

SUMMARY

An unknown pattern. Stanisław Vincenz and music constitutes an attempt at reconstructing the „philosophy of music” of one of the most original Polish 20th century prose writers – Stanisław Vincenz. Born in 1888 at the foot of the Eastern Carpathians, known as the eulogist of the Hutsulshchyna, he undertook the Jewish themes, wrote about the mountains and published dozens of essays devoted to the culture of ancient Greece, Dante and European literature; he is also the author of memoirs and abundant correspondence. Vincenz was a dedicated music lover – not only a sensitive listener but also an original thinker; a lot of his works address the subject of music. To recreate the world of his musical impressions and reflections, the author of this book referred to Vincenz’s all published texts and the abundant literature on the subject, nearly everywhere coming across interesting mentions and leads, which ultimately constitute a coherent entity.

The introduction presents Vincenz’s biography seen from the perspective of his musical interests, sensitivity to sound and musical imagination. It outlines his work and discusses his consistent and extensive literary output, in particular a four-volume epic *On the High Uplands* (*Na wysokiej połoninie*, *Połonina* in short). It also addresses the fundamental questions concerning the issues of musicality of literature, and especially the specific nature of the research of the subject carried out in Poland. The history of how the issue has been perceived from the perspective of literary studies is outlined in the context of an extensive discussion of the relations between various arts. It takes into account Tadeusz Szulc’s pre-war treatise as well as subsequent methodological proposals confronted with Krzysztof Lipka’s (a music historian and musicologist) view presented in his essays. The most useful is Ewa Wiegandt’s proposal, complemented and refined by Andrzej Hejmej, as it describes all the ways in which music functions in literature in terms of three categories: “musicality I” – the sound stratum of a literary text (“the sphere of sound instrumentation and prosody”); “musicality II” – “the level of thematising music”, i.e. descriptions of music in the fictional world; “musicality III” – “interpretation of musical forms and techniques in a literary work of art”, i.e. the existence of literary forms shaped under the influence of musical forms. In the case of Vincenz this helpful pattern had to be complemented with other issues, and especially

the already-mentioned “philosophy”, i.e. his original concept of the essence of music itself. The introduction closes with the discussion of the research to-date on musicality of Vincenz’s main work. Despite the abundant literature devoted to the writer’s work, only one author – Aleksandra Pawlicka – undertook the subject, which she did in her MA thesis and the article written on its basis.

The main body of the study is divided into four extensive parts: *The Rhythm of Space (Towards the Philosophy of Music)*, *The Key*, *The Song “Poloniny”* and *The Heart of the Myth (The Soundscape – the Mystic Landscape)*.

The Rhythm of Space paves the way for detailed research of Vincenz’s main literary work. The essays and other contributions revealed the inspirations which the writer drew from his greatest masters: Homer, Plato and Dante. A few minor but exceptionally significant Vincenz’s statements on music, and especially Hutsul and classical, were analysed. A short discussion was devoted to his “philosophy of space” and its relations with the acoustic aspect, which revealed the uncompromising intricacy of the writer’s reflection.

The Key introduces the issue of sound stratum of a literary text, presented in the context of the discussion of the phenomenon of listening and the acoustics of the surrounding world. It analyses Vincenz’s unique creative method, based to a great extent on the Hutsul oral tradition, which he admired and collected. It also draws attention to the aspect of the Hutsul epic – so significant from the point of view of the reader, i.e. the concept of “mountain time” shaping both the fictional world and the rhythm of the author’s narration. *The Key* formulates the research question concerning the formal status of *Polonina* as a work created in emulation of musical forms.

The Song “Poloniny” is a detailed analysis of all kinds of music presented in the fictional world from Vincenz’s main work: apart from the predominating Hutsul music it includes the music of Mozart and – occasionally – of other composers, songs rooted in various traditions and Gypsy music. In his extensive reflective passages Vincenz interprets – as it were – music in the context of the culture forming it. Marching accordion music is a premonition of the approaching time of militarisation, if not totalitarianism. A separate chapter is devoted to the analysis of the descriptions of instrumental music in *Polonina*, where special emphasis is placed on a Hutsul instrument – a type of pastoral aerophone, which Vincenz found the most important – the *flojera* (the pipe). One of the interesting features of the epic in literary terms is the descriptions of rites; Vincenz perceived Hutsul rites as the vestiges of antique choreia or its analogies. Emphasising the significance of music and its relation to the art of movement – dance, and the art of word – song and tale, the writer created artistically convincing descriptions of music performances. The last chapter of this part is devoted to the phenomenon of the “song” itself – its rich symbol-

ism present in the epic and numerous senses which it conveys in this literary work of art.

The Heart of the Myth is an attempt at capturing the essence of Vincenz's philosophy of music. The soundscape recreated in great detail in *On the High Uplands* reveals the relations between audible music created by nature and the mystic dimension of music. The mystic dimension leads into the depths of antique tradition, to the myth of Orpheus and orphism and to the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres, which was instrumental in influencing Platonian description of the creation of the world in *Timaeus* and since the times of Pseudo-Dionysius has strongly affected the Christian vision of music from the spirit world, reaching its perfection in Dante's *Paradise*. Yet, Vincenz's sense of synthesis made him see similarities between this tradition and the Hasidic idea of divine sparks and the Hutsul world of magic and myths. In his writing Vincenz very subtly suggests an ancient mystic vision of closeness of the acoustic and visual dimensions – a common source of light and music. The literary crowning of these ideas is the episode from the story of one of the protagonists of *Połonina's* fourth volume, Tytus. Returning to Bukovina after years of emigration, he undergoes a mystic experience, profoundly blending in with the “plainsong flowing from the whole of the world” – the music initiated by the wind blowing in the chimney of his wooden manor house. Final deliberations in *The Heart of the Myth* return to the question about the formal status of an epic as a “literary musical work” – *Połonina* may be interpreted at its various levels as a song, “Hutsul symphony” or even a “cosmic fugue”. However, in the case of Vincenz such theses have to be proposed with caution, because – even though he imbued his epic with rich symbolism and various contexts – he never used these formal measures unambiguously, combining a precise structure with spontaneity; suggesting rather than speaking in a straightforward manner, creating series of associations and using metaphors.

In *Final Remarks* the conclusions are presented in the form of a visual essay. The book ends with an attempt at answering the question about the effect which the literary rendering of Vincenz's music ideas have so far had on the contemporary Polish culture.

Translated by Bartłomiej Madejski