

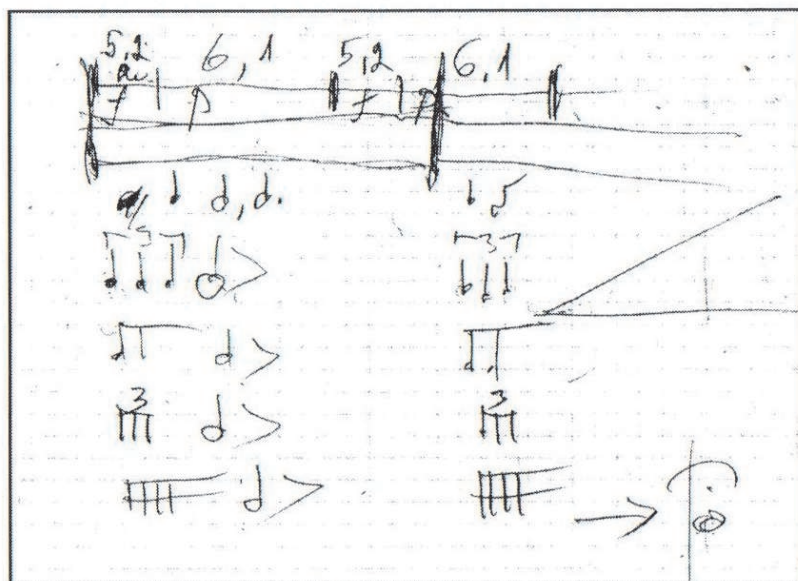
## The favourite instrument

Among Witold Lutoslawski's output are many instrumental and vocal-instrumental settings, but most of his major works were written for orchestra. One could therefore assume that his favourite instrument was the symphony orchestra. In writing for solo instruments there were some which interested him, others less so, some not at all: for example he never wrote a piece for harpsichord, despite repeated requests from many harpsichordists.

The cello could be considered one of the instruments he particularly favoured, especially during the period of the nineteen seventies. In these years he completed the *Concerto for cello and orchestra* (1969-70), *Sacher Variation* (1975) for unaccompanied cello and *Grave Metamorphoses for cello and piano* (1981), later reworked for cello and string orchestra.

The Cello concerto was dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich, who also gave the first performance. Undoubtedly some of the inspiration for this concerto came from Rostropovich, not only a great cellist but also a great human being, one of the first who had the courage to oppose openly the Soviet regime and suffer the consequences. While considering the sources of inspiration for the concerto one should not forget the political situation in Poland during these years. Lutoslawski was deeply concerned about the fate of his country, although he never publicly expressed his feelings, considering them a private matter. Like many of his compatriots he was greatly pained by the brutal state suppression of the students' protests and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in 1968. The cello with its low, sombre sound must have seemed to Lutoslawski the appropriate medium for expressing the dark mood of these years. It can not be a coincidence that some years later, in the period of "Solidarity" when there was in Poland great hope for a better political future, he became interested in the violin, but for *Grave*, written in memory of a friend, the musicologist Stefan Jarocinski, he returned again to the sound of the cello. Nevertheless, neither the Cello concerto nor *Grave* are unremittingly tragic and dark in their mood - there are rays of light breaking through the darkness; as if life is going to triumph over death.

Lutoslawski actively discouraged all non-musical interpretations of his works, to the extent of withdrawing his own statements in case they gave rise to such speculations. I personally experienced this when he did not allow the publication of the first version of an interview I conducted with him about the Cello concerto. However, he never undermined or contradicted many critics' opinion that the particularly dramatic struggle of the cello against the orchestra in the concerto brings to mind the desperate struggle of the individual against a totalitarian regime (perhaps Rostropovich against the Soviets?), although he never affirmed it publicly.



Schemat utworu *Grave*, naszkicowany przez Witolda Lutosławskiego 25 kwietnia 1981 r. dla Tadeusza Kaczyńskiego.

Sketch of *Grave* drawn by the Witold Lutoslawski on April 25, 1981 for Tadeusz Kaczyński

Unlike either the Cello concerto and *Grave*, the *Sacher Variation* was composed for a joyful occasion: the 70th Birthday of Paul Sacher the Swiss conductor, well known for commissioning many pieces of contemporary music. Rostropovich was again involved, on this occasion asking twelve composers to write short pieces that he could play at Sacher's Birthday concert. Apart from Lutosławski, the following composers supplied the pieces for this collection Conrad Beck, Heinz Holliger and Klaus Huber from Switzerland, Pierre Boulez and Henri Dutilleux from France. Wolfgang Fortner and Hans Werner Henze from Germany, Luciano Berio (Italy), Benjamin Britten (England), Alberto Ginastera (Argentina) and Cristobal Halffter (Spain).

Witold Lutoslawski's cello works are played by many outstanding cellists, some of whom were chosen by the composer himself to tour the world playing under his baton; he encouraged the career of the young Heinrich Schiff inviting him to perform the concerto for the first time in Poland (Warsaw Autumn, 1970) and many times afterwards Also Roman Jablonski often played it in Poland and abroad. Many other cellists have the concerto in their repertoire Siegfried Palm, Wolfgang Boettcher, Natalia Gutman, Lynn Harrell, Ivan Monighetti, Boris Pergameschikov, Lluís Claret, Truls Mork, Torleif Thedéen among Polish cellists Witold Herman, Roman Suchecki, Tomasz Strahl and Andrzej Bauer.

*Tadeusz Kaczyński*