

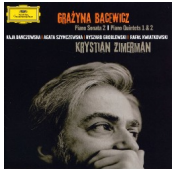
## Grażyna Bacewicz – Piano Quintets 1 & 2 – Piano Sonata No.2

Written by bluesever

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### Grażyna Bacewicz – Piano Quintets 1 & 2 – Piano Sonata No.2 (2011)



Piano Quintet No.1 1. *Moderato molto espressivo - Allegro* 2. *Presto* 3. *Grave* 4. *Con passion*  
Piano Sonata No.2 5. *Maestoso - Agitato* 6. *Largo* 7. *Toccata. Vivo*  
[play](#) Piano Quintet No.2 8. *Moderato - Allegro* 9. *Larghetto* 10. *Allegro giocoso*  
Musicians: Krystian Zimerman (Piano) Kaja Danczowska (Violin) Agata Szymczewska (Violin) Ryszard Groblewski (Viola) Rafal Kwiatkowski (Cello)

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Grażyna Bacewicz was famous as one of the leading and most forward-looking composers of her generation. Comparisons were drawn with Nadia Boulanger, who had occupied an equally prominent position in the world of music before the Second World War. Today it is Sofia Gubai-dulina who plays this role on the contemporary classical scene. If Grażyna Bacewicz's music failed to reach a wider international audience, this was due above all to the circumstances in which she lived and worked: during the most creative and productive years of her life as a composer, her native Poland - like all the other countries of the Eastern Bloc - was cut off from developments in the world at large and, more especially, in the world of western culture. Grażyna Bacewicz was born in Łódź on 5 February 1909 and died in Warsaw on 17 January 1969. She was active as a composer, violinist and teacher. She attended the Warsaw Conservatory, where she studied composition with Kazimierz Sikorski and the violin with Józef Jarzębski, graduating in 1932 and at the same time studying the piano with Józef Turczyński, before furthering her composition studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris and perfecting her violin technique with André Touret and, later, Carl Flesch at the École normale de Musique in Paris. Her studies in Paris were supported by Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Bacewicz's works are exceptionally rich and varied, extending, as they do, to all the different musical genres and forms.

But although she wrote symphonic works and instrumental concertos, her great passion was chamber music. Among her contributions to the medium are seven string quartets entirely capable of standing comparison with those of Bartók. Bacewicz was in total command of her

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métier. Her pieces are invariably notable for their clear and careful formal planning. She worked constantly at refining her musical language. During the interwar years her aesthetic outlook owed much to that of Karol Szymanowski, while also reflecting the influence of French music. In the wake of the Second World War her style became more animated and dynamic, a development arguably due to the influence of Stravinsky, Bartók and Prokofiev and to her use of stylized forms of Polish folk music.

At the end of the 1950s she made a cautious attempt to adopt a new aesthetic approach that she herself termed "avant-garde". Bacewicz's music has all the qualities of an exceptional art. Her formal mastery and technical brilliance have lost none of their ability to dazzle us today. This is a conviction shared by Krystian Zimerman: "I'd like to honour a composer to whom I and all the rest of us owe a great deal. I thought about recording the two quintets as long ago as 2002, when I presented Deutsche Grammophon with my recording plans for the next few years. I was still a student when I first got to know Grażyna Bacewicz's works in the 1970s. At that time my repertory included the Second Piano Sonata. This is a work I continue to perform at my recitals, and I should add that wherever I play it, it always goes down very well with audiences. After my recitals I am regularly asked: "Who wrote this music? Where can I get hold of a copy of the score? Are there any recordings?" On 5 February 2009 - the centenary of Bacewicz's birth - Krystian Zimerman gave the first of five concerts devoted exclusively to her music. It took place in her birthplace, Łódź, which was also the birthplace of Artur Schnabel.

The programme for this first concert featured the two Piano Quintets and the Second Piano Sonata. The five concerts were given in Poland's five most important cities: not only Łódź but also Warsaw, Poznań, Cracow and Katowice. In every case the musicians were enthusiastically received. Bacewicz and her formally perfect music returned in triumph to the concert hall. Krystian Zimerman and his four distinguished colleagues brought all their skill and innovative understanding to these works, making them sound freshly minted for the 21st century. "Our work in the rehearsal room will always remain lodged in my memory as something unique and unforgettable," says the cellist Rafał Kwiatkowski. "To be able to work together on a common goal was not just fantastic but mutually inspiring. I think we were very successful in what we achieved in the field of sonority, tone colour and, more generally, the colourful light that we were able to throw on the music. I have the feeling that we created a very special kind of aesthetic approach.

But how could it be otherwise when Krystian Zimerman was at the piano?" The violinist Kaja Danczowska had already worked with Krystian Zimerman in the recording studio, notably on pieces by Szymanowski. Asked how she thought the deepest layers and ideas of this music could be reached, she replied: "One need only surrender to the composer because everything she wanted to say is written into the music." The second violinist, Agata Szymczewska, who is also the youngest member of the group, admits that she had previously had little experience

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of playing chamber music, but after working with artists like Krystian Zimerman and Kaja Danczowska she is firmly convinced that in future the world of chamber music will mean far more to her than it has done until now: "I'm very happy I was able to work with musicians like these and to rehearse these exceptionally interesting pieces with them." "For me," says the viola player Ryszard Groblewski, "the music of Grażyna Bacewicz was already a known quantity, and I was aware of its exceptional quality. That's why it's been a great honour for me to work with Krystian Zimerman and three other brilliant musicians in celebrating this magnificent Polish composer on the occasion of her hundredth anniversary.

The two quintets, which I've now got to know in greater detail, are veritable pearls. I hope our recording will help to bring Grażyna Bacewicz's name to the attention of a wider audience." The First Piano Quintet was premiered in 1952 and quickly hailed as a work of exceptional maturity in terms of its musical ideas and the ways in which those ideas are implemented. All four sections are logically interconnected so as to create a four-movement cycle, while also revealing highly personal emotions on the part of the composer. The magisterial musical language reflects the work's classical form. As always with Bacewicz, the composer's technical skills and her understanding of the instruments' range of sonorities are on the very highest level. It is clear that great passion informs this work, a point evident from even the very first bars, in which a lyrical section (*Moderato molto espressivo*) is contrasted with the iridescent brilliance of the virtuosity and also with the figurative fragments (*Allegro*). The second section is a scherzo at a markedly faster tempo. It is written as a stylized Polish folk dance, the oberek, a dance of which the composer was particularly fond and which is heard again in the final movement of the Second Piano Sonata. The Second Piano Sonata was written a year later and belongs to the same creative period as the First Piano Quintet. Both works share a similar neoclassical form, a comparable post-Romantic range of expression and the use of the oberek. We would be entirely justified in speaking of this work in the same breath as the great piano sonatas of the 20th century, including, for example, the late sonatas of Prokofiev. The three-movement work begins with a *Maestoso - Agitato* filled with contrasts and emotional tensions and built up along the lines of an opening *allegro*. The highly emotional *Largo* is reminiscent of the slow movement of the First Piano Quintet, while the final *Toccata* sweeps the listener along with its virtuosity and energy, the latter produced by its use of the oberek. It was Bacewicz herself who gave the first performance of the Second Piano Sonata, a work that calls on its performer's entire technical arsenal. A few years later the piece was taken into the repertory of Andrzej Jasiński, who subsequently taught Krystian Zimerman and inspired his famous pupil with an abiding love of this extraordinary work. The two piano quintets were written thirteen years apart. The second of them dates from 1965 and is generally regarded as one of the most important of all her contributions to the medium. It also represents a change of aesthetic direction for its composer: as she admitted at the time, she was now moving towards the avant-garde and the world of dodecaphony, aleatory features and complex tone colours. Formally speaking, the work harks back to Classical models. But it achieves its sense of cohesion by dint of its uninhibited flood of sounds, most frequently in the form of individual motifs and brief phrases which, one after the other, are carried forward by the different instruments. "A lot happens in my music," Grażyna Bacewicz once explained. "It's aggressive and at the same time lyrical." This says all that needs to be said about her music. There is indeed much that happens in it, and even though several

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decades have now passed since it was written, it continues to exert a powerful fascination on listeners and performers alike. ---Jan Popis, Editorial Reviews

Po pięcioletniej przerwie Krystian Zimerman powrócił, by uczcić 100-lecie urodzin wybitnej polskiej kompozytorki i skrzypaczki - Grażyny Bacewicz. Muzyk sięgnął po II Sonatę fortepianową oraz oba Kwintety fortepianowe, w których towarzyszą mu czołowi polscy kameraliści Kaja Danczowska, Agata Szymczewska, Ryszard Groblewski i Rafał Kwiatkowski. Nagrania dokonano w lutym 2009 roku, w Akademii Muzycznej w Katowicach. Punktem centralnym albumu jest "pasjonująca" (jak napisał recenzent Los Angeles Times) II Sonata fortepianowa, której wykonaniem Zimerman zelektryzował w 2008 roku publiczność Festiwalu Salzburskiego: "Trudno jest znaleźć w całej polskiej literaturze muzycznej drugi taki utwór, o tak wielkiej sile i uroku, który cechowałaby taka wytworność... W pierwszej części "Maestoso" Zimerman po raz kolejny zachwyca słuchaczy swoją niezrównaną maestrią, pełne impetu pasaża ani przez chwile nie tracą swego napięcia." (Die Presse).

Skomponowana w 1953 roku II Sonata fortepianowa to jeden z najwybitniejszych utworów tego typu w całej muzyce fortepianowej XX wieku, wspaniale rozplanowana formalnie, pełna zaskakujących zwrotów dramaturgicznych i szalenie wymagająca technicznie. Inspirowany polską muzyką ludową I Kwintet fortepianowy to utwór o wyjątkowo silnej ekspresji, niezwykle przy tym spontaniczny i zróżnicowany.

II kwintet fortepianowy cechuje większy liryzm. Dramatyczna kompozycja uwypukla rolę fortepianu, traktowanego tu niemal solistycznie, w sposób na wskroś romantyczny.

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