
Sinfonia Varsovia kicks off Bozar's focus on Poland

Brussels, 8th Jan - To mark Poland's presidency in the Council of the European Union, Bozar is organising *Focus on Poland*, with talks, films and an exhibition alongside the finest Polish music.

Tonight, Sinfonia Varsovia is kicking off **a semester full of Polish music** with works by Bacewicz, Szymanowski, and Górecki. This opening marks the beginning of a rich program, spanning classical to electronic genres. Audiences can look forward to highlights such as performances by the **Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of **Marin Alsop** and the *Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg* with conductor **Tarmo Peltokoski**. Adding an electronic twist, the celebrated renowned Polish **Unsound Festival** will have its first Brussels' edition.

8 Jan.'25 - Sinfonia Varsovia

The subtitle of Henryk **Górecki's** *Third Symphony*, "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs", refers to the three texts sung by a soprano throughout the opera. A 15th-century lament of the Virgin Mary is followed by a text written on the wall of a Gestapo cell and signed by an 18-year-old woman. A Polish folk song about a mother looking for her dead son brings the symphony to a close. In an interview in 1992, against the backdrop of the civil war in Bosnia that reminded him of the Second World War and communism, Górecki said: "My third symphony is tragic, but not in the sense of a tragedy. I simply wanted to express great sorrow. A sorrow that burns within me, which I cannot shake off." The soprano **Liudmyla Monastyrska** embodies the maternal grief and resilience in this work, accompanied by the Polish **Sinfonia Varsovia**. Violinist **Josef Špaček** adds Karol **Szymanowski's** *Second Violin Concerto* to the programme.

Co-organized by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute.

Co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Poland.

14 – 15 Feb. '25 - Unsound Brussels

Bozar is excited to announce that **Unsound**, an internationally acclaimed Polish festival for boundary-pushing music and visual arts, is coming to Brussels. With roots in Krakow and editions in New York, Toronto, and Adelaide, Unsound has built a worldwide reputation. Expect a wide range of contemporary music: from emerging talent to leftfield and experimental work. Regardless of genres, Unsound goes for a full-on radical sound.

On 14 and 15 February 2025, Unsound Festival makes its debut in Brussels with a two-day program that promises to captivate audiences.

The festival begins on **14 February** at **Bozar**, showcasing the innovative sounds of Polish composer **Piotr Kurek**, the multidisciplinary artistry of **Ego Death**, and the experimental creations of UK artist **Rainy Miller**.

On **15 February**, Bozar continues to host an inspiring lineup featuring **Raphael Rogiński & Indrė Jurgelevičiūtė** presenting *Žaltys*, the hauntingly beautiful audiovisual project Гільдегарда (*Hildegarde*) by Heinali & Andriana-Yaroslava Saienko, and the dynamic duo **AKA HEX**, a collaboration between **Aisha Devi** and **Slikback**.

All Concerts at Bozar will take place in the Terarken room – Specifically designed to host electronic artists and performances, the venue accommodates 400-500 people in an open, unseated, underground space.

The festival wraps up in style on the evening of **15 February** with a **Clubnight at Reset**, offering an electrifying lineup featuring **Slikback**, a **2K88 b2b ojoo** set, the mesmerizing beats of **Gummi** and more to be announced.

With the support of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the international cultural program of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2025.

25 Mar. '25 - Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra & Marin Alsop

With his 1926 *Stabat Mater*, Karol **Szymanowski** joins a prestigious line of composers who have set the anonymous mediaeval text to music: Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Rossini, Schubert and Verdi. Szymanowski has updated the tradition by using a Polish translation of the Latin text and adding Polish folk melodies to the religious piece. The three soloists never sing together, as if Mary's sorrow could not yet be shared, and only come together in the closing section. This vocal masterpiece by Szymanowski is supplemented with his



own *Fourth Symphony* and two works by his compatriots: the *Suita* for string orchestra by Grażyna **Bacewicz** – also dating from the 1930s – and Krzysztof **Penderecki's** *Ciaconne* from 2005.

Co-organized by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the international cultural program of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2025.

15 May. '25 - Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg & Peltokoski

In **Wagner's** unrivalled musical drama, a blasphemous Dutchman is condemned to roam the sea forever. Only the everlasting faithfulness of a woman can break the curse. Senta, the daughter of a sea captain, is prepared to swear her fidelity. Fate determines otherwise, however, and the lovers only come together in death. In *Der fliegende Holländer*, Wagner returns to one of his most important themes: the redemptive power of love that overcomes death itself. Under the inspired leadership of **Tarmo Peltokoski**, the **Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg** brings Wagner's masterpiece entirely to life in this concert performance.



Explore all concerts with Polish Music at Bozar

11.01.2025	'Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Emelyanychev & Tetzlaff'	Modest Mussorgsky <i>A night on a bare mountain</i> Karol Szymanowski Concerto for violin and orchestra no. 1, op. 35 Pyotr Tchaikovsky <i>Symphony no. 6, op. 74, "Pathétique"</i>
21.03.2025	'Patricia Kopatchinskaja & Fazil Say	Karol Szymanowski Myths for Violin and Piano, op. 30 Fazil Say New piece Patricia Kopatchinskaja New piece Ludwig van Beethoven Sonate for violin and piano no. 9, op. 47, "Kreutzer"
11.05.2025	'Jan Lisiecki'	Works of Frédéric Chopin , Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Rachmaninov, Karol Szymanowski , Olivier Messiaen, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki

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4 Polish composers you should get to know

Everyone knows Chopin's mazurkas and polonaises, but which Polish composers took up his legacy a century later? Discover 4 Polish composers and more at Bozar.

Karol Szymanowski: the role model after Chopin

33 years after the death of Frédéric Chopin, Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) came into the world in an art-loving, aristocratic family where he was taught music from an early age. In his young career, he followed a neo-Romantic course and promoted new music by compatriots in the group 'Young Poles'. Strauss, Wagner and Chopin influenced his first compositions. **Jan Lisiecki** ([11 May](#)) plays some of Szymanowski's stunning *Préludes for piano* from the first opus number.

Having travelled through Europe and North Africa, it was mainly the impressionists Ravel and Debussy - with their penchant for exotica - who had an influence on Szymanowski. The 1915 *Myths for violin and piano* are the ultimate proof of this and are on the programme of **Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Fazil Say** ([21 March](#)). When Poland regained its independence after the end of World War I and Szymanowski became director of the National Conservatory, young composers saw him as their spiritual leader and his music as the rebirth of a national style. Szymanowski nevertheless travelled often and incorporated foreign impressions into his music. He described his *First Violin Concerto*, soon to be performed by **Antwerp Symphony Orchestra** ([11 January](#)) as 'a new, different

music' by exploring timbres and breaking free from imposed structures.

In the search for a personal (Polish) style with universal dignity, Szymanowski sought refuge in the folk music of the Tatra mountains. In the incomparable *Stabat Mater* - on [25 March](#) with **Polish National Symphony Orchestra** - the composer creates a Polish atmosphere by mixing archaic elements with folk music, but following modern harmonic and tonal procedures. In the *Second Violin Concerto* - on [8 January](#) with **Sinfonia Varsovia** - modality and the long notes in the basses make the link with folk music. Then, in the Fourth Symphony (also 25 March), he incorporates two national dances: the oberek and the mazurka.

Grażyna Bacewicz: more than a violinist

Countless Polish streets and schools bear her name: Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-1969). The name might ring a bell here in Belgium too, as the Queen Elisabeth Competition awarded the last of her seven violin concertos. She broke through as a violinist, but after a car accident threw herself entirely into composing adventurous music, in which the violin was often given an important role. Compared to Szymanowski, Bacewicz experienced another transformation of Poland: in 1939, Hitler occupied Poland. She



wrote her *Overture for Orchestra* ([8 January](#) with **Sinfonia Varsovia**) during World War II but it did not receive its premiere until 1945.

Henryk Mikolaj Górecki: the popular introvert

The *Third Symphony*, also known as *Symphony of Lamentations* ([8 January](#) with **Sinfonia Varsovia**) by Henryk Mikolaj Górecki (1933-2010), commemorating the Nazi bombing of Danzig, is indicative of the transition between Górecki's earlier dissonant style and his later style characterised by repetition, simplicity, modality and an archaic soundscape. It was met with international criticism at the time. Of the work, Górecki said, 'My *Third Symphony* is tragic, but not in the sense of a tragedy. I just wanted to express a great sorrow. A suffering that burns inside me and I cannot shake off.'

The music teacher and avant-gardist experienced the next turning point in Polish history: from Soviet state to independent republic after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Partly because of this new context, he did not break through to the general public until 1992, even though he had already won international prizes in the 1960s. Thirty years later, the recording of the *Third Symphony* even entered the British charts. The soundtrack to a new world marked by its past.

Krzysztof Penderecki: paving the way for the future

You may recognise the music of Krzysztof Penderecki, who died in 2020, from the films of Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick and David Lynch. Or maybe you have been fond of his 1984 Polish Requiem, a grandly conceived mass to which Penderecki added parts in subsequent years. One of these is the Chaconne ([25 March](#) with **Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra**), which was written in memory of Polish Pope John Paul II and was not given a place in the requiem until 2005. Penderecki was a dedicated music teacher at the Academy of Kraków and Yale School of Music. We wonder which (Polish) composers will fill his shoes and our concert hall in the coming decades ...

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