

With obvious effort two men carry into a train carriage a solid, unidentified object. In a moment, the dark shape becomes a recognizable outline of a piano. A voice speaking off screen declares that during the concert tour the train became the artist's home¹. This is said by Piotr Anderszewski, the brilliant Polish pianist, and the frame comes from the documentary film: *Piotr Anderszewski. Voyageur intranquille* by Bruno Monsiegeon.²

In the contemporary world of piano performers Anderszewski is a truly rare figure, transgressing all rules. Keep in mind that this is a world in which various peculiarities are almost a norm. Anderszewski's originality, however, possesses a purely musical dimension. At the age of forty he has already attained the rank of a classic. Actually, his recordings - the majority is phenomenal³ - and stage appearances have elevated him to this status but ultimately "canonisation" was performed by Monsiegeon executing a film portrait. After the excellent *Enigma* with Sviatoslav Richter in the lead role (1998), the innovative portrait of Glenn Gould (*The Alchemist*, 2002), yet another depiction of the Canadian pianist (*Hereafter*, 2005), and a meticulous record of Anderszewski's work on the Beethoven variations (*Piotr Anderszewski Plays Diabelli Variations*, 2007) the French director attempted to bring us closer to the phenomenon of Anderszewski's art in a holistic approach.

Already the very mention of the Polish pianist alongside a list of such significant names is meaningful, showing that Monsiegeon does not bother with just anyone. In his opinion, Anderszewski is absolutely outstanding, a worthy successor of the above-mentioned giants of the piano. Since we are dealing with a totally unconventional figure (beyond the norm - the director says upon several occasions) the film about him simply had to be extraordinary. The director's brief introduction to the concept of the film declares: *This would be a "frontier" film, on the borderline between documentary and fiction. It would be set against a backdrop of a winter journey across Poland, then to Hungary (his two home countries), before traveling to Germany, London, Paris, and finally to Lisbon, where he has recently settled. The chosen means of transport for these meanderings was hardly conventional. Like a modern-day troubadour, Piotr would not travel by airplane or car, but in a private train carriage hired for the purpose, which would be attached to various trains according to an itinerary dictated by places he wished to visit and his concert schedule. To Piotr, the planning of concerts years in advance and the rigid formality of concert halls are constraints that must be overcome in order to restore music's innate vibrancy and escape the relentless treadmill of a touring musician's lifestyle.*

My Mobile Home. The Travelling Artist

For Zbyszek Benedyktowicz

*With a piano installed on board his carriage, Piotr would be able to practise, stopping wherever fancy took him, whether a church, or a village square - places associated with such-and-such a composer. We would unload the equipment required for impromptu recitals to be held at these sites.*⁴

The initial project proposed by the director was accepted by Anderszewski and to a great extent subsequently realised. For several weeks a train carriage became a home, a living room, a work studio, and a means of transport. The result is an extraordinary road movie in which we become acquainted with numerous aspects of the artist. We can, therefore, extract purely musical elements (repertoire, piano technique, musical predilections, remarks on music, etc.). We may also follow fragments referring to family motifs or the cultural root from which the artist emerged. Or, by stressing the fact that we are dealing with a film story we might focus solely on the poetics of the film: to reveal the elements out of which it was construed, to observe the editing technique, and to compare it with other films representing the same genre (two most recent examples: *Helen Grimaud. Living with Wolves*, EMI Classics 2008 and *Leif Ove Andsnes. Ballad for Edvard Grieg*, EMI Classics 2008). Finally, already while assessing, we can try to answer the question whether the whole undertaking has been successful and the proposed portrait is convincing.⁵

In the proposed commentary I would like to follow yet another path and to decipher the film slightly differently than the way dictated by the imperative of the genre. To put it as briefly as possible: the point of departure is imposed reality, i.e. an outlined portrait of the artist and thus that, which can be seen (and heard); the subsequent path leads towards discourses more or less obviously inscribed into the film's message. The purpose is to abandon step-by-step concrete images and take a closer look at their reflections, echoes, and associations. To arrive towards amplification understood not only as the expansion (as in the Latin: *amplificare*) but also as the reinforcement (as in the



English: *amplifier*) of particular elements present in the film. I describe the film and the worlds projected by it. Such an interpretation procedure calls for a transition from that, which the film tells us to that about which it tells us. In other words: in order to trace its sense greater importance will be attached to a whole network of meanings and references built above the intentions inscribed into the film than to those intentions as such.

It follows from the above that I would like to treat the Monsaingeon documentary predominantly as a special “cultural text”, a film record composed of assorted semantic ingredients. In the spirit of such an approach I propose the thesis that the documentary can be deciphered not solely (and not so much) as a portrait of an artist as predominantly a story about him. More exactly: about assorted homes, enrooted in actual space and suspended in more subtle space. The Polish and Hungarian home. The homes in Warsaw, Budapest and Lisbon. The processes of leaving and returning home. The search for a home and home-oriented nostalgia. Familiar and foreign spaces. Travelling and roots. Possible worlds – possible places of residence. Literally: about a train carriage temporarily changed into a home. And finally, on the last storey of the film tale there is the home composed of sounds, fleeting musical constructions creating the ethereal but just as real space of a home. In a similar and equally ambiguous sense the film is interpreted by means of a story about residing in its most elementary,

pragmatic meaning connected with theoretical topography, which can be precisely measured by applying geographical or cultural parameters; this is also a story about dwelling, which Martin Heidegger described originally and innovatively while commenting on the famous refrain from Hölderlin: *Full of merit, yet poetically / Humans dwell upon the earth.*⁶

The below presented anthropological commentary will follow two diverse (but somehow complimentary) trajectories of understanding the home and dwelling: individual and general, local and universal, literal and mechanical perspectives. By following this pendulum motion we shall not lose sight of anything that is essential on the literal level; quite possibly, we shall be capable of perceiving something also underneath the narrative surface.

Everything seems to indicate that *Voyageur intranquille* is a film whose plot takes place here and now. Note: despite numerous attributes of the present it seems to have a distinctly anachronic canvas. This feature can be traced on several levels, the first being the most obvious – the level of things. It would be a good thing to realise that the piano and the train, the two prime objects creating film narration, belong to the nineteenth century and refer to the world and mentality of that period. More: the piano and the train are distinguishing marks, especially recognisable emblems of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, the film medium itself is a nineteenth-century invention. Watching this highly contemporary journey of an artist across Europe only after a certain time do we become aware of its anachronic traits. It is quite possible that the unhurried, engrossing narration is not merely a journey in space but also to the innermost recesses of time. The vehicles of this journey are the piano, the train, and film.

First, the piano. This is a special instrument, but only due to its potential of expression. Each piano - it suffices to listen carefully to declarations made by pianists - has its own personality and some sort of an inner mystery. The piano emanates strange energy. Paradoxically, although it recalls and sometimes is compared to a coffin, it lives. This living, almost spiritual aspect of the instrument was cleverly noticed and expanded by Jan Gondowicz in his gloss to *The Piano* by Jane Campion. The majority of reviewers immersed themselves in the meanders of the protagonist's complicated emotions, forgetting somewhat the titular instrument, which, after all, so perfectly expressed her personality.

No one had taken a closer look at the mythology of the piano. And there is quite a lot to examine. This is the most mysterious of all instruments. The only that irrefutably produces the impression of being a living creature also, or especially, when it remains silent. The massive presence of the piano can be a burden. In

inspires fear in children and distance amongst adults. It subjugates its users spiritually. It is a demanding creature and cannot bear dampness, cold and uneven temperature. Neglected, it groans ominously and momentarily becomes out of tune. In a word, it comprises the object of a cult. It accepts offerings in the shape of hours spent on *Gradus ad Parnassum* and *Kunst der Fingerfertigkeit*.

*The piano moulds personality. Not by means of art but via life. Everyone who had a piano carried up to the fifth floor or whose window was stormed by a crane, who tolerated complaining neighbours and was forced to share his humble living space will immediately confirm this opinion. The piano enforces a certain style: every day, for hours, one does not chat, listen to the radio, drink tea or smoke, but sits and plays. It is tremendously expensive – pianists claim that one has only a single piano in a lifetime. A costly work of art, it requires servicing as if it were a delicate machine. Even loftiest spirits do not shy from the tuner's crank and tinkers with the hammer mechanism. Finally, the piano demands strength. In order to set into motion in a chromatic etude the Bösendorfer keyboard or the magnificent Broadwood, portrayed in the film (but even more resistant) one becomes covered in sweat after half a minute. In a word: a strong character is needed to deal with a piano.*⁷

The essayist also aptly indicated the totally non-contemporary nature of the piano in present-day culture, its affiliation to the lost archipelago of the nineteenth century: *The piano, a sacred object of nineteenth-century culture, symbolizes it just as the automobile symbolizes the twentieth century. This is a symbol that concentrates the entire gravity of the past century. A period when objects were respected and even worshipped. Hence it is obvious what a defenestration of a piano could have signified for Norwid or how striking the instrument with an axe must have been a sacrilege of sorts in Campion's film. A Europeanised version of: "If there is no God than everything is allowed". First and foremost, this is the reason why the transference of a piano into a wild natural environment must have constituted the summit of extravagant imagination.*⁸

True, the piano not only lives and easily and readily succumbs to personification, but seen from the viewpoint of contemporary mentality it appears to be a recognizable messenger of the world of the past. This is a world of non-extant aristocratic salons, obligatory piano playing conceived as part of good upbringing, the nineteenth-century novel in which the piano becomes an essential utensil in fictional space. Only an awareness of this distinguished position of the nineteenth-century piano makes it possible to comprehend the meaning of the sardonic remark made by Emil Cioran about Chopin raising the piano to the statute of tuberculosis⁹, or to understand the reason why the remains of Giacomo Puccini were laid to rest in a piano standing in his villa in Torre del Lago.¹⁰

More, the piano, it turns out, is such a specific and curious organism that it finds it difficult to establish relations with contexts other than those sanctioned by means of cultural customs (salon or concert hall). For certain reasons (shape? size? "personality"?) it is not suited for other spaces, in particular open ones. Placed in them, it creates a clearly eccentric combination with the closest surrounding. In this case, the dissonance is based on a contrast between artful/natural, but apparently is not reduced to it. This is probably the reason why such an impact is exerted upon our imagination by the phrase from Rimbaud's *Illuminations*: *Madame *** set up a piano in the Alps*.¹¹ This is also the reason why the famous scene from *Un Chien Andalou* – a piano dragged along a road (and serving as a coffin for a rotting cadaver of a donkey) – leaves such a strong imprint. The same is true of the image of a piano on a New Zealand beach in Campion's film. Quite possibly, this is also why from of passable documentary film about Grieg (mentioned above and featuring the Norwegian pianist Andsnes) we so easily recall the scene with the pianist playing on a mountaintop. The Monsaingeon film based on an only slightly less eccentric conception – a piano on a train – adding another chapter to this Surrealistic mythology. In this case, the dissonance attains a high/low form. A valuable, technically and aesthetically sophisticated object, an emblem of high culture has been placed in a popular, commonplace, and universally used mode of transport. Food for thought is provided by the fact that in both cases this symmetry and dissonance, albeit first acting as a source of aesthetic shock, do not cease to fascinate and attract.

Leaving the train and addressing people awaiting him at a Poznań train station the pianist admits that he loves moving about by train, his current home. The scene, in the manner of a somewhat comical (flowers, welcoming speeches, cameras) and probably unintentional remake of *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* by Louis Lumière, recalls the vehicle in which the pianist travels. Anderszewski obviously likes this form of travelling. He declares that he enjoys the very chance to travel without any responsibility for the voyage; travelling by train is a special form of freedom: everything takes place in constant motion, with not effort on the part of the passenger. Nothing depends on the passenger who is incapable of making decisions, and all responsibility is borne by the train driver. Apparently, the train *tournee* was not the pianist's one-time extravagance indulged for the sake of the film. Anderszewski reveals a predilection for voyages of this sort. In one of his interviews, he declared: *By way of example, last year I hired a Gierek-era private carriage and together with my friends travelled across the whole of Poland, from Cracow to the Hel peninsula, although we actually bypassed Hel since a drunken depot worker forgot*



Piotr Anderszewski

to detach our carriage. For hours we stood in a snowy field. This was an absolutely wonderful experience. Or when we made our way through fog lifting above a side track, to find ourselves in the market square of Zamość....¹² At the same time, we learn what sort of travelling is Anderszewski's favourite. In this case, the heart of the matter obviously does not involve ordinary travelling, a thoughtless devouring of space but savouring it. Perhaps one could even say: contemplation of the landscape, if this did not sound so exalted...

Film narration follows the rhythm of the train carriage, with stopovers for piano recitals. The role played by the train is particularly interesting. Carrying valuable cargo, it is filmed in assorted ways: in static close settings – on railway stations or in dynamic takes – in the course of the journey. Generally, however, the train is filmed in motion. Changing frames show the way in which it traverses space. There is no need to read the writings of Paul Virile (monographist and diagnostician of contemporary forms of acceleration) to be quite certain that one of the essential aspects of contemporaneity – perhaps the most consciously experienced – is speed. Terror of speed, rapid changes, all-embracing motion – these are the living and irremovable components of daily experience. What is the source, then, of the earlier proclaimed anachronic nature of railway transport and the train as such? Everything depends on the point of reference. Characteristically, some 150 years ago the railway was regarded as the avant-garde of progress, preceding its time (recall the enthusiasm radiating from Turner's brilliant: *Rain, Steam and Speed. The Great Western Railway*, 1844). More: the railway belonged entirely to the future. The train won the race against the horse carriage. Today, however, compared to the speed attained by an airplane or even an automobile the conventional train proves to be relatively slower. The problem, however, does not lie in measurable numbers.

In the domain of mentality and collective imagination – and it is they that are predominantly the object of our interest – the train envisaged as a tool for displacement is, and shall remain, a mode of locomotion from the past, regardless of the incidental attainments of TGV. This anachronic feature is discernible particularly when we look at it from the viewpoint of railway mythology: both the one associated with the technological taming of space, when the train symbolised a triumph of *ratio* over untamed Nature (a motif often accentuated in Westerns), and the one linked with literature, when railway tracks became the arena of existential dramas, to mention the *casus* of Anna Karenina. After all, already the legend of the Orient Express – the very essence of a train above all others – could serve as convincing proof. The first trip from Paris to Constantinople was made by this wonderful vehicle (known as the Titanic on tracks) in 1883. In

the wake of wartime turmoil, problems with borders, and a gradual reduction of the timetable, the last journey along the original route took place in 1977. The still preserved legend is a combination of elements referring (probably) to the past: aristocratic loftiness, Parisian chicque, Arabian exotica, the flavour of adventure, not mention the sensational aura of *Murder on the Orient Express* ... Paradoxically, failed attempts made from time to time to reanimate its fame indicate that the era of the Orient Express has already passed.

Although this might seem strange within the context of the explosion of speed, more: the deification of speed in the present-day world, the train with its measured rhythm and relatively low moving remains in the past. Intuition did not deceive Monsaingeon when he decided to place his protagonist in a train carriage. He has our total approval: a contemporary troubadour cannot – and certainly should not – travel in an aeroplane.

In its capacity as a nineteenth-century time machine the train is almost naturally linked with the cinema. Connections between the train and film – a motif deserving a separate presentation – are discernible from the very beginnings of the cinematic arts. Not by accident was one of first Lumière miniatures the aforementioned *L'arrivée d'un train*. Theoreticians from that period were well aware that the cinematographer displays its abilities best when he shows motion. Recommended themes for filming mention first and foremost the train. In the awareness of the spectators those two phenomena appeared simultaneously. In an excellent article about the presence of the train in earliest cinematic accomplishments Yuri Tsivyan cited a fragment from the first issue of "Cine-Phono" from 1907: *Luminous pictures were first shown more or less fifteen years ago and the impression they produced were so great that everyone, thinking about this amazing wonder, recalls the time when he first saw a rushing train*.¹³ Does the passenger sitting inside a train carriage not perceive the window showing shifting images as similar to a film screen? The *motion pictures* offered by the cinema and the moving pictures seen from a train window are distinctly close; this strange isomorphism offers much food for thought.

3.

Considered from the construction (and not chronological) perspective *Voyageur intranquille* is composed of two – not quite matching – parts. The first encompasses factographic details from Anderszewski's life, and the second concerns reflections about the essence of music. They interweave in assorted proportions, from time to time surprising each other.

The biographical part places special emphasis on the artist's Polish and Hungarian origin, with distinct stress on local Polish specificity. This is the weakest

link, with the pianist reading off screen an earlier written text full of insufferable and exalted clichés about the torn apart and tormented country, “murdered and violated Warsaw”, Slavonic soul in an “ideally cut Parisian suit” (about Chopin’s music). Fortunately, from time to time there appears a counterpoint, as in the excellent scene in which Anderszewski gazes at the distant Palace of Culture and Science and describes it, obviously, as a horrible symbol of Soviet captivity, while an accompanying friend, Maciej Grzybowski (also a pianist), comments in much simpler terms by complaining about the Stalinis phallus and immediately disarming the martyrological narration.¹⁴

All this recalls in places an educational film composed of multi-use building blocks. Looking, however, at the frames not from an evaluating but a descriptive, anthropological viewpoint one might perceive in those weak points or slip-ups something extremely interesting: the long duration of national stereotypes. It becomes clear that the vision of Poland, the Poles, and Polishness both in the story told by the pianist and in the film narration as such possesses all the features of a mythological construction. Interestingly, they supplement each other and seen from a basically inner perspective (Anderszewski) Poland matches the martyrological vantage point, with Polish mentality becoming part of the tearful and sentimental Slavonic soul.¹⁵ In turn, judging by the excessive snow-filled frames Poland viewed from an external perspective (Monsaingeon) is a land of eternal winter and persistent snowfalls. This film version of *Winterreise* (with pastoral frames distant from the dramatic ambience of Schubert’s cycle) is photogenic but from the cognitive point of view it only reinforces old stereotypes. One could have the impression that while portraying Poland the director remained true to an image cultivated in seventeenth-century France. It was then that there emerged a vision of Poland encased in permanent cold winters (as in the poem by Philippe Desportes, in which Poland is *toujours de neige et de glace couverte*), as well as of the constantly inebriated Pole.¹⁶ Having seen the film, the Western public will reaffirm its conviction that there is only a single season in Poland (winter almost predominates in the film¹⁷) and that the Poles learn to drink ice-cold vodka (the pianist offers it to his guests in the train carriage) together with mother’s milk ...

Fortunately, Anderszewski appears in the film also as a citizen of the world and certainly as a European. His home expands and transgresses far beyond Polish or Hungarian borders. Not by accident does his journey start on the (just as mythologized) eastern borderlands of the Continent and ends in Lisbon along the ocean coast. The pianist does not forget about his roots but clearly cultivates an everlasting imperative of seeking a home, home-oriented nostalgia, space in

which he will be able to truly live without limiting the meaning of this verb to a merely physical dimension. Lisbon, he adds, is a successive, essential step along this path: the greatness of Lisbon is its past, while its decadence and greatness have collapsed. This is the noble feature of the town, where the pianist strolls for hours down its streets, observing everyday, small-scale dramas and the theatre of life. In doing so, he experiences being pierced by the local, strange silence. More, he feels at home, an emotion that grants him inner peace. Anderszewski sees Lisbon as the town of the eternal voyager. This is a truly feminine and maternal town, in the shape of a mother’s belly. Hence the feeling of safety and distance from the great world.

This statement contains significant ambivalence, as if a faraway echo of the words uttered by the pianist at the beginning of the film when he mentioned his fear of motionlessness and longing for incessant motion. Anderszewski is always on the road, in constant motion, but at the same time he searches for a place to settle down. He is a nomad, but a rather strange one with the distinct syndrome of the domiciled person. Interestingly, this intimate confession also contains the earlier mentioned anachronic motif. Anderszewski seems to be not living in the present and he looks back, towards the past. Hence the attention paid to pre-war Warsaw (his birthplace and a town granted particular significance in his private mythology) and the passion for Lisbon, today slightly provincial, whose splendour is already part of a distant past.¹⁸ In his metaphorical characteristic of Lisbon Anderszewski animates the feminine, maternal topos. He envisages the town as an expansive home comprehended predominantly as a friendly and secure cosmos (Lisbon – my home! - he could have echoed Fernando Pessoa¹⁹, enamoured of his birthplace), with its most perfect personification: the image of a maternal belly. Here, the town-home assumes clearly feminine features.

4.

So far, I have used the French title of the film: *Voyageur intranquille*. Actually, this is the version that appears most often in promotion material or sales offers. The film, however, and this is noteworthy and significant, has titles also in other languages, with the English *Unquiet Traveller* being semantically close. The German title, although already without the adjective, is similar: *Wanderer ohne Ruhe*. Only the Polish version differs considerably from the one in three Western languages: *Podróżujący fortepian* (The Travelling Piano). Agreed, this is not a precise translation of the French original: in Polish the traveller is not someone but something. The pianist has vanished, leaving behind only his instrument.

Is this a translational lapsus, the carefree work of a translator, or a subconscious exchange? It would

be difficult to propose an unambiguous answer. Apparently, the lexical and thus - this is particularly significant! - semantic exchange contains something of great importance. Ascertaining this obvious feature I am concerned not merely with the fact that - if one were to treat comments on the modelling role played by the title seriously - *voyageur intranquille* produces an entirely different reception of the film among the French spectators than a *travelling piano* among the Polish audience. In the first case emphasis has been placed on the artist (together with the entire luggage of associations connected with voyages and travelling as well as its literal and metaphorical connotations), while in the second case the title abandons the person and concentrates primarily on the instrument he plays. This circumstance appears, at first glance, to be obvious and does not require in-depth commentaries. A closer look, however, discloses a greater complexity of the issue since it transcends considerably beyond the domain of linguistics and translational competence.

In other words, I propose the thesis that the Polish version of the title did not appear by accident. More, that it is not semantically innocent but, on the contrary, significant. In addition, it carries references to Polish historical memory, predominantly literary. One might have the impression that the past, stored in the language, exerted a strong impact on the author (authors?) of the Polish title. It is, after all, impossible not to discern in the phrase: "travelling piano" - in addition, within the context of the art represented by the Polish pianist and Chopin's music in particular - a shadow of an association with the earlier-mentioned *Fortepian Szopena* by Norwid. First and foremost: with the most dramatic scene in which the tsarist authorities hurled the instrument from a window of the Zamoyski Palace in 1863, the year of the January insurrection.

But this simple observation, albeit slightly enhancing the reception of the film, does not end similarities between *Podróżujący fortepian* and *Fortepian Szopena*. There is a single reservation: we have to liberate the poem from the intrusive patriotic mask added by customary school textbook interpretations. Contrary to usual associations, Norwid's poem remains above all routine simplifications. On the contrary, it represents dense meaning, full of things left unsaid, uncertainties, abruptly broken phrases, and sudden silence. For this reason, its interpretation is extremely capacious.²⁰ Apart from the patriotic stratum, the most legible and easiest to grasp, Norwid's text is also a poignant reflection, or perhaps even better: meditation on art and its essence. The point of departure is Chopin's brilliant music. Here is a brief fragment:

O You! In whom Love's Profile chooses to abide
And Art's Perfection is your name -

You! who assemble in the ranks of Style
And fashion stone, penetrate the song's refrain ...²¹

It is precisely in this poetic attempt at naming the essence of music, despite all the obvious differences, that the poem comes close to Anderszewski's film narration.²² After all, his commentary contains an intensely Polish motif (one could even say with a certain dose of sarcasm: one with a moving-martyrological twist). Not only does it mention Chopin and his music but - and within the context of Norwid's text this is even more interesting - it also formulates deeply conceived sentences about the art of playing the piano, pertaining additionally to a question whose verbalisation remains extremely difficult: the essence of music or perhaps of art in general.

The title, however, resonates in the memory of the Polish spectator due to yet another reference. Suffice to take into consideration a fragment of the film in which Anderszewski speaks about the unprecedented wartime destruction ("murder") of Warsaw. The film illustrates this touching and extremely emotional narration with documentary photographs of buildings razed to the ground and ruins. Looking at those images it is simply impossible not to revoke a certain meaningful fragment of *Pianist* by Władysław Szpilman. Recall: at the end of the war the titular artist is taken by surprise in an empty, abandoned house by a German officer and in order to validate his profession is forced to play the piano. The surrealism of this extraordinary scene mingles with the horror of war.²³

Recalling those associations, obvious for the Polish recipient, we start to understand that the documentary's Polish title is not quite as absurd as it might seem at first. Apparently, by replacing the neutral and bland "traveller" with "piano" the title resonates well with certain fragments of Polish memory. Another significant fact is that both cited works match Anderszewski's narration with its strongly accentuated martyrological overtone.

5.

Anderszewski without doubt lives within music and for music. Interestingly: his statements about extra-musical themes tend to be gushing but those dealing with music are pure factuality. In the majority of cases he speaks about music using the technical language of an artisan, and it is difficult to treat occasional anecdote-illustration inserts otherwise than in the categories of a joke.

What does this mean? As briefly as possible: we are dealing with concentration on music as such, its architectural essence and not artistic expression. Performance, as envisaged by the artist, does not consist of an expressive addition to music but organically stems from it. It must do so! In the case of Anderszewski this means laborious, analytical, and archaeological

(i.e. observing the strata) work on a composition. He dissects it into particular individual molecules and re-arranges them into “a new order” so as to disclose as much as possible of that, which is inside the notes and between them. Yes, *la musique avant toute chose*...

The film contains remarkable scenes making it possible to observe the manner in which the pianist reads the rough score. Anderszewski plays a certain fragment, singing its main melodic line and, at the same time, commenting *a vista* its “conceptual” content. Doing so, he reveals its inner logic and the necessity of concrete sounds. Take the example of the extraordinary *Barcarolle* by Chopin: the first few opening notes (resembling a dish of pasta), several successive sounds (the song of a drunken gondolier), a slight pause, as if to listen more carefully to the phrase (which despite all remains beautiful), followed by a grimace (in the fashion of a bad French chanson) to arrive at the end line, with Anderszewski commenting on Chopin’s complicated nature. A music object-lesson in a nutshell.

6.

In an introduction to his *The Predicament of Culture*, a book that at its time was a breakthrough in anthropological reflection, James Clifford wrote: *This century has seen a drastic expansion of mobility, including tourism, migrant labour, immigration, urban sprawl. More and more people “dwell” with the help of mass transit, automobiles, airplanes. (...) An older topography and experience of travel is exploded. One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space. Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth.*²⁴

This text comes from 1988. In an article written a few years later - *Travelling Cultures* (referring to certain motifs in the book) - Clifford returned to a changed comprehension of residing and travelling in the contemporary world. The text contains several fragments taken from literature. Symptomatically, their prime object is the hotel conceived as space-time reflecting the spirit of modernity. There appears a fragment from Conrad’s *Victory*, known from *The Predicament of Culture* (the age in which we are camped like bewildered travellers in a garish, unrestful hotel), but also a phrase from *Tristes Tropiques*, in which the anthropologist described a dive in the Brazilian small town of Goiania, which he saw as a symbol of civilizational barbarity (a place of transit, not of residence).²⁵ Hotels are places through which we only pass and in which all meetings are fleeting and accidental. They are legible signs of the contemporary lack of enrootment, mobility and superficial contacts...

It would be a good thing to place Monsaingeon’s film and in particular the figure of the constantly travelling protagonist against the backdrop of those declarations. The opening statement, deprived of an

anthropological commentary, could appear rather trivial and not at all obvious; it lists assorted places of residence: Warsaw, Budapest, Lyon, Strasbourg, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Lisbon... Transition in space as a form of existence. In the fascinating (but also tedious) mobile world in which such transitions are a norm we are all émigrés on the road and in some way not at home. It could be sensible to ask: who is the artist in such a hotel community, always on the move in all directions? In what way does he differ (if such is the case) from other nomads?

Anderszewski, just as almost every present-day musician, is a travelling artist, a constant voyager.²⁶ The film accentuates the condition of the artist-traveller, a restless spirit, a man on the road, always drifting, never permanently enrooted, living out of a suitcase in rented apartments. Once again: what is the contemporary musician? A traveller? A tourist? A vagrant? A nomad? And the really essential question: is his homelessness a mere particle of a wider phenomenon or is it qualitatively different?

Before I attempt to suggest a certain answer to those questions here is another brief comment from Clifford’s study on “travelling”. Reflecting on the operativeness of the conceits applied by sciences dealing with culture he examined the contents of such terms as: “travel”, “displacement”, or “nomadism”. At one point, Clifford noted surprisingly: “Pilgrimage” seems to me a more interesting comparative term to work with. It includes a broad range of Western and non-Western experiences and is less class—and gender-biased than “travel”. Moreover, it has a nice way of subverting the constitutive modern opposition between traveller and tourist.²⁷

Taking into account the above (as well as gathering together certain earlier motifs) it appears quite apt to suggest that if the musician is actually a voyager then he is a special sort of traveller, *homo irrequietus* (according to the formula suggested by St. Augustine), who in his activity and calling comes close to the status of a pilgrim. This holds true particularly for the interpretation bequeathed by Norwid in his celebrated poem:

Above all estates there is the estate of estates,
A tower above flat houses
Piercing the clouds ...

You think that I am not the Lord
Because my moveable home
Is of camel hide ...
...

But I abide in the bosom of the sky,
While it seizes my soul
Like a pyramid!

But I too have as much of the earth
As is covered by my foot.



Piotr Anderszewski

As long as I walk! ...²⁸

The suggested musician-pilgrim parallel requires appropriate comprehension. Naturally, this attempt at placing the artist in a quasi-religious context does not have in mind the common understanding of religiosity. It is rather concerned with stressing the importance of the task undertaken by the artist and the significance of the work he performs. In a roundabout way this leads to a more profound grasp of the formula openly mentioned by Anderszewski in the film: being a musician is not a profession, it is a calling. In other words - what is it? The elementary meaning of this slightly forgotten connotation - especially in reference to creativity - is excellently recalled by Wiesław Juszczak:

*It is not I who decides about calling, its type and direction, but vocation itself: a force that sometimes appears to be internal but whose actual source is outside, and which delineates my path. This force is the reason why I am compelled to pursue a given path, to follow it regardless of obstacles and to always wish to walk down it. The destination of such a striving can be, therefore, conceived as a centre from which this force emanates and which is the source of the voice calling me. The fact that I am supposed to, and want to go towards that voice means that the road is endless. It also signifies that the goal of my striving is "for all practical purposes" unattainable. The limitlessness of roaming in a state of calling, wandering towards the target of that calling and, simultaneously, the source is decisive for the freedom of each such path. In other words: the level of the objective determines the measure of freedom. This measure constantly grows and the potential of vastness is just as continuously revealed to us.*²⁹

These words cast a light on the feeling, stressed upon several occasions by Anderszewski, of being compelled to be a pianist, some sort of a force, an inner imperative that "urged" him to devote himself to playing. Within this context words about an overwhelming and incessant wish to strive towards a performance absolute gain greater importance. Without that commentary they could appear to be pretentious and empty. In both cases - the pilgrim and the artist - it is precisely the path that appears to be the true objective and particularly a renewed but never totally satisfactory effort to attain the selected goal. Another characteristic feature is the reversal of customary signs: settling down is not a value in itself and homelessness does not have a negative qualification. This state of weightlessness, typical for both, and of perennial being on the road are probably the price paid for attempting to attain the objective, which - once again in both instances - possesses the nature of a vanishing horizon.

7.

Remarks about the pilgrim's condition of the artist-musician lead us to the last stratum of reflections,

i.e. meanings that without doubt exist although it is difficult to describe and verbalise them precisely. If a musician does not have a home, if his home is mobile (although today it assumes another form: a comfortable train carriage rather than camel hide sandals), if he is sometimes tormented by a feeling of being rootless and homeless then where is his true home? After all, it has to exist somewhere. It appears that resolving this question is neither difficult nor particularly sophisticated. This home is - must be! - art. In the case of Anderszewski: it is music. Such a solution, however, lures with its obviousness and is not at all that simple as it could appear at first glance. We arrive here at a successive curious paradox connected with the two basic parameters amidst which we exist: time and space.

There is no doubt that the home - regardless of the architectural forms it assumes - both in its commonplace semantics and in more sophisticated languages is predominantly a cryptonym of that, which is permanent, immobile, steadfast, and lastingly enrooted in topographic reality but also in a wider, symbolic and spiritual reality. Meanwhile, how does music exist? Regardless of refined responses to this difficult question one thing appears to be certain: music exists in time. To put in stronger terms, it exists in disappearance and reduction, i.e. it is and, at the same time, it seems not to be, it exists in motion and gradual vanishing. (*Tout note doit finir en mourant*, Marin Marais says in the film: *Tous le matins du monde* by Alain Corneau). It exists, but temporarily, in passing time. Its ontology is curiously fragile and its existence - almost phantom. But despite its nature variable in time it remains - and this is probably the greatest paradox of the musical element - just as real. For many of those who live for the sake of music this is the only reality! Nonetheless, taking the common sense approach, so-called musical space - to cite this routine expression, paradoxical in the context of the earlier comments - is a conspicuous antithesis of the idea of the home, i.e. something tangible, concrete, and mundane. In exact terms, music does not exist. Nor can it be identified with any sort of "space", unless within the limits of linguistic metaphor. It is the outcome of sounds temporarily enrooted in time, in ever-changing rhythmic, melodic and harmonious configurations. It is thus a phenomenon designating pure change, while the idea of the home contains the essence of durability. Music thus understood as a variable, disappearing, unreal phenomenon composed of time would be an antithesis of the home, conceived as a firm and truly existing reality.

Is it possible, therefore, to reside within music? And what would this mean? Can music - however understood - be a home? Is it possible to build on sand? And does music really have to be/is an antithesis of the home?

Let us for a moment listen carefully to a intriguing fragment of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* by Rilke, an author who was probably the closest to describing the enigmatic reality of music, a sphere that radically exceeds and resists the word:

*But for us, existence is still enchanted;
in any number of places, it is still the origin. A playing
of pure forces untouched except by one who kneels in
wonder.*

*Words still serenely approach the unsayable. . .
And music, ever new, out of the most trembling
stones, builds her home in those regions least usable.*³⁰

Anderszewski's personal story about music appears to follow this line of thinking. Although it is pure disappearance, music in its most perfect symptoms builds permanent, albeit airborne constructions. Created out of unsteady elements it arranges itself into spaces that resemble a home in which one wants to reside. More: those musical "stones", albeit in constant motion, are arranged into a special home recalling holy space. This is the particularly striking feature of the cited fragment: a solid and permanent structure is built out of "trembling stones". Such a home, ostensibly fleeting, strongly opposes the reality ("barren emptiness") of the world, in which we lead our daily lives and which we perceive routinely as the only existing one. Apparently, musical constructions, albeit fluid, merging and disintegrating in time, are stronger and more complete than quite a few real homes.

Anderszewski holds several works of the assorted composers he performs in particular esteem. Four names reappear in the film: naturally, Chopin (whom he knows best of all and plays in small doses because they are too delicate), Mozart (whose works are the most poignant and probably the most extreme in their ambiguity), Brahms (whose will to attain perfection is an obstacle in which the pianist sees himself) and, obviously, the towering *pater familias*, Jan Sebastian Bach (working on *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* Anderszewski was under the impression that he was facing an opened book of eternity). These are, at the same time, musical homes to live in: Home-Chopin (associated closely with the motherland), Home-Brahms (linked first and foremost with the masculine element), Home-Mozart (basically infantile but also the most ambiguous: light-dark, sad-joyous, divine-impertinent) and the perhaps most capacious Home-Bach (with the beautiful metaphor of a book) opening up onto eternity.

Anderszewski proves above all doubt that it is possible to reside within music, although this is a special home devoid of foundations, underpinning, walls and roof. A mobile home made of time and ethereal sound. Nonetheless, it is just as real. Anderszewski's confessions produce the endless feeling that despite all the

objections formulated by common sense there exists something not unlike "musical space" and that this possibly imperfect metaphor becomes concrete before our eyes (and ears). In other words: that it really becomes a space to inhabit and can become a real home despite the fact that – let us repeat – the phenomenon of music as if radically negates the essence of a domestic continuum.

Listening to Anderszewski performing Chopin or, in particular, Mozart, especially when in the course of playing he comments aloud the essence of the music, one has the irresistible impression that we are watching and hearing someone who has found himself in domesticated, native space. Who, as the ambiguous English expression has it, is *at home* and thus is an expert on what he does but also, quite ordinarily, is home.

Endnotes

- ¹ All statements by the pianist are based on the film soundtrack.
- ² B. Monsaingeon, *Piotr Anderszewski. Voyageur intranquille*, Medici Arts International 2008.
- ³ L. van Beethoven – *Diabelli variations*, 2001, W. A. Mozart – *The Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major*, K. 467, *The Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor*, K. 491, 2002, J. S. Bach – I, III and VI *Partita*, 2002, F. Chopin – *Ballades, Mazurkas, Polonaises* 2003, K. Szymanowski – *Piano Sonata No. 3, Métopes, Masks*, 2005, W. A. Mozart – *The Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major*, KV. 453 and *The Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor*, K. 466, 2006, L. van Beethoven – *Bagatelle*, op. 126 and *Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major* Op. 15, 2008, *Piotr Anderszewski at Carnegie Hall* - Bach, Schumann, Janáček, Beethoven, Bartók, 2009.
- ⁴ B. Monsaingeon, *Piotr Anderszewski – Unquiet Traveller*, booklet added to a DVD, pp. 6-7.
- ⁵ The film received the Gold Medal in the music and performing arts category at the French Festival International des Programmes Audiovisuels in Biarritz (2009). It was also awarded in the best artist's portrait category at Festival International du Film sur l'Art (FIFA) in Montreal (2009).
- ⁶ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Poetically Dwells Man...*, in: idem, *Odczyty i rozprawy*, transl. J. Mizera, Kraków 2002.
- ⁷ J. Gondowicz, *Romans z fortepianem*, "Kino" no. 4:1994, p. 29.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ E. Cioran, *Aforizmy*, selected, transl. and prep. J. Ugniewska, Warszawa 1993, p. 33.
- ¹⁰ Puccini buried himself – or was buried – in (or near) an object that commemorates him and symbolizes his oeuvre - a piano; M. Leiris, *Operratics*, transl. G. Bennett, København-Los Angeles 2001. Puccini died in 1924, but his mentality belonged to the nineteenth century.
- ¹¹ A. Rimbaud, *Wiersze. Sezon w piekle. Iluminacje. Listy*, selected and prep. A. Międzyrżeczki, various translators, p. 201.
- ¹² *Biedny Chopin. Rozmowa z pianistą Piotrem Anderszewskim*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 22 December 2003.
- ¹³ Y. Tsivyan, *O symbolice pociągu w początkowym okresie kina*, in: *Sztuka w świecie znaków*, selected, trans., introd. and bibliography B. Żyłko, Gdańsk 2002, p. 198.
- ¹⁴ I have seen Monsaingeon's film several times and am

certain that the most unbearable in Anderszewski's statements is not the content but the way in which he speaks. The emphatic mannerism with which he says the earlier written sentences is the reason why his voice becomes slightly artificial, a contrast with his natural and unaffected behaviour.

- 15 This one-sidedness and stereotype nature of declarations comes even more as a surprise considering that in his other statements Anderszewski's attitude to Polish issues is highly ambiguous, at least in his declarations: "I left Poland already after secondary school and all told spent less time here than anywhere else. There are different types of enrootment, however, and this is why I feel closely liked with this country, especially due to my upbringing by my father and paternal grandmother, which had an enormous impact on my sister and me. I am extremely attached to Poland and, at the same time, pathologically anti-Polish. Gombrowicz represented a similar attitude, right? At least in this particular case I can identify with him", *Porządek i ogień. Z Piotrem Anderszewskim rozmawia Patrycja Kujawska*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" no. 43:2009, p. 34. It is worth recalling that Monsaingeon's film was addressed predominantly to the Western audience, hence Anderszewski's narration is inscribed so strongly, almost ostentatiously into routine anticipations.
- 16 A convincing analysis of the origin of such images (and their obstinate presence in French contemporary thought) was conducted by Ludwik Stomma in one of the chapters of his book: *Wzloty i upadki królów Francji sposobem antropologicznym wyłożone*, Łódź 1991, pp.155-161. Quotation from Desportes after: Stomma, p. 158.
- 17 Recall those two images: the artist together with his sister-violinist, wearing stylish sheepskin coats and dashing in a sleigh across snow-smothered Zakopane or the solitary pianist traversing a winter landscape.
- 18 It is precisely this feature of Lisbon (marginality, provinciality) that, next to its poignant beauty, was accentuated by Mircea Eliade, yet another resident of the city, who spent the war in the Portuguese capital and who mentioned the magnificent and unforgettable square at the mouth of the Tag as well as the omnipresent white and blue colours. In the evenings the streets resounded with music and singing. The overall impression was that of a town outside the range of history, in particular current history – beyond the reach of the hell of war. M. Eliade, *Próba labiryntu. Rozmowy z Claude-Henri Rocquetem*, transl. K. Środa, Warszawa 1992, p. 85.
- 19 F. Pessoa, *Księga niepokoju Bernardo Soaresa pomocnika księgowego w Lizbonie*, transl. M. Lipszyc, Izabelin 2007, p. 73.
- 20 Suffice to delve into the detailed and multi-sided analysis of the text written by Władysław Stróżewski; cf. W. Stróżewski, *Doskonale – wypełnienie. O „Fortepianie Szopena”*, in: idem, *Istnienie i wartość*, Kraków 1981, pp. 181-214.
- 21 C. K. Norwid, *Fortepian Szopena*, in: Norwid, *Dzieła wybrane. Wiersze*, Warszawa 1980, vol. 1, p. 498.
- 22 This is an appropriate moment to stress the quasi-cinematic approach used by Norwid, to which attention has been drawn by Stróżewski in a brilliant exegesis of the poem: *Everything appears in a distinctly marked perspective, in close-ups or long shots, as if as a result of working with a camera, which brings the depicted objects closer or relegates them to the background*, Stróżewski, op. cit., pp. 211-212.

- 23 W. Szpilman, *Pianista. Warszawskie wspomnienia 1939-1945*, introd. and prep. A. Szpilman, afterword W. Bierman, Kraków 2000, p. 168 (the book is supplemented by an appendix: W. Hosenfeld, *Fragmenty pamiętnika*).
- 24 J. Clifford, *Kłopoty z kulturą. Dwudziestowieczna etnografia, literatura i sztuka*, various translators, Warszawa 2000, p. 21.
- 25 J. Clifford, *Traveling Cultures*, in: *Cultural Studies*, ed. and introd. L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, P. A. Treichler, New York-London 1992, p. 96.
- 26 This travelling feature of the condition of the contemporary musician appears in numerous statements made by artists. The great pianist Sviatoslav Richter responded outright to the remark that he gives concerts not only in great metropolises but also small localities: *I am a voyager. I find every locality on a map interesting, be it large or small*, E. Kofin, *Ich słowa*, Wrocław 2009, p. 16.
- 27 Ibid., p. 110.
- 28 C. K. Norwid, *Pielgrzym*, in: Norwid, op. cit., p. 376.
- 29 W. Juszcak, *Słowo o powołaniu*, in: idem, *Fragmenty*, Warszawa 1995, p. 82.
- 30 R. M. Rilke, *Sonety do Orfeusza*, part II, Sonet X, in: R. M. Rilke, *Wybór poezji*, transl. M. Jastrun, Kraków 1987, p. 281.

