

AdNaan by Jacek Grudzień: An Intermedia Performance

Monika Karwaszewska, PhD, Hab.

Poland, Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk

e-mail: mon-kar@wp.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6455-0421



Abstract

The musical piece *AdNaan* by the contemporary Polish composer Jacek Grudzień was written in 2002 for solo cello and tape, specially commissioned by the accomplished cellist Andrzej Bauer.

The composer's intent was to create a work that would be a certain reflection on the sound landscape surrounding us. *AdNAAN* thus belongs in the so-called ecological music and related concept of *soundscape* formulated by Raymond Murray Schafer. Besides the sound signal, the main musical information carrier, an essential role in this work is fulfilled by the space from which the sounds come. The elements of the

soundscape (a recited excerpt from Prospero's monologue from Shakespeare's *Tempest* and passages from Lenten songs recorded in a church in Warsaw) and cello sounds have been recorded on audio tape and digitally manipulated. The piece received a recommendation by the UNESCO International Composers' Tribune in Vienna, gaining world renown as a result.

Currently, new interpretations of this piece are being made, e.g. with solo accordion. The accordion variant of this composition is recorded in the 5.1 surround sound system. To create this version of the work, the tape part was processed by a sound engineer in a recording studio. The instrumentalist recorded the accordion part, to which the sound engineer added several layers of live electronics. The sound engineer used special sound effects that caused the accordion tone colour to blend with tape for a uniform sound of the whole.

The subject of studies and analyses will be the electro-acoustic work *AdNaan* in both its versions.

The composition in its original version, in turn, has become the inspiration for an intermedia performance art.

Key words: intermediality, polish contemporary art and music, body

movement, music choreography, virtual reality, generative music, electroacoustic music

1. The object of study. Jacek Grudzień and *AdNaan*

A Polish composer born in 1961, he collaborates with the Polish Radio Experimental Studio and is mainly associated with theatre and film music.

Grudzień learned composition under the direction of Włodzimierz Kotoński and piano improvisation under Szabolcs Esztényi at the Academy of Music in Warsaw (currently the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw). Though his family had musical traditions, it was thanks to the distinguished improviser that Jacek Grudzień decided to study composition. The moment of meeting Esztényi may be considered, to borrow Mieczysław Tomaszewski's concept of nodal points in the life of the composer, as 'the moment of the first crucial meeting' [9, 10]. Between 1986 and 1987, as part of the scholarship funded by Witold Lutosławski, Grudzień studied electronic music in Barry Anderson's studio. His compositions are inspired by minimal music, repetitive technique, electronics and new digital technologies (including virtual synthesizers). The composer points to Gagliarde (1996) as the pivotal point in his work, his first composition written for a string quartet, one of the more difficult ensembles. The premiere was given by Kwartet Wilanowski during Warszawskie Spotkania Muzyczne (Warsaw Musical Meetings).

The subject of analysis is the electroacoustic work *AdNaan* that received the UNESCO Composer's Tribune

recommendation in Vienna and gained world renown. The solo cello and tape version of this composition, commissioned by the excellent cellist Andrzej Bauer, was created in the summer of 2002. Apart from this version, others with viola and accordion were created, the tape part being unchanged. The composer suggests the use of amplified instruments during the performance, which will fully convey his artistic idea. The composition, in its original version, provided inspiration to create intermedia performance art.

AdNaan, as the composer revealed, is a name of one of the angels. The title does not carry any underlying message of the content of this work. It is, however, an essential element in choreographing the work.

2. Methodology

While attempting to analyse and interpret the ambiguous work by Jacek Grudzień, one may refer to the concept of literary stylization formulated by Stanisław Balbus. 'Stylization', according to the author, 'best and most vividly emphasizes [...] the character of any intertextual phenomena, i.e. intertextual and inter-stylistic relationships' [1]. Translatable to this composition are certain Balbus's intertextual strategies related to intertextual passivity, such as 'overt imitation', where 'intertextual relationships are subordinated to the subject-informative functions present and, as inter-semiotic gestures, neutralized' [1]. In his *AdNaan*, the composer alluded to old styles, genre principles and excerpts from works by other composers, at the same time revealing the evocation of his own pattern and original style.

The composition is also a certain reflection on the soundscape that surrounds us. *AdNaan* thus belongs to the so-called ecological music and the related concept of soundscape by Raymond Murray Schafer. Besides the sound signal that is the main transmitter of musical information, the space whence the sounds come fulfils an essential role in the work. The elements of the soundscape (a recited excerpt from Prospero's monologue from Act 4, excerpts from Lenten songs recorded in a church in Warsaw) and the sounds of the cello were recorded on tape and digitally manipulated.

3. Projection of tape and sound source

The tape part that accompanies the soloist (regardless of instrument) in this piece is unchangeable and is notated only as an audio track. The sound sources for creating the tape part were regular cello sounds performed and recorded by Andrzej Bauer, who selected the excerpts (ranging from one note to whole motifs) located in the score intended for the soloist [4]. Besides the sounds of the cello, the composer used excerpts from Lenten songs heard and recorded in a church in Warsaw as well as an excerpt from Prospero's monologue from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our life is rounded with a sleep', recited by the composer's friend Owen Leech.

The audio samples used as building blocks were then processed by the composer using the *Cubase* computer software and compiled into a patchwork whole. Due to these manipulations, despite the use of only one sound

generator, the final result is a polygenic material and thus an intermedia work. This intermedia artefact is created by different media, such as the electronic medium (tape part) and amplified acoustic instrument. As a result of media hybridization, a composition is created in which the process itself is viewed as a basic medium for creative expression. It is worth noting at this point that 'Intermediality does not mean either the sum of various media concessions or the placement of particular works among the media, but the integration of aesthetic concepts of particular media in the form of a new media context' [7].

The projection of the tape is straightforward. When playing the tape, one needs to set the temporal ratios, sound level and, if need be, the reverb effect. The composer, wanting to achieve the desired effect of strict, canonic imitation, used various effects offered by a virtual synthesizer.

4. From a conductus to an intermedia song

Both the piece and its music material were created intuitively. The composer did not give this work any specific musical form or genre in advance, yet he mentions alluding to the medieval conductus. One may presume that the material recorded on tape functions as a cantus firmus typical of conductus. As a result, a framework is created with juxtaposed various – in terms of material and style – structural ideas that mark the phases of the piece. Particular phases are separated by a section that returns in altered variants, fulfilling the role of a refrain like in a rondo.

AdNaan takes the form of an intermedia multi-part verse-refrain song, where in

each verse the composer presents a different type of music material. The composer achieved multi-part texture through multi-track recording. The composition thus resembles a palimpsest structure and may be based on 'comparing poetics which are based on semiological criteria characteristic of a given medium' [8].

Refrain (A) – a fast, motive passage employing repetitive technique. It includes four different – melodically-rhythmically and metrically – sections which become the basis for the structure of individual variants of the refrain (A₁, A₂, A₃, A₄; see Photo 1). Each of them uses, however, a distinctive ostinato figure and its variants. The final refrain (A4) takes the form of a coda. In the electronic layer that accompanies the soloist's repetitive motifs, the composer introduces sound effects to imitate the sound of a folk band.



Photo 1. J. Grudzień, AdNaan, Refrain (A) by kind permission of Jacek Grudzień

The first verse (B) is based on a melodious, cantilena-style theme in the solo part, transformed with the use of the technique of imitation. The tape part imitates the excerpts from the theme played by the soloist, producing an echo effect. The theme, due to its original

rhythmic pattern, resembles the tango rhythm (see Photo 2).



Photo 2. J. Grudzień, AdNaan, Verse (B) by kind permission of Jacek Grudzień

The second verse (C) includes exclusively electronic sounds from the tape part. In terms of style, this verse alludes to electronic sound generation techniques used in actively developed popular music genres such as hip hop or rap. A detailed analysis of the sound effects and technologies used for this verse shows an example of intra-compositional, covert intermediality, as defined by Werner Wolf's typology of intermedia relations [12]. One of the media used is obvious (the electronic medium, the tape part), while the other is alleged in 'signalling in the artefact a potential presence of imitation of outside media structures and techniques' [11]. In this case, the alleged medium will be the imitating on the cello (electronically modified) of the sound generating techniques used by hip hop performers and DJs, such as looping, sampling or scratching. This explicit reference to modern techniques in popular music provided the basis for a metaphorical intermedia discourse in this phase of the piece.

The third verse (B₁) alludes, in terms of music material, to verse B. In the tape part, the composer used a texture reminiscent of the pointillism of the 1950s. This audio track is the background that accompanies the cello

theme played first in the form of improvised 'out of tune' glissando intervals, then in its original form like in verse B (see Photo 3).



Photo 3. J. Grudzień, *AdNaan*, Verse (B₁) by kind permission of Jacek Grudzień

The fourth verse (D) uses new material to be improvised on and performed *rubato*. In this phase Jacek Grudzień alludes to folk music, quoting original and electronically modified motifs of a Lenten song. In addition, the ending of this phase features a playback of an excerpt from Prospero's monologue from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. With this ending, the composition reaches its culmination, which is then resolved in the final phase of the refrain. Grudzień achieves this culmination in both parts by a progressive increase in the level of dynamics, rhythmic diminution and acceleration of musical action in the electronic medium, as well as by the upward glissandos performed by the soloist (see Photo 4).



Photo 4. J. Grudzień, *AdNaan*, Verse (D) by kind permission of Jacek Grudzień

The following is the large-scale structure of the piece:

a (bars 1-14) tape introduction [time: 0'00" – 0'33"]

A (bars 15-28) [time: 0'34" – 1'30"]

B (bars 29-48) [time: 1'31" – 2'17"]

A₁ (bars 49-57) [time: 2'18" – 2'32"]

C (bars 58-69) tape part [time: 2'33" – 2'59"]

A₂ (bars 70-77) [time: 3'00" – 3'19"]

B₁ (bars 78-95) [time: 3'20" – 4'02"]

A₃ (bars 96-98) [time: 4'03" – 4'06"]

D (bars 99-138) [time: 4'07" – 5'19"]

A₄ (bars 139-164) [time: 5'20" – 6'30"]

5. From generative art to live performance art

Jacek Grudzień's *AdNaan*, due to the sources of sound used, belongs to generative art which, according to Philip Galanter, 'refers to any art practice where the artist uses a system, such as a set of natural language rules, a computer program, a machine, or other procedural invention, which is set into motion with some degree of autonomy contributing to or resulting in a completed work of art' [3].

The version for accordion, created in a recording studio, uses additional sound generators and latest studio technologies. The audio track of the tape was spatially processed using compression and psychoacoustic processors by a professional sound engineer, Dariusz Mazurowski, to adapt the electronic sound to the one of the accordion. In this way, amplification, better clarity and spatiality of sound were achieved. Mazurowski added several layers of live electronics to the audio tracks of tape and accordion, the task of the former being to blend the soloist's timbre with the sounds recorded on tape. The accordion part was recorded in the studio using a special array of six microphones and mixed to the 5.1 standard (the placement of the speakers being front, centre, sides and top). The recordings, as reported by Mazurowski, 'were being manipulated and saturated by means of a series of

special processors and, finally, each track was placed in a virtual sound space in accordance with the positioning of the microphones, with the use of a state-of-the-art spherical diffusion processor' [6]. The final version of this work, containing all the audio layers, was recorded in a stereo CD version [2].

Comparing the time-dynamics representation of the phonographic recording of both versions of the work (sonogram) and its time-frequency representation (spectrogram) one may notice that the caesuras of individual phases are accurately reproduced in the accordion variant (see Figure 1, 2).

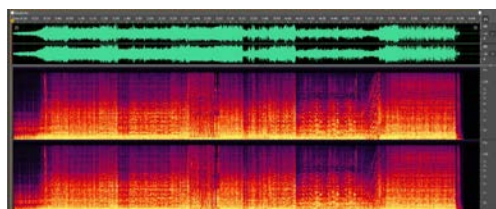


Figure 1. J. Grudzień, *AdNaan* (Andrzej Bauer, cello), sonogram and spectrogram

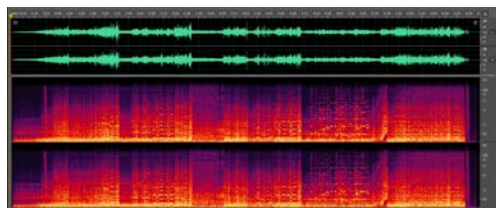


Figure 2. J. Grudzień, *AdNaan* (Pawel Zagańczyk, accordion), [2], sonogram and spectrogram

Technical interference in the tape layer on the sound engineer's part, based on specialist compression, besides creating a different interpretation of the work, additionally helps the listener to particulate the form into distinct phases.

As a composition, *AdNaan* also became an inspiration and a starting point for

creating a collaborative, multi-layer audio-visual work produced by a composer, a choreographer, a visual artist and a music theoretician.

6. Conclusion

Jacek Grudzień's *AdNaan* is undoubtedly a work of acousmatic art in which the process of perception of an invisible source of sound emitted by a computer in real time, transmitted by a multi-channel speaker system, being, by analogy, twentieth-century *musique concrète*, is an element of a broadly defined soundscape. The two versions of the composition, the original one and the accordion one created by the sound engineer, demonstrate that an intermedia work may be open to interpretation by the performer. The original version of the piece became an inspiration for creating an interdisciplinary work, an interactive project. During this performance art the audience may follow the live animation, i.e. visual music in which synchronization of audio signals and lighting with body movement is present.

References

- [1] Stanisław Balbus, *Między stylami* (Cracow: Universitas, 1993), 19, 112–13
- [2] *Fall of Icarus – Mazurowski, Zagańczyk*, Requiem Records Opus Series 42/2019
- [3] Philip Galanter, 'What is generative art? Complexity theory as a context for art theory', *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference, Exhibition and Performances on Generative Art and Design*, ed. Celestino Soddu (Milan 2003), <<https://generativeart.com>> (accessed 23 October 2020), 4

[4] Jacek Grudzień, *AdNaan*
(unpublished, 2002)

[5] Monika Karwaszewska, Beata Oryl,
authorized conversation with Jacek
Grudzień from 20 September 2020
(Gdańsk, unpublished)

[6] unpublished correspondence with
Dariusz Mazurowski of 12 September
2020

[7] J.E. Müller, 'Intermedialność jako
prowokacja nauki o mediach' *Od
projektora do komputera. Współczesna
niemiecka myśl filmowa. Antologia*, ed.
trans. A. Gwóźdź (Katowice, 1999), 152

[8] Adam Regiewicz, 'Komparatystyka
jako sposób badania nowych mediów',
Teksty Drugie 2 (2014), 57–8

[9] Mieczysław Tomaszewski, 'Droga
twórcza, jej progi i fazy, przemiany i
fiksacje', *Dzieło muzyczne i jego
konteksty* 5 (Bydgoszcz, 2009), 9-20

[10] Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Muzyka w
dialogu ze słowem. Próby, szkice,
interpretacje* (Kraków, 2003) 35–47

[11] Magdalena Wasilewska-Chmura,
*Przestrzeń intermedialna literatury i
muzyki* (Kraków, 2011), 36

[12] Werner Wolf, 'Intermediality
Revisited Reflections on Word and Music
Relations in the Context of a General
Typology of Intermediality', *Word and
Music Studies: Essays in Honour of
Steven Paul Scher and on Cultural
Identity and the Musical Stage*
(Amsterdam, New York, 2002), 28