

PIOTR GRELLA-MOZEJKO - SELECTED REVIEWS

I like to say that when I am composing, I fully understand the sentiment of God because, when I am composing, I am a god, I create my own world, I am in full control and I have to be extremely careful not to screw it up. I am very future-oriented...

(interview by Nora Abercrombie)
ARTSBRIDGE

...Piotr Grella-Mozejko's Sonata, *The Horizon of Forgetfulness* (1996) [is] a brawny, high-contrast work full of rich counterpoint and compelling textural changes.

Allan Kozinn
THE NEW YORK TIMES

[Piotr Grella-Mozejko's] creative, uncompromising honesty was confirmed by the premieres of *Contra tempus* for large orchestra, a string quartet [*Strumienie snu*] and a work for chamber ensemble [...*noc bezkresna, noc bezsenna*...].

Hans-Theodor Wohlfahrt
NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT für MUSIK

Grella-Mozejko's music shows qualities similar to those one finds in the works by Eric Satie, Charles Ives, John Cage or Hans-Joachim Hespos, whose explosive and immanently dramatic music could almost form a model for Grella-Mozejko's work. The title of Grella-Mozejko's *minimum-optimum-maximum* for contrabass stands for minimum information, optimum interpretation and maximum expression. This work, a set of simultaneous instrumental, vocal and theatrical actions, ending with the soloist "buried" under the instrument, spoke out most forcefully against the sterile habits the academic avant-garde. With its provocative gestures, the piece was the best guarantor of artistic unrest and the related search for artistic essence. Grella-Mozejko [is an] outsider...

Ludolf Baucke
HANNOVERSCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

The biggest sounding piece, actually, was a quintet of English horn, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn and 'cello. This was Piotr Grella-Mozejko's wonderful-sounding *Kyrie*. It is notable for its strikingly consonant two-part writing - English horn and bassoon, double-stop 'cello, horn and bass clarinet. The piece changes seamlessly. Timbres are rich, pulsing. There is mystery in *Kyrie* and not a great complexity. *Kyrie* sounded like the hit of the evening with the audience, too.

Thomas Putnam
THE BUFFALO NEWS

[Piotr Grella-Mozejko's] *First Piano Sonata (horyzont zapomnienia)* was of immense difficulty and one wonders if it needs to be so tough. But... it brims with silver-streaked beauty and visceral power.

John Charles
THE EDMONTON SUN

...Piotr Grella-Mozejko's *Kyrie* for English horn, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn and 'cello showed a deep and uncompromising language.

Hans-Theodor Wohlfahrt
THE PARIS NEW MUSIC REVIEW

Maybe the most "intense" or modern piece is by Piotr Grella-Mozejko. Entitled *dreamtide*, it's for clarinet, violin and marimba. [It is] very slow, lots of atmosphere, and with very interesting colour... When you look at the score you can't tell what it's going to sound like. But when you start rehearsing you hear how effective it is. It really has a timeless effect. And [Grella-Mozejko's] scores are so beautifully clear in terms of his manuscript hand.

John Charles
THE EDMONTON SUN

Grella-Mozejko's *Numen* in its organ/bass clarinet version is stunning.

John S. Gray
THE WHOLENOTE MAGAZINE

...*river to the ocean*... is a haunting and colorful journey with an organic formal process (even the jarringly bright major chords sound natural and justified, although surprising)

Jay Batzner
SEQUENZA21

[Piotr Grella-Możejko's *The Dreams of Odysseus*] is... hypnotic, beautiful and vaguely sinister...

Pamela Anthony
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

...fascinating music, ...unusual colours [*dreamtide*].

Marvin Rosen
CLASSICAL DISCOVERIES, WPRB 103.3 (Princeton, NJ)

Piotr Grella-Możejko describes his "String Quartet No.2 (1999-2000): The Secret Garden," as his effort to "encode in sound [his] emotional response to the excessively poignant and visually stunning movie that Agnieszka Holland made of the Frances Hodgson Burnett classic children's novel..." "The Secret Garden"... begins with a long, slow, barely audible sonic extrusion without any particular shape that thickens with deep cello bowings. The feeling is exploratory. The excitement builds, a sense of presence and shaped moments emerge, wheezy and drony like evanescent dragonfly wings. One senses in the sometimes tender, sometimes taut passages, rushes of feeling as if a definite but unknown language were being spoken. This work speaks with a notable confidence, without being transparent.

Stanley Fefferman
SHOWTIME MAGAZINE

George Crumb's "Black Angels" felt a bit gimmicky to me -- the performers playing crystal glasses and gongs with their bows -- but it did manage to convey its theme of war and chaos. Piotr Grella-Możejko's "TrancePaining," however, captured the same theme with a relentless chugging bang; the perfect counterpoint to [R. Murray Schafer's] "Waves."

The Muffyglob

Pianist Andrzej Dutkiewicz's sensational performance of *Melodrama V* by Piotr Grella-Możejko was one of the highlights of the [Laboratorium] festival...

Walentyna Węgrzyn
RUCH MUZYCZNY

Composed in 1995 especially for the Penderecki [String Quartet], Grella-Możejko's *String Quartet No. 1*, subtitled *Strumienie snu* (Polish for Streams of a Dream), emerged as a strikingly individual sounding piece by virtue of its primarily soft dynamics and hyper-active textures of whispery high harmonics and double stops. A veritable beehive of activity, the music demanded playing of intense concentration and careful calculation and this is exactly what it received from the Waterloo-based foursome [Penderecki String Quartet].

William Littler
THE TORONTO STAR

At first glance, Grella-Możejko's *Strumienie snu* seems diametrically opposed to the frenzy of activity found in the Penderecki [*2nd String Quartet*]. One can simply look at the opening metronome marking, with the amazingly slow pace of a single quarter note equalling four beats per minute! This automatically creates a contradiction between what one sees in the score and what one hears; while the music seems extremely slow and drawn out, the performers are looking at pages upon pages full of activity which would be impossible at a quicker tempo. As for the music itself, the entire composition can be seen as a wonderful display of subtlety... The absolute quietness of the piece forces the listener to observe every pitch or noise created to serve [the] desire for forward momentum. I see this composition as a model for all composers working in the contemporary field.

Scott Godin
RUCH MUZYCZNY

{*Strumienie snu* (Streams of a Dream)}. By far the least conventional music on the CD...

Peter Burwasser
FANFARE

Piotr Grella-Możejko's 1995 *Strumienie snu* for string quartet is a worthy outgrowth of the experimental music of Polish composers of the last generation. [...] This rhythmically complex work requires much delicate playing and attention to detail (...). This is a work which grows with each hearing – providing successive musical revelations of something not recognized or heard before.

Jerry Ozipko
MUSICWORKS

The following night, the Penderecki String Quartet opened their program dangerously with *Strumienie snu* by Piotr Grella-Możejko and *Croissant* by Gilles Tremblay. These pieces explored timbre ornamentation in slow intense detail, with careful restraint. Despite the risks to sustained attention, the audience was not lost at all – a tribute to the musical craft both of the composers and of the quartet.

Darren Copeland
MUSICWORKS

The last work [on *Stringtime* CD] is *Strumienie snu* for string quartet (1995) by Grella-Możejko. Now this is a different story altogether, In fact, this is probably the only piece of the CD, which could be labelled "avant-garde" or "new". I read some strange remarks in the booklet about metronome marking and that what appears in the score sounds very different from the way it looks. (...) There are many interesting events taking place here, which you can observe with a tense attention. The piece sort of catches your ears and your mind in a concentrated act of listening, and though Grella-Możejko's piece is the most unmelodic, the most "unbeautiful" of the works on the CD, it may well be the most interesting, the most intriguing!

Ingvar Nordlin
SONOLOCO

Piotr Grella-Możejko's composition [*TrancePaining (Black Wings Has My Angel)* - String Quartet No.3] is a tour de force of perpetual motion.... To get it, one has to imagine Philip Glass riding on the *Wabash Cannonball* rewriting Khatchaturian's *Sabre Dance* for string quartet and locomotive.

Stanley Fefferman
SHOWTIME MAGAZINE

Nowhere was the technical excellence of the Penderecki Quartet more evident than with the final offering, also a world premiere performance, "TrancePaining (Black Wings Has My Angel) String Quartet No. 3", by Piotr Grella-Możejko, completed just last month. Following the minimalist musical score with its seemingly never-ending repeats surely was a feat in concentration alone. The subtitle was taken from American author Elliott Chaze's dark-toned novel. Grella-Możejko voices his protest against the global events of today. He stands vehemently against the tyrants "using their often unlimited powers to bleed nations in the name of freedom."

Anna Lisa Eyles
THE LIVE MUSIC REPORT

...*mare tenebrarum* (*sea of darkness*, Piano sonata #2...) stretches the traditional notion of a **piano sonata**. It is a highly temperamental emotional outpouring in an improvisatory manner divided into two movements, *Sempre allegro* and the other *Presto possibile*... the total effect was strongly cathartic... In the end we are – contrasted with the brightest stars in the darkest night, alone afloat in a vast sea, here we wonder and stare up into the night sky.

Elgar Schmidt
THE ALBERTA NEW MUSIC & ARTS REVIEW

In his pieces, Grella-Możejko tries to capture the idiomatic essence of music in its authentic new manifestation - as a process of dense, concentrated as it were, variety. Only those who are able to create new music can achieve that. Grella-Możejko *Melodrama V* is unbelievably convincing in terms of the development of music. The piece is extremely difficult but so mature that it should be published immediately...

Bogusław Schaeffer
ŻYCIE LITERACKIE

[...] the 24-minute concerto [*epitaphios threnos*] turned out to be a piece worth hearing, with a distinctive musical character and an emotional communicativeness. [B]y drawing his material from late-7th and early-8th century Byzantine chants by St. Andreas of Crete, he [Piotr Grella-Możejko] also chose a means of thematically unifying its nine short movements. The solo instruments... were treated as extensions of the orchestra rather than as subjects for virtuoso showcasing, with a sad lyricism dominating most of the movements. Although the music could be dissonant, its vocal inspiration clearly informed most of the writing, with a sustained ecclesiastical-sounding chord bringing the concerto to a close. The titles of many pieces wind up seeming arbitrary. The title *Lamentations* fit this piece perfectly.

William Littler
THE TORONTO STAR

Piotr Grella-Możejko brings us to... completely different world, the conclusion of which was the highlight of the concert... This work [*Coloratura for Charles/disco(n)notation* for baritone saxophone and electronics] is largely a work of impression... The music (is) at one moment harsh, then reflective, and often sardonic (a modern hymn)... At one point the baritone sax calls out, like a conch shell concert of Neptune, and we enter into a very deep watery mysterious world. Rarely in a concert have I seen an audience so completely drawn into a single 'duration' of concentrated mood...

Elgar Schmidt
THE ALBERTA NEW MUSIC & ARTS REVIEW

The output of Grella-Możejko springs from the spirit of progressive tendencies of the last decades. Examples include *zapada zmrok* for chamber ensemble, devoted to the memory of Giacinto Scelsi, and *Numen* for bass clarinet and organ, endowed with an interestingly developed melody.

Krzysztof Kwiatkowski
RUCH MUZYCZNY

coloratura for Charles/disco(n)notation for baritone saxophone and electronics by [...] Piotr Grella-Możejko, is an amazing work. This reviewer encountered so many colourful saxophone timbres which he had never heard before, even in his imagination! The piece is a virtuosic vehicle for the solo instrument and employs leading-edge extended playing techniques including key clicks, multiphonics, double-stopping, extremes of articulation and rotary or circular breathing.

Jerry Ozipko
THE ALBERTA NEW MUSIC & ARTS REVIEW

Listening to and watching Piotr Grella-Możejko's *OBOEnergy...* was by no means a nonsensical experience... (the work) turned out to be a refreshing, witty tale about yet undiscovered possibilities of a very energetic instrument.

Olga Pacewicz
KURIER PORANNY

Piotr Grella-Możejko's *OBOEnergy (MariuszAZIONI)* for oboe (1985-86) - played beautifully, with elan and prowess by Mariusz Pędziątek - could easily satisfy all those who are into pastiche, sketch and instrumental theatre - in other words, the aesthetics which the composer has successfully explored for a long time.

Anna Ignatowicz
RUCH MUZYCZNY

Often contemplative and occasionally strikingly graphic, *The Dreams of Odysseus* [by the Brian Webb Dance Company] takes the audience on an odyssey on its own. Carol Johnson's striking paintings... help set the mood, as does Piotr Grella-Możejko's haunting soundtrack.

Rosa Jackson
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

Piotr Grella-Możejko participates with *coloratura for Charles/disco(n)notation* for baritone saxophone and electronics. He is probably the most known of the composers on this CD. His piece enters the scene with a jolly, vigorous baritone saxophone in a tonal succession that seems clear enough, but displaying a magnitude of different characteristics, with light electronic manipulations and shadings. The piece does not have a very distinct formal scheme. It feels more that this is a musical event that is always going on, which Piotr Grella-Możejko has tapped in to at a random stretch. Andriy Talpash handles the load with expertise.

Ingvar Nordlin
SONOLOCO

This one [*Acclamations – Canadian Organ Music*] makes my head swim in the most delightful of ways. Each of the composers is either Canadian born or ended up there from elsewhere... The one thing all these composers have in common is that there really is no commonality and, paradoxically, all the commonality in the world. They are all players in our now well-documented musical continuum, and they have all made fine, though quite contrasted contributions to its continuance... The *Lachrymae — in memory of September 11, 2001* of Grella-Możejko alternates pure hymnody with 12-tone technique in what I find to be the most intensely moving offering on this CD.

William Zagorski
FANFARE MAGAZINE

Dan volgt Piotr Grella-Możejko's 'Moon down' voor fluit en piano [...] Volgens *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* schrijft hij "compromisloos eerlijke muziek." Anderen hebben het dan weer over zijn onorthodoxe esthetiek vol contrasten, rijk aan contrapunt en dwingende veranderingen in de textuur. [...] Zijn werk was magistraal: magnifieke, moderne, maar zeer toegankelijke muziek. Hij is bovendien van de zeldzame componisten, die zich, naast het eigen werk, héél sterk inzetten voor het werk van hun levende collega's.

GROEN! GENT (Gent, Belgium)

Grella-Możejko's *Missa instrumentalis*, originally written for the youth orchestras of both Edmonton and Saskatoon, is a series of impressions based on the traditional sections of the mass. With some deliberately unsettled time signatures (in the *Gloria* and the *Agnus Dei*), and a wide range of feelings - quiet grandeur (*Kyrie*), confident assertion (*Sanctus*), measured reverence (*Credo*), this work was full of details.

D. T. Baker
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

In *Three Consecutive Dreams*, all set to Grella-Możejko's music, Webb choreographed three works that differ stylistically, but each captured the odd and inexplicable reality of dream... The music of Piotr Grella-Możejko is dense and intriguing, and powerfully evocative.

Pamela Anthony
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

He [Piotr Grella-Możejko] combines the contrasting elements of extreme intellectualism with improvisatory tendencies and doing so summarises the 20th-century idioms he grew up with... *the first february the last january* (1983)... consists of two independent parts, a melodic score and a harmonic score, which can be played by any combination of one to four melodic instruments, and one to two harmonic instruments. Each player selects an independent tempo, and once they have finished the score (they also must flip the actual score over and read it upside-down once they have read through it the normal way) they are to remain silent until all other players have completed their parts. The unconventional demands of the composition require an in-depth understanding of the individual parts as they unfold around you... The subtleties inherent in the score (all dynamics are extremely soft throughout) were carried out [by the Clarion Ensemble] in utmost detail. The listener could easily sit back and either focus on a specific instrument or listen to the resultant collage of sounds.

Scott Godin
MUSICWORKS

Grella-Możejko's work [*Missa instrumentalis*], a completely non-vocal interpretation of the church mass, is an abridged version of the mass outline, but nevertheless, it was truly able to evoke the hope sought for in its texts. Unlike the majority of his compositions... this work "is an unabashedly tonal/modal composition, based on 'real' melodies... The music here has been clearly inspired by the traditions of Western European music, being both melodic and contrapuntal in the traditional sense. The melodies were derived [from old Polish Church hymns], and the orchestrations were, for the most part, transparent. Shifting between unison chant, monody and sections which were more contrapuntal, as well as being intermingled with interesting rhythmic plays, the music proved to be extremely listenable and uplifting...

Jerry Ozipko
MUZYKA 21

Euphonia [...] is a boldly textured work reminiscent of both Beethoven and Bartók. The Penderecki Quartet captured Możejko's keen concept of sonic possibility for strings, squandering creaminess of sound on the chordal parts, and a furious exactitude on the turbo motives.

Colleen Johnston
KW RECORD

[Piotr Grella-Możejko's] *Euphonia* opened with a great minor-sounding theme that kept recurring in unexpected but fitting places. Tension was maintained by alternating sections of silence with long tones in second violins and violas. There was also effective use of... fast repeated notes... - that I'm sure the orchestra found fun to play. Overall, the work had a very dark sort of mood, but it was a safe darkness, womb-like. Minor, but not atonal or frightening.

Lia Pas
MUSICWORKS

...*mare tenebrarum* (*sea of darkness*, Piano sonata #2...) stretches the traditional notion of a **piano sonata**. It is a highly temperamental emotional outpouring in an improvisatory manner divided into two movements, *Sempre allegro* and the other *Presto possibile*... the total effect was strongly cathartic – a release of inner rage and the question of resolution. In the first movement we are tossed about in a summer storm, the second movement included a few hurricanes. In the end we are – contrasted with the brightest stars in the darkest night, alone afloat in a vast sea, here we wonder and stare up into the night sky.

Elgar Schmidt
THE ALBERTA NEW MUSIC & ARTS REVIEW

The second work on the program was... a finely crafted composition by Piotr Grella-Możejko. His... *Euphonia* was composed in 1998 and dedicated to the Penderecki String Quartet and the distinguished Polish philosopher Bohdan Pociąg. The program notes indicated that the composition was based on a specially constructed twelve-tone row that allowed Grella-Możejko to compose the quartet using tonal chords, a theme that recurs throughout the piece and various other interesting compositional devices that do not necessarily resonate with other compositions that fall into the realm of classic serialism. The Penderecki String Quartet produced an effective and convincing performance that brought out every nuance of the composition. The piece calls for extreme precision of playing and the Penderecki String Quartet were able to satisfy the requirements without making the performance sound overly technical.

Peter Amsel
FOR THE LOVE OF MUSIC

Piotr Grella-Możejko's *maze, haze, mist, daze* for flute choir was a serial piece, but did not sound like it, being quite melodic, with a very distinctive theme. The opening had an Arabic and medieval feel, with the rest of the piece conveying a sense of open, airy desert-night space. I especially liked the section of fast moving notes through the tone row, with a high melody played in the piccolo, and the fast section repeated very effectively flutter-tongue. The Alberta College Flute Choir performed the piece impeccably, with two of each of the following: flute, piccolo, alto flute, and bass flute.

Lia Pas
MUSICWORKS

coloratura for Charles/disco(n)notation for solo baritone saxophone (with optional signal processing) by Edmonton's new music composers offered a more challenging and experimental range of work in one of the best, and certainly most memorable concerts of the [Edmonton New Music] festival... *Composers' Forum II* reflected the depth, artistry and vitality of the city's new music scene... The concert... ended with the brilliant and fascinating *Horngardens (Music for Norval Morrisseau)* by Piotr Grella-Możejko...

Pamela Anthony
CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

...[Carson P.] Cooman then brilliantly played the American premiere of a work of Canadian composer Piotr Grella-Możejko... entitled *Sacrae symphoniae* and... was highly, highly tonal and modal. The work... makes use of baroque religious tunes and folk tunes. It was a real shock to hear it coming from the pen of a 20th century composer. The only other work of Grella-Możejko's that I had heard was his *Due pezzi* for organ, which Cooman had played on an early concert this year. The fact that Dr. Grella-Możejko has such diverse styles up his sleeve is impressive. In both of the pieces of his that I have heard, he demonstrated very talented writing and he is obviously a master of multiple styles.

B. Finkel
THE MUSIC ADVISOR (Western New York)

Black Angels, an experimental film combining dance, a haunting score and some superb cinematography, is the kind of work that demands - and deserves - repeated viewing... The poetry by Beth Goobie provides a backdrop and the evocative music by Piotr Grella-Możejko heightens the effect.

Marc Horton
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

Grella-Możejko is a fanatical connoisseur of the avant-garde. What does being an avant-garde composer mean today? Above all, it means being against stereotypes, mediocrity and conservative academia. All this - stereotypes, mediocrity, academia - sneaked into our music, so we now need real fanatics to fight for the new. Grella-Możejko takes seriously such aspects of new music as decomposition, disintegration and dissociation. These are his points of departure. He is extremely talented... He is, to large extent, self-taught and only believes in himself and those who create unmistakably new music. And this is why I like him.

Bogusław Schaeffer
ŻYCIE LITERACKIE

Piotr Grella-Możejko's originally notated scores - showing a great abundance of various timbral and visual crossover ideas - deserve special attention... They are characterised by a thorough care given to detail as well as structure and texture. The form of his pieces usually stems from structural and textural preconceptions. The listener's attention is drawn to this music by clarity and intensity of its rich construction.

Katarzyna Piątek
RUCH MUZYCZNY

This production [*Northern Arch/Arc du Nord*] by the Edmonton Composers' Concert Society offers a fine sample of Alberta music-making, reportedly the first recording devoted exclusively to music by composers from that province... The recording gorgeous, silent backdrop works to flatter the smooth, creamy tones of Dennis Prime's B-flat and A clarinets, while the same performer turns to the rarely heard basset-horn... for Piotr Grella-Możejko's adventuresome *aa69/coloratura for Dennis Prime*, making use of distortion and multiphonics arrived at through overblowing... the package is most attractive and the recording is top notch.

Rick MacMillan
CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

...the concert [of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra] demonstrated the independence and vitality of an inspired and at the same time expansive Canadian avant-garde [including] *Contra tempus* by Piotr Grella-Możejko, a serial piece, which begun with a succession of powerful tutti chords and then - through a gradual evolution of softening instrumental landscape - finally breathed out in a festive tonal maestoso distantly reminiscent of Bach.

Hans-Theodor Wohlfahrt
NEUE MUSIKZEITUNG

I always repeat: the best pieces are those that do not exist yet... Art is a melting pot of contradictions - who knows what's "cooking" inside?

(interview by Katarzyna Pawliszewska)
SŁOWO POWSZECHNE