IMPACT, INFLUENCE, AND PERFORMANCE OF SZYMANOWSKI'S MYTHS OP. 30

by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937) composed *Myths*, Op. 30 for violin and piano in 1915. Since its composition the work has been a favorite of violinists, whose interest and reverence are roused by this milestone of early twentieth-century composition for violin. Szymanowski's seamless writing for the two instruments conjures a sensual and evocative world through which the musicians may illustrate the composer's ability to exploit the technical capabilities of the violin. Furthermore, through Szymanowski's close collaboration with celebrated violinist Paweł Kochański (1887-1934), the composer was able to balance his compositional skill with his desire to create music that does not boast extroverted virtuosity, resulting in a work that is more consciously expressive and subtle.

Scholars and biographers divide Szymanowski's compositional output into three creative periods: a first period from 1899-1913, the second from 1914-1919, and the third from 1920-1937.[1] As a young student in Warsaw, Szymanowski gained a firm grasp of harmony and counterpoint, while his understanding of European musical styles was expanded through his many travels. The works written during his first period demonstrate elements of German Romanticism, are heavily influenced by literature (particularly that of the Young Poland poets who represented a modernist movement in the early twentieth century in which writers reacted against naturalism and positivism and were instead looking to foster a sense of unrestrained Romanticism in Polish literature), and are shaped by the musical influence of Chopin, Wagner, Strauss, and Scriabin.[2] During World War I, however, Szymanowski truly found his voice as a

[1] Paul Cadrin refers to these three periods in *The Szymanowski Companion* in his chapter on "Songs".
[2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Young Poland movement," accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Young-Poland-movement.

composer, and his second compositional period represents the most fruitful and inspired years of his career.

Upon finishing his opera *King Roger* in 1924, Szymanowski entered a new phase of creativity, finding inspiration in the traditional music of the Tatra Mountains of southern Poland. Examples of this new musical style include the song cycle *Słopiewnie* (*Word-songs*) from 1922, his Mazurkas Op. 50, and the ballet *Harnaise* (which depicts the Polish mountains and their people). In 1927 Szymanowski was appointed Director of the Warsaw Conservatory, although he agonized over his decision to accept the position and struggled with the choice throughout his tenure there. He needed the financial stability of the position but severely disliked the confines of that kind of employment. He felt his ideas regarding music and education ran in sharp contrast to those around him and he resigned from the position in 1929. The following year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from The Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

The remaining years of his life were not particularly happy ones and his compositional output slowed dramatically due to financial troubles, health problems, and a rather severe drinking habit. Diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis near the end of 1936, he died soon after in Lausanne on 29 March 1937. At the state funeral held by the Polish Government "thousands turned out to pay their respects to this man they considered the most important composer after Chopin."[3]

It was during his second compositional period (1914–19) that he wrote *Myths,* Op. 30 for violin and piano. Writing in Zarudzie in 1915, Szymanowski found isolation from the surrounding turmoil of the war and was able to synthesize elements of German Romanticism, Eastern Exoticism (through the exploration of Greek mythical subject matter), and aesthetic

[3] Frank Kwantat Ho, "The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 7.

qualities from the French *fin de siècle* style of Debussy and Ravel. With his longtime colleague and collaborator, the distinguished violinist Kochański, Szymanowski succeeded not only in creating music that was incredibly idiomatic for the violin using many old and new extended techniques, but also in achieving complete unity and collaboration of violin and piano. Both instruments function expressively together, with no one instrument ever elevated above the other.

After providing a short biographical sketch of Szymanowski's upbringing, education, and cultural and musical proclivities for context, this study will discuss works from his middle period that influenced *Myths*, their compositional style and form, important musical details and expression, and finally how the piece impacted contemporary composers of the time and violin repertoire in the future. The last chapter will be dedicated to performance practice from the violinist's perspective. This performance guide will provide in-depth practical instruction on how to achieve full command of the extended techniques, and offer advice regarding other challenging technical issues, as well as matters of interpretation and collaboration with the piano. The biographical details discussed in this thesis are primarily drawn from two important biographies of the composer: Bogusław Maciejewski's *His Life and Music* and Alistair Wightman's in-depth book *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*.[4] Wightman, the British musicologist, has contributed vast amounts to the scholarship and study of early twentieth-century Polish music, the Young Poland movement and specifically Szymanowski himself.

An examination of Szymanowski's *Myths* reveals that he was a composer who was able to fuse and weave together disparate elements and influences drawn from the rich musical history, literary canon, cultures, and traditions with which he came into contact. He achieved

[4] B. M. Maciejewski, *Karol Szymanowski; His Life and Music* (London: Poets and Painters' Press, 1967); Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016).

such a blending through elevated craftsmanship, innovation, and idiomatic writing, and established himself as one of the great Polish composers of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Karol Szymanowski was born into the wealthy land-owning Korwin-Szymanowski family of Polish gentry who owned a large estate in the village of Tymoszówka, which was at that time part of the Kiev Governorate of the Russian Empire, on the border between Soviet Poland and the Russian Empire.[1] Szymanowski's family was musically very well-connected. His father Stanisław Szymanowski was an avid musician and intellectual, and Karol and his four siblings all enjoyed what his sister regarded as a "happy, if rather intellectual" environment.[2] Like Karol, his brother Feliks was also a talented pianist, and their three sisters were a painter, poet, and singer respectively.

Much of Karol's early music education came courtesy of his family as he initially received piano lessons from his father. Karol would later study with his uncle Gustav Neuhaus (father of the famous Polish pianist Heinrich Neuhaus), at his music school in Elisavetgrad. It was during his studies with his uncle that Karol was introduced to the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms; he developed a love and reverence for the music of Chopin, Scriabin; and instilled in him a taste for the literature of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). As noted by Alistair Wightman, Szymanowski credited this time for providing "my earliest musical memories [of] Chopin, Bach and *especially* Beethoven."[3] This love of the great composers of the past influenced Szymanowski as a young composer, as evidenced throughout his early compositions and in the elements of traditional form and tonality displayed in many of his works from his second and third periods of composition.

[1] The town of Tymoshivka now sits in Cherkasy Oblast in Ukraine.
[2] B. M. Maciejewski, *Karol Szymanowski; His Life and Music* (London: Poets and Painters' Press, 1967), 17.
[3] Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 10.

Fourteen-year-old Karol was introduced to Georges Bizet's *Carmen* and Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* when his family attended performances during an 1897 trip to Vienna, Leipzig, and Frankfurt. While the former did not impress him, *Lohengrin* and later works of Wagner made a significant impression on the young composer. In a letter to Adolf Chybiński in 1909, Szymanowski wrote: "The shock which disturbed my equilibrium was *Lohengrin*—and it was precisely that which shaped my future life. Henceforth Wagner became the *sole* object of my dreams. And I came to know all his works from piano reductions."[4]

This performance of *Lohengrin* was Szymanowski's first experience hearing a fully-staged Wagner opera and it launched his broad and exhaustive study of Wagner's scores that followed. The influence of these studies can be heard in the motives and harmonies of his Op. 1 Piano Preludes and in the cycle of songs he later wrote to Hans Bethge's text, *The Love Songs of Hafiz,* Op. 24 and 26. While Szymanowski would later deny the existence of various early influences, it is notable that he never denied the impact of Wagner upon his compositional output.[5]

At the age of nineteen, Karol was sent by his father to study in Warsaw. While he did not attend the Warsaw Music Institute (a forerunner of the conservatory) as a full-time student, he did attend counterpoint and composition classes there with the distinguished composer Zygmunt Noskowski (1846–1909) and piano and instrumentation with Marek Zawirski (1862–1911). Wightman notes that their father's decision to send Karol and his brother Feliks to Warsaw instead of the more musically progressive St Petersburg has to do with his deeply anti-Russian sentiments. The Warsaw Music Institute was not an obvious or popular choice for ambitious

[4] Ibid., 9.
[5] Stephen Downes, *Szymanowski as Post-Wagnerian: The Love Songs of Hafiz, Op. 24* (New York and London: Garland Pub., 1994), 22.

music students at that time, and Wightman further states that "it would have been impossible to claim that Warsaw was anything but a musical backwater."[6] Nevertheless, Karol's arrival coincided with the establishment of the Warsaw Philharmonic, the conductor of which, Grzegorz Fitelberg (1879–1953), would become an important and influential friend of Szymanowski's. While Warsaw may not have been the most thriving musical scene in Europe at the time, this orchestra did help revive the city's sense of musical activity and growth moving forward.

Szymanowski never completed his studies in Warsaw with Noskowski, even though he was the professor's most talented and promising student. Szymanowski preferred to hone his skills and perfect his craft on his own. He occupied his time with the study of Chopin, Scriabin, Wagner, and Richard Strauss while striving for a compositional style that possessed broader European values. Wightman concludes:

> In his early career, Szymanowski was less concerned with nationalistic Polish culture than with the quest for a compositional technique which would bear comparison with that of the most progressive composers in the rest of Europe. He distanced himself from Warsaw's official, and rather reactionary, musical circles […].[7]

Szymanowski outgrew the so-called musical backwater of Warsaw to create an individual style, encompassing such a broad range of musical influences that one could not say his future in composition was at all stifled by his humble educational background. It was this quest for progress, and distancing himself from Warsaw's musical scene, that would compel him and his young colleagues to form the Young Poland in Music movement.

[6] Alistair Wightman, *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski* (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 16.
[7] Ibid., 21.

Young Poland in Music

In early 1900, Karol met and befriended three musicians that would become some of the most important and influential people in his life. The "Three Musketeers" were world-renowned pianist Artur Rubinstein (1887–1982), conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg, and the incredibly talented violinist Paweł Kochanski.[8] As evidenced through Szymanowski's collections of letters, these musicians were his support system and sounding board on some of the most important decisions of his life. They were also pivotal in the public performance and perception of his works. Together with the conductor Ludomir Różycki (1883–1953) and composer-pianist Apolinary Szeluto (1844–1966), these colleagues were some of the most important musical figures in the movement in Warsaw and were closely connected to Young Poland poets, including Tadeusz Miciński and Kazimierz Tetmajer.

Wightman describes Young Poland as a *fin de siècle* modernist movement of primarily musicians, poets, and other artists who stood against Positivism and Realism, the prevailing artistic trends of the time. The head ambassador for the group, Stanisław Przybyszewski, revealed the values he thought were integral to Young Poland in his artistic statement, *Confiteor*: "Art has no aim; it is aim in itself. It is the absolute, because it is a reflection of the Absolute—the soul. … Art stands above life, penetrates the essence of the universe… [It] becomes the highest religion, and the artist becomes its priest."[9] Przybyszewski's manifesto was influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and ran parallel to many of Szymanowski's ideas about art and music expressed in his letters, writings, and compositions from this time. This kind of

[8] Maciejewski, *His Life,* 23.
[9] Jim Samson, "Szymanowski," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: 2001), 194.

proclamation was a unifying force for the members of Young Poland that situated them against the traditional Polish musical community.

Szymanowski had a great appreciation for the poetry and prose produced by the literary members of the movement and drew inspiration from work, for example *Six Songs* Op. 2 (poems by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer), *Three Fragments* Op. 5 (poems by Jan Kasprowicz), and *The Swan* Op. 7 (poem by Wacław Berent). He was not only sympathetic to the styles and ideas of radical aestheticism projected in their writings, but also open to the French and Russian aesthetics that influenced their works.[10] Polish composer, pianist, and musicologist Feliks Starczewski described the purpose of the Young Poland movement as follows:

> The purpose of the organization [Young Poland in Music] is the support of new Polish music through concerts and the publication of the musical works of its members, forging an artistic future for themselves on the basis of wide-ranging co-operation, and at the same time avoiding the often-burdensome dependency on music publishers on the one hand, and all manner of impresarios on the other.[11]

Because of this co-operation within the Young Poland movement, Szymanowski and his fellow composers were given significant autonomy over their compositions. Such independence was extremely valuable for them. It gave them the freedom to create music of their choosing and to bring forth what they believed to be a new, vital, and intrinsically Polish art. Szymanowski, despite struggling to maintain financial stability throughout his life, stubbornly stood by his right to compose and champion music at his own will and to follow his motivations and stimulations.

Szymanowski's compositional output during the time he spent in the Young Poland movement display several stylistic traits and influences, including a continued reverence for the music of Chopin and Scriabin (and his "mystic chord"), the skillful use of contrapuntal writing, and a taste for chromaticism. He was criticized, however, for his preoccupation with the musical

[10] Samson, "Szymanowski," 193.
[11] Wightman, *Szymanowski on Music*, 23.

style of Richard Strauss—a critique which would follow him throughout much of his early career. For example, in one review of a Young Poland performance that included Szymanowski's Concert Overture and First Piano Sonata, critic Aleksander Poliński refers to an evil spirit "which depraves their [Young Poland composers'] work, tries to strip them of individual and national originality and turns them into parrots vainly imitating the voices of Wagner and Strauss." Poliński continued with the hope "that [they] free themselves from such influences as soon as possible…. I am concerned about a 'Poland' which… slavishly follows German musical fashion and propagates the ideas of the musical bundists."[12]

Poliński's opinion regarding the German influence on these Polish composers was shared by several other musical figures and critics in Poland at that time; however, this rather negative view of the group was balanced by those who appreciated the particular genius of Szymanowski, and saw the talent, skill, and necessity of such a movement in Poland. For example, in one of his reviews, Zdzisław Jachimecki wrote:

> It is with a genuine admiration that we regard composers who are courageously walking the path to the temple of true art. This ambition is discernible in the works of several young Polish composers who have formed a publishing cooperative to print their works. Their publishing company has brought to our attention several strong and vigorous talents… Judging from their publications to date, Karol Szymanowski is the most notable talent in the group… His piano preludes, etudes and variations share a single cardinal advantage in that they form a departure from the obsolete ideas of beauty in music… I confidently submit that Szymanowski's works will amount to one of the brightest moments in Polish music.[13]

[12] Wightman, *His Life,* 55.
[13] Zdzisław Jachimecki, "Muzyka w Polsce" (*Music in Poland*), in *Polska, obrazy, opisy* (*Poland: Images, Descriptions*; Lviv, 1907) http://www.karolszymanowski.pl/life/education-the-young-poland-movement/.

Jachimecki's bold claim acknowledges Szymanowski's early compositional potential and accurately predicts the composer's capacity to rise out of the bonds of the German musical tradition and pave his own way forward.

CHAPTER 3: STYLISTIC INFLUENCES

Two crucial influences shaped Szymanowski's attitude towards music and compositional style from an early age. The first came from his rich musical home life: his father, in his role as his first teacher, was hugely influential on Karol's early musical studies and was also the impetus behind the decision for him to continue his musical studies in Warsaw. His close family connection with Gustav Neuhaus and Felix Blumenfeld also played an integral role in his early musical development, as it was on the family estate at Tymoszówka that Karol spent endless nights listening to the music-making of the extended Szymanowski family, absorbing all the variety and richness, and cultivating his own musical taste. In his book *Karol Szymanowski we wspomnieniach* (*Karol Szymanowski Remembered*), Jerzy Smoter outlines a typical home concert scenario as demonstrated in a performance that took place at the Neuhaus estate in 1896:

> Tala Neuhaus played Schumann's *Fantasia in C,* Harry [Henryk] Neuhaus a Toccata by Bach and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, Felcio [Feliks] Szymanowski performed Chopin's F major Ballade, the Impromptu in G flat major and three Mazurkas… it was he who accompanied me in Grieg's F major Violin Sonata.[1]

The concert lasted five hours, until midnight, and following each musical performance audience members would offer criticisms regarding aspects of the music and performance. Surrounded by such intellect and enthusiasm for music, it is no wonder that Karol not only cherished and revered the great composers of the past but also became a well-rounded compositional master himself.

[1] Jerzy Maria Smoter, *Karol Szymanowski we wspomnieniach* (Krakow: Polski Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1974), quoted in Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 10.

The second formative influence on Szymanowski's style stemmed from his composition teacher, Zygmunt Noskowski, and his time as a student in Warsaw. Szymanowski received a strong musical and literary stimulus from his family, but it was through Noskowski, a prominent composer and pedagogue, that he acquired sound theoretical training, especially in counterpoint. Noskowski regarded Szymanowski "as a spiritual son, and seem[ed] to have succeeded in giving his pupil helpful advice on theoretical matters without encroaching upon his individuality."[2] This compositional education prepared Szymanowski to be a technically proficient composer; however (and perhaps more importantly), Noskowski introduced him to other young, notable composers and musicians from his inner circle of students: Apolinary Szeluto, Grzegorz Fitelberg, and Ludomir Różycki, with whom Szymanowski spent many hours poring over Strauss's symphonic poems and playing piano duet reductions.

Szymanowski later became quite critical of his teacher's approach to composition, commenting that "Noskowski caused his music to stand beyond the sphere of the instinctive musical feeling of the nation ... even though they possessed a certain undeniable artistic value, they came and went, vanishing from our stages, like a sleepy dream."[3] In Szymanowski's opinion, Noskowski's work, like most late nineteenth-century Polish music, "[had] nothing of the uneasy, brooding expectancy and frustration at the sense of inertia which prevailed throughout society and which was so eloquently expressed in other branches of Polish culture."[4]

During this time, Russian-controlled Warsaw was a city of political unrest. Following the financial crisis in August of 1899 came widespread depression and Russian pressure on the agitated working class. When the city underwent a series of aggravated demonstrations over food

[2] Wightman, *His Life,* 22.
[3] Michałowski, Kazimierz, *Karol Szymanowski Pisma Tom 1, Pisma muzyczyne,* (Krakow: 1989), quoted in Wightman, *His Life,* 22.
[4] Ibid., 23.

shortages and more burdensome taxation the Russian military responded with force. These events were formative in the shaping of Szymanowski's identity and worldview as an artist and composer. As a young student, Szymanowski therefore developed a somewhat ambivalent attitude to Polish political affairs and society. While some in the Polish musical community responded with nationalistic fervor, Szymanowski looked abroad for stylistic inspiration.

During his middle period of composition, Szymanowski was particularly influenced and intrigued by French and Russian musical styles, and exoticism—the first two of these as musical styles associated with particular musical scenes and the last as a cultural construct. French Impressionism greatly appealed to him through his many trips to Paris, attending performances, and spending hours studying the scores of Debussy and Ravel. Szymanowski believed that through this French influence he had found the way forward for music in Poland, claiming "I shall never cease in the conviction that a true and deep understanding of French music, of its content, its form and its further evolution, is one of the conditions for the development of our Polish music."[5] This sentiment shows that for him, as necessary as it was to strive towards true musical individuality, it was also essential for composers to develop and restore Polish musical culture to its rightful status.

In addition to French Impressionism, Szymanowski was also influenced by the Russian compositional style, particularly that of Russian ballet. Unlike his ultra-patriotic father, Szymanowski did not despise all things Russian; the music of Alexander Scriabin, and later Igor Stravinsky, had a significant effect on his compositional style. In 1913 he wrote to Stefan Speiss that "Stravinsky is a genius; I am terribly taken with him, and *par consequence* I am beginning to

[5] Stefania Łobaczewska, *Karol Szymanowski: Życie i twórczość* (Cracow, 1950), 271, quoted in Jim Samson, "Szymanowski: An Interior Landscape," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106 (1979): 69.

hate the Germans (I'm not speaking of the older ones of course!)."[6] And in 1924, in an essay on Stravinsky, he wrote: "Quite apart from the immediacy of its expression and its purely objective value, Stravinsky's art by its very nature demonstrably and definitively 'revalues' established ideas about musical aesthetics." In both his middle period and in his compositional maturity Szymanowski drew inspiration from Stravinsky's aesthetic of Anti-Romantic objectivity and vitality.[7]

The final important source of his musical language came from his fascination with the idea of exoticism. This preoccupation inspired Szymanowski to travel to places like the Mediterranean and the Middle-East, places that represented for him a sense of other-worldliness, an escape from reality. The impressions he gained from these trips stirred deep feelings and a sense of purpose within him, and the result upon his compositional output was music with an inexplicable, exotic quality. In December of 1910 the composer wrote to his friend Jachimecki:

> If Italy didn't exist, I could not exist either. I am not a painter or a sculptor, but when I walk along the museum halls, the churches, even the streets... when I become aware of the entire generations of the most beautiful, most genial of people, I feel that it is worthwhile living and breathing.[8]

The combination of these stylistic influences created a captivating and modern quality in Szymanowski's music of this period. He wielded a mystical, exotic, contemporary sound through combining elements of German expressionism with a Debussian French impressionistic style, further infused with the invocation of otherworldly utterings from the Mediterranean and the ancient world. One hears the German influence in his use of heightened, intense lyrical writing,

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[6] Teresa Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski Korespondencja, Volume 1, 1903-1919*, Krakow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, (1982), quoted in Alistair Wightman*, Karol Szymanowski: Correspondence, Volume 1 1902–1919* (Self-published e-book 2016), 308.
[7] Alistair Wightman, *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski* (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 223, quoted in Stephen Downes and Paul Cadrin, *The Szymanowski Companion*, (London: Ashgate, 2015), 28.
[8] Teresa Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski Korespondencja*, quoted in Wightman, *Correspondence*, 148.

jarring dissonances, wide melodic range, and dramatically contrasting textures. The French impressionistic quality comes from his use of ambiguous tonality and modes, the pentatonic scale, textural variety, and masterful use of instrumental color. He was always striving to find an elevated contemporary sound for Polish music, while also retaining a firm grasp on his musical traditions (Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Chopin) and the music of the world around him.

Szymanowski spent much of his time studying the works of other composers; however, he could not escape criticisms that his music either was too indebted to those he studied and admired or departed from them too significantly (specifically when he broke away from German musical values). In his article "Szymanowski and Polish Nationalism," Jim Samson articulates the common critical opinion of the time that Szymanowski would "wander aimlessly among the byways of contemporary European music."[9] Various degrees of criticism followed him throughout much of his early career, and he battled both publicly and privately with contemporary music critics. He wrestled with the notion of their objectivity and taste, and the way the written critique "stands between the creative artist and the healthy and essentially well-adjusted instinct of the masses."[10]

Szymanowski specifically addressed the composer and critic Piotr Rytel (1888–1970) for his lack of understanding regarding his music. According to Wightman, Rytel believed German music contained a spiritual value that others such as Szymanowski and his contemporaries lacked. In his essay "My splendid Isolation" written for the Warsaw journal *Kurier Polski* in November of 1922, Szymanowski states that Rytel "does not see my real face behind these

[9] Jim Samson, "Szymanowski and Polish Nationalism," *The Musical Times* 131, no. 1765 (1990): 135.
[10] Wightman, *Szymanowski on Music*, 78.

masks, which, one after the other, he would have me wear, and asserts that I do not have a face of my own at all."[11]

In his article entitled "Stylistic Integrity and Influence in Bartók's Works: The Case of Szymanowski," Malcolm Gillies describes the natural progression of a young artist's development. He writes:

> The young composer learns his craft by modeling his work on that of sanctioned predecessors; such work shows excessive signs of influence or importation from these predecessors, but at some stage the worthy young composer "finds his mature voice"; the distinctive features outweigh the similarities with the earlier models, which now provide, at most, an occasional inspiration; something of moral purity has emerged – integrity of style; the years of apprenticeship are over.[12]

Such a progression may be observed in Szymanowski's practice of "constantly acquiring new influences that are superimposed onto old ones, creating a unique combination that lives in spite (or because) of its contradictions."[13] Szymanowski's compositional approach, when viewed in this light, may be interpreted as the most natural, creative process any artist can practice.

[11] Ibid., 196.
[12] Malcolm Gillies, "Stylistic Integrity and Influence in Bartók's Works: The Case of Szymanowski," *International Journal of Musicology* 1 (1992): 139.
[13] Durval Cesetti, "The Narrative of a Composer's Biography: Some Aspects of Szymanowski Reception," *The Musical Times* 150, no. 1908 (Autumn, 2009): 29.

CHAPTER 4: MIDDLE-PERIOD AESTHETICS

Many of Szymanowski's middle-period compositions explore the subject matter of mythology and exoticism. Inspired by his love of travel, the composer spent much of his life outside of his home country. According to B. M. Maciejewski in his biography of the composer, Szymanowski spent the years from 1907 to 1914 visiting Berlin, Paris, Rome, Algeria, and Morocco while living alternately between his estate, Warsaw, and in an apartment in Vienna.[1] A trip to Africa and Sicily in 1914 was especially inspirational to the composer as he wrote *Myths*. At the time of its composition, Szymanowski pored over old photographs of the trip and recalled his impressions so much so that this piece may be viewed as a kind of ode to the journey, a remembrance of the feelings and influences he gained through the experience.[2]

In *Myths*, the picturesque landscape, ancient architecture, and surroundings of Sicily color the score dramatically; one can hardly avoid noticing a programmatic quality to the music. The poet Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Szymanowski's cousin and close friend, accompanied the composer on that particular trip to Sicily and North Africa and later, upon hearing *Myths*, felt compelled to make this incredible statement:

> I was not looking for a reflection of Arethusa or pursuing her Alfeo. The smooth and mysterious mirror of water with dark wigs of papyrus was silent. However, I heard high and painful sounds, intensively restrained passion — the kind I heard at one time emanating from the dark box of a Stradivarius violin. For me, the source of Arethusa unquestionably grew from a strange memory of a great artist who talked to me for the first time during the long summer night about this island, which I later felt a strong feeling for.
>
> The high, penetrating Szymanowski melody in this stillness sounded in me as something hidden, as a captivating *inner stimme* […] Whenever I now hear *Arethusa's Spring* being played by all the great violinists, I always see before me the mixture of a poor southern Russian city and this city of traditional antiquity,

[1] B. M. Maciejewski, *Karol Szymanowski; His Life and Music* (London: Poets and Painters' Press, 1967), 31.
[2] Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work.* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016) 142.

> where I saw the black water, over which cooed the sleeping pigeons; I see the face and gesture of this person, who submitted to the sound his entire life and complete inadequacy of individual endeavors in order to gauge life, understand and return to it artistic justice; justice in beauty.
>
> Oh, not the aesthetic justice that Gide wrote about in this same hotel by the same spring in his *Symphony Pastorale,* not a justice measurable and mathematical on an Archimedean scale – but the most basic kind, when – listening or observing, reading or seeing, a person says to himself: this is truth, this is life, this is love, this is death.
>
> There are a few such works today about which we can say this. Too few, which speak to us of change and duration in the manner as this work of Szymanowski.[3]

Iwaszkiewicz truly captures in these paragraphs the most poignant aspects of Szymanowsi's aesthetic, rich in colors and sensuality, and music that is therefore more personal and deeply felt. Iwaszkiewicz's description of *Myths* also resonates with an essay that Szymanowski himself wrote in 1925 about Ravel, who left a deep impression on the composer. In this ode to the French composer, titled *Maurice Ravel on the Occasion of his Fiftieth Birthday,* Szymanowski speaks reverently about Ravel's music:

> When listening to Ravel's music one often has an almost visual impression of the sun, weaving a dancing, golden net over the waves of the southern sea. It is full of the open air of mysterious, glittering lights, of an azure sheen, of movement and life. Sometimes one feels quietly pensive, attempting to hear the mysterious melodies floating on the far away air. There again the sky might cloud over, and the sea darken, taking on a steely brilliance. There is a moment of self-contained melancholy, without complaint or reproach, without blatant gesture. Suddenly there is a stronger gust of wind and the waves billow as if in tragic anticipation of a storm which never arrives, so as not to destroy in a senseless outburst of passion the beauty and order which prevails here. And then, once more, the peaceful rays of the sun glitter bewitchingly over the nimbly playing waves. It may appear from this that Ravel's music is a superficial play of light, color and shade – a cold, soulless "aestheticism." Not at all! For beneath this "surface" translucent, peaceful, concentrated depths lie concealed, and it is to these depths that the

[3] Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Książka o Sycylii* (Krakow, 1956), 126-127, quoted in Teresa Chylinska, *Karol Szymanowski; His Life and Works* (Friends of Polish Music, University of Southern California, 1993), 95.

"surface" owes its magical play of light and color.[4]

These poetic comments on Ravel's music show the importance of the "sensual aspect of aestheticism" in Szymanowski's own compositional approach.[5] Additionally, they reiterate the significance Szymanowski placed on beauty and concealed depth in music that goes beyond the "flowing currents of everyday reality and spheres of immediate experience."[6]

In the introduction to his book *Szymanowski, Eroticism and the Voices of Mythology*, Stephen Downes talks about the "crisis of the subject" and "Romantic nostalgia, expressive of a yearning for the subject's utopian redemption."[7] Szymanowski was grappling with the balance of his surroundings, of what it meant to be a composer of Polish background, but also what it meant to champion one's individual style amidst a dense haze of stylistic musical forces. He was an avid reader of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and believed, as did they, that music is the primary expression of the essence of everything; only second to music comes poetry and drama.[8] In this context, one begins to understand the role that mythology and exoticism played in shaping Szymanowski's middle-period aesthetic. For him, Italy represented the ancient world. In its ruins and symbolic Greek architecture, it represented both a distant, foreign connection to 8the ancient cultures of the past, and to the "otherworld" concept of the exotic. This intrigue with the distant, even unattainable "otherworld" was shared by many artists and philosophers of the time and was most readily manifested in Szymanowski's middle-period music.

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[4] Alistair Wightman *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski*. (London: Toccata Press, 1999) quoted in Peter Cadrin, "Choral Music," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Stephen Downes and Paul Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 33.
[5] Ibid, 32.
[6] Ibid, 33.
[7] Stephen Downes, *Szymanowski, Eroticism and the Voices of Mythology* (London: The Royal Musical Association/Ashgate, 2013), 13.
[8] Ibid.

The presence of an authorial voice is also relevant to any discussion of Szymanowski's middle period aesthetics. Stephen Downes describes how Strauss "[constructs] images of authorial creation" in that he relinquishes his authorial or compositional voice to the expression and anguish of the title character in *Elektra*.[9] Downes presents Strauss's practice in contrast to Szymanowski's writing, in which it seems that he made a point of not relinquishing authorship; his music was too personal. Szymanowski's correspondences display his great sense of pride, bordering on egoism, and that he was deeply attached to the authorship of his music. Downes connects this with Szymanowski's preoccupation with the character of Narcissus in his works and makes some interesting observations about the composer's hopes and desires regarding his musical and literary output. He writes:

> The desire to voice the artistic revelation of the truth of a precarious, multi-faceted, yet integrated self lies behind much of Szymanowski's work. In his musical and literary output, the self is projected through the voices of deities who speak languages of love. The unifying figure is Eros, who may be embodied as Dionysus, Christ, Narcissus or Orpheus, and the gospel he proclaims tells of the resurrection and freedom of the desiring subject.[10]

Szymanowski explored this "precarious, multi-faceted, yet integrated self" most explicitly in his novel *Efebos* (1917), with the chapter "Symposium" offering what Downes calls his most "sustained literary exploration of eroticism."[11] The novel was unfortunately destroyed in a fire in Warsaw during the siege of 1939, but its central thesis was preserved in a Russian translation

[9] Stephen Downes, *Szymanowski, Eroticism and the Voices of Mythology* (London: The Royal Musical Association/Ashgate, 2013), 1.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Stephen Downes, "Opera," in *The Szymanowski Companion,* ed. Stephen Downes and Paul Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 150.

written by Szymanowski that he gifted lovingly to Boris Kochno in 1919.[12] Downes comments on the surviving portions:

> It is often a frankly misogynist text that posits a vision of an educated culture in which homoeroticism might be liberated as a new heroic and creative masculine subjectivity that contrasts with the enslavement or degeneracy so frequently placed upon it.[13]

It is thanks to the partial survival of *Efebos* that one can understand how Szymanowski's homosexual orientation impacted his musical proclivities and his expressions of eroticism.

Szymanowski projects his musical "self" through what Downes refers to as the "chord center" technique. For example, his use of ambiguous chromatic harmony in the unique scoring of the opening chord in the second Myth, "Narcisse." This chord is emphatically repeated, thus creating its own enclosed universe. Szymanowski uses a similar "chord center" technique to capture the unity of the Dionysian dancer in *Tanz*, the forth of the songs from *The Love Songs of Hafiz*, Op. 24, in the opening song of *Songs of a Fairy Princess*, Op. 31, and the themes of enchantment and loneliness in "Calypso" from *Metopes*, Op. 29.[14]

Isolation and his "Inner World"

Szymanowski felt like an outsider throughout much of his life, especially during his youth. As he matured both as man and musician, this "outsider" mentality became connected to his identity as a Polish composer and his homosexuality, which he had come to realize and accept on his aforementioned and influential trip to Italy in 1914.[15] This isolation fostered a keen

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[12] World Heritage Encyclopedia, Introduction to Karol Szymanowski, *Efebos* (Project Gutenburg website, s.v. Efebos http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/efebos).
[13] Downes, "Opera," 151.
[14] Stephen Downes, "Szymanowski and Narcissism," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association,* 121, no. 1 (1996): 59-60.
[15] Downes, "Opera," 151.

feeling of "otherness" for Szymanowski, as was evident in his lamenting letters to close friends and family and the purposeful way he shut himself off from the world and his Polish contemporaries in order to write. Adding to this was his commitment to the task of drawing the Polish musical community out of their nationalist perspective and into the larger realm of European musical styles.

At the time Europe was at war, but because of an injury in his youth he was regretfully unable to enlist, further isolating him from his contemporaries.[16] He was most productive during this time, both in his musical and literary works, as he consciously isolated himself from the horrors of war first in London and then at his family estate in Tymoszówka. He later sought the safety of Elizavetgrad (now the Ukrainian city of Kropyvnytskyi) until Bolshevik troops occupied it in January of 1918.[17] This time spent fleeing from the war meant continued separation from the cultural centers of Poland. The separation came at a price to his career and finances. He wrote to his friend Stefan Speiss in 1919:

> I am living in this small town and not in Warsaw! I am disgusted by the boundless irony of my current parochialism. At a time like this, to have chosen the town of Elisavetgrad over any other city in the world— this is simply unthinkable. … We have absolutely no idea what is going on in your parts, in our country. An enviable position indeed! One would perish of melancholy but for the persistence with which I am writing *Efebos*.[18]

It was not just the war and geography that caused him difficulty with his career, but also the ongoing strain in his relationship with Polish audiences. Speaking about performances in Lwów

[16] Wightman, in Volume 1 of his *Correspondence*s documents a letter Szymanowski writes to Stefan Spiess in 1914, as he is worried about the effect of the war on his sister Stasia and her family: "I myself regret at times that my leg does not permit me to take part in the war." Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: Correspondence, Volume 1, 1902–1919* (Self-published e-book, 2016), http://www.plaintextebooks.com/_/_/622747/karol-szymanowski-correspondence-volume-1-1902-1919#ch1902, 371.
[17] See http://www.karolszymanowski.pl/the-traveller/elizavetgrad-now-kirovograd/.
[18] Adam Mickiewicz Institute, "Szymanowski," http://www.karolszymanowski.pl/life/the-war/.

and Kraków of *Myths* (among other compositions), he reports to his friend Zdzisław Jachimecki in early 1920:

> Once again, I experienced a similar feeling to that which seven years ago, forced me to leave Warsaw, namely—complete lack of contact between the Warsaw public and my music. I am a stranger to them, incomprehensible, and probably even useless to the general structure of Polish music…. The European atmosphere of my art is simply indigestible to their provincialism.[19]

While contemporaneous Poland poets and writers were, like Szymanowski, exploring the subject of mythology and eroticism in various ways, few composers were writing works like *Myths*. Contemporary Polish composers were instead focused on projecting a national sentiment in music. For example, Paderewski (ever the patriot) finished writing in 1917 the Hymn for Male Chorus and Piano or Wind Orchestra titled *Hej, Orle biały* (*Hey, White Eagle*; a reference to the Polish national emblem), while fellow Young Poland colleague Ludomir Różycki finished the unashamedly romantic and Chopinesque *Four Intermezzi for Piano*, Op. 42 in 1918. There is very little that compares in these compositions to *Myths,* but they do show how Szymanowski was a composer with a far greater depth of association, inspiration, and influence than his contemporaries. As Stefan Jarociński writes:

> If any historian of music tried to trace a logical line of development in Polish music in the first three decades of the twentieth century … he would be amazed at the inexplicable gap which would naturally yawn between the works of Paderewski, Karłowicz or Różycki, and the works of those composers whose talent matured in the years between the two World Wars. It is precisely Szymanowski's, and only Szymanowski's work, that fills the gap supplying the missing link between the two periods.[20]

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[19] Maciejewski, *His Life,* 58.
[20] Stefan Jarociński (ed.), *Polish Music, Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers* (1965): 171, quoted in Downes and Cadrin, *Szymanowski Companion*, 235.

In *Myths,* Szymanowski successfully channels his "inner world" (a personal aesthetic concept embodying imagination and detachment) through the use of exotic imagery, mythical narrative, and the attendant musical devices. Szymanowski constantly internalized his experiences from life abroad and his travels, applying them to his reading and score studies. What he masterfully accomplished in his middle-period compositions was the musical portrayal of those inspirations, the stylistic representation of which ensured that the colorings and nuances were deeply woven into the essence of the sound rather than serving as mere superficial affects. He was not simply pulling inspiration from other influential existing musical styles and superimposing their traits onto his own. His method was intense yet productive, drawing on the internal conflict between the isolating nature of his compositional process and the public obligations a composer's life entails.

The time he spent at his friends' estate in Zarudzie contributed to his physical isolation from the world. It was here in the countryside that Szymanowski could lose himself in his world and his work. These visits were not without emotional highs and lows, spells of intense productivity, and frustrating idleness. However, Szymanowski harnessed creative exploration through his "interior landscape" and creative solitude. This time was interrupted by the Russian revolution of 1917, the impact of which greatly affected the composer's future work.

Mythology

Mythology as an extra-musical source of inspiration significantly impacted Szymanowski's compositional output during the war years. Szymanowski developed a fascination with historical Greek and Arabian civilizations as a result of his extensive travels. From the ancient ruins and architecture to the literature and philosophy of these past cultures, the

composer found an enthralling and vastly different world. He was not the only artist of the time to entertain these fascinations, however, as mythological subject matter and exotic influences can also be found in the music of Debussy (*L'après-midi d'un faun*), Strauss (*Elektra*), and Stravinsky (*Apollon Musagète* and *Oedipus Rex*). The shared interest in mythology among artists represented a general trend away from the disenchanted middle-class pursuit of Positivism and progress, toward a more significant interest in eroticism, post-Romanticism, and Nietzsche's Dionysian/Apollonian philosophy. This use of mythology as a source of inspiration gave Szymanowski the means to achieve "cultural regeneration" of Polish music, as well as "expressions of a new ecstatic enchantment and erotic subjective identities."[21]

Similarly to the way Wagner drew from philosophy and mythology, Szymanowski also attempted to align his music with the long history, mythology, and philosophy of the Greeks. Downes refers to this practice as what he calls the "Mythical method" of finding creative avenues through the "modern chaos:"

> The reworking of myth found in the work of authors now considered to be models of the modernist writer, Eliot and Joyce, the "past in the present" represented an invocation of ancient paradigms … to make artistic creation possible in the face of modern chaos. Eliot's classic essays … explored the "mythical method" as the way the "modern" artists can create within the intersection of past achievement and present anxieties. The prize, in the face of the fear of being ephemeral and hence imminently dead, is immortality in the museum of great works.[22]

For Szymanowski this method allowed him to manage his anxiety of artistic relevance and authorship. He, along with other composers of the time, knew that referencing the profound and

[21] Tyrone Greive, "Violin Solo Music," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Stephen Downes and Paul Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 263.
[22] Ibid., 263.

immortalizing world of Greek Mythology was one way to connect their work to a shared European past.

Philosophy

Szymanowski believed that art should not concern itself with political and national identity. Rather than focusing his creative efforts on composing music that appealed to a particular style or national taste, he primarily sought to express the varying aspects of the human condition in his music. An avid reader, Szymanowski immersed himself in the writings of Nietzsche. He took a interest in his book *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music,* and its stance on human struggle within the dichotomy between the Dionysian and Apollonian forces. He praised the book as being "one... which tell[s] great truths about the essence of art," moreover, its concepts profoundly influenced the formation of his general philosophy.[23] In the 1886 preface, Nietzsche's section on "Attempt at Self-Criticism" asks: "what would music have to be like to be no longer of Romantic origin, like German music – but *Dionysian?...*"[24] It is very clear that Szymanowski was explored this view in various ways in his middle period compositions.

Nietzsche argues that Greek Tragedy is the only art form that genuinely represents the human experience. He also believed that it was possible for modern art music to express this, citing the operas of Richard Wagner as the *rebirth* of tragedy.[25] According to Nietzsche, the spirit of Dionysus represented a confirmation of life and prosperity in the face of suffering and it gave artists an alternative to Schopenhauer's pessimistic slant on philosophy. The renewal of this

[23] Ibid., 265.
[24] Fredrich Nietzsche, Preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 11.
[25] Ibid., 12.

Dionysian force as a creative aesthetic greatly influenced those artists, writers and intellectuals who were receptive to his call. Szymanowski was an avid follower of Nietzsche's philosophy, describing *The Birth of Tragedy* as "the most beautiful books in the world."[26] In his music he tended to represent the Dionysian forces through dance and the Apollonian through song, for example in the final movement of *Myths* "Dryads Et Pan", and further developed his Opera *King Roger* (1924).

Szymanowski alludes to the duality (anima/animus) integral to the human experience and pivotal in the themes of Greek Tragedy in *Myths* and other works of the time; however, he addresses them most directly in his opera *King Roger*. This pivotal masterwork "dramatizes Szymanowski's struggle with the nature of his personality and his art" as he explores the opposing forces of Christianity and pagan Hellenism, Eros versus Logos, his discovery of the "secret relationship between Christ and Dionysus, and through the characters of King Roger and the Shepherd, the dual manifestations of femininity and masculinity."[27] Also, it was Eros, in the "Symposium" chapter of his book *Efebo*s, that he equated with love and the total unity of forces: "Binding the community and the nations into a pan-European culture where existing boundaries are broken down. Eros is thus characterized as a widely embracing force working in psychological, artistic and political spheres."[28]

In a 1906 letter to Hanna Klechniowska (a fellow pianist and composer), the young Szymanowski said:

> You possess *intuitively* what I strive for bitterly. You could be as good a painter or doctor of philosophy as you are a musician—for me you would be the same, because you possess in yourself that which I prize above all art and philosophy—

[26] Stephen Downes, *Szymanowski as Post-Wagnerian: The Love Songs of Hafiz*, *Op. 24* (New York: Garland Pub., 1994), 18.
[27] Stephen Downes, "Themes of Duality and Transformation in Szymanowski's *King Roger*," *Music Analysis* 14 (1995): 279.
[28] Downes, "Opera," 151.

the real substance of life.[29]

This personal statement from Szymanowski—defining creativity as universal and elemental—summarizes his general philosophy of life. This philosophy combined with his affinity for Nietzsche and the concept of music being a primary expression of all experiences culminated in Szymanowski's music during his middle period.

[29] Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: Correspondence*, 650.

CHAPTER 5: THE MYTHS

The Myths were written between March and June of 1915, just months before he wrote another of his slightly lesser known violin works, *Tarantella*. He wrote the first movement of *Myths* separately, initially conceiving it as a stand-alone piece named "La Source Enchantée." Upon completion of the full three-movement work, he dedicated the poems to Paweł Kochański's wife, Zofia, with whom he was also extremely close.

Myths was one of several triptychs Szymanowski wrote at this time, suggesting that he was partial to the form, with piano works *Metopes*, Op. 29 and *Masques*, Op. 34 completed in the same year. Additional similarities between these three-part works exist in that they each provide examples of instrumental cycles that seek to express a new aesthetic for their instrument through "a new and thoroughly transformed technique of sonority; a new musical idiom."[1]

Myths loosely depicts impressions from his travels in Sicily, and like both *Metopes* and *Masques,* draws from a specific tale from Greek mythology. Teresa Chylińska relates this quasi-programmatic approach by comparing Szymanowski's "discreet allusion" to his "remembrace of Siciliy, the land of the realized myths," to Debussy's use of symbolist poetry.[2] The allusions to his travels in Italy are further elaborated upon by Polish composer and pedagogue Adam Walaciński in the preface of the 1978 Universal Edition score of *Myths* where he writes:

> These three poems for violin and piano reflect the repercussions of Szymanowski's journey to Italy and Sicily in 1911 and 1914, but these are remote repercussions – they are more a musical meditation on classical mythological threads than a transposition of direct impressions or an exact literary programme.[3]

[1] Teresa Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Works* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, School of Music, 1993), 99.
[2] Ibid., 94.
[3] Adam Walaciński, preface to *Volume 9, Works for Violin and Piano* (Universal Edition, Wien, 1978), IX.

The literary source from which Szymanowski drew inspiration for his musical depictions was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[4] The story of Arethusa and Narcissus is found in Ovid's fifth volume, while the characters depicted in "Dryads Et Pan" are drawn loosely from Ovid's tales of the god Pan and forest nymphs.[5]

In the first movement, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," the myth of Arethusa focuses on the nymph's attempted escape from the unrelenting love and pursuit of Alpheus, god of the river. The legend is set on the small Island of Ortygia, off the coast of Sicily, where an underground spring supposedly links the ocean to the river Alpheus in Arcadia. Afraid of Alpheus's intentions and wishing to remain the virginal companion of the goddess Artemis, the nymph perspired from fear and transformed into a stream. Artemis came to her aid and broke the ground beneath, giving her an opportunity to flee; however, Alpheus flowed through the sea and found her.

The second movement of *Myths* invokes the story of Narcissus, son of the river god Cephissus and a hunter known for his immense beauty and vanity. Lured to a still pool of water by the goddess Nemesis, he sees his reflection and falls in love with his image. His beauty enthralled him so much that he could not look away, and as a punishment from the gods, there he remained transfixed until his death. The story concludes with a beautiful flower growing upon the spot where Narcissus perished.

The final movement, "Dryads et Pan," depicts a forest scene replete with inebriated nymphs dancing amidst the humming and murmuring of the evening in "an evocation of the forest murmurs of antiquity."[6] The amorous god Pan, shepherd of the woods and pastures,

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[4] According to Stephen Downes one can find a copy of verses from Ovid in Szymanowski's handwriting at the Composers' Archive of Warsaw University Library. Stephen Downes. "Szymanowski and Narcissism," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association,* 121 (1996): 58.
[5] Ovid, *Metamorphoses Book Five*, trans. Anthony S. Kline (2000).
[6] Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 144.

appears with his pipes. Pan, traditionally described as having the legs and horns of a goat, generally incites fright and panic when he appears, and an expected moment of fright and a subsequent flurry ensues in this myth. In an article discussing the various antithetical attributes of Pan, Ippokratis Kantzios mentions that the ancient Greek Pan was the god of the wilderness, but also of husbandry and farming. He was depicted as being a god that generated fear yet was also a master piper and lover of dance and music.[7]

Compositional Form and Style

All three movements in *Myths* feature a flowing ABA^1 ternary form with added coda or codetta. Much of the writing in *Myths* departs from standard Romantic harmonic and structural practice, but it is fitting that on a large-scale formal level, the pieces are relatively traditional and straightforward. By using a varied ternary structure in each movement, Szymanowski was free to experiment harmonically and expressively. The composer marks the sections with the use of different textures, tempos, and characters, and with the inclusion of some traditional harmonic and cadential functions in each.

As in most of his works for violin, Szymanowski loved to explore the full range of the instrument, particularly exploiting the melodic intensity of the lowest and highest registers. He wrote in a way that demands a violinist's flexibility and refinement, but also total control of technique. *Myths* is no exception, exhibiting a rich harmonic palette through the layering of notes to produce an "overloaded vertical structure," combined with a strong melodic, sonorous tendency "full of chromatic evasions and saturated with arabesque—like ornamentation."[8] *Myths* is a grand tour de force of violin techniques, making full use of the instrument's expressive

[7] Ippokratis Kantzios, "'Old' and 'New' Pan in Menander's Dyskolos," *The Classical Journal,* Vol. 206, No. 1 (2010): 25-27.
[8] H. H. Stuckenschmidt. "Karol Szymanowski," *Music & Letters* 19, no. 1 (1938): 38.

range. He uses every technique in such a purposeful, evocative way, from artificial, natural harmonics and two-note harmonics, left hand and right hand *pizzicato*, simultaneous *arco* and *pizzicatos*, *glissando*, *portamento*, *tremolando*, and both rapid single and chordal trilling.

Myths also exhibits the trend found in many of Szymanowski's works in which he experiments with stark contrasts of texture and meter. Throughout the tone poems he juxtaposes passages of enriched chords and thick contrapuntal textures with moments wherein only a single violin line is present. Rhythmically, Szymanowski loves to "accumulate small note-values and fractions, combinations of duple and triple figures, syncopations and displacements" where "asymmetrical bars… often intrude into simple symmetrical formations."[9] Using Frank Kwantat Ho's analysis of each movement as a starting point, the following sections will discuss each of the three *Myths* in more detail (see appendix for a chart presenting the formal structure of each movement, taken from Ho's 2000 dissertation on Szymanowski's violin music).[10]

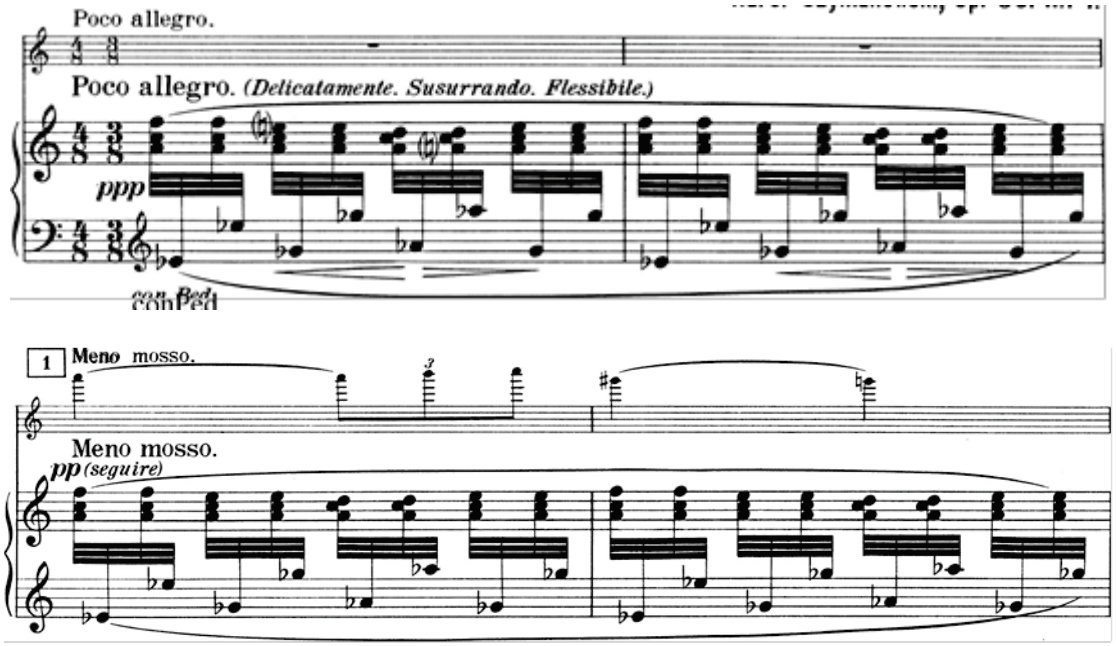
The form of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse"

Alistair Wightman discusses the idea that the whole movement derives from the opening material offered in both the piano and violin parts (see example 1), and that the subsequent melodies are variations of this opening line "either by addition of subsidiary motives, inversions or elisions." Furthermore, he observes that the unifying role played by the interval of the sixth, which he notes is "apparent in the first chord of the piano introduction, itself a sort of *jeux d'eau* which bears the directions Delicatement susurrando, flessible."[11]

In this movement E flat and A are the referential key areas, a compositional element that can lead to a lack of tonal grounding in the traditional sense; however, Szymanowski creates a

[9] Ibid., 40.
[10] Frank Kwantat Ho, "The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 53.
[11] Wightman, *His Life*, 145.

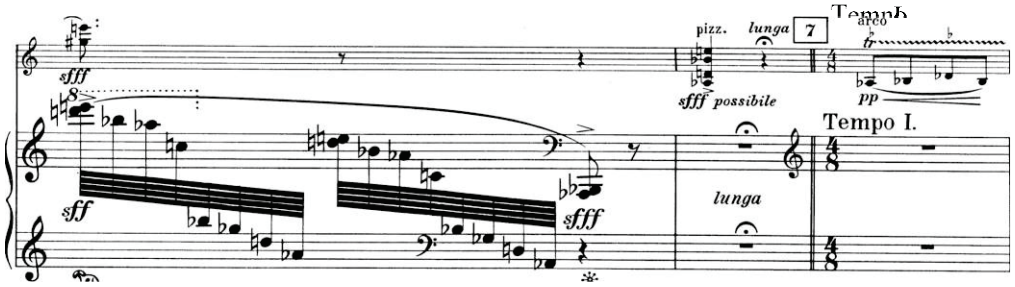
bitonal framework of stability wherein each instrument represents one of the tonal centers. These two tonal centers form the interval of a tritone, which is reinforced many times at pivotal moments during the movement. This tritone is evident from the very opening, in which the piano delivers a murmuring "water" motive around E flat while the violin wanders in the high registers with an ethereal melody beginning on A. The layering of the repeated contrapuntal texture in the piano line also provides grounding for the ear, and a dense web of sound over which the violin may soar.



Example 1: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 1-4.

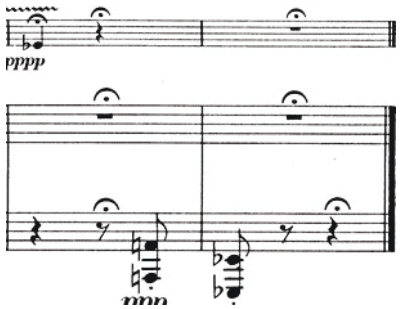
The dual keys are reinforced again in m. 73, however not with the key areas themselves (Eb and A) but by reminding the listener of their tritone relationship. A rapid descending flourish creates a climactic moment in the piano line followed by an abrupt, somewhat disturbing double stop *pizzicato*, layering one tritone on top of another (Ab —D, Bb—E). The effect is arresting

and provides a striking example of the way Szymanowski contrasts textures and abrupt silences to create drama. Szymanowski makes further use of this untraditional compositional technique to outline the ternary structure of the movement, using the abrupt silence to emphasize the return of the first theme in the A' section (see example 2).



Example 2: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 72–74.

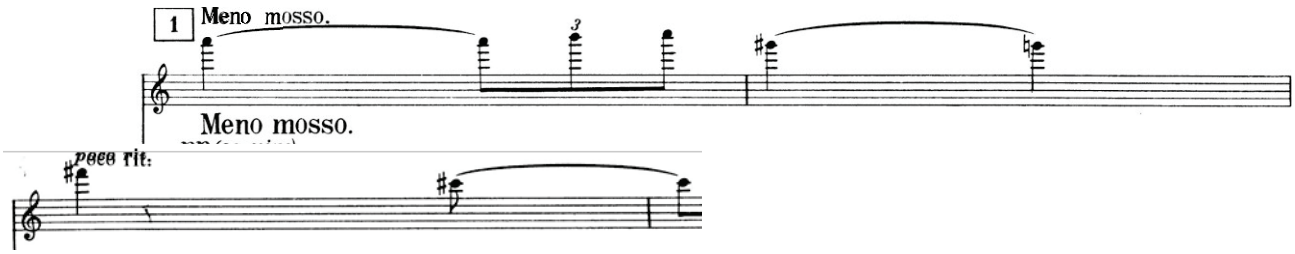
Before the movement concludes, Szymanowski reminds the listener one last time of these tonal centers, creating a somewhat unexpected, uncomfortable end to the movement. It feels like a final interjection where the piano is intent on having the last word (see example 3).



Example 3: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 116–117.

Hyojin, in her dissertation on *Myths*, draws attention to one of Szymanowski's unifying motives, capturing the ear for the first time in the high, soaring violin line in the first A theme

(see figure 4). This motive consists of a four-note descending chromatic line: A, G#, G, F# (see example 4).

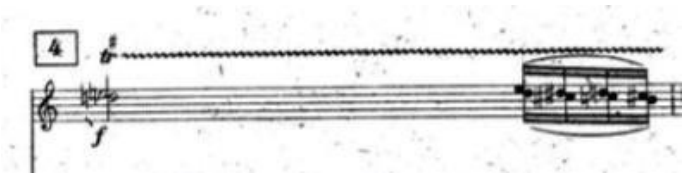


Example 4: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 9–12.

A four-note descending motive can be found in all three movements (in various forms) and provides the listener with a small melodic clue that repeatedly appears. Mm. 19–22 of "Narcisse" (see example 5) offers another example, beginning with C#–C–B–A# before a distinct dotted motive following. Finally, the four-note motive returns in "Dryads et Pan" with a more malevolent character at m. 42, where it is incorporated into the trill with the addition of a major second (see example 6).[12]

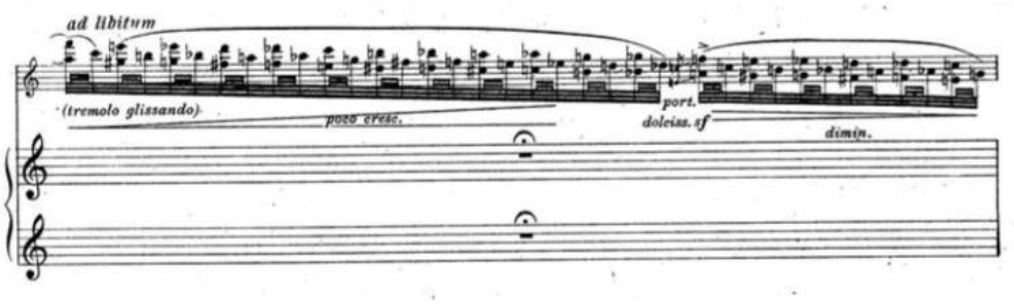
Example 5: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 19–22.

[12] Hyojin Ahn, "Karol Szymanowski's Musical Language in *Myths* for Violin and Piano, Op. 30" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2008), 11.



Example 6: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," m. 42.

A prevalent feature in this tone poem is the composer's captivating ability to summon the sound and imagery of water cascading down the fountain at Arethusa (in the center of the city of Syracuse in Sicily). Tremolo sections in the violin such as the one in m. 109 (see example 7) that rise and fall dynamically with crescendos and decrescendos are not only examples of some of the many uses of extending violin technique, but also stand out as pivotal moments of beauty and intrigue. Szymanowski's remarkable use of the high register of the violin creates a sense of sparkling transparency and light which contrasts with his layering of sound and textures during moments of drama and intensity.



Example 7: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethusa," m. 109.

Another way Szymanowski captures the nature of flowing water in the movement is with his use of irregular meter, fluctuating between quadruple and triple time, in order to create a feeling of capricious fluidity that simulates the irregular motion of water. He combines this metric fluidity with flowing contrapuntal gestures which dominate the material in the piano part

in both A and its return (described by Frank Kwantat Ho as the "water accompaniment," see appendix). In the B section, Szymanowski uses expressive and gestural features in both the violin and piano lines to transform the lulling water motives from the opening into something more violent, surging, and raging. Bursting, chromatic, flourishing gestures, back and forth between the two instruments, may be observed in m. 57 before they swell in combined frenzy at m. 62. Here, as the piano rumbles a reminiscent "water accompaniment" motive interrupted with violent ascending outbursts, the violin wails through an elaborate, chromatically-descending passage full of articulated triadic note combinations with trills that increase in volume.

The coda (m. 105) displays the most beautiful moments of water imagery in the entire movement. At m. 105 and 109 the violin issues two solo descending flourishes that serve as poignant musical evocations of glistening water tinkling downward from a fountain. The final descending gesture dissolves into a bubbling trill, increasingly more stagnant and repetitive, joined by the piano's familiar "water accompaniment." The final two bars contain two short octave quarter notes in the piano left hand, A and Eb, like final droplets that recall the two tonal centers.

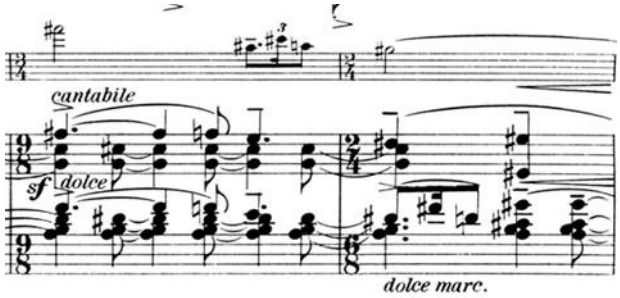
The form of "Narcisse"

The second of the Myths, "Narcisse," has a strong narrative element; according to Christopher Palmer this musical response to the myth is more like a "miniature symphonic poem," and he notes the "strenuous canonic competition between the violin and piano." Stephen Downes connects this movement to several of Szymanowski's other works that also develop "a method of relating significant (and usually highly complex) sonorities with the form-defining harmonic process" that is present in the opening of this movement as an ambiguous chromatic

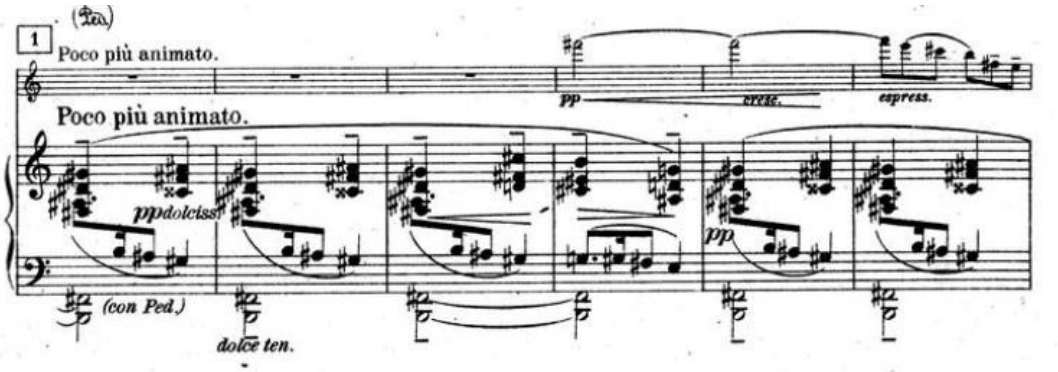
harmony that creates a "chord center." This highly individualized chord (involving a tritone with an added fourth) creates the basis of the entire movement's tonal universe.[13]

The hypnotic opening piano motive introduces a feeling of stagnant, transparent water; however, the addition of appoggiaturas in the beginning of every second bar slightly offsets the passive repetition of the chords, reinforcing by point of comparison the feeling of the limpid water. In stark contrast to the flowing, bubbling water gestures in the first myth, here the right hand relentlessly taps out repeated chords. Marked *dolcissimo* and *espressivo*, the violin enters with an irregular, soaring melody drawing from both the major pentatonic scale and the aforementioned unifying motivic descending chromatic line. This violin melody is one of the important unifying links of the myth as it appears in all three sections. In m. 8, Szymanowski introduces a dotted triplet eighth-note motive (see example 8) that begins in the violin line before pervading the piano part over the course of the A section (particularly by m. 19 and into the second A theme). Ho refers to this rhythmic figure as an "obsession" motive, but listeners may understand it in additional ways. Szymanowski develops its function throughout the movement from its melodic role in the opening, to an incorporated, repeated textural and rhythmic device in the second theme of A at m. 23 (see example 9). Here, the rhythmic motive acts like a reverberation in the water surface that repeats many times.

[13] Christopher Palmer, *Szymanowski* (London, 1983), 46, quoted in Downes, *Szymanowski and Narcissism*, 58.

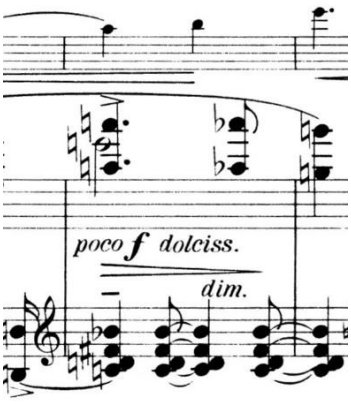


Example 8: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 8–9.



Example 9: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 23–28.

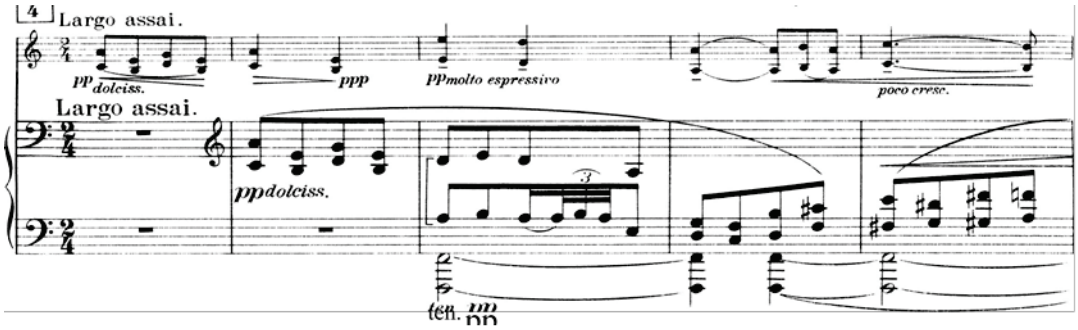
The obscure nature of the chromatic harmony in this movement, with its whole-tones, tritones, pentatonicism, and white/black key relationships is characteristic of Szymanowski's harmonic style at this time. There is even a reference to one of Szymanowski's great early influences, Scriabin, with a mystic chord found in m. 11 (see example 10). This chord is based on whole-tones, tritones, and 7ths, all of which contributes to the ambiguous tonality and ethereal *impressionistic* quality of the movement.



Example 9: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," m. 11.

Each instrument depicts the presence of the two integral elements: reflective water in the piano, and the character and beauty of Narcissus in the violin. Szymanowski achieves this with the use of the extreme high and low register, long wistful melodies that in the first A theme climb tentatively before tumbling down from high suspended notes, at times echoed in the piano right hand (for example m. 31). Each return to the A theme heightens the drama (m. 4, 68, 97). The first melody is marked *piano, dolcissimo*, *cantabile*, the second *forte, con passione* and the third *piano Piu mosso, agitato* which ultimately leads to a final climax at m. 117 with the only *fff* of the piece as the violin wails through the recurring chromatic descent.

In the B section one hears the first of three starkly contrasting moments. The tension of the A section drops as the tempo slows and the violin delivers a kind of hushed, lilting lullaby accompanied by the left hand of the piano rumbling a haunting tremolo on B while the right hand sings its own version of the theme in octaves. Each of these phrases (m. 49, 83, 138) emerges out of silence to reiterate the three-part form and offer moments of respite. In the second lullaby section at m.83 (see example11), Szymanowski releases the tension further by delivering a passage completely devoid of chromaticism, he hollows out the texture even further as the piano mirrors the violin a bar later (first an exact repetition, and then slowly distorting).



Example 10: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 83–87.

Following each of these pivotal sections of calmness, Szymanowski takes the opportunity to wind up the tension again and again through various modes of textural contrast, dynamic intensity, tempo fluctuations, and articulation range. For example, in the section beginning in m. 53, the role of piano as mirror reflection of the violin becomes integral, but now roles are reversed and the piano leads.

The pressure builds in this passage full of alternating seconds and sevenths, the violin in canon with the piano's right hand as they climb for several bars. The constant driving dissonances together with the thick homophonic texture almost entirely covers the reappearance of the first theme. It appears mid-bar in the right hand of the piano at m. 62, a watery reflection of its full passionate return in the violin line at m. 68 for the first climactic moment of the movement.

The coda section (m. 138) reiterates each of the thematic elements of the myth, like a final curtain call. It begins with the calm rocking lullaby in the violin with octave piano melody, followed by the descending motive from the second theme of A, and a low register iteration of the opening melody in the last four bars to conclude. Szymanowski weaves these three integral themes together to make a beautiful, cohesive final phrase.

The form of "Dryads et Pan"

This movement is the most overtly programmatic of the three and also the most technically demanding for the violinist, displaying the full array of technical devices. When questioned by the violinist Robert Imandt about the nature of the programmatic content, Szymanowski offered this evocative, descriptive statement:

> In the *Dryades*, it would be possible on the whole to imagine the programme in an anecdotal sense. And so there are murmurings of the forest on a warm summer's night, a thousand mysterious voices which intermingle in the darkness; the games and the dancing of Dryads. Suddenly the sound of Pan's flute. Silence and anxiety. A languorous and balmy melody. Pan appears, amorous … of the Dryads, their fright in diverse, indefinable episodes: Pan leaps away in flight, the dance resumes, then little by little, everything calms down in the freshness and silence of daybreak. In sum, a musical expression of the languorous restlessness of a summer night.[14]

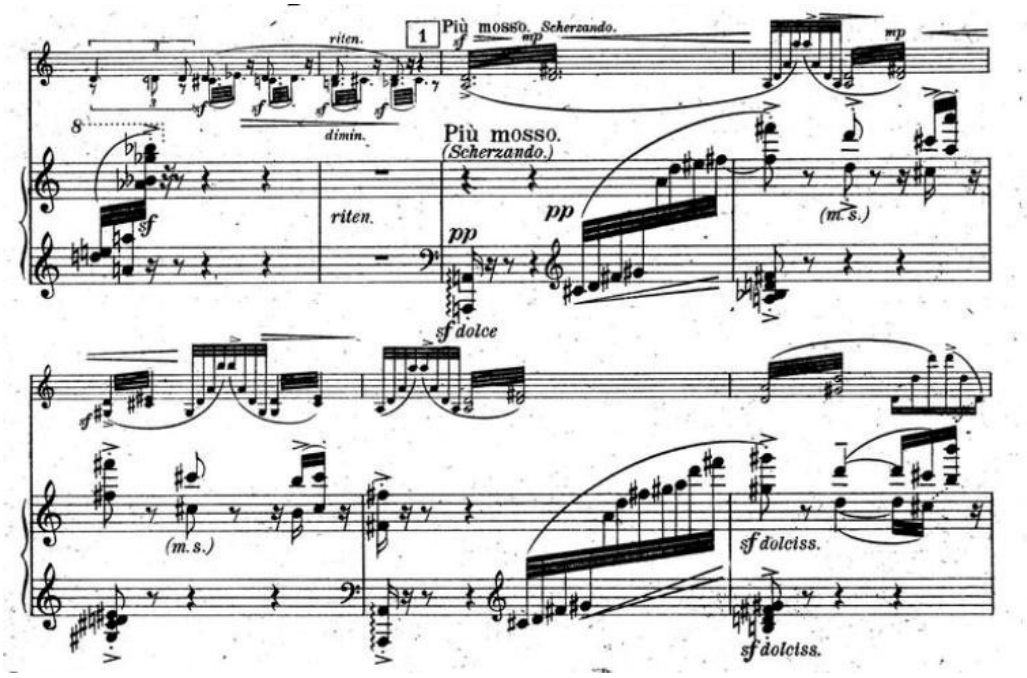
Szymanowski integrates each of these juxtaposing characteristics that he describes in his imagined summer night through the continual reappearance of small melodic motives, side by side, and eventually layered on top of one another.

The movement begins with an oscillating motive in the violin, which Wightman claims is the first use of the notated quarter tone in music history (see example 12).[15] It wavers back and forth like an exaggerated trill, evoking humming, chirping, or as the composer himself describes, the murmuring of a warm summer night in the forest.[16]

Example 11: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 1–4.

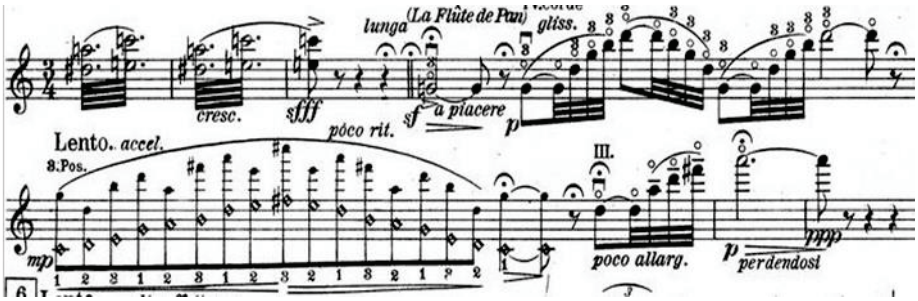
[14] Teresa Chylinska, *Karol Szymanowski; His Life and Works* (Friends of Polish Music, University of Southern California, 1993), 95.
[15] Wightman, *His Life,* 142.
[16] Ibid., 144.

The playful, frisky, dancing "Dryad" theme enters at mm. 11 (see example 13). Szymanowski creates this character with the use of rapid arpeggio motives in both instrumental lines, and a lively variation of the melody, softly articulated in short, accented eighth notes in the piano. The scene unravels into indulgence and debauchery with tremolos and long trilling passages over the top of a dense, rapid arpeggios to create a feeling of Dionysian frenzy.



Example 12: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 9–15.

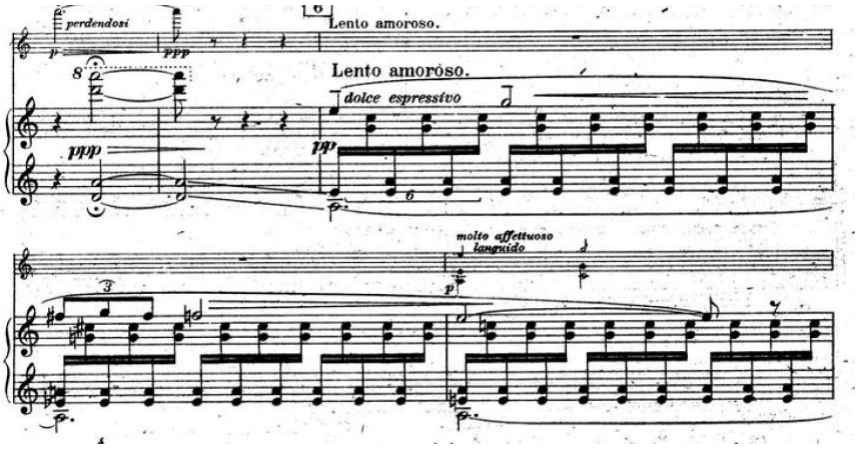
The tomfoolery abruptly ends as Pan makes his entrance, marking the beginning of the B section (see example 14). His flute call cuts through the silence, offering both reproach and reflection. Pan represents the opposing power to the wild Dionysian spirit, the Greek Apollonian concept of order, balance, and harmony (see below for a further discussion of this duality between Dionysian and Apollonian order).



Example 13: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 52–58.

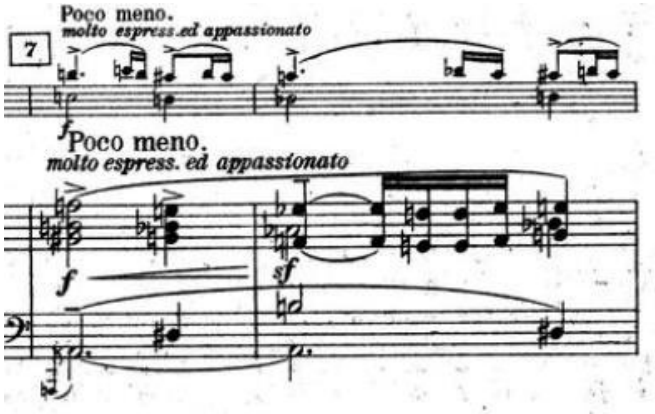
Pan's pipe calls are arresting and contrasting in a number of ways: the timbre of the harmonics give it a reedy wood-pipe-like quality, the open tonality of triads and fifths contrasts against the otherwise chromatic and sometimes vivid dissonances of the forest motives in the B section, and the texture is thinned dramatically. Aside from the opening and closing bars, this is the only time in this movement in which there is only a single line.

Following the flute call, Szymanowski introduces Pan's "languorous" melody (see example 15), first in the right hand of the piano, and then mimicked in harmonics by the violin. Juxtaposed against the music of the Dryads' dancing in the A section, this listless melody is even more striking, with each iteration displaying a mere minor third in melodic range. This melody is the second of three that preoccupy the B section, each varying dramatically in temperament and range.



Example 14: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 57–61.

In m. 73 (see example 16) the character pivots dramatically into something more passionate and yearning as Szymanowski explores the characterization of Pan as a lonely figure. The top line in the violin utters a pleading song that strains against the major seventh ringing underneath. In this way the melody is both yearning and foreboding, reminding the listener that despite Pan's authority over the woods and Nymphs, his appearance instills fear. This poignant moment reappears in a slightly altered form at the conclusion of the B section (mm.112) in combination with the melody from the second theme, now in harmonics, evoking the feeling of an echo heard throughout the woods that reminds the listener of what took place. Szymanowski marks this return of both themes *pianissimo* and alternates them between the instruments.



Example 15: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 73–74

The third melody of the B section appears in m. 85 and is passionately expressed in both violin and piano parts simultaneously (see example 17). This melody is dramatic, climatic, and marks a dynamic high point as the only time Szymanowski sets important melodic material in *fortissimo*, each note emphasized with accents. As the section continues, Szymanowski capriciously alternates between melodic fragments as if offering a series of snapshots throughout the evening scene. These fragments are gradually layered together in order to alternately heighten and dissipate tension.

Example 16: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 84–89.

There is a rather soft return to the thematic material of the A section found at m. 120, presented above fragmented utterings of melodic material from the B section in the piano. The music returns into a chaotic display of trills and arpeggios until finally Pan reappears, once again abruptly silencing the hysteria and sounding the pipes. The humming quarter-tone chirps return for a final display before the movement closes.

An evocative feature of this movement is the way Szymanowski juxtaposes Dionysian and Apollonian characters. This subject matter was a preoccupation throughout his life and creative output. Szymanowski develops these two characters using sections of contrasting material. A clear example of this takes place in the opening section where he explores Dionysian

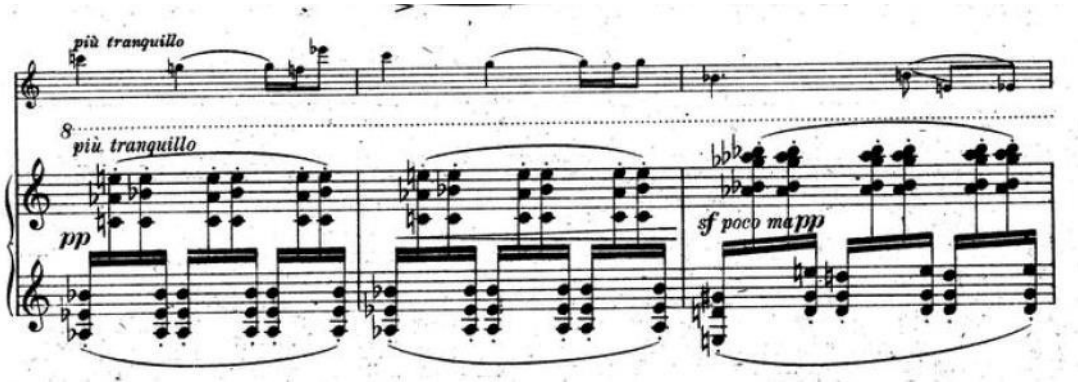
fervor through the characterization of the forest nymphs with flourishing motives marked by rapid arpeggios, trills, and tremolos followed by a dancing jaunty melody. The Apollonian contrast is provided by the characterization of Pan with his pipe calls (m. 55 and 142) and harmonic scales from the violin exhibiting vastly contrasting timbre and tonality.

Another feature explored in this final movement is that of dance. Szymanowski references aspects of dance in his compositional style in many other early and middle period works, including *Lottery for a Husband* (1908–9), the fourth song from *The Love Songs of Hafiz* (1914), and "Tarantella" from *Notturno e Tarantella* (1915). Wightman discusses the role of dance in Szymanowski's music beginning in his middle period as follows:

> From here on, dance becomes a vitally important part of his aesthetic. But — with one exception — these middle period dance movements are no longer recognizable archaic or social dances, analyzable in terms of clearly defined forms, but rather represent the essence of dance as a creative force, associated with a personal hedonism, and more broadly with the divine, cosmic dance, with its mighty unifying Dionysian powers.[17]

The jaunty melody at m. 17 is the perfect example of the dance "essence" to which Wightman refers in the description above (see example 18). Emerging out of the chaos of arpeggios and tremolos, this initial melody gives the impression of a lopsided drunken waltz. Fragments of this melody reappear in both the B and returning A sections, but it never again sounds in its entirety.

[17] The "one exception" refers to *Notturno e Tarantella,* in which Szymanowski uses more traditional dance forms. Stephen Downes, "Harmony and Tonality," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Downes and Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 110.



Example 17: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 21–23.

The final and most outstanding feature displayed in this myth is Szymanowski's extensive use of violinistic technical devices. He does not simply use them for a virtuosic display, but rather employs each technique as an emotional and narrative tool. One clear example of this may be found in his use of violin harmonics to convey the entrances of Pan and his flute; however, Kochański draws attention to two other exemplary uses of violin technique:

> The uneasiness and terror aroused in the Dryads by the appearance of Pan is expressed in recurring glissando passages in fourths — an entirely new affect — and in a continuous trill above long passages of seconds. If properly played this composition makes a great impression because it is so full of emotional effects.[18]

These narrative connections revealed by Kochański are incredibly useful from a performer's perspective and will be expanded upon further in Chapter 6. The moments Kochański mentions, and their subsequent reappearances throughout the movement, play an integral role in creating that feeling of "uneasiness and terror," while also displaying the Dionysian passion and frenzy that is so starkly juxtaposed to the harmonics of Pan's flute.

[18] Frederick Martens, *String Mastery* (1922), 77, quoted in Tyrone Greives, "Solo Violin Music," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Downes and Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 464.

The Impact of Myths on Szymanowski's Contemporaries and Music in Poland

Szymanowski's influence on Polish music is undeniable, but generally his compositions became more influential after his death than they were during his lifetime. Throughout his life he received little support from the Polish musical elites for what he believed to be the important work of bringing Polish music out of provincialism and into the future of European music. In his article titled "Influence of Szymanowski on Polish Music" Paul Cadrin writes:

> Szymanowski felt imbued with a personal mission toward the Polish musical world. This mission may be defined as raising the musical life in Poland, and particularly the field of composition, to a level comparable with contemporary European standards. ... The new art should aim more than ever at the obliteration of the boundaries between "Polishness" and "Europeanness", between a distinctive Polish art and the shared European tradition, which, after all, was the soil of Polish culture... Szymanowski was labeled by the Polish musical establishment as a representative of the avant-garde.[19]

Szymanowski's music may not have had the general impact for which he hoped, but *Myths* was one composition that left a strong impression on musicians, violinists, and composers of the time, including Béla Bartók. After the war, in 1921, Bartók ordered copies of all Szymanowki's available works, and later performed *Myths* himself with violinist Zoltán Székely in Budapest. At this time, Bartók was experiencing a period of compositional drought, seemingly caught up in self-doubt. Malcolm Gillies writes about how the composer was struggling, adding a comment taken from a letter from Bartók's mother-in-law in which she writes about hearing Szymanowski's works as performed by violinist Jelly Aranji, "whose wonderful playing on the violin has drawn out of Béla this (as he tells) long-dormant plan."[20] Such musical stimulation resulted in two violin sonatas, the first of which bears striking connections to *Myths*.[21]

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[19] Paul Cadrin, "Influence of Szymanowski on Polish Music," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Downes and Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 223.
[20] Malcolm Gillies, "Stylistic Integrity and Influence in Bartók's Works: The Case of Szymanowski," *International Journal of Musicology* 1 (1992): 151.
[21] Ibid., 151.

Szymanowski and Bartók had a lot in common, but also some very crucial elements that separated them. They both traveled to Africa in 1913–14, and according to Gillies "attempted to incorporate new Arabic sounds into their compositions."[22] They were both susceptible to surrounding influences and tended to soak up the music and sounds around them. While Szymanowski may have been somewhat wary of the kinds of influences that affected him, Bartok was comparatively more open: "he was ever looking over his shoulder, always susceptible to the latest trends and to the influence of novel ideas he observed in the work of others, whether alive or dead."[23]

Paul Cadrin writes at length about Szymanowski's musical reception in respect to both the World Wars and the advent of socialist realism in Poland between 1948–56, claiming that it "ranged from the rejection of a repertoire deemed bourgeois and decadent, to an ambiguous advocacy of folklorism and neoclassicism."[24] Cadrin also notes that the process of de-Stalinization (which began in 1953) and the subsequent Warsaw Autumn festival in 1956 were crucial historical events that not only had a huge impact on contemporary music in Poland, but also initiated a change in attitude towards Szymanowski's music. The aesthetic qualities of his earlier periods (Romanticism, Exoticism) returned to favor alongside a continued interest in neoclassicism and a move toward "sonorism" (the exploration of sonic phenomena in music, particularly popular in the 1960s) by Polish composers of the avant-garde.[25]

Szymanowski's influence spread beginning in the 1950s. Composers such as Augustyn Bloch (*Piano Variations "Karol Szymanowski in Memoriam,"* 1953), Poitr Perkowski (*W stronę*

[22] Ibid., 151.
[23] Ibid., 145.
[24] Paul Cadrin, "Travels Outside of Poland," in *The Szymanowski Companion*, ed. Stephen Downes and Paul Cadrin (London: Ashgate, 2016), 242.
[25] Ibid., 245.

Atmy, 1979), and Marek Stachowski (*Ody safickie,* 1985) wrote works in homage to Szymanowski. Additionally, the composer's style has even found its way into jazz with Włodzimierz Nahorny's 1997 album of improvisations on the themes of The Myths*,* and Marcin Wasilewski's jazz trio from their 2005 album *Trio* featuring an improvisation on *Roxanna's Song (Król Roger*, Op. 46).[26]

As Cadrin mentions in the closing statements of his chapter, the grand scope of the celebrations that took place in Poland in 2007 marking the 70th anniversary of his death and the 125th anniversary of his birth and commemorating the composer's contribution to music, leave no speculation as to the implication and importance of his work. The Polish Parliament marked the year as the "Year of Karol Szymanowski."[27]

[26] Ibid., 246-7.
[27] Ibid., 248.

CHAPTER 6: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE

The challenge for a violinist setting out to perform *Myths* is not necessarily what one would expect, considering its reputation for extended techniques and compositional ingenuity. In a piece of this technical breadth and intricacy one would expect the primary difficulty to be in the execution and technical command of the material, and while this is indeed a major consideration, the perfect collaboration between composer and performer resulted in such idiomatic writing that despite its technicality, the piece fits comfortably into the violinist's hand. Therefore, the biggest challenge is conveying its emotional trajectory and taking responsibility for one's interpretation. Szymanowski gave the following advice regarding the role of the interpreter to violinist Robert Imandt:

> The principal "tonality" of the "flowing water" in *Arethusa*, the "still water" of "Narcisse" (the motionless, transparent surface of the water), where the beauty of (the ephebe) Narcisse is reflected are the general strands of the work with which I am inclined to permit the greatest freedom to the inspiration of an interpreter who has the talent…[1]

The joy of performing music that fits the violin so well stems from the freedom to focus on exploring every emotional subtlety without technical frustration or hindrance. Rather than presenting one technique after another like some frivolous show-piece, *Myths* conveys the colors, moods, and textures together with the piano. For a violinist, this represents both challenging and rewarding work.

Szymanowski boldly remarked that "together Paweł and I created in *Myths* and the [First] Concerto a new style, a new mode of expression for the violin, something in this respect

[1] Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 144.

completely epoch-making."[2] While Szymanowski was not one to downplay his genius, Alistair Wightman confirms that the composers assertion of a "new mode" of expression was not mere bluster:

> The originality of *Mythes* lies in the way that techniques which previously had been superficial pieces of showmanship now became genuine substance in their own right. It is a measure of the unique nature of the Szymanowski-Kochański partnership that *Mythes*, *Notturno* and the Concerto should have become a vehicle for both Szymanowski's innate lyricism and Kochański's technical specialties without there being internal creative tensions.[3]

The collaboration of Szymanowski and Kochański resulted in the creation of music with a rare connection between the often-divided worlds of intense virtuosity and intimate expressivity, and for any performer tasked with presenting this music, that is both a tall order and an entirely fulfilling experience.

Performance History

Szymanowski's collaboration with Kochański and the violinist's brilliant command of his instrument were some of the driving forces behind the composition of *Myths*. Kochański was one of the most distinguished and talented violinists in Europe at that time. In addition to working with Szymanowski, Kochański received dedicatory works from many other prolific composers, including Stravinsky and Prokofiev.

According to Wightman, the first performance of any portion of *Myths*—the first movement, titled "La Source d'Arethusa" at the time—took place at the Kupicki Club in Kiev on 5 April 1915.[4] Adam Walaciński places the first performance of the full piece at a charity concert

[2] Ibid., 142.
[3] Ibid., 143.
[4] Ibid., 142.

in Uman (Ukraine) in 1916 (performed by Szymanowski himself alongside Kochański), followed by many additional performances at unspecified locations between 1917 and 1918 by Kochański and Henry Neuhaus.[5]

"La Fontaine d'Arethusa" and "Dryads et Pan" were first performed abroad by Kochański and Gregory Ashman at Carnegie Hall in New York on 12 November 1921.[6] In that same year, Béla Bartók also performed the piece with violinist Zoltán Székely. Other violinists that have played and championed the piece over the years include Bronislaw Huberman, Joseph Szigeti, Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Nathan Milstein, Jascha Heifetz, Henryk Szeryng, and many others.

Important recordings include the 1981 Deutsche Grammophon release pairing the Polish violinist Kaja Danczowska with famed pianist Krystian Zimerman in what is a captivating performance, overtly emotional but also expertly balanced with both instruments moving as one organism. While this album also includes César Frank's Violin Sonata and Kochański's transcriptions for violin and piano of two of Szymanowki's songs from *King Roger*, the most impressive part of the recording is their interpretation of "Dryads et Pan," which brims with character contrasts and liveliness.

Pianist Sviatoslav Richter delivers an especially engaging performance for the 1982 live recording of a concert in Warsaw celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Szymanowski's birth. In addition to the composer's second and third piano sonatas, Richter's ode to Szymanowski features a performance of *Myths* in which he is joined by his compatriot and long-time collaborator, the violinist Oleg Kagan. This incredible performance is raw and thrilling, full of the kind of drama and intensity one would expect from a live performance by this acclaimed

[5] Adam Walaciński, preface to *Volume 9, Works for Violin and Piano* (Universal Edition, Wien, 1978), X.
[6] D.J.T., Concert Review, *Musical America* 35, no. 4 (19 Nov 1921): 33.

Russian duo. The emotion throughout this recording is heightened and mixed with the odd moment of roughness, such as the cracks in the harmonics in "Dryads"; however, such qualities are what make this live recording so special.

A CD Accord album of a July 2001 performance in the Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall features Polish violinist Krzysztof Bakowski and pianist Anna Górecka in all of Szymanowski's violin and piano music, including Violin Sonata in D minor (Op. 9), *Lullaby* (*La Berceuse d'Aitacho Enia*, Op. 52), Nocturne and Tarantella (Op. 28), Transcriptions of Roxana's Song from the Opera *King Roger* (Op. 46) and Dance of the Harnasie From the ballet *Harnasie* (Op. 55), and *Myths* (Op. 30). The contrast this duo creates between the sweet and lyrical, the impassioned, heightened intensity, and the lively and frantic is compelling. The climax in "Narcisse" is arrestingly dramatic, and their ability to portray and interpret the dancing frolicking Dryads in the final movement is convincing and interesting.

A review of the aforementioned performance by Kochański and Ashman in New York (1921) offers some perspective on how audiences were receiving *Myths* at that time. Writing for *Musical America*, the author states:

> "La Fontaine d'Arethusa" and "Dryads et Pan" have no form in the conventional sense, but they are longer and more highly organized than the usual modern show-piece for the instrument. They are so full of poetic suggestion that the technical skill of their construction demands no undue attention. Each calls for the use of the mute in some passages; one theme is played *sul ponticello*. They would be nothing in the hands of players less adroit than Mr. Kochański and Mr. Ashman. There is a clear relationship in this music to that of the modern French-men, but the dramatic quality which marks Szymanowski's songs lifts them out of any danger of monotony. Both numbers were greeted with applause which seemed as sincere as it was long, an unusual tribute to two unusual modern tone-poems for violin and piano.[7]

[7] Ibid.

The mastery of Szymanowski's writing was not lost on the reviewer as he mentions the "poetic suggestion," "technical skill," and "dramatic quality" of the music. Furthermore, it seems the audience was equally appreciative of the performance and the music itself. Such an experience was not an exceptional event, as Szymanowski himself described the concert in Kiev where "La Source d'Arethuse" was premiered as "a splendid success."[8]

Matters of Interpretation

There are many factors to consider when interpreting violin music of the early twentieth century. Interpretive decisions regarding bow stroke, bow pressure, vibrato addition and execution, phrase length and shape, dynamic factors involving coloring and shading of sound must all be thoughtfully planned. Additionally, it is also important to consider the specific additions of bowings and fingerings in the score of *Myths* in regard to the edition in question. Since its first print by Universal Edition in Vienna in 1921, the piece has been published many times (by Universal) as a whole and in its separate parts.

Walaciński specifies in the preface to the score that Kochański's fingerings, bowings, and slurs were added to the manuscript and (with the composer's approval) the printed editions by Universal so that they would serve as reminders to Kochański in his own performances of the work. Walaciński mentions that "it has been decided to keep them without any supplements or alterations in the present edition, for they have value as evidence of the collaboration of the composer and the performer."[9]

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[8] Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: Correspondence, Volume 1, 1902–1919* (Self-published e-book, 2016), http://www.plaintextebooks.com/_/_/622747/karol-szymanowski-correspondence-volume-1-1902-1919#ch1902, 384.
[9] Walaciński, Preface, XI.

Fingering

While Kochański's addition of fingerings in the Universal Edition are extremely useful, it is also equally necessary and essential to consider one's own hand size and preferences. As Ruggiero Ricci states in his book *Ricci on Glissando: The Shortcut to Violin Technique*:

> Examining the many published editions of violin music, we find fingerings by Hermann, Schradieck, Auer, Flesch, Galamian, Gingold, Francescatti, Heifetz, Szeryng, etc. Each fingering is added to suit the individual hand of the editor. These varied fingerings are better than nothing, but as a result, the student plays whatever fingering he sees regardless of whether or not it suits his hand. When the teacher writes down a fingering, the pupil does not use his brain. One fingering cannot fit all hand size, and printed fingerings should serve only as a guideline.[10]

Every hand is different, and each must find a fingering solution that best fits their preference. From the perspective of a violinist with a small span and relatively short fingers, I find that Kochański's fingerings are almost entirely comfortable. A piece with this degree of technical demand (including parallel chords, chordal harmonics, rapid passage-work, wide leaps, and chordal trilling) means that it is imperative for the left hand to be flexible and for there to be systematic moments of relaxation. Thoughtful fingering choices will help to maintain flexibility and comfort. For example, fingered octaves are useful wherever there are lengthy passages of continuous octaves (see "Narcisse" m. 85) if the violinist's hand size permits it.

Bowings

Indicated bowings were added by Kochański himself, although it is still important to consider which of these to observe and which should be treated as recommendations, as bowing preferences vary based on body size and arm length. Additionally, it is necessary to differentiate when a composer is referring specifically to bow strokes, and when the markings relate to issues

[10] Ruggiero Ricci, *Ricci on Glissando: The Shortcut to Violin Technique,* ed. Gregory Zayia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 91.

of phrasing; however, by the late nineteenth-century, the level of specificity of detail in the score meant that this became less a concern. In the case of *Myths,* knowing what we do about the close partnership and trust between Szymanowski and Kochański, any markings are likely the functional additions of the performer rather than the authorial markings of the composer, therefore we can ascertain that these markings are primarily bowings.

There are many challenges for the right hand in this piece, such as extreme and abrupt dynamic changes, a variety of chordal passages, and rapid string crossings. In "Dryads et Pan," for example (see example 14,) Szymanowski writes *Lento* and groups the entire harmonic passage into one bow at m. 55. Perhaps Kochański with his excellent technique and long arm could manage this; however, to achieve an even sound on the harmonics, the indicated dynamic shift and the *ritardando,* one might consider separating this passage into two bows. A good place to separate is between the harmonic E and F# (sounding high C#), as this falls at the top of the crescendo and the E harmonic is particularly resonant. Such a division might help the performer achieve a smooth and covered bow change. Other tactical separations could include m. 88, between the high and low D#, so that one can achieve a successful *ff* and *sff* on the lower D#, and m. 141-2, from the bottom of the *gliss.* to the top (ending V bow) so that the top chord has enough bow to ring.

Other bowing considerations involve sustaining beautiful legatos in the dramatic cantabile melodies in the first and second poems*,* and also in the rapid ascending or descending scale passages, such as in m. 61 of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" or m. 26 of "Dryads et Pan," for example. The inclusion in both passages of overlapping slurs (where the bowing does not coincide with the particular melodic note grouping) is an indication that the bow change should

be inaudible. Much control is needed during the bow change either at the tip or the frog; therefore, a soft right hand and wrist are necessary.

Bow Stroke

To achieve the vast range of strokes required in these poems, a violinist must be constantly vigilant about maintaining a flexible right-hand grip. From rapid strokes to painstakingly slow extended passages, subtle or brutal accents to incredibly fluid bow repetitions, thoughtful bow grip and elbow levels are integral.

Bow stroke, pressure, and speed are all critical considerations in music this specific and evocative, such as in "La Fontaine d'Arthuse" when creating the effect of flowing water. At mm. 28–29 Szymanowski writes *sciolto*, meaning free, without strictness and legato. Executing this instruction requires speed and airiness in the bow stroke balanced with enough pressure to create the legato line and the swell in dynamic. One must also special care when considering bow pressure in the chordal harmonics in this movement (at mm. 49–55, for example). The bow must maintain even control of both strings, but also just enough speed to execute the harmonic notes without cracks or squeaks.

The initial violin entry of "Narcisse" demands both slow and steady bow lightness and also a certain attention to the core of the sound when creating the long, yearning melody. Furthermore, in order to create the illusion of the water surface's transparency in m. 49 the bow must be equally balanced on both strings of the chord while still maintaining a transparent, glassy quality. Experiment with speed and elbow levels. In spite of the amount of interpretive suggestions that Szymanowski provides in his specific, expressive, and evocative writing, the performer should not discount the high level of thought and consideration needed to execute Szymanowski's desired style.

Vibrato

The style and use of vibrato are crucial considerations for any violinist, similar to a painter's choice of brushstroke in terms of their expressive capability. In a technically challenging piece like *Myths,* it is important to approach vibrato with more than convenience in mind. The vibrato choices should always be intentional. The kind of vibrato added to a note or throughout a phrase can provide a considerable degree of expressive variety, adds markedly to the sonority and resonance of the sound, and works to convey character, intensity, and phrasing. A variety of sizes and speeds is necessary in works such as *Myths* which have such vast, expressive ranges essentially driven by their melodic, lyrical content.

The violin's opening phrases in both "La Fontaine" and "Narcisse" are perfect examples of Szymanowski's lyrical, melodically-driven writing. Vibrato quality and style are particularly integral to the shaping of these lines and to fully exploit the contrasting registers of the violin. The opening bars of the first myth are written in *pp* and lie high in the violin's register, therefore a small, sweet, yet continuous vibrato will support the timid, wandering disposition of the melody.

Lengthy chordal progressions provide a challenge for a violinist when it comes to vibrato, as they restrict the amount of movement possible on and between each chord. For example, beginning in m. 49 of "Narcisse" the constant variation of hand position caused by the continuous change in interval makes sustained, resonant vibrato difficult (especially as each finger spreads further apart). It is useful to practice each connection separately, alternating back and forth from one chord to the other, while keeping the left hand flexible and the vibrato easy.

Transitioning into and out of *portamenti* can also prove problematic for maintaining a continuous vibrato. As the hand shifts in and out of position, the process of anchoring the finger for accurate intonation impedes the motion of the vibrato. In such passages one must identify the exact moments and sections where the difficulty applies (for example "La Fontaine" mm. 9–19, "Narcisse" mm. 26–34, "Dryads" mm. 85–90) and be intentional with the vibrato. It is helpful to practice shifting in several different ways (see the section below on *portamenti*) so that muscle memory can be relied upon for intonation, and the violinist can retain a flexible, free left hand.

Rhythm and Meter

The opening of "La Fontaine" provides an example of dual time signatures as the music alternates between 4/8 and 3/8. The pattern begins in the piano: 4/8 – 4/8 – 3/8 – 4/8 – 3/8 – 3/8 – 4/8, providing a sense of instability through the mimicry of the natural abnormality of flowing water. The opening melody in the violin changes the pattern, however, to 4 – 4 – 3 – 3. To activate a more elongated sense of phrasing, treat this 4 – 4 – 3 – 3 pattern as one phrase, the second continuing for an additional bars until m. 20. Allow the high, wistful melody to flow freely, and note that Szymanowski instructs the pianist to *seguire* (follow).

There is one moment in "La Fontaine" where violin and piano have different time signatures simultaneously. At m. 41 the violin has 6/8 over the piano's 4/8, each of the violin's three eighth-note beats falling within the piano's two eighth-note beats. It seems Szymanowski has written the section this way for clarity and convenience, allowing the violin's melody rhythmic continuity from the previous section, yet also clearly notating the densely contrapuntal material in the piano and allowing both players to still feel the section in two.

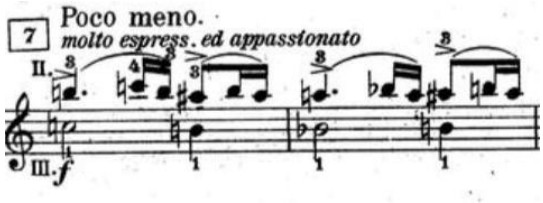
Three of the themes in "Dryads" share a similar rhythmic motive, which transforms in effect and intent with each thematic appearance. This is important for the performer to identify,

as the approach to each varies dramatically in terms of technique, rhythmic and melodic drive, and character. The three themes below feature a similar rhythmic motive (quarter note or dotted quarter note followed by two sixteenth notes). With each iteration Szymanowski transforms the motive to create a different effect. The first theme, marked *dolcissimo* (see example 19), has the feeling of a waltz with the emphasis on the first beat. Here the rhythm enhances the disjointed melody, propelling the large intervals forward, and serving to emphasize the pointy melodic contour. For the violinist, it is necessary to retain a light, active bow arm and a vital and lively approach to the rhythm while avoiding unintentional accents.

The second theme (see example 20) uses the same rhythmic material and while it is also in triple meter, it retains none of the rhythmic drive and liveliness of the first theme. The contrasting character is more ardent (marked *molto espress. ed appassionato*) and features a melody devoid of any large leaping intervals, driven by a rhythmic impetus in which accents emphasize the first and third beat of each bar. In this theme the violinist should focus on bow pressure and distribution, maintaining the legato slurs and the intensity throughout the sixteenth notes. Consider using the down-bow to provide a naturally weightier accent on the downbeat and the slightly lighter weight of the up-bow on the third beat accent to give each bar shape.

The third theme, marked *con passione* (see example 21), is the most climactic and intense of the three as it incorporates the rhythmic motive in the second bar to create a hemiola effect wherein the emphasis on every second beat and the contour of the melodic material is highly dramatic, with theatrical *portamento* slides. There are a number of simultaneous technical challenges in this passage, from maintaining the *ff* dynamic and sustained intensity throughout, to the coordination of left hand *portamenti*, intonation on high notes, and right hand bow speed and pressure.

Example 19: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 17–21.



Example 20: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 73–74.

Example 21: Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 85–89.

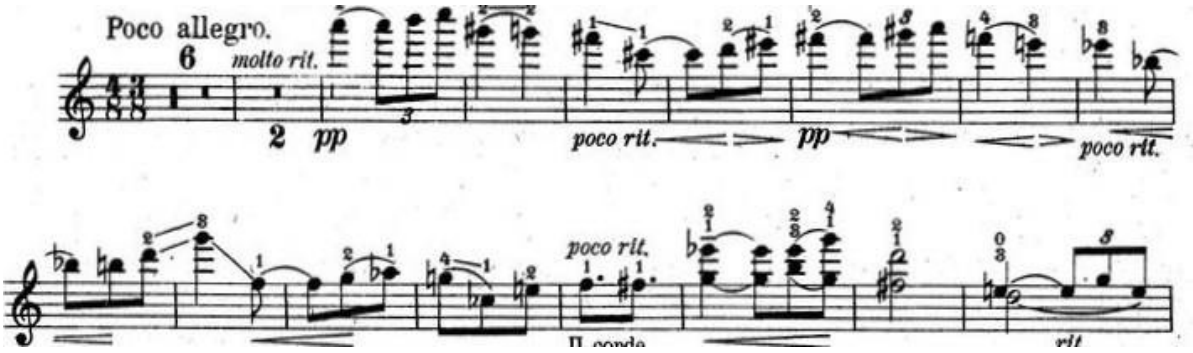
Dynamics

Szymanowski has written the dynamics in *Myths* with such incredible specificity that their interpretation may seem uncomplicated at first glance; however, the interpretive challenge lies in discovering their effect within the bigger picture. Almost every bar contains dynamic instruction, and each movement generally contains markings ranging from *pppp* (end of "La Fontaine") all the way to *sfff* (indicating *subito fortissimo*), all inundated with rapidly juxtaposing dynamic fluctuations. While it is incredibly gratifying to play from a score that is so specific, it requires detailed work in which the performer must think about what each dynamic marking

suggests within the context of the gesture or phrase and how to project every mood, color, or character indicated.

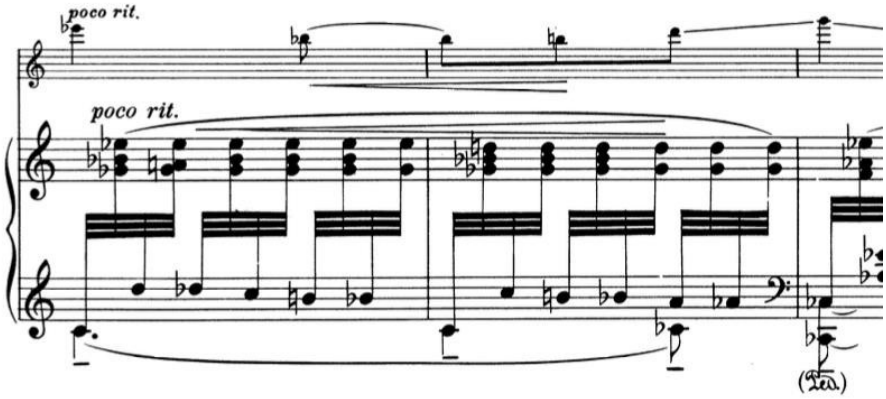
To successfully convey the range of dynamics displayed in *Myths,* one should think of them as more than simple indications of volume. Interpret them using a varied palette of colors and shades, moods and emotions. Dynamics in this setting can be a tool for creating a soundscape, conjuring illusions of light, glimmering water, frenzied activity, hype, stagnancy, etc.

Questions should be considered when approaching "La Fontaine" (see example 22): Do the various dynamic markings in mm. 12–26 indicate for the violinist to remain within *pianissimo*, or rise above pianissimo? Do the small *crescendo* markings in the bars following imply a gradual rise in dynamic *in general?* If so, that would require the performer to make a very rapid *diminuendo* where it is marked *perdendosi* (at the end of the phrase) to create a dying away effect convincingly. If one is to consider the phrase, it becomes clear that Szymanowski is creating with these detailed dynamic markings an elongated, fluctuating, intricately shaped phrase line.



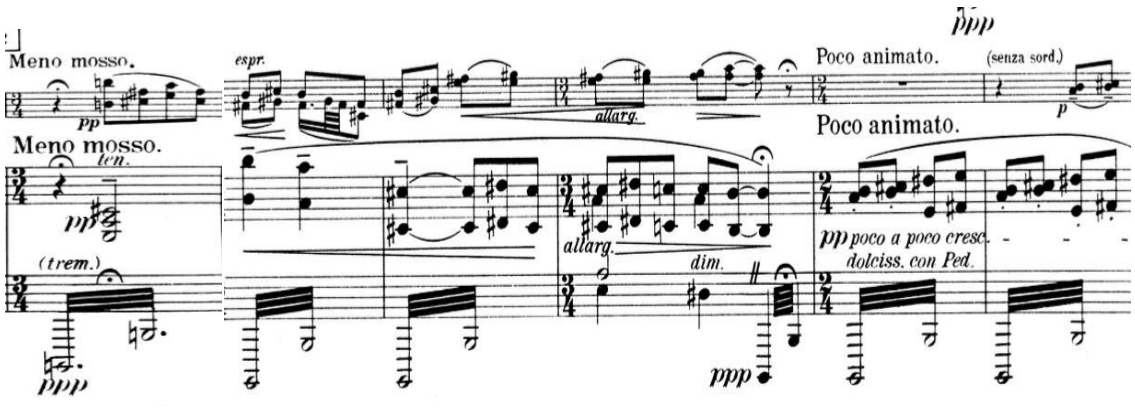
Example 22: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethusa," mm. 1–23.

The way the passage is written for both instruments, most notably the scoring of the violin in a high register, insures that there is no danger of the violin melody being covered by the density of the piano's murmuring motives. Therefore, the violinist can feel at ease to experiment with all the shades of *pp* imaginable. There are scattered moments throughout this opening section where Szymanowski does specifically direct the pianist to rise with the violin's dynamic ascent (see example 23) and this could be the composer's way of pointing out the top of the longer phrase line.



Example 23: Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethusa," mm. 15–17.

There is a moment in "Narcisse" where the register of the violin material does not aid in the projection of the melody and could be an area where both musicians take care with the balance (see example 24). There is a chance that the violin can be lost in the dense scoring at the opening of each section (m. 49 and 54). The violinist should be sure to take the small crescendo in bar 50 seriously, so that the interesting details of the chords (particularly the lower line) are not covered.



Example 24: Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 49–54.

Approaching Specific Violin Techniques and Technical Difficulties

The following paragraphs discuss the many violin techniques Szymanowski incorporates into *Myths,* with a focus on achieving technical command of each. Where necessary, advice will be given regarding specific practice techniques and approaches, and recommendations for further study from volumes of etudes such as Joseph Massart, Carl Flesch and Rudolf Kreutzer.

Portamenti/Glissandi

This piece represents the perfect test of how to navigate intentional *glissandi* (or *portamenti*) and non-audible *glissandi* In his chapter, "The Problem of the *Glissando,*" Carl Flesch differentiates the two terms this way: "The *glissando* or *portamento* is the more or less audible connection between two tones, produced by a change of position. By *glissando,* I understand a *technical* device, by *portamento* a *means of expression*…"[11]

The *portamento* in Flesch's time may be thought of as an expressive tool of phrasing (alongside dynamics, rubato, and vibrato), an unwritten form of expression which aids the

[11] Carl Flesch, *Violin Fingering: Its Theory and Practice*, trans. Boris Schwartz (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1966), 101.

performer in subtly shaping the expressive force of the piece. In *Myths*, Szymanowski specifically indicates *portamenti* in the score; his intention likely in these cases is for them to be treated as a sonoristic device, however, this is only speculation. The entry of the violin melody in the beginning of the first myth is a perfect example of such an indication (see example 22 above).

Whether one could also add in expressive, performative (unwritten) *glissandi* remains a question of interpretation. It is a relatively common practice to do so within the boundaries of good taste when one is performing works from the Romantic style period and later; however, Szymanowski's music in general (including *Myths*) must be regarded differently due to his explicit specificity. However, if one looks to Kochański as the technical inspiration behind this piece, then one can easily justify an extra *glissando* here and there for expressive purposes. One only needs to refer to recordings of Kochański playing Brahms violin sonatas to hear that he is generous with their inclusion—more than modern taste might accept. In either case, highlighting and articulating Szymanowski's specific additions of *portimenti* is important, and these additions should be treated with due emphasis and lyricism. This discussion falls within a larger interpretational issue of violinistic style and how it has changed over the years. What used to be stylistic and tasteful in Kochański's day may not necessarily be so today. Nevertheless, at a certain point, it is necessary to take ownership of one's style of playing and deliver it thoughtfully and convincingly.

When approaching Szymanowski's written *portamenti* there are some practical considerations to keep in mind. A good rule of thumb when practicing any technique is to tackle it from many angles, work on it in as many ways as possible. To grasp the feeling of every part of the movement of the slide, practice each *glissando* slowly up and down regardless of what

direction it is written. Experiment with the speed of each *glissando*, practicing it faster and slower than written in order to come to a thorough understanding of its timing.

Always consider which finger is best to use during the slide, whether it is the previous or following finger, or even a separate finger altogether. Ricci writes at length about the different styles and uses of fingerings. For understanding and mastering *Myths,* it may not be necessary to go into all the specifics, so long as there is a clear understanding of the function of the slide, and the most effective way to achieve it.[12]

It might be useful to look briefly at a specific (and somewhat odd) example of *glissandi* found in m. 55 of "Dryads et Pan" and which takes place during a passage of natural harmonics. While it is, of course, possible to slide from one note to the next as indicated, it may be beneficial to start by using separate fingerings. These harmonics tend to be further apart than expected, so to practice achieving a convincing sound on each without the *glissando* could be helpful.

Harmonics

When practicing harmonics, one should be aware of the pressure of the stable finger as well as the speed and pressure of the bow. A useful question to ask during this process is: What is this harmonic technique intending to convey? If it is intended to represent the sound of a pipe, as in "Dryads et Pan," what kind of pipe sound was Szymanowski hoping to emulate?

Chordal harmonics, such as those found in mm. 49 and 53 of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," create challenges. The difficulty lies in achieving a stable sound on both harmonic notes of the chord. One problem is creating and maintaining stable fifths that have sound intonation. Experimentation with the left-hand position is necessary and focusing the bow stroke on the base

[12] Ricci, *Ricci on Glissando,* 91.

note of each two-note chord is essential for avoiding extraneous noises and squeaks. Confidence in bow pressure and speed at the beginning of each harmonic chord is essential. Another suggestion for practicing this section is to tune the fifths without the harmonics first. These fifths are difficult to tune, so one should remember the hand position when adding the harmonic note back in.

When playing the difficult harmonic section in "Dryads et Pan" (beginning in m. 103), one should start by practicing the grounded finger separately. Doing this will give the player a full understanding of the contour of the melody first, and a feel for both left- and right-hand movement. It could also be helpful to practice the melody with harmonics but without any specific articulation, helping the player to find the desired sound. Once the desired harmonic tone is achieved, then comes the challenge of adding the articulation while still retaining that specific sound-world. During this process, it is advisable to keep the tempo slow and steady before increasing the tempo as one's confidence in the technique increases.

Bow speed and finger pressure are also important factors when playing the natural harmonics utilized in "Dryads" to imitate Pan's flute. One must maintain a soft but consistent left hand and confidence in the *glissandi* (as previously discussed). Experiment with using a slightly *tasto*, medium bow pressure.

Chordal passagework

It is important to think about what Szymanowski intended with each chordal passage. Some should be delivered with pressure on each chord while others executed with a smooth legato quality. This legato quality is difficult to produce when executing octaves that jump between large intervals (such as in m. 61 of "Narcisse"). There are a few suitable practice techniques to apply in these cases. For example, one might practice adding long *glissandi*

between each octave, allowing the left hand to feel the distance between each shift and the bow to maintain the legato. Once this feels stable and comfortable, practice it the opposite way using a *martelé* stroke. Stop the bow between each octave, find the new note in silence, and continue playing. Etudes one may find relevant for this kind of technical difficulty are found in Joseph Massart's *The Art of Studying R. Kreutzer's Etudes*, especially Nos. 5.4 and 6.[13]

The homophonic passage that begins in m. 49 of "Narcisse" is particularly challenging for several reasons. Maintaining correct intonation is always difficult when executing such an elongated passage of legato chords. Switching between sevenths and seconds alternately stretches and constricts the left hand, necessitating both flexibility and utilizing moments of relaxation.

There are two challenges for a violinist when achieving even, legato, chordal passages. The first is balancing and preempting the string crossings with the correct right elbow levels, the intention of which is to avoid sudden bow jerks, accents, and an uneven tone on both notes of the chord. The second challenge is maintaining the legato throughout the slurs while achieving equally smooth changes to and from both notes of the chord.

There are two useful practice techniques for passages like this. The first is to use slow, untimed separate bows with each chord, sinking into the string and taking the time to find the right tuning for each as well as the correct weight and balance of the bow on the strings. The second technique is to practice the passage at half speed, using half bow per chord with *martelé* strokes, two chords in each bow. Be sure to take regular breaks during these exercises, to allow

[13] Joseph Lambert Massart, *The Art of Studying R. Kreutzer's Etudes: 412 examples compiled according to the advice of the author* (Carl Fischer, New York; 1898), 11.

the left hand to rest. For more contrapuntal, chordal passagework practice, try Rudolf Kreutzer's studies Nos. 34 and 39.[14]

Trills and chordal trilling

There are rapid trilling passages throughout all three movements, although Szymanowski uses the technique in different ways to convey natural elements like water in "La Fontaine" or to evoke the humming forest in "Dryads." Using the "Dryads" passage beginning in m. 128 as an example, one might find it useful to begin by practicing the passage without the trills, only the sliding chords. Once the hand feels comfortable finding the necessary movement within the rhythm, then add the trill.

Trills within chordal passages are difficult for both hand and brain. To get both accustomed to achieving this awkward technique, spend a few minutes practicing scales with an anchored note and additional trill on top. As previously mentioned, remember to take regular breaks to give the left hand time to rest.

Rapid passagework

While not an advanced violin technique specifically, Szymanowski's use of rapid passagework does warrant some attention as there are many examples of this throughout Myths, particularly in the first and third movements. This music calls for a violinist to be able to move around the violin rapidly, and with ease and grace. Achieving this requires thought regarding left hand thumb placement and preparation.

To assist in mastering this technique, one should practice every fast grouping in different ways. Start by trying them slowly, but with a steady tempo. Add dotted rhythms, grouping the

[14] Rudolf Kreutzer, *42 Studies for Violin,* ed. Hermann Schröder (G. Schirmer, New York, 1889), 64, 74.

notes in two and then groups of three in triplet rhythms. Experiment with different bowing types, *spiccato* bowings, separate bowings, and exaggerated *martelé.*

Finally, approach these passages while focusing on the left hand. Start with slow, intentional finger placement (always practice within a specific tempo, preferably with metronome) then slide between the larger shifts/intervals. For supplementary practice, refer to Kreutzer studies nos. 14 and 23, which both requiring a player to maintain legato during fast scalic and chromatic passagework.[15]

Collaboration

The scoring between the violin and the piano in *Myths* is entirely cohesive and while it may be very contrapuntal at times, the instruments should move together as one organism. It is important for any duo ensemble to collaborate earlier in the collaboration process rather than later and in *Myths* it is extremely valuable for both instrumentalists to start working together from the very beginning. Such early collaboration will help to resolve any tempo-related issues that may arise, although there will inevitably be a need for tempo negotiation between the two instruments, as the pair prepares the piece.

It is important for both players to be well-versed in the score, and the violinist will benefit greatly by rehearsing from the full score. As with any music written so cohesively, it is necessary for both performers to experience the parts both aurally and visually. The duo should consider how different the writing is for the violin (primarily melodic and lyrical) compared to the piano (primarily symphonic) and where in the work this difference could create issues of balance; however, due to Szymanowski's use of contrasting textures and dramatic range in register, balance issues are rare.

[15] Ibid., 32, 46.

In “La Fontaine” it might be helpful to practice the A section without the “water accompaniment,” where the piano just taps out the bottom note of each gesture in eight notes and continues playing the bass note lengths accordingly at R1. Removing the thickness of texture from the piano material can help both players to grasp the basic flow and phrasing of the section.

The B section of “La Fontaine” will need careful study and rehearsal. The parts are so intricately woven together that the piano has a difficult task of gracefully executing each rhapsodic gesture. Additionally, the violinist must be extremely careful not to rush through the melodic phrases between mm. 29–41 and many passages in the middle section.

“Narcisse” presents many challenges for the members of the duo individually, but as a collaboration comes together with more ease. Both players should be aware of the dual time signatures in the A section of this movement and consider how this feature will impact flow and phrasing. For example, why does Szymanowski notate the right hand in 2/4 and the left hand in 6/8 from m. 9, when he could have written out the left hand in triplets? Perhaps he meant it to convey a different *feeling* of tempo (languorous violin in contrast to the busy, active piano) rather than having direct ramifications regarding tempo.

There can be the potential for balance issues in the B section of “Narcisse,” particularly around m. 50 and continuing passages. These are rare occasions where the right hand of the piano is playing at a higher register than the violin. The violinist should be careful to project both lines of each chord equally, as the bottom line can get lost in the dense texture.

An important task in “Dryads” is for the performers to focus on connecting the flourishing scale passages between piano and violin. It could be beneficial to take these sections apart (mm. 11–15 or 33–39, for example), playing only the thirty-second note runs to practice that connection between the violin and piano right hand. One of the main challenges in

rehearsing this movement comes in executing successful character changes, from the different character of each of the Dryads' themes to the *Lento Amoroso* melody conjuring the image of Pan and his pipes.

Conclusion

Myths is an undeniably captivating piece of music in which Szymanowksi has created music that is driven by both its lyricism and sensuality, a tour de force of violinistic technique and subtle virtuosity. Walaciński expertly summarizes many of the reasons why this piece stands out in the canon:

> Technical devices of typically virtuoso nature—arpeggios, continuous trills on double-stops, single and double harmonics, pizzicato performed with the left hand, etc.—are not only set into the refined coloristic and harmonic climate, but also undergo a full sublimation, their commonplace function, turning to outward display, is raised to the decisive role of being one of the main elements of coloring, which in the case of *Myths* utterly governs the artistic form of the composition. Szymanowski sets different effects together into kaleidoscopic arrangements and forms constellations of uncommon variegation of colours and variable polymorphism. Instrumental timbres are also markedly enriched with a subtle play of registers.[16]

By studying this piece through the lenses of both Szymanowski's experience and the context of the time during which he composed deepens one's admiration for its creativity and ingenuity of the work. One discovers that there truly was nothing quite like it written at that time, due in part to the harsh realities of war. In partitioned Poland the potential for musical creativity was stifled by political forces and this environment encouraged compositions in nationalist musical styles; however, Szymanowski's ability to isolate himself from his surroundings and access the creative power of his inner world meant that he was able to produce this masterpiece in spite of the oppressive atmosphere that dominated the music of his homeland.

[16] Walaciński, Preface, xi.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this piece displays an endless array of technical demands both for violinist and pianist, as well as the challenge of collaboration between the instruments. Yet the true satisfaction that may be found in the study and mastery of this piece as a performer comes from exploring the expressive and lyrical range of the material and the many contrasting timbres a duo can creation through their thoughtful, experimentation and exploration of Szymanowski's collaborative soundscape and textures.

Appendix 1: "La Fontaine d'Arethusa"[1]

A: measures 1 to 29	
Mm. 1–8: Mm. 9–28:	Piano introduction ("Water" accompaniment); bitonality used (A minor and E-flat minor). First theme introduced by the violin. Temporary resolution in E-flat major at m. 21.
B: measures 29 to 73	
Mm. 30–36: Mm. 42–46: Mm. 47–56: Mm. 57–73:	Second theme introduced by violin, combined with the first theme. Short transition. Second theme fragmented and in augmentation. Longer transition leading to climax (mm. 71 to 73). Variation of the second theme (mm. 63 to 68).
A': measures 74 to 1 17	
Mm. 74–81: Mm. 87–103: M. 104: Mm. 105–117:	"Water" accompaniment First theme; temporary resolution in E-flat major at m. 99. Reappearance of the second theme as a cadenza. Coda. *Cadence on E-flat.

[1] Frank Kwantat Ho, "The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 53.

Appendix 2: "Narcisse"[1]

A: measures t to 48	
Mm. 1–3:	Piano presents multi-layered dissonance. 6/8 over 2/4, LH emphasizes the 2nd beat of each bar.
Mm. 4–22:	
Mm. 23–48:	First theme presented by the violin, ascending gestures gradually reaching higher, then falling in chromatic descending motive. "Obsession" motive prominent *(Poco piu animato*); B major established (B-F# LH pedal). Second primary theme presented m. 26, provides antithetical motion to first theme, falling chromatic lines.
B: measures 49 to 96	
Mm. 49–52:	Third theme (*Meno mosso*). B major pedal in piano LH.
Mm. 53–61:	*Poco animato*. Alternating sequences of 2nds and 7ths exchanged in *stretto* between piano and violin.
Mm. 62–73:	Layering of thematic material in piano: first theme in RH, inverted repetitions of falling motive from second theme in LH.
Mm. 74–75:	"Obsession" motive developed.
Mm. 76–82:	First theme.
Mm. 83–92:	Third theme.
Mm. 93–96:	Second theme.
A: measures 97 to 148	
Mm. 97–122:	First theme. Climax at m. 117 (triple *forte*).
Mm. 123–137:	Second theme accompanied by "obsession" motive.
Mm. 138–148:	Codetta. Third, second, and first themes combined into a single melodic line (summation). Close in B major.

[1] Frank Kwantat Ho, "The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 59.

Appendix 3: "Dryads et Pan"[1]

Introduction: measures 1 to 10	
Mm. 1-10:	Violin solo; notable use of quarter-tones; piano entry at measure 4.
A: measures 11 to 54	
Mm. 12–16	First theme ("Dryad" theme) introduced by the piano, accompanied by tremolando and arpeggios in the violin part.
Mm. 24–41:	First theme played by violin; piano plays "Dryad" accompaniment.
Mm. 42–54:	"Free" section I: "Dryad" accompaniment and fragments of the first theme featured. Transitional material; glissando trills in major seconds in violin part.
B: measures 55 to 119	
Mm. 55–58:	Pan's pipe call ("La flute de Pan" as Szymanowski marks in the score).
Mm. 59–68:	Second theme.
M. 69:	"Pan pipe" interruption.
Mm. 70–72:	"Dryad" accompaniment.
Mm. 73–80:	Third theme.
Mm. 81–84:	Second theme.
Mm. 85–90:	Variant of the first theme.
Mm. 91–94:	Third theme.
Mm. 95–112:	"Free" section II: fragments of first and second themes incorporated.
Mm. 113–119:	Second and third themes combined.
A: measures 120 to 142	
Mm. 120–127:	First theme with occasional interjections of second and third themes (e.g., mm. 122 to 123,126 to 127.
Mm. 128–142:	Transitional material, with occasional use of the second and third themes.
Mm. 143–157:	Coda: Pan's pipes return followed by a return to the quarter—tone murmuring motive from the opening, interrupted by a frenzied pizzicato flourish and a final chord on D.

[1] Frank Kwantat Ho, "The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 2000), 64.

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