

**KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI**  
**ACADEMY OF MUSIC**  
**IN KRAKOW**

**Paweł Riess**

**Musical language in Jerzy Fitelberg's chamber music  
based on String Quartet no. 4 and String Quartet no. 5**

**As part of the proceedings for the award of the title of doctor  
in the field of arts, in the discipline of musical arts**

**advisor: prof. dr hab. Bogusława Hubisz-Sielska**

**Kraków, 2024**

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## **Artistic work – programme**

- **Jerzy Fitelberg – *String quartet no. 4***

- Tema
- Var. 1
- Var. 2
- Var. 3
- Var. 4
- Var. 5
- Var. 6
- Var. 7
- Fuga

- **Jerzy Fitelberg – *String quartet no. 5***

- I. Allegro
- II. Tema con variazioni
  - Tema
  - Var. 1
  - Var. 2
  - Var. 3
  - Var. 4
- III. Vivace

**Performed by:**

**Fitelberg Quartet:**

**Aleksander Daszkiewicz – I violin**

**Fabio Salmeri – II violin**

**Paweł Riess – viola**

**Jakub Gajownik – cello**

**Sound engineer:**

**Kacper Żarna**

**The recordings were made on 17-19.07.2022 in the Concert Hall of the prof. J. Świder School of Music in Jastrzębie-Zdrój, Poland.**

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**Illustration 1 - Jerzy Fitelberg, 1930s-40s.**

## **Introduction**

The list of composers and their works that remain outside the circle of those most frequently performed is very extensive. There is also a lot of figures in the world of music whose lives and achievements have been completely covered up by the complexities of history and unfortunate turns of fate. One such artist is Jerzy Fitelberg, a figure who is little or completely known and treated marginally in the context of Polish music. The mission to bring composers and valuable works out of oblivion and to restore them to their rightful place in culture is one of the main objectives which should guide musicians of all specialisations. This peculiar ‘archaeology’ is a strongly emotionally stimulating branch of artistic activity, which can give the researcher-performer both deep satisfaction and a sense of fulfilled duty towards the history of music.

Being brought up in a family cultivating knowledge of music, fine arts and architecture, I have always been interested in artists and works unknown in the circles where I was and am artistically active. The first such admiration took place during my education at the I. J. Paderewski Secondary Music School in Cieszyn, when, using the wealth of Internet resources, I came across recordings of English music from the first half of the 20th century. Captivated by the beauty of the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax or Gerald

Finzi, of which practically no one in the local musical community had any knowledge, I began my efforts to acquire knowledge about them, gain the score materials and, finally, to perform their music. Having taken up studies at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Krakow, I continued to develop this area of interest, extending my research to works and composers of different periods or origins. I first encountered the figure of Jerzy Fitelberg when, while researching profiles of Polish composers of Jewish origin, I was looking for interesting and original repertoire for my projects. Intrigued by his biography, I came across recordings of several chamber works<sup>1</sup> by this composer, which made me enchanted by this music and its craftsmanship. The impact was so strong that, in the absence of a wider awareness of Jerzy Fitelberg and his legacy in the art world, I decided to take on the mission of promoting his valuable oeuvre and attempting a deeper exploration of his life and work. In addition, in order to pay due tribute to him, I formed the Fitelberg Quartet, whose central repertoire axis is his music.

The main aim of this work is to present, from the perspective of the performer and researcher, two of Jerzy Fitelberg's works for string quartet as well as the figure of this composer, which needs to be portrayed as fully as possible. This task is accompanied by the exposure of the characteristics of the musical language he used in his chamber works, which constitute the main domain of his compositional work. The results of the research contained in the work, together with the presentation of key information and contexts from his life, are also a basis for discussion and further research into his figure and music, which could result in the creation of a monograph on this forgotten composer. In order to create the work constituting the subject of the research carried out as part of the doctoral programme at the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Krakow, I chose two compositions by Jerzy Fitelberg for string quartet which, coming from different stages of his life, show Fitelberg's contrasting approach to composing a string quartet in terms of its technical qualities, above all its construction. The reflections contained in the work are based on the author's research carried out on the composer's manuscripts made available by the archives holding the works of Jerzy Fitelberg in their collections. On their basis, contemporary editorial studies have been prepared, providing both the score material used in the recording of the music and a source of musical examples accompanying the text.

The content of the thesis is divided into five main sections preceded by an introduction. The first chapter focuses on presenting the figure of Jerzy Fitelberg and several aspects such as the

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<sup>1</sup> *Jerzy Fitelberg Chamber Works*, CHAN 10877 performed by ARC Ensemble, Chandos 2015

contexts that influenced his artistic activities (views on art, the question of identity, family relations, etc.) or the reception of his music throughout the century. Above all, this section contains his extensive biographical sketch together with an attempt at a periodisation of his life and work. Due to the significant role of the string quartet genre in Fitelberg's oeuvre, the second chapter describes the most important information concerning all his works for this instrumental ensemble and attempts to place this output in the context of the genre. The third part of the work focuses on issues concerning String Quartets Nos. 4 and 5, including their analysis, interpretation and performance problems, and a description of the preparation of a modernised edition of the score text. The fourth chapter contains a synthetic presentation of the characteristic features of Jerzy Fitelberg's musical language on the basis of Quartets No. 4 and No. 5, referring also to the essential content present in his other works for this instrumental cast. The final, fifth chapter focuses on the conclusions and summary of the research conducted on Fitelberg's quartet works and his musical language, making an attempt to indicate the place of this composer in the overview of Polish composers of the 20th century.

The literature on the life and/or work of Jerzy Fitelberg is extremely modest and limited to just two articles. The text by Emilia Elsner, published in the periodical 'Muzyka' in 1938, is a brief attempt to bring Polish music lovers closer to the figure and music of Jerzy Fitelberg, who was already a hardly recognisable figure in his homeland. The second article, by Ewelina Boczkowska, comes from the present times and concerns the traces of the composer's activity in the USA. Some of the information about the contexts of his life can be deduced from content related to people close to him. For obvious reasons, a considerable amount of such information can be found primarily in Leon Markiewicz's studies on Grzegorz Fitelberg (biography and the correspondence). The son of this conductor is also mentioned several times in Karol Szymanowski's letters. The remaining research material consists of the composer's personal documents, of which the most about the personality of Fitelberg junior and his beliefs or opinions on music can be deduced from letters addressed to Roman and Barbara Palester, which have been preserved in the collection of the University of Warsaw Library. Surprisingly, although the two composers shared a very friendly relationship manifested in abundant correspondence and mutual support for musical activity, Palester, who remained in Europe, did not devote a single text or broadcast to either music or the figure of his friend. The source material on Fitelberg is supplemented by brief mentions or notices (Lech Dzierżanowski, Zofia Helman, Tadeusz Kaczyński, Stefan Kisielewski), as well as



reviews of performances of his works collected by the composer himself and several official documents preserved in American archives.

The traces of life and work of Jerzy Fitelberg was sought by Gary Fitelberg, who portrayed himself as the composer's cousin. They were most likely related through Anna Fitelberg, Grzegorz's younger sister, who managed to emigrate to the USA at the outbreak of World War II<sup>2</sup>. As Gary Fitelberg had no musical training his activities were of a popularising, possibly archival nature. According to a survey, Gary tried to collect information and personal material after his cousin until his death in 2016. Unfortunately, according to all indications, these mementos were most likely annihilated as a result of a fire in his house that same year.<sup>3</sup>

## **I. Jerzy Fitelberg – The Forgotten Composer**

### **1. Biographical sketch**

‘Son of the conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg’ - is the most common term used in the vast majority of biographies of Jerzy Fitelberg, who was born on 20 May 1903 in Warsaw as the only child of Grzegorz and Natalia (née Landau). Details of the life of this now-forgotten composer, especially those from before the Second World War, are residual information, based mainly on his musical achievements and the few mentions left by his acquaintances.

Above all, the details of Jerzy Fitelberg's childhood remain the greatest unknown, but it can be assumed that he studied music under his father guidance and the artists he befriended. In the section on completed schools on the J. S. Guggenheim Foundation scholarship application document, he indicated as his place of study: “High School Warsaw-Moscow-Warsaw, 1914-1919”<sup>4</sup>, on the other hand, in a letter addressed to the New York Philharmonic Association concerning his biography, under the ‘studies’ tab he mentions only “Warsaw Conservatory”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg 1879-1953. Życie i dzieło*. Fibak Marquard Press S.A, Katowice 1995, p. 14

<sup>3</sup> Information obtained from people who had direct contact with him or collaborated with him on a project level, including flutist Adrianna Lis and music producer Simon Wynberg.

<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, document dated 1946.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, document dated 03.03.1946

It can therefore be assumed that he received his basic musical education, at least in part, in the Polish capital. Unfortunately, neither in this document nor in any other available source are the names of his pedagogues from his school days indicated. One of the shortened biographies of the composer contains the information that Grzegorz Fitelberg, wanting to enable his son to become acquainted with the functioning of an orchestra ‘from the inside’, placed him in the orchestra of the Warsaw Opera as a percussionist<sup>6</sup>. This detail, together with a note concerning the finishing date (16 January 1920) and place (Warsaw) of his *Phantasy „Last moments of Till Eulenspiegel”* op. 9, seems to confirm such a state of affairs, despite his father's absence from Poland at the time.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Cadenbach, *Jerzy Fitelberg*, [in:] *Franz Schrekers Schüler in Berlin: biographische Beiträge und Dokumente. Schriften aus dem Archiv der Universität der Künste Berlin*, Band 8, Universität der Künste Berlin, 2005, pp. 25.



**Illustration 2 - Jerzy and Grzegorz Fitelberg, around 1912 r.**

In June 1921, Grzegorz Fitelberg returned to Warsaw to become the second conductor of the capital's Philharmonic Orchestra. Then his paths with his now-adult son separated for good, as the junior left for Berlin to take up studies in Franz Schreker's composition class. From today's point of view, this choice may seem interesting and unusual, since, following the recommendation of Karol Szymanowski, who was so close to the Fitelberg family, the vast majority of Polish composers of the turn-of-the-century generation sought opportunities to develop in Paris. Berlin and its environment, on the other hand, were well known to Grzegorz Fitelberg, as he regularly stayed in the capital of the German Empire in the first decade of the 20th century thanks to the patronage of Prince Władysław Lubomirski. There, the aspiring composer and conductor befriended Ludomir Różycki, with whom he later formed the Young

Polish Composers' Publishing Company, a group financed mainly by Prince Lubomirski and soon joined by Apolinary Szeluto, Karol Szymanowski and Mieczysław Karłowicz. In this context, it cannot be excluded that after the end of the First World War, Fitelberg senior still had a number of acquaintances in the then capital of the Weimar Republic, making it easier for his son to find accommodation and to take up studies with a highly regarded pedagogue such as Franz Schreker. After the end of the First World War, he moved from Vienna to Berlin to become director of the Hochschule für Musik there. The choice of Schreker as the main composition pedagogue for Jerzy (the other, mentioned in the biographies, was Walter Gmeindl), may also have been related to the contacts and acquaintances his father made while residing regularly in Vienna between 1911 and 1914, where he held the position of Kapellmeister of the Imperial Opera from 1912, as successor to Bruno Walter<sup>7</sup>.

Although the Berlin stage of Jerzy Fitelberg's life and work is the longest in his career, relatively little is known about the details of the development of his career at the time, apart from the dates of his various compositions. All that survives in the archives of the Universität der Künste are copies of the certificates for the continuation of his studies submitted each year, and requests for the release of student from military service, issued and signed by the university's management for submission to the Polish consulate<sup>8</sup>. Rainer Cadenbach, who accessed these materials, further suggests an interesting series of events, reporting that the last, in his opinion unapproved, application for the Polish student's discharge from the army was issued in July 1926 with the notation 'Class Gmeindl'. Moreover, he hypothesises a change in the class and the fact that Fitelberg graduated without a diploma<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit. pp. 56.

<sup>8</sup> R. Cadenbach, *Jerzy Fitelberg*, op. cit. pp. 25-26

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, pp. 26



**Illustration 3 - Caricature of J. Fitelber, Baden-Baden 1929, „Die Musik” XXI - author. Benedikt F. Doblin**

Apart from the mentioned facts and musical traces from the Berlin stage of Jerzy Fitelberg's life, practically nothing is known, apart from the undoubtedly difficult financial conditions the young composer had to face. What has survived is a typescript of his application of 6 March 1931 addressed to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, who was then acting as music propaganda clerk in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This document contains a request for a material subsidy, as well as an explanation of the young artist's difficult material conditions:

As the current economic situation makes it impossible for me to continue my work as a composer and to promote my compositions, I am forced to make an earnest request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to grant me a financial subsidy that would allow me to continue my further work.<sup>10</sup>

In this document, the composer also gives the address of his place of residence - *Westfaelischestrasse 58, Berlin-Halensee*. This place of residence was also confirmed by his father in his correspondence<sup>11</sup>. Jerzy Fitelberg remained in the capital of the Weimar Republic until 1933, when he decided to move to Paris because of the Nazi takeover of Germany and the intensification of persecution against people of Jewish origin there. Among the resources available, there are no records to indicate unequivocally whether the young composer was subjected to any direct repression while still in Berlin. However, it seems entirely accurate to assume that his Semitic roots must have been a burden in the context of his earning situation. In the inter-war period, the Paris-based Max Eschig publishing house handled the publication of some of Fitelberg's works in France. However, the composer's most recognisable works at the time, such as e.g. Violin Concerto No. 2, String Quartet No. 2 or Tango for violin and piano from the ballet Prometheus Badly Tangled, were in the catalogue of the Vienna-based Universal Edition. This publishing house, in the situation of the *anschluss* of Austria by the Nazi German Reich, was presumably obliged to break all contracts with composers of Jewish origin, including the suspension of the publication of their works. In addition, Jerzy Fitelberg's name appeared on a list created in 1935 by Reichskulturkammer president Joseph Goebbels containing the names of 108 composers whose music should not be performed publicly in Germany<sup>12</sup>. In fact, it is most likely that it was these facts that Fitelberg had in mind when he mentioned in a letter sent from Paris in 1938:

[...] I lost a foreign publisher, a whole series of performances and suffered artistic and material losses [...].<sup>13</sup>

The young composer's choice of Paris as the place for his next settlement seems somewhat obvious. In the French capital, since the times of the 19th-century Polish national uprisings, a number of emigrating Poles had found their refuge, and among these the Polish artistic

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<sup>10</sup> Document photocopy [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit., pp. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Grzegorz Fitelberg to Karol Szymanowski in Warsaw dated 11 march 1929 [in:] T. Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski: Korespondencja: pełna edycja zachowanych listów od i do kompozytora*, T. 3, cz. 2, PWM, Kraków 1997, pp. 340

<sup>12</sup> F. Geiger, *Die „Goebbels-Liste” vom 1. September 1935. Eine Quelle zur Komponistenverfolgung im NS-Staat*, [w:] *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 59. Jahrg., H 2, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2002, s. 105-106 [access: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/931195>]

<sup>13</sup> Extract of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 14 April 1938. APC WUL, w/o sign..

community was particularly numerous. In the inter-war period, Paris was also the main musical centre in Europe, where the most important artistic events and initiatives took place. Antoni Szałowski presented the inter-war situation of Polish musicians in the French capital, stating:

Poles are becoming more and more fashionable in Paris. Polish artists are in search, it is not only easier to get Polish works performed, but these performances are in high demand.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps Fitelberg had already realised that it was in France that he would find relative ease and stability for himself. Sensing that the environment there would be favourable to Polish artists, he would have a better chance of progress and finding an audience for his music. Even before settling in Paris, he maintained close relations with the artists present in the city. He also joined the ranks of the Association of Young Polish Musicians (SYMP), which enabled him to participate in a composition competition organised by this association in 1928.

If something ‘‘managed to succeed’’ in Paris - it then had success all over the world.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, thanks to his victory in the aforementioned competition, his prize-winning String Quartet No. 2 was frequently performed and broadcast on the radio. The figure of Fitelberg junior received pan-European press coverage. For this reason, among others, his choice of Paris as a destination for emigration was also linked to his artistic recognition, not only through his many acquaintances. In a letter dated 3 June 1933, Karol Szymanowski wrote from Paris to Grzegorz Fitelberg:

I'm about to go to breakfast with Jerzy and Jacobi<sup>16</sup>. I'm about to go to breakfast with Jerzy and Jacobi . I've seen Jerzy a couple of times now, he's very concerned, but I hope that he'll somehow make it here, as he's eased his way into the various Countesses and Duchesses who decide everything here, and which is naturally what we're trying to do.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that already a few months later (on 23 January 1934), the first monographic concert of the young Fitelberg's music was held, where his chamber works (including f. e. *String Quartet No. 2*, and *Suite* for violin and piano) were performed by Aline Van Barentzen, Janine Weill, Quatuor Krettly and Roman Totenberg. Stefan Kisielewski also

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<sup>14</sup> K. Régamey, *Rozmowa z Antonim Szałowskim*, „Muzyka Polska” (1938) no. 2, pp. 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> T. Kaczyński, *Ostatnia rozmowa z Antonim Szałowskim*, „Ruch Muzyczny” 1978, pp. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick Jacobi - American conductor and composer, a close friend of J. Fitelberg, who significantly supported Fitelberg after his emigration to the USA in 1940.

<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from a letter from K. Szymanowski to G. Fitelberg of 3 June 1933, *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja. Tom 4*. col and ed. by Teresa Chylińska, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 1997, pp. 144



left his Parisian reminiscences of Fitelberg junior on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, writing in his peculiar style:

Szałowski and I once visited him; he was a bizarre human insect, a persistent woodworm who, like a fanatic, composed incessantly. He had a number of American prizes, I wonder what happened to his enormous output.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, Paris became the place of most intensive work for Jerzy Fitelberg, for it was there that the greatest number of his works were written. The String Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 and the String Trio, which were composed there, are also outstanding for the highest level of difficulty among his chamber works for string instruments. In addition to his own work, he was also involved in copying sheet music and preparing instrumental parts, as can be seen from the very close similarity in calligraphy between his manuscripts and the handwritten parts of unpublished works by other composers, such as Szymon Laks. It is highly probable that, like most other composers, he also made a living from instrumentation and giving lessons. From 1930, he was a Polish delegate to the Permanent Commission for International Exchange Concerts (PCIEC), whose aim was to exchange musical production between member countries through intermediation with radio stations. His active participation in PCIEC contributed to the popularisation of Polish music through Polish concerts organised, among others, in the USA and the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup>

The last Parisian address recorded by Jerzy Fitelberg where he lived was Villa Robert Lindet 7, now located in the 15th arrondissement of that city. It is likely that during his stay in France he met and married before 1935<sup>20</sup> Tamara (her maiden name has not been clearly established), a Pole living in that country and having a large family there<sup>21</sup>. In Paris, he also forged one of his most enduring and warmest friendships with Roman Palester and his wife Barbara.

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<sup>18</sup> Kisielewski Stefan, *Życie paryskie*, „Ruch muzyczny” no 5/1977, (in:) Stefan Kisielewski. Pisma i felietony muzyczne. Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2012, pp. 652.

<sup>19</sup> Z. Helman, *Muzyka Polska w Paryżu*, „Muzyka” 1972, pp. 86.

<sup>20</sup> In a memoir by Felicja Lilpop Krance, dated 24 December 1935, a fragment of which is found in Karol Szymanowski's collection of correspondence, one can read the oldest chronological information mentioning the fact of Jerzy Fitelberg's marriage to Tamara: *‘There were more than twenty of us at the time. First of all Karol Szymanowski [...], the composer Jerzy Fitelberg (the son of ‘Ficio’) with his wife Tamara [...], The kitchen was tiny and it was difficult to make a traditional Christmas Eve menu for so many people - so we invented a Lenten bigos, which was very popular, just like all the rest [...]. I don't think I've ever seen Karol in such a great mood! [...]’*. vide: *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja. Tom 4 1932-1937*. col. and ed. by T. Chylińska, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 2002, pp. 299.

<sup>21</sup> In a letter to Roman and Barbara Palester dated 3 August 1948, Jerzy Fitelberg mentions Tamara's ‘numerous cousins’. In the surviving correspondence, he specifies only two persons from his wife's family - an aunt and a





**Illustration 4 - Violinist Colette Franz<sup>22</sup> & Jerzy Fitelberg, "Wiadomości literackie" 1937.**

The invasion of France by the Third Reich in 1940 was the reason for next stage of emigration for Jerzy Fitelberg, who then decided to travel to the USA by ship from Genoa to New York<sup>23</sup>. Thanks in part to the presence of his music at American events devoted to contemporary music, e.g. the Copland-Sessions Concerts in the 1930s, and above all to the prestigious Coolidge Prize received in 1936 for his String Quartet No. 4, Fitelberg was recognisable among American composers, and had numerous acquaintances there (Rodziński, Rubinstein, Piatigorski, Copland, Jacobi and others) making it easier to find a place of asylum. His aunt Anna Fitelberg and a number of family friends, including Julian Tuwim and Kazimierz Wierzyński, also stayed in the USA. Grzegorz Fitelberg also reached the United States via South America with his third wife Zofia, married during this escape.

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brother. Letters dated 29 October 1949 and 10 April 1950 mention Tamara's aunt Buber, who lived in Paris. She was to book Jerzy a stay at the Park Hotel in Paris for the duration of his stay there, and a few months later to help the Palestras with the conversion of the dollars sent by Jerzy into francs. Tamara's brother lived in Geneva, and she was to visit him there during her trips to Europe related to her professional duties as part of her work in the administrative structures of the United Nations.

<sup>22</sup> C. Frantz was the first performer of the solo part in J. Fitelberg's *Violin Concerto No. 2*.

<sup>23</sup> R. Cadenbach, *Jerzy Fitelberg* op. cit., pp. 28

In his first post-war letter to Roman Palester dated 26 November 1945, the young Fitelberg writes:

My dear Roman, today I read your letter written to Father. It is difficult for me to tell you how touched I am by the first message from you. Do you remember our Parisian life, the nightly readjustments, the chattering about music? - So many Memories. - And so many years have passed! I came to America in 1940. A year later Tamara and my mother arrived. - My father is in excellent shape, full of energy, healthy and young. - As well as ruining sheet music, I give private lessons, occasionally instrument some jigs, and besides that I have made a few films (short ones) - here in N.Y. Tamara also works - so somehow we manage. - I worked quite a lot and in America I reworked Szymanowski's "Masques" for piano with orchestra, as well as Dance from "Harnasie" for piano - both things - on Arthur Rubinstein's request. I wrote "Variations" for string orchestra, "Epitaph" for violin and orchestra, "Nocturne" for orchestra (Rodziński is playing it this season in N.Y.), "Divertimento" for orchestra, 5<sup>th</sup> quartet, three pieces for violin and piano, choruses, "Sonata"... for solo cello. It seems to be all of the above. - [...] I would very much like to see you and Barbara. - I have a lot of news from Paris. Several friends are trying to go to see me, but with visas it is difficult to get them, and transport is very difficult for the time being. - Give my regards, Roman, to your friends and colleagues.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Excerpt of letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 26 November 1945. APC WUL, w/o sign..



**Illustration 5 - 244 West 72nd street, Nowy Jork, 30s-40s, - The building where Jerzy Fitelberg lived and died**

The composer spent the first year of his emigration in the USA alone; it was not until 1941 that his mother and wife arrived. In New York, the Fitelbergs lived at the address 244w, 72nd Street, located in Manhattan's Upper West Side. The place of salvation that the United States appeared to be, however, proved to be a very difficult environment for an artist wishing to remain independent of commercialism. In the composer's correspondence, his aversion to the largest city in the USA is clearly highlighted, especially the weather conditions there. Fitelberg's comments clearly express his distaste for American artistic trends, as well as his complaints about the difficult situation of immigrant musicians operating in this country, who did not want to create works for a mass audience. In a similar tone, Grzegorz Fitelberg expressed his observations:

In November 1940 we arrived in New York. It was the last moment: in December, as you know, the war with Japan. So I am four years in the States. One big hopeless disappointment. We don't fit in. A country for completely young people or natives. All but a microscopic fraction are doomed to do nothing. I am talking about refugees from Europe. And those who have been here for a long time are so afraid for their jobs that they don't want to help anyone.

Here no one knows anybody - everyone is afraid of each other... You ask me about Artur [Rubinstein]. He doesn't have the time. He hasn't approached me once. To the extent that I accidentally meet him once a year, of course he's very exultant. There is no musical culture here. Everything is short-lived and for display. New York - a city of 8 million people - has one orchestra - the season lasts five months. The auditorium seats 2,800 people - a huge deficit - the charity is covered by old ladies. Opera - the famous Metropolitan - season lasts 4 months - artistic level is none. Some opera-orchestras are created, cobbled together ad hoc - they last 3-4 weeks each and disappear. Titles - names - loud words last forever. Chicago Civic Opera is a solid, permanent concept. And the opera season lasts 2 weeks!!! In the whole year 2 weeks. Everything takes place without rehearsals. Just cheap - to make it cheaper! I tried to make artistic compromises - I was engaged, I conducted a ballet - I missed, and discouraged to the point - that I got sick, I dropped everything and went back to New York. I had one good concert on 3 May 1944 with Huberman and Małcuzyński with the Violin Concerto and Szymanowski's "Harnasie". I had good concerts in Montreal, Toronto. In N. York with Huberman we did Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. To top it all off, our music and ourselves do not and have not enjoyed any sympathy here - rather disfavour. My son Jerzy has been here since April 1940, struggling to make ends meet. He has won an Academy of Arts award - \$1,000. A performance of his "Nocturne" by the Philharmonic has been announced for this year. This will be the first performance in five years. Jerzy's chamber music has been performed three or four times. That's it.<sup>25</sup>

Renewed performances of the young Fitelberg's music also began in Europe after the end of the war turmoil. Palester wrote:

Here they are starting to play a bit of Jerzy and I'm really enjoying it.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently, this was not a high enough number of performances to get the European music community interested again in the works of the young Fitelberg, who had already settled in the USA.

In a letter, sent on 28 November 1946, Fitelberg junior gives details of his difficult earning situation, based on giving private lessons, making (reluctant) commissioned instrumentation, copying sheet music and occasionally composing music for short films. However, these were

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<sup>25</sup> Excerpt of a letter from Grzegorz Fitelberg to Stefan Spiess dated 6 November 1945, [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga z lat 1941-1953*, Fundacja Muzyczna Międzynarodowego Konkursu Dyrygentów im. Grzegorza Fitelberga, Katowice 2003, pp. 76-77.

<sup>26</sup> Excerpt of a letter from Roman Palester to Grzegorz Fitelberg, 28 October 1948, [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga* op. cit, pp. 141.

short-term sources of income. The main burden of maintaining household finances fell to Tamara, who worked as a translator<sup>27</sup> within the United Nations office structures, where she:

has a great (in material terms) job [...] but has to work hard.<sup>28</sup>

This income situation (Tamara's regular job and Jerzy's occasional earnings) continued until the composer's death. Jerzy spent the vast majority of his time composing at home, working on commissions or dealing with day-to-day personal matters. A document has survived showing that he applied for a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for the year 1946-47, which he did not finally receive<sup>29</sup>. His greatest financial successes of the time were the 1945 The American Arts and Letters award for lifetime achievements (\$1,000)<sup>30</sup>, and first place ex equo (\$1,000 and publication of the winning work) at the Pennsylvania College for Women competition in Pittsburgh for his "Organ Suite"<sup>31</sup>.

As time went on, Fitelberg's professional status began to evolve in a positive direction, as he managed to establish cooperation with several smaller publishing houses, such as Edward B. Marks Music Company, Omega Edition, Associated Music Publishers and Southern Music Publishing. He received several commissions from these companies (especially E.B. Marks) (e.g. "Concerto" for Clarinet and Orchestra, "12 Etudes" for 3 Clarinets, "Children's Album" for Piano), while commissions increasingly began to come from individual artists and organisations as well (e.g. "Nocturne" for orchestra from Artur Rodziński and the NYC Philharmonic; "Concertino da camera" for violin and piano from the Koussevitzki Foundation; the children's opera "Henny Penny" from the American League of Composers in association with the Juilliard School). A few months before his death, he wrote to Palester about this situation:

They play me little, but print me a lot. It would be better if they started publishing you here and playing me. [...] I've got some paid work; a lot of writing, working 10-12 hours a day. [...] So after 10 years of "broadwaying" my affairs have moved on a bit.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> E. Boczkowska, *O Jerzym Fitelbergu w Nowym Jorku na podstawie źródeł archiwalnych*, [in:]: *Muzyka Polska za granicą. T. 3 „American Dream”. Polscy twórcy za oceanem*. Ed. B. Bolesławska-Lewandowska, Jolanta Guzy-Pasiak, ISPAN, Warszawa 2020, pp. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester, 28 November 1946, APC WUL, w/o sign..

<sup>29</sup> Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, b. 22, f. 2-3, ok. 1946 r.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, documents dated 29 March 1945 and 18 May 1945.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, documents dated 22 June 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester, 27 November 1950, APC WUL, w/o sign..

Fitelberg often complained about his poor health caused by the unfavourable weather conditions in New York, as well as complications from a ship voyage to and from Europe. In addition, he probably did not avoid substances such as alcohol and cigarettes (large quantities of which he sent to Palester in Paris after the end of the war). Increasingly frequent problems with his condition, and above all the overwork and stress of his professional affairs, led Fitelberg junior to fall ill, which he described in a letter to his father:

My dear, neither you nor I have succeeded. I see from your letter that we were ill at the same time. I am glad that you have improved and that you are getting better. I was ill from mid-December until now. It began with 'false angina pectoris'. [...] In February I was laid up for a fortnight, some viral infection, fever in 5 days of 41 degrees and this without regard to penicillin, aureomycin, aspirin and other medicines. I lost weight, got tired and am slowly getting on with finishing the commission for the Kussewicki Foundation. - I go out little, I see little of anyone. [...] Couldn't you write a little more often?<sup>33</sup>

At the end of April that year, Grzegorz Fitelberg received a dramatic letter from his daughter-in-law, in which she outlined her husband's last moments:

A terrible misfortune has fallen upon us. Jerzy stopped living on Wednesday morning 25 April. When he got out of bed in the morning, he collapsed and was gone. From September onwards, he had suffered from heart problems and so the doctors assumed that the pains caused by the spasms in his blood vessels were of a neurological nature. In such cases he took nitroglycerine, which immediately eliminated the pains. Recently, however, the attacks had been recurring with increasing frequency and, although death was instantaneous, the poor man had been very tired over the past few months. He worked until the last minute and 2 days before his death he submitted a piece for violin with piano called *Concertino da Camera*, commissioned by the Kussewicki Foundation! Somehow he was especially happy that he had finally finished it and worked longer on it as usual, because it was already very difficult for him to write.<sup>34</sup>

## **2. An attempt at a periodisation of the life and work of Jerzy Fitelberg**

Jerzy Fitelberg's life of less than 48 years resulted in almost a hundred compositions. The inability to become familiar with much of his music, due primarily to the scarce number of

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<sup>33</sup> Excerpt of a letter from Jerzy Fitelberg to Grzegorz Fitelberg dated 12 March 1951, [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga* op. cit, pp. 260.

<sup>34</sup> Excerpt of a letter from Tamara Fitelberg to Grzegorz Fitelberg dated 29 April 1951, [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Korespondencja Grzegorza Fitelberga* op. cit, pp. 263.

recordings, is a serious problem in terms of analysing and establishing outlines of clear divisions which would characterise his work. An insight into his works for string quartet and his recordings of other works, together with an understanding of the contexts in his life, make it possible to attempt a periodisation of this oeuvre. A sketch of such a division into stages and phases based on the most important details of the composer's life is presented in the table below. It takes into account the aspect of Jerzy Fitelberg's place of permanent residence and the artistic milieu with which he may have had the closest contact at a given time.

Warsaw stage	Berlin stage		Paris stage	New York stage
Do 1921	1921-1933		1933-1940	1940-1951
Juvenile phase	Student phase	Career development phase		Existence phase

Musically, the Warsaw step and juvenile phase is naturally linked to his first attempts to write music. This is the time when he began to search for his own artistic path, enraptured by the musical events surrounding him, of which he had the chance to be a part mainly thanks to his father. His music of those years is characterised by expressionistic tendencies (recognisable, for example, through the specific titling of his works and the distinctive elements contained in the music), as well as strong inspiration from the work of Richard Strauss and German post-Romanticism. The Berlin phase, beginning with Fitelberg's studies in the capital of the Weimar Republic, was a time of fascination with modernism, new objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), and finally neoclassicism in the works of Hindith, Stravinsky, composers of the Les Six group and Prokofiev, whose echoes resound, for example, in Quartets Nos. 1 and 2. The career development phase comes at the time when Fitelberg finishes his studies and attempts to break through with his music to the public. The first major success of his life was the first prize at the SMMP competition in Paris (1928). There may be a certain overlap between the Berlin and Paris stages, as a few years before he moved to the French capital, his increasingly strong links with the Parisian environment are already noticeable. The relocation of his life to the French metropolis was due to purely pragmatic geopolitical reasons, hence the overlap between these phases. It was during this period that he conducted his most intensive creative work, which, due to his experiments and sound explorations, seems to have gone ambitiously ahead of the trends present among Polish musicians at the time. The last stage, the New York stage, whose separation is also due to the emigration factor, is connected with the phase of existence, which above all reflects the atmosphere of the first years of Fitelberg's stay in the USA, when he was struggling with enormous material and living problems, as well as a lack of interest in performing his music. This stage involves a complete

reorganisation of the composer's life, both creatively and personally. It was only after the end of the Second World War that Fitelberg's music began to be noticed again and new works were commissioned. In his output from this period, one can also notice a kind of simplification of his musical language, although it is not radical and represents a kind of return to the creative tendencies of his youthful years. Compositions written at this time bear the hallmarks of simplification in terms of cycle construction (above all reduction of movements), and their musical content is far more transparent than those written in Paris before the war.

So constructed periodisation refers in part to Mieczysław Tomaszewski's concept of the functioning of the nodal points in artist's lives<sup>35</sup>. The subdivisions he proposed can also be applied to Jerzy Fitelberg. The initial creative phase, which is characterised by 'imitation of existing models', is linked to the Warsaw stage. The early creative phase, where 'developing, altering or adapting a pattern consciously chosen by oneself' is emphasised, is connected with the Berlin stage of study. In the case of Fitelberg's biography, the Berlin and Paris stages merge: The phase of mature creativity, detailed by 'liberation both from the creator's heavy burden of attachment to tradition and from the "stupor" of fascination with a voluntarily adopted model' and 'the attainment of maturity, above all in terms of craftsmanship, [...] in order to be able to unveil one's own face', and the phase of peak creativity, which is 'the second act of a period of creative fullness [...] which reaches into the depths and achieves the peak of one's own possibilities'. The late creative phase, where the characteristic element is the transition through a 'crisis moment of existential threat' and the following 'shock and purification', which allow one to redefine one's work, corresponds to the New York phase. The last phase proposed by Tomaszewski - the final oeuvre, which is characterised by 'immersion in oneself' and a 'soliloquy and farewell' mood of acts and music - finds no equivalent in Fitelberg's biography due to a simple reason - death surprised the composer prematurely.

The concept of the periodisation of Jerzy Fitelberg's life and work presented here, being the author's proposal, is intended to help put in order the confusing history of this artist, as well as to highlight contexts facilitating the interpretation of his artistic ideas and music. The proposed division serves not only as a reference when describing the individual issues

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<sup>35</sup> M. Tomaszewski, *Życia twórcy punkty węzłowe. Rekonesans.*, [in:] *Beethoven 2. Studia i interpretacje*, red. M. Tomaszewski i M. Chrenkoff, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2003, s. 283-292. All quotations in this paragraph that have been placed in quotation marks are taken from this text by Tomaszewski.



discussed in this thesis, but can also contribute to the further development of research into his figure and output.

### **3. Relationship between father and son in the context of their artistic activities**

As already mentioned, in virtually all sources mentioning or describing Jerzy Fitelberg, the description 'son of conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg' occupies a prime position. The father's personality and artistic activity overshadowed the son not only during their lifetime, but practically shrouded the figure and work of the youngest representative of the family until modern times. Their relationship thus provides an interesting context for the artistic achievements of these two musicians, revealing a kind of tragism of these family relationships, strongly influencing the life stories of both.

Music marked the axis of the entire Fitelberg family's life. This is evidenced by their genealogy, which, being relatively short, goes back in time only to Hozjasz Fitelberg and Lota, *de domo* Pintzow, Jerzy's grandparents, who settled in Dźwińsk (Daugavpils) in what is now Latvia. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, this town had a Jewish population of around 45%, and Hozjasz held the post of Kapellmeister of a Russian army garrison there<sup>36</sup>. He and his wife had three offspring: Eliza and Anna, and Gregory, born on 18 October 1879. The senior of the family must have recognised musical talent in his son, for he sent him to Warsaw for regular education at the Institute of Music. There, the young artist studied under the auspices of Stanisław Barcewicz, at that time a highly regarded violinist and concertmaster of the Warsaw Opera. The composer Zygmunt Noskowski also took him into his class. Doubtless Grzegorz Fitelberg must have presented a fairly high standard as a violinist, for at the age of 22 he was appointed concertmaster of the second violin section of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, established in 1901. It was most probably at this stage of his life that Grzegorz must have become involved with Natalia Landau, whom he later married. They had only one child, Jerzy, born on 20 May 1903.

The Fitelbergs (as Russian citizens) spent the years of the First World War in areas distant from military action, settling first in St Petersburg, where the conductor worked with Paweł Kochanski, Alexander Glazunov, Sergei Kussewicki, Sergei Diaghilev and Sergei Prokofiev,

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<sup>36</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit., pp. 14.

among others. After the turmoil of the Bolshevik Revolution, Grzegorz Fitelberg was appointed as the orchestra director of the Grand Theatre in Moscow. Some sources concerning his son, confirming this combination of events, point to the fact that Jerzy was at that time studying in Moscow<sup>37</sup>. Grzegorz Fitelberg's first marriage was turbulent, unstable and ended in divorce during the conductor's stay in the territories of the Soviet Socialist Republics (Russian FSR and Ukrainian SSR) before 1919.<sup>38</sup> This fact is confirmed by an excerpt of a letter from Zofia Kochańska to Karol Szymanowski, in which she writes:

Pietia Suwczyński<sup>39</sup> says that Fitelberg wants to divorce his wife, that he shouts at her, makes things up, hates her. He earns a lot himself, and it seems they have taken everything from her [the Revolutionists]. Is there a worse animal than man?<sup>40</sup>

Nothing is known about the further fate of Jerzy's mother until mention is made of her arrival in 1941 in the USA, where she settled with her son and daughter-in-law<sup>41</sup>, then named as one of the heirs to her son's possessions<sup>42</sup>.



**Illustration 6 - Grzegorz and Jerzy Fitelberg, around 1910**

<sup>37</sup> R. Cadenbach, *Jerzy Fitelberg*, [in:] *Franz Schrekers Schüler in Berlin: biographische Beiträge und Dokumente*. Schriften aus dem Archiv der Universität der Künste Berlin, vol. 8, Berlin, 2005, pp. 25

<sup>38</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit. pp. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Piotr Suwczyński (1892-1985) – Russian patron of the arts, a close friend of K. Szymanowski, S. Prokofiev, I. Stravinsky, as well as O. Messiaen and P. Boulez.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Zofii Kochańskiej to Karola Szymanowskiego in Elizawetgardzie, dated 18 September 1919, [in:] T. Chylińska, *Karol Szymanowski: Korespondencja* op. cit. vol. I, 1903-1919, PWM, Kraków 1982, pp. 586

<sup>41</sup> This information is given by J. Fitelberg in a letter to R. Palester dated 26.11.1945 r, AKP BUW, no sign..

<sup>42</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit., pp. 102.

During the inter-war period, Grzegorz Fitelberg often included his son's symphonic music in the concert repertoire. One of the most frequently conducted works by his junior was his *Violin Concerto no. 2*. Performances of the young Fitelberg's music after the Second World War in Western Europe were rare and mainly related to its presence at the Festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music, while in Poland and the Eastern Bloc countries, due to the composer's emigration, they had no opportunity to appear, although traces of efforts in this direction can be found. Jerzy wrote on this issue:

My father wrote to me that he was going to play my *Nocturn* on the radio in May - personally, I don't think my father would have pulled off such a heroic act and actually played something of mine in Poland.<sup>43</sup>

One can only surmise that the two Fitelbergs, gifted with strong and temperamental characters, must often have clashed with each other on various levels.

Grzegorz Fitelberg was not an easy friend. He did not allow a critical attitude towards himself, he was apodictic and greedy, jealous and bossy in his friendship.<sup>44</sup>

Stefan Spiess wrote about K. Szymanowski and G. Fitelberg:

These two artists, with the same musical tastes and aspirations, always in agreement, complemented each other perfectly. They abhorred conformism and parochialism, not uncommon in our country at the time. [...] They shared the common idea of creating new Polish music with wider horizons, and this strengthened their friendship. They were also united in their need to act together. Fitelberg [...] had a glorious thrust to bring out, show to the world and promote Polish talents. In the given case - in the face of Szymanowski's indisputable greatness - he was faced with an extremely grateful duty. On the other hand, Szymanowski needed someone close to him with whom he could talk about his writing, someone who would at the same time help him to transmit his music to the world. And since he came across an eminent musician, a conductor, he became warmly attached to him. [...] Ficio was direct in his interactions, prone to spontaneous impulses<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg do R. Palester dated 12.04.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>44</sup> L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg*, op. cit, pp. 86

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, pp.. 87



**Illustration 7 - Portrait of Grzegorz Fitelberg, ar. 1942**

In 1948, the elder Fitelberg stayed for several months in the Argentine capital. His son recalls this by writing:

I really don't know what is going on with my Father; do you know that he 'invited' me to Buenos Aires on my account (I don't joke, I write the truth). Why has he started to approach you now?<sup>46</sup>

In a later letter, he comments on his interlocutor's statement, probably concerning the situation mentioned between Grzegorz Fitelberg and Roman Palester, with the words:

What you write about Father is so sad, - I have the impression that he has become completely impossible. Everything he does, says, is so baseless, the constant whims, antics, allowing himself too much.<sup>47</sup>

Another indication of the son's attitude to his father can be found in the letter, in which Junior, among other things, announces his arrival, his stay of several weeks in Poland and his meeting with Grzegorz in Katowice:

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<sup>46</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 3.03.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>47</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 14.03.1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

I hope that everything will go 'well'. I mean Father, that he will be calm and I will not have misunderstandings with him because of him.<sup>48</sup>

Such content quite clearly expresses the unfavourable tone of the Fitelbergs' relationship. Similarly, the 'chilly' climate of family relations can be read in the context of their professional relationship:

I ask you not to send Father the partition of the tromboniana [Concerto for trombone, piano and string orchestra], as Marx (at Father's request) has sent a set of this "masterpiece" to Katowice. I do not quite realise why and for what it is to Father, after all he will not perform it. Anyway, it doesn't move me and I don't care.<sup>49</sup>

Analysing the surviving traces of the relationship between father and son, the ambivalence of their relationship becomes apparent. Undoubtedly, junior's entire life must have been negatively affected by his father's abandonment of his mother, especially in the context of the aforementioned misery the family suffered during the Bolshevik Revolution. However, they were united by a passion for ambitious new music and an uncompromising commitment to realising their artistic intentions. It is also significant in this context that whenever Grzegorz Fitelberg was on the programme committee of the IMSC Festival, it would usually be his son's work that appeared in the repertoire of the festival. Thus, the relationship between Grzegorz and Jerzy was fruitful from the point of view of their artistic path, especially for the son, while from the purely human or domestic point of view, this relationship is difficult and tempestuous to say the least..

#### **4. The issue of the composer's creative attitude and personality**

In the literature to date on Jerzy Fitelberg, there has been no study that attempts to factor out the details of the composer's creative attitude and personality, which would thus provide a meaningful context for tracing and studying his oeuvre. Learning about the composer's character, an attempt to reconstruct his way of thinking, behaviour and views on art or contemporary artistic phenomena is an indispensable element of the theory of integral interpretation of a musical work propounded by Mieczysław Tomaszewski<sup>50</sup>.

Fitelberg's creative approach, which he demonstrated not only in his statements, but also in his own composing activity, testifies to his no-compromise approach in creating music that is

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<sup>48</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 8 September 1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>49</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 24 April 1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>50</sup> M. Tomaszewski, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego. Rekonesans*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2000

ambitious, intellectual and in every respect refined and thoughtful. Drawing on his own experience and that of artists who were close to him aesthetically, he did not resort to “easy tricks” that could quickly gain him popularity among a wider audience. Even Fitelberg's youthful works are an evidence of his rich creativity, sublime explorations in the field of musical language and excellent mastery of the composing skills. These elements characterize his output at every stage of his career. In terms of his devotion to ambitious music, composing and its popularization, he was close to both the attitude of his father and Karol Szymanowski, as described by Stefan Spiess<sup>51</sup>.

Taking a look at the creative path of Fitelberg junior and familiarizing oneself with recordings of his music, which in their modest number nevertheless give a certain picture of the output coming from different periods of his life, one can see a certain clear course of the composer's career path. As a student, adopting an anti-Romantic stance, he rejected his youthful admiration and inspiration from the contextual and non-musical aspects at the time, without giving up his workshop achievements. His interests were increasingly focused on the output embedded in the neoclassical trend. Among composers writing within such aesthetics, Henri Prunières placed him in 1936, including him in the Ecole de Paris group, placing his name alongside A. Tansman, I. Stravinsky, S. Prokofiev and B. Martinů<sup>52</sup>.

The character of Fitelberg junior's music clearly indicates a special closeness to the trend of vitalism and, as particularly emphasized by contemporary reviews, folklorism (despite the lack of overt stylizations or direct quotations in his works). He was clearly averse to both the music of artists operating with dodecaphony and this technique itself:

I don't like Schonberg's music, and his followers get on my nerves with their talkativeness, incompetence and lousy musicianship. I have a feeling that Dallapiccola is a real composer – I don't really understand why he embraced “Schonbergianism” and made himself a 12-tone circumcision. I know that they are stinking up the already stinky air of Paris.<sup>53</sup>

Two years later, he wrote:

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<sup>51</sup> See. quote on pp.. 27

<sup>52</sup> After: H. Prunières, *Les tendances actuelles de la musique*. “La Revue Musicale” 1936 no 162, [in:] Z. Helman, *Muzyka Polska między dwiema wojnami*, „Muzyka” 23, 1978, pp. 26.

<sup>53</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 26.06.1947 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

These Schonbergists, they are a scourge - and apparently that they have a growing number of followers in Europe.<sup>54</sup>

It is clear from the preserved materials that he was by far most interested in the technical and structural issues of the compositions. The emotional layer or extra-musical context, if the content of the work was not related to the text or illustrative function, was not explored or explained by him in any way. The descriptions of his own works that he included in program booklets were laconic and usually contained brief facts about the context of the work's creation and how it was constructed.

A statement by Jerzy Fitelberg from 1949, valuable for observing the composer's development, has survived, demonstrating the specificity of his working style:

I don't want to go into the details of the change in style or character of my music over the past years. Only I would like to point out that I have radically changed my writing system. I wrote the first concerto, in 1928, in 7 days, writing the partition in ink. The 2nd quartet I also wrote within a week. The 5th - I wrote 4 weeks (in 1945). Now - I try to work "by heart". - that is, I do the whole creative process almost without noting on paper, I devise by heart the smallest details, pages of music. Of course that during notetaking there are major changes in the plan and composing of a piece. - This radical change in the way I work is not the result of making a certain decision - on the contrary, this way of writing and working is a natural result, one day I noticed that this way suits me better, and I have a feeling that this is also related to the line of development and change in the style of my music. A child's opera, whose piano excerpt is 146 pages - I composed "by heart". But I want to emphasize that I have not made any agreement with myself, and it is possible that with my next work (when and what - I do not know) I will start sketching and scribbling.<sup>55</sup>

A significant fact is Fitelberg's frequent use of the phrase "obstalunek" in the context of his works written at someone else's request. The phrase appears in his letters of a personal nature and its regular use, in turn, testifies to his peculiarly workshop-professional approach to composing commissioned music, as the term "obstalunek" denotes an order made with a craftsman. In opposition to such a state of affairs, he uses the phrase "own work" to refer to works that were intended to be created by his authorial intention.

A distinctive feature of Jerzy Fitelberg's personality was his hardworking nature, which was attributed to him by both close and distant acquaintances. This was mentioned by, among

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<sup>54</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 9.05.1949 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>55</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 11 czerwca 1949 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

others, Stefan Kisielewski <sup>56</sup>, whereas Palester reported to Grzegorz Fitelberg on his son's stay in Paris with the words:

Jerzy [...] now feels better here, which doesn't prevent him from counting the days when he will already be at home and when he will already be able to compose from 6 o'clock in the morning, of course..<sup>57</sup>

In terms of dedication to his work and its prioritization over his personal life, he seemed to be much like his senior. The small number or absence of memoirs by other composers about Jerzy Fitelberg, together with the statements quoted here about his heroic dedication to creative work, may give the impression that he preferred isolation in the privacy of his own studio to participating in social gatherings. It is highly likely that this impression comes from the distance between him and a large fraction of Polish composers, especially those with more conservative views. He boasted acquaintanceships with important figures (André, Ansermet, Bartók, Copland, Hindemith, Rodzinski, Piatigorsky, Rubinstein, Stern, Stravinsky, Szymanowski, Totenberg and others), but his circle of closest friends seems to have been narrow. From the Polish point of view, apart from his father, the most important figures were Roman Palester and Julian Tuwim, while of foreign musicians, there were figures who had little influence in shaping the dominant musical trends of the post-war era (Julius Hiljman, Frederic Jacobi). It is known, however, that Fitelberg junior was a member of several formal groups related to music (SMMP, Permanent Commission for International Exchange Concerts, American League of Composers), so his acquaintances must surely have been numerous at least in this area. Important in the context of his person, and helpful in the aforementioned contacts, was his fluency in 5 languages (Polish, Russian, German, French and English) which he declared in his application document for American citizenship.

Jerzy Fitelberg was a humorous person, endowed with a peculiar sense of wit, manifested in the use of expressions that were often jolly, at times infantile, and at other times using far-fetched verbal constructions. In the letters he sends, in which his cheerful mood is emphasized, there are peculiar “word games” and humorous phrases, in which he often uses the names of various people, including his own. Below is a transcription of several examples:

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<sup>56</sup> See quote from S. Kisielewski on pp.. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Excerpt of a letter from R. Palester to G. Fitelberg dated December 1949, in: L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg korespondencja*, op. cit., pp.. 189.



Motto:

an eye for an eye  
an artificial tooth - for an artificial tooth  
two Perkowskis for one Kassern  
one+one Kassern for ½ Perkowski  
letter for letter

29nd March in w New York

Title: my dears

Allegro ma non troppo: The food is going, going, going [...].

Scherzo: cigarettes will go, go, go [...].

Con fuoco, molto energico - as soon as Szmury Szmura arrives - I'll simply tell him that a certain sum should be sent to you regularly every month [...].

Andante con melancolia. Unfortunately Father was seriously ill, he had pneumonia [...].

Lamentoso - write.

Misterioso - I kiss you

Jerzysik<sup>58</sup>;

My oldie (because it is already 20 years old) first Violin Concerto had such a good success here in December (first performance in the U\$.A) that this Concerto has a future in this Land without a past. Since one old partition has existed so far (sweated by Ansermets, Papas, Scherchen and similar animals) therefore - since I'm an accomplished fool - I'm writing the parts on carbon paper, changing the dynamics a bit, and slowly getting down to composing. Who knows, maybe I'll write the 6th Quartet. I don't know yet. In the event - if so, in order to repay Barbara and get revenge on her for liking my 5th - I will dedicate my future 6th to her, provided she is willing to graciously accept a modest dedication from a shitty friend.<sup>59</sup>;

What's more: politics stinks of rape. Rape stinks of politics. Ochlewski is violently silent.

Stravinsky's last piece: String Concerto I violently dislike.

Violently I am waiting to hear from you.

I violently kiss Barabasia (but only (unfortunately) by letter).

I violently hug you.

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<sup>58</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to B & R. Palester dated 29.03.1947, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>59</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to B & R. Palester dated 8.01.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

Vashenkiy Jerzuj<sup>60</sup>;

The way he signed his letters was also sometimes a form of sublime artistic display.



**Illustration 8 - Ending of a letter from J. Fitelberga to B. and R. Palester dated**

## 5. Issues of national identity

Don't stay in this dump, where they will consume you raw out of jealousy, and where your Jewish name will always be a hindrance to you. In France, art knows only one criterion - *value* - and no one will ask you if you are circumcised or not.<sup>61</sup>

So wrote Zdzisław Birnbaum to Aleksander Tansman. Indeed, composers of Jewish origin had great difficulty breaking through in their native musical environment, and to this day the names of most of those who tried to be active in interwar Poland remain in the realm of oblivion.

Jerzy Fitelberg's Jewish origin is evident and indisputable from both his mother's and father's sides. The question of his parents' marriage was overlooked in the materials for many years, even the approximate date of their union is unknown, and the only certainty can be taken from the fact that this wedding could not have been celebrated in a Roman Catholic church. This is

<sup>60</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to B & R. Palester dated 12.04.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>61</sup> A. Tansman, *Regards en arrière. Itinéraire d'un musicien cosmopolite au XXe siècle*, red. Cédric Segond-Genovesi with Mireille Tansman Zanuttini i Marianne Tansman Martinozzi, Château-Gontier 2013. Quote after: M. Gamrat, *Aleksander Tansman w Paryżu (1919-1940) w świetle wspomnień i dzienników kompozytora*. [in:] *Muzyka polska za granicą. T. 2. Między Warszawą a Paryżem (1918-1939)*, ed. B. Bolesławska-Lewandowska, J. Guzy-Pasiak, ISPAN, Warszawa 2019, pp. 63.

confirmed by the notes of Leon Markiewicz, who states that in the identity papers of Grzegorz Fitelberg and his second wife Halina Szmolcówna, whom he married in 1928, the entries “Roman Catholic confession” appear in the section on the religious affiliation of these figures. In addition, the record of the conductor's matrimonial status has been officially changed from “divorced” to “married,” which clearly suggests that Grzegorz Fitelberg could not have remarried in the same Catholic Church, casting the strongest suspicion on the fact that he entered his first marriage in the Mosaic faith<sup>62</sup>.

No source states or even hints at the religious affiliation of Jerzy Fitelberg. If he was in any way connected with the spiritual sphere, most likely it must have been his very personal, hidden feelings, which he did not share with anyone. Despite his Semitic background, he apparently did not become more closely associated with the New York Jewish community. Some presumptions about his ties to the Jewish faith stemming not only from his background can be drawn from Fitelberg's close friendship with Frederick Jacobi, an American composer who was strongly associated with New York's Jewish community, mainly through his commissions for ceremonial and liturgical music for the city's various synagogues. Fitelberg junior's acquaintance with Jacobi, most likely dates back to his Parisian days (this is confirmed by a reference in K. Szymanowski's correspondence<sup>63</sup>), moreover, they undoubtedly knew each other from concerts and premieres of their music, as works by both composers were performed by the same ensembles (Quatuor Pro Arte, Budapest String Quartet). In addition, Jacobi's biographies provide information that he studied for a while in Berlin with Paul Juon, which does not exclude the possibility that it was there that he met the Polish composer for the first time. Thanks to Jacobi's recommendation, among others, Jerzy Fitelberg was able to apply for American citizenship, which he received in 1947.

The issue of Jerzy Fitelberg's sense of national identity is clearly crystallized in his post-war letters, where he firmly declares himself a Pole:

I am anxious to have my name in the Catalog of the Polish Music Publishers. After all, I don't need to explain to you for what reasons I am writing about it, simply - as a Polish composer – I would like to “actively belong to you and be with you”.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, during his stay in the US, even after receiving citizenship of that country, he did not change his name to the English-language version George, but remained with the Polish

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<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, p. 100-101.

<sup>63</sup> See. quote. on pp.. 15.

<sup>64</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 28.11.1946 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

spelling. On the basis of her research, Ewelina Boczkowska highlights Fitelberg's emotional ties with his homeland:

Although he left the country at a young age, it was here that he premiered his first works. In exile, he took part in concerts thematically related to Poland. [...] Even after he had spent almost twenty years in exile, he considered himself and was considered a Polish composer.<sup>65</sup>

No significant sources have survived indicating Jerzy Fitelberg's unequivocal identification with his Semitic background, which in any case proved to be a burden for the composer in the context of the racist policies of the Nazis and other nationalist parties.

Through his contact with Palester, Fitelberg jr. pushed hard for his music to be performed in Poland, as well as for his works to be published by P.W.M. and for his name, along with a list of works, to be included in that publisher's catalog. Not yet having a complete understanding of the situation of artists in Poland, he often expressed his desire to come to his homeland, seeking various ways to do so, the most likely of which involved his planned collaboration with filmmaker Eugeniusz Cenkalski<sup>66</sup>. However, nothing came out of the talks regarding composing music for the director's films. Over time, however, the gradual abandonment of the Fitelbergs' desire for a permanent return to their homeland becomes apparent in subsequent letters, due to, among other things, numerous financial impediments or a lack of cooperation from the domestic musical community. The decision to remain in exile was sealed after Jerzy received information about the Socialist Realist art ideology proclaimed by Minister Sokorski, which was mandatory for Polish artists who did not want to be marginalized from domestic public life. Jerzy commented at the time with the words:

Everything you write about Poland interests me immensely, but it interests me rather as a passive spectator - because I would not like anyone to control and dictate how and what I should write. Either one creates real art, and then one can't operate on the concepts of "what pleases whom" or one does tricks - such as women's hats. For the rest, we certainly think the same with you - it's a shame to write about them, it's not worth it. I read more than a year ago reports in *Izvestiya* from the Composers Congress in Moscow (you surely remember, the brawl with Prokofiev). A complete mess, the talk of ignorant people, fools<sup>67</sup>

During his stay in Poland, Jerzy Fitelberg met with Tadeusz Ochlewski in Cracow on October 28, 1949, to negotiate a contract between the Polish Music Publishing House and the

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<sup>65</sup> E. Boczkowska, *O Jerzym Fitelbergu...*, op. cit., pp. 37.

<sup>66</sup> See. Letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 4.03.1946 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>67</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 8.09.1949 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

American publisher B. Marx Editions (with which the young Fitelberg worked extensively) for exclusive rights to represent the Polish publisher in the American market. Unfortunately, all efforts on Fitelberg's part, despite the clear desire of the American side, came to naught, as the Polish side finally broke off the negotiations having rejected the arrangements made a few weeks later. In the end, Jerzy's efforts to have his works published in PWM also proved unsuccessful, with the result that the young Fitelberg abandoned all hopes for the presence of his music in Poland.

Typically Polish elements, often really deeply hidden, can be found in his music. As a rule, these are fragments with a slightly folkloric tinge (e.g., in Quartet No. 3 or Serenade for viola and piano), as well as moments, especially in the slow tempo movements, that may resemble the mood of Szymanowski's music. This is most often manifested through the use of idiomatic elements, such as basing the melodic line on a characteristic scale (such as Lydian) against a background of imitation bourdon. In the context of its Semitic origins, however, the absence of any analogous references to Jewish music is remarkable.

## **6. The issue of reception of creative output**

The figure of Jerzy Fitelberg was already poorly recognized in his homeland in the interwar years due to his early departure to study and stay in emigration. His music in his contemporary times met with a mixed reception in Poland, while abroad it seemed to arouse somewhat more enthusiasm and understanding. This legacy has not been subjected to deeper study and the present work is one of the first to attempt to provide broader contexts and biographical data. A trace of the work on Jerzy Fitelberg's legacy can be found in the archives of musicologist Stanislaw Golachowski housed at BUW. There is a set of sketches of a lecture on Polish composers absent from the country, among whom Jerzy Fitelberg is mentioned, and the general body of the text clearly indicates an attempt to undertake a broader look at, among other things, his output. While this content is evident in the manuscript, the final version (typescript) no longer mentions this composer. This is an evidence of the censoring of the text in order to remove from the consciousness and cultural life of Poland composers remaining in the USA.

If one can speak of performing the music of Jerzy Fitelberg, then by far one of the most frequently presented and recorded <sup>68</sup> works by this composer is the *Concerto for String Orchestra* from 1930. This work is actually the composer's own arrangement of *String Quartet No. 2* from 1928. It is also the only score among Jerzy Fitelberg's chamber works for string instruments to appear in print during the composer's lifetime, thanks to a contract with the Vienna-based Universal Edition. The piece won first prize (15,000 francs and an unspecified work of art that was a gift from Alfred Chłapowski, Poland's ambassador to France) at the SMMP Competition in Paris, ahead of 31 works submitted for the tournament, including compositions by Zygmunt Kassern (second prize for *Concerto for voice with orchestra*), Michał Kondracki (third prize for *Partita for orchestra*), as well as Szymon Laks, Tadeusz Jarecki and Stanisław Wiechowicz (honorable mentions)<sup>69</sup>. The success was all the more significant for the young composer because the Jury of the competition, under the chairmanship of Maurice Ravel, included Artur Honneger, Albert Roussel and Florent Schmitt. With the winning, the piece was presented a few months later at the 7th Festival of the Society for Contemporary Music in Geneva by Quatuor Pro Arte. For the composer's trip to the event, Grzegorz Fitelberg, together with Karol Szymanowski and Zbigniew Drzewiecki, applied for a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the amount of 600 zlotys<sup>70</sup>. Thanks to the award and the success of the premiere of the winning work, *String Quartet No. 2* was later presented at many major concerts and music festivals, as well as broadcast relatively frequently by various radio stations. This triumph also ensured that the young composer began working with Universal Edition. Karol Szymanowski congratulated Grzegorz Fitelberg on this success of his son, writing

I am very happy for Jerzy's success, in every way, even officially as “president” of the section. However, there must be something in it if they are honoring him like this for the second time!<sup>71</sup>

*String Quartet No. 2* also received considerable praise among influential critics. In a highly favorable review of the Geneva festival, Alfred Einstein praised the piece for, among other things, placing rhythm as a key factor in creating the work's expression and narrative in

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<sup>68</sup> At the time of publication of this work, two CD recordings of the *Concerto for String Orchestra* had been made.

<sup>69</sup> Press clipping from n.n. magazine, Personal Files, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, no ref.

<sup>70</sup> Por. *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja. Tom 3*. Collection and compilation: Teresa Chylińska, Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 1997, pp. 108-109.

<sup>71</sup> Excerpt from a letter from K. Szymanowski to G. Fitelberg dated 16.01.1929, [in:] *Karol Szymanowski. Korespondencja. Tom 4*, op. cit, pp. 48.

opposition to other compositions presented during the concert<sup>72</sup>. Henry Prunières, on the other hand, wrote:

Personally, I was very impressed by the Quartet, and in the review I praised the combination of "Germanic strength and enthusiasm with that somewhat feminine sensitivity characteristic of Polish musicians." The finesse of the composition and the hand virtuosity it revealed were very unusual in a 25-year-old composer. [...] Jerzy Fitelberg is currently one of the most interesting young musicians in Europe, with an original and refined talent that will please French audiences.<sup>73</sup>

The success and popularity of this work undoubtedly must have resonated with the Polish music community as well. What remains a mystery is the impact that *String Quartet No. 2* or its orchestral version may have had on the work of Grazyna Bacewicz. Indeed, some harmonic and melodic elements of this work are very reminiscent of the Polish composer's *Concerto for String Orchestra* from 1948, for example. These musicians knew each other from Parisian circles, and Bacewicz had the opportunity to perform some of Fitelberg's chamber works (including *Sonatina for 2 violins*). Moreover, Bacewicz had a close, even paternal, relationship with Grzegorz Fitelberg (inferring from the content of their correspondence). It is therefore very likely that even if she did not have the opportunity to listen to *String Quartet No. 2*, she may have been well acquainted with its score.

The success of Jerzy Fitelberg's *String Quartet No. 4*, which was awarded the Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge Medal, an honor bestowed by the U.S. Library of Congress, had a relatively large echo in the music world, especially in both the Polish and American press. The Polish composer's work was selected from among 263 works sent to the competition by a jury that included Paul Bekker, Jacques Gordon, Eugene Ormandy, Roger Sessions and Oliver Strunk<sup>74</sup>. Among the winners of this award are: Ernest Bloch, Benjamin Britten, Tadeusz Jarecki, Gian Francesco Malipiero and Alexander Tansman. Several reviews of American performances of

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<sup>72</sup> A. Einstein – A report on the Festival of the Society for Contemporary Music: *Im Gegensatz dazu ist ein (zweites) Streichquartett von Jerzy Fitelberg ein echtes Werk der "Expression" von besonderer rhythmischer Eindruckskraft, wenn es auch seine haftende Stelle in der visionären Ueberleitung zum Schlusssatz aufweist, die etwa and die "Silla"-Musik Pfitzners erinnert.* Personal Files, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>73</sup> *Personnelement. ce Quatuor me produisit une forte impression et je celebrai dans un compte-rendu l'alliance qu'on y pouvait admirer de "la force et de l'elan germaniques avec cette sensibilite un peu feminine particuliere aux musiciens polonais". La finesse de l'écriture et la virtuosite de main qu'elle revelait etaient tres extraordinaires chez un compositeur de 25 ans. [...] Jerzy Fitelberg est un des jeunes musiciens, les plus interessants d'aujourd'hui en Europe son talent original et fin est de nature a plaire au public francais.* Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>74</sup> Excerpt from unknown American magazine, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign

*Quartet No. 4* have survived in the composer's private collection, with Jim Walz writing after the first performance:

Fitelberg's composition admirably played by William Kroll and his associates, proved to be a long one-movement work, consisting of a theme, many variations and a fugue. Its devices were most ingenious and its dynamic force was powerful, although the composer's individual idiom made most of the variations difficult to follow. The piece moved swiftly through its dissonances, leaving the listener only a few harmonious moments in which to catch a breath of consonance<sup>75</sup>.

The composer also kept two reviews of the 1941 performance of this work. Louis Biancolli reported at the time:

The palm for scholarly workmanship went to the polish entry, Jerzy Fitelberg's fourth string quartet - built around a theme and variations [...]. Mr Fitelberg grasps his theme by the hand and takes it places in an orderly world of logic, ending in a fugue. The writing is as clear as mountain air, and as dry<sup>76</sup>.

Lazare Saminsky, on the other hand, while praising Fitelberg's talent and his skillful handling of the compositional technique, points out that the work is too expansive, describing the variation work carried out in it as "a patchwork of concise improvisations."<sup>77</sup>

In 1950, Jerzy Fitelberg was awarded first prize at a composition competition organised by the Pennsylvania College for Women to celebrate the institution's 80th anniversary. The success of the Polish composer's *Suite for Organ* (first place ex-equo with Gardner Read) unfortunately brought only local publicity in addition to financial gratification. Obviously, for political reasons, there was no mention of this prize in Poland.

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<sup>75</sup> J. Walz, excerpt of a review [in:] „Musical America”, 25.04.1937, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>76</sup> L. Biancolli, excerpt of a review from unknown American magazine 20.05.1941, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>77</sup> L. Saminsky, excerpt of a review [in:] "Musical Courier", July 1941, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign.. "Of the two string quartets, the one by Jerzy Fitelberg (Poland) is of a decidedly superior substance, but of cruel length unwarranted by the structural aim. Just why this composer of talent and supple craft should dissolve such a rigid form as a theme with five variations into a bowlful of verbose improvisation, is just «one of those things».





**Ilustracja 9 - Presentation of awards at the Pennsylvania College for Woman composition competition, From left, Jerzy Fitelberg, Paul Anderson, Gardner Read, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 1950**

In the reception context of musical works, a no less significant issue is the relationship of the composer with the performers. The intention to write a particular piece for a particular artist (or with a particular artist in mind) often determines a series of dependencies around the composition's creation. Usually Fitelberg dedicated his works to the artists who either commissioned the work or gave its first performance. For example, he dedicated his *Theme with Variations for Violin and Piano* (1944) to the Polish-American violinist Samuel Dushkin, who had commissioned the work from him. His *Symphony No. 1* (1946) was dedicated to Franz André, who premiered it with the Brussels Symphony Orchestra he was leading at the time. In the case of the string quartets No. 2 and No. 3, there was a situation of dedication to the first performers: *String Quartet No. 2* bears the annotations 'a Quatuor Pro Arte', and *String Quartet No. 3* 'a Noveau Quatuor Hongroise'. In turn, he dedicated the orchestral version of the second quartet to the Swiss director Ernst Ansermet, who conducted the world premiere of the *Concerto for String Orchestra* in 1930. In the context of Fitelberg's quartet output, *String Quartet No. 4*, dedicated to Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge, the founder and titular patron of the prize the composer received for this work, seems to be an exception. *Quartets No. 1* and *No. 5* bear no dedication.

Even in the inter-war period of the 20th century, both Jerzy Fitelberg's music and his person were viewed rather unfavourably in his homeland, which was linked not only to his Jewish background, but also to the fact that he was permanently abroad. In one review of a concert held in February 1938, a critic hiding under his initials wrote:

The performance of such a work by the Polish Radio, especially since Mr Jerzy Fitelberg is not really Polish, nor even resides in Poland, is an incomprehensible act. [...] I do not recall ever hearing a comparable ugly, awful, cynical composition. It gave the impression of an attack by a sufferer of St Vitus' disease.<sup>78</sup>

The temporal context of the publication of this text should be borne in mind here, which coincided with a period dominated by strong anti-Semitic sentiments in Polish society, fuelled by supporters of the nationalist government coalition of the Republic of Poland. Grzegorz Fitelberg spoke about this in a very blunt manner, writing:

Let me tell you Stefan: to be a Jew is bad, to be a Pole - also bad, but to be a Pole and a Jew is very hard. This is, of course, not my view of Jews and Poles, but of almost the whole world.<sup>79</sup>

Some Polish critics accused Jerzy Fitelberg's music of being deficient or even lacking an emotional layer. An anonymous reviewer described the Polish premiere of Fitelberg's *Violin Concerto No. 2* by Warsaw's Polish Radio Orchestra with the following words:

Typical work of a brainiac, product of a speculative mind, music from the world of mathematics and numbers [...]. It [the Concerto] is characterised by the music of a mature man, conscious of his aims and intentions, and of a keen craftsmanship. Unfortunately, it is a pure musical abstract, undoubtedly wise and scholarly, but so devoid of emotive elements that it hardly finds its way to the listener.<sup>80</sup>

Juliusz Wertheim, who belonged to the conservative group of Warsaw artists, spoke in a somewhat similar tone in an article entitled *Ze świata muzyki* [From the world of music], a summary of a series of concerts at the Warsaw Philharmonic. He wrote about Sonata No. 1 for piano composed by Fitelberg in 1926:

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<sup>78</sup> Press clipping from an unknown magazine, dated Friday, 25 February 1938, containing a review by an unknown critic, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>79</sup> Letter from G. Fitelberg to S. Spiess [in:] L. Markiewicz, *Grzegorz Fitelberg. Korespondencja* op. cit, pp. 76

<sup>80</sup> Press clipping from an unknown magazine, containing a review by an unknown critic, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, w/o sign.- Taking into account the contextual information contained in the article, the timeframe of the publication can be defined as 1938-1939.

As far as the 'sonata' (sic!!) by Jerzy Fitelberg is concerned, I must once again openly point out that in the face of these fashionable cacophonous experiments, I am always helpless, asking myself who is making fun of whom: is the creator of these brain-twisted eccentricities, so offensive to the ear, deliberately mocking the audience, or is the audience, patiently listening to the end of the production, mocking the composer?<sup>81</sup>

When looking at such statements, one should bear in mind the traditionalist views held by a large part of the domestic musical community in interwar Poland. These were usually opponents of the supporters of Karol Szymanowski and Grzegorz Fitelberg, such as the previously mentioned Juliusz Wertheim or Piotr Rytel.

There were also positive reports about Fitelberg's work in Polish circles. One of the most prominent Polish violinists in the world, Roman Totenberg, officially spoke about Jerzy Fitelberg in an interview in very flattering terms:

When asked whether, apart from Szymanowski, he had works by other Polish composers in his portfolio, Mr Totenberg stated that he would probably also play here the extremely valuable works of the young Jerzy Fitelberg (son of Grzegorz), whom he considered one of the most talented composers of Young Poland.<sup>82</sup>

In turn, the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra advertised his character and works in the following words:

Already the first works, written in 1922-26, clearly indicate Jerzy Fitelberg's peculiar compositional panache, his outstanding musical temperament. Possessing serious expertise, he does not overuse it, does not get entangled in contrapuntal and harmonic entanglements. Already in these first compositions one can sense a decisive planarity, a convincing symmetry of form and content; the concept is based on the foundations of a clearly outlined theme.<sup>83</sup>

Although this text expresses itself about Fitelberg junior in a very complimentary tone overall, one should take into consideration the fact that at the time of the publication of this bulletin, the artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic was Roman Chojnacki, closely connected with the circle of composers of the Young Poland movement, also including the father of the protagonist of the above statement, with whom he maintained cordial relations.

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<sup>81</sup> J. Wertheim, *Ze świata muzyki*, excerpt of a review from an unknown periodical, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA w/o sign..

<sup>82</sup> Paper clipping, date & author unknown, NYPLA, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>83</sup> Excerpt from a review of J. Fitelberg's oeuvre published in the 1932 programme bulletin of the Warsaw Philharmonic, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

Moreover, the task of such a text was to effectively promote the composers whose works were to be presented in the following artistic season, where, in this particular case, the Philharmonic was planning the Polish premiere of J. Fitelberg's *Second Violin Concerto* under the direction of the composer's father.

During his stay in the USA, Fitelberg inevitably tried to get closer to the local community of Polish artists. As time permitted, he maintained close contact with Artur Rodziński, for whom he composed *Nocturne* for orchestra in 1944. The ‘Orchestra Builder’, as the Polish conductor was called, made no attempt to hide his enthusiasm for Fitelberg's composition:

Dear Sir! I like Nocturn very much and I will definitely play it this season - when - I don't know yet. It seems to be in the second half of the season. Best regards. A. Rodziński.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, no reviews of the performance of *Nocturne* have survived in the composer's archives; nevertheless, Rodziński worked hard to promote this work:

Dear Mr. Mitropoulos: There is a wonderful composition "Nocturne" by Fitelberg, which I played this season, of which he has made a recording, and is most anxious to play it for you. When I tell you that I really do not remember ever before being so impressed with a contemporary composition, perhaps it will express my tremendous admiration and love I have for a piece of music like his "Nocturne". I am sure that, should you decide to perform it next season, you will share my enthusiasm for this composition.<sup>85</sup>

Fitelberg also had a relationship with the artists associated with the American League of Composers<sup>86</sup>, particularly with Aaron Copland, who, having become aware of the Polish composer's talent as early as 1930, led to the performance in the USA of, among others, his *Second Sonata for piano*<sup>87</sup>. Some of Fitelberg's violin works, headed by a transcription of *Serenade* for viola and piano, were also included in the repertoire of Isaac Stern. The composer's career was developing in a positive way, and his last work, *Concertino da camera* for violin and piano commissioned by the Kussewicki Foundation, was to be a kind of leverage for his reputation. However, Fitelberg's surprise death at the age of just 49 dashed all of the positive perspectives.

Fitelberg fell into oblivion for many reasons, both personal and historical. He died prematurely, childless. Tamara Fitelberg moved to Europe after 1955, where she worked in

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<sup>84</sup> Personal Files, Jerzy Fitelberg papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, letter dated, 8.05.1946.

<sup>86</sup> J. Fitelberg joined the American League of Composers soon after his arrival in the US.

<sup>87</sup> E. Boczkowska, *O Jerzym Fitelbergu...*, op. cit, pp. 42.

various cities, thus weakening her contacts in New York artistic circles. Grzegorz Fitelberg, Tuwim and Rodziński also passed away shortly after Jerzy Fitelberg's death, and with their deaths an certain époque came to an end. Fitelberg's closest friend, Roman Palester, became involved in 1952 in Munich, where he hosted broadcasts for Radio Free Europe (Palester had been out of the Poland since 1947). In Poland, no one sought to promote Fitelberg's music. After the war, serialism, promoted at music festivals in Darmstadt, became the main avant-garde trend in classical music, and in Poland socialist realism was in force. Communist power and censorship erased the names of emigration artists from musical life for many years. This, combined with the commonly dominant national school perspective in the history of music (dating back to the 19th century), resulted in the marginalisation of émigré composers - often seen as strangers in the country of emigration, and absent in their homeland.<sup>88</sup>

### **Modern reception:**

After Jerzy Fitelberg's death, his music only began to function in the concert and recording field in the 21st century. One person who really did a lot in this context was the composer's relative Gary Fitelberg, mentioned in the introduction. His cooperation with Simon Wynberg, a Canadian musician, producer and manager of the ARC Ensemble, resulted in the first monographic album entitled *Jerzy Fitelberg Chamber Works*, recorded by the British Chandos label as part of the *Music in Exile* series realised by the aforementioned ensemble. The album received, among others, a positive, though laconic, review in the Polish press by Dorota Szwarcman:

The recordings of most of these works are phonographic premieres. And this is music of very high quality. There are youthful works in the style of carefree neo-classicism, reminiscent of Stravinsky or Alexander Tansman. There are also later ones, in which we find similarities to the nostalgic moods known from the music of the recently so fashionable Mieczysław Weinberg. Fitelberg definitely also deserves such a 'trend'..<sup>89</sup>

The ARC ensemble further promoted the album in 2015 with concerts in Europe, including two in Poland.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibidem, pp. 48.

<sup>89</sup> D. Szwarcman, review of an album *Jerzy Fitelberg Chamber Works* performed by ARC Ensemble, Chandos, „Polityka” 42.2015 (3031), s. 79, access: [www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kultura/muzyka/1636209,1,recenzja-plyty-arc-ensemble-jerzy-fitelberg-chamber-works.read](http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kultura/muzyka/1636209,1,recenzja-plyty-arc-ensemble-jerzy-fitelberg-chamber-works.read).

Recorded in July 2021 by the Fitelberg Quartet, the album Jerzy Fitelberg String Quartets no. 4 & no. 5, (which is the subject of this work's description) received a positive reception, both in the domestic and international media:

These are difficult items to perform and quite complicated perceptually, but the ensemble here gives evidence of the highest musical qualifications. String Quartet No. 4 was written before the war in 1936 and is a dramatic work, at times even aggressive or sonically brutal, written quite densely, which gives the impression that it is being performed by an ensemble larger than a quartet. [...] Quartet No. 5, written in 1945, although also adopting the theme construction with variations in the middle section, differs significantly from its predecessor. It is decidedly lighter, less densely instrumented, at some points dance-like (as if in the style of Karol Szymanowski), and one can even find here echoes of Polish folklore - perhaps Kurpie folklore. There is no doubt that both recorded items are testimonies of great compositional talent.<sup>90</sup>

Fitelberg stepping out of Fitelberg's shadow? [...] After 1989, little has improved in terms of the availability of Fitelberg's music. This is a pity, as it deserves attention. Two string quartets interpreted by the ensemble, which debuts on the phonographic market with a disc with the works of its patron, prove it. The young artists had to show both high technical skills and considerable inventiveness, especially as the variation technique plays a key role in the presented material..<sup>91</sup>

The debut album of the Jerzy Fitelberg Quartet contains an excellent premiere recording of two quartets (4 and 5) by the ensemble's patron. [...] The album aroused my great appreciation. This was due to a very interesting performance and beautiful sound. I highly recommend it!<sup>92</sup>

The Fitelberg Quartet really digs into the variations but relishes the lighter elements of the music as well. They have august forebears. The Fourth Quartet was premiered in 1937 by the Coolidge Quartet and the Fifth in 1946 by the Hungarian. It would be good to think that other

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<sup>90</sup> J. Tumiłowicz, review of an album *Jerzy Fitelberg String Quartet no. 4 & no. 5* performed by Fitelberg Quartet, AP0543, access: [www.maestro.net.pl/index.php/10197-jak-marnujemy-talenty-jerzy-fitelberg?limitstart=0](http://www.maestro.net.pl/index.php/10197-jak-marnujemy-talenty-jerzy-fitelberg?limitstart=0).

<sup>91</sup> W. Paprocki, review of an album *Jerzy Fitelberg String Quartet no. 4 & no. 5* performed by Fitelberg Quartet, AP0543, „Ruch Muzyczny” #13/2023, access: [www.ruchmuzyczny.pl/article/3363](http://www.ruchmuzyczny.pl/article/3363).

<sup>92</sup> A. Jędrasik, review of an album *Jerzy Fitelberg String Quartet no. 4 & no. 5* performed by Fitelberg Quartet, AP0543, „Nasz Dziennik”, 4-5.11.2023, No. 256 (7824), access: [www.acteprealable.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AP0543-Nasz\\_Dziennik\\_no\\_256\\_4-5\\_11\\_2023.png](http://www.acteprealable.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AP0543-Nasz_Dziennik_no_256_4-5_11_2023.png)

ensembles will take up Fitelberg's chamber music and the larger musical world will realise that there are two Fitelbergs to consider – the conductor Grzegorz and his son, Jerzy.<sup>93</sup>

The monographic discs mentioned above are not the only recordings of the music of Jerzy Fitelberg to be encountered, as some of his pieces have also appeared in the repertoire of albums compiling works by various composers. So far, the following have been recorded: *Piano Sonata No. 1* ("Franz Schreker's Masterclasses in Vienna and Berlin. Vol. 2. Rathaus, Fitelberg, Von Zieritz: Piano Sonatas", Kolja Lessing, EDA Records,); *Concerto for string orchestra* ('Poland Abroad: Music for String Orchestra, Laks, Tansman, Fitelberg, Karłowicz', KammerSymphonie Berlin, Jürgen Bruns); *Concerto for trombone, piano and string orchestra* ('Poland abroad. Concerto/Concertino. Jerzy Fitelberg, Tadeusz Kassern. Michał Spisak', Andrzej Sienkiewicz, Grzegorz Gorczyca, Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Christoph Slowinski), *Sonata for solo cello* ('Monologue. Polish Solo Cello Works', Tomasz Daroch, DUX 1771)

It is worth noting at this point that the album containing Fitelberg's *Sonata for Solo Cello* received the Polish Phonographic Academy's Fryderyk 2023 award in the 'Classical Music' section for the 'album of the year - solo recital' category. Oskar Łapeta wrote about Fitelberg's piece recorded there:

Already the album's opening Sonata for solo cello by Jerzy Fitelberg, son of Grzegorz, is a repertoire curiosity. Written in 1945, this work consists of four contrasting movements - *Maestoso*, *Moderato*, *Andante* and *Tempo giusto*. It is eclectic music, reflective and lyrical rather than dramatic.<sup>94</sup>

Fitelberg's music, due to its high level of complexity of musical content, remains difficult in reception, which creates additional challenges in its popularisation among a wider audience, even the most conscious, active and engaged ones. Despite the undoubtedly high artistic value of the work of Jerzy Fitelberg, without further promotional and recording projects it will continue to be forgotten or treated only marginally. Opportunities to improve this situation can primarily be found in programmes funding this type of undertaking, although it would do most good to take on the task of having his music performed by artists of worldwide renown. The possibilities afforded by arrangements or transcriptions for other casts would also

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<sup>93</sup>. - J. Woolf, review of an album *Jerzy Fitelberg String Quartet no. 4 & no. 5* performed by Fitelberg Quartet, AP0543, MusicWeb International  
access: [www.musicwebinternational.com/2023/02/fitelberg-string-quartets-acte-prealable/](http://www.musicwebinternational.com/2023/02/fitelberg-string-quartets-acte-prealable/)

<sup>94</sup> O. Łapeta, review of an album *Monologue. Polish Solo Cello Works* performed by Tomasz Daroch, access: [www.klasycznapytoteka.pl/tomasz-daroch-monologue/](http://www.klasycznapytoteka.pl/tomasz-daroch-monologue/)

increase the accessibility of this output. A very important step towards the dissemination of Jerzy Fitelberg's oeuvre could be the publication of works not yet published in print. A favourable circumstance for this, especially in the context of a lack of heirs, is the fact that the period protecting his copyright expired with the 70th anniversary of the composer's death in 2021.

## II. Works for string quartet by Jerzy Fitelberg

The surviving compositional output of Jerzy Fitelberg numbers around a hundred works representing all genres, of which chamber compositions are the most numerous, while concertante works dominate in terms of larger scoring. Available sources testify to the fact that, apart from composing throughout his adult life, Fitelberg had to undertake numerous activities that provided him with the necessary financial income. Giving lessons, copying sheet music or instrumenting other people's works took up a lot of valuable time, which he wanted to devote to “his own work”<sup>95</sup>. It was in this category, opposite the “orders”, that he created his compositions for string quartet:

Piece of music	Year & place of composition	Premiere
Fantasia ‘Till Eulenspiegel’s Last Moments’ Op. 9	1920 in Warsaw	unknown
String Quartet no. 1	1926 in Berlin	unknown (possibly 20.11.1930 in Paris)
String Quartet no. 2	1928 in Berlin	21.11.1928 in Paris 08.04.1929 in Geneva
String Quartet no. 3	1935-36 in Paris	08.02.1937 in Paris
String Quartet no. 4	1936 in Paris	11.04.1937 in New York
String Quartet no. 5	1945 in New York	08.04.1946 in London
String Quartet no. 6	1950 in New York	unknown

The following sections briefly describe Fitelberg's works for string quartet, together with the presentation of a table of the formal structure of each, indicating the number of movements, their descriptions and initial tempos. Due to the frequent presence of polytonality in the earlier works, and the lack of major-minor systematicity that intensified with the progress of the creative path, which had the effect of atonalising longer fragments of the works, these tables do not take into account the tonality of the various movements.

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<sup>95</sup> See info on pp.. 32.



## 1. Warsaw stage

### *Fantasia “Till Eulenspiegel’s Last Moments” Op. 9*

*Fantazja „Ostatnie chwile Sowizdrzała”* op. 9 (PL) is Jerzy Fitelberg's juvenile and first work for string quartet, written when he was barely 16. The *Fantasia* is included here primarily because the composer consciously regarded it as a completed work and in his opinion it was a significant item in his oeuvre, which he proved by including it in his official lists of compositions.

In the manuscript of the *Fantasia*, which has survived in the composer's archives, on the last page of the score there is an annotation: Ende. 16 I 1920. Warsaw Erstellung. The work's subtitle, indicating the programmatic nature of the composition, first directs the potential recipient's mind to Richard Strauss's symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegels Lustige Streiche*. However, how meaningful the influence of his work on the Polish musician may have been remains in the domain of conjecture. It is highly probable that the young Fitelberg was familiar with the German composer's works, mainly through his exposure to them at rehearsals and concerts hosted by his father, at which his son must undoubtedly have been present, whether passively or actively. Apart from this hypothesis, the fact of the immense popularity of the works of Richard Strauss in European musical life remains significant, while the fascination and inspiration with his works in every aspect are strongly reflected in the music of many composers of the early 20th century, such as composers from the Young Poland movement, with whom Jerzy Fitelberg, for obvious family reasons, had direct contact.

*Till Eulenspiegel’s Last Moments* is an approximately 7-minute-long compilation of freely linked creative ideas put together into one piece, for which the common factor is an extramusical story. The fragments, which the composer clearly separates during the course of the piece, are not melodically and thematically closely linked to each other, and their variety is even maximally polarised. On the one hand, there are pieces with a very dense and rapidly rhythmic texture, and on the other hand, stable chordal verticals, reminiscent of an exercise in harmony, during which it is difficult to grasp any leading musical idea. Throughout the piece, the dominant part of the cello is clearly noticeable - in this voice one will find the majority of soloistic fragments. Moreover, in the composition's finale, this instrument plays a key role in terms of narrative, underlining with its melodies the dramaturgy of the situation of the title Eulenspiegel’s last moments, and also, as the author notes in the score, ‘imitating the sound of drums’.



### Example 1 - *Fantasia "Till Eulenspiegel Last Moments"* op. 9, b. 214-218, cello part - end of work

All elements of this work indicate that the young composer was most likely trying to make a general reference to the semantic layer of Strauss's symphonic poem, without using any direct quotation.

Fitelberg included this work in the list of his creative output, but there is no information about its publication in print or concert performances. In the context of his later works, *Fantasia* appears as an attempt at composing, in a way foreshadowing his wider interest in the instrumentation of the string quartet, which on the one hand constituted a kind of experimental field for his sound experiments (developed especially in the mature stage of his life), and on the other hand as material for his most personal and ambitious artistic expression.

## 2. Berlin stage (1921-1932)

### *String Quartet no. 1*

Among the documentation left behind by Jerzy Fitelberg, no record has survived which deals more closely with *String Quartet No. 1* in terms of the details of its composition. In the voices of this work preserved in the NYPLA archives, there are performance annotations (musical didascalia in French, as well as markings regarding fingering or bowing), which most likely testify to the fact that this work was performed by French-speaking artists. It should also be stressed that the surviving score materials (voices versus score) differ considerably in terms of calligraphy, as well as the paper on which they were produced. In both cases, the title is written in German Streichquartett, with the Roman numeral *I* still preceding this name in the score. The score paper is signed *K.U.V. Beethoven Papier Nr. 35 (20 Linien)*, and the style and notation of the letters and notes is clearly consistent with those of the composer's other manuscripts. The surviving instrument parts were most likely drawn up by a copyist (unspecified), as they clearly differ from the score and Fitelberg's other manuscripts in terms

of calligraphy, especially the lettering, which in this case is much more careful and proportionate. Furthermore, the sheets of paper on which the voices were drawn up are signed *Néocopie Musicale, Paris. (No. 1)*, which further strengthens the thesis that they were handwritten by someone other than the composer. A note survives of a performance of this work by Quatuor Krettly on 20 November 1930 at the Salle Chopin, located at the SMMP's headquarters in Paris, which is mentioned in the Association's catalogue of concerts by Zofia Helman<sup>96</sup>. The instrumental parts in discussion were most likely created in a relation to this performance.

The score of *String Quartet No. 1* lacks a more precise date of composition than the year 1926, when Jerzy Fitelberg completed his education at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, which allows us to conclude with the assumption that this piece may have been one of the examination works presented by the composition student at the end of his studies. This thesis is supported primarily by the musical content of the quartet, in which the young composer demonstrates his mastery of the compositional technique by presenting a wealth of phrasal ideas, a variety of constructions of individual links (in terms of both forms and textures), as well as a multiplicity of compositional techniques used. Whether this work was played closer to the time of its composition has so far been impossible to pin down, and the earliest certain date of performance remains the aforementioned November 20, 1930.

This Quartet, which lasts about 12 minutes, consists of five contrasting movements of relatively small size. An outline of its construction is shown in the table below:

Mvt I	Mvt II	Mvt III	Mvt IV	Mvt V
<i>Presto</i> ♩ = 144	<i>Andante</i> ♩ = 56-60	<i>Allegro</i> ♩ = 116	<i>Molto Allegro</i> ♩ = 126	<i>Presto</i> ♩ = 144

The first movement of the cycle presents a logically constructed, polytonal (use of the A major and C major Mixolydian scales) dialogue between two pairs of instruments separated by a virtuosic passage of a somewhat schizophrenic character, in which the part of the first violin is exposed against the background of pulsating eighth notes played pizzicato by the other instruments. The second movement of the quartet is a canthylenic piece with folk tones framed in an ABA form scheme. As in the first movement, Fitelberg paired the instruments in terms of key marks - the voices of the viola and cello have two sharps at the key, while the

<sup>96</sup> Z. Helman, *Muzyka Polska w Paryżu* op. cit., s 97

violin parts perform this part without marks. The third and most elaborate movement of the cycle presents a carousel of contrasting episodes framed in the form of loose fantasy. In the course of this apotheosis of the music game, episodes of a grotesque, even mocking character appear, in which many listeners can find inspiration in the atmosphere of Berlin social life in the mid-1920s. The fourth movement of *Quartet No. 1* begins and ends with a signal in the form of a publicized interval chord (the notes e and h in different octaves), between which a polytonal fugue based on a strongly chromaticized theme takes place. Its first projection takes place in the key of E minor in the voice of the cello. The next performances take place successively in the voices of the second violin (key of C minor), viola (key of F sharp minor) and first violin (key of D minor). Trying to find extra-musical associations associated with this link, inspirations of the expanding big city full of hustle and bustle and street noise, as well as the cosmopolitanism that was present in Berlin recovering from the post-war turmoil, may come to mind. *String Quartet No. 1* closes with the fifth movement, which is an exact repetition of the first movement. This type of structure of the cycle clearly refers to the construction of a classical serenade beginning and ending with the same link, usually in the nature of a march (e.g. L. van Beethoven's *Serenade in D Major*, Op. 8 for string trio, as well as Mozart's marches considered overtures and postludes to his serenades). Closer to Fitelberg's time, a similar arrangement was used by A. Schönberg in his *Serenade*, Op. 24. In this case, however, there were distinct transformations of musical material between the extreme links, despite the use of the same construction, character and the use of coinciding themes<sup>97</sup>.

In the context of the previously discussed *Fantasia*, one can clearly see both technical and musical progress along the path of the young Fitelberg's chamber music development. The first quartet is not yet a full-scale work in terms of architectonics, but more of a simple cycle composed of five miniatures. The contrast of all musical planes between the links and the repetition of the first link at the very end, in addition to the connotations of the serenade genre, further evoke associations with suite construction. The development work in each link appears conservative (mainly due to the small size of each link). In turn, the sound layer is explored more than the formal and technical layer. Despite the use of a multiplicity of musical ideas, often extremely polarized in character, Fitelberg deftly managed to put them together in a logical cycle, which is ultimately a graceful piece in the spirit of neoclassical modernism.

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<sup>97</sup> J. Chomiński, *Serenada i divertimento*, [in:] J. Chomiński, *Wielkie formy instrumentalne*, PWM, Kraków 1987, pp. 791-792

### ***String Quartet no. 2***

Composed in 1928 in Berlin, it brought the 25-year-old composer his first significant creative triumph and fame, for the work earned Fitelberg first prize at the SMMP Competition in Paris on May 12 of the same year. Due to this success, Quatuor Pro Arte gave a radio broadcast performance of *String Quartet No. 2* at a concert in Geneva on April 8, 1929, as part of the 7th Music Festival organized by ISCM. Fitelberg dedicated the work to that ensemble, which then included it in its permanent repertoire, presenting the Quartet regularly throughout Europe. Earlier, on November 21, 1928, the Polish Quartet (Władysław Syrewicz, Tadeusz Gonet, Zygmunt Jarecki and Jan Przybojewski) performed the work at the SMMP building. Thanks to the composer's preserved concert leaflets and bulletins, it is known that in addition to the above-mentioned ensembles, the piece was also included in their repertoire in the 1930s by the Krettly Quatuor and the Roman Totenberg Quartet. Sources on the reception and resonance of this piece indicate that it was definitely one of the most popular works of Jerzy Fitelberg<sup>98</sup>.

This quartet is built from 3 contrasting segments, while its performance is within 17-18 minutes. The scheme of construction of this piece is illustrated by the following table:

Mvt I	Mvt II	Mvt III
<i>Presto</i>	<i>Andante</i>	<i>Presto</i>
♩ = 116	♩ = 58	♩ = 116

In the first movement, the composer presents a polyphonic fugato of a motoric character, at first polytonal (without distinguishing the key by means of key marks), and in the further course of the narrative increasingly harmonically coherent. Throughout its entirety, each of the voices maintains a clear distinctiveness until the unison coda of this link played jointly by all instruments in unison (in octave doubling). The next movement begins *attaca* with a solo passage by the cello introducing its lyrical duet with the viola of a relatively melancholic character. In these parts, the voices present two similar in expression themes with folkloric timbre. They are then processed in the voices of the violin, accompanied by the ostinato accompaniment of the other instruments. This link is crowned by an atmospheric chorale fading into silence. The third movement, which begins with a bold introduction, elaborates on the thematic material in terms of the phrases that occurred in the previous links, capturing them in various rhythmic variants. Not infrequently they take on a dance idiom, which is

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<sup>98</sup> The details of this issue are further discussed in Chapter I. 6.

highlighted by syncopated rhythm and irregular accents. In contrast to such passages, the composer puts together sections with a more cantilena-like melody supported by an ostinato rhythmic figure (a quarter note and two eighth notes or vice versa), which plays an accompanying role. Toward the end, the so far sustained motoric flow of the piece is gradually slowed down rhythmically to then seemingly break out into a serene violin duet (somewhat contrasted in mood with the viola and cello duet from the second link). After a brief general pause, the work is topped by a surprising twist - a descending progression of a C major scale based on parallel major chord components in fortissimo dynamics.

Compared to the earlier works for string quartet cast, the greatest progression and development can be seen in the work's construction. While in the first quartet all the movements last no longer than 2' (except for the third, which lasts less than 5'), in the second quartet the movements are much more elaborate and motivically linked. Both the entire cycle and its individual components have a clearly outlined form that maintains clarity of content and narrative coherence.

### **3. Paris stage (1933-1940)**

#### ***String Quartet no. 3***

It is the only one of Fitelberg's string quartets for which the exact time of composition is known, as the composer noted it on the last page of the manuscript score: December 16, 1935 - March 1, 1936 in Paris. However, the date of the premiere remains disputable, as two concert brochures survived in Fitelberg's archives informing about the allegedly first performance of *String Quartet No. 3* relatively close to the date of its completion. According to these, Fitelberg's work was originally to be performed as early as 13 May 1936 by a string quartet from Winterthur, but this most likely did not happen. The work was certainly performed on 8 February 1937 at the Hall of the Paris Conservatoire during a concert by the Nouveau Quatuor Hongroise, hence this performance should be taken as the first<sup>99</sup>. This work was also presented in the USA, as the programme of a New York concert of Polish chamber music (18 December 1944) has survived. There the Gordon String Quartet gave the first American performance of *String Quartet No. 3*.

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<sup>99</sup> Considering also the issue of dedication discussed in Chapter I. 6

The performance time of the entire work oscillates around 28-30 minutes. A diagram of the structure of this work is shown in the table below:

Mvt I	Mvt II	Mvt III	Mvt IV	Mvt V
<i>Allegro pesante e molto energico</i> ♩ = 132	<i>Adagio</i> ♩ = 72	<i>Presto</i> ♩. = ♩ = 138	<i>Andante</i> ♩ = 80	<i>Allegro vivace</i> ♩ = 138

This structure, symmetrical towards the central part of the work, is most often referred to as an arch form. It is possible that Fitelberg, who was looking for interesting and ambitious ideas and was fascinated by Bela Bartók's innovative chamber works, wanted to refer in some way to the Hungarian composer's output. The greatest source of inspiration in this case seems to be Bartók's *String Quartet No. 5* from 1934, the structure of which is framed by an analogous division of movements in terms of tempo (Allegro - Adagio - Scherzo: alla bulgarese - Andante - Finale: Allegro Vivace). According to references in their correspondence, the two composers knew each other and had the opportunity to discuss professional issues<sup>100</sup>, but this occurred as late as in the USA. Before World War II, Fitelberg could probably have known Bartók's work only from concert performances and scores. Another trace of the link between the two composers is the world premiere of Fitelberg's *Quartet No. 3* and the first performance in France of Bartók's *Quartet No. 5* at the same concert on 8 February 1937 in the concert hall of the Ecole normale de musique de Paris by the same ensemble (Hongroise's Nouveau Quartet). In the case of the above-mentioned works, the centre of the form is the middle section with the symmetry of the links moving away from it accordingly. The thematic material of Fitelberg's *Quartet No. 3* presented in the first link is homogeneous and forms the basis for the following sections. The second and third sections are variations on the theme of the exposition. The fourth movement in a way duplicates the material presented in the second movement in a new version with, among other things, an inversion of the phrases presented there. The finale, based on motifs from the preceding movement, also presents new material introduced by the composer, skilfully interweaving it with the basic one in various structural variants. Fitelberg makes use of polytonality, polymetry or extremely polarised dynamics in his third string quartet. He particularly explores and exposes the rhythmic layer in the fast tempo movements (he has given accents to practically all the notes in the forte dynamics). It is also the most 'folkloric' of his quartets, due to the folk-like shaping of some sections

<sup>100</sup> „So are you going to Buda and Pest for the competition? I recall my conversations with Bartok in NY, I'll tell you one day.' - excerpt from a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 21.08.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign...

(e.g. leading the melody in a Lydian scale against a bass bourdon, using a characteristic dance accent, etc). The work manifests many similarities in terms of techniques and voice leading with *Quartet No. 4*, which seems obvious due to the similar time of their composition. On the harmonic side, however, this work seems particularly reminiscent of Bartok's *String Quartet No. 4*, written for the Belgian Quatuor Pro Arte (which had the Polish composer's Quartet No. 2 in its repertoire). Other works by both the Polish and Hungarian composer were not infrequently presented at the same events, such as during a German tour in October 1929, where the aforementioned Belgian ensemble Fitelberg's *String Quartet No. 2* and Bartok's *String Quartet No. 4*

### ***String Quartet no. 4***

In the case of Fitelberg's next work for string quartet, only the date of completion is known, which the composer annotated at the end of the score - 20 August 1936. Given the similar volume of musical material, several potential routes of the work's composition can be surmised. A less likely option would be to begin work on the composition shortly after the completion of the previous *Quartet No. 3* (1.03.1936). Given the complexity of the work numbered four, as well as the degree of complexity of its formal and textural layers, the more plausible hypothesis remains that work on both works for string quartet was begun at a similar time and conducted, at least at some stage, in parallel.

The first performance of *String Quartet No. 4* is recorded as 29 January 1937 at the Concert Hall of L'Ecole Normale le de Musique in Paris (no information on the performers is available). Fitelberg was awarded the prestigious Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge Medal for his fourth quartet, and to mark the occasion, the winning work was performed by the Coolidge Quartet on 11 April 1937 at the US Library of Congress. It was also to be the first work by Fitelberg junior for string quartet to be performed in Poland, as part of the 17th ISCM Festival during a concert on 20 April 1939 at the Warsaw Conservatory Hall, where the work was to be presented by the Ondriček Quartett. A few years later, the composer wrote:

So far, none of my five quartets has ever yet been played in the Country.<sup>101</sup>

Indeed, the Polish premiere of Fitelberg's String Quartet No. 4 did not take place at that time.

The programme balance of the Warsaw festival was somewhat disrupted by the deletion of a number of works due to the non-arrival of suitable performers. The greatest devastation in this respect was caused by the fact that the German authorities did not grant the Czech

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<sup>101</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester of 28 November 1946, AKP BUW, w/o sign.



musicians the right to leave. This came too late for these performers to be replaced, especially as these were mostly very difficult works. [...] As a result of the non-arrival of the Ondriček quartet, Webern's and Jerzy Fitelberg's quartets had to be cancelled.<sup>102</sup>

*String Quartet No. 4*, in a way continuing the tradition of Fitelberg's previous works in this genre, was also performed as part of the 18th ISCM Festival on 19 May 1941 by the Gordon String Quartet at the University of Columbia Theatre in the USA. It is the longest work written by Jerzy Fitelberg for this instrumental cast, with a performance time of approximately 32 minutes. In terms of its overall structure, it is in one movement, but consists of a theme, seven variations and a final fugue.

Theme	<i>Allegro</i> ♩ = 120
Var. I	<i>Allegro</i> ♩ = 112-116
Var. II	<i>Moderato</i> ♩ = 92
Var. III	♩ = 240
Var. IV	♩ = 80

Var. V	♩ = 100
Var. VI	♩ = 120
Var. VII	♩ = 58
Fugue	♩ = 120

Fitelberg, placing his *Quartet No. 4* among the most musically demanding works in his oeuvre, wrote of it in the following words:

My Variations <sup>103</sup>, in order to make a proper impression, they must be performed very precisely (as with all music). I consider it, apart from the 4th quartet, to be the most difficult (in the musical, not technical sense) of my compositions.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, the work in question, due to its complexity and comprehensiveness, is characterised by the highest level of musical difficulty among his other works for string quartet. On the other hand, from the technical-performance point of view, together with *Quartet No. 3* it is the work with the most complicated instrumental parts among Fitelberg's other compositions for this cast..

<sup>102</sup> K. Regamey, *Po festiwalu warszawskim*, [in:] „Muzyka Polska” vol. 5, ed. B. Rutkowski, pub. Towarzystwo Wydawnicze Muzyki Polskiej, 1939, pp. 257.

<sup>103</sup> He means *The Golden Harp. Variations on a Polish Folk Song for String Orchestra* (1942-1943)

<sup>104</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester of 3 December 1948 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

## 4. New York Stage (1940-1951)

### *String Quartet no. 5*

In Fitelberg's surviving private materials, there is no mention whatsoever of the context in which the Fifth String Quartet was written. He declared that it took him about four weeks to work on the piece<sup>105</sup>, crowned on 28 April 1945, which date is given in the manuscript together with the place of composition (New York).

Compared to the Parisian works for string quartet, *the Fifth* may appear to be a work outlined in a much simpler, not to say conventional, manner, as Fitelberg constructed it in three separate movements with a tempo system: fast-slow-fast, moreover, in the first movement, using the construction of the sonata allegro.

Mvt.I	Mvt.II ( <i>Tema con variazioni</i> )					Mvt.III
<i>Allegro</i> ♩ = ca. 120	<i>Tema</i> <i>Andante</i> ♩ = 72-74	<i>Var. I</i> <i>Allegretto</i> ♩ = 84-88	<i>Var. II</i> <i>Andante</i> ♩ = 72	<i>Var. III</i> <i>Vivace</i> ♩ = ca. 88	<i>Var. IV</i> <i>Andante</i> ♩ = 72-76	<i>Vivace</i> ♩ = 120

Such an impression, however, will be very superficial, as the construction of each of the links and the musical material they contain demonstrate the maintenance of an ambitious and expertly crafted work of composition.

The work was first performed on 8 April 1946 by the Hungarian String Quartet at Goldsmiths Hall in London, during the 20th Festival organised by the ISCM. In his personal collection, the composer kept a press clipping succinctly reviewing the concert, where a critic stated that the music 'stunned the audience', while he wrote about the details of Fitelberg's work only in the context of the middle movement, as being pleasant to listen to 'lively and appropriate in length' to the cycle of variations<sup>106</sup>. The composer mentioned another performance:

4th June Hungarian quartet rips my fifth in Paris - radio and public concert<sup>107</sup>

However, it has not yet been possible to establish whether he was personally present at any of the European events that included performances of his quartets. Fitelberg probably had high hopes for fame with his *Quartet No. 5*, as he transcribed it for string orchestra at the turn of 1945 and 1946, completing the work on 7 October 1946 with an arrangement entitled

<sup>105</sup> See. Letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester of 11 June 1949 r., AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>106</sup> Excerpt from a review by Scott Goddard, from unknown British journal, Personal Files, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

<sup>107</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 30 April 1947, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

*Symphony for Strings*. As long as the composer was considering his post-war return to Europe, he wanted *Quartet No. 5* to be played and published in both versions in Poland. To this end, he repeatedly asked Roman Palester for recommendations and assistance in settling the matter with the then director of PWM, Tadeusz Ochlewski. Excerpts from the composers' correspondence concerning this problem reveal the intricate fate of Fitelberg's collaboration with the PWM, which came close to a positive ending.

I am keen for my fifth quartet to be performed in Poland. So far, none of my five quartets has ever been played in the Country. Do you think such a performance is possible?<sup>108</sup>;

I have written to Ochlewski that I am submitting Quartet No. 5 (and a reworking of this Quartet for string orchestra entitled *Symphony for Strings*) and *Serenade* for viola and piano. I will send them the notes at the first opportunity. Roman - and if you could not write a few words to Ochlewski from Paris on this matter?<sup>109</sup>;

After prolonged negotiations, everything pointed to the possibility of cooperation.

Two days I received a letter from Ochlewski with the contract for the fifth quartet. I thank you sincerely, I know that thanks to your efforts this contract has been 'brought to life'.<sup>110</sup>;

Ochlewski sent me an advertising page of P.W.M - with the fifth quartet announced. - But when will it be published?<sup>111</sup>

In further letters, the outline of communication between Ochlewski and Fitelberg takes a much bleaker picture. In addition to his efforts to publish his own works, the composer, who was in the USA, also mediated a collaboration between the American publishing house E. B. Marks Edition and PWM, which was to include mutual representation and circulation of publications.

I have written to Ochlewski several times, asking about my fifth quartet - but he does not answer. So I don't know anything, when, at what time the quartet will be printed.<sup>112</sup>;

I had a letter from Ochlewski that Chopin, that this and that, that the publication of my quartet has been postponed. What do you think and advise? Do you think he will publish the Quartet, or is he just spinning? Should I continue to wait, or ask to be released from the contract?<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 28 November 1946, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>109</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 4 March 1947, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>110</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 7 June 1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>111</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 3 December 1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>112</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 11 June 1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

During his only after-war visit to his homeland, the young Fitelberg personally went to meet the director of the PWM in Krakow:

Yesterday I was at Ochlewski's for my issues, the 5th Quartet and Marx's issues. He supposedly here promises to print the Quartet, I even broached the idea of breaking the contract, but he claimed that he had to publish and that he would publish.<sup>114</sup>

In the winter of 1950, the matter was finally resolved in a negative way. Among inquiries into this state of affairs, the most plausible thesis is that cooperation was blocked for political reasons. Whether this decision was made by the Polish authorities standing over PWM or was an initiative of Ochlewski, by his official position obliged to submit to the doctrine of Socialist Realism in Polish culture, remains an open question. Fitelberg gave Palester a brief comment on the matter:

My publishing affairs are going well now; I'm even glad I broke up with that fool Ochlewski, I think I'll put the 5th Quartet here somewhere.<sup>115</sup>

### ***String Quartet no. 6***

Fitelberg mentions his plans to write another work for string quartet to Palester twice in letters dated 27 January 1947 and 1 March 1948, without providing any further details other than to mention it and to include it in the category of 'own work'. Other mentions of this work appear with continued correspondence:

I'm still thinking about a new quartet, once I've finished all these commissions for Marx, I'll write a 6th Quartet for myself.<sup>116</sup>;

I'm getting immensely bored with this childish game [an opera for children *Henny Penny*] - I'm thinking of a new Quartet, and I am constantly writing uninteresting things that take me away from this Quartet<sup>117</sup>;

You're wrong, Roman - I don't write much, I think about something, including the Sixth Quartet and Nonet, and other 'little things', but when I think about it, maybe I will write something.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 16 August 1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>114</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 29 October 1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>115</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 25 March 1950, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>116</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 3 September 1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>117</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 25 April 1949, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>118</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 24 April 1950, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

Jerzy Fitelberg completed his last work for string quartet in August 1950 with a two-movement structure that closes with a duration of 21 minutes<sup>119</sup>. This work should be considered lost because only a collection of loose drafts (described by the institution as drafts and final score manuscripts for unknown reasons) consisting of crossed-out notes survives in the NYPLA archives. None of the publishers with whom the composer claimed to have collaborated have this work in their official catalogue. A major problem in the search for traces of *Quartet No. 6* remains the lack of any mention of a publisher to whom Fitelberg could have sent the manuscript and the fact that most of the publishing houses with which he collaborated were either closed down or restructured (merged or bought out). The correspondence indicates that Palester, who was in Paris, was to receive a copy of the score of this work. Fitelberg also sent and submitted his *Sixth Quartet* to the organising committee of the ISCM as a proposal for his work for a festival organised by that association in 1951. Due to the fact that Fitelberg had submitted the work himself for performance at the festival, rather than by a section (as should have been the case according to the Society's statutes, which had been amended the previous year), none of the compositions sent by Fitelberg, including the *Quartet No. 6* in question, were considered by the programme committee of the 1951 ISCM Festival. What happened to this copy and the other copies of the score (if any) has not yet been established.

## 5. Fitelberg's string quartets in the context of the genre - a reconnaissance

In the reception of genres, the string quartet has established itself as the face of quintessential ensemble chamber music, and since the late Beethoven has become known as the paradigm of the absolute music.<sup>120</sup>

Exploring the sound aspects of the combination of two violins, viola and cello is one of the key issues facing the student of composition. In the history of music since classicism, it would be difficult to name a composer who is versatile in terms of the genres he uses and who does not have a string quartet in his oeuvre, even if it is a minor work or a youthful compositional attempt of a pedagogical nature.

The quartet output of Jerzy Fitelberg by virtue of being spread over practically the whole length of his creative life, illustrates the path of the composer's development, the processes of

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<sup>119</sup> Zob. Letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 30 August 1950, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>120</sup> M. Janicka-Słysz, *Poetyka muzyczna Karola Szymanowskiego. Studia i interpretacje*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2013, pp. 211.

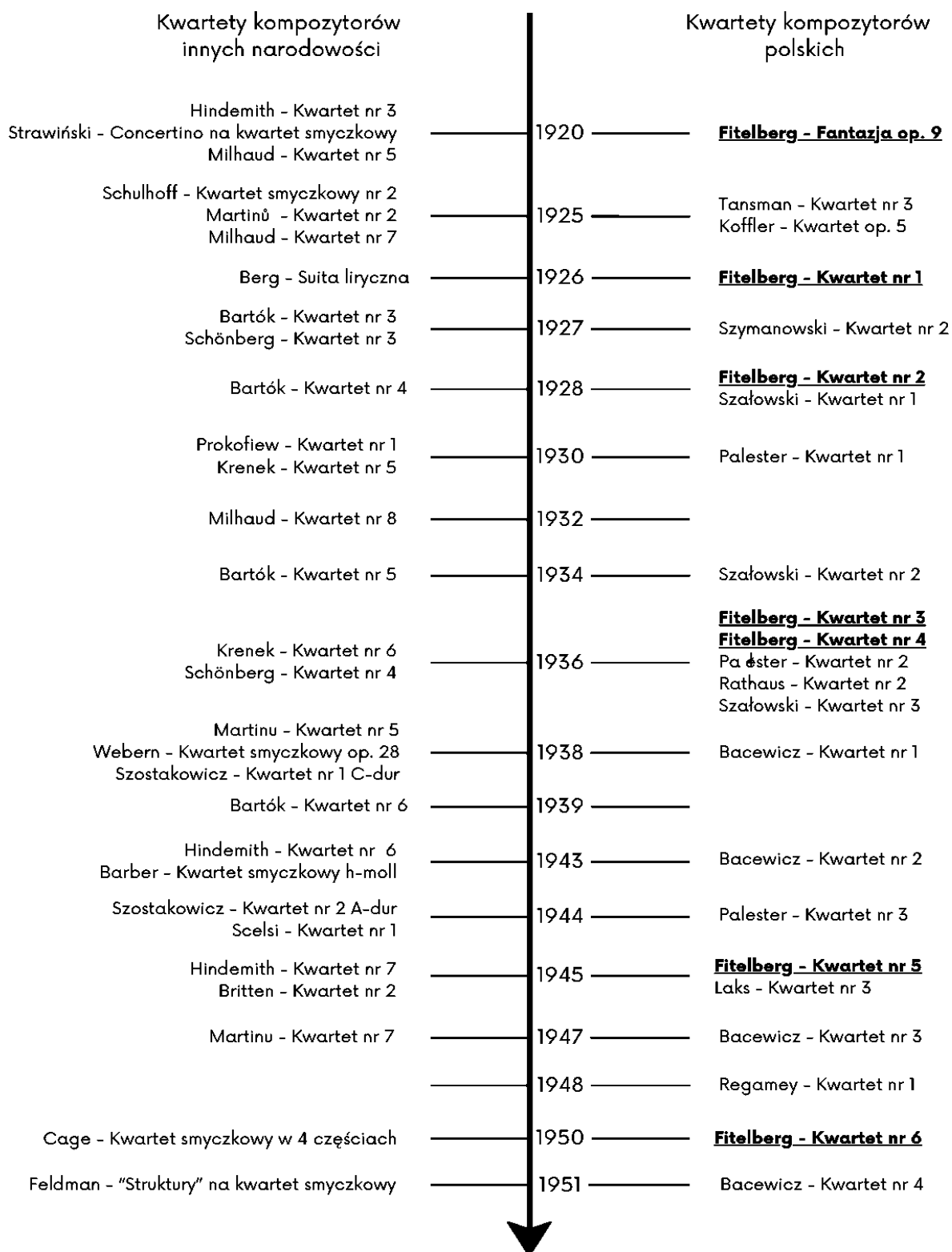
formation of musical ideas, as well as expansion of the fields of interests and sound explorations. As far as the composition of music for string quartet is concerned, he remains firmly rooted in the tradition of the genre as far as the use of instruments is concerned, preserving the idea of the dialectic play of individual voices. All of his quartet works are cyclical, with numerical designations which, for reasons of convention and aesthetics adopted by him, have neither an indicated tonality nor titles of their own. Fitelberg makes use of a relatively narrow range of articulation or dynamics, and does not force himself to search intensively for new sounds. His emphasis seems to be on the qualities associated with experimenting with structures of form, as well as exploring melorhythmic constructions towards developing an individual musical language. If one looks at the macro-constructions of Fitelberg's quartets, it becomes clear that he proposes something different in practically every work. A certain resemblance is only apparent when comparing his quartets *No. 2* and *No. 5*, but these works operate with widely divergent elements of, for example, internal architecture or melodics, and are also markedly stylistically different. The use of a three-movement fast-slow-fast tempo structure in these two pieces also demonstrates a kind of attachment to the tradition of the genre. While the five-movement structure of *Quartet No. 3* is some evidence of drawing inspiration from Bartók's oeuvre, the construction of *Quartet No. 4* based on a theme with variations ending in an extended fugue (in addition, based on the main theme of the variations) may appear to be Fitelberg's original idea.

Variations as an independent cycle appeared in quartet literature before Fitelberg's lifetime (Zdeněk Fibich - *Theme with Variations in B flat major*, Josef Gabriel Rheinberger - *Theme with Variations*, Op. 93, Louis Spohr - *Theme with Variations*, Op. 6 and Op. 8), and also in the works of Polish composers (Ignacy Jan Paderewski - *Variations in F major*, Władysław Żeleński - *Variations in G minor*, Op. 21). On the other hand, the combination of a variation and a fugue is a relatively common structure in works for orchestra or keyboard instruments, to mention just works by Ludwig van Beethoven (*Variations and Fugue in E flat major*, Op. 35), Johannes Brahms (*Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, Op. 24), Józef Hoffman (*Theme with Variations and Fugue*, Op. 14) or Max Reger (Op. 73, 81, 86, 100, 132, 134). Interestingly, an example of a variation ending with a fugue in a string quartet instrumentation can be found in the work of Zygmunt Stojowski, who composed his *Variations and Fugue* Op. 6 for this cast. However, in the case of this work, the fugue theme operates with new musical material, separate from the variation theme. It is unlikely that Jerzy Fitelberg knew or was even aware of the existence of any of the aforementioned works for string quartet. It is far

more likely that he was aware of the cycles of variations topped with a fugue found in keyboard and orchestral literature, such as those mentioned earlier. Taking into account the way in which the musical material is handled, especially the use of the theme, it can be assumed that the construction of *Quartet No. 4* in the literature for this instrumental cast represents a formal innovation.

In order to catch a glimpse of the broader time perspective of the creation of the works by Jerzy Fitelberg discussed in this chapter, the following chart showing the completion dates of selected works for string quartet by Polish and other composers can be used.

### Panorama wybranych kwartetów smyczkowych 1920-1951



**Illustration 10 - Overview of chosen string quartets written between 1920-1951. Works by Polish composers on the right side. Works by composers of other nationality on the left side.**



What should not escape notice is the fact that Fitelberg created works for string quartet purely out of his own need and invention. Such an approach is widely recognised as a kind of characteristic mark of the genre. The combination, in string quartets, of the idea of the most personal musical expression and dialogue was brilliantly described by Zbigniew Bujarski:

The string quartet as a genre is a kind of private letter that a composer sometimes writes to a specific addressee and in a similar way other composers' quartet music is received - like a private sound correspondence between individuals.<sup>121</sup>

Interestingly, such intentions can be read across multiple levels of dialogue between the subjects of creator, performer or audience. In the context of the above, the questions arise: for whom did Fitelberg write his quartets? With whom did he want to enter into this dialogue? In view of the scarcity of sources, this question will most likely remain open forever, although a few hypotheses can be attempted on the basis of contexts. In the case of Fitelberg's quartets, dedication, which would seem to be the obvious answer in such a case, is not entirely justified. Only three of the seven works for string quartet bear a dedicatory note (Quartets Nos. 2, 3 and 4). In the first two cases, the addressees are the ensembles that premiered the work, but, according to all indications, were neither the initiators of such a work nor the commissioning bodies. In the case of *Quartet No. 4*, the dedication is addressed to a patron whose material support has contributed to the important development of the functioning of contemporary chamber music in the United States. And, as in this case, in virtually every work by Fitelberg for string quartet, one can detect a desire to 'strike up a conversation' with an audience aware of the importance and significance of ambitious music, an active listener able to appreciate the craftsmanship of his intricate work. Feliks Łabuński, who studied Fitelberg's legacy after his death, outlined him as 'a lonely composer-modernist creating for an audience of specialists'<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> Quote after: Z. Bujarski, *Kwartet na jesień*, composer's commentary in the score, PWM, Kraków 2002, pp. 35, [in:] E. Wójtowicz, *Oblicza kwartetu smyczkowego w twórczości kompozytorów krakowskich*, Akademia Muzyczna im. K. Pendereckiego w Krakowie, 2021, pp. 80.

<sup>122</sup> E. Boczkowska, *O Jerzym Fitelbergu...*, op. cit, pp. 45

### III. Issues of interpretation and performance of String Quartets No. 4 and No. 5

#### 1. *String Quartet no. 4*

Fitelberg creates his most elaborate work for string quartet using one of his most favoured constructions - the variation form. The theme he outlines is an expressive melodic line which, due to its peculiar construction, may evoke associations with the twelve-tone idiom. However, given the considerable inconsistencies in the compatibility of the musical material of the theme with the doctrines of dodecaphony, the practical lack of manifestations of the use of this technique in the further course of the Quartet, as well as Fitelberg's very negative statements about this technique (and the composers using it)<sup>123</sup>, this track should be considered a dead end. As mentioned earlier, the structure of String Quartet No. 4, which is from the point of view of macro-form a one-movement work, consists of a theme, seven variations and a final fugue. The way in which the set of variations is ordered is governed by conventional rules of serialisation using numbering, with some of the links connecting directly (by means of a stopped note or chord), and their distinction on listening made possible by contrasts of tempo and character. The transformations of the theme present in the variations usually operate with short musical ideas derived from it. Over the course of successive movements, the composer also introduces new characteristic motifs, which, being independent of the main theme, can only evoke distant associations with it. These aspects were emphasised in a positive light by Francis D. Perkins, who participated in the work's premiere:

Mr. Fitelberg employs both theme and harmonic colors deftly, while fairly consistent in his devotion to variously hued dissonance. The ingenuity of his scoring, both in his employment of the massed tone of the instruments and also making use of their tones set apart in contrast, is marked, and the successive variations offer a wide and kaleidoscopically shifting variety of mood, pace and hue.<sup>124</sup>

On the other hand, this critic complained about the work's length, which, in relation to the content it contained, created the impression of a work composed of more than twice as many links. Such a perception may be the result of the construction of individual variations from clearly separated or strongly contrasting segments.

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<sup>123</sup> See quote on pp.. 31

<sup>124</sup> F. D. Perkins, Excerpt from the review: *4 New Works Heard in Capital Music Festival*, New York Herald Tribune, April 1937, NYPLA, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers. w/o sign.

But the number of variations—sixteen or more by a strictly unofficial count—seems excessive: their sequence for half an hour or more led to a sense of lengthiness. or the impression of indefiniteness of destination which not seldom has militated against the chances for general public acceptance of otherwise noteworthy works.<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, Fitelberg, through the accumulation of musical content and its pronounced sectionalisation, creates an impression of over-composition, also noticeable in his other chamber compositions. This way of conducting the musical content raises doubts about its intentionality. In the programme booklet of the 17th ISCM Festival, during which the Polish performance of this work was to take place, there was a description of *String Quartet No. 4*:

The theme - the thematic exposition of the whole piece - consists of two groups contrasting with each other, group A and group B. The first variation is a reworking of thematic group A. The second variation depends in the same way on thematic group B. The third variation is a reworking of the first, the fourth a reworking of the second, &c. In the final seventh variation, the thematic material, which had been subject to multiple changes in the previous six variations, is crystallised in its final form. This is followed by a Fugue, based on the variation theme, which forms the quartet's widely extended coda. The quartet ends with a short epilogue which, along with the beginning of the piece, forms the two focal points of the quartet. The author's intention was to create a piece in which these two points of gravity would constitute two moments of musical action, - the beginning and the end, while the seven variations and the fugue would play the role of a bridge, connecting these two points.<sup>126</sup>

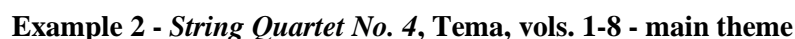
It is not clear whether this description is by the composer or by the person responsible for editing the festival programme booklet. Such a laconic outline does not convey the full complexity of this highly structurally complex work. In addition, the way in which the musical motifs used are processed, which differs from the original, is of considerable significance, making it difficult to make a clear statement of the variation measures employed. In many respects one gets the impression of the composer introducing previously unseen motifs or a very distant processing of phrases presented in over-running fragments of the work. This state of affairs leaves both the quoted description of *Quartet No. 4* and the view of all planes of the work's construction vulnerable to polemics, the arguments of which depend on the individual and subjective experience of the recipients of Fitelberg's work. The division of the first link into groups A and B itself does not seem very clear in the context of the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibidem,

<sup>126</sup> Excerpt of biographical note and description of String Quartet No. 4 from the programme booklet of the ISCM Festival Warsaw/Krakow 1939, Jerzy Fitelberg Papers, NYPLA, w/o sign..

The opening **principal theme** of the work, which is presented by all instruments in unison, provides the key melorhythmic structure for the entire work. It has a distinctive and characteristic head motif, the melodic structure of which is based on interval leaps, which then pass into scale progressions. Also significant is its rhythmic pattern leading from longer notes to thicken into shorter ones. Thanks to these elements, the main theme is relatively easy to spot in a wide range of variants and configurations throughout each variation and the final fugue.



**The first variation** (*Allegro*) is framed by an ABA scheme with an epilogue. Each section in which reference is made to the material of the theme is conducted in two plans: the thematic voice and a counterpoint of a complementary nature (motoric movement, mainly eighth-note). These plans transition and exchange between the instrumental parts in a seamless manner, often blurring the differences between the sound and register of the individual instruments. The forefront of the theme in the first demonstration of the variations is emphasised through

the use of a rhythm analogous to the original and similar interval distances using an inversion of the direction of sound leading. A strong reference to the theme link is also made by a similar course of instrumental pairings in the two-voice sections.

**The second** variation (*Moderato*) transitions seamlessly from the previous one by using a stopped sound *a* in the 2nd violin's voice. The construction of this movement is of a developmental type. The elements that come to the fore of sound perception are punctuated rhythm, as well as irregular rhythmic groups (quintuplets, septuplets, etc.). Two characteristic motifs appear here, to which the composer alludes in the individual passages of the further variations. This is significant in that their content is not distinguished by features that coincide with the material of the main theme. The first is a motif that, with its apparent stabilisation of the rhythmic course (in the nature of a slow dance in triple meter), introduces a certain loosening of the narrative, immediately disrupted by a shortening of the rhythmic values that produces a hemiola effect. Later, this motif appears in Variation IV partly confirming the claim of the description quoted at the beginning of this section.

**Example 3 - *String Quartet No. 4*, var. II, bars 266-269 - motif in the character of a slow dance**

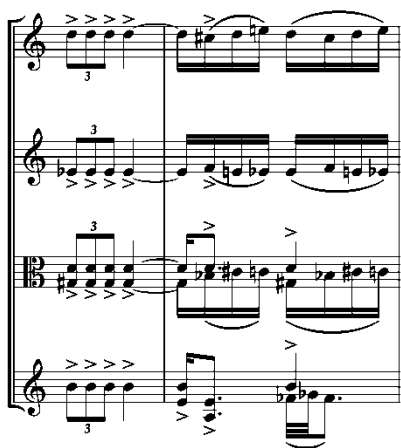
Towards the end of this variation, a second characteristic motif appears, called “choral” because of its homogeneous texture and parallel movements of the voices. The composer alludes to it in Variation VII.



**Example 4 - String quartet no. 4, var. II, bars 289-291 - choral motif**

**Third variation**<sup>127</sup> is constructed from several distinctly different sections that process two characteristic musical ideas. These are interwoven with each other or juxtaposed on the basis of character contrast. The first such motif is derived from the opening material of the link. It consists of a repetition of a single note from which a further musical thought is derived, usually of a vigorous and sharply articulated character.

<sup>127</sup> From this variation onwards, the composer only gives the metronome values of the tempo.



**Example 5 - *String quartet no. 4*, var. III, bars 316-17 - the first char. motif of this variation**

A group of four shorter notes and one longer note characterises the second major motif of this link. As a rule, it is based on an arched legato connected scale march, which gives it a singing and folkloric character. The consonance of the bowed melody is in itself an important contrast to the strongly chromaticised runs which are the development of the first motif of this link.

**Example 6 - *String quartet No. 4*, var. III. 368-373 - the second char. motif of this variation**

The succession of sections in this variation, as well as the ways in which the motivic material is developed, allow us to assume that the composer used a kind of recursion phenomenon in this link, creating ‘variations within variations’. The presence of two contrasting and explored alternating motifs, on the other hand, directs associations with thematic dualism, emblematic of the sonata form. Thus, one cannot exclude the existence in this variation of a certain structural hybrid, combining features of the above-mentioned forms. A similar procedure takes place in the finale of *String Quartet No. 5*, which is nine years younger.

**Fourth variation** is the first movement within *String Quartet No. 4* that does not begin with a sound directly derived from the preceding movement. This variation operates homophonically to the highest degree, juxtaposing the soloist part of the first violin against the accompanying voices of the other instruments. It is also the calmest and shortest movement of the piece. In the initial course of a few bars, the composer employs a conventional pairing of voices (1st and 2nd violins vs viola with cello), then smoothly bringing the 1st violin part into a dominant role over the others. The accompaniment parts sometimes complement (add to) the melodic line contrapuntally by referring to its content. The material of the three-voice sub-plot generally operates with a consistent texture in terms of rhythmic values and direction of the melodic.

**Fifth variation** is linked to the previous one by a *d-g-a-d* chord derived from the accompaniment plan of that link. Against its backdrop, the first violin presents single-note melodic material, which is then taken over by subsequent voices. The leading of the instrumental parts using imitative techniques forms the main axis of the musical course of this variation. Tempo fluctuations (rarely present in the other movements) are also relatively frequent. The final section brings the performance tempo closer to the next variation. In this way, the composer, without the use of hitherto functioning linking tones, attempts a free transfer between adjacent links while at the same time halting the musical action.

**Sixth variation** consists of two differentiated sections. The first is the most dance-like fragment of the entire cycle, which is preceded by a five-bar introduction that clearly alludes to the forefront of the main theme through the use of distant interval leaps (major seventh, minor ninth). The composer thus creates a kind of motivic cell - 3 interval leaps and a D minor chord. He repeats such a cell three times, each time developing sections of parallel shifted chords, leading to the actual beginning of the first section. Thanks to the use of "oberek" dance rhythms in 3/8 metre (two sixteenths + two eighths) - deployed in the background and the preservation of eighth-note pulsation - a dance idiom dominates this fragment. It is true that at a few moments there are bars that break from this ostinato (through the use of hemiola or a one-bar change of metre to even), but an immediate return to the earlier pattern maintains the grotesque dance mood. By means of increasingly frequent occurrences of such shifts out of the uniform pulse, the composer leads the narrative into the second fragment, set in contrasting 4/4 metre.



**Example 7 - *String quartet no. 4*, var. VI, bars 736-744 - Return of the principal theme forehead.**

The leading motif of the principal theme recurs here (for the first time in such a prominent way since the demonstration in Variation I), which is processed alternately in the violin voices on an imitative basis, then tightened rhythmically (*stretto*). Moreover, the contrapuntal lines that accompany or interweave these demonstrations of the leading motif constitute the material explored by the composer in the final fugue.

The composer concludes this variation with a very interesting treatment of the intensification of the ensemble sound led in pairs of voices. This ending culminates in three chords (the first played entirely *pizzicato*, the second half *arco/pizzicato*, and the third entirely *arco*) each

preceded by a repetitive motif. This structure seems to be analogous to the beginning of this variation.

Var. VII  $\text{♩} = 58$

763

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

770

*mp*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

**Example 8 - *String quartet No. 4*, var. VI - bars 763-775 - Augmented chorale motif together with eighth-note counterpoint**

In the final **seventh variation**, the composer takes the material presented earlier and reworks it in reverse order, in a mirror image as it were. This link appears to be framed by 3 main sections. The first (bars 763-826), makes use of the augmented melodic line of the ‘chorale’ motif (first presented in Variation II), with an added contrapuntal layer in which the characteristic element is a continuous eighth-note movement that flows seamlessly between the voices.

In the following section (bars 827-852), Fitelberg very clearly returns to structures taken from the development of the principal theme (successively bars 827-833 are a development of the

fragment in bars 21-27, while bars. 847-852 correspond to the fragment in bars 31-38). From vol. 853 the final section of the variation follows, providing a lead-in to the final fugue. Here, the forefront of the theme acting as the main narrative factor returns; in addition, the composer also introduces phrases that will be used in the fugue as a development of the theme (with the ricochet motif being the most prominent and characteristic).

**Example 9 - String quartet no. 4, var. VI - bars 881-883 - ricochet motif (in the part of the second violin)**

In the final progression of this section, the tempo begins to become disjointed as its increasingly frequent deviations in both directions appear. The last seven bars (*meno mosso*), by virtue of being softened in character, diverge from the preceding variation passages, thus providing a ‘bridge’ to the introduction of the final, longest section of the cycle.

The final fugue begins *attaca* with a G sound in the voice of the first violin. This sound is at the same time an extension of the highest component of the C major chord crowning Variation VII. The theme is a single-voice musical idea whose initial four bars operate on the material of the forefront of the main theme, preserving the first two characteristic interval leaps (the subsequent ones are already altered in relation to the original). The development, on the other hand, operates with a ricochet motif that appeared earlier (although only once) in the epilogue of the seventh variation.



**Example 10 - *String Quartet No. 4*, Fugue, bars 906-915, voice of 1st violin - theme (bars 906-909), its development (bars 910-912) and transition to counterpoint (bars 913-cont.).**

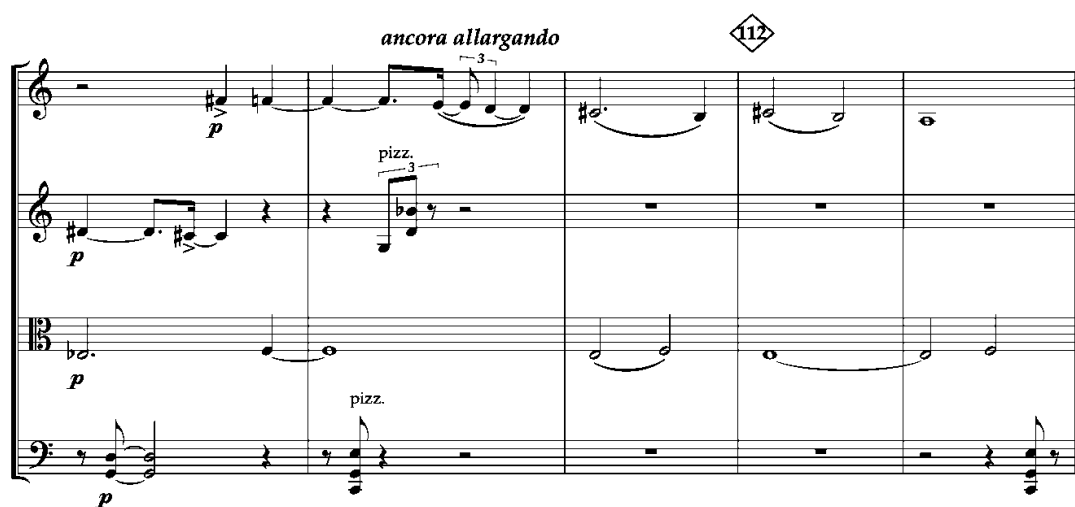
The presentation of the theme, introduced by close imitation, takes place successively in the voices of the second violin, viola and cello. The contrapuntal layer also maintains close imitation between the voices until the entrance of the theme in the part of the lowest-sounding instrument. From this point onwards, the accompanying voices merge into a homogeneous sound plan. The musical material thickens, interweaving individual motifs between the instruments. Subsequent demonstrations of the theme appear in interval doubling (first an octave apart, then a third) and later in single voices (imitating with only the direction of the melody). From vol. 1018 the theme is introduced on a stretto principle. In this space, very characteristic and distinctive in the course of the entire fugue are the chordal sections belonging to the accompaniment layer, where the composer puts together two different triads in the viola and cello parts. A kind of refreshing of the musical matter takes place in vol. 1050, where the theme is again presented in its original form (identical for the fugue). The accompanying voices operate with short motives reminiscent of those present in variations I, III and VI. Each theme, shown successively in the voices of viola, 1st violin, cello, 2nd violin, presents an independently longer passage against a background of game-like counterpoints.

In the final section of the fugue, the viola voice comes to the fore with a grotesque theme whose musical material alludes to the content of the first section of the sixth variation (dance character, triple meter). The other voices, playing pizzicato, accompany the ostinato rhythm of the triple without the first eighth, thus reinforcing the dance idiom. In the last bar of this passage, the performers return to the arco technique, as if another episode of the fugue were about to happen, but the music unexpectedly breaks off on the third measure of the bar.



**Example 11 - *String Quartet No. 4*, Fugue, bars 1098-1101 - grotesque dance theme in viola part**

What follows is an epilogue, the start of which is clearly separated from the fugue by a double bar line. Its beginning evokes in the voice of the first violins for the last time the characteristic frontal motif with leaps of octaves and sevenths, against a background of homogeneous accompaniment with figurative interjections, leading to a gradual halting of the narrative and a dilution of the musical material. The final five bars, like the last breaths of a living organism, calm the action towards a seemingly consonant consonance with a tonal centre around the A major chord components. The semitone change in the viola's voice and the C major pizzicato triad of the cello at the very end diametrically alter the sound of the ending close the work with a phrase like an aborted attempt to continue the motivic work, a kind of suspension of the music in an undefined space.



**Example 12 - *String quartet No. 4*, Fugue, bars 1119-1123 - ending of the piece**

## 2. *String Quartet no. 5*

As mentioned earlier, *Quartet No. 5* consists of 3 separate movements with contrasting tempi, with a total performance time of around 28-30 minutes. In terms of its melodic and harmonic layer, this work is clearer and more lucid than Fitelberg's compositions for string quartet dating from the 1930s. In contrast to these, each of the movements of the *fifth* is crowned by a consonant ending; moreover, passages with clear connotations of functional harmonics (especially in the central movement) are relatively frequent, providing a counterbalance to sections with atonal overtones.

**The first movement** is constructed on the basis of the sonata allegro form, with a clear thematic dualism within a conventional arrangement of sections corresponding to exposition, development and recapitulation. The first theme operates with a three-bar phrase of an abstract and peculiarly mechanical character.



### Example 13 - *String quartet No. 5*, mvt I, bars 1-5 - Theme I

The musical content is made up of separated groups of two sixteenths in a quarter relationship. This interval is a significant motif in the piece, for it also stands out in the following movements, appearing within the melodic runs as the dominant interval and often taking on a pivotal role in the construction of the motives. In the case of the overall display, the first theme is performed by the two instruments in octave doubling against a background of ostinato rhythmic accompaniment performed by the other voices playing a repetitive sound, also doubled within an octave. This peculiar ‘counterpoint’ operates with only two rhythmic groups: syncopes of sixteenths as well as eighths and quarter notes contained within a triplet group. It is noteworthy that the regular group (the hexadecimal syncopation) of the accompaniment appears only when there are pauses in the first theme.

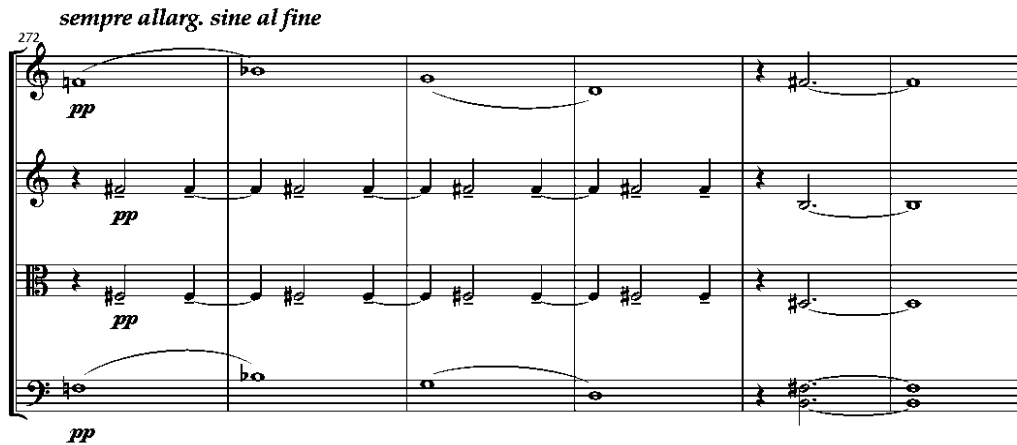
The second theme, which contrasts markedly in character with the first, is contained within the cantilena phrase of the rising and falling passage, where its dominant component is variants of thirds. As the exposition unfolds, the composer introduces the punctuated rhythm

more and more clearly, which in the further musical progression of the first link will constitute another significant and distinctive element comprising the motivic construction.

*un poco meno, pesante*

#### Example 14 - *String quartet No. 5, mvt I, bars 74-76 - characteristic punctuated rhythms*

The development section, which begins after the general pause, operates with a somewhat more rhythmically static narrative progression, gradually thickening the quartet texture with the introduction of voices with diverse material in turn. The interval of the quartet is still clearly discernible providing a sort of idiomatic reference to the theme. In the final run there is a literal reference of an augmentative nature to the opening bars. The material of the second theme is then added to the passage, developed between voices while expanding the ensemble register. This passage is interrupted by another general pause, after which the first climactic section begins, where the composer emphasises the greatest intensification of the timbral layer. It is based almost entirely on a quarter motif set in punctuated rhythmic, with increasing dynamics and a slowing tempo. The general pause after the climax is not written with rhythmic values but with a fermata placed above the bar line. The following recapitulation abbreviates the first and second themes in succession, in both cases with even greater momentum (due to additional octave doublings). The characteristic ostinato counterpoint rhythm begins to ‘blur’ into a repeated syncopation (first an eighth-note shift, then a quarter-note shift), against which reminiscences of the theme reverberate, calming the mood and leading to the culmination of the movement with a B major chord.



**Example 15 - String quartet No. 5, mvt I, bars 272-277 - end of the movement**

**Second movement** of *Quartet No. 5* is constructed in the form of a theme with four variations. The presentation of the leading phrase of this section proceeds in an unconventional manner - beginning with a synthetic ensemble progression, then moving to a conventional homophonic arrangement of the melody with chordal accompaniment. In the initial section of the theme, its successive components are placed between voices in a similar register, reinforcing the homogeneous ensemble sound. In the next section, the melody of the theme is taken over entirely by the voice of the first violins against the background of the aforementioned chords. It is worth noting the course of the line of the lowest voices based on a descending succession of notes mixing diatonic and chromatic scales, as this material constitutes an important reference in the subsequent variations. The characteristic leitmotif of the theme is a descending major chord followed by an accentuated rhythmic figure (thirty-two and a long note) of ascending three notes.

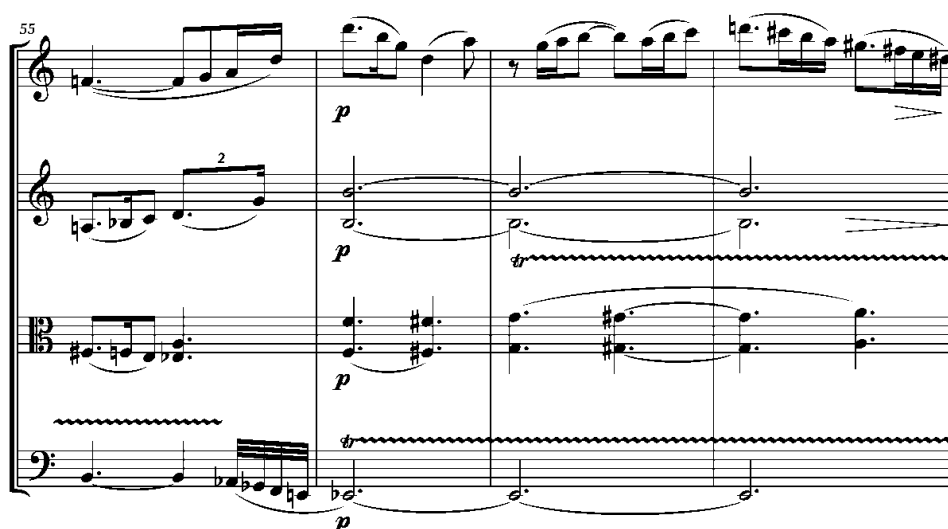


**Example 16 - String quartet No. 5, Mvt II, Theme, bars 21-22 - Characteristic front motif**

All the material of the thematic link is framed by an ABA formal arrangement, exiting and returning to the  $g^2$  sound. In the recapitulative fragment, the soloistic treatment of the voice of the first violin is highlighted. It is also worth noting the accompaniment layer of the other instruments, especially the varied rhythmic and the way in which the chordal direction is guided, elements to which the composer explicitly refers in subsequent elaborations of the material.

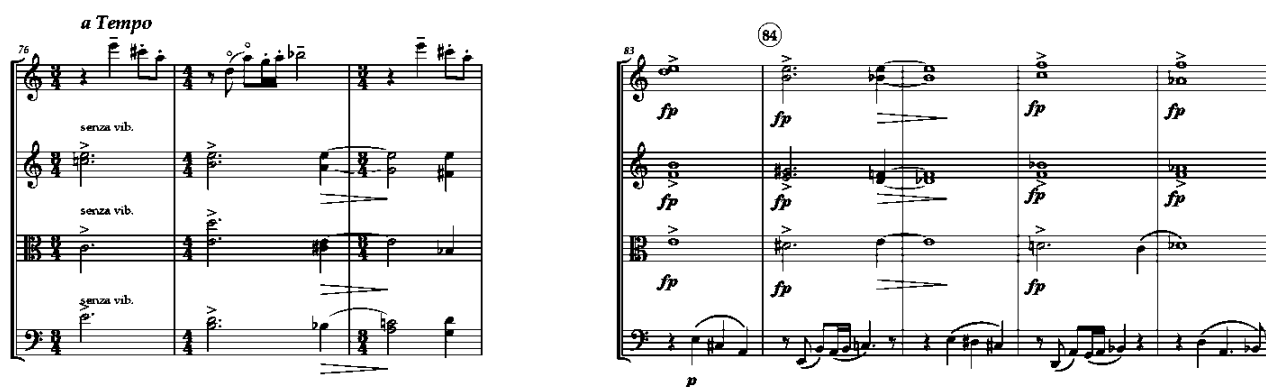


**First variation**, like the thematic link, it is shaped in an ABA pattern. Its content at first does not refer directly to the characteristic motif, relying only on the similarity of shaping the direction of the higher voices and the descending chordal accompaniment played pizzicato by viola and cello. All references to the thematic material are quite distant and operate on any of its components (e.g. the direction of the melody, the juxtaposition of proportional rhythmic values, etc.) with the exception of a clear evocation of the leading motif, which appears momentarily towards the end of the middle section. The final segment of this section is a recapitulation of the initial phrase using plan reversal, i.e. the melody is repeated in the lower register of the viola, while the violin realises a pizzicato accompaniment.



**Example 17 - *String quartet no. 5*, mvt II, var. 1, bars 55-58, development of the theme (from bar 56)**

**Second variation**, set in a contrasting slow tempo with its neighbours, has a structure very similar to the previous movements. In it, the composer conducts a narrative using alternating polyphony and homophony in sections. Unlike the first variation, all developments of the thematic material are realised in a much calmer mood through the augmentation of characteristic rhythmic values. In the middle fragment, the composer presents the leading motif in two contrasting approaches. First in the high register of the violin voice played with separate articulation, then in the lowest register of the cello played legato. Also varied in terms of harmony is the chordal accompaniment plan.



**Example 19 - *String quartet no. 5*, part II, var. 2- bars. 76-78 and 83-87 - juxtaposition of the leading motif**

In **third variation**, being the most extended segment of this movement, the construction proceeds differently from the previous parts, as it is the rhythmic character that clearly takes over the formative role in it. This fact, together with the evolutionary treatment of the thematic material and elements of rondo characteristics (if only due to the frequently recurring leitmotif), evokes clear associations with the scherzo genre . In beginning this variation, the composer used a method of introducing successive voices coinciding with the thematic link, which, apart from the direction of shaping the melodic line, constitutes the greatest similarity to the scherzo. There are also elements alluding to the quartet's neighbouring movements - primarily through the use of the quartet motif.

In this variation (as well as in fragments of the first), the dance idiom is clearly perceptible, thanks in part to the characteristic repeated rhythmic figures contained in triple metre.



**Example 20 - *String Quartet No. 5*, mvt II, var. 3 - bars 133-137 (voice of viola and cello) and 152-154 (voice of 1st violin) - fourths as the dominant motivic interval**

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. The first system begins at bar 311 and the second system at bar 317. The notation includes various articulations such as 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco), and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano). The music is written for four staves, representing the voices of the string quartet.

**Example 21 - *String quartet No. 5*, mvt II, var. 3, bars. 311-323 - dance idiom**

**Last variation** is somewhat of a mirror image of the theme. Its very beginning is conducted in the opposite way to its ending - during the first four bars, the violin voices diverge and the rhythmic values are thickened. Similarly, in the layer of the lowest voice, the gamut progression has an ascending direction (opposite to the descending one in the theme). The short viola solo excerpt in bars 408-412 is very interesting, as it alludes to the other movements in Quartet No. 5, especially to the motivically leading interval of the fourth. Only after this excerpt does the voice of the first violin present the variation theme. The accompaniment layer is enriched by thirty-two figurations, announced earlier in the aforementioned solo viola phrase. The final section presents material from the beginning of the link theme (an octave lower than the original). The second movement is crowned by the composer with a modal cadential phrase followed by a solution for a G major chord (example 41, p. 115).

Example 22 - *String quartet no. 5*, mvt II, var. 4, bars 408-415 - viola solo and return of theme

**Final movement** is framed by a structure that is very difficult to define unequivocally from an analytical point of view. As in the previous movements, the textures present here include homophony, strict and loose polyphony, as well as short passages operating with the homorhythm of the full instrumentation. Their distinction, as well as the score marks indicating the bar numbers, provide certain clues as to the division of the construction of the final movement. In this section one can find formal elements in line (at least in part) with the construction of the allegro-sonata form, the rondo, as well as a trace of thinking in terms of the arch form. Moreover, the various transformations of the thematic material in the individual excerpts also allow one to notice the composer's use of elements of variation technique. This multilayered construction shows how Fitelberg, despite his change in artistic environment, remained interested in experimenting with forms and creating conglomerates from them combining many features within a single link.

The variation form features here through clear transformations of the thematic material presented in the first segment, as well as a clear division of the link into 6 sections.

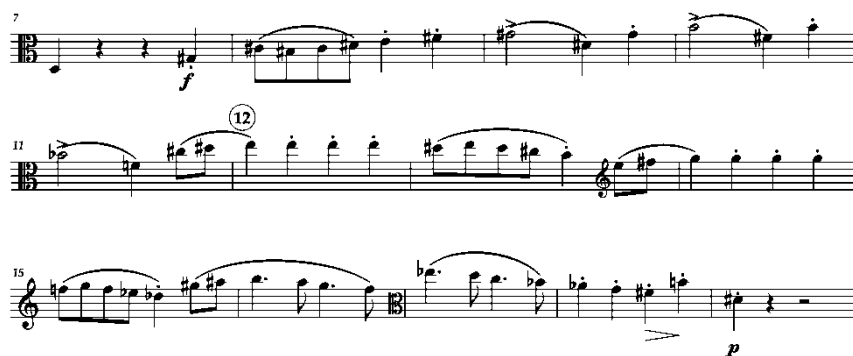
A reference to the rondo form can be found in the frequent recurrence of the principal material (theme I), divided by segments of varied course (refrain). The possibility of indicating both thematic dualism (theme II is less distinct than theme I), and the option of dividing the movement into exposition, development and abbreviated recapitulation, clarify the elements of sonata allegro in this movement. On the other hand, the closing of the link with material from its beginning is the only trace of reference to the arch form. Nevertheless, none of the above-mentioned options of construction fits unambiguously into the degree of complexity of the final movement of String Quartet No. 5. The following table shows an attempt to frame the construction of this link taking into account the two most fitting divisions of the musical course:

Variation form					
<i>Thematic group</i>	<i>Var. 1</i>	<i>Var. 2</i>	<i>Var. 3</i>	<i>Var. 4</i>	<i>Var. 5 &amp; epilogue</i>
<b>b. 1-61</b>	<b>b. 62-116</b>	<b>b. 117-206</b>	<b>b. 207-261</b>	<b>b. 262-349</b>	<b>b. 350-437</b>

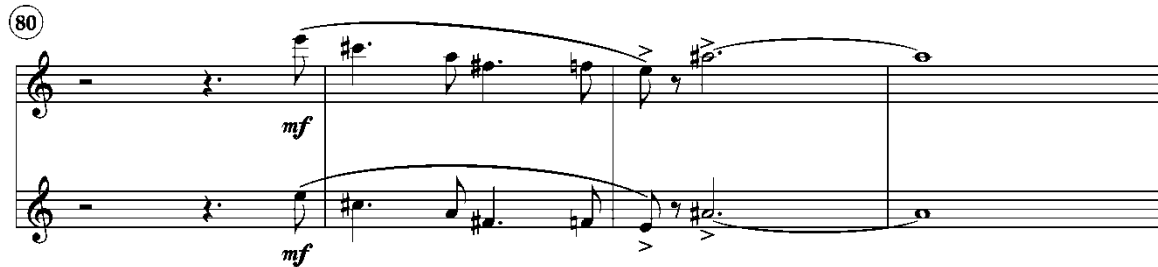
Allegro-sonata form		
<i>Exposition</i>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Recapitulation</i>
<b>b. 1-206</b>	<b>b. 207-349</b>	<b>b. 350-437</b>

Throughout the whole of the movement under discussion, Fitelberg operates with the development of four leading musical ideas, three of which should be regarded as the dominant thematic material. The most important structure is theme I, in which the use of the fifth as a motivic interval is once again very prominent. The content of this theme evokes associations of cheerfulness and light-heartedness through the use of abbreviated articulation and the accentuation of the strong part of the bar.



**Example 23 - String Quartet No. 5, mvt III, bars 7-19, viola voice - Theme I and its expansion**

The transformation of the expanded fragment of the I theme (in the above example, bars 16-17) constitutes a musical idea in the further course of the link that is evoked several times (example 23), which carries a much more dramatic expression (the influence of the intervals of the minor second and the tritone together with the irregular accentuation)



**Example 24 - *String Quartet No. 5*, mvt III, bars 80-83, voices of the 1st and 2nd violins - development of theme I used as further motivic material**

Another prominent musical idea is Theme II, which is distinguished from the others primarily by its treatment in triple meter and the introduction of a calmer character. Its two-bar forefront with an ascending direction constitutes the material developed in the particular further excerpts of this movement.



**Example 25 - *String quartet No. 5*, mvt III, bars 108-111, voice of the 1st violin - Theme II and its expansion**

In the central section (bars 207-261) of the movement, new melodic material is introduced, called Theme III in this work. Its content and presentation are clearly reminiscent of the opening of *String Quartet No. 4*<sup>128</sup>, however, as the material develops, the resemblance begins to blur due, for example, to the different way in which the voices are conducted.

<sup>128</sup> Cf ex. 36.

207 Tempo ♩ = 92-96

211 *allarg. un poco più pesante*  
*ben tenuto f*

**Example 26 - String quartet No. 5, mvt III, bars 207-213 - Theme III**

The augmented content of this theme is recalled in the presto space (vol. 350-383), representing the beginning of the proposed recapitulation. In this section, the development of themes follows a mirrored pattern, i.e. from theme III, through II (bars 384-394), then I (bars 395-399), ending with the epilogue (bars 400-437). The content of the final phase of this movement draws from its first bars, which are the base material for the further development of musical thought in this short passage. A reference to the interval of the fourth appears just before the very end in the voices of the viola and cello playing in a very high register, creating, as it were, a summary of the use of this motif throughout the cycle. It is also worth noting the musical material in the section between bars 133-149, which, through its use of monotonous syncopated rhythm, clearly refers to the ostinato of the accompaniment layer from the first part of the cycle. This, in addition to the frequent use of the interval of the fourth in the melodic layer, is further evidence of the continued coherence of the cycle as a whole.

Placing *Quartet No. 5* in the context of Fitelberg's other chamber works, one can see a kind of bridge between it and *Quartet No. 2*. Of his works for string quartet, he constructed only these two in three movements. In both cases, he also orchestrated, which is the de facto addition of the double bass part and the division of the voices in the individual parts into divisi and soli. Furthermore, in the musical layer of these works, certain similarities can be found in the construction of phrases or patterns, as well as in the relationships between the instrumental parts.

Considering Fitelberg's other works, one can see a clear parallel between the finale of his *Quartet No. 5* and the *String Trio* completed in 1938. The similarity between the indicated fragments of these works is evident in the motifs of the final section, as well as its rhythmic and agogic structure (Cf. excerpts 26 and 27).

*molto allargando*

⑨⑩  $\text{♩} = 132$  *rall.*

Example 27 - J. Fitelberg - *String Trio*, mvt IV - finale





### Example 28 - *String Quartet No. 5*, mvt III, bars 432-437 - finale

Another example of the aforementioned analogy is the identical manner of beginning the slow movements of *Quartet No. 5* and *Quartet No. 3*. In this particular case, however, the similarity is based only on the method of introducing voices, which is one of the composer's preferred ways of constructing the musical course.

Apart from the above-mentioned affinities, in *Quartet No. 5* one can find phrases whose sound layer may give the impression of some kind of inspiration or similarity to the works of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Fitelberg's surviving statements concerning the works of these composers are rather pejorative:

I listened to Shostakovich's Third Quartet and Fifth Symphony and Prokofiev's Second Quartet - not even worth writing about.<sup>129</sup>

The recent works by Serozhka and Shostk. are utterly awful - in my opinion. I listened to the Quartets of these Soviet Bachs here - I was horrified, by the way, naive supporters of red music turned red listening to it. If it hadn't been for that dreadful government pressure, Prk [Prokofiev] and Sh. [Shostakovich] could and certainly would have written better, for the heck of it, they have Russian, but not Soviet, talent.<sup>130</sup>

I listened to Prokokakafiev's 6th [Symphony] here - what poor music it is - doesn't hold together, badly instrumented, boredom upon boredom.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 26.06.1947, AKP BUW, w/o sign..

<sup>130</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 05.03.1948, AKP BUW, w/o sign...

<sup>131</sup> Excerpt of a letter from J. Fitelberg to R. Palester dated 24.04.1950, AKP BUW, w/o sign...

With such statements, Fitelberg denied any overt connection to their music, but nevertheless some kind of influence of this work may have had a subliminal effect on him. In the United States, gripped during the Second World War by a wave of anti-Nazi propaganda and at the same time supportive of the USSR, the music of Soviet composers was played very frequently until the introduction of the political actions known as Maccarthianism in the 1950s. Perhaps a particular phrase from the works of Shostakovich or Prokofiev that 'stuck in his head' became the impetus for his own musical thought, similar in character. Similar analogies on the sound side can be found between the finale of Fitelberg's *String Quartet No. 5* and the last movement of Bela Bartok's *String Quartet No. 5*.

### **3. Performance aspects of Jerzy Fitelberg's works for string quartet**

When analysing the performance aspects of Jerzy Fitelberg's works for string quartet, one can notice a wide range of technical issues and problems, which are particularly acute in the works from the Paris period. *Quartets No. 3* and *No. 4* are the most complex in terms of technical demands among his other compositions for this cast, especially the fourth. The *String Quartet No. 5* also poses a great deal of difficulty for the performers, similar in level to its predecessors.

#### **Performer Condition**

All the instrumental parts within each work are relatively even in terms of difficulty, sometimes presenting the greatest challenges to the voices of the first violins and cello. Nevertheless, on the technical and performative aspects, the works present a virtuosic level of instrumental requirements for all parts. One of the main problems in working with Jerzy Fitelberg's string quartets from the later stages of his oeuvre is the question of both the physical and mental condition needed for the reliable preparation and performance of these works. These two planes are clearly intertwined. The relatively long duration of each work, the rich and complicated musical content, the necessity to remain constantly in full concentration due to the numerous metric and agogic changes, the relatively few places to breathe, or even the long passages requiring an intensification of articulation and loud dynamics - these are features that undoubtedly pose a challenge to the performers..

## Intonation

The complexity of Fitelberg's music and the degree of intricacy of the individual parts generate the need for very intensive work on correct intonation and clean execution of the passages, which is essential for a proper performance of this music. There are many places where this aspect can present problems. These include, for example, fragments in which double-stops are played using an open string, to which the fingering has to be tuned. The problem is exacerbated in fragments where such sequences are played by two or more instruments. Great difficulties are posed by figures in which the musician has to find, in a very short time, sounds played in high positions on the lower string, paired with an open higher string, sounding lower than the fingering (example 28). In this case, one way of easing into the necessary position for the section may be to enter earlier or to try to catch the reference during the pause at a place on the string that is intuitive for the performer (e.g. being a characteristic natural flageolet). In doing so, attention should be paid not to cover the sounding empty/open string with the fingers used when playing on the lower string.



### Example 29 - *String quartet no. 4, var. II, t. 249-255, viola part*

Particular intonation difficulties are posed by those passages which are not only placed in relatively high registers for each instrument, but are also often conducted in octave doubling. This results in an enormous amount of work to be done in tuning each passage (both individually and as a duet), as well as the reasonable planning of an appropriate balance between the voices, which significantly affects sound projection, followed also by the problem of intonation.



**Example 30 - String quartet no. 4, var. II, bars 76-79 - an example of an episode highly problematic in terms of intonation**

## Rhythm

According to all the traces, both non-musical and in Fitelberg's works, the rhythmic aspect was of great importance to him. Certain rhythmical arrangements seem to have been used by him with great pleasure. These include: homogeneous runs of identical rhythmic values, punctuated rhythm, and the juxtaposition of irregular and even rhythms. In all of Jerzy Fitelberg's works for string quartet, the key issue to be mastered is the precise and accurate execution of passages with identical rhythmic patterns between the parts of the voices. Also sections with differentiated passages within individual parts involve a similar necessity. The very high degree of complication of these structures in the individual sound plans often gives the impression of rhythmic disorganisation, so that any hesitation in any of the voices can lead to a situation where one mistake, even the slightest one, negatively affects the final effect of the performance.

## Metre

The frequent changes of metre and tempo modifications encountered in these works even with the best string ensembles make it absolutely necessary to work with a metronome. This issue also translates into the aforementioned problem of mental condition, as numerous metric or agogic reorganisations, in the absence of a systematic and rigorous approach to work, can drastically affect the time of preparation of works, as well as the work atmosphere in an

ensemble. Due to the precision of the notation, it is clear that tempo changes should occur only in the passages envisaged by the composer, which makes it somewhat easier for performers to unify this aspect of interpretation. However, due to the slightest error in counting measures of bars or distraction of even one of the instrumentalists, any hesitation and inconsistencies in both agogic and metric layers during the performance may negatively influence the final result of the work's presentation. The composer leaves the interpreters freedom of manoeuvre in the area of pulse only at sections, where, while requesting a change of tempo, he does not specify its targeted value. Such a situation usually occurs at the end of longer sections, e.g. the last bars of the first movement of Quartet No. 5. Other similar issues are the signs: the fermata over the bar line and the comma. In both cases, the symbols express the need for a short pause to take a collective breath. The freedom and length of such a pause should be determined by both the narrative conditions of the music and the musicians' condition.

### **Fingerings and enharmonics**

Certain rapid musical passages are characterised by a high difficulty of the fingering application. The process of mastering them may generate a dilemma regarding the advantage of playing a particular passage either in different positions on one string or in one position between two or more strings. In such cases, the decision should be based on the individual experience and performance preferences of the instrumentalist, who should take into account the timbral qualities of each string. However, in relation to the many excerpts where these passages function in doubling, the method of *appliqué* should be established between the performers of the twin voices primarily with a reference to timbre and sound balance. There are chordal passages where it is essential that each component of the multi-chord is clearly heard, especially when it is not duplicated. Fingering that is well thought out and adapted to the instrumentalist's hand, as well as breaking the chord the same way for all instruments playing the chord, will then ensure a coherent and complete ensemble sound..

It is noticeable that Fitelberg, when composing music for string instruments, thought in enharmonically convenient sounds for the linear reading of each section. No double sharps or double flats appear in the musical progression. Lowerings of the *c* and *f* pitches and elevations of the *h* and *e* pitches appear very rarely, usually to maintain interval proportions or to simplify the reproduction of the progression of a particular scale. It is most likely that the composer's intention was to make it easier to read such passage in terms of fingering specific

to the performer's mental work when playing the instrument, which, in the context of the high complexity of his music, may have often been suggested by his contemporary interpreters.

## **Timbre**

Although the issue of timbre and tone colour was not one of the most explored aspects of the composer's music for string quartet, it should undoubtedly be noted as a significant factor influencing the performance of these works. Particularly important is Fitelberg's suggestive notation of dynamics and articulation, intensified especially in the fast passages. In common with the contexts described in this work arising from his life, works, inspirations and views, the characteristics of this treatment of sound indicate a close affinity with the aesthetics of vitalism. However, care must be taken to ensure that the intensification of sound dictated by the desire to highlight the characteristics of this genre does not disrupt the musical contents. After all, it is not about making every sound scratchy or harsh. The vibration of sound, which is also linked to the expressive aspect, similarly influences the timbral component. In Fitelberg's quartet works, the only hint of the vibration issue appears in the second movement of *Quartet No. 5*<sup>132</sup>, where, after an passage played *senza vibrato*, the composer notes the term *poco ordinario*, by which it can be assumed that playing with vibrato is treated by him as natural. However, in the case of Fitelberg's music, this manner should not be treated as an ornamentation of sound. Considering the lack of extra-musical context or a radical turn away from romantic aesthetics, any exaggeration of vibrato will make the abstract impression of his music less convincing. Instead, the skilful grading of vibrato can serve admirably as a means of strengthening or weakening the tension relations of the work's musical narrative structure.

## **Bowings and strings**

The construction of passages in fast tempos, which are constructed on intervals wider than a major third, involves frequent string changes, sometimes on each successive note. In most cases, attempting to prepare fingerings for such fragment to be played on a single string may involve unnecessary effects such as hearable portamento or glissandi, or make the performance more difficult and slower. Places where it is more comfortable to change the string at each note require particular attention to the right hand's action, so that changes in the bowing surface are precise and smooth for the flow of the music. The performance of such structures, particularly if they take place in faster tempos, can be made easier by using the movement of only the joint rather than the whole elbow.

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<sup>132</sup> This issue is further described in chapter IV, 6.

#### 4. The question of expression and emotionality in Jerzy Fitelberg's chamber works

Emotionality in music is generally understood in the same way as expression, which is defined as ‘the communicative power inherent in things or phenomena’<sup>133</sup>, while these terms are always subjective and subordinated to the individual experience and personality of the interpreters. In his youthful chamber works, Fitelberg jr. emphasises the emotional layer with suggestive performance terms. Furthermore, the emotionality as expressed through the programmatic titles of the individual works is revealed in their idiomatic musical narrative. His early works, such as *The Masque of the Red Death* (1920) for orchestra, *Fantasia ‘Till Eulenspiegel Last Moments’* (1920) for string quartet, *Fisches Nachtgesang* (1921) for clarinet, cello and celesta, *Das Mondscheinlied* (1922), and *Die Indische Harfe* (1923) for soprano, piano, violin, cello, flute and trombone, are among the best examples of the above claim. In the *Fantasia* itself, one can find a catalogue of various interpretative and performance expressions (the composer alternates between Italian, German and French) concerning issues of tempo, articulation and the nature of the work's progressions, which are often reinforced with an exclamation mark, testifying to the romanticised, even expressionist overtones of this work. Among these terms are conventional expressions, as well as those often found in the works of other authors, such as: *tranquillo, leggero, sotto voce, largamente, perdendosi, dolce, giocoso, scherzando, agitato, con fuoco, con tutta forza, energico, sehr zart, sehr langsam, wild, breit*. Further on, one may come across terms that are more sophisticated or composed of several elements: *dolcissimo grazioso!, poco incalzando, (detaché) impetuoso!, volando!, solo commode e sonore, grottesque!, schnell portamento, spiccato sehr schnell, elastisch, Noch schnell!, mit grosse Ton, mit Humor!, Imitiere den Klang von Trommeln*. Even in the *String Quartet No. 1*, residual traces of the transmission of compositional ideas concerning the emotional layer can be discerned, but compared to the elements present in the *Fantasia*, this is de facto residual, limited to expressions *espressivo* or *non espressivo*. The later compositions for string quartet do not contain any terms suggesting an apriori emotional basis, but only transformations related to technical issues such as agogic or dynamic changes.

As he continued his studies, a change in the naming style of his compositions becomes clearly apparent. Fitelber moved from titles with poetic overtones or evoking programmatic associations to titles related to the genre of the work or specifying its form: *Scherzo* for piano

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<sup>133</sup> Term *Ekspresja* [in:] *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 180

(1924), *Suite* for orchestra (1924), *Tema con Variazioni* for piano (1924-25), *Serenade* für Violine und Contrabass (1925), *Rhapsodie für 4 Klaviere* (1926). He maintained a similar tendency to title his compositions for the rest of his life, with a few exceptions for works based on literary texts (the children's opera *Henny Penny*, 1949; *Pan Tralaliński* for mixed choir to words by Julian Tuwim, 1942) or that provide musical illustrations for stage works (the ballet suite *Prometheus Badly Tangled*, 1929) and films (*Les Adventures de Mickey* for orchestra, 1934; *Poland Fights On* for wind instruments, piano and percussion, 1945). This change in the system of naming works following his compositional development was most likely the result of adopting an anti-romantic stance and involved ‘throwing off the superfluous ballast’ of features characteristic of a work that emphasised emotionality through a multiplicity of means and associations.

His [Fitelberg's] music is absolute, abstract music, devoid of all painterly, literary and programmatic elements. Listening to this music, one never has any kind of imaginative association, one does not see any images, nor does one hear any sounds of nature, ‘the sound of waves’ or ‘drops shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow’. [...] Fitelberg is the furthest away from the influence of French impressionism, which so often shaped at least in part the work of Polish contemporary composers. Likewise, Fitelberg's output is free of Romantic elements; it is far from any expression of private sentiments or personal moods. His compositions are in no way related to his intimate life; always full of verve, impetus and inner cheerfulness, they are pure music, a world apart for itself.<sup>134</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the musical content of Fitelberg's later works itself lacks a kind of expression. Yes, it is not expressed directly with words, as is the case in his youthful works, but it is linked to certain elements contained in the sound content, which should be described, following Tomaszewski, as “expressively ambiguous means”.<sup>135</sup> The easiest to identify would be the idiomatic associations emphasised by characteristic musical elements, such as fragments that evoke dance idiom (rhythm and accentuation), chorale idiom (texture and harmonics) or song idiom (cantilena and texture). Regardless of this, the construction of the form of the entire work or of the individual movements also carries a kind of emotional narrative understood as a set of tensions and releases present in the musical flow.

<sup>134</sup> E. Elsner, *Portrety kompozytorów współczesnych. Jerzy Fitelberg*, [in:] „Muzyka”, 1937, vol. XIV, no. 7-8, pp. 222.

<sup>135</sup> After: M. Tomaszewski, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego. Rekonesans*, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2000, pp. 43.



In preparing the recording of String Quartets No. 4 and No. 5, efforts have been made to be as faithful as possible to the musical text which is the object of the phenomenologically intentional<sup>136</sup>, Hence the expression contained in the Fitelberg Quartet's recording may appear reserved. Nevertheless, it follows the composer's directions in the score, trying to match the specific atmosphere of the composer's musical language of the 1930s and 1940s.

## **5. Issues in the editing and preparation of scores and voices of Jerzy Fitelberg's works for string quartet.**

The vast majority of Jerzy Fitelberg's compositions have survived in manuscripts. Of his works for string quartet, despite strenuous efforts and endeavours, only the *second* was published and is permanently available (as a print-on-demand) in the Universal Edition catalogue, being there a variant (sic!) of the *Concerto for string orchestra*. The largest collection of Fitelberg's works is in the NYPLA collection, where among his works for string quartet are: the manuscript of score and parts of *String Quartet No. 1*, a complete negative and two faded manuscripts of the score (without parts) of *String Quartet No. 3*, the complete score and parts of *String Quartet No. 4*, a pencil-drawn incomplete manuscript of the score of *String Quartet No. 5*, containing annotations and corrections in colour, and incomplete drafts of the manuscript of *String Quartet No. 6*. The complete source material for *String Quartet No. 5*, including the completed manuscript with parts, is in the collection of the University of Rochester Library. Another place where several of Jerzy Fitelberg's works can be found is in the Music Collection Cabinet of the BUW, which has in its archives, among others, the complete scores of *Quartets No. 3* and *No. 4*. In addition, a copy of *Quartet No. 3* (identical to the American negative version), has a dedication written in pencil on the title page:

To the Library of the Polish Composers' Union, with kind regards  
Tadeusz Kaczyński  
Warszawa, 5 June 1996

This is most likely the copy that, along with a number of his other works, Jerzy Fitelberg sent to Poland after the end of the war (possibly through Palester), hoping to publish them in print at PWM or perform them in his homeland. The manuscript of the score found its way into Kaczyński's collection most likely in connection with his research work on the SMMP. In

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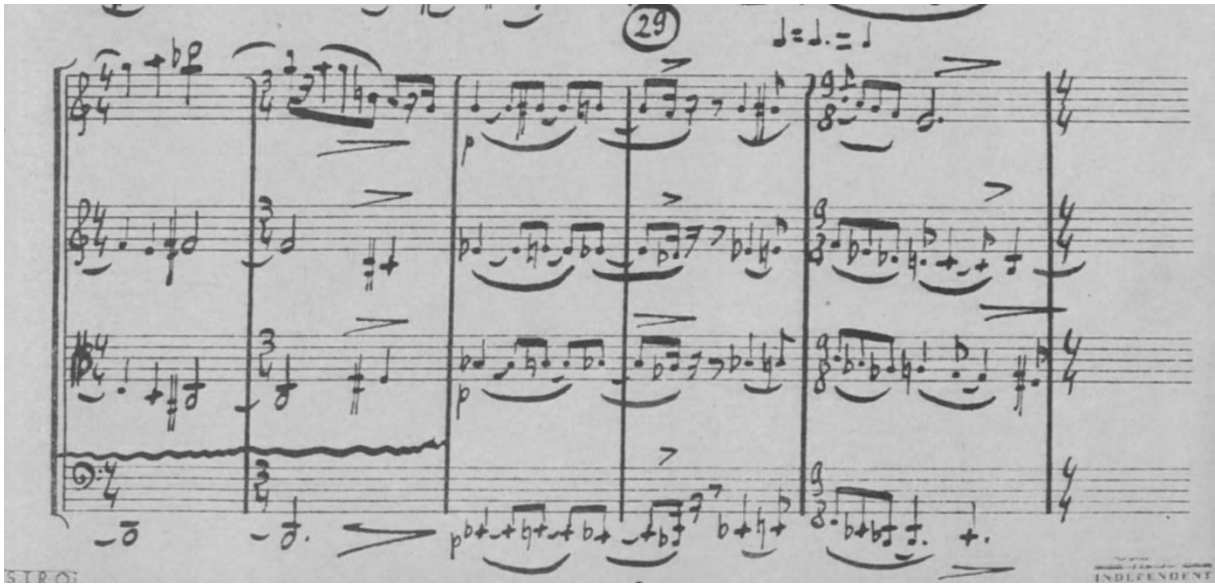
<sup>136</sup> Ibidem - On the score understood as an intentional object,

addition, the BUW archives contain scores of the orchestral version of *Quartet No. 5*, titled *Symphony for strings*, as well as his other chamber and orchestral compositions. All of the works of Jerzy Fitelberg collected at BUW are digitised and available to the public on a public domain basis, in view of the seventieth anniversary of the composer's death in 2021.

The score of *Quartet No. 6*, as mentioned, remain incomplete and its reconstruction from the surviving materials (intensely crossed out and difficult to decipher sketches) would be a highly complicated and time-consuming procedure. In the light of the composer's correspondence, it is known that the score and the voices were drawn up and distributed by him, hence subsequent research work on Fitelberg's oeuvre should focus on further searching for them.

The high level of difficulty of the musical material of Fitelberg's works, together with the composer's specific and not easy to read calligraphy, made it necessary to carry out a modernised edition of the score text. Within the scholarship granted by the Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage in 2021, the author of the present work undertook the project of compiling and editing Jerzy Fitelberg's scores for string quartet preserved in manuscript form, which are difficult to read and perform efficiently due to their specific calligraphy (*Fantasia Op. 9* and *Quartets Nos. 3, 4 and 5*). One more result of this project was a public presentation of 6 compositions by Jerzy Fitelberg for string quartet: 29 August 2021 in Krakow (*Quartets Nos. 1, 2 and 3*) and 19 March 2022 in Krakow (*Quartets Nos. 4 and 5* and *Fantasia Op. 9*), some of which were Polish premieres.

The notation made by Jerzy Fitelberg is very precise and did not require any major corrections on the technical aspect. Missing words and markings, which were omitted in the manuscript parts, but present in the score, have been filled in. Several rhythmic errors resulting from inadequate notation of values to metre have also been corrected. The most pronounced changes in relation to the manuscripts have been made in the enharmonic layer of the sounds, in order to make it easier to grasp individual scale progressions or a set of intervals in structures that are as intuitive as possible for a musician playing a string instrument. In a few cases (e.g. *Quartet No. 3*, Part 3 and *Quartet No. 4*, Variation 2), it was necessary to change the metre notation and the resulting transformation of the rhythmic values to the same ones in order to facilitate the performer's reading of the work. As a result, the reading of rhythmic values in relation to the course of the music and neighbouring bars was made easier.



**Example 31 - String quartet no. 4, var. II, vol. 287-291 - original composer's manuscript source.**

**Example 32 - String Quartet no. 4, var. II, bars 289-292 - enharmonic changes (bars 289-290) and change of metre (bar 291) from the original.**

The edition of *Quartets Nos. 3, 4 and 5* retains the score marking made by the composer, which is based on bar numbering (in the case of the Paris Quartets in decimal terms, i.e. t. 10 - no. 1, vol. 20 - no. 2, vol. 30 - no. 3, etc.; in the case of *Quartet no. 5* using the number of a particular bar).

The extraction of parts made it possible to significantly improve the reading and fluent performance of the pieces, especially in passages rich in dense textures or minor rhythmic values. The biggest difficulty in preparing the individual instrumental parts was selecting the

right places where the performer would have a moment to turn the page. Considering the varied options (a paper printout with different sheet combinations and a tablet displaying one page at a time) that musicians use when performing from sheet music, the assumption was made of the need to turn over each page of an individual voice. As a result, in the selected boundary bar for the juxtaposition of two pages<sup>137</sup> there is a break in the sound waveform. It takes the form of either a pause or a separation of the individual links. This treatment of tumbling has resulted in the ability to perform Fitelberg's quartets efficiently, both with the aid of displaying the notes on an electronic device (where the material is scrolled with a single click on the screen or the use of a special footswitch) and with traditional paper notes.

#### **IV. Characteristics of the musical language of Jerzy Fitelberg in his chamber works on the basis of *String Quartets No. 4* and *No. 5***

A comprehensive observation of Jerzy Fitelberg's works written for string quartet reveals a number of musical components which appear with great frequency and regularity in his chamber works written for this instrumental cast. The elements listed below, connected with many of the surfaces of Fitelberg's compositions, make up a peculiar set of compositional attributes which at the same time constitute a kind of idiomatycity of his musical language. Some of these elements are related to the influence of the artistic milieu changing around his persona, as well as to inspirations drawn from the achievements of artists he valued. Some are conquests of the musical language developed by himself, and some elements combine features of both the aforementioned levels.

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<sup>137</sup> This is either the last bar of the preceding page or the first bar of the following page.

# 1. Architectonics

## Formal models

The question of formal construction, which is ‘the result of the forces unleashed by the musical material itself’<sup>138</sup> from the perspective of all of Fitelberg's works, seems equivalent to his thinking and handling of the musical text.

[In Fitelberg's] works, the form-creating force is usually a motif with a clearly-defined line, mobile and energetic; this motif immediately introduces a certain tension into the work, from which the further course of the composition follows. This tension is augmented by the rhythmic, lively and energetic, often full of humour, sometimes even grotesque. In this way, a specific dynamism is created in the piece, a dynamism which, combined with a sense for structure, gives the work its resilience, compactness and energy. [...] The love for strictness of form [...] finds its particularly emphatic expression in the form of variations, that test of perfection of mastery of compositional technique, thematic work and ingenuity.<sup>139</sup>

Looking at Fitelberg's quartet output from a broader context, the greatest leap in development in terms of the way the cycle is constructed can be seen between the first and second quartets, when, after a work that was in fact a collection of 5 miniatures<sup>140</sup> he composes a fully integrated<sup>141</sup>, three-part cycle. Particularly in the later stages of his life, Fitelberg seems to be striving to expand his works to their largest size, not only by means of complicating and thickening their content, but also in terms of the complexity of their construction. Such an attitude is somewhat different from the trends present in the work of his neoclassical contemporaries, about whom Tadeusz Zygfryd Kassern wrote in 1936:

Contemporary music of recent times is characterised by [...] a tendency to express itself in forms that are as simple as possible. Observing the scores of the latest French (Milhaud, Roussel, Poulenc) or German (Hindemith) works, one notices... fewer and fewer notes. [...] New content in a clear, transparent form: this is the lasting achievement of modernism<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> R. Scruton, *Struktura muzyki atonalnej*, [in:] *Estetyka muzyki*, tr. Z. Skowron, PWM, Kraków 2004, pp. 419

<sup>139</sup> E. Elsner, *Portrety kompozytorów...* op. cit., pp. 223

<sup>140</sup> The first and fifth movements are exactly the same.

<sup>141</sup> In the concept of possessing the characteristics of a mature work, such as: the coherence of the cycle together with its clearly delineated structure, intensive development work, use of multiple compositional techniques, etc.

<sup>142</sup> T. Z. Kassern, *II audycja Państwowego Konserwatorium Muzycznego*, „Dziennik Poznański 78” (1936) no. 87, pp. 2, [in:] V. Kostka *Wpływ kultury muzycznej Paryża na twórczość Tadeusza Zygfryda Kasserna*, „Muzyka Polska za granicą” vol. 2 *Między Warszawą a Paryżem (1918-1939)*, ed. B. Bolesławska-Lewandowska, Jolanta Guzy-Pasiak, ISPAN, Warszawa 2019, pp. 122.

Fitelberg was evidently inspired by the work of Bartók, whose string quartets reached a relatively large size and a high degree of development of the musical material. Fitelberg's last two quartets and the issue of simplifying their construction seem to fit into a certain symptomatic pattern of a 'return to roots' and a softening of experimental tendencies, which, according to Mieczysław Tomaszewski's theory of the nodal points in the life of an artist, noticeably often occurs in the final periods of an individual composer's oeuvre. However, in the context of the prematurely deceased Fitelberg, can we speak of such a life phase? In this case, one must take into account the critical time of the Second World War, the difficulty of subsequent emigration after the relative stabilisation of life in Paris and the need to adapt to the post-war requirements of the musical environment. A peculiar phenomenon of adaptation to American trends and the consequent simplification of means can be seen in the works of Bartók and Schönberg, among others. In the case of Fitelberg, such a process can most easily be seen in the simplification of the construction of his works and, to some extent, in the slight simplification of the melodic and harmonic layer.

Certain preferences remained constant throughout his life, best exemplified by the presence of the variation technique which was clearly his favourite way of constructing form. He used this way of shaping the structure of a piece on many levels using both the direct name of the link or the work: *'The Golden Harp' - Variations on a Polish Folk Song* for string orchestra, *Quartet No. 4* (entire work), *Quartet No. 5* (2nd movement), *Sonatina* for two violins (2nd movement), *Concerto* for Clarinet and Orchestra (2nd movement), as well as in the author's descriptions of the compositions: *Quartet No. 3* (entire work), *Violin Concerto No. 2* (each movement bearing the signs of the use of this technique), or *Nocturne* for orchestra (entire work).

## **Texture**

The dominant texture type in Fitelberg's quartets is the heterogeneous (differentiated) type, where as the most frequent construction one can point to the conducting of two independent textural plans (melorhythmic layers) simultaneously. Characteristic of such a structure in Fitelberg's quartets is the leading of each plan by two instruments in octave amplification or multiples of this interval.



**Example 33 - *Quartet No. 4, var. 1, vol. 85-95* - an example of voice pairing**

The predominant arrangement of pairs is the juxtaposition of first and second violins opposite the viola with the cello. Occasionally, the composer groups the first violin with the viola facing the second violin with the cello. An arrangement of voices with a similar frequency of occurrence is the pairing of the first violin with cello opposite the second violin with viola. The duplicated voices are not always carried out in an identical course of the melody, as the composer sometimes introduces various kinds of derogations between coinciding melodic lines.

Another method of texture construction in the heterogeneous type, appearing incidentally in quartets (most often in slow tempo sections), draws on the principles of homophony and manifests itself through the parallel conduct of thematic (leading) and accompaniment layers. The method of conducting musical material in octave doubling has been encountered in chamber music since the dawn of its genre. According to Danuta Gwizdalanka, this

phenomenon was used very often, serving both to expose the architectonic elements and the sound qualities<sup>143</sup>.

Very rarely does Fitelberg reach for homogeneous (homogeneous) texture, which appears only in short sections. In *Quartet No. 4*, such fragments are focused on introducing rhythmization that contrasts with neighboring sections and exposing irregular accentuation. In *Quartet No. 5*, on the other hand, fragments using this texture are coupled with moments of buildup (movement I) or discharge (finale) of climaxes



**Example 34 - *String Quartet No. 4*, var. 7, bars 798-805 - homonymous texture**



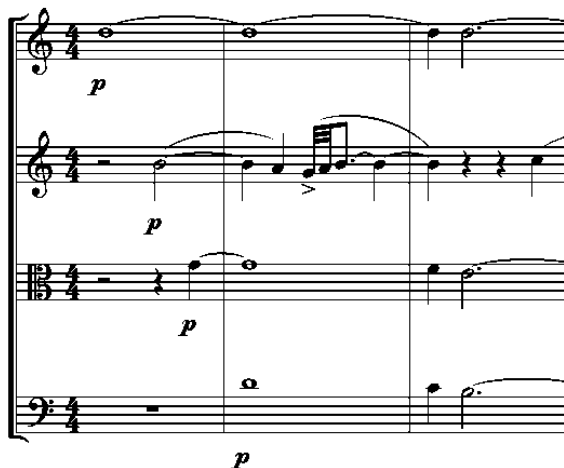
**Example 35 - *String Quartet No. 5*, Part I, bars 171-173 - homogeneous texture**

<sup>143</sup> D. Gwizdalanka, *Brzmienie kwartetów smyczkowych Ludwika van Beethovena*, Nakom, Poznań 1991, s. 25.

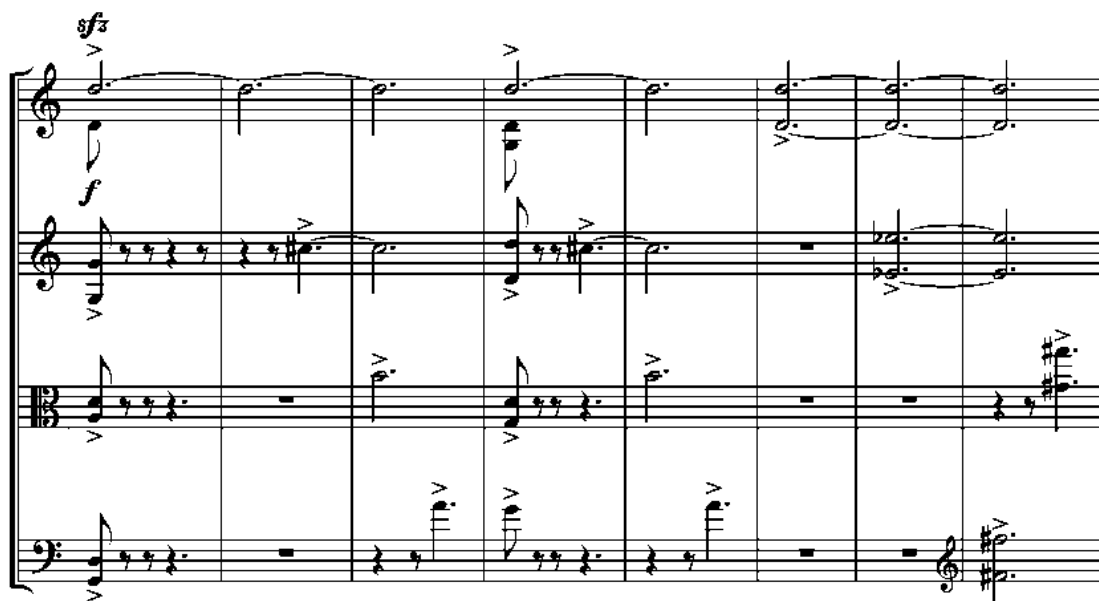


An exception to the above-mentioned way of structuring the texture is the theme of *String Quartet No. 4*, conducted for the first five bars of the piece in unison of all four instruments, which stems from the desire to emphasize its motivic function of an invocative nature.

One of Fitelberg's frequently used procedures for constructing texture is chord building, undoubtedly a way of treating voices polyphonically. This happens most often (but not exclusively) in slow tempo sections, and involves introducing sounds sequentially in each instrument until a chord is created.



**Example 36 - *String Quartet No. 5*, mvt II, bars 1-3 - building up a chord in G major in a relaxed tempo (Andante)**



**Example 37 - *String quartet No. 3*, mvt III, bars 374-381 - multi-tone building in fast tempo (Presto)**

## 2. Melodics

The melodic specificity of Jerzy Fitelberg's compositions for string quartet has noticeably evolved over the course of his creative life. While the relative simplicity of thematic constructions contained within clear homophonic and polyphonic textures (the fourth movement of *Quartet No. 1* may be an exception here) clearly dominates in works written while he was still in Berlin, as if following the aesthetic ideas of neoclassicism, his works from later periods saw a considerable complexity of melodic material with a simultaneous expansion of the architectonics of the works. The range of melodic characters in Fitelberg's works is very wide, extending from predatory and brutal to seemingly lyrical and cantilena-like.

When considering Fitelberg's ways of conducting melodic lines, one can see the emphasis on two main tendencies. The first is the use of second sound progressions in different directions (ascending, descending or mixed), abbreviated in this work as scale progressions. In quartets from the Berlin period, such runs are most often based on the construction of a scale (a schematic arrangement of intervals), usually having a setting in a particular key. In later works (the Paris and New York stages), it is very difficult to unambiguously indicate any tonal connotations of these tone series, whose components do not have a uniform interval construction and are most often based on a scale arranged by the composer for the needs of a given motif.

The second melodic tendency present in Fitelberg's quartets is to base themes or phrases on constructions composed of interval leaps, which, as a rule, do not have any tonal gravity, while not constituting a series in the dodecaphonic understanding<sup>144</sup>. Within this tendency, one can notice two directions taken by the composer: the first, in which the construction is based on a free choice of intervals, and the second, rarer, where the composer operates with a narrow range of distances of his choosing (an example is the first theme of the first movement of *String Quartet No. 5*).

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. quote. pp. 31.



**Example 38 - *Quartet No. 5*, mvt I, bars 38-40 - melodic line based on the composer's own interval system**

The main theme of *String Quartet No. 4* brilliantly illustrates the fusion of these two tendencies, where the first bars first operate the structure of interval leaps, and in turn use the construction of scale progression.

**Tema con variazioni**  
**Allegro** ♩ = 120

**Example 39 - *Quartet No. 4*, Principal Theme, bars 1-6 - a fusion of two ways of conducting the melodic line (leaping and scale passages)**

### 3. Agogics

In the chamber works of Jerzy Fitelberg, one can notice a very precise indication of the tempo of individual links or passages by means of metronome markings. In his mature quartets, too, Fitelberg does this consciously, although in many cases the agogic values he indicates prove

very difficult to maintain in relation to the complex sound content. However, there are episodes in which the composer, by giving a gently extended tempo range, allows the performers to choose the most appropriate one. Fitelberg's freedom in interpreting agogic changes is left (with few exceptions) to the extent of graded accelerations or decelerations, i.e. by giving a verbal term (*accelerando*, *avvivando*, *ritardando*, *meno*, *poco meno mosso*, etc.) without indicating the target metronomic value of tempo.

#### 4. Rhythm and metre

In terms of rhythmic organization, Fitelberg's mature string quartets present a wide range of structures and constructions, from completely simple to very condensed and highly complex.

The orderly organization of time is apparently of great importance to the composer. Indeed, in extreme cases it manifests itself in the desire to control and specify the breathing time, rendered by means of annotated pauses, which the composer not infrequently does by extending the bar with additional rhythmic value. In the example shown below, in addition to the issue of adding breath, the particular procedure also clearly indicates the introduction of an element of surprise instead of the expected climax of the passage.

**Example 40 - *Quartet no. 4*, var. 3, bars 450-452 - added rhythmic value that changes meter**

Ostinato structures are relatively rare. Their most frequent occurrence is in the finale of *String Quartet No. 5*, where, being an essential element of the accompaniment, they are motivically subordinate to the theme.

Polymetry is extremely rare, appearing for short segments in *String Quartet No. 3* (part III - central link) and *String Quartet No. 5* (part III - final link), and most likely serves to organize rhythmic values in accordance with the concept of pulsation devised by the composer. However, these fragments combining different meters may make it difficult to read the instrumental voice in relation to the other parts, and their preparation for performance would come off much easier if, while preserving the meter of the earlier course, they had an adequate notation of the irregular division of rhythmic values.

With regard to the frequent use of certain rhythmic structures, one may be tempted to try to list a few such figures, most often used by the composer. Among them should be pointed out punctuated rhythms, which due to their specific expressiveness, often emphasized by accents, are a distinctive component of the thematic material or are used for form-making purposes. Another structure that occurs frequently in Fitelberg's music is the pairing of irregular and regular rhythms, such as eighth-note triplets against four sixteenths. In passages with particularly dense texture, it happens that the composer also adds a third rhythmic plane, usually operating with longer notes.

The musical score for Example 41 shows four staves of music. The first staff is in 8/8 time, marked 'p', and contains eighth-note triplets. The second staff is in 8/8 time, marked 'pizz.', and contains eighth-note groups. The third staff is in 8/8 time, marked 'mf', and contains eighth-note groups. The fourth staff is in 8/8 time, marked 'mf', and contains eighth-note groups. The score transitions to 4/4 time in the second measure. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth-note triplets, sixteenth-note groups, and longer notes, illustrating the overlapping of various rhythmic groups.

**Example 41 - *Quartet No. 4*, var. 3, bars 423-424 - overlapping of various rhythmic groups**

## 5. Harmonics

Growing up in an era of tonality crisis, Fitelberg was exposed to many aspects of implementing harmonic plans. His extensive experience as a performer, copyist and, above all, a listener, also undoubtedly influenced the aspect of his musical language under discussion. While in Fitelberg's earlier works for string quartet tonality is emphasized, for example, through the use of key marks, from Quartet No. 2 onward he uses only adjacent marks. In that work, traces of functional harmony and its gestures (especially in the central link) play one of the most important roles in the course of the music. In his later works for string quartet, such harmony seems to disappear into the background, often becoming a result of linear voice conducting or the composer's desired arrangement of intervals, subsumed by a specific musical idea. Reducing the number of voices to two plans, often used by Fitelberg, provides an opportunity to expose rhythmic and melodic structures or their compilation, significantly reducing the importance of harmonics. Most often, such octave doubling allows the composer to achieve "amplification of the same series of aliquots, adding brilliance and strength to the sound"<sup>145</sup>.

When polyphony appears in works from the Paris and New York stages, Fitelberg relatively rarely uses pure major or minor chords. As already mentioned, it is even rarer to find traditional (understood as functional) combinations of consonances. Triads appear occasionally, usually to mark the end of longer phrases, sections or whole movements..

Example 42 - *Quartet No. 5*, mvt II, bars 445-448 - completion of the middle link

<sup>145</sup> D. Gwizdalanka, *Brzmienie...*, op. cit, pp. 26

In the above example, the movement ends with a modalizing cadential phrase. Most often, however, consonant chords or their short sequences emerge from an intricate melodic structure, often highly chromatized. In that case, they do not provide a clear and logical purpose to the preceding harmonic structure. For all intents and purposes, if one were to stop the music at any point before the cadential turn in the last bar cited above, it is difficult to suppose that any listener would guess that a G major chord would soon emerge. Similar ways of bringing a broader musical thought or longer section to a climax in Fitelberg's works can be found more.

## **6. Timbre**

### **Articulation**

In terms of timbral articulation, the composer adopts a traditional approach, showing a limited use of only conventional methods of sound extraction for string instruments (arco and pizzicato). In the scores of Fitelberg's quartets, in addition to the standard use of pizzicato, there are episodes in which its introduction is of a unique character (arpeggios), evoking the idiomaticity of ragged chordophones on the one hand, and contrasting the co-led sound plans on the other. Sometimes the composer, by using the “+” sign, suggests the extraction of a sound using a string plucking with the finger of the left hand. He uses such a procedure in places where there is little space for quick use of the right hand in this technique. Crucially from a narrative point of view, pizzicatos do not in any way take a leading thematic or motivic role.

A distinctive and most common medium of articulation in Fitelberg's chamber music are accents. In fast-tempo and brisk sections, they are not infrequently meticulously notated at each note of a given passage, giving rise to the assignment of this articulation a significant role in the interpretive context. In the case of passages with a slow tempo, accents are also frequently used, but nevertheless serve to emphasize a particular consonance or motif relevant to the current musical flow.



**Example 43 - *Quartet no. 4, var. I, bars 54-56***

This type of accenting is most apparent in works from the Paris and New York periods. In opposition to the above, the use of voices in slow tempo movements with frequent use of sound combinations seems to be a conventional way of treating such phrases, drawing much from the tradition of the genre.

The composer makes very infrequent use of flageolets, which in fact only appear in secondary plans. Moreover, there are only natural harmonics. This is most likely due to the sophisticated and often idiomatic timbre of this mode of sound production, which in most passages would stand apart from the character of the 'violent' musical runs. The glissando appears only occasionally in *Quartet No. 3* and is used by the composer for timbral and textural purposes, with the primary purpose of thickening the course of the music with an additional timbral effect. The issue of vibrato finds no particular emphasis in the composer's notation. The only example of drawing attention to this aspect occurs in the second movement of *Quartet No. 5*, when he twice orders the voices executing the chordal accompaniment plan to play *senza vibrato* (without vibrato). Interestingly, he does not cancel this guideline with the designation *con vibrato* (with vibrato), but *modo ordinario* (naturally), thus giving a valuable indication of the presence of vibrato in his music as an element of the customary way of performing sounds on string instruments.

Compared to several of the previously mentioned sound production techniques, one encounters tremolo articulation much more frequently in Fitelberg's quartets. It should be mentioned, however, that this effect appears in his works in two ways of notation. The first,



appearing more frequently, is the conventional notation (characteristic marking of diagonal beams on the staff of the note). The second way, on the other hand, takes the form of written rhythmic values on a single note, which in the context of a very fast tempo resonate with the tremolo effect - this type occurs in the movements of the final quartets *No. 2* and *No. 5*.

Interestingly, the composer does not use sound techniques unique to string instruments but commonly exploited by his contemporaries, such as *flautando*, *sul ponticello*, *sul tasto* or *col legno*. He also omits *bariolage* and *col punto d'arco* techniques, emblematic of quartet music from the Classical and Romantic eras. Fitelberg, on the other hand, was clearly sensitive to the timbral differences between the sound of the strings (C, G, D, A, E) played as open or fingered. There are sections where the composer uses the circle sign to indicate the necessity of the sound of the empty/open string rather than its fingered substitute. Similarly, by means of a letter name, he sometimes prescribes the playing of a string of his choice.

### **Dynamics**

The diapason of dynamic terms used by Fitelberg is relatively narrow for such a complex sound matter as that found in his string quartets, as it is limited to the range from *pianissimo* (*pp*) to *fortissimo* (*ff*). He not infrequently uses additional terms such as *sf*, *sfz* (*sforzando*), *fp* (*forte-piano*) and *sp* (*subito piano*). Interestingly, in his quartets (not counting the youthful *Fantasia Op. 9*), the composer makes the use of dampers only once, when it occurs throughout the entire passage of the fourth movement of *Quartet No. 3*. In this particular case, the effect is intended to enhance the timbral-dynamic contrast between the twin second movements of this work.

Of Fitelberg's five quartets, only the work numbered fourth ends with an episode (epilogue) which, by slowing down the impulsive musical narrative through a slowing tempo, simplifying and lengthening rhythmic values and increasingly lower gradations of dynamics, closes the work in tranquillity. Fitelberg's other works for string quartet are crowned in loud dynamics with a vigorous and motoric motif of homogeneous melorhythmic construction.

### **Register**

Jerzy Fitelberg's compositional richness is revealed not only in the architecture of his works for string quartet. In terms of the use of conventionally produced sounds on instruments, his quartet music is characterised by a very wide range, especially towards the high pitches. Conducting the narrative in opposing registers (a combination of extreme and distant registers) appears relatively frequently in his work and serves primarily to heighten the power

of the sound in forte passages, as well as to create the impression of a wide sound space in non-climactic passages. The highest notes are usually reached by means of a gamut march, which makes it much easier to reach and correctly intonate the less intuitive notes in terms of fingering. Only occasionally does the composer instruct the performers to finger in the high registers of the low strings to achieve their brightened sound. However, in the vast majority of the musical material, he leaves the performers free to play their preferred strings.

## V. Conclusions

In many ways, the life and work of Jerzy Fitelberg is a striking example of hard-working, uncompromising artistic attitude and determination in writing ambitious music. His artistic activity - the means he uses, the way he constructs his pieces, or even the phrases he formulates in the context of his own music - demonstrates an anti-Romantic attitude, whereby 'romantic individualism was contrasted with the collective self, emotionality with intellect, and spontaneous, "inspired" creativity with craftsmanship'.<sup>146</sup>.



**Illustration 11 - Jerzy Fitelberg - photo from ISCM festival catalogue 1946**

Fitelberg seems to regard his way of creating music as a synthesis of craftsmanship and creative intelligence. Especially his chamber works for string quartet emphasise the entrusting of primacy to the technical and formal qualities of composition:

In this formal, structural, matter-of-fact nature of Fitelberg's works, devoid of any personal, affectionate element, his true affiliation with contemporary music is revealed.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Z. Helman, *Muzyka Polska między...*, op. cit., pp. 20.

<sup>147</sup> E. Elsner, *Portrety kompozytorów...* op. cit, pp. 223

Evidently, his works, particularly the chamber works, testify to his expert mastery of all aspects of the compositional craft at a very young age. In the later stages of his life, he was more in search of creative development in the field of formal or structural aspects, while experiments with a harmonic language derived from dodecaphony were evidently considered pointless. Taking into account the timbral aspects mentioned in this section, a kind of ambivalence towards the perception of timbre can be observed in Fitelberg's music for string quartet. He does not use certain techniques or treats them marginally, while others constitute the indispensable essence of his style and compositional character. In his quartets, he does not seem to have searched for special or even more innovative ways of sounding the ensemble of string instruments, focusing primarily on questions of both melorhythmic and formal construction and on developing his own language by mixing various compositional techniques. The features of his music fit into the characteristics of the neo-classical sonoristic current identified by Maria Piotrowska, which, alongside parodicism, is one of the two dominant creative attitudes of 20th century neoclassicism<sup>148</sup>. The music set in this trend is characterised above all by the relative complexity of texture and form, the great importance of polyphony, the sonoristic transformation of sound achieved through 'the superposition of active, chromatically saturated proximal and distal planes', the processual principle of development resulting from the processing of material through the use of 'reliable means of traditional provenance'<sup>149</sup>.

The time of Jerzy Fitelberg's greatest creative activity in Europe was during the fifteen years preceding the Second World War. At that time, his oeuvre, set in the sonorist current, stood in strong opposition to French parodicism, clearly dominant among Polish composers who had experienced education in Paris. Unambiguously defining the place that Fitelberg's oeuvre could occupy in the overview of Polish neoclassicism is a difficult task, requiring deeper comparative research with the contemporary works of other native composers. Not only because of generational considerations, but above all because of his creative attitude and the very high level of his composing technique, his quartet output should be placed as one of the next steps in the development of Polish quartet music after the works of Szymanowski, and before the aleatoric quartet of Lutosławski. The similarity of the development and the focus on the field of chamber music (including the number of string quartets) place him alongside Grażyna Bacewicz. However, Fitelberg in principle 'preceded' the achievements of this

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<sup>148</sup> M. Piotrowska, *Neoklasycyzm w muzyce XX wieku*, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, Warszawa 1982, pp. 73

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem, pp. 79

female composer, who undoubtedly created her first works in the aesthetics of *sérénité*, orienting herself towards the sonorist current only in the second half of the 1950s. Due to the close relationship often mentioned in this work, the shared view of art and the partial similarity of musical language, Fitelberg's chamber works should also be placed next to the oeuvre of Roman Palester.

Fitelberg's legacy, which contains a number of fascinating works, completes the overview of Polish neoclassicism with yet another branch of creativity somewhat different from the dominant trends. Among Polish composers in the field of chamber music, he was one of the earliest to approach the aesthetics and models drawn from the achievements of Bela Bartók, and this without explicitly referring to folklore inspirations. In the inter-war period, like Józef Koffler or Karol Rathaus, he remained essentially a creative outsider, dedicated to composing individualised absolute music and perfecting it technically. His partly non-conformist attitude towards the dominant trends in 20th-century classical music did not bring the Polish émigré composer post-war fame on either side of the Iron Curtain. The fact of his emigration on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean effectively prevented his work from returning to the concert space of countries where cultural activity was controlled from the Kremlin. Fitelberg's unequivocal rejection of stylistic currents derived from dodecaphony, which largely dominated the world of music after 1950, and his pigeonholing as a 'neo-classical composer' similarly made his output relatively unattractive to subsequent generations. It is only nowadays that this highly valuable music is slowly being unearthed from the depths of archives and the circle of oblivion.

## Ending

This thesis summarises a stage of research around my interests and related explorations into the figure and work of the forgotten composer Jerzy Fitelberg. This activity intertwines the experiences of a music researcher, composer, arranger and, above all, an active instrumentalist-performer. My fascination with the figure and works of Jerzy Fitelberg resulted in a modernised edition of scores of some of his works for string quartet, a premiere recording of two of them, and also a contribution to the creation of a monograph on the composer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the creation of the CD containing the premiere recordings of String Quartets No. 4 and No. 5, as well as the contents of this dissertation. I would like to give special thanks to my Supervisor, Professor Bogusława Hubisz-Sielska, Ph.D., who, together with her spouse, Professor Mariusz Sielski, Ph.D., has continuously supported my artistic and professional development. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the management and staff of the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków for the opportunity to pursue my education at the Academy's doctoral school. Huge thanks for their invaluable contribution to the recording and presentation of Fitelberg's works goes to the musicians collaborating with me on this project: Aleksander Daszkiewicz, Fabio Salmeri and Jakub Gajownik, as well as the co-producers and directors of the recording: Jan Jarnicki and Kacper Żarna. This recording of Fitelberg's works could not have taken place without the appreciation and trust placed in my endeavours by the management of the National Institute of Music and Dance, together with the members of the committees assessing grant and fellowship applications. I owe a special thanks to Tomasz Sowa for his enormous contribution in helping me with the logistics of the CD production project. I would like to thank Professor Ewa Wójtowicz and Dr Paulina Zgliniecka-Hojda very much for the powerful amount of valuable comments, guidance and hints on the text of this thesis. I would also like to thank my entire family and all my supportive friends, especially Gabrielle Scholz and Michael Bosbach for constantly motivating me during the completion of the thesis and recordings. Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife Agnieszka, thanks to whom I was able to realise the entire work without worrying too much about the private sphere of our lives.

Without a doubt, the music of Jerzy Fitelberg poses many difficulties both in the process of preparation, the moment of presentation and in the reception. For some performers it may

seem that the effect will be disproportionate to the effort required to prepare his pieces. Nevertheless, this is a superficial impression, as in the 21st century a large number of music lovers undoubtedly appreciate the artistry of this music and its high artistic value, which is partly evidenced by the positive reviews of the recordings of Fitelberg junior's works that have been made so far. This is ambitious music for ambitious performers and ambitious listeners, in need of further promotion and publicity..

## Annex:

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## Abbreviations used in the work:

- AKP – Archiwum Kompozytorów Polskich [Polish Composers Archive]
- AMKP – Akademia Muzyczna im. Krzysztofa Pendereckiego w Krakowie [Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków]
- BUW – Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [University of Warsaw Library]
- ISCM – International Society for Contemporary Music
- KMWK – Komisja Międzynarodowej Wymiany Koncertów [Permanent Commission for International Exchange Concerts]
- NYPLA – The New York Public Library of Arts
- PWM – Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne [Polish Music Publishers]
- SMMP – Stowarzyszenie Młodych Muzyków Polaków w Paryżu [Association of Young Polish Musicians in Paris]

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