

THE KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI ACADAMY OF MUSIC IN KRAKOW

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**An Analytical and Interpretive Study
of Two Musical Settings of Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns*—
Stanisław Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* and Karol Szymanowski's
Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz, Op. 5—
from the Perspective of a Performer**

**as part of the proceedings for the award of a doctoral degree
in the field of art, in the artistic discipline: musical arts**

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Introduction

1. Aim, subject and scope of the thesis

The poetry of writers associated with the Young Poland movement struck a profound chord in the world of music. The works of Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (1865–1940), Leopold Staff (1878–1957), as well as the poem *The Swan* from the novel *Próchno* by Wacław Berent (1873–1940) were set to music by composers such as Władysław Żeleński (1837–1921), Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876–1909), Ludomir Różycki (1883–1953) and Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937). In the second half of the 20th century and the first quarter of the 21st century, the language of this poetry was deemed excessively laden with metaphors, too florid and overly emotional; it thus lost its prominent place among the texts chosen by composers (one of the few exceptions being Artur Zagajewski's *Święty Boże* from 2018).

However, inspired by the author of this dissertation, a composer of the younger generation, Stanisław Rzepiela (b. 1993), turned to Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns* (1860–1926). This led to the creation of an album dedicated specifically to works set to the poetry of the great Young Poland poet, bringing together compositions by Karol Szymanowski and Stanisław Rzepiela.

The recording, as well as the analyses and interpretations presented here, are based on the following scores: Karol Szymanowski's *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*, published by Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne¹, and Stanisław Rzepiela's own score of *Dies Irae*, made available by the composer (for which the author of this thesis expresses his heartfelt thanks). For the interpretation of Kasprowicz's *Hymns*, the edition published by the National Library was used².

Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz, Op. 5, composed by Karol Szymanowski in 1902 for voice and piano, and Stanisław Rzepiela's *Dies Irae*³, composed in 2024 for instrumental octet and tenor voice, are thus linked by a common thread—Jan Kasprowicz's collection of poems *Hymns*. Written between 1898 and 1901⁴,

¹ Karol Szymanowski, *Lieder / Songs, GA/CE C10: Op. 2, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 20, 22 na głos i fortepian*, ed. Teresa Chylińska, Adam Neuer, PWM, Kraków 2019, pp. 19–38.

² Jan Kasprowicz, *Wybór poezji*, Biblioteka Narodowa, 2nd ed., Ossolineum, Wrocław 1973, pp. 55–65.

³ The spelling of the title of the Rzepiela's cycle, *Dies Irae*, with capital letters has been retained in accordance with the score. The title of the sequence with the same title and the title of Kasprowicz's poem are given in the work in the form *Dies irae*.

⁴ J. Kasprowicz, *Wybór...*, op. cit., pp. 55–65.

they were originally included in two collections: *Ginącemu światu* (published in 1902) and *Salve Regina* (published in 1902). The first cycle comprises *Dies irae*, *Salome*, *Holy God*, *Holy Mighty* and *My Evening Song*; the second comprises *Salve Regina*, *Hymn to St Francis of Assisi*, *Judas* and *Hymn to Mary of Egypt*. Reissued in 1922 as *Hymns*, the poems became one of the most important elements of Jan Kasprowicz's oeuvre, as well as one of the most significant works of the Young Poland movement.

This description of the doctoral thesis was written after the author, together with the other performers, had recorded the works by Szymanowski and Rzepiela. This made it possible to attempt to convey, through this description, certain reflections, observations and experiences related to the preparation and performance of both works. This entire process led the author to formulate the following thesis: the Young Poland expression in Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns* is the main feature linking Szymanowski's and Rzepiela's song cycles. The stylistic differences in these two works stem from the distinct musical means employed to achieve this very expression.

The aim of this study is therefore to compare the two song cycles. In his *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*, Op. 5, Karol Szymanowski used excerpts from the hymns *Holy God*, *Holy Mighty* and *My Evening Song*. Stanisław Rzepiela, on the other hand, includes Kasprowicz's hymn of the same title in his *Dies Irae*. The shared inspiration of both composers from source texts drawn from a single collection, coupled with numerous differences—the more than one hundred years separating the composition of the two works, the differing instrumental forces, and the varied compositional techniques—constitute a sufficient basis for a comparison of the two song cycles.

Since what links the two works is their literary source, the starting point taken here is an examination of Kasprowicz's poems as a literary work. The *Hymns* constitute a work of exceptionally complex form and content; they therefore require a specialist analysis from both a historical perspective—against the backdrop of the Young Poland movement—and a biographical perspective—taking into account the circumstances of Jan Kasprowicz at the time of their composition.

Research tools from the field of poetics, relating to versification and the poet's use of imagery, also proved indispensable in the analysis and interpretation of the textual material. Examining these issues allows for a smooth transition to a discussion of the interpretative and performance aspects of Szymanowski's and Rzepiela's cycles, and in

particular the relationship between word and sound; this, in turn, requires a thorough musical analysis, which is especially important in the case of a newly composed work for which no scholarly literature yet exists. The final, yet most important, issue is to examine both compositions from the perspective of the singer as a performer.

2. State of research

Given that Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns* as a whole are not the subject of this doctoral thesis, the author has decided not to include a detailed discussion of all the poems. It was nevertheless necessary to examine their historical, literary and philosophical contexts, among other reasons because both Kasprowicz and Szymanowski are associated with the Young Poland movement, which, in both literature and music, was characterized by a specific ideological foundation that influenced the meaning and form of artistic works. From the extensive bibliography concerning the literature of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the author of the dissertation therefore consulted only selected works. Relevant information on the *Hymns* can be found in Jan Józef Lipski's study and introduction to Kasprowicz's *Selected Poems*⁵, as well as in the academic article *The Position of Kasprowicz's "Hymns" against the Background of Literary Movements of the Period* by the same author. The cultural contexts mentioned above were outlined on the basis of Artur Hutnikiewicz's monograph *Młoda Polska*⁶ and his book *'Hymns' by Jan Kasprowicz*⁷. Jerzy Tynecki's article *A Metaphysical Motif and a Religious Theme: On the Metaphysical and Religious Interpretation of Jan Kasprowicz's "Hymns"*⁸ explores the emotional and ideological essence of this poetry, which Szymanowski and Rzepiela later sought to convey in their own song cycles, so markedly different in terms of musical language.

Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz, Op. 5, has been the subject of numerous studies. In the course of the research, the author consulted, among others,

⁵ Ibid., pp. 3–108.

⁶ Artur Hutnikiewicz, *Młoda Polska*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2012.

⁷ Idem., *Hymny Jana Kasprowicza*, 1st ed., Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warsaw 1973.

⁸ Jerzy Tynecki, *Metafizyczny motyw i religijny wątek: o metafizycznej i religijnej interpretacji „Hymnów” Jana Kasprowicza*, „Prace Polonistyczne” 1982, no. 38.

publications by Danuta Jasińska⁹ and Andrzej Chłopecki¹⁰. He also deemed necessary to consult Karol Szymanowski's own *Writings*, as well as texts by his sister, Stanisława Szymanowska. The latter offer a particularly important perspective from the standpoint of the contemporary singer: reflections by a singer who was intimately familiar both with Karol Szymanowski himself and, as the first performer, with his works. This makes it possible to gain a much deeper understanding of the composer's vocal music, particularly *Three Fragments*, as well as the performance conventions of the period. The trends and expectations prevailing one hundred years ago in music, literature, and the broader field of the arts should also not be overlooked, as they differed significantly from those prevailing today. Another important publication, likewise written by an opera singer, is Katarzyna Suska's monograph *On Poetry and Vocal Lyricism of the Modernist Era: Debussy, Szymanowski—Inspirations*.¹¹

Stanisław Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* for solo tenor and instrumental ensemble is, as mentioned above, a newly composed work, whose recording premiere constitutes the primary subject of research in this doctoral dissertation. Originally planned as a song cycle, the work proved, upon completion, more difficult to classify by genre, additionally exhibiting characteristics of both a cantata and a dramatic scene. The composer's presence during the recording process, as well as a conversation with him regarding the work, its form, tone, and possible interpretations, provided invaluable informational and empirical material that made possible a deeper examination of this new musical work. The composer's statement, included in the appendix to the doctoral dissertation, offers original insights and subjective reflections related to the process of working on the piece. Due to the lack of existing studies on the work of Stanisław Rzepiela, literature concerning other Kraków composers active during a similar period, as well as methodological works, also proved helpful. The chapter on *Dies Irae*, however, is based primarily on the author's own analysis and interpretation of this new work. Stanisław Rzepiela's approach to Jan Kasprovicz's *Hymns*, more than 100 years after

⁹ Danuta Jasińska, „Hymny” Kasprovicza w ujęciu Szymanowskiego [in:] *Pieśń w twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego i jemu współczesnych*, ed. Zofia Helman, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 2001.

¹⁰ Andrzej Chłopecki, „Jestem i płaczę”. *Hymn Jana Kasprovicza według Karola Szymanowskiego* [in:] *Pieśń artystyczna narodów Europy*, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski, ‘Muzyka i Liryka’ series, vol. 8, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 1999.

¹¹ Katarzyna Suska, *O poezji i liryce wokalne epoki modernizmu. Debussy, Szymanowski – inspiracje*, Wydawnictwo Akademii im. J. Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 2008.

Szymanowski's *Three Fragments* came into existence and entered the performance repertoire, raises the question: what elements of Szymanowski's work resonate in Rzepiela's composition? His *Dies Irae* is very different in terms of compositional techniques, instrumental forces, and musical language; nevertheless, it contains elements that correspond with Szymanowski's cycle, such as the emphasis on the eschatological theme, the decadent and pessimistic tone, the incorporation of motifs rooted in the liturgical music of the Christian rite, and the metaphysical symbolism embedded in the melodic and harmonic layers.

3. Research methods

Since the main objective of this study is to compare the cycles by Szymanowski and Rzepiela, particularly in terms of interpretative and performance aspects as well as the relationship between word and sound, all specific methods are subordinated to the comparative approach.

For a more precise description of the works in terms of performance practice, scholarly articles in the field of vocal studies will be consulted, including *Memory and Auditory Imagination in the Process of Teaching Singing*¹² and *Vocal Emission and Semantic Analysis of a Vocal Work*¹³ by Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska. Issues concerning the compatibility of literary text with musical phrasing have been addressed on the basis of Elżbieta Sierosławska's monograph entitled *Musical Phrase and Textual Phrase: Prosody in the Translation of Opera Arias*.¹⁴

The individual interview as a research method was used in the section presenting the statement of the composer Stanisław Rzepiela. The doctoral dissertation also draws on encyclopedia articles.

¹² Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska, *Pamięć i wyobrażenia dźwiękowa w procesie nauczania śpiewu* [in:] *Kształcenie wokalne*, ed. Bogumiła Tarasiewicz, Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Zielona Góra 2016.

¹³ Eadem, *Analiza emisyjno-semantyczna utworu wokalnego* [in:] *Z zagadnień emisji głosu*, ed. Hubert Miśka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2015.

¹⁴ Elżbieta Sierosławska, *Fraza muzyczna a fraza tekstowa. Prozodia w przekładzie arii operowych*, Akademia Pedagogiczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2008.

Chapter I

Jan Kasprawicz's *Hymns* as an example of Young Poland literature

1. Young Poland literature—main artistic movements

The period known in literature as Young Poland spans the years from approximately 1890 to 1918. The literature of this movement reflects the new artistic concepts of the late nineteenth century, while at the same time expressing the catastrophic and decadent moods characteristic of every period of decline, a phenomenon that recurs in almost every century. New ideas and artistic movements emerged during this period in all fields of art, and the affinity between the arts was widely emphasised, particularly the relationship between literature and music. The dominant movements were symbolism, impressionism, and expressionism. They do not usually occur in their pure forms, but rather coexist in a certain symbiosis. Young Poland, as a literary period, is often broadly identified with modernism, whose main characteristic was a focus on novelty, as well as with neo-romanticism, that is, ideas opposed to rationalist movements such as positivism and realism.

The strongest literary movement of the late nineteenth century was symbolism. The term itself is very broad; rather than referring solely to a specific aesthetic movement, it denotes, above all, a way of perceiving and interpreting the external world, which may find expression in art through various means. In her monograph devoted to vocal lyricism and the poetry of the modernist period, Katarzyna Suska describes Symbolism as follows:

‘The Symbolists’ aim was to portray the world subjectively and to convey *l’état d’âme* (state of the soul) through the use of symbols. They assumed that their artistic expression should be characterised by ambiguity and obscurity, since a symbol is, by its very nature, something that cannot be fully defined. Symbolism regarded the entire empirical reality as a metaphor for the world of ideas”¹⁵.

In the *Symbolist Manifesto* (1886), Jean Moréas included a sentence crucial to the aesthetics of Symbolism: ‘the essential characteristic of Symbolist art lies in the fact that an idea is never fixed conceptually, nor expressed directly’¹⁶.

¹⁵ K. Suska, *O poezji...*, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁶ Jean Moréas, *Manifest symbolistyczny* [from:] Maria Niemojowska, *Zapisy zmierzchu*, Czytelnik, Warsaw 1976, pp. 303–305.

Polish literature of this period stands out from other European literatures due to its much stronger grounding in a national and patriotic climate. The writers of Young Poland, although they looked to Scandinavian, Belgian, Germanic, British and French models, nevertheless continually referred to national and Promethean ideas. Kasprowicz's *Hymns* are an example of a work almost entirely based on a multitude of symbols, which form the intricate structure of the piece.

The second major aesthetic trend of Young Poland is impressionism, which, however, is not as pronounced in literature as it is in the fine arts or in the most abstract of the arts, namely music. Impressionism in literature, strongly inspired by painting, manifested itself mainly in poetry. It was an attempt to capture fleeting impressions and moods within a literary work. It sought to evoke sensory and emotional experiences by depicting the transience of dynamic phenomena. The main theme of impressionist poetry was nature, described—following the example of painting—at various times of the day and year. Émile Vuillermoz wrote:

“To be an impressionist is to endeavour to translate and transpose into the language of lines, colours, masses or sounds not the external, realistic aspect of things, but the sensations they evoke in our sensory perception¹⁷”.

Another important movement in Young Poland literature was expressionism. Strictly speaking, it emerged toward the end of this period and developed in literature and the other arts during the first three decades of the 20th century. One of the first Polish writers to be associated with this movement was Jan Kasprowicz. His *Hymns*, written between 1899 and 1902, even predated the programmatic phase of the expressionist movement, whose manifesto did not appear until 1911 in the German magazine *Der Sturm*:

“Programmatic expressionism advocated extreme subjectivism in artistic means of expression, the spontaneous evocation of subconscious, often pathological states. It sought means of maximum expression”¹⁸.

¹⁷ Émile Vuillermoz, *Claude Debussy*, Kister, Genève 1957, p. 94; quoted after: K. Suska, *O poezji...*, op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

Among the phenomena characteristic of the Young Poland era were also interests typical of European art as a whole, such as synaesthesia, decadent aesthetics, parapsychology and Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy. Decadentism emerged in literature as a term denoting a certain attitude to life and aesthetics as early as the mid-19th century. The aesthetics of the Decadents stemmed from a belief in the progressive decline of artistic taste, taking the culture of antiquity as its starting point. In 1886, Anatole Baju founded the magazine *Decadent*, in which he promoted decadent fiction and art¹⁹.

2. Jan Kasprowicz—life and work

Witold Gombrowicz, in his characteristic style, offered a laconic characterisation of Kasprowicz:

'Kasprowicz. Wholemeal bread, a pigeon's soul, a sincere singer... But also: a peasant-traitor, a false peasant, an unnatural nature, a manufactured simplicity. Kasprowicz, having left the peasant and transformed himself into an intellectual, nevertheless wanted to remain a peasant—as an intellectual'²⁰.

Jan Kasprowicz was born in Szymbórz, near Inowrocław, in 1860. He was the eldest of fourteen children in a peasant family. His father, Piotr, and his mother, Józefa, were illiterate. Their son went down in literary history as one of the most important Polish poets of the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His deeply religious mother had a strong influence on her son's spiritual development and also instilled in him a sensitivity to nature. The poet spoke of his mother in these terms: "She had an exceptionally keen sense of nature..."²¹. The poet's education was not without its difficulties, as he constantly changed schools and places of residence. He experienced a veritable Sturm und Drang period, and his personality was shaped by a series of often turbulent life experiences. He passed his school-leaving examination in 1884, at the age of twenty-four. Kasprowicz's personal life was equally complicated. In his early youth, he married Teodozja Szymańska, but the marriage soon ended in divorce. In 1893, he married for the second time, this time to Jadwiga Gąsowska. Two daughters were born of

¹⁹ *Encyclopaedia of Symbolism*, PWN, Warsaw 1997, p. 345.

²⁰ Witold Gombrowicz, *Dziennik 1953–1969*, Instytut Literacki, Paris 1984, p. 205.

²¹ Maria Kasprowiczowa, *Dziennik*, 2nd ed., Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, Warszawa 1958, p. 436; quoted after: A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., p. 30.

this marriage. In 1899, Jadwiga left Kasproicz and their children for Stanisław Przybyszewski, a family friend and an influential yet controversial figure in literary and artistic circles. Kasproicz married for the third time in 1911, to Maria Bunin, a journalist of Russian-Swedish descent who was considerably younger than him. In 1923, he moved with her to the Harenda villa in Zakopane.

Kasproicz made his debut as a poet in 1878, when he published the sonnet *Poranek* in the Poznań-based magazine *Lech*. According to Kasproicz's correspondence, as presented in Tadeusz Mikulski's article in *Pamiętnik Literacki*²² he published his first collection, *Poezje (Poems)*, in 1889, with a foreword by T. T. Jeż, in Lviv at the publishing house Księgarnia Polska L. K. Bartoszewiczowej²³. Kasproicz's work spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, encompassing the twilight of positivism, realism—and, at times, even naturalism—as well as the new currents of twentieth-century poetry, including symbolism, expressionism and other modernist movements. These movements influenced changes in poetics, leading to a relaxation of formal rules of versification in favour of free verse and poetic prose.

Kasproicz's work as a literary translator is particularly noteworthy. He was proficient in the classical languages—Greek and Latin—as well as in modern languages: French, English, German and Italian. Drawing on these linguistic skills, he produced numerous translations, ranging from the ancient dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides and the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Byron, Yeats, Goethe and Schiller to modernist works such as the poetry of Rimbaud, Maeterlinck, d'Annunzio, Ibsen and Heijermans. These works also had a strong influence on the development of his individual artistic language.

The influence of Kasproicz's rural Polish background is ever-present in his work; yet we can observe an evolving spirituality, ranging from a deeply rooted faith, most likely instilled by his mother and intermingled with opposition to the institution of the Church, through a crisis of faith manifested in a polemic with the Absolute that at times verged on blasphemy, and finally to a reconciliation with God and the world.

²² Tadeusz Mikulski, *Wrocławska korespondencja Jana Kasproicza 1885–1888*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1961, no. 52/2, pp. 427–522 [https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/texts/pamietnik-literacki-czasopismo-kwartalne-poswiecone-historii-i-krytyce-literatury-polskiej/1961-tom-52-numer-2/pamietnik_literacki_czasopismo_kwartalne_poswiecone_historii_i_krytyce_literatury_polskiej-r1961-t52-n2-s427-522.pdf, accessed: 10 September 2025].

²³ J. Kasproicz, *Poezje*, Księgarnia Polska L. K. Bartoszewiczowej, Lviv 1889.

Towards the end of his life, the poet settled in Zakopane, where he died in 1926 and was buried in a mausoleum on his estate in Harenda.

Year	Title	Literary type/genre	Literary movement
1887	<i>From the Cottage</i>	poetry (a cycle of sonnets)	naturalism
1889	<i>Poems</i>	poetry	naturalism
1890	<i>Christ</i>	poetry, religious poem	symbolism
1891	<i>From a Peasant's Plot</i>	poetry	realism, naturalism
1891	<i>The World is Ending</i>	drama	symbolism, catastrophism
1894	<i>Anima Lachrymans</i>	poetry	realism, pessimism, symbolism
1895	<i>Love</i>	poetry (a cycle of poems)	symbolism
1898	<i>A Wild Rose Bush in the Dark Spruce Woods</i>	poetry	symbolism, impressionism
1902	<i>To the Vanishing World</i>	poetry (hymns)	catastrophism, expressionism
1902	<i>Salve Regina</i>	poetry (hymns)	catastrophism, expressionism
1906	<i>On a Heroic Horse and a Collapsing House</i>	poetry	symbolism
1908	<i>Ballad of the Sunflower</i>	contemplative poetry (poetic ballad)	symbolism
1911	<i>Moments</i>	poetry	symbolism, impressionism
1916	<i>The Book of the Poor</i>	poetry	franciscanism
1917	<i>Sita</i>	poetry/prose	symbolism, orientalism

Table 1. Selected works by Jan Kasprowicz in the context of modernist movements.

3. The Origins of *the Hymns*

It is impossible to write about the genesis of Jan Kasprowicz's Hymns in isolation from his personal circumstances during the years in which they were written. In 1899, Kasprowicz's personal life underwent a significant upheaval. His then-wife, Jadwiga Gąsowska, had been showing signs of discontent for some time. She was bored and, in a sense, disappointed with her situation; married life had not lived up to her expectations. She felt lonely and, in her view, deprived of entertainment, raising her daughters virtually without her husband's involvement, while he was constantly travelling and leading the interesting and glamorous life of an artist.

Aware of his wife's fascination with the work of his friend Stanisław Przybyszewski, Kasprowicz invited him to stay with them for a short while. Unfortunately, the visit ended with Jadwiga's decision to leave her husband and daughters

for Przybyszewski, followed by her departure with him to Warsaw, where they were to continue their life together.²⁴ The official divorce was finalised in 1905.

This was probably the most difficult event in the poet's life, one that shook the spirit of the sensitive artist, who was already burdened by other difficult life experiences. Scholars see this crisis as the source of inspiration for the collection *To a Vanishing World* (published in 1902).²⁵ . Volume I, symbolic and apocalyptic in its ideological message, contained four hymns: *Dies irae*, *Salome*, *Holy God*, *Holy Mighty*, and *My Evening Song*. Volume II contained the following: *Salve Regina*, *Hymn of St Francis of Assisi*, *Judas*, and *Mary of Egypt*. Volume II was published under the title *Salve Regina. The Poems*, simultaneously in Lviv and Warsaw towards the end of 1902.²⁶ . This volume bears witness to an attempt to come to terms with the world and a search for hope²⁷ . It was precisely these poems—these hymns, constituting Kasproicz's magnum opus—that were received with great enthusiasm by critics and readers from the very outset²⁸. Particular emphasis was placed on the combination of expressionism (a new element in Kasproicz's work) with impressionism, employed to express the emotional states of the lyrical speaker and to depict events with painterly grandeur and on a cosmic scale (e.g. the description of the Last Judgement).

Of particular significance for this study are *the poems Dies irae, Holy God, Holy Mighty One and My Evening Song*—that is, poems written in a spirit of rebellion, bitterness and resignation. On closer reading, we can very clearly discern Kasproicz's disillusionment with God, his indifference to the world, indeed his powerlessness in the face of Satan, the profound pessimism of humanity, the inevitability of sin, and consequently—human suffering. Also striking is the acute longing for the irretrievably lost innocence of childhood and the search for solace, tranquillity and comfort in death.

Echoes of a budding hope for deliverance from this hell of resignation appear in the hymn *My Evening Song*, used in Karol Szymanowski's song cycle. This poem already heralds the end of the poet's painful and exhausting struggle with the greatest spiritual crisis of his life.

²⁴ Idem, *Wybór poezji*, Biblioteka Narodowa, 2nd ed., Ossolineum, Wrocław 1973 , p. 11.

²⁵ Idem, *Ginacemu...*, op. cit.

²⁶ Idem, *Salve...*, op. cit.

²⁷ A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., pp. 60–67.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

4. The Poetics and Expression of *the Hymns*

Before Kasprowicz reached that crisis in his life—which resulted in the creation of the *Hymns*—the poet's personal style had already fully taken shape. Kasprowicz had already absorbed new literary ideas. In his works, we find reflections of both symbolism and impressionism in the volumes *Krzak dzikiej róży* (published 1898) and *Anima lachrymans* (published 1894). Deeply rooted eschatological themes also emerged, along with frequent references to *the sacred*, evident in the collections *Miłość* (published 1895) and in the poem *Chrystus* (published 1890). The latter work depicts, for the first time, the struggle between good and evil not on a social level but on a metaphysical one, which would later become the central thematic axis of *Hymns*.

Kasprowicz's *Hymns* is the first work in Polish literature to carry such a strong sense of catastrophe, and in terms of poetic form, it is one of the earliest manifestations of expressionism.

The genre term 'hymn' derives from the Greek word *hymnos*, which in turn stems from the verb *hydeo*, meaning 'to sing'. This term came into use after works of this kind had already appeared. Herodotus applied the term to certain Homeric rhapsodies characterised by sacred themes. Since ancient times, therefore, the concept of a 'hymn' has carried connotations of sanctity, sublimity and majesty, and has been associated with religious worship and the glorification of deities. During the Renaissance, the genre evolved; over time, the sacred elements in hymns were replaced by references to nature—the sky, the stars, the seasons. The broadening of the concept of the *sacred* during the Enlightenment made it possible to treat almost any subject that the author deemed sufficiently significant and momentous as a hymn. Consequently, it was not the subject matter but the mood, the perspective and the degree of emotional engagement that became more significant in defining the genre. Artur Hutnikiewicz proposes the following thematic and formal criteria to help us determine whether a given poetic work can be considered to belong to the genre of the hymn²⁹ :

- a subject universally perceived as sacred,
- the subject of the depiction or invocation is imbued with a radiance of exceptional beauty, strength or power, or inspires awe and terror,

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 43–44.

- the value represented by the subject is of vital importance to the world and the individual,
- the vagueness of the situation and time,
- a sense of sublimity with a distinctly religious basis,
- the subject's emotional engagement,
- a lofty, rhetorical style, with vocabulary and phrasing shaped by the extraordinary nature of the subject,
- all possible variations in verse form and stanzaic structure are permissible.

These characteristics, if present in sufficient measure in a given work, provide the basis for classifying it as hymnal poetry.

Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns* are lyrical poems, a genre consisting of a large-scale poetic work dealing with personal and reflective themes. However, epic and dramatic elements are also mixed with the lyrical material. This structure of the *Hymns* is a legacy of and evidence of the connection between Kasprowicz's poetry and Romantic literature, which introduced mixed genres. The lyrical quality of Kasprowicz's works is manifested through the impulsive and spontaneous changes in the inner states of the lyrical subject, full of tension and often resulting from conflicting emotions. By surrendering to the power of expression, these emotions result in numerous outbursts of confession, which also give the works a dramatic character.³⁰

The lyrical subject in Kasprowicz's *Hymns* can be viewed in various ways: firstly, as a character created by Kasprowicz (*Dies irae*—Adam, *Salome*—Salome, *Judas*—Judas); secondly, as a symbolic, personified figure of the universal human condition³¹; and thirdly, as the voice of the poet himself, concealing personal suffering within the experiences of the speaker³².

A distinctive feature of Jan Kasprowicz's poems is the coexistence of various literary conventions within them. One should note the intermingling of impressionist, naturalist, expressionist, and modernist-symbolist influences.

Lyrical content is therefore found in the *Hymns* within a wide variety of poetic structures, primarily in sequences of sentences and elaborate syntactic arrangements (so-

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 69–70.

³¹ Jan Józef Lipski, *Pozycja „Hymnów” Kasprowicza na tle kierunków literackich okresu*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1966, no. 4, p. 434 et passim; quoted after: A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., p. 70.

³² A view expressed by Stanisław Rzepliński in correspondence with the author of the description of the doctoral thesis.

called ‘syntactic parallelism’), in which the speaker expresses their thoughts and emotions and describes their situation. Syntactic parallelism is one of the characteristic features of the biblical style, which is ubiquitous in Kasprowicz’s *Hymns*. This is a fairly natural consequence of the choice of the hymn genre itself, as well as the subject matter (the Last Judgement) and the characters featured in the individual poems (biblical figures: Adam, Eve, Mary of Egypt, Judas). Numerous scholars of the *Hymns* have drawn attention to the similarities with the biblical style:

“The style of Kasprowicz’s work echoes that of the Book of Revelation through the use of the literary genre of the hymn, the framing of the narrative as a vision—which suggests a resemblance to prophetic visions—and the prominence given to the symbolism of blood and the associated symbolism of fire. Certain images in the hymns are explicitly of biblical origin; for example, the depiction of God as the Creator seated on a throne mirrors the ‘*One seated on the throne*’³³.

Kasprowicz’s *Hymns* frequently feature recurring rhetorical devices, such as the apostrophes in *Dies irae*³⁴, for example: “O Head, crowned with a crown of thorns,
/ With an eye that fades through the ages, look upon us!”, “O merciful God, have mercy on us!” (p. 154). Similar apostrophes, some more elaborate than others, are found in the hymn *Holy God*:

Weep with me! [...]
Come with me!
Cast off from Yourself, Father, Your untouchable splendour!
Cast off from Yourself that divine,
that sovereign power which, throughout the ages,
blazes as an unquenchable dawn
and bestows light upon the worlds,
and consumes the worlds in its fire, reducing them to ashes!
Become as wretched as I am, and cowering
and clad in the rags of this world (pp. 184–185).

³³ K. Suska, *O poezji...* op. cit., p. 118. The image of the “One seated on the throne,” originating from the Book of Daniel (Old Testament), is presented in Chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation.

³⁴ This and all subsequent quotations from *Hymny* are cited after: J. Kasprowicz, *Wzybór...*, op. cit.; page numbers are given in parentheses immediately after the quotations.

A form of apostrophe is the invocation, an example of which is the opening of the hymn *Holy God*: ‘O unfathomable, immeasurable powers!’ (p. 183). Numerous rhetorical questions also appear here, such as: “Do You have thunder— / Do You have a cloud in this midday heat,/ so that a bolt of lightning might fall from it/ and free this world from Satan?...” (p. 198). A very extensive sequence of rhetorical questions is also found in Szymanowski’s song *Holy God*. This passage will be discussed in the analysis of Szymanowski’s song cycle in the second chapter of this thesis.

Kasprowicz makes numerous references to liturgical and ecclesiastical tradition, quoting or paraphrasing various phrases from supplications, hymns, liturgical invocations and psalms. According to Artur Hutnikiewicz, this is: ‘a liturgical-folk stylisation constituting a kind of vision of the sacred as seen and felt through the medium of the rural people’³⁵.

The characteristics of Kasprowicz’s *Hymns* give them a distinctive ‘musicality’ and, at the same time, serve as a source of inspiration for composers whose works are the subject of research in this doctoral thesis. Musicality in art is one of the main tenets of the modernist era, of which Kasprowicz is a leading representative. Stefan Kołaczkowski summarises:

“In the typically modernist, ‘synthetic’ art of the *Hymns*, which employs musical and painterly devices, religious motifs and elements were one of the means of symbolic poetic expression. Here, they served as a tool for the artistic expression of the pain of existence and of all longings and desires, whether metaphysical or not”³⁶.

The symbolism of *Hymns* permeates all its spheres, manifesting itself above all in poetic imagery. All the references and allusions intensify the poems’ effect on the readers’ psyche and imagination. References to themes deeply rooted in the folk imagination—or, in a sense, in the poet’s own imagination—evoke associations, reconstructive imagery and the emotions that accompany them. The hymn *Holy God, Holy Mighty*, depicting a funeral procession marching in the sweltering midday heat to the ceaseless tolling of bells, was described as follows by Stanisław Przybyszewski, a native of the village of Łojewo in Kujawy—and thus, in effect, a neighbour of

³⁵ A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁶ Stefan Kołaczkowski, *Twórczość Jana Kasprowicza*, Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, Kraków 1924, p. 103.

Kasprowicz during his youth—as he juxtaposed it with events during the cholera epidemic of the 1870s:

“Oh! How vividly I remember that terrible, scorching summer, despite the fact that I was only five years old at the time... Throughout the nights, processions of peasants wandered from village to village, while the terrified child was awakened from sleep by their cries for mercy, their wailing rendition of *Holy God!* Or, over open graves, by their blood-choked sobbing as they intoned *Witaj Królowo!* Neither lamentations nor pleas and supplications were of any avail: every day, peasant carts carrying coffins crudely fashioned from four planks passed through my native village; at the cholera cemetery just beyond the village, the coffins were thrown into common graves.”³⁷ .

In *Dies irae*, in turn, Kasprowicz alludes to the landscapes of the Tatra Mountains, popular amongst the artists of Young Poland and already present in his own work (*A Wild Rose Bush*), weaving symbolic visions of spruce trees, the jagged ridges of a sky-high mountain range, and a cavernous ravine.

In Kasprowicz’s *Hymns*, we also find naturalistic elements. This naturalism pertains to descriptions of nature, as in the hymn *Dies irae*. In the example below, the poet employs stark naturalism (comparable, for instance, to that in Charles Baudelaire’s *La Carcasse*) to evoke a sense of revulsion and provoke a negative moral and aesthetic reaction.

black leeches, green lizards
slither forward through the water
and entwine themselves in slippery coils
the sad billions of martyrs’ crosses,
sprung from the marshy earth,
sunk into the marshy muck...
and behold their heads, strange human heads,
glowing with the cadaverous fat of yellowed, bald foreheads,
with jaws shrouded in a mass of black beards,
rest upon the laps of these dead bodies...
and raise their slanted, cloudy eyes
towards their bowed temples (p. 160).

³⁷ Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Moi współcześni. Wśród obcych.*, Warszawa 1926, p. 14; quoted after: A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., p. 74.

To achieve a similar effect, Kasprowicz employs naturalistic descriptions, creating in *Dies irae* an erotic image of the golden-haired Eve nestling against Satan.

Numerous impressionistic devices can be found in *My Evening Song*, where, in contrast to naturalism, Kasprowicz paints landscapes that are far more subjective and based on feelings. He creates an image of twilight with low colour saturation and light intensity, in a palette of dark patches of colour. It also strongly appeals to the imagination through its acoustic quality—silence dominates, interrupted by distant sounds of the day settling down to sleep:

onto the meadows of the plain, onto the dark field of grain
and she sat down by the lake's shore
and, lost in prayer, gazes into its depths –
over the still, contemplative water –
and listens, and gazes, and whispers
her eternal prayers.
From remote villages come the sounds of conversation,
in the marshes, wild birds call out,
and somewhere in the wilderness, somewhere at a crossroads
in a solitary cottage, a light glimmers, (p. 202).

Expressionism in *Hymns* can be seen, for example, in the numerous hyperboles. Phenomena, emotional states and objects often take on an extraordinary intensity in Kasprowicz's work; for example: "the mighty Womb of almighty wombs, / the Brightness of brightness / the Darkness of darknesses, / the Grace of graces and the Wrath of wraths" (p. 163).

In linguistic terms, there is also an accumulation of epithets with a strong emotional charge, such as 'stone-like', 'blind' terror; 'eternal', 'everlasting' amen; 'immense', 'unprecedented', 'eternal', 'fiery' lust, and a 'Job-like' voice. These devices create an image in the style of expressionist painting, with garish colours and distorted, exaggerated contours. In this way, the poet presents a catastrophic view of the world, in a menacing and monumental form. The language is subservient to intense emotion, full of contrasts, often bordering on a scream; it takes the form of symbols and departs from realistic descriptions.

There is an accumulation of syntactic structures of a single type, such as questions, exclamations, repetitions and enumerations. Examples can be found in the hymn *Holy God*:

Here I am!
And You are here with me!
Break this silence!
Let Your thunderous word
Thunder over the great cemetery!
Let it joyfully proclaim hope! (p. 191).

Here, exclamatory and interrogative sentences serve to express the lyrical subject's emotional state and its intensity. Numerous repetitions, in turn, emphasise the continuity and repetitiveness of the phenomena appearing in the *Hymns*, often those that cannot be precisely situated in time. Of particular significance are the accumulations of verbs, which further expand the semantic scope of the phenomena and emphasise their simultaneity.

This device intensifies the emotional impact of the message. It is worth noting the personal and demonstrative pronouns that appear repeatedly, often in clusters. This stems, of course, from the genre-specific nature of hymns as works addressed to a specific recipient; however, in this case, it also serves as an element of expressionist poetics. Here is an example from the hymn *Holy God*: 'A Ty, o Święty! / A Ty, o Mocny! / Ty Nieśmiertelny' (p. 199).

In *Hymns*, Kasprowicz decisively breaks with the rules of traditional versification, leaving positivism far behind, and introduces innovative versification, rhythm and an innovative approach to rhyme. The poems are written in irregular verse, which allows the poet, depending on his expressive needs, to depart from prosodic rigours and return to them. It enables him to alternate between different metres and varying stress patterns, and to freely loosen or tighten the structure as required. Through these techniques, Kasprowicz builds tension, shifts moods, and plays with conceptual associations. All types of regular and irregular metres are present in *Hymns*. In *My Evening Song*, for example, we find a multitude of syllabic verses, as in the passage beginning with the words 'na łąk płaszczyzny, na ciemny łąn zboża' (p. 202).

The eleven-syllable line found here recurs several times, often conveying impressionistic moods and creating a stark contrast with the more expressive, irregular

passages. A syllabic-tonic verse—a trochaic tetrameter with three-line stanzas—is found at the beginning of *Dies irae*. Here, one should look for a stylisation of medieval hymnal poetry, to which the entire poem alludes. The rhyme scheme is also significant here:

The trumpet will scatter a strange sound
fire will congeal, the glow will dim
the histories of the worlds shall return to dust.
Leaves will fall from the trees of eternity
at the Judge's dreadful coming,
to bear witness to the Psalmist (p. 152).

The most significant *innovation* introduced by Jan Kasprowicz in the versification of *Hymns* is the use of the sentence-based system and the emotional system within the structure of the poem. These systems are variants of free verse with an irregular and non-numerical metre. The poet utilises the sentence-based system, at times interweaving stable stress patterns, rhymes, and even displaying a tendency towards syllabic, syllabic-tonic or—tonic regularity. At the same time, the flexibility of this system allows him to move freely between various regular patterns or to depart from them entirely. The sentence-verse form is the dominant form in most of the poems. A striking example of such interweaving of versification can be found in excerpts from *My Evening Song*, where a syllabic-tonic peasant song appears:

from crooked huts
and from those weather-beaten barns
a boy's song weeps:
Oh play for me, little pipe,
play for me, little pipe,
I whittled you from a willow branch,
where is that silvery-blue stream,
where that rustling grove stands!
The lady killed her husband there,
it's green, hey! the grave,
it's green, hey!
And the thorny hawthorn bush
scatter their blossoms across the ground,
and a whisper comes from the woods!...

and the soul listens and listens...
and its day fades away (p. 201).

The second system of irregular versification mentioned, namely the emotional system, in which emotional dominants serve as the structural elements defining the organisation of the text. This system, being one of the purest forms of free verse, allows changes and breaks in the intonational line, as well as points of cadence, to be based on an emotional principle. The expressionism of the *Hymns* manifests itself in this type of verse, emphasising the inner states of the lyrical subject. An example comes from the hymn *Holy God*:

And my wings are stained
with blood that flows endlessly
from my heart...
And my eye is veiled in mist,
which is the death
of my heart and my soul! (p. 183).

The final aspect of the poetics of *Hymns* that warrants separate consideration is rhyme. Jan Kasprowicz composes his poems predominantly in unrhymed verse, though there are exceptions to this rule. An innovative technique employed by the poet is the use of an expanded range of rhyming sounds. Lines that rhyme with one another may be separated by as many as several lines, which weakens their connection and sometimes renders it almost imperceptible. Kasprowicz also makes frequent use of assonance, thus employing yet another means of softening this phonetic aspect of poetry.

Yes, me, Adam, whom he took upon his shoulders
from the Garden—that superhuman burden
of crushing guilt
and for ages upon ages I have been climbing with this burden
towards the eternal heights,
and, pale-faced, I dare not turn my gaze
towards those twilights that have settled upon the earth (p. 157).

In the above example, in addition to the distant rhyme *brze-mię/zie-mię*, there is also the rhyme *wi-ny / wy-ży*, which has a fairly low degree of consonance. Given the predominance of blank verse in *the Hymns*, passages in which regular rhyme schemes

recur allow the poet, by way of stark contrast, to express desired states and moods in a particularly vivid and expressive manner. The paraphrase of the *Dies irae* sequence and the boy's song discussed above are examples of the use of such a literary technique.

Chapter II

An analysis of Karol Szymanowski's cycle *Three Fragments* from the Poems by Jan Kasprowicz, Op. 5, with particular emphasis on stylistic and performance aspects

1. The cycle in the light of theoretical and musical analyses and interpretations

Tadeusz A. Zieliński stated in his book *Lyricism and Ecstasy*:

“Whilst the Songs to texts by Tetmajer display the characteristics of delicate lyricism, the *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*, Op. 5, composed shortly afterwards (1902) and also for voice and piano, constitute a powerful, deeply moving drama”³⁸.

This cycle is now regarded as one of Karol Szymanowski's most significant works. Moved by the text of the poems—published at the time in the collection *To a Fading World*—the composer created music in which the spiritual and aesthetic nature of the poet's words finds its unique reflection. The entire work bears the dedication “In memory of the great poet Jan Kasprowicz”, highlighting Szymanowski's special connection with this particular literary work. The scholar Zofia Helman emphasised the great significance of poetry for the composer:

“The texts of the poems themselves, which form the basis of the musical creation, reveal the composer's aesthetic tastes, his value system and his artistic motivations. Tracing the poetic themes in Karol Szymanowski's songs thus reveals numerous connections between his musical style and the cultural context of the era in which his creative personality took shape”³⁹.

This suggests that it is appropriate to seek similarities between a literary work and Szymanowski's composition. It therefore suggests that, when undertaking an analysis of *Three Fragments*, one should examine the characteristic features of the poems in the collection *To the Vanishing World* and familiarise oneself with the background to its creation. This is one possible key to interpreting this song cycle and, at first glance,

³⁸ Tadeusz A. Zieliński, *Szymanowski: Liryka i ekstaza*, PWM, Kraków 1997, p. 83.

³⁹ Zofia Helman, *Pieśni Karola Szymanowskiego w kontekście literackim i muzycznym jego czasów* [in:] *Pieśń w twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego i jemu współczesnych*, ed. Zofia Helman, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 2001, p. 11.

seems to be a great help. Unfortunately, this proves to be an illusion as soon as we take into account the complex form, internal diversity and stylistic range of Kasprowicz's poetic texts. The significance of the poems published in 1902 was also noted by Andrzej Chłopecki:

“What is important, however, is Szymanowski's special, deeply emotional relationship with Kasprowicz's *Hymns*, treated as a forceful manifesto of a generation, a manifesto to which the composer seems to subscribe”⁴⁰.

This manifesto expressed, amongst other things, a rebellion against prevailing values, which was one of the guiding ideas of the artists of the Young Poland era, as briefly described in the previous chapter. This opposition is particularly evident in *To a Vanishing World*. Chłopecki also quotes an excerpt from Szymanowski's correspondence from 1910:

“These are works written several years ago [...] yet despite this, and despite the fact that in my general approach to musical composition I have moved in a completely different direction in recent years, I attach great importance to these works, not only subjectively, as a characteristic manifestation of my development, but also, in a sense, objectively. In fact, this is the only manuscript that has been neatly transcribed. [...] I am convinced (though I do not know if rightly so) [...], that whilst the creative element *par excellence*—the intuitive one—can be considered independently of the (technical) means of expression, this element manifested itself most strongly and most directly in these very works”⁴¹.

All this information confirms the validity of seeking common features in the poems and songs. For the subsequent chapters, which deal with performance issues, these are key conclusions that pave the way for a singer's informed interpretation of the cycle.

The significant patriotic aspect of the compositions was also highlighted in Chłopecki's study:

“This is a patriotic song. Patriotic by design. National in its worldview. It fits within the Romantic ethos of Polish culture under foreign rule. [...] Although it is difficult to regard Szymanowski as a Parnassian, aestheticism nevertheless played a significant role in his creative worldview, *implicitly* contained within his music [...]. In the form in which this

⁴⁰ A. Chłopecki, op. cit., p. 247.

⁴¹ *Między kompozytorem i wydawcą. Korespondencja Karola Szymanowskiego z Universal Edition*, edited by Teresa Chylińska, PWM, Kraków, 1978, p. 183; quoted from: A. Chłopecki, op. cit., p. 247.

category of patriotism appears in *the Hymns*, it does not occur even in the so-called ‘national’ period. Aesthetics have here been clearly subordinated to expression and to the impact of extra-musical content”⁴².

Holy God, Holy Mighty! and *My Evening Song*, from which the words for Opus 5 were drawn, are deeply rooted in folk spirituality and refer to the symbolism and moods associated with the Polish countryside of Kasprowicz’s time. Szymanowski’s music fits into this idiom, speaking through rhythms and melodies that evoke similar associations, complementing the image sketched by the poet with a layer of sound. Jim Samson also noted the poems’ strong ties to Polishness:

“The interweaving of mystical fervour and images of cruelty in these poems is “earthed” through a focus on the tragedy of existence and on the exceptional sensitivity of the Polish peasant, his rebellion against a cruel fate, and at the same time his stoic acceptance of it”⁴³.

The researchers’ observations reveal the unusual nature of the patriotism found in Kasprowicz’s poems and, consequently, in Szymanowski’s songs. The nature of this patriotism is quite different from that which we most commonly associate with the genre and which is evident, for example, in the music of Stanisław Moniuszko or the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz. It lacks a positivist outlook towards the future, romantic adoration and an emphasis on national aspects or a longing for them. Kasprowicz and Szymanowski rather illustrate the generational experience of suffering endured by people connected to the Polish land. A similar conclusion was drawn by Alistair Wightman, who, in a commentary on the inspiration behind *Three Fragments*, wrote:

“This could not fail to strike a deep chord in him [Szymanowski—P.K.], as it expresses a rebellion against a distant, soulless Deity, drawing on images taken from the Polish landscape and making it a symbol of human despair”⁴⁴.

⁴² Ibid., p. 248.

⁴³ Jim Samson, *Music in transition: a study of tonal expansion and atonality*, Norton, New York 1977, p. 132. All quotations from foreign-language literature, unless otherwise stated, are translated by the author of this work.

⁴⁴ Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*, Routledge, London 2016, p. 31.

A second fundamental common feature, stemming from the specific form of patriotism discussed earlier, is the existential and spiritual nature of Kasprowicz's words, reinforced by Szymanowski's music. Danuta Jasińska described this feature as follows:

"The themes presented in Kasprowicz's *Hymns* centre on the symbolism of good and evil, sin and punishment, judgement and death. The symbol of the torn, wandering soul and the forces of nature suffering alongside it—evocatively depicted in a mournful procession dragging itself along on a fatal journey towards leaning crosses, to a solitary grave—is of key significance. Szymanowski also incorporates these motifs into his cycle. In Kasprowicz's work, the tone of expression shifts and intensifies, ranging from lyricism to profound tragedy. This expressive line is also evident in the songs of Op. 5, to mention its three main categories: sublimity, lyricism and drama"⁴⁵.

When the analyses of literary scholars and musicologists are compared, a strong interdependence between the music and the poems becomes apparent. This correspondence is similarly evident in terms of the means of expression and style in both works. Symbolism, expressionism blended with impressionism, decadence and Kasprowicz's catastrophism—which, incidentally, marked a turning point in the poet's oeuvre—did not fail to influence Szymanowski's songs. Confirmation of this can be found, for example, in the words of Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz:

'Kasprowicz's *hymns*, in Szymanowski's musical interpretation, became a manifesto of music born of the poetics of the expressionist cry and the sombre mood of the turn of the century, a testament to the crumbling positivist image of humanity. In the "darkness of the stars", the composer affirmed his lyrical modernist "self" [...] But the Young Poland decadent style, in which 'the black crow caws and caws without end', would soon be infiltrated by a different, exotic colouring"⁴⁶.

The symbolism in the music of *the Three Fragments* was noted by Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska, who drew particular attention to the last *piece* in the cycle, *My Evening Song*:

⁴⁵ Danuta Jasińska, „*Hymny*” Kasprowicza w ujęciu Szymanowskiego [in:] *Pieśń w twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego...*, op. cit., pp. 38–39.

⁴⁶ Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz, *Poetyka muzyczna Karola Szymanowskiego: Studia i interpretacje*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2013, p. 184..

“It is therefore a matter of evoking a certain general symbolism of folk poetry and folk beliefs, of a romantic folk tradition, which for the poet signifies a kind of ‘lost paradise’. The quotation itself is a symbol here—the quintessence of folk mentality and creativity”⁴⁷.

In these statements, we find further confirmation of the very close, multifaceted relationship between the verbal text and the music. It is therefore worth asking about the musical devices employed by the composer—do they too find their source in the devices used by the poet? Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska highlighted this interdependence using the example of stylisation occurring in parallel in both the words and the music of the third song:

“Kasprowicz’s poetry in the quoted excerpt contains strong stylistic allusions to folk text, both in terms of vocabulary (‘uliniłem cię’) and in its rhythmic structure, as well as in its poetics of mystery, magic and fairy-tale quality. For his part, the composer complements this stylisation through a winding ‘flute-like’ melodic line, the harmony, the nostalgic mood and the mazurka-like rhythmic pattern”⁴⁸.

In Kasprowicz’s poems, particularly in *Holy God, Holy Mighty!*, this stylisation stems from the very choice of an archaic genre. It has specific cultural connotations, primarily associated with the religious sphere; it is also linked to particular stylistic devices (e.g. apostrophes, elevated language). Szymanowski addressed this by placing great emphasis, amongst other things, on accentuating the plagal character of the cycle’s harmony and on creating a sense of modality in the melody. Danuta Jasińska described this as follows:

“Although the harmony [of Szymanowski’s cycle—P.K.] is governed by functional principles, its plagal character is a manifestation of stylisation suggesting the atmosphere of church music. [...] As this relationship stems from the harmonic treatment of the supplicatory melody, its musical meaning is overlaid by the expressive and semantic content conveyed by the lyrics. Similar references appear in the song *Jestem i płaczę* [...] On the one hand, the plagal harmonic colouring is a feature of stylisation; on the other, a sign of poetic motifs and symbols; and thirdly, a material that contributes to the cohesion of the cycle”⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Katarzyna Suska-Zagórska, *Asymilacja ludowych pierwowzorów w polskiej pieśni artystycznej – zarys problematyki* [in:] *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Edukacja Muzyczna 12*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 2017, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

⁴⁹ D. Jasińska, op. cit., pp. 41–42.

Chłopecki also noted the parallels between the devices employed by the poet and the composer. In an article on *Jestem i płaczę*, he observed:

“Romantic poetics, based on rhetorical metaphors—which at times take the form of *Augenmusik*—serves here as a prelude to modernist symbolism. Folk religiosity finds its counterpart in harmonic language—in plagal harmony, in subdominant references, and also in modal melody. The sombre mood is evoked by the tolling of bells and the low and lowest registers of the piano’⁵⁰.

Jim Samson, referring to the second and third songs of the cycle, also emphasised the modal aspects and Szymanowski’s carefully considered harmony:

‘The music [of the second and third songs—P.K.] is much more firmly rooted in the diatonic scale than in the first song, and achieves evocative effects through a combination of modal melodic patterns and simple sequences of triads in root position’⁵¹.

A comparison of various scholars’ interpretations of Szymanowski’s *Three Fragments* reveals a common thread running through them. According to all the authors, the music composed by draws not only on the verbal text of Kasproicz’s poems, but also responds to their style, form, genre and other aspects.

2. The structure of the individual songs in the cycle

The first song—*Holy God*—is characterised by the presence of a hymnal quotation from *the Trisagion*⁵², which structures the form of the song. The quotation appears here in the form of an opening acclamation, namely the words: *Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy and Immortal*. In Polish tradition, *the Trisagion* is known as the ‘supplication’. It functions as a multi-dimensional national and Christian-folk symbol, and lends the work a distinctive, sacred character. The supplication is often sung in the face of natural disasters and wars, which reinforces its association with tragic events.

The repetitive nature of the supplication in Polish, combined with its characteristic monotonous music, allows one to identify sections that function as quasi-verses,

⁵⁰ A. Chłopecki, op. cit., p. 252.

⁵¹ J. Samson, op. cit., p. 133.

⁵² Greek *triságios*, ‘thrice holy’—a hymn of praise in honour of the Holy Trinity, originating in the Greek Christian rite and adopted by the Western Church in the 11th century.

which Szymanowski separated with a quasi-refrain. These sections, together with the recurring supplication (in blue), are as follows:

bars 5–7 (3 bars)—piano only

bars 8–16 (8 bars)

bars 17–20 (3 bars)

bars 21–40 (19 bars)

bars 40–46 (6 bars)—overlaps with the next section

bars 47–88 (36 bars)

bars 89–92 (3 bars)

bars 93–113 (20 bars)

bars 115–118 (3 bars)

bars 119–125 (6 bars)—piano only

The form presented above is characterised by a certain symmetry. There is also a noticeable lengthening of the verse sections up to bars 47–88, which can be regarded as the centre of the song. These bars are also the most varied internally, both in the vocal part and in the piano part. We can identify several textures and ways of constructing the narrative. The further from the centre, the simpler the sections become. A further argument in favour of this symmetrical interpretation of the form is the six-bar section containing a supplication, which is longer than the others, each of which consists of only three bars.

Like the first song, the second—*I Am and I Weep*—also contains musically correlating fragments. In this case, however, we cannot speak of a refrain, but rather of a frame, as the aforementioned fragments are repeated only twice (bars 1–8 and bars 62–72). Nevertheless, the repeated use of the supplication (bars 73–83) suggests that the composer devised a broader dramatic framework linking the two songs in the cycle. The fact that both songs draw their words from the same poem by Jan Kasprowicz also supports this interpretation.

In terms of the number of bars, *I Am and I Weep* is divided into the following sections with their respective tempos:

Allegro molto, agitato (8 bars)

Meno mosso, Andante mesto (10 bars)

L'istesso tempo (44 bars)

Tempo I con passione (10 bars)

Meno mosso, sostenuto sempre (10 bars)

This mathematical division once again highlights the symmetry of the arrangement of the sections in relation to the song's most elaborate central section (*L'istesso tempo*). However, if one takes into account the compositional frame mentioned earlier, the composer evocatively brings the material of *I Am and I Weep* to a close as early as bar 72, whilst in the epilogue he once again includes a quotation from the supplication. The repetition and, at the same time, the interweaving of these two musical ideas provide a further argument for recognising a clear, audible and strong connection between the first two parts of the cycle.

An examination of the bar structure and tempo progression in *My Evening Song* reveals, at first glance, the similarity between the first and last sections, both marked *Adagio*. The tempos within the bars between them (bars 6–123) increase progressively, with the exception of *the poco meno e rubato*, which does not follow this trend. In terms of the number of bars in the successive sections, the song can be seen to be divided into two parts, each of which in turn contains two sections. The 18-bar *poco meno e rubato* section, which marks the beginning of a longer musical phrase, is subsequently developed following an agogic change to *poco più*. From this perspective, *the Allegro agitato* can be understood as a continuation of the *poco più* or as a summary of both two-section passages. The opening and closing *Adagio* sections, by virtue of providing a clearly defined framework, emphasise the form of the intervening sections.. A look at the notated dynamic and expressive markings leads to a similar conclusion. The correlation between *Moderato, in the rhythm of a mazurka but very slow* and *Poco più mosso—Tempo di mazurka*—apart from the as-yet-unmentioned dance rhythm that also links these two sections—is evident in their similar dynamic ranges. The dynamics are dominated by *p* and *pp*, with the volume increasing to a maximum of *mf*. This range is considerably wider in the following three sections, in which the performers are required to achieve dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *fff*.

3. Performance considerations

3.1. The role of the semantics of Kasprowicz's text in the vocal interpretation of Szymanowski's cycle

In the cycle *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*, Op. 5, Szymanowski used selected verses from two of Kasprowicz's hymns: *Holy God* and *I Am and I Weep*. The lyrics of the first and second songs come from the same hymn—*Holy God*—whilst those of the third come from the hymn *My Evening Song*. The full text of all three songs, as well as the omitted passages, are set out in Tables 2, 3 and 4 (together with the bar numbers and agogic markings inscribed by the composer).

<i>Holy God</i>			
Text in <i>Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz</i>	Original text of the poem <i>Holy God, Holy Mighty!</i> verses 1–43	Measures	Agogics
O unfathomable, boundless powers! I flap my wings, like that night bird, whose bloodied eye was commanded to gaze into the sun's glare.	O unfathomable, boundless powers! I flap my wings like that night bird, whose bloodied eye was commanded to gaze into the sun's glare...	1–16	<i>Lento mesto</i>
Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy and Immortal.	Holy God! Holy Mighty One! Holy and Immortal!...	17–20	<i>Tempo I</i>
And my wings are stained with blood! Which flows endlessly from my heart, And my eye is veiled in mist, which is the death of my heart and my soul.	And my wings are stained blood that flows endlessly from my heart... And my eyes are clouded over, which is the death of both my heart and my soul!	21–40	<i>Suddenly more agitated, restless</i>
Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us! And may the tears, which on a bright morning hang upon the ears of the rested grain, or cover the tufts of grass wrapped in sleep, turn into loud lamentations and ceaselessly flow towards Your dawns.	Let it be the end for you too! Holy God! Holy Mighty One, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us! And may the tears, which on a bright morning hang upon the ears of the rested grain or cover the tufts of grass wrapped in sleep, turn into loud lamentations and ceaselessly flow towards your dawns...	41–69	<i>Tempo I</i>
Let them tear them to shreds, into bloody rags the dawn's glow rising above the earth, where pain and despair slumber.	Let them tear to shreds, into bloody rags the dawn's glow, rising above the earth,	70–79	<i>Più mosso agitato</i>
	where pain and despair slumber, vast worlds, conceived by Satan, or perhaps by You,	80–88	<i>Meno mosso (Andante)</i>
O Holy, Immortal, Holy, Mighty God!	O Holy, Immortal, Holy, Mighty	89–92	<i>Adagio</i>

	God!		
Why must my lips must utter a song of blood? Weep with me! Why must I walk alone into this dark expanse, though the midday heat blazes in the sky? Why must I alone drag myself along the crossroads towards those leaning crosses?	Why must my lips must utter a bloody song?! Weep with me! Why must I walk alone into this dark expanse, though the midday heat blazes in the sky?... Why must I drag myself alone to the crossroads, towards those leaning crosses,	93–105	<i>Allegro agitato</i>
upon whose black shoulders a cawing crow alights? And with her beak scatters the dead to dust?	on whose black shoulders does a cawing crow alight and with its beak scatters the dead's ashes?	106–114	<i>Meno mosso</i>
Holy God! Holy Mighty One! Holy and Immortal.		115–125	<i>Lento assai. Tempo I</i>

Table 2. Comparison of the text of Kasproicz's poem 'Holy God, Holy Mighty' and Szymanowski's song *Holy God*; red—text omitted by Szymanowski, green—text altered by Szymanowski, blue—text added by Szymanowski.

<i>I Am and I Weep</i>			
Text in <i>Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasproicz</i>	The original text of the poem <i>Holy God, Holy Mighty One!</i> lines 336–389	Measures	Agogics
Here I am! Here I am, weeping, flapping my wings, like that wounded bird, like that night bird, whose bloodied eye was commanded to gaze into the sun's glare.	Here I am! Here I am, and I weep... I flap my wings, like that wounded bird, like that night bird, whose bloodied eye was commanded to gaze into the sun's glare...	1–8	<i>Allegro molto, agitato</i>
And at my feet a lone grave is being dug, and a black crow perched upon the arms of the Passion of Christ, caws and caws endlessly and with its beak scatters the dead man's ashes.	And at my feet a solitary black crow digs a grave, and a black crow, perched upon the shoulders of Christ's Passion, caws caws and caws and with its beak scatters the dead man's ashes...	9–18	<i>Meno mosso, Andante mesto</i>
And they trudge along, clad in a luminous veil of August mists, like shadows towards the great grave. Behind them, the thistles have stirred from the sandy dunes, yarrow has stirred from the field boundaries,	And they drag themselves along, cloaked in the luminous mist of August, like shadows, they drag themselves towards the great grave... Behind them, the mullein stirred from the sandy dunes, yarrow has stirred from the field boundaries,	19–61	<i>At the same time</i>

a wild boar stirred from behind the hedgerows, calamus rustled in the watercourses and, having shaken the fragrant roots from the silt, it walks alongside them. From the marshes, clumps of rushes, from the roadside thistles with yellow spines, broad-leaved burdocks, drowsy coltsfoot, purple madder, prickly hawthorns have risen and are walking. With soft leaves of the willows, the row rustled, in silent, desperate mourning following in their wake. The fields, entirely strewn with stalks, have been torn away at this time from their native soil, and, like giant walls, rose up and flow on, through this great hour of sorrow!	a wild boar stirred from behind the hedgerows, calamus rustled in the watercourses and, having shaken the fragrant roots from the silt, it walks alongside them... From the marshes, clumps of rushes, from the roadside thistles with yellow spines, broad-leaved burdocks, drowsy coltsfoot, purple madder, prickly hawthorns have risen and are walking... With soft leaves a row of willows rustled and in silent, desperate mourning following in their wake... The fields, entirely strewn with stalks have broken away at this time from their native soil and, like gigantic walls, rose upwards, and now they flow, through this great hour of sorrow...		
And You, O God, O Immortal One, O One crowned with radiance, on an inaccessible throne seated amongst the stars! And with your head resting upon the golden Triangle,	And You, O God! O Immortal One! O one encircled by a wreath of radiance! on an inaccessible throne you sit amongst the stars and with your head resting upon a golden Triangle,	62–72	<i>Tempo I con passione</i>
with a three-armed cross at your feet, you pour the stardust through a golden hourglass, Have mercy, have mercy on us!	with a three-armed cross at your feet, you pour the stardust through a golden hourglass and you will not even glance at the earthly dust! Have mercy, have mercy on us!	73–83	<i>Meno mosso, sostenuto sempre</i>

Table 3. A comparison of the words of Kasprowicz's poem *Holy God, Holy Mighty* and Szymanowski's song *I Am and I Weep*.

<i>My Evening Song</i>			
Text in <i>Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz</i>	Original text of the poem <i>My Evening Song</i> lines 34–73	Measures	Agogics
Blessed be this moment, when the soul's evening hymn is born!	Blessed be this moment, when the soul's evening hymn is born!	1–5	<i>Adagio</i>
When, from the quiet fields, from the rye fields and riverbanks, from the fields and from the fallow land, from ramshackle cottages and from those weather-beaten barns a boy's song rings out:	When from the quiet fields, from the fields and riverbanks, from the crossroads and from the fallow fields, from ramshackle huts and from those weather-beaten barns a boy's song weeps:	6-23	<i>Moderato, in the rhythm of a mazurka, but very slowly</i>
So play on for me, little pipe, play for me, little pipe, play! I whittled you from a willow branch, where is that silvery-blue stream,	So play on for me, little pipe, play on for me, play on! I carved you from a willow branch, where is that silvery stream,	24-53	<i>A little livelier— Mazurka tempo</i>

where that rustling grove stands; the lady killed her husband there, green, oh green, is the grave, it's green, oh, it's green!	where that rustling grove stands! The lady killed her husband there, green, oh green! is the grave, it's green, oh!		
And the thorny hawthorn bush scatters its blossoms across the ground, and a whisper drifts from the woods; And the soul listens and listens, And the day fades away for it...	And the thorny hawthorn bush scatters its blossoms across the ground, and a whisper comes from the woods!... And the soul listens and listens... And the day fades away,	54–71	<i>Poco meno e rubato</i>
And she, following the trail of longing, she flows in a surging moonlit wave, flowing with dew glistening on the meadows and the tops of soothed trees, and the ridges of white mountains towards those forgotten days, when love and peace were neither a consuming fire, nor a stony, blind terror. The expanse opens up before him and, filled with eternal night, it swallows up in its depths all that has overcome it with mockery and sin, and filled with penance,	and she, following the trail of longing, flows as a vast moonlit wave, it flows with dew, glistening on the meadows, and the tops of soothed trees and the ridges of white mountains towards those forgotten days, when love and peace were neither a consuming fire, nor a stony, blind terror. The expanse stretches out before her, and, filled with eternal night, it swallows up in its depths all that has overwhelmed her with scorn and sin and penance,	72–109	<i>A little further on</i>
with a face darkened by shame and disgrace, and the trampling of the holy, divine laws. And the bloody torch of vengeance, and pain, terrible pain	a face darkened by shame and disgrace and the trampling of the sacred, divine laws and the bloody torch of vengeance and pain, terrible pain	110–123	<i>Allegro agitato</i>
such a longed-for, yet such a gnawing spectre.	such a longed-for, yet such a gnawing spectre.	124–128	<i>Adagio</i>

Table 4. A comparison of the words from Kasproicz's poem *My Evening Song* and Szymanowski's *My Evening Song*

Even a cursory glance at the tables above reveals that Szymanowski, apart from selecting relatively short excerpts from the poem (which stems from the demands of the song genre), omitted certain lines—particularly the blasphemous ones—even from those included in the first and second songs. The composer's omission of these lines meant that the work as a whole took on a slightly different tone. One might think that Szymanowski did not agree with Kasproicz's harsh perspective. However, a question arises: why, despite such a faithful setting of the poem's fragments in other respects, did the composer remove an element that could be considered essential to the worldview presented in the poem? One might speculate that, unlike poetry read in private, songs are a form of art presented in public (in Szymanowski's day, more often in concert settings than in semi-private salon gatherings), and so he subjected them to a kind of self-censorship. All this, of course, remains in the realm of conjecture. The omission was, however, noted by Danuta Jasińska:

“It is significant that these are verses of a blasphemous nature, from which Kasprowicz’s question already emerges—is the Creator of the world God or Satan? By removing this theme, the composer does not, therefore, follow the main poetic idea, but endeavours, through musical means, to convey the expressive atmosphere that emanates from the chosen text”⁵³.

Katarzyna Suska interpreted this situation differently:

“As regards line 14, perhaps Szymanowski felt that a direct, blasphemous curse directed at God, with a very strong emotional charge, appeared too early in the course of the poem. In a sense, it disrupts the ‘blooming structure’ which forms the compositional backbone of the whole. Up to this point, the dynamics have generally not yet exceeded *forte*, although there is a single *ff*, serving only to highlight the word ‘blood!’. The omission of lines 30 and 31 appears to stem from a certain harmonic plan. The supplication that follows the words: ‘where pain and despair slumber’ deviates significantly from the original melody of the supplication and is a chromatic descent. By contrast, a reference to this melody appears earlier in the form of the characteristic *B–A sharp* semitone on the words: ‘despair slumber’”⁵⁴.

The author described the form of the song *Holy God* as a ‘blooming structure’, a literary device that involves repeating a single fragment of the text in an increasingly elaborate version each time. The refrain-like, recurring supplication is precisely subject to this principle of ‘blooming’. The composer—following Kasprowicz’s example—seeks to build up tension gradually. Therefore, a sudden emotional outburst („Niech będzie skonem i Twoim!”), which requires appropriate interpretation through musical means, does not fit with this concept⁵⁵.

A second point worth considering is the substitution of words in *My Evening Song* (see Table 4 below). The change of the personal pronoun from ‘her’ to ‘him’ alters the meaning of the statement. ‘Her’ refers to the word ‘soul’ appearing 11 lines earlier. Similarly, further on we read that ‘przestwórz [...] topi w swych głębiach wszystko co ją [a więc nadal duszę] zmoгло’. In Szymanowski’s work, it is unclear to what the pronoun ‘him’ refers. Was this a deliberate change at all, or a mistake, consistently repeated since the song’s first edition? According to available sources, the word ‘him’ does not appear

⁵³ D. Jasińska, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵⁴ K. Suska, *O poezji...*, op. cit., p. 91.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; the description of the song *Święty Boże* can be found in Part III, Chapter I, pp. 87–100.

either in the first edition of *To the Vanishing World*⁵⁶ from 1902, nor in Kasprowicz's manuscript of *My Evening Song*⁵⁷.

3.2. The specific nature of vocal phrases in relation to the structure of Kasprowicz's text

The shaping of vocal phrases in Szymanowski's songs in relation to Kasprowicz's original text is a significant issue from the performer's perspective. An analysis of the literary work reveals typical features which the composer emphasised and which should not go unnoticed by the singer. Szymanowski adapted Kasprowicz's text to his own needs. In most cases, this does not alter the meaning of the words. The composer has better adapted the text to the vocal phrases, which greatly aids both the reception and the performance of the work. More intrusive alterations involve replacing exclamation marks and question marks with a single full stop (Table 2: *lento mesto, tempo I, allegro agitato*).

The image shows a musical score for Szymanowski's 'Three Fragments...' from 'Holy God', pp. 101-105. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics in Polish and French. The piano part has a fermata at the end of bar 105. The score is labeled 'PWW 9748'.

Example 1. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *Holy God*, pp. 101–105.

Example 1 shows a passage in which Szymanowski added a question mark after the word 'krzyżom', instead of a comma, as in Kasprowicz's version. Here, the musical idea takes precedence over the poetic one. The deliberate build-up to the climax and the emphasis placed on the word 'krzyżom' by the fermata, as well as the clear separation of the following bar by the fermata at the end of bar 105, create an emotional caesura. This allows the performer to descend from the peak of emotion and prepare for the next phrase. Retaining the original punctuation would have made these two bars

⁵⁶ J. Kasprowicz, 'Ginącemu...', op. cit.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Moja pieśń wieczorna*, scan of the manuscript, polona.pl [<https://polona.pl/item-view/a557755f-b4c5-484f-afd5-5817b17c2d0c?page=4>, accessed: 10 September 2025].

almost impossible to perform. Such a move on Szymanowski's part might also serve as a further argument in favour of the view that Szymanowski alters the tone of the text; however, it seems that his aim here is different. A detailed analysis of the song reveals that Szymanowski simply achieved a different distribution of tension in this way, enabling him to condense Kasprowicz's thought, fit it into a concise form, whilst preserving its unique character.

In the same passage, Szymanowski changed the original '?!' to '?' (table 2 pp. 29–30; ex. 2, p. 35).

krwawą pieśń? Płacz ze mną Dla - cze - go sam mam iść w tę przestrzeń cie - mną, choć żar połud - nia
dou - leur? Sei - gneur - ! Pour - quoi dois - je seul sui - vre ma rou - te sous le cru-

Example 2. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *Holy God*, vols. 96–100.

The ending of the line has thus been seemingly weakened. However, the nature of the verbal-musical phrase, the expression and the agogics do not in any way suggest a softening of the question. The function of the exclamation mark has been taken over by musical elements, suggesting the appropriate intonation. It may be assumed that the changes in punctuation were, in such cases, dictated rather by a desire to simplify the notation.

A similar situation occurs in the first quotation from the supplication. Szymanowski dispensed with Kasprowicz's exclamation marks in favour of constructing a coherent, more uniform triple phrase, which forms the thematic centre of the first song. Retaining the original might have weakened the theme and robbed it of its sense of coherence.

I Am and I Weep and *My Evening Song* provide further examples of more substantial alterations to the text. In the second song, Szymanowski reversed the order of the lines (Table 3, pp. 30–31, bars 15–16).



Example 3. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *I Am and I Weep*, bars 13–16.

This allowed the composer to shape the verbal-musical phrase in such a way as to emphasise the original line ‘bez końca’ (‘endlessly’), giving it the function of a climax (Example 3). At the same time, the repetition in the phrase ‘kracze i kracze’ is highlighted by means of a regular ascending pattern—this allows the meaning to be reflected in the musical texture. Katarzyna Suska regards this device as an example of an imaginative suggestion deliberately constructed by the composer, which influences the perception of a given musical passage. This seemingly minor adjustment to the word order, combined with a specific direction of the melodic line, serves, according to the author, to evoke a specific image, which may be significant for the performer and stimulate their imagination:

“The way the melodic line is structured, evoking the form of a recitative, together with the chordal (organ-imitating) sound of the piano, suggests the phenomenon of movement and gives that movement a direction. A kinetic image emerges—a shift in the direction of gaze. The text depicts a crow perched on a cross, cawing in a repulsive and sinister manner. Jan Kasprończak writes:

and a black crow,
having perched on the Cross of Christ’s Passion
endlessly
caws and caws

The composer makes a slight alteration, but does so very deliberately. He rearranges the last two lines:

and a black crow,
perched on the arms of the Passion
caws and caws,
endlessly

This image fills us with dread, for we perceive it—thanks to the music—from the bottom up. At the same time, we see the Cross of the Passion from a human perspective, from a position of our own humiliation, in accordance with the poet’s intention. Kasprowicz, as the author of the text, wishes to show us that God is distant and inaccessible. Szymanowski adds a new aesthetic dimension in the form of the suggestion of movement and space. Through this musical device, the symbolic image gains a new sense of drama and intensity⁵⁸.

In the change in bar 43 of *My Evening Song*, one can, in turn, discern a different intention (Example 4, p. 37). The reversal of the word order reinforces the dance-like character of the *Poco più mosso* section—the *Tempo di mazurka* remains.

The musical score for Example 4 shows bars 43-48 of 'My Evening Song'. The vocal line is in G major, 3/4 time. It begins with a piano (pp) dynamic and includes the lyrics: 'pa - na pa-ni tam za-bi - ła, zie - le - ni się hej, mo - gi - ła, zie - le - ni się, hej! Où re-po-se le beau sei-gneur que tu - a la da-me blon - de, cel - le qu'il ai - ma!'. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (ppp) dynamic and includes a 'ten.' (tension) marking. The score ends with a 'dolce marc.' (dolce marcando) marking.

Example 4. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *My Evening Song*, bars 43–48.

Thanks to the inversion of the words ‘pani pana’ in Kasprowicz’s verse, the textual contrast between bars 43 and 44 is heightened. The vowel ‘a’, which dominates this combination, lends greater melodiousness, clarity and openness to the entire musical motif. The combination ‘pani pana’, when set to a mazurka rhythm, would risk creating the syllabic cluster ‘pa-nipana’, which in turn would weaken the stressed ‘tam’ in the following bar. The composer shapes the narrative (including the vocal phrase) consistently, even at such a basic level as individual vowels.

We may suspect a similar motivation behind the change in bars 97–98 of the same song. The use of ‘Roztwiera’ (opens) instead of ‘rozszerza’ (expands) seems to be dictated by the explosive sound of the ‘ztw’ cluster (Example 5, p. 38). As a result, the burst of expression intended by the composer gains musically in at least two respects. Firstly, the expressionist qualities of this phrase are brought out more strongly. The *ritardando* and the doubling of the vocal melody in the piano part, as well as the *crescendo* over the last two eighth notes, are a musical representation of the word and

⁵⁸ K. Suska-Zagórska, *Pamięć...*, op. cit., pp. 35–36.

‘open up’ the space before the next phrase, which is additionally marked *con passione*. Secondly, it makes the performance easier. Reproducing the phrase as written by the composer in the dynamics he proposed, whilst retaining the original ‘expansion’, could cause problems—due to the juxtaposition of the ‘sz’ and ‘rz’ sounds. Such a sequence of fricative consonants, and in particular the voiceless ‘sz’, would potentially weaken the musical accent intended for the third beat of bar 98, and would subsequently make it difficult to achieve the ‘opening’ effect.

The image shows a musical score for 'My Evening Song' by Karol Szymanowski, bars 97-99. The score is in B-flat major and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics in Polish and French. The piano accompaniment is marked 'fff' and includes a 'rit.' (ritardando) and 'con passione' marking. The score shows a complex harmonic structure with many accidentals and a dense texture.

Example 5. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *My Evening Song*, bars 97–99.

3.3. Dynamic planning as the primary medium of the expressionist style

Karol Szymanowski’s songs are characterised by frequent, often sudden, dynamic changes. It is largely thanks to these that the expressionist features of *Three Fragments* become apparent. Throughout the cycle, dynamic markings range from *ppp* to *fff*, and the amplitude in each section is as follows:

- *Holy God*—from *ppp* to *fff*
- *I Am and I Weep*—from *pp* to *fff*
- *My Evening Song*—from *ppp* to *fff*

As can be seen, the piece is characterised by a wide range of dynamics. Szymanowski precisely outlined the intended changes, using *crescendo* and *decrescendo* notated alongside specific note values, or by means of the term ‘*subito*’. Furthermore, he employed additional terms suggesting expression, such as ‘*con passione*’, ‘*mesto*’ and ‘*agitato*’.

Two aspects are noticeable in *Holy God*. Firstly, with each repetition of the supplication, the dynamics build, and each of the three motifs becomes a distinct rising and falling wave (Example 6, p. 39). The quotation thus structures the piece not

only through recurring words and melody, but also through a recurring dynamic pattern. This is disrupted only in bars 89–91, which, by departing from the rule, prepare for and foreshadow the drama of the following section.

Tempo I

Świe - ty Bo - że. Świe - ty Moc - ny, Świe - ty a Nie - śmier - tel - ny.
 Ô Sei - gneur Saint des Saints -, ô Puissance É - ter - nel - le.

17 pp mf p

8

Example 6. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments*..., *Holy God*, vols. 17–20.

The second significant aspect is the restlessness of the song's other sections, evoked by varying tempo, articulation and dynamics. This contrasts with the orderly, prayerful invocation. This heterogeneity—particularly in terms of sound intensity—also belongs to the vocabulary of expressionism and serves to convey the powerful emotions captured in Kasprowicz's poem. In the same process, by way of contrast, this makes it possible to highlight bars containing text with impressionistic descriptions (Example 7).

szkli - wą pia - ną o - kry - wa - ją kę - py w sen o - tu - lo - nych traw,
 la ro - sée si pu - re qui bril - le dans les prés fleu ris

57 pp molto cresc.

Example 7. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments*..., *Holy God*, pp. 57–62.

In Example 7, one can observe the *crescendo* and *decrescendo* frequently employed by Szymanowski over the course of one or two bars, creating a undulating effect that evokes an expressionist sense of unease.

It is also worth noting the very abrupt dynamic changes in the first song (Example 8, p. 40). These, too, help to create a sense of unease, further heightened by sudden

emotional shifts arising from the texture, the way the melody is carried, and the lyrics embedded in the music.

Allegro agitato

Bo - że!
- tel - le!

Dla - cze - go mo - je - li war - gi ma - ją wy - rzu - cać
Pour - quoi mes lèvres te di - sent seu - les mon chant de

91

lunga

ff subito

ff

Example 8. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *Holy God*, pp. 91–95.

I Am and I Weep presents a slightly different, though equally intense, dynamic structure. The piece begins with the exclamation ‘I am!’, marked by the composer as *sff* (Ex. 9). Furthermore, the term *agitato* may also influence the dynamics, through which (among other things) the performer can shape the turbulent character of the opening phrases. This exclamation, emphasised by the composer and set apart by Kasprovicz as a separate line, is in fact the musical equivalent of a scream. Combined with long rhythmic values, the static nature of the piano part, and its separation from the narrative section by a fermata, this creates an effect of exaggeration.

Allegro molto, agitato

sff

Je - stem! Je - stem i pla - cze, bi - je skrzy - dla - mi, jak
Je souf - fre! Je souf - fre je pleu - re Je bats des ai - les tel

sff

ff

Example 9. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, ‘*I Am Here and I Weep*’, vols. 1–3.

Bringing the preceding section to a close at a heightened dynamic level, the composer delineates it from the subsequent section by placing a fermata over a rest,

thereby creating a moment of suspension before the entry of the *meno mosso*, *andante mesto* section. Although *mesto* does not constitute a tempo designation in the strict sense, functioning rather as an expressive indication, it is closely aligned with the *pp* dynamic marking specified by the composer in the score. The pronounced contrast between these juxtaposed sections once again evokes the characteristic abrupt shifts between extreme expressive states associated with expressionist musical language.

In the section *L'istesso tempo*, a new dynamic idea is introduced into the song's structure, one most characteristic of *I Am and I Weep*. In bars 19–61, the composer slowly begins to build up a crescendo towards the climax in the following section. The beginning of this process can be observed in bar 27 (Example 10). Szymanowski leads the performers and listeners from delicate, impressionistic descriptions of nature, marked with dynamics ranging from *pp*, *p* to *mf*, right up to an expressionistic outburst of emotion, upon returning to the musical material marked *allegro molto*, *agitato*.

a tempo
poważnie, równo
(jakby w pochodzie żałobnym)

Za ni - mi dzie-wan-ny z piasz - czys - tych wydm się ru - szy - ły, z miedz się ru -
Les hau-tes mo - lè - nes sui - vent le tris - te cor - tè - ge, et les pen -

27 *pp*

8

Example 10. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *I Am and I Weep*, bars 27–29.

The unusual comment ‘As if in a funeral procession’ indicates the expression very precisely and has a decisive influence on the dynamic layout of the vocal part. Despite the impressionistic nature of the musical depiction of nature coming to life, with the echo of a bell—ringing out and then fading—added by Szymanowski, the dynamics increase. From bar 39, Szymanowski wrote ‘from this point onwards with ever-increasing strength and passion’. The previous interplay of timbre and subtle dynamics is gradually replaced by an atmosphere of growing unease, created by *the accelerando* and increasingly louder dynamics. The musical phrases, however, continue to be characterised by considerable internal variation in volume. This sense of ‘undulation’ persists until bar 54, where the

final wave begins, crashing with great force in the closing bars, thereby shifting the emotional sphere once again from the realm of impressionism into that of expressionism.

The last two sections are performed with great dynamism and at a turbulent tempo that emphasises this. The piece ends in much the same way as it began. Szymanowski notated *sff* on almost every stressed note in the song's final four bars (ex. 11, p. 42), thereby heightening the drama of the words. It is also worth noting the solemnity of this conclusion. The expressionistic, jarring dynamics of the final piano chords bring to mind the runs played on the organ, perhaps using all the stops, whilst the full sound evokes the tolling of a bell. This is a typical example of the fusion of expressionist aesthetics with symbolism.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is in French, with lyrics: "nad na - mil - tiè de nous!". The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords, many of which are marked with "sff" (sforzando fortissimo) and "ten." (tension). The tempo is marked "allarg." (allargando). The score is numbered 79 and 80.

Example 11. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...., I Am and I Weep*, pp. 79–83.

My Evening Song, like *Holy God*, begins and ends with a quiet dynamic. The dynamic structure of the third song also features a characteristic rise and fall in sound intensity across the phrases. The first three sections are maintained at a dynamic level close to *piano*, rarely reaching *mezzo forte*. Once again, this is accompanied by a sense of the composer's shift away from expressionism towards impressionistic sound painting.

In the following section, marked *Poco meno e rubato*, there is a shift in expression. The focus shifts from nature to the soul. Szymanowski emphasises this change of perspective by introducing a wider dynamic range in the successive phrases, whilst largely retaining their undulating shape, which gradually becomes increasingly jagged. In this passage, it is not the dynamics but the melody that serves as the vehicle for expressionism—its foundation on the octave interval combined with a semitone, which carries a significant dramatic charge. (ex. 12, p. 43). The recurring motivic pattern in the piano part and the continuous build-up in volume lead to a climax in bar 97,

sustained at *fff*. The descending vocal phrase, the thinning piano texture and the *rallentando*, in turn, shape a smooth descent to *pp* in bar 109.

Example 12 is a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The tempo is marked *poco a poco*, *crescendo*, and *accelerando*. The lyrics are in Polish and French. The piano part features a descending phrase in the right hand and a more active bass line. The score is numbered 89.

Example 12. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *My Evening Song*, vols. 29–92.

In the *Allegro agitato*, on the other hand, expressionism manifests itself in a very rapid rise from *pp* (bar 110) to *fff* (bar 120) and, once again, in the undulating phrasing, interval leaps and sudden accents (Example 13).

Example 13 is a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The tempo is marked *Allegro agitato*. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are in Polish and French. The piano part features a rapid rise in dynamics from *pp* to *fff* and includes undulating phrasing, interval leaps, and sudden accents. The score is numbered 110.

Example 13. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *My Evening Song*, bars 110–114.

Following this—the final emotional outburst in the entire cycle—comes the concluding section, maintained at the same tempo as the beginning of the song—*Adagio*. Its descending phrase brings the piece to a close at *ppp* with a *morendo* marking. The dynamic structure of the whole is rounded off by a slow transition into silence.

One can discern a dynamic analogy between the beginning of the first song and the end of the third. Such a framework lends a sense of cohesion to the cycle, whilst at the same time offering scope for interpretation in the context of the text and music, as well as the values represented by the artists of Young Poland.

The intense variability in *Three Fragments from the Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*, both at the level of the cycle as a whole and of the individual pieces, poses a major challenge for performers. Some of the dynamic markings suggested by the composer prove impossible to execute if interpreted as relating solely to volume, in isolation from phrasing, interval patterns, texture or the lyrics. In particular, situating the work within the context of expressionism, symbolism and impressionism, and relating their principles to the dynamic structure of each song, allows specific dynamic markings to be translated into a form of emotional expression, which in turn enables a coherent performance.

3.4. The form and artistic message of *Three Fragments* as perceived by a contemporary performer

The song cycle *Three Fragments from Kasprowicz's Poems* and the original poetic text are now over a century old, yet they remain as relevant as ever. The universal themes they contain allow a 21st-century performer—seemingly very distant from the era of Kasprowicz and Szymanowski—to interpret and genuinely experience them. The composer's musical language, combined with the distinctive content and form of the poems, creates a clear message that touches upon themes such as the suffering of the individual and the collective, a sense of injustice and resentment towards the world and its Creator, or even doubt in His omnipotence. Listeners and performers alike may find in these songs their own emotions of reproach and anger, their own cry of despair, or personal melancholy and deep sorrow; they may also express these through Kasprowicz's words and Szymanowski's music.

The musical quotation of a supplication in the first song, despite the ongoing secularisation of society, remains even today a recognisable symbol of supplication, having a powerful effect on the imagination of both listener and performer. *Holy God* was structured internally by Szymanowski on the principle of dichotomy. Here, passages of nascent reproach—emotions such as sadness, anger and even fury—are interwoven with passages expressing a plea for mercy, underpinned by a premonition of its futility. The sense of powerlessness in the face of the world and the absolute, which resonates throughout the song, is a universal feeling, affecting people always and everywhere, and it is in this that the contemporary performer, and subsequently the listener, can reflect their own experience.

The second song deals with a theme similar to that of the first, yet its central motif—nature's procession towards the 'great grave'—seems, at first, far less obvious.

Szymanowski's words and swelling music, with its increasingly intense march-like character, allow the performer to gradually discern the gathering emotions. It is worth noting that this procession culminates in an accusation levelled at God of indifference towards His creation, and concludes with a fervent plea that is open to multiple interpretations. The performer may find in it a still smouldering spark of hope for divine intervention, or may deliver it as an empty formula, shaped into the ultimate expression of disbelief not only in God's action but even in His existence. As for the entire progression—the slow build-up of emotion—the performer may interpret it as a gradual descent into madness, spreading anger, or anything else that allows the singer to naturally lead up to such a violent outburst at the climax. The variety of possible interpretations, coupled with the intuitive guidance towards a personal tone through the music, allows one to recognise the timelessness of *I Am and I Weep*.

My Evening Song, particularly when compared with the songs that precede it, becomes a moment of reflection, a respite following intense experiences. The stylisation employed by Szymanowski in the third song allows the contemporary performer to be transported into memories of their own idyllic past, into the tranquillity of nature, a place and time of carefree bliss. At the same time, as an integral part of such a dream, a brutal image of reality emerges, depicted by Szymanowski through a series of illustrations that contrast with the rhythm of the mazurka. In this further dichotomy, the performer can discern a universal human sentiment: the dissonance between memories of the idyllic world of childhood, a lost paradise, and the hardships (often perceived as unjust) of the present. This nostalgia, which grows into a heart-rending longing, is, once again, something intrinsically linked to the human condition, enabling bridges of understanding to be built between generations.

The cycle as a whole becomes, for the performer, a three-part experience of profound emotions, allowing them to discover their own identity within the timeless themes contained in the words and music. Interpreting Szymanowski's composition can bring both immense satisfaction and difficulty, stemming from the weight of the emotions it contains. The *three movements* demand a high degree of sensitivity and maturity from the artist. The artist will not find 'pretty' music here, but rather a full spectrum of emotions—not always beautiful ones—which compel one to look deep within oneself.

Chapter III

Contemporary musical settings of *Hymns*—Stanisław Rzepiela's *Dies Irae*

1. The vocal-instrumental works of Stanisław Rzepiela

Stanisław Rzepiela is a representative of the generation of Polish composers born in the last decade of the 20th century. In 2015, he obtained a Bachelor's degree in the composition class of Prof. dr hab. Marcel Chyrzyński, and in 2018 a Master's degree in the composition class of dr hab. Maciej Jabłoński at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków (then the Academy of Music in Kraków). Furthermore, in 2020, he obtained a Master's degree in the conducting class of Prof. Dr. hab. Rafał Jacek Delekta. He also completed his violin studies at the Władysław Żeleński State Secondary Music School in Kraków.

Initially, as a trained violinist, he focused primarily on instrumental composition. Over time, however, the focus of his interests shifted towards vocal and vocal-instrumental music, which now form the mainstay of his work.

Rzepiela's most important source of inspiration is literary text, whilst the foundation of his compositions lies in the relationship between words and music. At the heart of his creative process lie: the vocal quality of the melody, the deliberate shaping of harmony, and the integration of music with theatrical and narrative elements. To date, Rzepiela's compositional output has included numerous vocal-instrumental works, which are listed, along with basic details, in Table 5.

Autonomous music	Functional music
<i>Song of the Hidden God. Shores Full of Silence</i> for chamber orchestra and female choir (2013), premiered at the concert of the winners of the 2nd <i>PatriPatriae</i> International Composition Competition (2014, W. Kilar State Music School in Katowice) <i>De sancto Stanislao</i> for mixed <i>a cappella</i> choir (2013) <i>A Song of the Hidden God. Shores Full of Silence</i>—an oratorio for soloists, a narrator, a chamber orchestra and a female choir (2014), premiered at the <i>Cracovia Sacra</i> festival (2014, Basilica of the Holy Trinity in Kraków)	<i>Lovers from Marona</i>, music for a radio play based on a work by J. Iwaszkiewicz; dir. A. Turowiec, pedagogical supervision by A. Brzoska (2013), Prapremier Festival in Bydgoszcz (2013) <i>HeeHeeHatty. What's That Falling?</i>, music for a short animated film for children; dir. T. Głodek, music by S. Rzepiela and D. Troya Molina (2014), Paris Animation Film Festival, 57th International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film, FESTIVAL CINE JUNIOR France, TIFF Kids Film Festival in Toronto, O!Pla. <i>Kop-Ciuszek, or the fairy tale about the princess who had too many clothes</i>, music for a stage production;

<i>Peccantem me quotidie</i> for a cappella female choir (2016), premiered at the Lenten concert 'Stała matka bolejąca' (2017, St Casimir's Church, Kraków) <i>Credo</i> for mixed choir and instrumental ensemble (2016), premiered at the <i>Cracovia Sacra</i> festival (2016, Church of the Bernardine Fathers in Kraków) <i>The Bells</i> for solo soprano with piano accompaniment (2017), premiered at the City of Kraków Creative Scholarships ceremony (2017) <i>Totapulchra es, Maria</i> for mixed choir and instrumental ensemble (2017), premiered at the <i>Cracovia Sacra</i> Festival (2017, St Casimir's Church, Kraków) <i>Stabat Mater Dolorosa</i> for a cappella female choir (2017), premiered at a concert by the winners of the 3rd <i>PatriPatriae</i> International Composition Competition (2018, W. Kilar State Music School in Katowice) <i>Δημήτηρ (Demeter)</i> for soloists, actors, dancers, choir and orchestra (2018), premiered at the Duetissimo Festival (2018, Kraków Philharmonic) <i>God Has Forsaken Me</i> for solo tenor with piano accompaniment (2019), premiered at the Ada Sari International Festival and Competition of Vocal Art (2019, Nowy Sącz) <i>Missa Descendens</i> for mixed a cappella choir (2019) <i>Ubi caritas</i> for mixed a cappella choir (2022) <i>Väinämöisenloitsuja</i> for a cappella male choir (2024) <i>Dies Irae</i> for solo tenor and instrumental ensemble (2024)	dir. W. Jurewicz, script by G. Reszka (2015), Zagłębie Children's Theatre (2015) <i>In the Land of Music</i>, music for a children's play; script and direction by K. Nurkowska (2015), Captain Jadwiga Beaupré of the Home Army Primary School in Sygneczów (2015) <i>Othello</i>, music for a stage production (2016); script and direction by A. Skorupa, State Theatre School in Kraków (2016) <i>A national assault on culture. Target: theatre</i>, musical arrangement for a performative reading of excerpts from Joseph Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i>, translated by J. Dukaj, Conrad Festival in Kraków (2017) <i>A Tale of the Artist's Creation</i>, a musical fairy tale; script and direction by W. D. Terechowicz (2017), Cricoteka (2017) <i>The Divine Comedy. Hell</i>, music for the production; written and directed by M. Rasiewicz, Ignatianum Academy in Kraków (2017) <i>Oedipus</i>, music for the production; directed by A. Skorupa, script by P. Urbanowicz and A. Skorupa, pedagogical supervision by R. Ziolo (2017), State Theatre School in Kraków (2017) <i>The Enchanted Forest</i>, music for a children's play; written and directed by K. Nurkowska, 6th Municipal Children's Theatre Festival 'Teatr i my' in Krzyszkowice (2017) <i>At the Wedding</i>, music for a stage production; directed by R. Sadowski, script by M. Malinowski (2020) <i>Wind, Rain and Whatever You Like</i>, music for the Kraków Philharmonic's educational series 'Fairy Tales Written in Music'; script by D. Stańczuk, directed by M. Czerwień (2022) <i>Fredro for Children—Paweł and Gawel</i>, music for the Kraków Philharmonic's educational series 'Fairy Tales Written in Music'; script by M. Czerwień, directed by R. Sowa (2023) <i>Fredro for Children—The Wind and the Night</i>, music for the Krakow Philharmonic's educational series 'Fairy Tales Written in Music'; script by M. Czerwień, directed by R. Sowa (2023) <i>The Elephant—A Trumpeter Like No Other</i>, music for the Krakow Philharmonic's educational series 'Fairy Tales Written in Music'; script by D. Stańczuk/T. Pyrczak, directed by T. Pyrczak (2023) <i>Fredro for Children—A Fairy Tale about an Owl</i>, music for the Krakow Philharmonic's educational
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	series ‘Fairy Tales Written in Music’; script by J. Łysiński, directed by R. Sowa (2024) <i>Polish Fairy Tales and Legends—About the Dwarves and the Orphan Marysia</i>, music for the Krakow Philharmonic’s educational series ‘Fairy Tales Written in Music’; script by J. Łysiński, directed by R. Sowa (2025)
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Table 5. Vocal and instrumental works by Stanisław Rzepiela.

2. *Dies Irae*—analysis and interpretation of the cycle

2.1. Structure of the work

Stanisław Rzepiela’s *Dies Irae* for tenor and eight instruments is an elaborate chamber work composed to the words of the poem *Dies Irae*, taken from Jan Kasprowicz’s collection *Hymns*. The work was composed in 2024, and its first recording was made in 2025 (the recording premiere) with the author of this paper as the soloist.

Dies Irae consists of four parts—songs: I *The Day of Wrath*, II *Adam and Eve*, III *The Last Judgement*, IV *The End of the World*⁵⁹.

In each of these sections, the composer has distinguished segments, marked with consecutive Arabic numerals in the score. These segments form self-contained musical ideas, which is one of the defining features of the work’s structure. It is internally varied and abounds in sudden contrasts, usually dictated by the semantics of Kasprowicz’s poetic text. To understand the structure of the piece, it is worth providing a brief description of the individual sections, taking into account their length (the number of bars—although this is not a precise indication, as both metre and tempo change regularly), the composer’s initial tempo marking, and the expressive terms used here, the literary text used in the song in question, divided into larger sections, as well as the author’s comments, which he considers essential for an adequate description of each section. Here is Kasprowicz’s text as it appears in Rzepiela’s work, with the numbers of the sections (self-contained musical ideas) indicated:

<i>I The Day of Wrath</i>		
lyrical text	score numbers bar numbers (1–299)	tempo markings and expressive markings
	Vol. 1–12 instrumental introduction	<i>Tremenduosamente</i> , <i>inexorably</i> ♩=73–75

⁵⁹ The spelling of the titles of the movements follows that of the score.

The trumpet will sound a strange note, fire will congeal, the glow will dim, the histories of the worlds shall return to dust. Leaves will fall from the trees of eternity upon the Judge's dreadful coming, to bear witness to the Psalmist... Sin stains the soul with black blood... Left defenceless, we stand alone – who will have mercy on us?	No. 1, bars 13–34 vocal part from bar 13	<i>Maestoso, di fronte alla fine: slightly less animated than Tempo I ♩=ca 68</i>
The mournful path of inevitable punishment, drenched in tears and accompanied by a chorus of wails on this endless day of the Lord's wrath,	No. 2, bars 35–48	<i>Meno mosso di Tempo I; tranquillo, melancholico ♩=ca 70</i>
a day of the Lord's wrath, in which, amidst the flames of the tranquil sun, fresh, unfaded roses burn fresh, unfaded roses of sin and guilt!	No. 3, bars 49–56	<i>Meno mosso, tranquillo ♩=65</i>
	No. 4, bars 57–67 with the oboe as solo instrument (Eve's motif)	<i>Pigramente; ♩=55 pochissimo rubato</i>
A leaf torn from your tree, the human spirit rushes forwards and backwards, like a handful of dust swept up by a cyclone: before it and behind it, a flaming sword its red blade flashing; before and behind it, the dead rise from their cemeteries the spectres of the ages, marked by the shame of guilt and sin,	No. 5, bars 68–88 vocal part from bar 72	<i>Pesante, 'grave', quasi marziale ♩=95</i>
and they curse, and blaspheme, and weep, they wail and hiss, and gasp in ceaseless despair, they die of mad laughter on this day of the Lord's endless wrath day...	No. 6, pp. 89–106	<i>Immediately more animated, barbaric, not too heavy, but almost grotesquely ♩=100</i>
Death groans, death cries out! Their brows vanish in the clouds of the peaks; a wall of drizzling mists all round an unknown breath is swept about,	No. 7, Vol. 107–114	<i>Maestoso, di fronte alla fine; Slightly faster than Tempo I (♩=approx. 80)</i>
it creates some monstrous, wild shapes and drives their herds across the valleys, and gathers them once more into a cavernous abyss, and hurls their mass towards the heavens, and weaves them into black shrouds this invisible, shudder-inducing Weaver, and with that heavy, wet yarn he covers everything that is... Alas!...	No. 8, pp. 115–134	<i>Immediately more animated, barbaric, not too heavy, but almost grotesquely ♩=100</i>
	No. 9, bars 135–149 with the oboe as solo instrument	<i>Tranquillo, melancholico con rassegnazione ♩=65</i>
O merciful God, have mercy on us!	No. 10, pp. 149–167	<i>Poco più vivo ♩=70</i>

The great hour of Your wrath has come, Job's voice has already thundered, the heavens are crashing down, from the Head wrapped in thorns warm blood flows like a river and a sea, and her pain is transformed into a river and a sea of blood...	the movement begins with a solo oboe part and towards the end, a solo trumpet vocal part from bar 154	
In God's temple the sacred song has fallen silent, the veil has already been torn in two, the wall is crumbling and the rock is splitting... And the blood in these seas, in these red seas, has congealed into dark ice... Kyrie eleison!	No. 11, pp. 168–184 vocal part from p. 170	<i>Misterioso</i> ♩=70
You have opened a dreadful grave before us... The worlds are swallowed up by impassable mud; The worlds are swallowed up by impassable mud, worlds, cast out from the gates of God. Terrifying before the impassable mire, worlds cast out from God's gates. Kyrie eleison! (the phrase 'Kyrie eleison!' encoded in the instrumental track, repeated several times)	No. 12, pp. 185–205	<i>A tempo, ma poco più mosso</i> ♩=75
	No. 13, bars 206–211 solo oboe	<i>Meno mosso</i> ♩=55
And from beneath the roots of poisonous herbs, from beneath clumps of rushes, reeds and grasses, from ditches, sinkholes, gullies and pits, covered with the sooty film of putrid water, a swarming brood of vipers begins to crawl out: black leeches, green lizards wiggle their way forward through the water and entwine themselves in slippery coils the sad billions of martyrs' crosses, sprung from the marshy earth, sunk into the marshy muck...	No. 14, pp. 211–240 vocal part from p. 215	<i>Pigramente, poco più mosso</i> ♩=65
And here are their heads, strange, human heads, glowing with the cadaverous fat of yellowed, bald foreheads, with jaws shrouded in a mass of black beards, rest upon the laps of these dead bodies... And they raise their slanted, cloudy eyes towards their bowed temples... And, having encircled their hips in a lustful embrace, with moist lips they whisper words of debauchery to them...	No. 15, pp. 241–260	<i>And the tempo, sempre poco a poco accel. (♩=75 in the previous movement)</i>

	No. 16, bars 261–272 bar 272—general pause (<i>in tempo</i>)	<i>Meno mosso than Tempo I; tranquillo, con rassegnazione</i> ♩=60
A great clamour arose all round, when the archangel's trumpet sounds the call for the Last Judgement. A sombre voice resounds, like thunder, the golden-feathered one's call, level with the valleys and the mountains. The terrified soul of the worlds trembles, and He drains the depths of the seas. He stirs the bones of the ages in their graves. The power of the archangel's trumpet by the power of the archangel's trumpet, the grave has already opened.	No. 17, pp. 273–299 bar 299 general pause and fermata	<i>Subito tremendo—Tempo I, inexorably</i> ♩=73–75

Table 6. The form of the first movement of S. Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* cycle, taking into account the literary text.

II Adam and Eve		
text	score numbers bar numbers (1–125)	tempo markings and expressive markings
Do not look where fair-haired Eve sat, banished from paradise for all eternity, with crime at her white feet, eternally mocked by a fiery lust of guilt and sin...	vol. 1–8 solo recitative <i>a cappella</i> vocal part from vol. 9, the piano enters	<i>Mesto, consciously; little ad lib.</i> ♩=approx. 60
	No. 1, bars 11–24 oboe as solo instrument	<i>In tempo</i> (♩=60); <i>mesto, leggiero, as if observing the events of the first part from a distance</i>
Let them judge me, let them punish me – yes, me, Adam, who took upon my shoulders carried from the Garden this superhuman burden of crushing guilt	No. 2, bars 24–36 vocal part from bar 26	<i>Poco più mosso</i> (♩=65)
and for ever and ever I struggle with this burden towards the eternal heights, and, pale, I dare not turn my face towards those twilights that have settled upon the earth, there, towards that hellish pass, where fair-haired Eve has taken her seat with the serpent of sin at her white feet...	No. 3, bars 37–52 with an upbeat	two volumes earlier: <i>a tempo</i> (♩=65)
	No. 4, bars 53–65 with an introductory bar no vocal part oboe as solo instrument	<i>In tempo nuovo</i> (♩=approx. 65) <i>molto espressivo</i>
The cock had not yet crowed, yet on the infernal pass, above the depths of the Styx's abyss, sits, beneath the rubble of a sky-high ridge, the foremother of Sin, fair-haired Eve, with the serpent of betrayal at her white feet.	No. 5, pp. 66–82	<i>Poco meno mosso</i> ♩=60

Kyrie eleison!		
	No. 6, bars 83–97 no vocal part; the oboe serves as the solo instrument in bar 93, the piano features motifs from ‘The Head Crowned with Thorns’ and a quotation from ‘Dies irae’	<i>Pochissimo più mosso di tempo precedente</i> (♩=approx. 68); <i>striscare</i>
Adam, the damned, turn away from these dreadful paths! Hang upon your cross, jutting out in the heavens, and do not look where fair-haired Eve, having taken up residence on the threshold of hell, clings to the lecherous serpent! Alas! –	No. 7, bars 98–108 with an upbeat	<i>A little more lively</i> ♩=70; <i>heavy</i>
Cover your errant eyes, Adam, you who are pursued! There above you! At the summit Golden-haired Eve! The weight of her sin has crushed you; you have come to a standstill your journey! Cover your wayward eyes and, for ever and ever, cast yourself into the abysmal ravine!...	No. 8, pp. 109–125 epilogue, recitative	<i>Mesto, leggero</i> (♩=60); <i>senza speranza, recitative: Calmo, poco ad lib.</i> ♩=approx. 60

Table 7. The form of Part II of S. Rzepiela’s *Dies Irae* cycle, taking into account the literary text.

III The Last Judgement		
text	score numbers bar numbers (1–163)	tempo markings and expressive markings
And He, the mighty Womb of almighty wombs, Brightness of all brightness, Darkness of darknesses, Grace of graces and Wrath of wraths, stood over the passing of Life and, laying his hand upon the head of Sorrow, upon the immeasurable Head, crowned with thorns, filling the vast expanses of the universe, began the Judgement.	lines 1–11 recitative	<i>With horror, in the face of majesty, almost beyond measure, rubato, (following the soloist); tempo ad lib. but approx. ♩=80</i>
Thunder bolts strike, and His call rises above the thunder! The vastness of existence cannot contain, and His golden light shoots above the full moon, above the fiery glow of torrents of lightning...	No. 1, vols. 12–23	<i>Tremendous, inexorable</i> ♩=70

What am I before You, I who come from paradisiacal realms , an exile, this crushing guilt and now I perish,	No. 2, bars 24–30	<i>Introverso, as if from a different perspective</i> ♩=70
You listen to weeping and wailing with a deaf ear and you judge! Kyrie eleison! You gaze upon the torment of the ages with a sightless eye and you judge! Kyrie eleison! A woman, with a cry of despair, gives birth to a child, You pour hyssop upon his sinful soul The gale sweeps along the crossroads with a sigh , towards your heights prayer it carries bloody, nailed to crosses, You judge! Kyrie eleison!	No. 3, bars 31–51 with an upbeat	<i>Pesante</i> ♩=75, introductory bar: <i>molto pesante l'istesso tempo</i> (♩=65) <i>e rall. molto</i>
And who made me look at these black boulders, crumbling to rubble under the force of Your wrath, O dreadful God – at these boulders, where the dreadful fruit of Your tree, the golden-haired Eve, presses the lizard's bare breast to her own?...	No. 4, pp. 52–70	<i>Meno mosso</i> (♩=65); <i>pochissimo rubato; introverso, as if from a different perspective</i>
Look!... She lays her white hand on his temple – on his deathly, sunken, yellowed temple and greenish... Kyrie eleison!	No. 5, pp. 71–104	<i>And the tempo, pesante, on the brink of madness</i>
Upon her bosom rested the black, gleaming beard of the fiery Satan, which cast its shadow over the dying world, Kyrie eleison!	No. 6, bars 105–120 instrumental, vocal part from bar 109	♩=60, after 4 bars: <i>Pochissimo meno mosso; quasi senza misura, poco ad lib.; con la consapevolezza della sconfitta. '...tutto è compiuto'</i>
My soul is consumed by an eternal, unhealed wound! Who will give me the remedy? O Father of debauchery! Nothing that has happened beneath the vault of heaven happened without Your will! O source of betrayal! Cause of sin and vengeance, and despair, and mad laughter! mad laughter, mad laughter Kyrie eleison!	No. 7, pp. 121–140	<i>Più mosso</i> (♩=75) <i>ardently</i>
Judge, O Righteous One! Shatter the foundations of the worlds, quell the great fire in a smouldering spark, reduce Adam's deceitful heart	No. 8, pp. 141–150	<i>Pesante, maestosamente</i> (♩=55)

and weep! Weep with him, O stony, icy God!		
Let Your piercing trumpet resound as a cry over the stubble of Your harvest...	No. 9, pp. 151–163 The finale	<i>Più mosso</i> (♩=65); <i>with full force</i>
He vanquished the two-headed dragon, he vanquished Satan with three backs in a great battle the Lord's archangel, Michael, and perished in the abyss.		

Table 8. The form of Part III of S. Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* cycle, taking into account the literary text.

IV The End of the World		
lyrics	score numbers bar numbers (1–55)	tempo markings and expressive markings
And the end of the world came... O moment of peace!	bars 1–7 with an upbeat introductory recitative	<i>Quasi attacca, ad lib., quasi parlando, senza tempo</i> (♩=approx. 55)
And I, an exile from Paradise, a wanderer unhappy, banished to these earthly fields to die, and to watch, beneath the rubble of the sky- high ridge, sits Mother Death, fair-haired Eve, caressing the serpent of Sin, I send to the heavens, a mysterious darkness, this is my eternal, unending: Amen!	No. 1, bars 8–25	<i>A little more animated, but languid</i> (♩=55)
In the deep silence of the dead, only the 'Amen' can be heard, my dreadful 'Amen'. O merciful God, have mercy on us! Kyrie eleison!	No. 2, bars 26–34	<i>Tempo precedente</i> (♩=ca 55), <i>ma poco ad lib.</i>
Before me lies an abyss, born of guilt, by Your sin, O God!... I am perishing! I am perishing! I am perishing!	No. 3, bars 35–43	Tempo I (♩=55)
And what shall rise above the void, where worlds once were and I, rich in the will to live, yet today placed amongst the dead? Let there be nothing! Amen For what can there be, if I am lost?... Has the impenetrable darkness of nothingness has descended Amen.	No. 4, vols. 44–55	<i>Facing the end; almost boundless, timeless</i>

Table 9. The form of Part IV of S. Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* cycle, taking into account the literary text.

If we look closely at the structure of the Rzepiela's cycle, the feature that immediately distinguishes all the movements is their length. The first song is by far the longest (299 bars), whilst the second is the shortest (55 bars). The middle sections are roughly half the length of the longest (the second comprises 125 bars, and the third—163 bars). The first part presents all the musical leitmotifs of the entire cycle; it can therefore be regarded as a kind of overture, an exposition of the core musical material. Rzepiela did not retain the original chronology of Kasprowicz's poem; instead, he selected excerpts from the text, sometimes arranging them in a different order and thereby achieving the intended dramatic effects⁶⁰. His adaptation of Kasprowicz's text also abounds in—not always typical—tempo markings and expressive terms, evoking a distinctive theatricality that permeates Rzepiela's *Dies Irae*.

2.2. The role of the spoken text in shaping the drama

The title *Dies Irae* is taken from a hymn used in the liturgy of the funeral Mass in the Catholic Church since the 13th century. The words '*Dies irae*' come from Latin and literally mean 'The Day of Wrath'. This 'The Day of Wrath' is identified with the Last Judgement and the end of the world, as described in the biblical Book of Revelation⁶¹. In music, the *Dies Irae*, with the words of the original hymn—once attributed to Thomas of Celano— appears in numerous *Requiem masses* and is usually the most dramatic section, performed by a choir representing the people of God. The biblical description of the Last Judgement is one of the most inspiring images in the history of culture. It is also extremely spectacular, and the drama of this image captures the imagination. At the same time, the image itself evokes musical associations, particularly the notion of the Archangel's resounding trumpet, which has been utilised in masterful musical works, such as the '*Tuba mirum*' movement from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Requiem*. Kasprowicz not only draws on these musical and theatrical elements in his depiction of the Last Judgement, but also explores the metaphysical and existential dimensions of this event. That is why his hymn entitled *Dies irae (The Day of Wrath)* contains highly expressive imagery, characterised by subtext, Christian symbolism, but

⁶⁰ The complete text of the work *Rzepieli*, together with Kasprowicz's original text, is included in Appendix No. 1.

⁶¹ "Bo nadszedł Wielki Dzień Jego gniewu, a ktoś zdoła się ostać?", *Biblia Tysiąclecia* (Rev. 6:17), Pallottinum, Poznań 1965 [<https://biblia.deon.pl/rozdzial.php?id=1092>, accessed: 23 August 2025].

also by existential and humanistic reflection. It addresses themes of sin, guilt and damnation, as well as the undeserved suffering of humanity and the individual's rebellion against the great Creative Force.

As previously noted, the composer modified the original text of the poem. The central point around which Rzepiela constructs his narrative is Adam as an individual and his experience of betrayal by Eve, for which he accuses God, who remains indifferent to his suffering. The events of the Last Judgement form a tragic backdrop, whilst also serving as a stage on which the lyrical narrator appears as *a dramatis persona*. In this way, the composer achieved a more distinct timeline than in Kasprowicz's work, drawing closer to the classical principle of the three unities: place, time and action. This arrangement allows the cycle to be viewed as a sequence of four scenes.

The sections *The Day of Wrath* and *Adam and Eve* contain the most striking examples of the composer's work with the text. They draw their material from lines 1–302 of the poem; however, Kasprowicz's original order is not retained. Instead, Rzepiela—conceiving *The Day of Wrath* as a sort of bird's-eye view of the end-of-the-world events described by the poet—omitted certain verses, whilst transferring passages containing Adam's subjective, individual experience to the section *Adam and Eve*. Whenever an element that has been moved or omitted occurs in the course of the first part of *Dies Irae*, the composer has signalled this fact through the use of musical themes that represent most of the themes addressed there. Rzepiela assumed that the events of the first and second parts occur simultaneously; consequently, in *Adam and Eve* too, alongside the text in the tenor part, there are musical reflections of the omitted verses. For example, in the first part, between bars 139 and 154, having concluded the treatment of the text in the tenor part at line 96, the composer planned line 146 as the next vocal phrase.

original text	version in Rzepiela's composition
verses 97–113 a description of the space where 'that Head, crowned with thorns, bursts the edges of the horizon'	bars 135–142 The theme of 'the Head crowned with a crown of thorns' in the piano part
lines 114–118 the stanza about Eve line 118 'Guilt and sin'	bars 139–149: the theme of Eve in the oboe part bars 143–144: the theme of the flowers of guilt and sin in the piano part
lines 119–124 The stanza in which the 'Trumpet of Judgement' appears	bars 145–149 a variation in the musical notation of the words 'Dies irae' in the trumpet part
verses 125–136 refer to Adam and Eve	bars 149–151: Adam's theme in the violin and viola parts; Eve's theme; a variation on Eve's theme in the cello part

verses 146–152 line 146: the invocation ‘O merciful God, have mercy on us!’ line 150 ‘from a head crowned with thorns’	bars 154–167 text in accordance with the poem
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Table 10. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, Part I—equivalents of Kasprowicz’s verbal text omitted from the tenor part (leitmotifs) and placed in the instrumental parts.

original lyrics	version in Rzepiela’s composition
lines 114–118 line 118, the words ‘Winy i grzechu’	bars 1–10: text as per the poem bars 9–10: the motif of the flowers of guilt and sin in the piano part
lines 119–124 The stanza in which the ‘Trumpet of Judgement’ appears	bars 11–12: the encoded words ‘Dies irae’ in the string quartet part
lines 125–136 lines 146–152 line 146: the plea ‘O merciful God, have mercy on us!’ line 150 ‘from the head crowned with thorns’	bars 26–52, in accordance with the poem bars 53–56 (including the upbeat) theme ‘O merciful God’ in the oboe part bars 57–60: the theme ‘The head crowned with thorns’

Table 11 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, Part II—equivalents of Kasprowicz’s text omitted from the tenor part (leitmotifs) placed in the instrumental parts.

The above comparison demonstrates that the composer made considerable efforts to remain faithful to Kasprowicz’s poem, despite adapting the text for the purposes of his cycle.

In Part III, *The Last Judgement*, the composer made a number of minor abridgements to Kasprowicz’s text, including the motif of the ‘Head crowned with a crown of thorns’ and the invocations: ‘Kyrie eleison’ and the word ‘Amen’—which, in Kasprowicz’s version, ultimately brings the image of the Last Judgement to a close—appear in the musical texture, represented by leitmotifs. Rzepiela also removed certain passages from the text entirely. The nature of these changes is illustrated by the excerpt in which Kasprowicz’s original text is shown in black, the deleted lines in yellow, and the lines encoded solely in the instrumental layer (words replaced by leitmotifs) in green:

And He,
the mighty Womb of almighty wombs,
Brightness of brightness,
Darkness of darknesses,
Grace of graces and Wrath of wraths,
stood over the passing of Life
and, laying his hand upon the head of Sorrow,
upon the immeasurable Head, crowned with thorns,
filling the vast expanses of the universe,

began the Judgement.
Thunderbolts strike,
and His call rises above the thunder!
The vastness of existence cannot contain all the lightning bolts,
and His golden light
shoots above the full moon, above the fiery glow
of torrents of lightning...

What am I before You, I who, from the realms of paradise,
as an exile, carrying with me this crushing guilt
and now I perish,

a wretched wanderer from East to West,
under the inevitable verdicts
raised at the dawn and dusk of day and night?!
You have set your foot upon the backs of generations
and you pass judgement! Kyrie eleison!

You listen to weeping and wailing with a deaf ear
and you judge! Kyrie eleison!

You gaze upon the torment of the ages with a blind eye
and yet you judge! Kyrie eleison!

A woman, with a cry of despair, gives birth to a child,
You douse his soul with hyssop to cleanse it of sin
and you judge! Kyrie eleison!

The wind sweeps along the crossroads with a deep sigh,
towards Your heights
it carries bloody prayers, nailed to the crosses,
You judge! Kyrie eleison!

And who created me for this, that at this very moment,
clad in condemnation, in tattered mourning,
a scrap of cloth, torn from the dreams of Your world,
writhing and crawling before You,
and with a dead eye, numbed with terror,
of the dreadful Judgement, plucking out the fiery,
world-shattering commands?

And who commanded me to gaze upon those black boulders,
crumbling to rubble under the might
of Your wrath, dreadful God –
at those boulders where the dreadful fruit of Your tree,
the golden-haired Eve,
presses her bare breast against the breast of the serpent?...

O Head, crowned with a crown of thorns!...
Who will take pity on my orphaned fate,
on my fate,
which, O God, will Your hands not free from these chains?
Kyrie eleison!

Behold!... Kyrie eleison!
She lays her white hand
on his temple –
upon a deathly, sunken, yellowed, lifeless temple...
Kyrie eleison

And whilst You mete out Your Judgements, O sea
of inexhaustible wrath,
she gazes into his eyes with her own –
with a fading gaze!
Kyrie eleison!
Her bare thighs tremble,
with her fingers she combs through the gold of her braids
and with a wave of golden hair
she covers his nakedness and caresses, and caresses
with her red lips the pallor of his lips.
Kyrie eleison!

His serpentine coils encircle the hips
of the lustful Sorrow,
and she, arching her wanton body,
breathes with insatiable desire.
Kyrie eleison!
Upon her bosom rests the black, gleaming beard
of the fiery Satan,
which has cast its shadow over the dying world,
and she,
generous in bestowing criminal caresses,
she wrapped her trembling hips around him,
in his arms, burning with desire...
Kyrie eleison!

My soul is consumed by an eternal, unhealed wound!
Who will give me a remedy?

Father of debauchery! **Kyrie eleison.**

Nothing that has happened beneath the vault of heaven
happened without Your will!

Kyrie eleison!

O source of betrayal! **Kyrie eleison!**

Cause of sin
and vengeance, and despair, and mad laughter!
Kyrie eleison!

Judge, O Righteous One!

Shatter the foundations of the worlds,
quell the great fire with a smouldering spark,
reduce Adam's deceived heart
and weep!
Weep with him, O stony, icy God!

Let Your piercing trumpet
resound as an echo of weeping
over the stubble of Your harvest...

The two-headed dragon,
Satan with three backs was vanquished in a great battle
the Lord's archangel, Michael, and perished in the abyss. **Amen.**

Only the final song of the cycle—*The End of the World*—has been retained in the original order devised by the poet, apart from the single word 'Amen', which has been transferred to the musical layer. Owing to the 'merging' of the first and second songs in terms of their use of Kasprowicz's text, they take place simultaneously in a dramatic sense. In Kasprowicz's Hymn, excerpts from the first song in Rzepiela's work 'interweave' with the storyline of Adam, which in Rzepiela's work forms the main plot of the second song. However, musically speaking, the two parts—the songs—contrast with one another⁶².

Part I of Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* is entitled *The Day of Wrath*. From a dramatic perspective, this part presents an external view of the events of the apocalypse, without delving into the inner states of the lyrical subject—the biblical Adam. The first part of Rzepiela's cycle is the most elaborate; it displays great internal diversity, with frequent

⁶² The full text of Rzepiela's work, alongside Kasprowicz's original text, is included in Appendix 1. .

changes in texture, instrumentation, mood and tension. It is a kind of overture setting the scene for the events that are to follow. It differs from an overture—as a typical part of an operatic work—primarily in terms of its length, as it is the longest song in the cycle. Even the initial expressive markings: *tremendioso* (with grandeur, with magnitude), *inesorabilmente* (inexorably) indicate the character of the entire movement. There is a distinctly palpable atmosphere of dread, tension and anticipation of the inevitable arrival of a cataclysm of cosmic proportions.

Part II, *Adam and Eve*, stands in contrast to the second song. From the expressive markings at the beginning: *Mesto, consapevolmente; poco ad lib.* (*sadly, consciously, somewhat freely*), through the inclusion of a *secco* recitative in the first 10 bars, right up to the moving epilogue, which the composer—by analogy with the beginning—has given the form of a *secco* recitative. The entire piece focuses on the perspective of the lyrical narrator; it is introspective and does not advance the dramatic action, but rather provides insight into the narrator's relationships with other people. Two of the leitmotifs presented earlier⁶³ are given specific associations, corresponding here to the characters of Adam and Eve. The second song is in verse form (the verses begin successively in bars 26, 68 and 98 with an upbeat, ending with a quasi-refrain-like reference to the Eve motif), and is opened and closed by corresponding a cappella passages for tenor. It is characterised by an intimate atmosphere; the instrumentation omits percussion and trumpet, while featuring longer solo passages for the oboe accompanied by a string quartet and piano. All these features stand in stark contrast to those of the first movement.

Part III is entitled *The Last Judgement* and forms the culmination of the entire cycle, embodying the peak of its musical and dramatic tension. Once again, a highly varied texture emerges, evoking associations with the first song. Musical passages analogous to those in Song I, *The Day of Wrath*, return; however, here the narrative and dramatic action revolve around the lyrical subject rather than serving merely as a musical depiction of the Apocalypse.

Part IV, entitled *The End of the World*, serves as a conclusion and summary of the cycle. It is the most intimate song, with the clearest chordal texture in the instrumental layer. The composer focused on the lyrical text, which is partly set to music in the form of *secco* recitatives.

⁶³ A list of leitmotifs is provided in Chapter III, section 2.3.

The cycle captures the essence of Kasprowicz's text, encompassing its most important dramatic and lyrical elements; it is, one might say, a faithful musical adaptation of the literary work. Following Kasprowicz's example, the composer placed particular emphasis on the use of symbols, quotations and leitmotifs, concealing rhetorical figures—both chordal and melodic—within the musical texture, whilst also assigning individual instruments the role of reflecting the themes present in Kasprowicz's poem.

The textual content serves as the starting point for all musical layers and thus shapes the work's dramatic structure. Rzepiela composed music that illustrates the poem's content, whereby the musical layer creates the setting in which the lyrical narrator exists. In addition to its pictorial function—which, apart from the use of the technique of 'sound painting', is enriched by numerous rhetorical figures and various other compositional devices—the words of Kasprowicz's hymn have been woven into the instrumental texture. This is manifested in leitmotifs, musical quotations drawn from the Christian liturgy, and the encoding of the text within the musical structures. All of this contributes to the work's distinctive musical and verbal language.

In ideological terms, in his *Dies Irae*, Rzepiela brought the experience of the individual—the lyrical subject—to the fore. Adam's tragedy thus becomes the central dramatic axis, overshadowing the element of the 'collective self' and the suffering of the community, which is most frequently highlighted by literary scholars. The composer followed a less popular interpretation, pointing to certain analogies between the poet's situation and that of the lyrical subject. In this line of reasoning, Adam represents Jan Kasprowicz, Eve his wife Jadwiga Gąsowska, whilst Satan is associated with the figure of Stanisław Przybyszewski. In the course of his research, the author came across material previously unknown to the composer which may confirm this hypothesis. Maria Kasprowiczowa, the poet's last wife, wrote in her diaries:

'He walked over to the table and opened a volume of his poems. I knew where he would stop:—"Dies Irae—God's wrath—the dreadful Day of Judgement". He had written this poem twelve years earlier, in that year of storms and life-changing events [...] At that moment, I suddenly saw in him that other man, the creator of immortal hymns; I sensed his true soul.

“Only I understand this piece,” he said, closing the book, casting it aside and, leaning towards me, murmured: “It is a song of jealousy”⁶⁴.

If we are to believe Kasprowiczowa, we can conclude that Rzepiela, in his artistic sensibility—which was also open to poetry—intuitively recognised the poet’s motivations that drove him to write this poem.

2.3. The central themes and their use throughout the work

Musical leitmotifs are one of the most important tools used by Rzepiela to construct the narrative. They are of a liturgical nature (‘amen’, ‘Kyrie eleison’), stand in for biblical motifs (‘Dies irae’, ‘Adam’, ‘Eve’, ‘head crowned with thorns’), whilst others cannot be classified in this way but always derive from Kasprowicz’s poems. Listed below are all the leitmotifs introduced by the composer in *Dies Irae*.

- ‘Kyrie eleison’



Example 14. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, violin part, bars 11–12.



Example 15. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, tenor part, no. 7, pp. 139–140.

- ‘head crowned with a crown of thorns’



Example 16. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, piano part (right hand), No. 2, pp. 35–40.

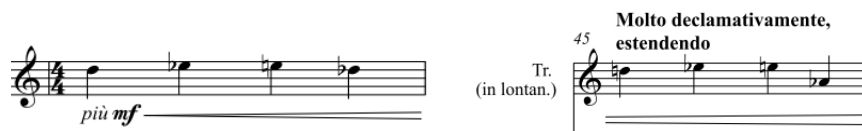
⁶⁴ Maria Kasprowiczowa, *Moje życie z nim: 1910–1914*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Literackiego, Warsaw 1932, p. 106 [https://bc.radom.pl/dlibra/publication/26933/edition/26454/content, accessed: 10 September 2025]



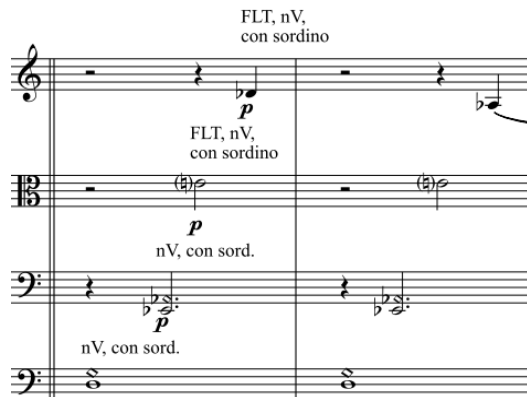
Example 17. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, viola and cello parts, No. 4, pp. 66–68.

- ‘dies irae’

This leitmotif was created by encoding the words ‘dies irae’ using the *soggetto cavato* technique. The individual notes, read either by letter or using solmisation (the composer did not use a consistent system), correspond to specific letters or syllables: the note *d*—the letter ‘d’, *es*—‘ies’, *mi* (*e*)—‘i’, *re* (*des*)—‘rae’, i.e. ‘dies irae’; *d*—‘d’, *es*—‘ies’, *mi* (*e*)—‘i’, *la* (*as*)—‘lla’, that is, ‘dies illa’.



Example 18. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, trumpet part, No. 2, pp. 44–45.



Example 19. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, parts for violin, viola, cello and double bass, No. 1, Vol. 11–12.

-

Dies Irae’ chords

Tremendoso, inesorabilmente
♩ = 73-75

Example 20. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*: first chord—piano and double bass parts, bars 1–2; second chord—piano, double bass and trumpet parts, vols. 6–7; third chord—first section, piano, double bass, cello, viola and violin parts, plus the lingering *E-flat* from the previous bar in the trumpet part, vol. 11.

Example 21. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, piano part, No. 8, bars 109–111.

- ‘flowers of sin and guilt’

Example 22. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 3, bars 54–56.



Example 23. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, piano part, vols. 9–10.

- ‘Eve’s theme’ (‘the serpent’s theme’)

57 **Pigramente**
♩=55; pochissimo rubato

Ob. *mp dolce, sedurremente, estaticamente, con esaltazione*

mf *meno*

poco trattenendo

11

63 **A tempo**

Ob. *mp*

più

poco trattenendo

poco f

nV→mV

Example 24. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, oboe part, No. 4, vols. 57–67.

p

8

zlo - ci - sto - zlo - sa E - wa,

Example 25 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, tenor part, No. 4, pp. 62–63.

- ‘Adam’s theme’

It is also encoded using the ‘*soggetto cavato*’ principle: the note *A*—the letter ‘a’, *D*—‘d’, *A*—‘a’, *E* (mi)—‘m’, i.e. ‘Adam’.

pizz.

mp come gocce di sangue che cadono

pizz.

mp come gocce di sangue che cadono

Example 26. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, violin and viola parts, No. 10, pp. 149–150.

Poco rubato (seguirente il solista)

26 *mp poco rubato; con amarezza*

T. 

Nie - chaj mnie są - dza,

Example 27. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, tenor part, no. 2, pp. 26.

- ‘O Merciful God’

p doloroso **poco rall**



O Bo-że mi-lo-sie - rny, zmi-luj się nad na - mi! Two - je-go gnie-wu na-dszedł wie-lki czas,

Example 28. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, tenor part, no. 10, pp. 154–157.

Pochissimo più mosso di tempo precedente **sempre poco a poco accel.**

(♩ = ca 68); strisciare

83 *mp* 

Example 29. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, oboe part, No. 8, pp. 83–85.

- ‘amen’

pp smorzando *p*



Example 30. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, piano part, no. 8, pp. 125–126.

più f



Example 31. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, piano part, No. 3, pp. 42–43.

Rzepiela used leitmotifs for several purposes. The first, and most obvious, is the appearance of a musical theme simultaneously with the development of the text, introduced in the vocalist’s part. This applies to ‘Kyrie eleison’ and ‘O merciful God’. Both phrases, used repeatedly by Jan Kasprowicz in the hymn, form a kind of refrain-like

invocation in the original text, which the composer treated in a similar manner. Both melodies are modelled on sacred music performed during the liturgy. ‘Kyrie eleison’ is based on the Lydian scale, whilst ‘O God...’ begins with a typical *exclamatio*, a leap of a major sixth. Rzepiela arranged the text in such a way that the vocal part omits, in places, the aforementioned phrases found in the source text; however, these are not ignored, but merely transferred to the instrumental layer, which allows their original function in the poet’s text to be preserved. Another type of theme in *Dies Irae* is the ‘Adam’ theme and the ‘Eve’ theme. The former is also a form of musical coding, consisting of the notes *a, d, a, es* (mi). Eve’s motif, also referred to by the composer as the ‘serpent motif’—a heavily chromatic melody reminiscent of the rhetorical figure of *circulatio*, associated here with ‘winding’—is a more vivid depiction of the character in which Eve appears in *the Dies Irae*. Unlike the previous motifs, these do not have ‘fixed’ words, but they too are textualised when the text in the vocal part relates to their corresponding themes. The composer treated them in the same way as the previous ones, using these motifs as representations of verses which he omits in his arrangement. The remaining leitmotifs have not been set to text, yet they fulfil similar functions to the previous ones. ‘Head in a crown of thorns’ was largely omitted by Rzepiela in his treatment of the text, yet it remains present in the instrumental layer, represented by third progressions. ‘Flowers of guilt and sin’—or simply ‘guilt and sin’, as the theme appears at moments when the text specifically addresses these elements—are played as arpeggiated chords. Both ‘dies irae’ leitmotifs do not represent specific textual threads; rather, they are general themes present throughout the entire cycle, signalling the apocalypse. The final motif, representing the word ‘amen’ in the text, is a cluster built up gradually through the superimposition of successive notes of a given scale.

2.4. The musical language of the work

The musical language employed by Stanisław Rzepiela in *Dies Irae* is tailored to Kasproicz’s poem. The pitch material is essentially twelve-tone (notes extending beyond this range result from the use of glissandos and *sprechgesang* for expressive and semantic purposes; example 32).

A tempo; strisciare,
sempre poco a poco accel.

215 .35

Ob. *p* seducente *p* *più*

T. *p* con disgusto costante e crescente:
poco a poco più parlando (quasi alla "schprechgesang")
A spod ko-rze-ni ja-do - wi-tych ziół, spod kęp si - to-wia i trzci-ny i traw, z ro-wów, prze-pa-dlisk, wą - do-łców i jam, po-kry-tych o - pa-

Vn. mSP, FLT, nV *pp* *pp* *pp*

Vi. *pp* *più p* *pp*

Vc. *più p* *pp* *più p* *pp*

Cb. pizz. *p* arco, mSP *più p* *pp*

Example 32. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, no. 14, pp. 215–221.

It is organised according to several overlapping principles. The first of these is centralisation—most often achieved through the use of pedal notes (and occasionally intervals, such as *tremolando*). The second is the frequent identity between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the music (sometimes referred to as interval structuralism). For example, the musical material of the first presentation of the ‘Kyrie eleison’ theme coincides with the third chord of the ‘Dies irae’ theme (Chapter 2.3, ‘Dies irae’ chords). The influence of ecclesiastical modes also appears significant, although the composer himself disavows modality in the strict sense. Due to the introduction of the *Dies irae* sequence melody (set in the Dorian scale), as well as its contrapuntal transformations (inversion, inversion of the inversion), the modal character of the sound is easily discernible to the ear, despite the often dissonant nature of other layers of the texture and the significant use of chromaticism. The use of contrapuntal transformations, apart from organising the musical material, may also have symbolic significance—as a reference to techniques employed in the music of past eras, particularly the Renaissance and Baroque periods, foremost among them the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. It generally belongs to the ‘high’ style and thus harmonises with the textual content.

mf quasi senza emozione, annuaziando;
quasi eco di canto gregoriano

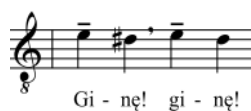
8 Trą-ba dzi-wny dźwięk ro-zsie-je, o - gień_ skrze - pnie_ blask ście-mnie-je;

Example 33. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, an inversion of the *Dies irae* melody, bars 13–17.

Echoes of the major–minor system are also visible and audible—in the frequent use of thirds in chord structures (albeit with added dissonances) or the use of fifth relationships (e.g. in the conclusion of the first movement). An example of triadic, yet non-functional, thinking can be found in a section of the fourth movement, where the tenor part is written in C minor, whilst the instrumental ensemble forms a vertical, sustained C major chord (this naturally has consequences not only in terms of sound, but also semantically).

It may be surmised that the *Dies Irae* sequence served as the starting point for the cycle’s melodic structure. It contains no melismas; a maximum of three notes fall on a single syllable—a pattern also evident in the original lines composed by Rzepiela. The sequence has a narrow range and is dominated by seconds and thirds (larger intervals most often occur as ‘empty’ or ‘dead’ intervals—between phrases). In comparison, the melodies written by the composer are more varied and often dissonant; yet they constitute, as it were, a natural development of the sequence in a contemporary musical language—perhaps this impression stems from a respect for the sonic qualities of the verbal text, with the melodies deriving from its prosody and intonation. The passages of Kasprowicz’s text paraphrasing the medieval hymn retain the original poetic metre of the sequence (an eight-syllable trochaic verse), thanks to which setting the text to music using a medieval melody presents no difficulty.

The use of rhetorical figures and musical imagery also lends itself to such reflection. In both the vocal and instrumental parts, one can discern, amongst other things, numerous instances of pathopoia, exclamatio and circulatio.



Example 34. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, tenor part, no. 3, p. 40.

Through his ‘sound painting’, Rzepiela created an illustrative rendering of the themes in Kasprowicz’s text. The evocative glissandi and the meandering piano part are reminiscent of ‘a foetus coiled like a viper’ (*The Day of Wrath*, pp. 211–240), whilst the marching snare drum and the rapid descending runs of the string quartet, maintained in a complex polyrhythmic pattern, bring to mind the lurching march of ‘the rising spectres of the ages’ (pp. 89–106).

44 **4** Di fronte alla fine,
quasi senza misura, senza tempo
p quasi recitativo, ad lib., come in delirio, apatico

T. A cóz po - wsta - nie po - nad ni - co - ścia - mi,

Vn. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

VI. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Vc. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Cb. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Pfte. *sub. pp, morbido, leggerissimo, radioso*

Example 35. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, No. 4, vol. 44.

The texture of the entire cycle is varied. Formations of the 'melody and accompaniment (which can be understood as an extension of a simple homophonic texture), such as:

79 15

Tr. (in lontan.)

T. *poco f* przed nim i za nim plo - mie - ni - sty miecz i - skrzy się o - strzem cze - rwo - nem; *più f, appassionatamente* przed nim i za nim

Vn. *pp* — *molto* — *f*

VI. *pp* — *molto* — *f*

Vc. *pp* — *molto* — *f*

Cb. *sfz* *sim.* *f marcato*

Pfte. *sfz* *sim.*

Rull. *f*

T.-t. *mp*

Example 36. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 5, Vol. 79–83.

There are often more than two layers, creating a kind of ‘polyphony of textures’, for example in bars 36–42 of the movement *Adam and Eve*, where the oboe and tenor parts are in a polyphonic relationship with one another, the strings integrate them, providing a kind of sonic glow, whilst the piano part forms a third layer, which, whilst related in pitch to the others, yet standing out due to the consistent use of a rhythmic arpeggio.

Ob. **3** *p* *più* *p* *più* *p* *più* *p* *più*

Pochissimo string. **Poco meno mosso** ($\text{♩} = \text{ca } 60$) **A tempo** ($\text{♩} = 65, \text{♩} = 130$)

T. *mp* *come svegliati dal letargo* *mp*
i wie-ki wie-ków pnę się z tym cię-ża-rem ku wie-ku - i - stej wy-ży i zbla-dłą nie śmiem o - dwró-cić się twa-rzą

Vn. *arco* *pizz.* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vl. *arco, ord., nV* *pizz.* *arco (nV e sempre sim.)* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vc. *arco, nV* *pizz. sim.* *arco (nV w sempre sim.)* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz. arco* *pizz.*

Cb. *pizz.*

Pf. *leggiere* *p* *mp* *sim.*

Example 37. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, No. 3, Vol. 37–42.

In example number 38, on the other hand, the texture is even richer:

Example 38. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 14, pp. 222–230.

To achieve a specific expressive and semantic effect (conveying a sense of isolation, emphasising the importance of the vocal text, the meaning of which is not disrupted by the accompanying instruments), Rzepiela also introduced monophonic passages, for example :

Example :39. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve, a cappella* tenor part, bars 1–6.

This marks the beginning of Part II. The composer has created a structural frame, concluding this song with a corresponding section.

At times, two parts—most often the tenor and the oboe—complement each other in a dialogue, for example :

54

Ob. 48 *Meno mosso di tempo precedente* ♩ = ca 57 *sub. p* *p* *trattenendo molto* *In tempo nuovo* (♩ = ca 65) *più mf cantabile, doloroso*

T. *p con un misto di fascino e odio* *con furia* *mf*

ja - sno - wlo - sa E - wa z pa - da - lcem grze - chu u swych bia - lych stóp...

Example 40. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, No. 3, bars 49–52. The oboe begins, and the tenor continues ‘Eve’s theme’.

Some of the procedures employed by the composer are relatively “artificial,” such as the introduction of figures belonging to the sphere of *Augenmusik*. An example of the latter is the visual appearance of the “head with a crown of thorns” theme (Chapter 2.3). The stems, flags, beams, and chromatic signs, combined with a long, winding phrase and mixtures (mainly of thirds), evoke the image of twisted thorn branches on Christ’s head. Even less intuitive may be the encoding of the words “Adam” and “dies irae” according to the principle of *soggetto cavato*, a technique already employed by Josquin des Prez, for example in his *Missa “Hercules Dux Ferrariae”*, which consists in assigning the syllables of words to the pitches of a theme (Chapter 2.3), or the use of Morse code to rhythmically encode the words “dies irae” in the trumpet part.

The value of Rzepiela’s work, however, lies in the way these pre-compositional procedures are employed: they do not disrupt the coherence of the musical language but instead blend naturally into the sonic environment of the composition.

Tromba Sib. (in lontananza) *Tremendoso, inesorabilmente* ♩ = 73-75 *fp* *f* *mf* *ff*

Example 41. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, vols. 1–5. In the trumpet part, the words ‘dies irae’ are written in Morse code.

The instrumental techniques employed in Rzepiela’s *Dies Irae* generally do not go beyond the standard repertoire. One example of an unusual technique is the action of dragging a mallet from a triangle across the surface of a tam-tam, used, for instance, in *The Day of Wrath* segment over bars 211–231.

All the techniques employed—both linguistic and poetic—are subordinated in Rzepiela’s work to Kasproicz’s poem and its interpretation, both on a micro level

(for example , the encoding of individual words) and on a macro level (tonality, texture, sonic atmosphere).

2.5. Instrumentation and its use

The ensemble comprises a solo tenor, piano, B-flat trumpet, oboe, violin, viola, cello, five-string double bass with the fifth string retuned to B, and percussion (tam-tam, tubular bells, gran cassa, snare drum). In the first and third movements, all the performers play; in the second, the tenor, piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass and oboe; whilst in the fourth, the tenor, piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass and batteria. The instruments often represent themes, illustrate the backdrop to events or ‘express’ passages from Kasprowicz’s text through leitmotifs or musical quotations. The texture of the piece is often chordal and homophonic, with a solo part (vocalist or instrument) responsible for a given section of the hymn.

The ensemble performing *Dies Irae* is not a typical formation generally associated with song forms. The piano and vocalist (in this case, specifically a tenor), as the standard components of the instrumentation historically established for this form, are supplemented by additional instruments. The string ensemble, which is also unusual, consists only of first violin, viola, cello, and a five-string double bass, with the lowest string additionally retuned down by a semitone to *B*₂. The remaining instruments—oboe, trumpet, and percussion (gran cassa, tam-tam, snare drum, and tubular bells)—move Rzepiela’s composition away from chamber music and towards the symphonic tradition. The ensemble’s tutti passages at climactic moments require the acoustic space of a concert hall in order to resonate fully, which raises the question of the extent to which the term *da camera*, derived from the Italian expression for “chamber”, can be applied to *Dies Irae*, despite the relatively small number of performers (nine) suggesting such a classification.

If we look at the instrumentation in the subsequent movements, we can conclude that Rzepiela carefully planned the distribution of dramatic tension throughout the entire cycle. In the first movement, all the instruments and the tenor appear. A characteristic feature here is the expressive marking for the trumpet: *da lontananza*. This term literally translates as ‘from a distance’, which is the composer’s suggestion that the trumpet’s sound originates from another space, either in a physical sense or in an eschatological dimension (the trumpet’s voice comes from ‘another’ world). In keeping with the convention adopted by other composers who have set eschatological texts to music, there

is also a reference here to the New Testament's Apocalypse of Saint John. The trumpet heralds the end of the world, in this case as an enigmatic rhythmic signal, in which, upon careful listening, we can discern the words '*dies irae*' written in Morse code. The same message also appears right at the very beginning of *The Last Judgement*. The trumpeter is also entrusted with musical quotations and figures reminiscent of a signal trumpet, accompanying, for example, the climax of the piece. From the very beginning of the piece, therefore, the performers are tasked with illustrating Kasprowicz's poem.

*Batteria*⁶⁵, due to the use of instruments that are relatively loud compared to the rest of the ensemble, is often required to play at a *pianissimo* dynamic level, which poses a considerable challenge for the performer. The *gran cassa*, together with the double bass playing its lowest notes, repeatedly creates a background following *sforzato* outbursts, evoking the sound of a thunderclap and the reverberation that follows it. The bells, present in passages referring to Gregorian chant, are associated with the symbolism of a funeral bell striking the final hour. They also appear at the moment of the lyrical subject's death. The snare drum articulates a polymetric rhythm in the section designated by the composer as *dance macabre*, described by the expressive markings *quasi marziale* and subsequently *Barbaro poco pesante, ma e quasi grottescamente*. The tam-tam, in turn, appears as another growing roar, a monumental accent, or, for example, as a sound effect produced by dragging a metal triangle beater across the cymbal, introducing the lines about snakes, leeches, and vipers. *Batteria* employs a range of different beaters in order to create, as effectively as possible, the musical landscapes outlined by the composer.

The unusual string quartet functions in *Dies Irae* as an ensemble, producing sonorities through a variety of playing techniques. Apart from the double bass, which frequently joins the percussion and piano with its lowest notes, the remaining instruments of the quartet always appear together. The score alternates between passages in which the strings provide a chordal background with limited movement in their individual parts and those characterized by the emergence of a polyphonic texture. The composer also transferred fragments of the hymn's text from the vocal part to the quartet, entrusting the instruments with the quotation "Kyrie eleison," repeated numerous times throughout *Dies Irae*, thereby giving the instruments a "voice." This suggests that Rzepiela assigned the

⁶⁵ *Batteria* (Italian)—a set of percussion instruments played by a single percussionist.

strings a role equal to that of the soloist, which in turn places considerable demands on the performers. The quartet part is replete with chords that are difficult to tune, played entirely as harmonics, *sul tasto*, or with sharply defined *sul ponticello* effects. Almost the entire composition is notated with *non vibrato* articulation. In the more lyrical passages, at a *piano* dynamic, *pizzicato* is used to accompany the solo voice. Rzepiela also introduced a percussive element into the double bass part by employing Bartók pizzicato in sections of the song where a strong rhythmic character comes to the fore, as well as to intensify the tenor's expression at moments of sudden emotional outbursts in the vocal part.

The oboe plays a distinctive role in *the Dies Irae*. As early as its first appearance (Ex. 24, p. 64), Eve's heavily chromaticised motif is presented, bringing to mind the melodies of snake charmers from Indian culture. In addition to assigning the instrument a specific theme from Kasprowicz's text, the composer entrusts the part with the role of a solo voice. In passages in which it accompanies the vocalist, the musical material takes the form of a dialogue with the tenor, or a counterpoint to him (Ex. 37, p. 70; Ex. 38, p. 71). In these instances, Ewa's musical theme is repeatedly divided between these two voices, suggesting a special semantic connection. In Part III, one can observe the multifaceted role of the oboe; in addition to the aforementioned relationship with the tenor, a very clearly defined interplay with the trumpet part is evident here. Both instruments, in addition to their collaboration with the string quartet and the piano, engage in a dialogue with one another. Rhetorical figures (e.g. *pathopoia*), performed by the trumpet and the oboe (often in dialogue), are also noticeable; these serve as a commentary on the words in the tenor part.

Example 42. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, oboe and trumpet parts, No. 5, pp. 88–89.

Throughout almost the entirety of Part III (from No. 3 to No. 8), there are passages where the three solo 'voices'—tenor, trumpet and oboe—come together. This stems from the high emotional tension conveyed through the music, which in turn evokes the image of the Last Judgement as depicted in Kasprowicz's poem. In the final part of the cycle,

these two leading instruments are no longer present, which clearly indicates that the central figure of the drama is Adam—a man left in nothingness and solitude.

The piano part encompasses the entire range of the instrument, at times utilising notes that are extremely far apart, and is not confined to the middle register. Throughout the entire cycle, its role is not tied to a specific group or instrument, but rather correlates with what has been written for other performers. The piano part features onomatopoeia, various types of bells, tremolos and arpeggios; the composer has also included precisely specified pedal work. The piano introduces some of the musical themes and remains responsible for their primary musical representation. Also worth noting are the octaves in the left hand, which serve as preparatory notes for chords; a similar technique was employed in Szymanowski's songs

The choice of instruments at particular moments can be interpreted, above all, as a means of illustrating the 'scenes' conveyed by Kasproicz's hymn. The striking of the tubular bell, preceded by the 'Kyrie eleison' motif alongside the declamatory passage marked *quasi preghieramoso*, effectively illustrates the aforementioned house of God mentioned in the text (ex. 43, p. 76).

11
Misterioso $\text{♩} = 70$

p quasi parlando, poco ad lib., quasi preghieramoso

T. $\text{W} \text{ świą-ty} - \text{ni} \text{ bo-żej} \text{ za-milkł} \text{ świą-ty} \text{ śpiew,}$

Vn. SP, nV arco

VI. *pp morbido*

Vc. SP, nV arco

Cb. *pp morbido* SP arco $\square \nabla$ - *lento*

Pfte. *f pp morbido*

G. C. *mf*

Cmp. *p*

Example 43. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, no. 11, vols. 168–170.

2.6. Genre-related issues

The *Dies Irae* cycle, originally conceived by the composer as a cycle of songs, in its completed form defies traditional genre classification. The successive movements of the composition are coherently linked in terms of their source text; they also form an internally consistent arc of dramatic tension, lending the whole an integrated character. The work as a whole, which is further characterised by a coherent musical language and a strong emphasis on the relationship between word and sound, is entrusted to a single soloist. The subject matter revolves around the lyrical protagonist's psychological and emotional experience of the end of the world, exploring their inner states and placing the clearest emphasis on these. These elements may suggest that the work can be interpreted as a contemporary take on the song cycle.

However, attention should also be paid to the degree of internal development in each movement and the expanded ensemble, compared to the conventional format

featuring voice and piano. The percussion and wind instruments, in particular, may suggest that, in terms of its instrumentation, the cycle constitutes a larger-scale vocal-instrumental form. A further argument is the complex formal structure, the length of the movements (the longest lasts almost 15 minutes) and the highly emphasised sacred theme arising from Kasprowicz's text. Taking this into account, an association with the cantata genre comes to mind. The description by literary scholars of Kasprowicz's poem as a 'stylised hymn'⁶⁶ also brings *Dies Irae* closer to such a conclusion.

Literary scholars, however, recognise numerous elements in the poet's text that point to a possible dramatic interpretation. These include the use of dialogue, visual narration, a clearly defined first-person narrator and other characters. By adapting the text for the purposes of his composition, Rzepiela established a clearer chronology of events, enabling the creation of a sequence of events and, consequently, a dramatic structure. The whole revolves around the experience of the lyrical narrator, and only he has a voice, creating something akin to a monodrama, or, in musical terms, a stage miniature, a concert scene or a dramatic song for the stage. The presence of recitative-style passages, vivid agogic expressions bearing the hallmarks of stage directions, and the presentation of the other characters through thematic motifs, also lends support to this interpretation. The composer himself, however, did not write the work with this in mind, although he confirms that he sees such potential in it⁶⁷.

3. The expression of the tenor part in the *Dies Irae* cycle

The tenor part, corresponding to the role of the lyrical narrator who in Kasprowicz's hymn fulfils the dual role of narrator and Adam, is internally highly varied, requiring a technique that enables the text to reach the listener above *the forte* of the other performers, whilst at the same time creating an atmosphere of intimacy in the *a cappella* passages. From the singer's perspective, the cycle is a kind of monodrama, where the tenor, like in a one-man play, must guide the audience through the entire dramatic arc with his words, juggling a multitude of emotions—often of great intensity—whilst remaining within the conventions of classical singing. From the point of view of operatic singing technique, performers of this cycle are closest to verismo singing, which at times gives way into *Sprechgesang*. The text has been set syllabically, the only

⁶⁶ A. Hutnikiewicz, *Hymny...*, op. cit., p. 99.

⁶⁷ A view expressed by Stanisław Rzepiela in correspondence with the author of the doctoral thesis.

exceptions being passages from the hymn, where Kasprowicz drew on the original Latin '*Dies Irae*' sequence, and Rzepiela arranged them by stylising, and at times directly quoting, the original chorale melody. Given the demanding rhythmic structure of the piece, this treatment of the text frequently presents a high level of difficulty for the soloist. The range within which the part is written also contributes to the complexity of this task. It spans notes from low *B* to high *b¹* and utilises the entire range of notes in between, placing demands on the upper, middle and lower registers alike. The melodic line, shaped not only by second intervals but often based on leaps or passages spanning the entire range, emerges as a further factor contributing to the high level of difficulty of *the Dies Irae* cycle from the singer's perspective. Given that Rzepiela established a strong connection between the musical layer and every word of Kasprowicz's poem, the singer bears the responsibility of articulating the text very clearly, in keeping with the spirit of the composition.

The rich repertoire of emotional means that the tenor must employ in interpreting the work is described in detail through agogic, dynamic and expressive markings. In these instructions, Rzepiela has, in places, provided quite precise descriptions of the expression he prescribes, which, on the one hand, gives the singer the opportunity to interpret the work precisely and create a personal artistic message. On the other hand, the composer's very precise instructions often present sophisticated vocal demands. The first part of the cycle, (*The Day of Wrath*), the most elaborate of all, poses a huge challenge for the singer. Even the very first phrases in the tenor part in bar 13, stylised as a Gregorian chant and notated in a changing metre designed to preserve the word stresses, offer a foretaste of the test of technical proficiency and artistic sensitivity in the subsequent sections of the work.

Interesting examples of characteristic elements of the tenor part can be found in Part I. In the following section, these will be described according to the following principles:

1. the text has been assigned to bar numbers. Where there are no changes in performance markings, the notation reverts to Kasprowicz's versification;
2. tempo, dynamics and expression are given as indicated in the score. The terms have been translated by the author;
3. Some of the examples are illustrated with excerpts from the score.

<i>The Day of Wrath No. 1</i> No. 1 (bars 13–34) <i>Maestoso, di fronte alla fine; poco meno mosso di Tempo I, (poco ad libitum)</i> (Majestically, in the face of the end) ♩=ca 68		
bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
13	Trąba dziwny dźwięk rozsiej,	<i>mezzo forte, quasi senza emozione, annuiziando; quasi eco di canto gregoriano</i> (as if without emotion, foreshadowing what is to come; as if an echo of Gregorian chant)
	ogień skrzepnie, blask ściemnieje, w proch powrócą światów	
18	dzieje.	<i>mantenendo la tensione</i> (maintaining the tension)
19	Z drzew wieczności spadną liście na	<i>forte, più ardentemente</i> (more fervently) <i>più forte</i>
	Sędziego straszne przyjście, by świadectwo dać Psalmiście...	
25	Grzech krwią czarną duszę plami...	<i>poco più mosso</i>
28	Bez obrońcy staniam sami - któż zlituje się nad nami?	<i>con certa paura</i> (with some trepidation)

Table 12. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 1, lyrics, agogics and expression.

In the section *The Day of Wrath*, No. 1, in bars 13–18 (Example 44, p. 80) we read: *quasi eco di canto gregoriano* (as if an echo of Gregorian chant), which indicates a reference to a specific style with archaic-religious overtones; subsequently, in bars 19–31, we find *mantenendo la tensione* and *più ardentemente*, (*maintaining the tension, more fervently*), where this type of expression persists in the tenor melody, but the instrumental sound becomes increasingly prominent. The instrumental sounds appear in the form of chord ‘columns’, based on a single note. This structure and development of the musical form do not alter the manner of performing the vocal part.

1 **Maestoso, di fronte alla fine;**
Poco meno mosso di Tempo I
molto rall. . . . (poco ad lib.); ≈ca 68

3

Tr. (in lontan.)

T. *mf quasi senza emozione, annunciando; quasi eco di canto gregoriano*
Trą-ba dzi-wny dźwięk ro-zsie-je, o - gień skrze - pnie, błask ście-mnie-je; w proch po - wró - cą świa-tów

Vn. *f espress.* (OR) → SP

Vi. *f espress.* (OR) → SP

Vc. *f espress.* (OR) → SP

Cb. *sf* → *f* → *ff* → *sub. p* (OR) → SP

Pfte. *sf* → *f* → *ff* → *sub. p* → *mp* → *p*

G. C. *f*

Cmp. *mf* → *mp*

Example 44. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, vols. 11–17.

The opening of *The Day of Wrath* is a foreshadowing of the dramatic and bloody events that are to reduce the earth and humanity to dust. The introduction of allusions to Gregorian chant brings a sense of austerity, asceticism and dignity. The terms *quasi senza emozione*, *annunciando* cast the singer in the role of a herald announcing an extraordinary, momentous event. The instruction *mantenendo la tensione* requires the performer to maintain a constant emotional tension, which is dramatically reinforced by the *più forte* dynamics, beginning with the words: ‘*Sin stains the soul with black blood...*’ From this line onwards, the narrator becomes the voice of humanity, representing the entire human race. The individual is overcome by fear (*con certa paura*), as they sense the full horror of the event that is to come. The melodic line oscillates around *the tenor passaggio*⁶⁸, requiring precise breath control and clear articulation between registers.

⁶⁸ The point on the vocal scale where the transition between different vocal registers occurs—most commonly between the chest and head registers (and sometimes between other registers as well). On the tenor vocal scale, depending on individual characteristics, it is situated between the notes *E flat*¹ and *F sharp*¹.

The term *quasi eco di canto gregoriano* appears once more in No. 7, in bar 107, but here it is supplemented by the indications: *forte, con orrore, ma anche con delizia* (with horror, but also with delight). The indication *quasi eco di canto gregoriano* appears again in No. 7, at bar 107, but here it is supplemented by the markings *forte, con orrore, ma anche con delizia* (“with horror, but also with delight”). The *quasi*-Gregorian chant appearing at this point is written in a relatively high tessitura. Given the contrasts between the individual numbers of the work, the rapid changes in style and musical elements, and, consequently, the need for the voice to be technically prepared for swift transitions, it is essential to plan the singer’s vocal resources carefully across all four parts. The indication *quasi eco di canto gregoriano* appears for the final time in the finale of Part I, *The Day of Wrath*. Undoubtedly, the use of Gregorian-chant stylisation should be regarded as one of the most important characteristic features of the tenor part.

Part I: <i>The Day of Wrath</i> No. 2 (bars 35–48) <i>Meno mosso di Tempo I; tranquillo, melancholico, con rassegnazione</i> (calmly, melancholically, with resignation) ♩=ca 70		
bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
39	Żałobna drogo	<i>slowly, miserably</i> (pitifully)
41	nieniochymnej kary, broczącej we łzach i przy	<i>poco a poco più con disapprovazione</i> (gradually with increasing disapproval)
42	jęków wtórze	<i>mf</i>
43	w ten pozbawiony końca Pańskiego gniewu	<i>f, inesorabilmente</i> (relentlessly)
45	dzień, Pańskiego gniewu	<i>Molto declamativamente, estenendo</i> (very declamatory, drawing out)
46	dzień,	<i>Tempo I, inesorabilmente</i> (relentlessly)

Table 13 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 2, text, agogics and expression.

41

Tr. (in lontan.)

T.

Vn.

VI.

Vc.

Cb.

Pfte

Cmp.

bro - czą - cej we łzach i przy ję - ków wto - rze w ten po - zba - wio - ny ko - fca Pa - ńskie - go gnie - wu

poco a poco più con disapprovazione

mf

f

mf

fp

poco f

sff

mf

fp

poco f

sff

mf

fp

mf

sff

sf

molto

f

poco f

Example 45 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 2, bars 41–44.

Bar 39, following a brief lull, brings an emotional outburst in bar 43 on the note G^1 , followed by a descending phrase which is sustained at *forte*, building to *fortissimo* in bar 46. The instruction *molto declamativamente, estendendo*, appearing in bar 45 on the words written below the tenor's staff, against the backdrop of the rest of the ensemble playing at a loud dynamic, requires the singer to use the maximum projection of their voice, yet without distorting the text. This is a very difficult task for the performer.

<i>The Day of Wrath No. 1</i> No. 3 (Acts 49–56) <i>Meno mosso, tranquillo</i>, (slower, calmly) ♩=65		
bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
49–53	Pańskiego gniewu dzień, w którym w pożarach spokoj nego słońca szatańskim chichotem płoną	<i>mezzo piano, morbido</i> (calmly, softly) <i>poco trattenendo</i> (holding back a little) <i>pochissimo più ampio</i> (a little wider) <i>immediately mezzo piano, without a pause</i>
54–56	świeże, niezwiędłe róże	<i>pochissimo meno mosso, ma senza rubato (in tempo)</i> (slower, but without rubato) ♩=65

56	grzechu i winy!	<i>dolce, nauseabondo</i> (sweetly, sickeningly) <i>poco trattenendo</i> (holding back slightly)
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Table 14. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 3, text, agogics and expression.

10

49

3

Meno mosso, tranquillo

mp, morbido

Pa - fiske - go gnie - wu dzień, w któ - rym w po - za - rach spo - ko - jne - go

65

poco tratten.

Pochiss. più ampio

mf

sło - ńca sza - ta - fiskim chi - cho - tem

sub. mp

(senza cesura)

pło - ńa

Pfle

pp, ma sonore

(con 2da)

pp

T.-L.

5/4

7

4

pp

Example 46. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 3, Vol. 49–53.

No. 3 serves as a kind of respite from the earlier intensity of expression. The term *morbido* appears, and the *a cappella* vocalist introduces a new musical idea; only after a moment do the piano and gran cassa join in a similar articulation. In bar 53, at the end of the phrase, the composer notated two fermatas; he then continued the musical statement *senza cesura*, adding the terms: *dolce, nauseabondo* (sweetly, nauseatingly). This is an extremely difficult passage to perform, where an excessive focus on just one aspect—whether technical or expressive—may lead to a lack of emotional authenticity in the interpretation.

<i>The Day of Wrath</i> No. 1 No. 5 (bars 68–88) <i>pesante, grave, quasi marziale</i> (heavy, grave, as if at a marching tempo) ♩=95		
bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
78	Od twego drzewa ode- rwany liść, pędzi duch ludzki i naprzód, i wstecz, niby	<i>mezzo forte, sonore, quasi marcato</i> , (resonant, almost marcato)
79	garść kurzu, po- rwana cyklonem:	<i>più</i>
86	przed nim i za nim płomie- nisty miecz iskrzy się ostrzem czerwonym;	<i>poco f</i>

83	przed nim i za nim	<i>più forte, appassionatamente</i> (passionately)
	wstają z swych cmentarzy	
	upiory wieków,	
86	naznaczone sromem	<i>poco trattenendo</i>
87	winy i	<i>pochissimo meno mosso</i>
88	grzechu,	
	i	<i>with anger, shouting a little, almost spitting</i> (with anger, shouting a little, almost spitting)

Table 15. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 5, lyrics, agogics and expression.

The upbeat to bar 89 ‘*con rabbia, un poco alla gridare, quasi sputare*’ leads us into section 6.

No. 6 (bars 89–106), No. 8 (bars 115–134)

Both numbers begin with the indications *Subito più mosso, barbaro, poco pesante, ma e quasi grottescamente* (“suddenly faster, barbarically, somewhat heavily, but also almost grotesquely”). The composer himself described this passage as an allusion to the *danse macabre*, intended to depict the march of the spectres rising from the dead, as described in the text⁶⁹. The highly distinctive rhythmic language of this section, irregular in character, is intended to represent the distorted forms of movement and action of these figures, thus conveying as vividly as possible the words written by Kasprowicz.

Both passages require the tenor to produce a highly distinctive vocal sound and precise articulation in short, fragmented phrases set in a frequently changing metre. The singer must be able to shift rapidly from an almost “shouting” marcato articulation to a more lyrical shaping of the phrases that conclude both sections (Example 47).

⁶⁹ A view expressed by Stanisław Rzepiela in correspondence with the author of this doctoral thesis.

98

T. sy - cza i dy - sza nie - u - sta - ją - cą ro - zpa - cza, od sza - le - ficze - go za - mie - ra - ją śmie - chu

Vn. *sf* *mp* *f* *sf* *poco f. marcato*

Vl. *sf* *mp* *f* *sf* *poco f. marcato*

Vc. *sf* *mp* *f* *sf* *poco f. marcato*

Cb. pizz. arco *poco f. marcato*

Example 47. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 6, pp. 98–104.

I The Day of Wrath No. 10 (bars. 149-167) <i>Poco più vivo (a little livelier) ♩=70</i>		
bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
154	O Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!	<i>doloroso</i> (painfully)
157	Twojego gniewu nadszedł wielki czas,	<i>poco rallentando</i> <i>poco meno mosso</i> , 'grave' (seriously) ♩=65
158	głos już zagrzemiał hio- bowy niebios wałą się posowy, z owiniętej cierniem Głowy	<i>poco avvivando</i> (livening up a little)
164	rzeką i morzem płynie ciepła krew,	<i>più</i>
166	w rzekę i morze krwi jej	<i>molto rallentando</i>
167	ból się zmienia...	

Table 16. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 10, lyrics, agogics and expression.

The voice enters in bar 154, giving the singer around 30 bars to prepare for the presentation of the theme 'O merciful God' and the subsequent phrases, which at times descend as low as the lower limits of the tenor range. The very wide range of the tenor part, spanning from *B* to *A flat*¹, between numbers 10, 11 and 12, with declamatory phrases centred on the note *C* in number 11, requires a careful balance of technique and

expression. Following a sudden increase in dynamics in the final two bars (166–167), there is a sudden softening to *pp*, which sets the mood for number 11.

<i>The Day of Wrath</i> No. 11 (bars 168–184) <i>Misterioso</i> (mysteriously) ♩=70		
bar number	text	Tempo, dynamics, expression
170	W świątyni bożej zamilkł święty śpiew,	<i>quasi parlando, poco ad lib., quasi preghieramoso (almost speaking, a little freely, almost as if in prayer)</i>
	już się zasłona rozdarła na dwoje, mur się już wali i skała już pęka...	
177	A krew w tych morzach, w tych czerwonych morzach ścięła się w ciemny lód...	
183–184	Kyrie eleison!	<i>a little livelier ♩=75</i> <i>rallentando</i> <i>declamatively</i> <i>molto rallentando</i>

Table 17. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 11, lyrics, agogics and expression.

The way the tenor part is constructed clearly reveals its ‘prayerful’, even meditative, character. Short declamatory motifs are set in the lower register, based on very close intervals and chromaticism. They appear in dialogue with the instruments. Example 48 illustrates the principle of the voice’s appearance:

29

171

T. *już się za-sło-na ro - zda-rla na dwo - je, mur się już wa-li i ska-la już pę - ka*

Vn. *SP, nV arco pp morbido*

Vl.

Vc.

Cb. *sim.*

Pfc.

G. C.

Cmp.

Example 48 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 11, pp. 171–176.

I The Day of Wrath No. 12 (pp. 185–205) <i>A tempo, ma poco più mosso</i> ♩=75		
bar number	text	Tempo, dynamics, expression
185	Straszny przed nami otwo- rzyłeś grób...	<i>poco ff con rimprovero</i> (with reproach)
198	Światy pochłania nieprzebyty muł, Światy pochłania nieprzebyty muł, światy, od bożych odepchnięte bram.	<i>nella follia</i> (in madness)
204-205	Kyrie eleison!	<i>ff</i>

Table 18. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 12, text, agogics and expression.

The dialogue between the tenor part and the instrumental parts continues in the same vein, and in particular with the trumpet, treated as a solo instrument.

The entire movement emphasises a growing melodic ‘madness’: an ostinato, a persistently repeated melodic phrase reminiscent of a round, set against constantly shifting dynamics.

***The Day of Wrath* No.
No. 14 (bars 211–240)**

Pigramente, poco più mosso ♩=65 (languorously)

bar number	lyrics	tempo, dynamics, expression
215 232–240	A spod korzeni jado- witych ziół, spod kęp sitowia i trzciny, i traw, z rowów, przepadlisk, wądoców i jam, pokrytych opałowym szkliwem zgniłych wód, zaczyna wypływać żmij skłębiony płód:	<i>with constant and growing revulsion; little by little speaking more (almost like ‘schprechgesang’)</i> (with constantly growing revulsion; gradually speaking more and more (almost ‘schprechgesang’)
232	czarne pijawki, zielone jaszczury	<i>holding back a little</i>
233	wiją się naprzód wpław i opła-	<i>A tempo, gradually accelerating</i>
232	tają kręgami śliskimi męczeńskich krzyży smutne miliardy, z bagnistej wyrosłe ziemi,	
240	zapadłe w ba- gnisty kał...	<i>♩=75 holding back</i>

No. 15 (bars 241–260)

At the tempo, gradually accelerating

bar number	text	tempo, dynamics, expression
241	I oto głowy swoje, dziwne, ludzkie głowy, świecące trupim tłuszczem żółkłych, łysych czół, o szczękach otulonych kłębem czarnych bród,	
250	kładą na łonach tych pomarłych ciał...	

257	I skośne, mętne oczy podnoszą do góry ku ich schylonym skroniom... I biodra opasawszy w lubieżnym uścisku, zwilgotniałyimi usta szeptają im słowa rozpusty...	♩.=55 <i>poco a poco più estatico</i> (gradually more and more ecstatic) <i>Metallico</i> ♩.=60 <i>quasi sussurando (mezza voce), con un misto di disgusto ed eccitazione</i> (immediately piano, almost in a whisper, with a mixture of disgust and excitement)
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Table 19. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, Nos. 14 and 15, text, agogics and expression.

Example 49. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, No. 15, pp. 249–253.

For the tenor part in numbers 14 and 15, Rzepiela introduced very specific expressive markings: *con disgusto costante e crescente*; *poco a poco più parlando* (*quasi alla 'sprechgesang'*), *poco a poco più estatico*, *sub. p*, *quasi sussurando (mezza voce)*, *con un misto di disgusto ed eccitazione*. These appear, thereby altering the way the narrative is constructed. From bar 215 to 256, the singer must create a gradual expressive *crescendo* against the backdrop of an undulating, dissonant musical phrase. Furthermore, from bar 241, the composer introduced a '*poco a poco accelerando*' lasting until bar 256, in which the tenor builds from the initial '*poco a poco più estatico*' to conclude the entire passage with four bars '*con un misto di disgusto ed eccitazione*'. It should be noted that the entire passage marked as '*Sprechgesang*' (bars 215–260), relates to a single elaborate image in Kasprowicz's Hymn, containing a naturalistic description of nature and human corpses, intended to evoke a feeling of revulsion in the listener, which symbolically suggests the decay and ugliness of a world tainted by sin and corruption.

A spod korzeni jadowitych ziół,
spod kęp sitowia i trzciny, i traw,
z rowów, przepadlisk, wądołców i jam,
pokrytych opałowym szkliwem zgniłych wód,
zaczyna wypływać żmij skłębiony płód:
czarne pijawki, zielone jaszczury
wiją się naprzód wpływ
i oplatają kręgami śliskimi
męczeńskich krzyży smutne miliardy,
z bagnistej wyrosłe ziemi,
zapadłe w bagnisty kał...

I oto głowy
swoje, dziwne, ludzkie głowy,
świejące trupim tłuszczem żółkłych, łysych czół,
o szczękach otulonych kłębem czarnych bród,
kładą na łonach tych pomarłych ciał...

I skośne, mętne oczy podnoszą do góry
ku ich schylonym skroniom...
I biodra opasawszy w lubieżnym uścisku,
zwilgotniałymi usty
szepczą im słowa rozpusty...

Both numbers provide scope for a greater display of acting than of singing. The effects embedded in the instrumental parts further intensify the long build-up of tension composed by Rzepiela, centred on the conflicting emotions of revulsion and excitement with sexual undertones, allowing the tenor, through a quasi-nd theatrical interpretation, to create the repulsive image contained in Kasproicz's words. It is important that expression manifests itself here much more clearly than vocal technique. Thanks to this, the *a cappella* exclamation appearing in No. 16: „jakaż to orgia dzika! Jakiż to chaos mąk!”, marked *mp*, which also foreshadows the subjectivity of the *Adam and Eve* section, will resonate in the appropriate context.

I The Day of Wrath, No. 16

Bar 266, *Poco meno mosso, quasi senza tempo, mp rubato, con rassegnazione e disgusto* (with resignation and disgust) may evoke an association with a sudden halt and reflection. The *a cappella* text, composed monophonically and in stark contrast to the previous section, allows the performer to take a few bars' respite and prepare for the challenging No. 17. One may also discern a similarity here with other *a cappella* passages in the piece, which in turn allows us to identify here the first 'subjective' expression of the lyrical subject planned by Rzepiela within the cycle.

Poco meno mosso, quasi senza tempo (♩=ca 55)
mp rubato, con rassegnazione e disgusto
 266 T. Ja - każ to o - rgia dzi - ka! Ja - kiż to cha - os mąk! Ky - ri - e e - lei - son!
 Pfte. *p cantabile*
 G. P. (In tempo)

Example 50. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, pp. 266–272.

I The Day of Wrath, No. 17

The final bar number of the piece, 17, serves as a dramatic closing bracket for *The Day of Wrath*. In bar 274, the quasi-choral melody returns, divided into three distinct presentations, modulating to successive tonal centres. This time, the melodic line is heavily chromatic, oscillates in a higher *tessitura* and is not without drama. The dynamics of this passage are also high and do not subside in the final bars. This is likely dictated by the semantics and versification of the text:

Szum się wielki stał dokoła,
 Kiedy surma archanioła
 Na ostatni sąd zawoła

Gwiazdy z orbit wytrąciła
 Archanielskiej trąby siła
 Już rozwarła się mogiła

Idą na się zmartwychwstali
 Ogniem buntu świat się pali
 Tłumy w krwawej brodzą fali.

Kasprowicz's text here consists of three tercets written in thirteen-syllable lines with very regular rhymes, and is clearly modelled on Old Polish verse. The singer must pay close attention and articulate as clearly as possible the original melody (albeit a semitone lower than the original) of the medieval '*Dies irae*' sequence, which appears in the final passage—which also serves as the climax of this section (Example 51).

286

A tempo ma pochissimo più ampio;
 inesorabilmente

45

Tr. (in lontan.) *sf* *ff* *sf* *sf*

T. *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

Vn. *pp* *molto* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf*

Vl. *pp* *molto* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf*

Vc. *pp* *molto* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf*

Cb. *sf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf* *poco mf* *sf*

Pfte. *p* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

G. C. *sf* *f* *mp* *sf* *mp* *sf* *mp* *sf*

Lyrics: I - dą na się zma - rtwych-wsta - li, o - gniem... bu - ntu... świat - się pa - li,

Example 51. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, *The Day of Wrath*, No. 17, pp. 286–291.

The remaining songs in Rzepiela's work are similarly structured in terms of the tenor vocal part. For this reason, as well as due to the considerable length of the work, the author will not undertake an analysis of the musical material in as much detail as in the case of the song *The Day of Wrath*. Nevertheless, the most significant sections will be presented, and the elements essential to characterizing the artistic and dramatic

expression of *Dies Irae* will be discussed, as these should be taken into consideration by the tenor in his interpretation of the work.

Part II: *Adam and Eve*

One of the most distinctive features of Part II is the musical frame in the form of *a cappella* recitatives at the beginning and end of the piece (Ex. 52; Ex. 39, p. 71).

Calmo, poco ad lib. ♩ = ca 60

mp doloroso, con un senso di fallimento; quasi recitativo - parlando a se stesso

meno

mp mesto, con desiderio

65

T. 112

Za-kryj błę-dne żre-ni-ce, ści-ga-ny A-da-mie! Nad to-bą tam! u szczy-tu zło-ci-sto-wło-sa E-wa! Jej grze-chu cię-zar zgniotł cię, sta-

Example 52. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, Adam and Eve*, No. 8, pp. 112–117.

Adam and Eve is a movement intended to convey the emotions of the lyrical subject, whilst at the same time serving as a substantive preparation for the listener for *The Last Judgement*. The framework created by the composer through the *a cappella* recitative in the tenor part enables the performer to craft a highly personal interpretation of the character. Through the freedom inherent in the recitatives and the singer-friendly *tessitura* maintained throughout both sections, Rzepiela creates an unusual space of silence and speech.

II <i>Adam and Eve</i> before No. 1 (bars 1–10) <i>Mesto, consapevolmente; poco ad lib. ♩=ca 60</i> ('sadly, consciously')		
bar number	lyrical text	tempo, dynamics, expression
1	Nie patrz, gdzie siadła jasno-włosa Ewa,	<i>mp calmo, descrivere le emozioni senza sperimentarle; quasi recitativo</i> („describing emotions without actually experiencing them; almost recitative-like”)
5	wygnana z raju na wieczysty czas, mająca zbrodnię u swych białych stóp, wieczyście żarta płomie-	<i>pochissimo accel.</i> (<i>A tempo</i>) <i>sub. P dolce</i> <i>pochissimo trattenendo</i>
9	nistą żądzą	
10	winy i grzechu...	<i>sub. mp, con disgusto</i> („with disgust”)
No. 8 (bars 109–125)		

<i>Mesto, leggero</i> (♩=60); <i>senza speranza</i> ('sadly, lightly; without hope')		
bar number	tekst słowny	tempo, dynamika, ekspresja
112	Zakryj błędne źrenice, ściigany Adamie!	<i>calmo, poco ad lib.</i> (♩=60) <i>mp doloroso, con un senso di fallimento; quasi recitativo—parlando a se stesso</i> („painfully, with a sense of failure, almost recitative—speaking to oneself”)
114	Nad tobą tam! u szczytu	<i>meno</i>
116	Złocistowłosa Ewa!	<i>mp mesto, con desiderio</i> („sadly, with longing”)
118	Jej grzechu ciężar zgniółł cię, stanąłeś w pół drogi!	<i>(poco rallentando)</i>
	Zakryj błędne źrenice	<i>(A tempo)</i>
120	i na wieki wieków	<i>(poco stringendo) con crescente amarezza e rabbia</i> („with growing bitterness and anger”)
121	rzuć się w przepastny żleb!...	

Table 20. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, *Adam and Eve*, Nos. 14 and 15, lyrics, agogics and expression.

Part II, *Adam and Eve*, viewed against the backdrop of the cycle as a whole, may evoke a sense of relief following the highly intense Part I, but also a shift towards a closer focus on detail, after the more panoramic perspective offered by *The Day of Wrath*. *Adam and Eve* is characterised by the lyricism of the tenor part, emphasised by its interplay with the accompanying oboe part whenever Kasprovicz's text refers to Eve. It has a quasi-, verse-based form, framed by Adam's soliloquy. Of all the movements, this one most closely resembles a song and, despite the lack of grandeur in the movements flanking it, it is a very important link in the whole, introducing the thematic issues that are most significant for the *Dies Irae* in dramaturgical terms. In the measures of the score indicated above (Table 20), original expressive markings appear: *con disgusto* ('with disgust'), *con un senso di fallimento; quasi recitativo—parlando a se stesso* ('painfully, with a sense of failure, almost recitative—speaking to oneself'), *con crescente amarezza e rabbia* ('with growing bitterness and anger'). Such an abundance of expressive markings lends itself to a highly varied and carefully considered interpretation of this relatively short recitative. Over the course of these bars, the singer can demonstrate the various timbres of their voice, emphasising the text with the appropriate tone and bringing out the character of the lyrical subject they are portraying, whilst executing all the slowdowns and accelerations in their own way.

The music in the '*Adam and Eve*' section allows for the creation of a more tranquil narrative and to develop the subjective 'I' of the lyrical narrator, from whose perspective

the interpretation of the subsequent sections should be formed. In the tenor part, as before, there is a significant range of *C-flat*¹, as well as momentary emotional outbursts, though these are not quite as dominant as in *The Day of Wrath*. One of the most technically challenging passages in the piece is measures 32–34, in which Rzepiela notated a descending triad phrase starting from C-sharp¹, which, after a leap of a sixth, returns to C-sharp¹, where, over a quarter note and a whole note, the tenor performs a crescendo, before executing a diminuendo in the final bar in 5/4 time on a dotted half note *e*¹, followed by a half note *f*¹. Due to the pitch of the notes and the requirements regarding dynamics, this passage presents a challenge demanding technically sound breath control. The transition from *e*¹ to *f*¹ may also prove problematic, as it could cause the unstressed part of the word ‘winy’ to be emphasised unintentionally.

51

Pochissimo più mosso **pochissimo accel.** **tornare al tempo**
più *più mf*
 przy-gnia - ta - ją - cej wi - - ny

Example 53 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, *Adam and Eve*, tenor part, No. 2, bars 32–34.

Part III: *The Last Judgement*

The Last Judgement, despite its lesser internal variation and structural complexity, is probably the greatest challenge of all the movements for the singer. It incorporates musical material from the two preceding movements; in terms of form, it is analogous to *The Day of Wrath*, though the musical material is condensed. The purely instrumental passages and moments of silence, which allowed for a breather between successive sections of the tenor part, are here significantly reduced, whilst the expression arising from the dramatic tension of the text and the music accompanying the voice introduces, right from the very beginning, a sense of climax that builds as the piece progresses. The vocal and agogic material written for the tenor is also more demanding—there are more high notes and phrases built around them; the density of the narrative leaves no room for a calm breath, and the interpretative demands set out by the composer range from the opening ‘*con orrore*’, ‘*di fronte alla maestà*’, through ‘*sull’orlo della follia*’ and ‘*di fronte alla morte*’, right up to ‘*annunciando la fine del mondo*’. *The Last Judgement* begins with a recitative culminating in a prominent phrase spanning from *B* to *a*¹; in order for such low notes to resonate freely, the singer’s voice must remain fresh, despite the fact that, emotionally, the entire cycle may tempt one to strain the voice.

a consequence of the preceding segment. It contains a very dense accumulation of apostrophes, notated by Rzepiela on a undulating, ascending melodic line, reaching the highest notes of the cycle— b^2 .

ord. Mą du-szę pa-li wie-czna, nie-za - mknę - ta ra - na! Któż mi le-ka-rstwo po da? O jcze ro-zpu - sty! Nic, co się sta-lo pod skle-pem nie-bio-sów, bez

Example 56 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, tenor part, No. 7, pp. 121–127.

Numbers 7 and 8 continue the theme of number 6. In these, the tenor part presents an explosion of expression in the form of desperate anger, madness and contempt, crystallising in the final phrase of section 8 into a blasphemous outburst.

III The Last Judgement before No. 7 (bars 121–140) <i>Più mosso</i> (♩=75) <i>ardentemente</i> (‘passionately’)		
bar number	lyrics	tempo, dynamics, expression
121	Mą duszę pali	<i>più f molto espressivo, disperatamente, con rabbia</i> (‘desperately, with anger’)
126	wieczna, nie zamknięta rana! Któż mi lekarstwo poda? Ojczy rozpuszt! Nic, co się stało pod sklepem niebiosów, bez Twej się woli nie stało!	<i>più</i>
131	O źródło zdrady!	<i>ff</i>
134	Przyczyno grzechu i zemsty, i rozpacz szaleń- czego śmiechu!	<i>più mf</i>
139–140	szaleń czego śmiechu! szaleń czego śmiechu! Kyrie elejzon	<i>accelerando, losing myself in madness (gradually more out of time)</i> (“losing myself in madness” (“gradually more and more out of time”)) <i>a little more lively</i> (♩=80) <i>molto rallentando</i>

Table 21. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, No. 7, lyrics, agogics and expression.

Before the concluding ‘Kyrie eleison’, the emotional vocal outburst ends in bars 135–136 with a repeated phrase of ‘mad laughter’, which is described by means

135 **accel.** **Più mosso (♩=75)** **poco accel.** **Poco più mosso (♩=80)** **molto rall.**

Ob. *p* *(f)* *p* *(f)* *p* *(f)* *p* *più f espress.*

Tr. *p* *(poco f)* *p* *(f)* *p* *(più f)*

T. *perdermi nella follia (poco a poco più fuori di tempo) (mp)* *f senza i sensi, nella follia (ff)*

Vn. *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(ff) p*

Vl. *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(ff) p*

Vc. *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(più f) p* *(ff) p*

Cb. *mf* *pesante* *più mf pesante* *ff* *mp*

Pfte. *mf* *pesante* *più mf pesante* *(ff)*

Cmp. *secco (senza Rda)* *Muta in Gran cassa* *Gran cassa* *mp*

III <i>The Last Judgement</i> No. 8 (pp. 141–150) <i>Pesante, maestosamente</i> (♩=55) ('heavy, majestically')	
lyrics	tempo, dynamics, expression
ładź, Sprawiedliwy! Crus z światów posady, ozżęgnij wielki pożar w tle- ęcej iskierce, na opiół spal Adama oszu- ane serce	<i>con disprezzo</i> ('with contempt') <i>much more flowing</i> (♩=75) <i>meno mosso</i> (♩=65) <i>rallentando</i>
łacz! Z nim razem płacz, kamienny, lodowaty boże!	

151	Niech Twa surma przeraźliwa echem płaczu się odzywa nad pokosem Twego żniwa...	<i>di fronte alla morte</i> ('in the face of death')
158	Dwujęzycznego smoka, Szatana o trzech grzbietach	<i>a faster tempo than before</i> (<i>J</i> = approx. 60); <i>almost without measure, ad lib. (following the soloist); more mf, almost declamatory; melorecitation; announcing the end of the world</i> ("almost without measure, almost declamatory, melorecitation, announcing the end of the world")
159	zwalczył w wielkim boju archanioł pański, Michał,	
160	i zginął w otchłani.	

Table 23. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, No. 9, lyrics, agogics and expression.

Section 9 possesses extraordinary dramatic intensity, with the tenor as its principal 'actor'. It is clearly divided into two parts: a highly dramatic section (bars 151–154) and bars 158–169, which depict the final image of a world in ruins. This takes the form of a melorecitative passage. The composer has clearly emphasised this passage musically and provided the singer with every means to pour his entire interpretation into it. In these words by Kasprowicz, we can discern Adam's crystallised feelings and thoughts in the context of both the poem and the cycle; and consequently, all the emotional tension built up in the tenor part finds its *catharsis* in these bars. Following this sequence, which is so physically and technically demanding in terms of vocal technique and artistic sensitivity, comes the declamatory proclamation of the end of the world in bars 158–160, set to the repeated note *D*. This is a passage in the *Dies Irae* of considerable significance, emphasised all the more by the chorale melody appearing in movement 9 (ex. 58, p. 98), which frames the essential substance of the cycle and suggesting that what follows is a kind of epilogue.

Example 59. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, No. 9, pp. 151–157.

Part IV: *The End of the World*

Rzepiela notated *The End of the World quasi attacca* following Part III. It opens with an *a cappella* phrase, *quasi parlando, senza tempo*, continuing on the note *D*. The enharmonically altered Adam motif appearing at the beginning of No. 1 is described by the expression *impotente*; this remains applicable to the interpretation of almost the entire Part IV. The vocal part is dominated by the mid-range and lower mid-range, which allows for a free interpretation, and, from a technical perspective, to calm the breath and the body. The texture and instrumentation of the entire section leave ample acoustic space for interpreting the text in a manner closer to that of a chamber ensemble. Rzepiela uses chords at *pp* dynamics or silence in places, from which the tenor phrase emerges; thanks to this, the performer can create an atmosphere of intimate expression that contrasts with the previous section. No. 3 is the final outburst of musical and textual expression, notated in the vocal part in a phrase written in or above *the tenor passagio*.

**Pesante, pochissimo più fluente
di tempo precedente**

**Pochissimo più pesante,
persistentemente**

Molto tenuto

con furia

con disprezzo

con un senso di ingiustizia

37
8
T.

de mną prze-pać zro - dzo - na przez wi-nę, przez grzech Twój, Bo - że!... Gi - nę! gi - nę!

Example 60 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, tenor part, No. 3, bars 37–40.

IV *The End of the World*

No. 4 (bars 44–55)

Di fronte alla fine; quasi senza misura, senza tempo (facing the end; almost without measure, without tempo)

bar number	lyrics	tempo, dynamism, expression
44		<i>p, quasi recitativo, ad libitum, come in delirio, apatico</i> (almost recitative, as if in delirium, apathetically)
48	A cóż powstanie ponad nicościami,	
	gdzie ongi były światy	<i>quasi parlando</i> (almost speaking)
	i Ja, w chęć życia bogaty,	
	a dziś w umarłych postawiony rzędzie?	
50	Niech nic nie będzie!	general pause at the beginning of the bar. Then SOLO
52	Amen	<i>poco rallentando</i>
53	Bo cóż być może, jeśli ja zaginał?... Na wszystko mrok nicości nieprzebyty spłynął Amen.	<i>poco meno mosso</i>

Table 24. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, No. 4, lyrics, agogics and expression.

The final nine bars of the *Dies Irae* cycle are presented as a recitative, which may be associated with a kind of reflection, summary and conclusion following the events that have taken place in the piece thus far. From the performer’s perspective, what is most significant is the harmonic ambiguity of the progression—the persistent C major chord in the string section makes it difficult to sing the correct pitches of the vocal melody, which is written in C minor. Furthermore, the composer repeats the phrase *di fronte alla fine* (‘in

the face of the end'), which also appears at the very beginning of the tenor line in the first movement. It is worth reflecting on this device and adapting the interpretation accordingly, as it is clearly the perspective that frames the entire work. Awareness of his tragic fate and the inevitable 'end' thus accompanies Adam from the very beginning. Another characteristic feature of the part here are the numerous rests with added fermatas. Appropriate 'use of silence', which divides a longer phrase into short fragments, allows for a better realisation of the indicated '*come in delirio*'.

44 **4** Di fronte alla fine;
quasi senza misura, senza tempo
p quasi recitativo, ad lib., come in delirio, apatico

T. A cóż po - wsta - nie po - nad ni - co - ścia - mi, g dzie o - n gi by - ly świa - ty i Ja, w chęć ży - cia bo - ga - ty.

Vn. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Vi. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Vc. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Cb. FLT, nV, *radioso* *pp*

Pfte. *sub. pp*, morbido, leggierissimo, *radioso*

Example 61. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, No. 4, Vol. 44–46.

The cycle concludes with a sense of calm experienced by both performers and listeners. The conclusion brings a sense of calm following the highly intense and varied course of the work as a whole. The use of the poem's final words—particularly the semantically rich 'amen'—sung, or rather almost spoken, at a low dynamic level, creates the impression of the form being brought to a close and the definitive conclusion of *Dies Irae*.

Chapter IV

A comparison of the musical settings of Kasprowicz's *Hymns* in the works of Szymanowski and Rzepiela in terms of interpretation and performance

1. Performance requirements and difficulties in both works

The cycles by Stanisław Rzepiela and Karol Szymanowski present a range of diverse challenges for the singer. Many of these will differ between the two cycles, stemming directly from the differences in the musical language employed by the composers, whilst some, directly related to the text, may be similar.

When comparing the two cycles under consideration, the following similarities can be identified:

1. The unifying element between Stanisław Rzepiela's *Dies Irae* and Karol Szymanowski's *Three Fragments* is, of course, the choice of texts, and their arrangement for the vocal part, which is a syllabic setting with a few exceptions where there are justified (e.g. stylisation in Szymanowski's work, or the incorporation of Kasprowicz's words into the original melody of the *Dies Irae* sequence) and not particularly numerous melismas.

2. The range of techniques employed by both composers to set the poems to music differs, yet we can identify certain common elements. These include the previously mentioned wide dynamic range of both compositions, detailed agogic markings, as well as sudden bursts of expression, changes in articulation, local stylisations or imitations, quotations and expressionist drama. Stanisława Korwin-Szymanowska pointed out that *Three Fragments* strike a balance between singing and recitation⁷¹, whilst Stanisław Rzepiela emphasised the similarity between his work, and the elaborate recitative *accompagnato*⁷². However, if one examines the harmonic language and the rhythmic patterns employed in both cycles, clear contrasts become apparent. Karol Szymanowski utilises a harmonic language that combines plagal and modality⁷³, with distinctly weakened functional relationships and rich in chromaticism. One can find in it melodic

⁷¹ Stanisława Korwin-Szymanowska, *Jak należy śpiewać utwory Karola Szymanowskiego*, Gebethner i Wolff, Warsaw 1938, p. 54 [<https://polona.pl/item-view/a127a324-9bee-4e84-b948-c2e8f68f2ea5?page=55>, accessed: 10 September 2025].

⁷² A view expressed by Stanisław Rzepiela in correspondence with the author of the doctoral thesis.

⁷³ D. Jasińska, op. cit.

phrases characteristic of the Phrygian, Aeolian and Lydian scales. The singer must find their way within the complex world of Szymanowski's harmonies in order to fully realise the composer's vision. Meticulous collaboration with the pianist and an awareness of one's role in a given section of the piece are essential here. This also results in a shift in the singer's role from that of a soloist to that of a co-performer. Stanisław Rzepiela, departing from functional harmony, employed frequently shifting tonal centres; there are numerous chordal oscillations between major and minor, and chordal structures devoid of thirds are present. For example, in *The End of the World* (The End of the World), the tenor part is written in C minor against a backdrop of resounding C major, creating a metaphorical semitone friction between the soloist's part and that of the ensemble. The structure of the piece is also built on leitmotifs, some of which always appear in the same notes. The soloist's melodic line, often constructed through dissonance and chromaticism, set against the backdrop of the composer's complex harmonic language, presents a significant challenge even in the process of the singer learning the part. It is essential to be aware of how the voice interacts with the instrumental texture, as well as where the composer has employed melodic phrases that recur throughout the cycle. The rhythm of the *Dies Irae* is based on successive polymetry, which serves as a counterpart to Kasprończak's text, which is also irregular, tending to oscillate between different patterns depending on the dramatic requirements. For the performer, this is a highly demanding aspect of the work, particularly in passages of fast tempo, sudden tempo changes, or elaborate multi-bar phrases in which the composer has indicated *accelerando*. Polymetry, though not as regular as in Rzepiela's work, can be found in *Three Fragments*, where, much like the harmonica, it serves to indicate the emotional and semantic context within a given fragment. The frequent changes in tempo, which lend the piece its proper expressive dimension, as well as the numerous fermatas and rhetorical pauses, contribute to the aforementioned declamatory character of the work and give it the quality of natural speech. The composer's sensitivity to the rhythmic notation and his translation of it into natural expression, and subsequently harmonising it with the pianist, is the very essence of creating a form of artistic expression.

3. A demanding tenor part that makes free use of various techniques, such as: *secco* recitative, *accompagnato*, Gregorian chant, melorecitation ('I flap my wings like a bird'), and Sprechgesang.

Monophonic texture or *secco* recitative have been used to set to music the lyrical subject's personal utterances. One such example can be found in bars 1–10 (Ex. 62, p. 105) of *Holy God*. Similar reflective *a cappella* phrases, or those of a personal and intimate nature, can be found in *Dies Irae* (Ex. 39, p. 71; Ex. 52, p. 92; Ex. 61, p. 101). This suggests that both Rzepiela and Szymanowski interpreted and set to music in a similar way the passages of the poem containing the lyrical narrator's confessions.

Lento mesto
w powolnym, poważnym ruchu KAROL SZYMANOWSKI, OP. 5

Canto

ppp

O nie - zgtę - bio - ne, nie - ob - ję - te, mo - ce!
 Ô Sain - te Puissance, ô For - ce Im - mor - tel - le!

Piano

ppp

pp ma pesante

poco rit.

Skrzydła - mi trze - po - czę, jak ptak ten noc - ny,
 Je bats des ai - les -, tris - te oi - seau de

p

Example 62 . K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *Holy God*, vols. 1–10.

One can also discern a certain degree of similarity between the endings of *Three Fragments* and *Dies Irae* (examples 63, 64, p. 106).

51

poco rall. Poco meno mosso

lunga

T. Na wszy-stko mrok ni - co - ści nie - prze - by - ty sply - - nął- A - men.

Vn. FLT, ST, nV

Vl. FLT, ST, nV

Vc.

Cb.

Pfte. più *p* morendo

T.A. *pp* poss.

Example 63 . S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The End of the World*, No. 4, vols. 51–55.

Adagio

T. tak po - za - da - nym, a tak żrą - cym wid - - mem.
som - bre fan - to - me qui vient cru - el et dé - si - ré.

P. 124 *p* *sub. p* *pp* *ppp morendo*

Example 64. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *My Evening Song*, pp. 124–128.

Both endings are similar in their reflective, melancholic character, their low, gradually diminishing dynamics (*p*—*pp*—*ppp*), marked by the composers with graphic ‘diminuendo’ indications. *The End of the World* concludes with a fermata on the notes of the piano and tam-tam parts, with a marked diminuendo throughout the entire bar, which can be interpreted as bringing both sounds down to a level of silence. *My Evening Song*, in addition to the *morendo* marking (fading away), ends with a rest over which

Szymanowski wrote a fermata, clearly indicating the silence that should ‘play’ the last half-bar of the song.

Furthermore, the recitatives in both cycles take on various forms. In Szymanowski’s work, they also take the form of invocations and prayers. In Rzepiela’s work, however, they appear as pure declamation imitating speech (Ex. 50, p. 90), as passages described by the composer as recitatives (Ex. 39, p. 71; Ex. 52, p. 92), to passages stylised as Gregorian chant, and those of a prayerful nature (Ex. 65). A more detailed analysis of these examples is presented in Chapter III of this thesis.

1. Number 6 in *The Last Judgement* contains an exceptionally dramatic text, set in the form of a recitative *accompagnato* (Ex. 65). It is worth comparing this example with bars 9–18 of the song *I Am and I Weep* (Ex. 3, p. 35). At first glance, the similarity may not be apparent; however, by examining the nature of the words and the manner in which they are set to music, the following elements become evident: the similar tragic nature of both passages, the instrumental reinforcement and rhythmic accentuation of the words of greatest semantic significance, and the dominant *piano* dynamic rising to *forte* as the passage develops.

The musical score for Example 65 is a recitative *accompagnato* for a tenor (T.), euphonium (Cb.), piano (Pfle.), and guitar (G. C.). The tempo markings are 'poco rall.', 'Poco meno mosso', 'poco accel.', and 'rall.'. The dynamics are 'mf poss.', 'mp', 'molto', and '(f)'. The lyrics are: 'ro - zpa - lo - ne - go Sza - ta - na, co świat u - mie - ra - ja - cy o - krył swo - im cie - niem.'

Example 65. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Last Judgement*, No. 6, Vol. 111–113.

The recitative in the tenor part of No. 11 in Stanisław Rzepiela’s *The Day of Wrath*, through its prayerful character (*quasi preghieramoso*), may evoke associations with the supplication used by Karol Szymanowski in *Holy God*.

Example 66. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae, The Day of Wrath*, nos. 10–11, vols. 165–170.

4. Both Szymanowski's and Rzepiela's cycles require the same type of vocal technique. In particular, the required technique should be associated with that used in the performance of Romantic, post-Romantic and veristic operas. When looking for similar vocal demands in Polish literature, one should mention: Moniuszko, Nowowiejski, and also Szymanowski in his operatic works (e.g. *King Roger*).

A comparison of Szymanowski's and Rzepiela's works also revealed numerous differences between these two compositions:

1. On first looking at the sheet music or audio recording, the difference in length between *Dies Irae* and *Three Fragments from the Poems by Jan Kasprowicz* becomes apparent. According to the recording provided by the author of this study, the durations are as follows: Stanisław Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*—37:30; Karol Szymanowski, *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*—18:21. A difference of almost 20 minutes in a work intended for a single singer can prove to be a colossal difference, depending on the musical material the artist is required to perform. In this case, both cycles contain highly demanding vocal parts, sparing the singer neither in terms of interpretative demands nor technical difficulty, as discussed in greater detail in Chapters II and III.

Therefore, in terms of the stamina required of the performer to sing the entire work, the *Dies Irae* cycle appears to be far more demanding.

2. Continuing along the lines of comparable parameters, attention should be drawn to the vocal range in which the vocal part is written. Stanisław Rzepiela intended to utilise almost the entire range of the tenor voice, from the low, rarely encountered *B* tenor down to the high *b¹*. Szymanowski did not intend the *Three Fragments* for a specific voice type; in any case, no such information is to be found in the available historical sources. Admittedly, Andrzej Chłopecki, citing Kornel Michałowski, reports that Karol Szymanowski's friend Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz claimed that the cycle was originally intended for tenor and baritone; however, this has not been confirmed⁷⁴. We know that the first performer was Szymanowski's sister, who possessed a lyrical-coloratura soprano voice. Throughout the cycle, the singer utilises a range from *B* to *g¹*, which compared to *Dies Irae* places similar demands on the performer in the lower register, whilst in the upper register a difference of as much as a minor third can be observed. A difference of this kind, which concerns the extremes of the scale, can often prove crucial, for instance when deciding whether to perform a given cycle. This is linked to the nature of the human voice, as well as technical, physiological and physical limitations, particularly given the duration mentioned earlier. The conclusion suggests itself that Karol Szymanowski's cycle, although this statement cannot be substantiated without a comparative context, is more accessible in this comparison. This is evidenced by the fact that *Three Fragments* have been and continue to be performed by tenors (albeit infrequently), as well as by sopranos and mezzo-sopranos. It should be noted, however, that this accessibility is greatest for mezzo-soprano voices, owing to the vocal range of *Three Fragments*.

3. A significant difference in the demands placed on the soloist can be observed in the musical dimension. This concerns the rhythmic structure, musical language, shaping of the vocal phrase, use of the voice, length of the work, and the vocal range required in the two cycles. *Dies Irae* was composed by Rzepiela specifically for the tenor voice. The composer makes use of almost the entire vocal range, extending the solo part, according to traditional classification, from *B* to *b1*. Depending on the movement, different sections of the voice—lower, upper, or middle—may be placed under greater

⁷⁴ A. Chłopecki, op. cit., p. 246.

strain. Consequently, performing the cycle requires mastery of vocal technique across a very wide dynamic range and throughout a two-octave span, with considerable freedom that allows room both for the performer's individual interpretation and for the agogic nuances prescribed by the composer. *Three Fragments* by Karol Szymanowski were composed for voice and piano, without specifying a particular voice type. The vocal part ranges from *B* to *g1*. Since the works were first composed, performance practice has established the cycle as being performed primarily by sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, and altos, and less frequently by tenors.⁷⁵ The cycle often emphasizes the lower and middle registers, reserving the upper notes for moments of climax. The composer nevertheless introduced melodic variants (*ossia*) that allow higher voices greater freedom in shaping the vocal phrase. The demands placed on the singer, as indicated by the agogic and dynamic markings, point to the need for the ability to employ a wide variety of vocal colours and shades, as well as to shape the phrase across a dynamic range from *ppp* to *fff*. Some of the elements discussed above may be regarded as similarities between the two cycles, while others constitute significant differences.

4. In Szymanowski's work, from the perspective of a tenor voice, there is undoubtedly a very frequent tendency to maintain the melody within the lower mid-range, below *C¹*. Occurring in the immediate vicinity of such passages, sudden emotional shifts—often associated with different dynamics, a higher melodic position and greater intensity of expression, become exceptionally difficult technical challenges. In such situations, there is a risk of disrupting the continuity of phrasing and, consequently, of emotional distortion. For example, the very beginning of the cycle contains melodies descending into the lower registers of the voice, after which higher phrases, if one wishes to sing them in the same character, may prove problematic (Ex. 61, p. 101). In the same song, we can find more passages of a similar nature. One of the most difficult 'leaps' of this type occurs in bars 101–109 (Ex. 67, p. 111).

⁷⁵ E.g. *Szymanowski: Complete Songs for voice and piano*, vol. 1, Piotr Beczała, Reinliid Mees, Channel Classics, 2012.

pa-li się w przestworzu. Dla - cze-gosam mam wlec się po roz-dro-żu ku tym pochy-łym krzy - żom?
 - el so- leil rou- ge et me trai-ner seul sans joie et sans re - pos vers tes croire lu - gu - bres?

rall. fff

101 *ff*

Meno mosso

Któ - rym na czar-ne ra - mio - na kra - cza - ca sia-dla wro-na?
 Où le noir corbeau jet - te vers les cieux sa mor-ne plainte?

106 *pp subito* *mf*

Example 67. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, *Holy God*, bars 101–109.

The emotional fermata notated by the composer allows for a transition between *fff* and *pp subito*; however, executing this technically correctly, immediately after the climactic phrase, is an exceptionally difficult task for the singer. It is essential to bring the emotional tension under control immediately, and thereby steady one's breathing. Taking a new breath, rationally planned, must enable the performance of the next phrase at *pp*.

An example of a different kind of performance challenge is the build-up to and the climax of the song *I Am and I Weep*. Following a funeral march lasting several bars and the return of the musical theme from the beginning of the song—without any pause for the performer—there is a transition intended to lead back to the quotation from the supplication (Example 68, p. 112).

accele - ran - do

nie - do - stę - nym tro - nie sie - dzisz po - mię - dzy gwiaz - da - mi! I
qui re - po - ses sur ton trô - ne se - mé d'é - toi - les, un

66 mf

8

accel.

gło - wą na zło - ci - stym spocząw - szy Trój - kę - cie, krzyż
nim - be de so - leil au - tour de ta tê - te, la croix

69 6 6 crescendo sff

8 sff

Example 68. K. Szymanowski, *Three Fragments...*, 'I Am Here and I Weep', pp. 66–72.

The *accelerando* introduced by the composer, repeated twice in bars 66 and 69, becomes a further factor complicating the singer's execution of these bars. There is no point at which the singer can take a free breath, as their 'reserve' of breath may already have been depleted by the previous, expressively intense passages. A real problem arises, which can only be resolved by 'managing' the breath, at the cost of interrupting the phrase. In this case, the *accelerando* leaves the singer even less time for such a strategy. When planning breaths, we must take into account the gradual acceleration of the tempo, as this naturally affects the distribution of breath. The recording artist decided that the exclamation mark following the word 'stars' was the best semantic point for a breath. Consequently, the conjunction 'i', sung on the final eighth note of bar 68, had to be shortened to a sixteenth note. Other breathing options are possible in this phrase, but this one seemed to the author to be the most consistent with his interpretation. A similar issue relating the inability to take a natural breath actually extends to the entire closing section of *I Am and I Weep*. The vocal part is exceptionally intense from bar 54 onwards and grows in expressive intensity right up to the very end. We are unlikely to find demands of this kind in Rzepiela's *Dies Irae*. The composer planned the vocal part with a keen

awareness of how the instrument works, and passages that may prove problematic—such as bars 86–90, are separated in the vocal part by a comma from the following phrase, which begins in bar 91 with a sixteenth-note on the ‘i’ of the upbeat present in bar 90 (Example 69). This allows the singer to manage their breath without straining their reserves, in accordance with the written musical material.

85

A tempo, poco tratten. Subito meno mosso (♩=60) Subito più fluente (♩=65); dondolando poco accel.

Ob. *più f*

Tr. *più f* *pp* *ff* *più f* *sub. pp* *molto* *f* *più* *pp*

T. *più f* *pp* *ff* *più f* *sub. pp* *molto* *f* *più* *pp*

Vn. *più f* *mf* *più f* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Vl. *più f* *mf* *più f* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Vc. *più f* *mf* *più f* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Cb. *più f* *mf* *più f* *poco f* *mf* *poco f* *mf* *poco f* *mf*

Pfte. *più f* *poco più* *f* *meno* *f* *meno* *f* *meno*

G. C. *f* *pp* *più* *p* *più mf* *pp*

T.-L. *f* *pp* *più* *p* *più mf* *pp*

Jej - na - gie u - da drża pa - lca - mi ro - zcze - su - je zło - to swych wa - rko - czy i fa - lą zło - ci - stych wło - sów o - sła - nia je - go na - goś i

Example 69. S. Rzepiela, *Dies Irae*, *The Last Judgement*, No. 5, bars 85–90.

5. A first glance at Stanisław Rzepiela’s *Dies Irae* may lead one to conclude that there are difficulties associated with the musical language and the complex polyrhythms, examples of which can be found throughout the entire cycle (Example 70, p. 114).

the two works is the varying dynamic levels and the density of the texture. A '*forte*' in Szymanowski's work is not synonymous with a '*forte*' in Rzepiela's, which results in the selection of diverse technical means.

The larger instrumental ensemble envisaged by Rzepiela suggests that the singer should employ a singing technique appropriate to the operatic stage. A chamber music approach and the search for the finest nuances within the dynamic or timbral range of the voice, in passages where most of the instruments are present, may result in insufficient sound intensity, and consequently, a situation in which the words of the poem fail to reach the audience. However, the composer has provided spaces within the work that allow the singer to adopt a more chamber-music-like approach. Passages accompanied by pizzicato, harmonics, long sustained notes in the piano part, or even *a cappella*, become areas where the tenor bears almost all, if not all, of the responsibility for the work's expression.

Throughout the entire cycle, the singer must not forget that the composer has prioritised the text of the poem, which also necessitates the selection of appropriate articulation of the words, tailored to the dynamic level and the specific characteristics of the accompanying instruments in the given sections of the work. What is therefore required is a synthesis of performance techniques from the fields of chamber singing and stage singing, enabling the voice to become an appropriate medium that conveys, beyond the musical layer, the very essence of Kasproicz's poetry and the emotions arising from its interpretation. An awareness of the choice of means the tenor will employ whilst co-creating the work is crucial.

The *Three Fragments* by Karol Szymanowski lend themselves much more readily to a chamber music approach. The singer need not compete for sonic space with instruments possessing significant dynamic potential, such as the trumpet or percussion. However, one must not forget that the composer wrote the piano part to make the most of its potential, whilst entrusting the singer with the lower or middle register. Given the frequent presence of climaxes in the middle and lower registers of the piano, there is a risk—particularly in the case of a tenor voice—that overtones may overlap, somewhat obscuring the singer's sound and resulting in a muted expression contrary to the composer's intentions. This dictates the need, in certain passages, for the singer to draw upon technical resources typically associated with a large stage.

Both compositions therefore present a challenge for the solo singer, requiring them to consciously select the appropriate technical and articulatory means, suited to, amongst other things, the texture, instrumentation, dynamics and articulation of a given passage. In the *Dies Irae* cycle, a broader repertoire of techniques is required to enable an interpretation compared to *Three Fragments*, a requirement largely dictated by the expanded instrumental ensemble and the specific characteristics of the instruments it comprises. In particular, the ‘dialogical’ nature of the interplay between the voice (Adam) and the oboe (Eve) is reflected in the appropriate choice of vocal timbre and the manner in which the vocal phrase is carried out (ex. 71, p. 115).

3. The type of artistic expression determining a consistent vocal interpretation

In order to determine the required type of expression that a singer should adopt when undertaking the interpretation of song cycles, several aspects must be taken into account. Elements such as: the relationship between text and music; the historical and cultural context of both the poetic and musical works; the composer’s intentions; the instrumentation and genre of the piece; as well as the singer’s personal relationship with the content of the poem and the composition that utilises it.

The relationship between word and sound is one of the most important dimensions of vocal-instrumental forms. Consequently, when seeking the expression appropriate to a given work, it must be borne in mind that the vocal part cannot function in isolation from the text; therefore, the relationship between these two layers created by the poet and the composer. It is essential to consider several determinants of this relationship. The structure of the vocal phrase in the context of the poetic phrase—that is, how the soloist’s part corresponds to the natural division of a sentence resulting from linguistic rules, and how any disruption of this division, as intended by the poet, is translated into music. Next, the significance of linguistic prosody in the singer’s melodic line: does the composition reflect the organic rise and the decline of speech, and consequently the intonational tension. Another key aspect to analyse will be the rhythm and accentuation of the vocal phrase and its translation into naturally occurring word stresses according to the rules of language, as well as the stresses intended by the poet. Finally, do the music and the words interact to create a synergistic effect, or are they set in opposition to one another; does the melody serve to comment on the meanings of the text, or does it

illustrate them? All these elements help to identify the appropriate choice of artistic expression, which will in turn inform the interpretation.

The historical and cultural context should not be overlooked. The significance of the source text, which has evolved over the years, is a determining factor in how one should approach the performance of music that utilises its words. Awareness of the performance tradition (or lack thereof) concerning musical arrangements of a given text is also a source of debate or, conversely, of the assimilation of modes of expression that have emerged since the work was written.

Knowledge of the composer's conception and intention (insofar as these are known) is also a crucial consideration. The original vision of the work as conceived by the composer, its most important elements, the manner of executing the prescribed agogics, phrasing and dynamics, and above all, information about what he wished to convey through the piece. The composer's perspective over the years may also prove interesting—a commentary from a different vantage point on his life's journey and artistic development. Therefore, consulting the available sources through which one can access the composer's remarks on the work appears to be a necessity on the path to creating a complete artistic vision.

Finally, analysing the form, genre, instrumentation and comparing these, along with the elements mentioned above, with one's personal relationship to the text and the music. Thanks to this body of information, the artist is well-equipped to choose a form of artistic expression and create an interpretation that is true to themselves, the music and the poetry.

The relationship between word and sound may point the way towards an interpretation of both works. Detailed comments on this issue have appeared in the chapters devoted to the individual works; however, it is worth examining this issue from a comparative perspective. The vocal phrasing in both cycles is shaped with due regard for Kasproicz's varied and complex phrasing. Both Rzepiela and Szymanowski took into account the regular and irregular versification structures used in the poems. This became a determining factor in the construction of phrases aligned with textual rather than musical phrases. In *Dies Irae*, this manifests itself through the extensive use of polymetry, whilst in Szymanowski's work, through complex phrases spanning multiple bars.

Both cycles are united by the expressive element contained in Kasprowicz's poems. Both *Dies Irae* and *Three Fragments* are works of music deeply imbued with expression and emotion, which can be found in every layer of the composition. Viewing both works through this lens provides the key to their interpretation. The tragic portrayal of human suffering present in both cycles brings them closer together on a semantic level and leads to the conclusion that this is the correct line of thought for identifying the artistic expression that unites the two works.

Summary

These monumental poems, which embody the spirit of the Young Poland era whilst also serving as a record of the poet's personal dilemmas, set to music in the cycles by Karol Szymanowski and Stanisław Rzepiela, require a thoughtful performance. It is therefore worth examining the literary works themselves separately in terms of their poetic form, message, historical background, the moods, ideas and conflicts of values that existed at the time the *Hymns* were written. By examining all these elements, we recognise both the beauty and artistry of the poetic form, as well as the significance of their message, both for the Young Poland period and for contemporary audiences. It should be borne in mind that the poetic style of the *Hymns* is rich and varied, yet decidedly modernist even for the era in which it was written. Expressionism, so evident in the *Hymns*, appears as an innovative feature in Polish literature, whilst Symbolism, as a means of creating works of art, has lost none of its value even in the present day. Stanisław Rzepiela comments on the poetry of the *Hymns* as follows:

“These texts are difficult to engage with, saturated with symbolism that is often no longer decipherable to younger generations. Nevertheless, the *Hymns* leave their mark. They do not allow one to remain indifferent to them. They evoke emotions without explaining how to deal with them. And although their subject matter is demanding, in my view, these are texts for our time”⁷⁶.

The historical background of the *Three Fragments* is consistent; the composition was written in 1902, the same year in which Kasprowicz published his first collection, entitled *To a Vanishing World*. This raises the question of whether the year in which the compositional work on *Dies Irae* (2024) was completed can be compared with the time when those early works were written. Do the human condition, the intellectual, cultural and social climate, as well as the challenges faced by the individual, not find a certain analogy in the years marking the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries? Particularly in the context of social upheaval, disillusionment and rebellion against the values established by the generations born between 1946 and 1980, certain parallels can be drawn with the Young Poland era. For the singer, this suggests that the text has grounds to correspond

⁷⁶ This and subsequent statements by Stanisław Rzepiela are taken from an interview conducted by the author of this work with the composer on 10 September 2025. A transcript of the entire interview is included in Appendix No. 2.

with music which, in both cycles, is in harmony with the most significant trends of both eras. Therefore, one should not separate the interpretation of poetry from the music, but rather seek a certain consensus between the composer's language and the poet's language. It is also worth noting that the treatment of the text in *Three Fragments...* and *Dies Irae* attests to the high regard accorded to the content of the source poems.

In keeping with the spirit of Young Poland, Kasprowicz's poetry is highly 'musical' and employs symbolic, painterly imagery. Karol Szymanowski made excellent use of these qualities when composing his cycle *Three Fragments from Poems by Jan Kasprowicz*.

He selected certain passages that interested him as self-contained symbolic visions: a prayer of supplication, the funeral of humanity, a metaphysical longing for the lost harmony of the world. Andrzej Chłopecki, in the article quoted in the thesis, *I Am and I Weep. Jan Kasprowicz's Hymn according to Karol Szymanowski*, draws attention to Szymanowski's particularly personal relationship with the literary material, arguing that the Hymns constitute a kind of generational manifesto to which the then-young composer Szymanowski subscribed. Other researchers, whose conclusions are presented in Chapter II, section 2.1, 'The Cycle in the light of theoretical and musical analyses and interpretations', emphasise the connections between Szymanowski's musical style and the aesthetic trends of the period in which he composed (Zofia Helman, Katarzyna Suska). Danuta Jasińska lists three main categories which she considers the most important in the cycle: sublimity, lyricism and drama. Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz states that *the Hymns* in Szymanowski's music are 'a testament to the disintegrating positivist image of man'⁷⁷.

Examining Kasprowicz's works in the context of his personal life is a task of equal importance. Without the necessary knowledge, there is a risk of interpreting the poet's references to folk piety or the construction of a poem based on a vision of the apocalypse in a naïve manner, seeking out folklorism or a forced mysticism. Both these trends, which were popular during the Young Poland period, are not, however, the central themes in Jan Kasprowicz's *Hymns*, but rather a consequence of the search for symbolism organically linked to the deepest emotions. This symbolism is rooted in the Polish culture

⁷⁷ Małgorzata Janicka Słysz, *Poetyka muzyczna Karola Szymanowskiego: Studia i interpretacje*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2013, p. 184.

of that period, and in particular amongst the social strata from which Kasprowicz hailed. Through this choice of themes and imagery, he draws upon deeply emotional realms, enabling the creation of a work brimming with expression. The singer should therefore not only read but also experience the text chosen by the composer, finding within it a deeply personal appeal and emotional expression, based not on role-playing or stylisation, but rather on embodying the lyrical subject and seeking psychological realism. Similar conclusions are also presented by Stanisława Korwin-Szymanowska⁷⁸, who suggests ‘delving into’ the texts chosen by Szymanowski to gain a better understanding of the music.

Among the performance issues that must be addressed when discussing Szymanowski’s cycle, the following stand out: the specific nature of the vocal phrases in relation to the structure of Kasprowicz’s text, analysed in Chapter II, in section 2.2; and the dynamic plan as the primary medium of the expressionist style, described in Chapter II, in section 2.3 of this thesis description. A precise interpretation of the relationship between the verbal and musical texts, as well as the effective translation of dynamic markings into vocal and expressive means, are, in the author’s view, the most important element of the cycle’s stylistics from a performance perspective.

An extremely inspiring and significant experience for the author of this thesis was encountering a new, contemporary work—one very different from Szymanowski’s—namely *Dies Irae* for tenor and instrumental ensemble. The study, preparation and recording of this piece opened up avenues for a new interpretation of Stanisław Rzepiela’s work, one entirely devoid of tradition. The composer’s account of his work on *Dies Irae* is particularly interesting:

‘I began by analysing the text—its composition and structure. I read it over and over again, trying to delve as deeply as possible into its natural dramatic structure. I wanted to hear its rhythm and melody. Next, I tried to answer the question: how can I translate the poem’s narrative into music in a way other than linearly? I knew that setting the text to music in its existing form—from beginning to end—was out of the question. The narrative of such a work would then become tedious for the listener, regardless of the choice of compositional means and techniques’.

⁷⁸ S. Korwin-Szymanowska, op. cit., pp. 19–20.

The analysis of *Dies Irae* carried out in Chapter III yields the following conclusions: the main feature that the composer emphasised in the cycle is the distinctive theatricality of the narrative in Kasprowicz's *Dies Irae* hymn. This manifested itself in several ways. The composer described the tenor part in extraordinary detail, incorporating numerous unusual expressive markings, which he termed 'didascalia'. Furthermore, he made changes to the chronology of the poem, which he himself explains as follows:

'In my view, adding a musical layer to the text must reinforce the original drama, rather than blindly following it and thereby weakening it. That is why I decided to divide part of the poem into two parallel timelines. In this way, two main storylines began to emerge in the text: The Day of Wrath and Adam and Eve, which became the first two instalments of the cycle.'

The musical language, and in particular the use of leitmotifs and the original ensemble, are essentially subordinate to the meaning of the text, in an artistic form close to the sensibility and feelings of the contemporary composer and artist. The tenor part in the work is extremely varied, providing scope for the expression of a wide range of emotions. It constitutes rewarding, albeit demanding, material for analysis within the framework of a doctoral thesis, taking into account both the artistic work itself and its description. For the singer's primary focus is, after all, the interpretation of the works from a performance perspective.

There remains the question of a comparative analysis of the two works and determining what accounts for their similarity, or lack thereof. Although, formally speaking, the only thing linking *Dies Irae* and *Three Fragments from the Poems by Jan Kasprowicz* is their use of poems from the same volume of poetry, *To the Vanishing World*, a closer analysis reveals arguments suggesting that they do share points of contact. The exceptionally strong dependence of both cycles on the verbal text of the poems—whose stylistic devices, artistic and ideological currents, themes and, finally, emotionality are translated into the language of music—becomes a unifying feature of *Dies Irae* and *Three Fragments*... The expression arising from this interdependence, which is originally a characteristic feature of the collection *To a Vanishing World*, emerges as a common element in these two compositions. By highlighting these connections with the verbal text and juxtaposing them in a comparison of the two works in the preceding chapters of this

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study, the author sought to emphasise this relationship in particular. And although neither work shares a single line of verse from Kasproicz's poetry, the internal coherence of *To the Vanishing World*, along with the consistent emotionality and expressiveness of the poems, makes it possible to juxtapose *Dies Irae* and *Three Fragments*. Thus, the thesis put forward in the introduction—that the Young Poland-style expression of Jan Kasproicz's *Hymns* is the main feature linking the two song cycles by Szymanowski and Rzepiela, whilst the stylistic differences in both works stem from the differing musical means employed to achieve this very expression, is confirmed.

Let the final element of this summary be a subjective reflection by the author of this doctoral thesis on the artistic work described herein. As a singer, the author's attention is drawn to the performance aspect, with particular emphasis on the technical demands of both works. *Three Fragments from the Poems by Jan Kasproicz* have been interpreted and recorded on numerous occasions. It is worth noting that this has been done primarily by female voices, and it is precisely thanks to these singers, beginning with the aforementioned Stanisława Szymanowska, that a certain performance tradition for this cycle has emerged. Although the performance challenges in the case of a male voice will be similar, the sonic effect will be different, and the tenor will shape the interpretation in a different way, whilst also making a different impression on the audience. This has, in a sense, allowed, within the framework of an original interpretation, an entry to engage in a dialogue with the performance tradition and to present a fresh, personal perspective on the work. Unlike *Three Fragments...*, *Dies Irae* is a work that has never before been performed, and the analysis presented here is accompanied by its recording debut. Such a blank slate, on which a singer can be the first to inscribe their own interpretation, is both a rare opportunity for a creative approach from the ground up, free from the preconceptions imposed by others, and an enormous challenge, placing upon the artist the burden of creating their own vision of the work and, perhaps, establishing a benchmark for future performers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The use of Kasprowicz’s text in Stanisław Rzepiela’s composition *Dies*

Irae

The original text of Kasprowicz’s hymn *Dies Irae* (in full)

Part I of the piece *Dies Irae*—GREEN

Part II of the piece *Dies Irae*—PURPLE

Part III of the piece *Dies Irae*—BLUE

Part IV of the piece *Dies Irae*—BURGUNDY

The sections omitted from the ‘*Dies Irae*’ are marked in YELLOW

Jan Kasprowicz, *Dies irae*

Trąba dziwny dźwięk rozsiej,
ogień skrzepnie, blask ściemnieje,
w proch powrócą światów dzieje.
Z drzew wieczności spadną liście

Na Sędziego straszne przyjdzie,
by świadectwo dać Psalmiście...

A ty, psalmisto Pański, nastrój harfę swoją
już na ostatni ton!

Grzech krwią czarną duszę plami...
Bez obrońcy staniam sami -
któż zlituje się nad nami?

Kyrie elejson!...
O Boże! Ty bądź naszą łaską i obroną!
Kyrie elejson!

O Głowo, owinięta cierniową koroną,
gasnącym wieki wieków spojrzuj na nas okiem!
O spojrzuj na nas z tej głuszy,
która swym tchnieniem głębokiem
ogarnia światów bezmiary,
a którą ty wypełniasz swych bólów ogromem,
o Głowo, owinięta cierniową koroną.

Żalobna drogo nieochybnej kary,
broczącej we łzach i przy jęków wtórze
w ten pozbawiony końca
Pańskiego gniewu dzień,
w którym w pożarach spokojnego słońca
szatańskim chichotem płoną
świeże, niezwiędłe róże
grzechu i winy!

Na ich purpurze
osiadł posępny i siny
tej Konieczności cień,
z której przepastnej głębiny,
z łona, pełnego niweczających tchnień,
nad boskiej woli złomem
wyrosły zabójcze kwiaty
w Pańskiego gniewu nieskończony dzień...

A Ewa jasnowłosa, matka gwiazd i ziemi,
upaja się ich wonią, schylona nad niemi.
Kyrie elejson!
Przez ciebie w proch nicości wracają Twe światy,
o Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!

Od twego drzewa oderwany liść,
pędzi duch ludzki i naprzód, i wstecz,
niby garść kurzu, porwana cyklonem:
przed nim i za nim płomienisty miecz

iskrzy się ostrzem czerwonym;
przed nim i za nim wstają z swych cmentarzy
upiory wieków, naznaczone sromem
winy i grzechu,
i klną, i bluźnią, i płaczą,
jęczą i syczą, i dyszą
nieustającą rozpaczą,
od szaleńczego zamierają śmiechu
w ten Pańskich gniewów nieskończony dzień...

O Głowo, owinięta cierniową koroną,
Ty, co rozpierasz swej męki ogromem
piersz Konieczności! O Głowo,
której źrenice, jako dwie pochodnie
dogasające, płoną nad krętą,
pustą, nieskończoną drogą
i gasną, gasną, a zgasnąć nie mogą,
zawrzyj, swe oczy nad nami,
nie patrz na boleść i zbrodnię!...

Jedno jest tylko w przestworzach widomem,
jedno w zachodniej płomienieje zorzy
nad płomiennymi falami
wiekuistego Żywota
i nigdy w ciemnię grobu się nie złoży,
i nigdy ciężkich stóp swych nie poruszy,
by iść i iść, i iść
poza granice duszy -
jedno jest tylko Jednem,
grzęzącym miedzianą surmą archanioła
ponad pokoleń pokoleniem biednym
w Pańskiego gniewu nieskończony dzień:
wielki, wszechmocny Ból.

O Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!
Niech łaska Twoja winy nam odpuści...
A ty swe skronie tul
do zimnych opok, do strzaskanych grani,
do sterczących smutnie nad gardłem czeluści,
i płacz...

Surma jęczy, surma woła!
Giną w chmurach wirchów czoła;
wałem mżących mgieł dokoła
nieznany oddech miota,
jakieś potworne, dzikie kształty tworzy
i po dolinach rozpędza ich stada,
i znów je skupia w przepastnej otchłani,
i ku niebiosom wyrzuca ich kłęb,
i w jakieś czarne rozsnuwa całuny

ten niewidzialny, dreszcz budzący Tkacz,
i ciężką, moką tą przędzą pokrywa
wszystko, co jest...
O biada!...

Biada!... Pierś światów, przed chwilą tak żywa,
kona pod strasznym ciężarem...
Olbrzymy świerków padają strzaskane;
las się położył na skalisty zrąb;
wężę kosówek, wyprężywszy ciała
w kurczach śmiertelnych, drętwieją bezwładne;
wrzos na granitów podścielisku szarem
spełznął na wieki;
kozice stromą oblepiły ścianę
i patrząc trwożnie w bezmierny, daleki,
w ten nieskończony chaos mgieł i cieni,
runęły w żlebny grób...
Rozkrzyżuj silne ramiona
i paznokciami wpij się w twardego głaz,
i odwróć oczy od onej przestrzeni,
w której rozsada horyzontów krańce
ta Głowa, w cierń uwieczniona!

Nie patrz, gdzie siadła jasnowłosa Ewa,
wygnana z rajów na wieczysty czas,
mająca zbrodnię u swych białych stóp,
wieczyście żarta płomienistą żądzą
winy i grzechu...

O duszo, pełna miłości,
a którą nieustannie szarpią niepokoje!
Pańskiego gniewu zwałił się już dzień!
Trombita Sądu nad tobą rozbrzmiewa
piorunną mocą archanielskich tchnień
w Pańskiego gniewu nieskończony dzień...

Niechaj mnie sądzą,
niechaj mnie karzą -
tak, mnie, Adama, com na barki swoje
zabrał z Ogrodu to nadludzkie brzemie
przygniatającej winy
i wieki wieków pnę się z tym ciężarem
ku wiekuistej wyży,
i zbladła nie śmiem odwrócić się twarzą
tam, ku tym zmrokom, co zaległy ziemię,
tam, ku piekielnej przełęczy,
na której siadła jasnowłosa Ewa
z padalcem grzechu u swych białych stóp...

Miliardy krzyży,

opromienione okręgami tęczy,
z padolnych Styksów powstają głębiny
w Pańskiego gniewu nieskończony dzień
i rosną, rosną w jakiś straszny las,
co wierzchołkami swych bolesnych drzew
przeszywa wszystkie mgły
i wszystkie blaski, które lśnią nad mgłami,
wypływające z Wszechmocy Istnienia.

O Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!
Twojego gniewu nadszedł wielki czas,
głos już zagrzemiał hiobowy,
niebios wał się posowy,
z owiniętej cierniem Głowy
rzeką i morzem płynie ciepła krew,
w rzekę i morze krwi jej ból się zmienia...
W świątyni bożej zamilkł święty śpiew,
już się zasłona rozdarła na dwoje,
mur się już wali i skała już pęka...
A krew w tych morzach, w tych czerwonych rzekach,
ścięła się w ciemny lód...
Kyrie elejson!

Ogromna, niesłychana, wiekuista męka,
z nie przygasłymi oczyma,
mlecząca, cicha i jak zmierzch pobladła,
na wklęsłych skroniach siadła,
na wpólotwartych powiekach
i na wydętych piersiach tych olbrzymich ciał,
które do krzyży przybiła
nielitościwa Dłoń...
W kleszczach je swoich trzyma,
wpija się w kąty ust,
ramiona w kabłąk gnie
dręcząca wieki niezmierzona siła
i jak śmiertelny szal,
zastygły, skamieniały w godzinie konania,
swoim ciężarem się wgniata
w zwiędłe, z przepasek odsłonięte brzuchy
i biodra spłaszcza, kolana rozsuwa
i pokrzywione, czarne palce nóg,
pokrytych siecią fioletowych żył,
w zamarłych karczach wydłuża...
O grozo świata!
O widma, płynące w dal! -
W ten przestwór ślepy i głuchy,
w wilgotny, mgławczy pył,
w te ciemne wnętrza bezsłonecznych brył -
w potworne gmachy nadszczytowych chmur!

Jeszcze nie zapiał kur,
a na piekielnej przełęczy,
nad dnem Styksowych otchłani,
siedzi pod złomem niebotycznej grani
pramatka Grzechu, jasnowłosa Ewa,
z gadziną zdrady u swych białych stóp.

Kyrie elejson!
Straszny przed nami otworzyłeś grób...

I płyną, płyną te milczące krzyże
razem z ruchomym, wielkim trzęsawiskiem,
Błoto
które swą rdzawą kałużą oblewa
męczeńskie drzewa.
Wszystko, co było dalekim i bliskiem,
co opadało w niedojrzaną głąb
i w niedojrzane wznosiło się wyżej,
teraz tym wielkim, grząskim bagnem płynie
w Pańskiego gniewu ostatniej godzinie...
Kyrie elejson!

Światy pochłania nieprzebyty muł,
światy, od bożych odepchnięte bram

razem z ruchomym, wielkim trzęsawiskiem,
które swą rdzawą kałużą oblewa
męczeńskie drzewa.
Wszystko, co było dalekiem i bliskiem,
co opadało w niedojrzaną głąb
i w niedojrzane wznosiło się wyżej,
teraz tym wielkim, grząskim bagnem płynie
w Pańskiego gniewu ostatniej godzinie...
Kyrie elejson!

A spod korzeni jadowitych ziół,
spod kęp sitowia i trzciny, i traw,
z rowów, przepadlisk, wądoców i jam,
pokrytych opalowym szklivem zgniłych wód,
zaczyna wypływać żmij skłębiony płód:
czarne pijawki, zielone jaszczury
wiją się naprzód wpław
i oplatają kręgami śliskimi
męczeńskich krzyży smutne miliardy,
z bagnistej wyrosłe ziemi,
zapadłe w bagnisty kał...

I oto głowy swoje, dziwne, ludzkie głowy,
świecące trupim tłuszczem żółkłych, łysych czół,

o szczękach otulonych kłębem czarnych bród,
kładą na łonach tych pomarłych ciał...
I skośne, mętne oczy podnoszą do góry
ku ich schylonym skroniom...
I biodra opasawszy w lubieżnym uścisku,
zwilgotniałymi usty
szepczą im słowa rozpusty...

O Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!
W królestwie Śmierci staje nagi szal.
W niedoścignionym błysku
tchnienie żywota przenika
to, co od wieków zagasło...
W Pańskiego gniewu ostatniej godzinie
krew świeża płynie
z odrywających się od krzyży rąk,
z odrywających się od krzyży nóg...
I Głowa, owinięta cierniową koroną,
ta Głowa, która przestwór wypełnia bezbrzeżny,
podnosi ciężkie powieki i patrzy...

Jakaż to orgia dzika!
Jakiż to chaos mąk!
Kyrie elejson!
Idą na się zmartwychwstali,
ogniem wojny świat się pali,
tłumy w krwawej brodzie fali!
Adamie potępiony, zwróć się z strasznych dróg!
Zawiśnij na swym krzyżu, sterczącym w niebiosy,
i nie patrz, gdzie w spokoju Ewa jasnowłosa,
piekielny zajmując próg,
do rozpustnego przytula się gada!
O biada! -

Idą na się zmartwychwstali -
w oku mściwy skrzy się gniew,
rozpaczy kurcz wypręża rozchylone wargi,
kroplisty pot oblewa policzki zapadłe,
kudły włosów zlepia gęsta krew.
Z wyciem hyjen, z rykiem lwów,
z psów szczekaniem, z rżeniem koni,
które cugli nie zaznały,
łkając, jęcząc, grożąc, klnąc,
poszarpane miecąc skargi,
pędzi tuman ludzkich żądz.

Ten upada, ten się broni,
temu dłoń ścisnęła krtani,
ten się w swojego brata paznokciami wrył,
a tamten zęby szczyrzy, poszarpawszy ramię,

a ten olbrzyma ręką pochwycił dwie nogi
i rozdarł na dwie szczypy tułów Heraklowy,
i w ciemną rzucił bezdeń, w Sądu straszną noc...
A z parą szklanych, martwych kul,
rozsadzających oczodoły,
biegnie bez końca, bez końca, bez końca,
gnając przed sobą bratobójczy huf,
niemy i głuchy Strach...

Zakryj błędne źrenice, ścigany Adamie!
Nad tobą tam! u szczytu
złocistowłosa Ewa!
Jej grzechu ciężar zgniół cię, stanąłeś w pół drogi!
Zakryj błędne źrenice i na wieki wieków
rzuć się w przepastny żleb!...

Enoch i Elias z proroczymi księgi
przyszli obwieścić szalonemu światu
Pańskiego gniewu moc.
Lecz nim zdolali rozedrzeć swój płaszcz,
nim głos wytrysnął z przepełnionych łon,
padli w zamęcie spadających gwiazd,
zgaśli jak słońca,
na to wzniecone w przedpoczątkach bytu,
ażeby zgasły... Amen.

Szum się wielki stał dokoła,
kiedy surma archanioła
na Ostatni Sąd zawoła.
Głos rozlega się ponury,
jak grzmot leci złotopióry,
z dolinami równa góry.
Drży strwożona światów dusza,
a on głębie morz wysusza.
kości wieków w grobach rusza.
Gwiazdy z orbit wytrąciła
archanielskiej trąby siła,
już rozwarła się mogiła.
Idą na się zmartwychwstali,
ogniem buntu świat się pali,
tłumy w krwawej broczą fali.
Z wyciem hyjen, z rykiem lwów,
łkając, jęcząc, grożąc, klnąc,
pędzi tuman ludzkich żądz...
A On,
potężne Łono przepotężnych łon,
Jasność jasności,
Zmrok zmroków,
Łaska łask i gniewów Gniew,
stanął nad skonem Żywota

i rękę położywszy na głowie Boleści,
na niezmierzonej, cierniem opasanej Głowie,
wypełniającej wszechświatów przestwory,
rozpoczął Sąd.
Biją pioruny,
a nad pioruny idzie Jego zew!
Ogrom bytu błyskawic wszystkich nie pomieści,
a Jego światłość złota
strzela nad pełnię, nad ogniste łuny
błyskawicowych potoków...

Czym jestem wobec Ciebie, ja, com z rajskich włości
zabrał z sobą, wygnaniec, tę łamiącą winę
i teraz ginę,
od Wschodu do Zachodu tułacz nieszczęśliwy,
pod nieuchronnych wyroków
w początkach dnia i nocy wzniesionym obuchem?!
Stopę swoją złożyłeś na pokoleń grzbiecie
i sądzisz! Kyrie elejson!
Płaczów i jęków słuchasz nie słyszającym uchem
i sądzisz! Kyrie elejson!
Na mękę wieków patrzysz nie widzącym okiem
i sądzisz! Kyrie elejson!
Niewiasta z rozpaczliwym krzykiem rodzi dziecię,
Ty duszę jego grzechu oblewasz hyzopem
i sądzisz! Kyrie elejson!
Wicher idzie po rozdrożach westchnieniem głębokiem,
ku Twojej wyży
modlitwy niesie krwawe, przybite do krzyży,
Ty sądzisz! Kyrie elejson!
A kto mnie stworzył na to, ażeby w tej chwili,
odziany potępienia podartą żałobą,
kawałem kiru, zdjętym z mar Twojego świata,
wił się i czołgał przed Tobą,
i martwym, osłupiałym z przerażenia okiem
straszego Sądu wyławiał płomienne,
świat druzgocące rozkazy?
A kto mi kazał patrzeć na te czarne głązy,
rozpadające się na gruz pod mocą
Twojego gniewu, przeraźliwy Boże -
na głązy te, gdzie straszny owoc Twego drzewa,
złocistowłosa Ewa,
do piersi pierś padalca tuli obnażoną?...

O Głowo, przepasana cierniową koroną!...
Któż się nad dolą zlituje sierocą,
nad moją dolą,
której, Boże, Twe ręce, z kajdan nie wyzwolą?
Kyrie elejson!
Patrzaj!... Kyrie elejson!

Ona swą białą dłoń
kładzie na jego skroń -
na trupa, zapadniętą, żółkła skroń zleniała...
Kyrie elejson!
I podczas gdy swe Sądy sprawiasz Ty, o morze
niewyczerpanych gniewów,
ona swym okiem patrzy w jego oczy -
omdlewającym okiem!

Kyrie elejson!

Jej nagie uda drżą,
palcami rozczesuje złoto swych warkoczy
i falą złocistych włosów
osłania jego nagość i pieści, i pieści
ustami czerwonymi bladość jego ust.

Kyrie elejson!

Wężowe jego kręgi opasują biodra
rozlubieżnionej Boleści,
a ona, wyprężwszy swe rozpustne ciało,
nienasyconym oddycha pragnieniem.

Kyrie elejson!

Na łonie jej spoczęła czarna, lśniąca broda
rozpalonego Szatana,
co świat umierający okrył swoim cieniem,
Kyrie elejson! [added in Rzepiela's work]

a ona,

w zbrodniczych pieszczot rozdawaniu szczodra,
zamknęła w drżące go biodra,
w nabiegłe żądzą ramiona...

Kyrie elejson!

Mą duszę pali wieczna, nie zamknięta rana!
Któż mi lekarstwo poda?

Ojczy rozpuszty! Kyrie elejson.

Nic, co się stało pod sklepem niebiosów,
bez Twojej się woli nie stało!

Kyrie elejson!

O źródło zdrady! Kyrie elejson!

Przyczyna grzechu

i zemsty, i rozpacz szaleńczego śmiechu!

Kyrie elejson!

Sądź, Sprawiedliwy!

Krusz światów posady,
rozżegnij wielki pożar w tlejącej iskiecie,
na popiół spal Adama oszukane serce
i płacz!

Z nim razem płacz, kamienny, lodowaty Boże!

Niech Twa surma przeraźliwa
echem płaczu się odzywa

nad pokosem Twego żniwa...

Dwujęzycznego smoka,
Szatana o trzech grzbietach zwalczył w wielkim boju
archanioł pański, Michał, i zginął w otchłani. Amen.

I stał się The End of the World... O chwilo spokoju!
Zgasł płomienny głos proroka
i wieczności noc głęboka
nieprzejrzana jest dla oka.

A ja, wygnaniec z Raju, tułacz nieszczęśliwy,
zesłany, aby konać, na te ziemskie niwy,
i patrzeć, jak pod złomem niebotycznej grani,
usiadła matka Śmierci, Ewa jasnowłosa,
pieszcząca węża Grzechu, posyłam w niebiosy,
opadło nad wieczności tajemniczym mrokiem,
to moje wiekuiste, nieprzebrzmiałe: Amen!
Amen!

W umarłych bytów milczeniu głębokiem,
słysząc jedynie Amen, moje straszne Amen.

O Boże miłosierny, zmiłuj się nad nami!
Kyrie elejson!

Przede mną przepaść, zrodzona przez winę,
przez grzech Twój, Boże!... Ginę! ginę! ginę!
Amen.

A cóż powstanie ponad nicościami,
gdzie ongi były światy
i Ja, w chęć życia bogaty,
a dziś w umarłych postawiony rzędzie?

Niech nic nie będzie!
Amen!

Bo cóż być może, jeśli ja zaginął?...

Na wszystko mrok nicości nieprzebyty spłynął

Amen.

Note:

Text based on: Jan Kasprowicz, *Selected Poems*, National Library, 2nd ed.,
Ossolineum, Wrocław 1973, pp. 152–167

Appendix 2. Interview with composer Stanisław Rzepiela, conducted on 10 September 2025

Piotr Kalina: How did the structure of the piece *Dies Irae* take shape? What was the starting point?

Stanisław Rzepiela: I began by analysing the text—its composition and structure. I ‘read into’ it time and again, trying to delve as deeply as possible into its natural dramatic structure. I wanted to hear its rhythm and melody. Next, I tried to answer the question: how can I translate the poem’s narrative into music in a way other than linearly? I knew that setting the text to music in its existing form— from beginning to end—was out of the question an option. The narrative of such a piece would then become tedious for the listener, regardless of the choice of compositional means and techniques. It is not without reason that the poem is a literary form intended for reading—when engaging with the work in this way, one can return to its individual threads and ‘visually’ absorb the structure of the piece. A work in this form transcends temporal boundaries. However, when we sit down to listen to it, we transfer the work into the realm of events unfolding linearly in time. The listener’s attention is thus put to the test—it must be suitably stimulated so that the listener is willing to follow the narrative. Therefore, in my view, adding a musical layer to the text must reinforce the original dramatic structure, rather than blindly following it and thereby weakening it. That is why I decided to split part of the poem into two parallel timelines. In this way, two main storylines began to emerge in the text: ‘The Day of Wrath’ and ‘Adam and Eve’, which became the first two instalments of the cycle. Here, however, another problem arose: how to give the listener a clear indication that the action in these parts is taking place in parallel, given that we perceive the work linearly in time? The structure of Kasprowicz’s work came to my aid; in it, the author employed the technique of leitmotifs, thereby binding the text into a coherent whole, despite its length and multi-threaded nature. Although the technique of leitmotifs in music was widely used in past eras and is now considered outdated, I decided to employ it out of a desire to pay due respect to the text I intended to set to music. Since Kasprowicz employed precisely this means of expression, I too ought to do so. Therefore, the next step in creating the musical material for *Dies Irae* was to compose distinctive, easily recognisable leitmotifs, associated with specific passages of text or the images and

characters contained within the poem. I decided that by replacing individual sections of the text with the motifs assigned to them, I would be able to create the illusion of continuity in the narrative threads in such a way that the listener would be able to ‘hear’ the structure of the poem despite my intervention in it. Thus, a plan emerged to divide the poem into four segments: the two already mentioned, running in parallel, and two further segments, which together form a fast-paced, continuous narrative. Naturally, this involved removing certain passages of text which, in my subjective view, would have hindered the achievement of the goal set from the outset: to have the music I intended to compose bear the weight of the drama in Kasproicz’s poem.

Did you have the form of the piece *Dies Irae* fully thought out from the start, or did it take shape as you were composing it?

As I have already mentioned, I devised the form of the piece during the so-called pre-composition stage. I am, of course, referring to the macroform, that is, the general framework of the piece. The narrative at the microformal level emerged as I went along, as a result of following the individual threads contained in the text and navigating the leitmotifs, so as to reflect the structure of Kasproicz’s poem. One could therefore speak here of filling a previously created form with musical substance. Apart from the strategies mentioned, there were, of course, those that occur quite standardly in the creative process, such as referencing specific fragments from earlier sections, reworking them or ‘weaving them’ into the instrumental layer.

It may also be worth mentioning here the process of encoding various non-musical elements within the musical layer using Morse code or the simple conversion of words into letter names and solfège notes, as well as the quotation and reworking of musical motifs existing in culture (the choral melody of the *Dies Irae* sequence, or references to the Christmas carol *Bóg się rodzi*).

Did the fact that you were composing for a single solo voice and an instrumental ensemble matter to you? Did this influence the creative process itself?

The piece was commissioned by the soloist, so I constructed the entire composition with him in mind. The choice of specific scales and tonal fields was always dictated by the range of the performer's voice, whilst individual melodic passages were conceived

with vocal 'comfort'—in the broadest sense—in mind. In those places, however, where the melodic phrases contradicted this 'comfort', expressive considerations or semantic considerations took precedence. It should also be mentioned here that the piece was originally intended to be 'transposable' into a version accompanied by piano alone. Hence the considerable restriction of expressive means in the instrumental layer—I had to bear in mind the possibility of transferring them, with as little loss as possible, to the realm of piano texture. However, at a later stage I decided to leave the material exclusively in a version for a full instrumental ensemble, and it was with this intention that I composed the rest of the work. And although the resulting work as a whole is characterised by fairly conventional means of artistic expression, it nevertheless remains, in my view, consistent with Kasprowicz's work, whilst emphasising its concept and the narrative it contains.

The choice of specific instruments also had a significant influence on the shape of the composition. On the one hand, I wanted a chamber ensemble; on the other, I sought to convey the atmosphere of majestic (and at times even grandiose) dread depicted by Kasprowicz in the images of his text. Hence, amongst other things, the inclusion of percussion instruments. The wind instruments, meanwhile, have a more symbolic dimension in the piece—they are meant to evoke with specific elements of the poem. The trumpet—'a piercing, archangelic blast', 'spreading a strange sound'. *Tuba mirum spargens sonum [...]* as found in the medieval sequence. The oboe, on the other hand, bearing a distant echo of the Arabic pipes of snake charmers, is meant to be associated precisely with those reptiles, and specifically with the one that seduced the biblical Eve. It is therefore also her leitmotif, most often entrusted with the theme of the 'mother of sin'.

Which values in a literary text do you consider most important from the perspective of a composer of a musical work?

Kasprowicz's poem is, on the one hand, highly anachronistic, whilst on the other, it is in a sense still relevant today. It deals with the apocalypse— a theme of great resonance from the perspective of the times in which we live, characterised by the downfall of humanity and its morality, the erosion of ideals and, finally, the degradation of the world around us—both literal and symbolic. Yet, despite all this, the text is deeply moving because of its human dimension. For the speaker is not only a witness to and participant in the end of the world, but his own personal world is also crumbling before his very eyes. The Creator takes away his literal world, whilst Satan, in the form of a serpent, deprives him of his emotional and intimate world—Eve. As one realises the autobiographical threads from Kasprowicz's life contained in the poem, it is hard not to notice the sheer magnitude of emotion and experiences poured by the author of *Hymns* into poetic form. All these elements are positively pulsating with the expression they contain, providing fertile ground for a composer wishing to translate them into sound. It is simply inconceivable that such a text would not leave its mark on the personality of the person reading it, particularly one whose domain is the creative processing and expression of thoughts and emotions.

Why did you include so many tempo, dynamic and expressive markings in *Dies Irae*? Did you want the performers, and especially the tenor, to adhere strictly to these 'guidelines'?

One of the most significant elements of my creative language and compositional technique is the use of expressive and agogic terms, which I refer to for my own purposes as 'didascalia'. The theatrical association is not without significance here—my aim is to include specific guidelines for the performer in the score, containing a defined set of emotions that I would expect during the performance of particular sections of the work. In the case of a larger composition, such as *Dies Irae*, these 'didascalia' constitute, in fact, a kind of psychological sketch of the character the performer embodies. It is important to me that the emotions outlined in the expressions and agogics to be an integral part of shaping the fabric of the piece during its performance, and to require performers to follow the emotional layer precisely; without which—in my view—it is difficult to speak of musical performance, regardless of the music's origin, genre or period. Hence the vast number of specific instructions, which should be treated by all performers on a par with

the correct interpretation of pitch, rhythm or articulation. I regard expression as an element of a musical work with equal standing, and I expect performers to treat it as such in my compositions. When composing music, I also compose its expressive layer in this way.

Do you consider Kasprowicz's poetry to be anachronistic, or is it relevant in today's reality—in terms of its poetic form and the content it conveys?

I mentioned in my answer to the previous question that, despite its anachronistic nature, Kasprowicz's poetry possesses a certain relevance. To elaborate, I believe that its somewhat old-fashioned, extroverted expressiveness can serve as an impetus for experiencing deeper emotions. In an age of ever-increasing degradation of emotionality and empathy in society and the loss of the ability—once natural to humankind—to form relationships, a poem that is an apotheosis of extreme emotions (albeit largely negative ones: fear, anger, disgust, iconoclastic courage, jealousy, etc.), may well be capable of arousing vivid emotions in the reader. It may prompt them to reflect on themselves, on humanity, and on the surrounding world. Finally—to reflect on the question of faith, or more generally on the religiosity of the individual (for, after all, the lyrical narrator in Kasprowicz's poem is a deeply isolated being).

These texts are challenging to interpret, steeped in symbolism that is often no longer comprehensible to the younger generation. Nevertheless, the *Hymns* leave their mark. They do not allow one to remain indifferent to them. They stir up emotions without explaining how to deal with them. And although their subject matter is demanding, I feel they are texts for our times. Powerful, expressive texts—the sort that we perhaps need in an age of blandness, meaninglessness and a lack of expression. Though this is, of course, the subjective feeling of someone who has taken it upon themselves to translate them into music.

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