is closer to the latter. Approximately ninety percent of the sounds that make up the electronic background derive from the alto saxophone; however, it is not merely a subtle, shimmering backdrop as in *UI*. Here, more distinct motifs appear, sometimes aspiring to compete with the soloist. True to his usual practice, Jabłoński did not impose strict synchronization between the two layers, thus allowing the performer significant freedom in shaping the course of the musical narrative. Nevertheless, the presence of clearly profiled motifs in the fixed media sometimes compels the soloist to respond to them. The material of this layer is constructed on looping and echo effects, which makes precise temporal coordination unnecessary – differences of several or even over ten seconds between the notated and actual realization times are entirely acceptable. In all cases, material kinship between the two layers is preserved, relieving the soloist of the pressure of maintaining absolute synchronization and eliminating the tension associated with it. This enhances the performer's sense of interpretative freedom, something the composer particularly values. This is especially important because *Soliloquium II* is a large-scale, multi-layered, and formally complex composition.

Throughout the entire work (approximately twenty-one minutes in duration), a single tempo is maintained: quarter note = 54. This slow tempo allows for certain fluctuations during the execution of shorter rhythmic values. Although the rhythmic structure of the work is simpler than that of *Saxosphere*, the calm tempo and the suggestion of employing rubato contribute to rhythmic flexibility. This promotes individualization in the realization of the musical material and increases the performer's

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<sup>17</sup> The piece *Soliloquium I* was composed in the same year, and is written for bass recorder and fixed media. Maciej Jabłoński does not exclude the possibility of expanding the cycle with additional pieces – all of which would share the concept of combining a solo instrument with an electroacoustic component.

role in shaping the expressive character of the piece. This is entirely intentional on the composer's part and corresponds with the idea behind the work: *Soliloquium* is the Latin term for "monologue" – a conversation with oneself. Indeed, the music aptly reflects the atmosphere and character of such an inner dialogue – a reflection upon one's own thoughts.

The narrative of *Soliloquium II* is variable and quite diverse, although this variability seems less pronounced than in *Saxosphere*. The melodic line of the saxophone part often assumes a textural character, yet clearly motivic passages are also present. In contrast to the earlier works for alto saxophone and fixed media, one can here discern elements of motivic development. Certain motifs recur throughout the composition, often undergoing transformation; their form-shaping function coexists with that of the evolving texture and timbre – an approach typical of Jabłoński's chamber music. The most important motif appears to be a relatively simple structure, both rhythmically and intervallically, introduced at the very beginning. It consists of a long crescendo note leading into a single group of regular sixteenth notes: the first tied to the preceding long tone, the second a repetition of the same pitch, the third a tritone higher, and the fourth a repetition of that pitch. This motif (or, more precisely, its variants) recurs frequently throughout the work's narrative, assuming a signal-like function.

The structure of *Soliloquium II* comprises eleven sections of varying duration. Some are separated from the previous ones by a longer pause, while others follow almost immediately. The first section (bars 1 – 16; see Example 6) serves as an introduction – a kind of initiation of the inner dialogue. The work begins with the electroacoustic layer, with the saxophone entering after ten seconds. In bars 2 – 7, the principal motif appears in three variants, all characterized by repetition. Bar 8 introduces ornamental figures resembling rhythmized turns, written in simple rhythms of sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets. In the following three bars, the main motif returns in an expanded version, followed by a long, undulating figure that accelerates gradually and ends with a trill (bars 12 – 13). Immediately afterward, a variant of the main motif appears again, this time enriched with a looping triplet figure of a three-note descending sixteenth-note turn (two descending seconds; bar 14), a slightly longer tone following an upward leap, and a chromatic descent in thirty-second notes. At the end of this passage, the dynamics rise abruptly to forte, having previously hovered between ppp and p. The first segment concludes with a general pause lasting approximately eight to twelve seconds.

Example 6 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 1 – 16

Example 6 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 1 – 16

The second section (bars 17 – 48) constitutes the beginning of the work's main narrative. Although it resembles a freely constructed fantasy, the recurring characteristic motifs introduce a sense of formal discipline. This segment opens with the main motif extended by additional sixteenth notes and a tritone leap (crescendo to *mf*), after which the motion briefly halts, giving way to a series of dotted rhythms (dotted eighth-sixteenth; cf. bars 17 – 19). The passage concludes with a quarter note leading into a chromatic ascent in thirty-second notes. The motion of thirty-second notes returns after an eighth-note rest-this time descending – then stops on a half note and proceeds into a downward

passage in sixteenth-note sextuplets (mostly minor thirds). Another pause leads into a sixteenth-note quintuplet, initiating a gradual ascent. This chain of motifs culminates in a half-note trill at the beginning of bar 22.

A fragment of the main motif (sixteenth-note continuation) in bar 23 precedes the next phase of the second section. This part is distinguished by an ascending series of pitches separated by fourths or tritones, followed by a brief pause and slow descent. The first such figure begins with a sixteenth-note quintuplet and closes with short trills in thirty-second notes (bar 24). The next presentation of this structure opens with sixteenth-note motion, while the chromatic descent following a brief halt proceeds in eighth notes (bars 25 – 26). The continuation of this descent – in increasingly longer note values – forms the material of bars 27 – 28.

In bars 29 – 41, the narrative gains both intensity and mobility. Small rhythmic values predominate, and the dynamics fluctuate in waves, reaching *forte* three times. First appears a figure beginning with a group of sixteenth notes derived from the main motif, followed by an alternation of quarter notes and irregular sixteenth-note groupings (sextuplets and septuplets). The prevailing direction is ascending, leading to a trill at the beginning of bar 31. Another recurrence of the sixteenth-note group from the main motif initiates an extended passage in which three distinct musical phenomena intertwine: motion in moderate intervals (usually fourths, in sixteenth or sixteenth-note quintuplet rhythm) of varying direction; chromatic motion in thirty-second notes moving in a chosen direction; and slightly longer pauses in motion (lasting roughly a quarter note; cf. Example 7). The alternating directions of movement evoke a wave-like effect, occurring mainly in higher registers (including *altissimo*). In bar 37, a new musical idea appears: double descending steps in minor thirds in sixteenth notes, moving from the three-line to the one-line octave. The subsequent conglomeration of the aforementioned motivic phenomena culminates in a descending sequence alternating tritones and fourths in longer rhythmic values equal to five sixteenth notes (bar 40), followed by a quarter note and a thirty-second note turn figure.

Example 7 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 29 – 33

Bars 43 – 48 contain the final musical thought constructed from these three motivic elements. It features a much greater share of motion in fourths and tritones, written in sixteenth-note groupings (first two bars). The alternation of pauses and chromatic thirty-second-note motion appears later, generally with an ascending direction. The second section concludes with a half note followed by a long pause (six to ten seconds).

The third segment (bars 49 – 87) introduces a considerable change in the nature of the musical material. Fast motion disappears entirely, and the pace of the narrative slows (half notes and sustained quarter notes predominate). At the same time, wider intervals prevail, producing a sensation of “leaping” that sustains an undercurrent of unease. The melodic line of the saxophone becomes more intense: on the one hand, the composer explicitly calls for *dolcissimo* expression, yet on the other, the predominance of large intervals (mainly fourths and tritones) contradicts the vocal character. The frequent use of ligatures and irregular rhythmic groupings effectively obscures the pulse, rendering the notated 4/4 meter virtually imperceptible. Across bars 49 – 61, three phrases unfold, each lasting about three to four bars. The first – mostly ascending – covers a relatively narrow ambitus (A-sharp one – C3). The second rises more boldly (E1 – D3) before gradually descending, and includes shorter rhythmic values such as eighth-note

triplets or pairs of sixteenths. The final phrase ascends still more freely (F-sharp one – E3), due to the use of even larger intervals (sixths and sevenths), and does not end with descent. In each of these phrases, the upward motion corresponds with a crescendo reaching progressively higher dynamic levels (mp, mf, f).

Bar 62 introduces rhythmic simplification, which restores a sense of pulse. Between bars 62 – 65 unfolds a predominantly quarter-note frullato melody based mainly on tritones and seconds, moving from the lowest toward the upper (pre-altissimo) register. In the next four bars, a rhythmically irregular melody reappears, akin to the material from the beginning of the segment. The steady frullato quarter-note motion is reintroduced in bar 70 and continues uninterrupted until the end of the third section. Because of the prevalence of large intervals (fourths, tritones) and the maintenance of a single direction, the passage through successive registers occurs fairly rapidly. Later (from bar 79 onward), the intensity subsides, a result of alternating directions of motion and greater use of seconds. From the perspective of tension, the narrative assumes a wave-like shape; these oscillations of crescendo and diminuendo have a rather calm quality.

The transition to the fourth section (bars 88 – 111) is signaled by a clear reference to the first and second sections of the work. This is not a literal quotation of the opening material: alongside precise reminiscences, there appear entirely new motifs. The faithful quotations are expanded or supplemented with new material, generally by developing their original content and enlarging its scope. Thus, the chromatically descending triplets (bar 93; cf. bar 8) are extended, while the main motif leading into repetitions (bar 95; cf. bars 4 – 5) acquires a continuation of those repetitions in the same direction. The large, smoothly accelerating turn figure (bar 97; cf. bar 12) transitions into another turn-this time gradually slowing down. The reminiscence of bars 17 – 19 in bars 100 – 102 is extended with material derived from the dotted rhythms of the final bar and crowned with a trill followed by a rapid chromatic descent (bars 103 – 104; cf. Example 8). The next two bars present a slightly modified version of the developed reminiscence, now concluding with a descending passage in sixteenth-note quintuplets and a trill. This passage recurs, preceding several trills that close the fourth section. Its dynamic profile resembles that of the previous segment: wave-like motion with two peaks reaching forte (bars 98 and 107).

The musical score for Example 8 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 95 – 105, is presented in three systems. Each system consists of two staves: Sxf (Saxophone) and Comp (Compositional).  
 System 1 (bars 95-97): The Sxf staff begins at bar 95 with a dynamic of *< p*. It features a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a sixteenth-note triplet marked *pp*, and then a sixteenth-note sextuplet marked *mp*. The system concludes with a long, sustained note marked *ppp*. The Comp staff has a single note marked *mp*.  
 System 2 (bars 98-101): The Sxf staff starts at bar 98 with a dynamic of *f* and a long, sustained note. This is followed by a dynamic shift to *p*, then *pp*, and finally *p* and *mf*. The staff includes various articulations like slurs and accents. The Comp staff has a long line with several vertical tick marks.  
 System 3 (bars 102-105): The Sxf staff begins at bar 102 with a dynamic of *p* and a long, sustained note. The system ends with a dynamic of *p*. The Comp staff has a long line with several vertical tick marks and the instruction 'slow portamento stop' at the end.

Example 8 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 95 – 105

Before the fifth section (bars 112 – 151), there is a pause lasting six to ten seconds. It precedes a restless segment dominated by discontinuous sounds. Within a relatively small span, the dynamics fluctuate dramatically (from niente to fortissimo in four to five quarter notes). Up to bar 131, the material consists exclusively of tremolos within the range of a minor third. Almost all of these undergo a process of swelling and fading, with the exception of the motifs in bars 122 – 123 and 130 – 131. Beginning at bar 132, the material changes: the tremolos are replaced by alternations of sustained ordinario tones and frullato tones (on the same pitch, in quarter-note rhythm). This series of interwoven articulations of a single pitch culminates in a chromatic ascending passage of frullato thirty-second notes.

At the junction of bars 134 – 135, a brief return of the tremolo occurs, though this is the final appearance of the gesture in this segment. The quarter-note “ordinario–frullato” alternation in bars 136 – 138 evolves into a longer ascending passage (in the same rhythm and articulation); another similar gesture (bars 139 – 141) leads to an even more extended frullato ascent. The next two bars consist solely of chromatic thirty-

second-note motion alternating downward and upward (cf. Example 9). From bar 144 onward, the alternation of “smooth” and frullato tones assumes a slightly different shape: pairs of connected quarter notes, with the second (frullato) accented. Despite changing directions of motion, the overall tendency is ascending; the dynamics increase to forte in bar 148, then diminish to piano toward the end of the following bar. The close of this section is rather unexpected: bar 150 consists of a series of “Sicilian” rhythms-eighth-note triplets in which the first value is dotted and the second shortened to a sixteenth note. At this moment, the fixed media part is intended to overpower the soloist’s sound, after which the saxophone falls silent for ten seconds.

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Saxophone (Sxf) and Compressor (Comp). The score is divided into three systems, each representing a different section of the piece.

- System 1 (Top):** The Saxophone part begins with a series of notes, with dynamics *p* and *frull.* (frullato) indicated. The Compressor part is mostly silent, with a few notes in bar 141.
- System 2 (Middle):** The Saxophone part continues with a series of notes, with dynamics *mf*, *mp*, and *p* indicated. The Compressor part is mostly silent, with a few notes in bar 143.
- System 3 (Bottom):** The Saxophone part continues with a series of notes, with dynamics *mf*, *p*, and *ritardando* indicated. The Compressor part is mostly silent, with a few notes in bar 143.

Example 9 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 139 – 146

The saxophone’s return in bar 152 marks the beginning of the sixth formal segment (bars 152 – 171). The idea of dynamic fluctuation remains present here as well – the volume gradually oscillates between piano and forte. The content of this section is constructed through the alternation of the same elements that shaped the second section. This is evident from the outset: longer moments of repose, “scattered” sixteenth-note motion, and chromatic thirty-second-note runs, usually in a single direction (the figure in

bar 154 being an exception). These longer halts vary considerably in duration: in bars 155 – 156 they range between an eighth note and a half note, separated by four-note groups of thirty-second figures in various directions. The longer note values are marked *frullato*, with the sole half note treated as a trill that resolves into a descending *frullato* sextuplet.

Beginning at bar 158, a fourth motivic element appears: staccato repetitions in triplet or sextuplet sixteenth-note rhythm. Initially, these repetitive groups alternate with chromatic *frullato* figures in thirty-second notes. Later, in bars 161 – 163, there appears a sequence consisting of a long tone, a “scattered” sixteenth-note figure, a pause on a trill, an ascending chromatic passage, staccato repetitions, a descending chain of semitones, another trill, and again repetitions (cf. Example 10). The next three bars contain only triplet or sextuplet repetitions, whereas bars 167 – 168 feature only chromatic thirty-second-note runs, mostly descending. These lead to the conclusion of the sixth segment, where a half note progressing into a wave-like chain of sixteenth notes (both regular and sextuplet; cf. bar 169) precedes a sequence of alternating quarter notes and slurred groups of four ascending sixteenths forming passage-like figures (Example 11). The last of these adjoins a half-note trill.

The image displays a musical score for two staves, Sxf (Saxophone) and Comp (Compositional), covering bars 161 to 164. The Sxf staff features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sextuplets, and is marked with dynamics such as *p*, *f*, *mp*, and *mf*. The Comp staff shows sustained notes and effects like 'looped effects'. The score is annotated with terms like 'frull.', 'ord.', and 'triple staccato'.

Example 10 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 161 – 164

The image shows a musical score for two staves: Sxf (Saxophone) and Comp (Compositional). The Sxf staff begins at bar 169 with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0, F#0, E0, D0, C0, B-1, A-1, G-1, F#-1, E-1, D-1, C-1, B-2, A-2, G-2, F#-2, E-2, D-2, C-2, B-3, A-3, G-3, F#-3, E-3, D-3, C-3, B-4, A-4, G-4, F#-4, E-4, D-4, C-4, B-5, A-5, G-5, F#-5, E-5, D-5, C-5, B-6, A-6, G-6, F#-6, E-6, D-6, C-6, B-7, A-7, G-7, F#-7, E-7, D-7, C-7, B-8, A-8, G-8, F#-8, E-8, D-8, C-8, B-9, A-9, G-9, F#-9, E-9, D-9, C-9, B-10, A-10, G-10, F#-10, E-10, D-10, C-10, B-11, A-11, G-11, F#-11, E-11, D-11, C-11, B-12, A-12, G-12, F#-12, E-12, D-12, C-12, B-13, A-13, G-13, F#-13, E-13, D-13, C-13, B-14, A-14, G-14, F#-14, E-14, D-14, C-14, B-15, A-15, G-15, F#-15, E-15, D-15, C-15, B-16, A-16, G-16, F#-16, E-16, D-16, C-16, B-17, A-17, G-17, F#-17, E-17, D-17, C-17, B-18, A-18, G-18, F#-18, E-18, D-18, C-18, B-19, A-19, G-19, F#-19, E-19, D-19, C-19, B-20, A-20, G-20, F#-20, E-20, D-20, C-20, B-21, A-21, G-21, F#-21, E-21, D-21, C-21, B-22, A-22, G-22, F#-22, E-22, D-22, C-22, B-23, A-23, G-23, F#-23, E-23, D-23, C-23, B-24, A-24, G-24, F#-24, E-24, D-24, C-24, B-25, A-25, G-25, F#-25, E-25, D-25, C-25, B-26, A-26, G-26, F#-26, E-26, D-26, C-26, B-27, A-27, G-27, F#-27, E-27, D-27, C-27, B-28, A-28, G-28, F#-28, E-28, D-28, C-28, B-29, A-29, G-29, F#-29, E-29, D-29, C-29, B-30, A-30, G-30, F#-30, E-30, D-30, C-30, B-31, A-31, G-31, F#-31, E-31, D-31, C-31, B-32, A-32, G-32, F#-32, E-32, D-32, C-32, B-33, A-33, G-33, F#-33, E-33, D-33, C-33, B-34, A-34, G-34, F#-34, E-34, D-34, C-34, B-35, A-35, G-35, F#-35, E-35, D-35, C-35, B-36, A-36, G-36, F#-36, E-36, D-36, C-36, B-37, A-37, G-37, F#-37, E-37, D-37, C-37, B-38, A-38, G-38, F#-38, E-38, D-38, C-38, B-39, A-39, G-39, F#-39, E-39, D-39, C-39, B-40, A-40, G-40, F#-40, E-40, D-40, C-40, B-41, A-41, G-41, F#-41, E-41, D-41, C-41, B-42, A-42, G-42, F#-42, E-42, D-42, C-42, B-43, A-43, G-43, 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again crescendo. The final gesture (cf. bar 196), separated by an eight-second general pause, converts the quarter note into short repetitions, followed by a descending chain of minor thirds and one major second (in sixteenth-note quintuplets and sextuplets).

Example 12 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 191 – 196

Unexpectedly, the rhythm becomes varied and shifts into Lombardic patterns (alternating thirty-second notes and dotted sixteenths, the latter accented). In bars 198 – 199, the narrative calms: the sixteenth-note sextuplet rhythm yields to a series of quarter notes tied in pairs (*ordinario - frullato*). Yet the tension increases – this results from a crescendo to fortissimo in bar 202. Bars 203 – 205 may be regarded as a failed attempt to initiate a new narrative line, a new “story.” It quickly becomes apparent, however, that associations with the main motif and its inherent tritone interval are inescapable. A “scattered” sixteenth-note figure leads to a halt on a half note h1, from which arises a modal thirty-second-note ascent (alternating whole tone and semitone) reaching e3. A firm sixteenth-note quintuplet figure, built from a descending tritone and fourth, an ascending minor third, and repetitions, introduces *frullato* quarter-note motion, each note a semitone higher than the last.

The ninth section (bars 212 – 239) embodies the second and third phases of the climax. Initially (up to bar 219), the motion of thirty-second notes dominates, sometimes

combined with eighth notes or longer trilled notes. This recalls, though in modified form, the ideas present in the sixth segment. Given the climactic context, motion previously cast in sixteenth notes is now rendered in eighths, while ascending thirty-second-note chains change their harmonic identity-from chromatic motion to fragments of one transposition of the “semitone – whole-tone” scale. Only the thirty-second-note repetitions remain unaltered. The culmination’s peak is marked by a series of g4 repetitions in bar 219. It is completed by a sequence spanning the lowest and one of the highest notes of the saxophone (*frullato*), which ends in bar 223.

The next bar introduces a descending melody constructed primarily from thirds. It is not overly complex, though perceiving its rhythmic shape is far from simple due to numerous ties. Between bars 229 – 239, the rhythmic intensity of the saxophone part increases: the earlier structure of values ranging from triplet eighths to half notes gives way to chains of even sixteenth notes (regular, quintuplet, sextuplet, triplet, and septuplet), and from bar 236 onward, to thirty-second notes. Diatonic stepwise motion replaces other intervals (here, mainly thirds).

The tenth segment (bars 240 – 257) plays a somewhat ambiguous dramaturgical role. It can be interpreted as a peculiar attempt to reactivate the climax while simultaneously seeking to reconcile with the existing state of affairs. It opens with an ascending melody built from two long notes (over a whole note each) and two short ones (eighth notes), separated by wide intervals (a major sixth and two sevenths). The subsequent sequence of mostly descending chromatic thirty-second-note passages clearly refers to the second and sixth sections. After bar 250, the chains of semitones give way to repetitions in the same rhythm (only in bar 251 do groups of sixteenth – note quintuplets, sextuplets, and septuplets appear, arranged to convey an impression of natural acceleration; cf. Example 13).

Example 13 – *Soliloquium II*, bars 245 – 253

The final twenty-two bars form the eleventh section (bars 258 – 279). This is a coda-like passage, a musical farewell-though one executed with great subtlety and restraint. Bars 258 – 263 contain a literal recall of the material from the opening of the work. The following measures feature music closely related to the first section: “scattered” groups of regular sixteenths separated by a tritone, thirty-second-note ornaments, and irregular or irregularly accented rhythmic values (from bar 268 onward). Bars 270 – 272 bring an exact reminiscence of the beginning of the second section (cf. bars 49 – 51), which evolves into a descending sixteenth-note figure repeated a fourth lower in the subsequent bar. The work closes with a slow melody in the instrument’s low register, fading away on c1.

Because of its length and the interpretative and performance challenges it poses, *Soliloquium II* must be regarded as the most demanding work for saxophone and electronics by Maciej Jabłoński. The soloist faces the task of maintaining the listener’s attention and concentration for more than twenty minutes while simultaneously ensuring

formal coherence. The work thus requires an innovative approach to the concept of virtuosity – one in which technical brilliance is not the principal component.

## **Chapter III**

### **Performance issues in the works of Maciej Jabłoński**

The performance issues present in all three works recorded and discussed in this dissertation should be examined jointly. All of them are characteristic of Maciej Jabłoński's saxophone output from his most recent creative period. The composer employs a very broad palette of performance techniques, which can nevertheless be regarded as a coherent and shared set of means.

While preparing for the recording of these works, I was fully aware that I would have to devote exceptionally focused and meticulous attention to performance-practice issues typical of contemporary music, with the aim of mastering them to the highest degree. Not only saxophonists, but also many other instrumentalists, mistakenly assume that contemporary music places fewer technical demands on the performer. This assumption is entirely false.

In the works of Maciej Jabłoński, the issue of sound color is of paramount importance. An additional aspect closely related to timbre is the frequent use of microtonally altered pitches. Such microtonal inflections – both raised and lowered – modify the sound color in a distinctive manner. On the one hand, they create a palette of additional timbral possibilities; on the other hand, they demand extraordinary precision from the performer, as any inaccuracy may result in an impression of faulty intonation. Work on each instance of a microtonally altered pitch requires a deliberate choice – within the extensive range of saxophone fingerings – of the most appropriate fingering. This process necessitates a detailed analysis of the pitches preceding and following the microtone. Only an ergonomically efficient fingering configuration allows for the creation of this uniquely expanded, timbre-oriented cantilena, as well as the execution of frequently very rapid technical passages. Absolute perfection of finger technique is therefore required.

Each of the three works discussed here possesses a completely different character. Presenting three works by the same composer within a single corpus constitutes a particularly demanding task in contemporary music. Differentiating their individual characters is one of the principal challenges faced by the performer. Maciej Jabłoński is a composer whose works are distinguished by a richness of color and a highly diversified

dynamic range, which plays a crucial role in shaping musical tension.

The performer must therefore construct a personal “dynamic world,” grounded in their own technical and expressive capabilities. It is particularly important that dynamic contrasts be executed with great subtlety. Very often, the dynamic means are confined to the ranges *pp*–*mp* or *mf*–*ff*. The electroacoustic layer created by the composer never allows the soloist to employ an excessively forceful *forte*. Insufficient attention to extreme dynamics may produce especially unfavorable results in Jabłoński’s works, leading to distorted sound that is incompatible with the aesthetic of his music.

Issues of intonation are also of exceptional importance and clearly perceptible. At first glance, one might assume that elements of the electroacoustic layer could effectively mask any intonational imperfections. Nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout these works, one encounters electronically processed sounds that are extremely clear and distinctly audible; though they may appear less prominent, they would mercilessly expose any shortcomings on the part of the instrumentalist. Likewise, all microtonal inflections – both raised and lowered – sound exceptionally precise and “true.” Impeccable intonation is therefore an absolute prerequisite.

I am particularly pleased that the composer granted me permission to improvise in the final section of *UI*. This is a great pleasure and honor, but also an extraordinary challenge for the performer. One must create a sound world that is fully compatible with the rest of the composition. Extreme care is required to avoid introducing a kind of dissonance, both in terms of pitch material and in the refined timbral quality that is so clear and representative of the work as a whole.

The opportunity to participate in this kind of collaborative co-creation of a musical work is a source of great joy. At the same time, it constitutes a highly demanding task for every subsequent performer of this piece.

In conclusion, the performance of Maciej Jabłoński’s works requires an exceptionally high degree of technical precision and represents a genuinely intellectual challenge. Naturally, performing on any instrument and in any musical genre always demands solid technical preparation; however, the interpretation of these particular works confronts the performer with challenges of a distinctly different nature. They are often atypical for contemporary music, just as Jabłoński’s style itself remains atypical in relation to certain contemporary musical mainstreams.

I can assure every instrumentalist that engaging in the performance of these works will provide immense satisfaction and artistic fulfilment, while simultaneously elevating

their performance skills to a significantly higher level.

## Chapter IV

### Interview with Maciej Jabłoński

LL: Saxophone music constitutes an important part of your output; it is for this instrument that you have written the largest number of your solo works. What accounts for such a strong affinity for the saxophone? Is it your favorite instrument?

MJ: I am not sure I have a favorite instrument at all; I feel more or less the same about each of them. It is true, however, that I am very fond of the sound of the saxophone, and I greatly appreciate its capacity for timbral differentiation and its wide dynamic range. No other instrument I know can both whisper in extreme pianissimo and virtually roar in fortissimo. I enjoy the softness of its sound in low dynamics, as well as its very pronounced crescendos toward a large sonorous volume. This makes the saxophone an instrument with enormous expressive potential, and expressivity is, for me, the key element of music. This potential also encouraged me to include the instrument in the symphony orchestra, which appears in *Symphony No. 5*, and *No. 6*, as well as in *Fuori* (a concerto for two pianos, fixed media, and orchestra). It turned out that the addition of two saxophones significantly strengthens the woodwind section and allows for bolder combinations with the brass.

Such a significant number of my saxophone works is primarily the result of the efforts and initiatives of Prof. Andrzej Rzymkowski, to whom I owe more than one inspiration. In him I found a passionate advocate of my music – an advocate all the more valuable because he always respected my ideas and never exerted pressure on the sonic content of my pieces. I would sincerely wish any composer the opportunity to collaborate with someone so deeply committed.

LL: What was your first work that included a saxophone part?

MJ: That was the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra* from 2006. At that time, I tended to write highly expressive music with a very wide expressive range, though not structurally complicated – often motoric. Since my concept of the concerto genre rests, among other things, on depicting the relationship between the solitary individual

(the soloist) and the oppressive environment (the orchestra), I was primarily interested in means endowed with strong or even extreme expressive force. In the *Concerto* there is sonic contrast, sometimes rather radical, the soloist frequently seems to be fighting against the orchestra. There is no shortage of fast and motoric passages. The saxophone part is highly varied – as befits the concerto genre.

LL: Your next saxophone piece, however, had a completely different character...

MJ: You are referring to *Labyrinth of the Mind* from 2008. Yes, this piece differs markedly from the *Concerto*. I tried to express in it many shades of timbral subtlety, which were meant to portray the workings of the mind as well as the multiplicity and diversity of thoughts. The saxophones in *Labyrinth*... enter into various mutual relationships – from complete independence to full cooperation. Texture reigns here – the music of the piece is generally a kind of internally varied, shimmering continuum that seems to move in a meandering and restless way. At times, however, distinct and fairly uncomplicated motifs do appear, and one can also encounter unexpected vertical synchronization. This rhythmic alignment of the instruments occurs at a special moment in the work – one in which a highly pronounced emotionality comes to the forefront. It is a key fragment of *Labyrinth*..., one may even call it its emotional climax. It takes place after the dynamic climax, in which very complex rhythmic structures are superimposed in fortissimo.

At roughly the same time, I composed another saxophone piece: *Icons* (2008). This work was written for saxophone quartet, intended for the Cracow Saxophone Quartet as a piece for performance at the Krzysztof Penderecki Chamber Music Competition. *Icons* is a collection of miniatures, etudes – each has a different character and highlights a different technical issue. Both *Labyrinth*, and *Icons* exerted a considerable influence on my later saxophone output.

LL: The next saxophone work was *UI*, in which the soloist unfolds his narrative against an electroacoustic background (fixed media). What does this work mean in the context of your chamber music? Was it your first piece for a solo instrument with fixed media accompaniment?

MJ: I first used an electroacoustic layer as a background for a solo part in 2011 in *I Will Remember*, for solo flute; there is also a version for three baroque flutes and fixed

media. *UI* is my second attempt in this field. It was written during a period of particular interest in textural matters; in a sense, it is almost an experiment. Up to that point, my solo and chamber works had usually taken the shape of a sonic narrative, thus exhibiting a clear formal architecture and narrative progression. The music generally evolved from the opening moment toward a climax, after which tension decreased and returned to the initial state. This is, of course, a simplification, but it is true that increasing tension and a climax were “obligatory” elements of the musical course. This time, however, I wanted to see whether it would be possible to maintain the listener’s attention for about ten minutes without a clear drive toward a climax and even without rhythmically distinct melodic motifs. Around 2012 I was particularly focused on texture; therefore, in *UI* I placed the emphasis precisely on this domain. To enhance the impression of continuous meandering motion, I added a fixed-media layer generated with computer assistance – its nature is very similar, giving the impression of multiplying the saxophone’s meanders.

The variable, metrically elusive narrative of *UI* feels unreal, existing somehow outside time and resembling a dream. In my view, the experiment succeeded – I believe the music not only captures the audience’s attention but also creates a specific, oneiric impression. The prerequisite, however, is meticulous care for sound quality and tone culture: it must be maximally soft and warm-almost intimate in character-yet at the same time alive and dynamic. I can say with great satisfaction that you achieve this desired character perfectly. Every sound – whether in high or low dynamics – has its beginning, swelling, peak, and decay. Thus, it is never flat.

The intriguingly soft quality of your sound encouraged me to try yet another experiment. At your request, I replaced a certain original fragment with a short, free improvisation to introduce a greater variety of articulation and color. In my opinion, this solution served its purpose, for it alleviated the potential danger of timbral monotony. At the same time, it allowed – albeit to a small degree – your wonderful skills and vivid imagination to come to the fore.

My later works featuring a solo saxophone draw heavily from *UI*. Thanks to *UI*, I realized that I could replace or enrich motivic technique with extensive textural diversification. In *Saxosphere* and *Soliloquium II*, the development of form is based on combining motivic work with strong textural differentiation; the same holds for *Aureus II* for alto saxophone and harp, or the solo *Alpha*. I applied this technique successfully in other chamber works – it allowed me to free myself from certain limitations and habitual patterns. Even in larger works with solo parts, form and texture are shaped in similar ways

and play equally significant roles in the narrative (*Concerti grossi* Nos. 4 and 5).

LL: Yet you do not mention *Tao* – your second chamber concerto with a solo saxophone part. Was this an oversight, or was it intentional?

MJ: The case of *Tao* is quite specific. The concept of the piece is based on strong contrasts present on various levels. The form comprises two movements of radically different character, in the spirit of the *yin-yang* dichotomy in Taoist philosophy. The first movement (representing the masculine principle, *yang*) is kept in fast, volatile, and highly restless motion in the solo part, accompanied by an equally changeable chamber orchestra. The saxophone material is somewhat angular and contrasting, and highly varied. Creating and sustaining a decisive – sometimes even brutal – character and a sense of propulsion required the use of clear, distinct motifs aligned with the pulse. This affected the rhythmic language – regular rhythmic patterns dominate here, and irregular groups still conform to the meter without disrupting its flow.

The second movement is the complete opposite. It depicts the feminine principle – *yin*. This section is static, unfolds at a slow tempo, and the pulse is practically imperceptible. The solo saxophone often blends into the orchestral sound; its part does not differ substantially from the lines of the other instruments. My objective was to evoke a sense of calm and stillness, even a kind of emptiness, though in some rare moments (at the end of the work) one may hear meandering gestures reminiscent of *UI*. Long notes predominate. Shimmering figurations and varied texture were therefore inappropriate for either movement, which is why their presence in *Tao* is minimal.

It is worth noting that the experience gained during the composition of *Tao* – both theoretical and strictly practical – proved very useful when writing *Saxosphere*. Since the main axis of formal development in *Tao* lies in the orchestral part, I could shape the solo part much more freely and variably. I could proceed similarly later in *Saxosphere*, where the electronic background takes on the role of the orchestra. I realized then that my concerns about the coherence of various material qualities were exaggerated, and that Bogusław Schaeffer was right when he wrote in his *Small Handbook of Twentieth-Century Music* that music tends to homogenize itself. This allowed me to achieve a much greater degree of freedom in selecting material for *Saxosphere*, which undoubtedly enriched its narrative.

LL: Among your saxophone pieces there is one that is completely different from the others...

MJ: You must be referring to *Study of Color* for soprano saxophone and two alto saxophones, composed in 2018. Indeed, *Study...* differs markedly from my other works involving the saxophone. This is evident already from the score – my characteristic dense textures and irregular rhythms are entirely absent here, replaced by long note values or aleatoric elements based on improvisation. The lack of strongly varied texture shifts the focus to harmony rather than melody, as the melodic lines are either reduced to long notes or embedded within the thicket of improvised material. The harmony oscillates between consonances close to major–minor structures, atonal verticalities, and quarter-tone distortions of equal temperament. The “color” referred to in the title pertains precisely to harmony – the slow tempo favors the contemplation of various chords. An important advantage of *Study of Color* is the relative ease of performance – the piece does not require extended practice. Composing it was somewhat of a challenge for me: I had to reject the basic components of my musical language. Of course, I could always have limited myself to aleatoric material, but that would have adversely affected the clarity of the work’s aesthetic profile and its recognizability. And I would not have learned anything in the process.

LL: *Saxosphere* was written a year later, and in 2024 came *Soliloquium II*, your latest saxophone work – exceptional in its length and diversity. Despite obvious differences, these two pieces share many common features. What shaped their musical content?

MJ: *Saxosphere* was written for a presentation at a saxophone congress, so I wanted to diversify the material substantially in order to display both the instrument’s sonic richness and the performer’s abilities – in this case, Łukasz Nędza. I abandoned the shaping of the narrative as a sonic tale – *Saxosphere* resembles much more a free fantasy or a showcase of the instrument’s capabilities. The rhapsodic nature of the form does not, however, relieve the composer of the responsibility to ensure coherence of the narrative. Formal unity is strengthened by the use of the electroacoustic layer, whose material remains closely related to the material of the solo part. This relationship is structural rather than temporal – as usual, I do not demand precision or synchronization. The tape was

prepared so that any temporal shifts between the parts will not disrupt the intended sonic effects of their juxtaposition. This gives me a sense of freedom and considerable narrative “elasticity.”

By contrast, *Soliloquium II* was composed especially for you, to be included in your doctoral dissertation. One of its fundamental premises was its long duration (over 20 minutes) and broad phrasing-features that clearly distinguish it from *UI* and *Saxosphere*. However, the motivic language – both in terms of intervallic choices and rhythmic patterns – shows many similarities with both earlier works. One could even say that *Soliloquium* is a synthesis of the two.

Motivic development plays an important role in its structure, involving the transformation and elaboration of motifs. One result of employing this form-shaping technique is a strong sense of narrativity – the music, as it unfolds, seems to tell a story, thereby displaying marked evolutionary character. I placed great emphasis on creating a sense of derivation. Even in moments of contrast, I sought to preserve a sense of connection between adjacent fragments and to impart a cause-and-effect character to these transitions. This predisposition toward motivic development facilitates this. Compared with *Saxosphere*, the narrative exhibits less variability – the intensity and degree of change in the character and structure of motifs is much lower. I also made use of material repetition – both literal and modified.

The material of the fixed-media part also exhibits a broader phrasing. Compared with the analogous layer in *Saxosphere*, its gestures are longer and its material more coherent. Some of it resembles motivic shapes from the solo part, while other elements are entirely new. At times, gestures in the electroacoustic layer push into the foreground. The kinship between a large portion of both layers creates an impression of intentional interaction – even without strict temporal synchronization. Abandoning strict synchronization allowed me to achieve a sense of “timelessness” in the narrative – an impression of resistance to the passage of time – and it also afforded the soloist significantly greater comfort, which in turn influences the music’s character.

LL: Where do you obtain information about the possibilities and qualities of the instrument? What significance has contact with performers had for your work? Do you consult your ideas with them?

MJ: My knowledge of the saxophone stems primarily from the excellent, widely

recognized works of well-known composers. While writing any particular piece, I did not consult my ideas with anyone; therefore, the preferences of specific performers played no role in shaping the musical material. As it happened, I tended to develop closer relationships with saxophonists only during the preparation and performance of the piece; thus, there was no opportunity for them to significantly influence the musical text. There are, however, three cases in which I took into account the individual qualities of performers while composing – these concerned musicians with whom I had already collaborated.

The first was Michał Knot, for whom I wrote *UI*, and whom I had known from working on *Labyrinth of the Mind*. In 2016 I composed *IU* for alto saxophone and piano – this work was written at the request of Bartłomiej Duś, who a year earlier had premiered the solo part in *Tao*. The third case concerns *Saxosphere*, which I wrote for Łukasz Nędza, who had performed several of my chamber works. All three approached me with a request for a new piece to enrich their repertoire. It is also worth adding that my most recent saxophone piece – *Soliloquium II* – is likewise the result of a commission, for it was written specifically for you.

LL: And how do you view the role of the performer in shaping the sonic image of a work?

MJ: In my opinion, it is crucial. I am, by nature, an open person, curious about the world, and I enjoy diversity. Evidence of this is, for instance, the fact that I own 32 recordings of various performances of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 6* (my favorite composer), and I consider each one worth hearing. In working with performers of my music, I always try to listen attentively to what they have to offer. I have never forced musicians to accept my viewpoint without discussion or without confronting their own ideas. I believe that the performer knows their instrument better than I do and is more capable of choosing means that are optimal in relation to their own abilities and inclinations. Therefore, it often happens that I allow the musician to introduce modifications in order to better utilize their skills – especially when I see that such a change benefits the sound. Personally, I accept various interpretations of the text as long as the piece retains its individuality and identity.

Someone once said that in my works performers often become co-creators of the music. It is true-sometimes I even encourage musicians to search for alternative

interpretive approaches to find the best solutions. I do not fetishize the score – for the simple reason that paper will accept anything, even the greatest absurdity, whereas the composer is seldom infallible and can easily write something unplayable or poorly sounding. Young composers often learn from the scores of famous and acclaimed authors. They do not realize that many of the impressive devices in those scores sound entirely different or are even unplayable, and that in recordings they were replaced with alternative solutions. For this reason, I often insist that my composition students consult their ideas with instrumentalist colleagues as often as possible.

Throughout my career, I have found that treating the performer as a co-creator results in greater commitment and deeper emotional involvement. This, in turn, leads to interpretations that are more individual and original. I am not bothered by the existence of several different approaches to a single piece, on the contrary, I appreciate such situations. A good example is *UI*, which so far has had three performers (Michał Knot, Krzysztof Guńka, and yourself). Each created an interpretation distinct from the others, yet all are fully consistent with my aesthetic idea, and all are convincing and beautiful, which pleases me greatly! I must add that your way of performing *UI* lends the music extraordinary softness and nobility, as well as a profoundly personal character. This is why I readily agreed to your proposal to include a free improvisation. It introduces new elements, enlarging the work's overall panorama. At the same time, the improvisation further emphasizes the individuality of your interpretation.

To be honest, I oppose the notion of a single “correct” interpretation; I do not trust aesthetic “canons.” Of course – I know that there is always some aesthetic paradigm within which one must remain. But I see no need to establish a model performance of a work. Music would be far poorer if we had to limit ourselves to a single approach. Different perspectives on the same text enrich the music and give it depth, allowing new aspects to be discovered – those hidden between the notes.

LL: Thank you for the conversation.

## Conclusion

When I began my education in Poland, I did not anticipate that Polish saxophone repertoire would prove to be so rich and diverse. From the very beginning of my stay in this country, I conceived the idea of disseminating this body of work in the People's Republic of China, as it fully deserves such recognition. I soon became convinced that this aim should constitute the very core of my doctoral project. It was, of course, impossible to devote the dissertation to all composers who have written outstanding music for the saxophone; therefore, it was necessary to focus on one specific composer.

Thanks to Professor Andrzej Rzymkowski, I became acquainted with the saxophone works of Maciej Jabłoński. I quickly discovered stylistic elements in this music that strongly resonated with my personal preferences and artistic temperament. His compositions offer unique opportunities to present the qualities of an instrumental performer without excessive reliance on so-called extended performance techniques; they allow one to demonstrate both technical proficiency and musical sensitivity. Jabłoński is neither a traditional composer nor a radically modernist one – the aesthetic path he follows is clearly distinct and remains at a certain distance from the contemporary mainstream. It is also highly diversified. The style of his works appears to oscillate between neoclassicism and the avant-garde: although Jabłoński readily employs new sound resources, he consistently refers to a traditionally understood ideal of beauty and a sense of musicality. I must admit that the figure of Maciej Jabłoński and his compositions intrigued me deeply, prompting a desire to explore his oeuvre more thoroughly. Professor Rzymkowski strongly supported this interest and encouraged me to select saxophone works by this composer. In this way, the concept of the repertoire for my doctoral recording was formed. It consists of three works by Maciej Jabłoński for saxophone and electronics (fixed media): *UI*, *Saxosphere*, and *Soliloquium II*.

The selection of these particular works was ultimately determined by the composer himself, who pointed out that the inclusion of an electroacoustic layer allows for a significant expansion of the compositional means and an increase in expressive potential. These works are not only excellent exemplifications of the aesthetic foundations of Jabłoński's saxophone writing; they are also representative of the composer's highly diversified overall style. Having become familiar with *UI* and *Saxosphere*, I ventured to ask the composer whether he would be willing to write another

work for saxophone and fixed media. To my great joy, Maciej Jabłoński agreed, and within a short time *Soliloquium II*, dedicated to me, was composed.

Although *UI* and *Saxosphere* have been performed many times on concert stages in Poland and abroad, no one had previously undertaken a detailed analysis of their musical structure. Such an analysis is all the more justified given that, according to the composer himself, these works constitute a kind of stylistic calling card. The same can be said of *Soliloquium II*. A detailed description of the music makes it possible to penetrate more precisely into the depths of Jabłoński's compositional technique and to reveal the means he employs. This doctoral dissertation appeared to be an ideal place to undertake such an analysis. The analytical sections of this study are relatively extensive and detailed, as –being the first researcher to address this body of work – I felt a particular sense of responsibility inherent in producing a pioneering scholarly study. My intention was to provide saxophonists in my home country with access to the most comprehensive possible discussion of these compositions. I also do not conceal my desire to promote this music in the People's Republic of China and to share with interested readers my particular relationship with the music of Maciej Jabłoński.

A partially promotional purpose is also served by the broad and relatively detailed presentation of the composer's artistic profile. Maciej Jabłoński is a composer who has already made a significant contribution to contemporary saxophone literature, yet remains relatively little known outside his immediate artistic milieu. In my view, the artistic stature of his works fully justifies such promotion. I am proud that through this dissertation I have been able to contribute to a stronger presence of Jabłoński's music within the panorama of contemporary saxophone repertoire.

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