

## Don Quixote's Fortunes in Polish Jazz

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### ABSTRACT

While the intense reception of *Don Quixote* in music has been documented and analyzed by a large number of research works in past decades, little attention has been paid so far to its relationship with popular music, a lack which is especially acute when it comes to the world of jazz. This article—a study in comparative literature and intermediality—deals with a particularly fascinating aspect of this subject, namely the reception of Cervantes' masterwork in Polish jazz from 1927 to the present. The analysis of several examples, seen in the context of the reception of *Don Quixote* in Poland in general, and in the context of the historical circumstances in which these compositions and recordings were created, serves to expand current knowledge not only about the profound influence this novel has exercised on Polish culture, but also about its remarkable presence in the world of jazz more broadly.

**Keywords:** *Don Quixote* in music, influence, reception, jazz, Poland.

### 1. Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century, the fruitful reception of Cervantes' masterpiece *Don Quixote* in music has attracted the attention of many Cervantists and musicologists, especially in Europe and the United States of America. Excellent studies in this field have been published by researchers such as Flynn (1984), Esquivel-Heinemann (1993), Lolo (2006, 2007, 2010, 2018), as well as Sanz Manzano and Rubio Tovar (2011), among many others. However, scholarly interest so far has focused mainly on classical music and opera (Lolo, 2010: 13-14); only in recent years have several studies begun to explore the influence of *Don Quixote* within popular music genres such as rock and pop music, as well as within jazz. Some of the most notable and innovative investigations regarding rock and pop music inspired by Cervantes' novel are those carried out by López Navia (2010, 2016, 2018) and Giorgini (2015). In some recent publications, I have examined jazz compositions and recordings related to *Don Quixote* (Hagedorn, 2016, 2019, 2022).

The present article—a study in the fields of comparative literature and intermediality—deals with the reception of this masterwork of Spanish Golden Age literature in Polish jazz. For this purpose, in order to explain the context, I will first give an overview of the most important jazz works inspired by *Don Quixote* that have been created worldwide. Next, I will briefly summarize the reception of Cervantes' novel in Poland in general, with special attention to literature and the visual arts, as well as music. In the main part of this article, I will present and critically analyze various compositions and recordings in Polish jazz and in jazz-related genres and styles such as jazz-rock and jazz-pop in Poland. One of the questions to be discussed in this comparative, intermedial study of *Don Quixote*'s influence on Polish jazz is whether the musicalizations of the Spanish classic made within Polish jazz circles



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show certain similarities that allow conclusions to be drawn about the reception of this important work of world literature in Polish culture in general.

## 2. The reception of *Don Quixote* in the world of jazz

Since the 1920s, many jazz composers, musicians and groups from all over the world have created important works inspired by Cervantes' novel, its main characters and its most well-known episodes. Taking into account all subgenres and styles of jazz, from the beginnings of its history up to the present—from Dixieland, swing, bebop, post-bop, modal jazz and free jazz to jazz-rock, jazz fusion, smooth jazz, pop-jazz, third stream and electronic jazz—a list of the most important examples of compositions and recordings related to *Don Quixote* might include the following:

- Albert Brunies and His Halfway House Orchestra: "Barataria" (1925)
- Sonny Stitt: "Sancho Panza" (1953; composer: Johnny Richards)
- Pucho Escalante and the Noneto Cubano de Jazz: "Sancho" (1964)
- Luiz Bonfá: "Don Quixote" (1973)
- Egberto Gismonti: "Don Quixote" (1981; composers: Egberto Gismonti, Geraldo E. Carneiro)
- Okay Temiz and Sylvain Kassap: "Quixote" (1990; composer: Sylvain Kassap)
- Ivo Neame: "Quixotic" (2009)
- Jasper van't Hof: "Dulcinea" (2012)
- Peter White: "Don Quixote's Final Quest" (2014)
- Vince Mendoza: "Quixote" (2017/2023)
- Eli Degibri: "Don Quixote" (2022)
- Sam Kirmayer: "Quixote" (2022)

There are also several jazz suites inspired by *Don Quixote*, the most notable being the following:

- Kenny Wheeler: *Windmill Tilter: The Story of Don Quixote* (1969)
- Mitsuaki Kanno: *A Song of Don Quixote* (1981)
- Roberto Nannetti: *Don Quijote* (2004)
- Ron Westray: *Chivalrous Misdemeanors* (2005)<sup>167</sup>
- Tom Harrell: *Adventures of a Quixotic Character* (2014)
- Stefano Corradi: *Don Quixote - Il cavaliere dalla triste figura* (2018)<sup>168</sup>

## 3. The reception of *Don Quixote* in Poland

The influence of *Don Quixote* in Polish literature and culture has been explored, documented and analyzed in several research articles and books, principally those published by Matkowski (1919), Ciesielska Borkowska (1957), Sabik (1990, 2016), Monforte Dupret (2002, 2003, 2005), León Manzanero (2004), August-Zarębska (2005), Pietrak (2005), Presa González (2005), Eminowicz-Jaśkowska (2006), Sawicki (2006), Barbaruk (2015), Charchalis and Żychliński (2016), Gaszyńska-Magiera (2016), Kurek (2019), and Marrodán

<sup>167</sup> The Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at the New York Public Library holds a copy (call number LDC 44249 [CD]) of the original concert recording at Jazz at Lincoln Center, in New York City (Hagedorn, 2016, pp. 168-175).

<sup>168</sup> For further details and extended lists of examples, see Hagedorn (2016, 2022).

Casas et al. (2020). As a result, it can be confirmed that Cervantes' novel has had a particularly favorable, intensely fruitful, and exceptionally complex reception in Poland, and that it has produced a wide variety of works of great interest and quality within Polish literature and arts. A brief overview of some of the most representative examples can give us a fairly good idea of the remarkable fortune that *Don Quixote* has had in the cultural centers of Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Poznań, Łódź, Szczecin, Lublin, and Katowice, among others.

There are five Polish translations of *Don Quixote*, made by Franciszek Aleksander Podoski (1781-1786), Walenty Zakrzewski (1855), Edward Boyé (1932), Anna Ludwika Czerny and Zygmunt Czerny (1955), and Wojciech Charchalis (2016) (Kurek, 2019; see also Ciesielska Borkowska, 1957; Sabik, 1990, pp. 307-311, 315-317; Monforte Dupret, 2002; August-Zarębska, 2005, pp. 55-57; Gaszyńska-Magiera, 2016). As examples of the many abridged versions published in Polish, those by Zbigniew Kamiński (1900), Józef Wittlin (1925), Wiktor Woroszyński (1983), and Katarzyna Misztal (2005) are among the most noteworthy (Monforte Dupret, 2002, pp. 314-315; August-Zarębska, 2005, pp. 57; Eminowicz-Jaśkowska, 2006, p. 20).

The enormous influence of Cervantes' novel in Polish literature can be seen in the works of authors such as the following, among many others (Monforte Dupret, 2003; León Manzanero, 2004; August-Zarębska, 2005, pp. 58-67; Monforte Dupret, 2005; Pietrak, 2005; Presa González, 2005; Eminowicz-Jaśkowska, 2006; Sawicki, 2006; Sabik, 2016):

- Ignacy Krasicki: *The Adventures of Mr. Nicholas Wisdom* (1776, novel)
- Aleksander Fredro: *The New Don Quixote, or a Hundred Follies* (1822, play)
- Adam Mickiewicz: *Pan Tadeusz* (1834, epic poem)
- Juliusz Słowacki: *Beniowski* (1841–1846, epic poem)
- Konstanty Gaszyński: *Mr. Dezydery Boczek and his servant Pafnucy* (1846, novella)
- Cyprian Norwid: "Our Epic. 1848" (1851, poem)
- Bolesław Prus: *The Doll* (1887–1889, novel)
- Bolesław Leśmian: "Don Quixote" (1920, poem)
- Tadeusz Lopański: *The Knight from La Mancha – A Dramatic Poem* (1928, play)
- Władysław Szlengel: "The Ballad of Don Quixote" (1937, poem)
- Wojciech Bąk: *The Servant of Don Quixote* (1947, play)
- Antoni Słonimski: "The Trial of Don Quixote" (1963–1965, 1973, poem)
- Maria Kuncewiczowa: *Don Quixote and the Nannies* (1965, memoir, novel)
- Stanisław Ryszard Dobrowolski: *Hope* (1976, novel)
- Adam Zagajewski: *Another Beauty* (1998, memoir)
- Krzysztof Sawicki: *Don Quixote and the War* (2022, collection of poems)

There are, of course, numerous short allusions to *Don Quixote* in Polish literature, one of the most prominent and interesting examples being a sentence in a dialogue in the chapter "Sartorius" in Stanisław Lem's famous science fiction novel *Solaris* (1961), between psychologist Kris Kelvin and Sartorius, one of the scientists aboard the Solaris space station: "His thin face, entirely composed of vertical planes, exactly as I had always imagined Don Quixote's, was quite expressionless. This blank mask did not help me to find the right words" (Lem, 1987, p. 43).

Examples of paintings, engravings, sculptures and other works by Polish artists inspired by *Don Quixote* include the following (see *Don Kichot. Współczesna próba interpretacji* [...], 2005; Eminowicz-Jaśkowska, 2006, p. 30; Sawicki, 2006, p. 106; Marrodán Casas et al., 2020):

- Aleksander Orłowski: *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (1813, painting)
- Piotr Michałowski: *Seńko – Study for the Figure of Don Quixote* (1846–1848, painting)
- Jacek Malczewski: *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (1895-1900, painting)
- Jerzy Hulewicz: *Don Quixote* (1928, painting)
- Stefan Mrożewski: *Illustrations for Don Quixote* (1930, wood engravings)
- Zygmunt Waliszewski: *Don Quixote in an Armchair* (1934, painting)
- Marian Kratochwil: *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (1936, painting)
- Władysław Jahl: *Don Quixote* (1951, series of drawings, paintings and etchings)
- Tymon Niesiołowski: *Don Quixote* (1955, series of linocuts)
- Jerzy Panek: *Don Quixote* (1958, series of woodcuts)
- Tadeusz Michaluk: *Don Quixote and the Windmills* (1965, paper cut-out)
- Tadeusz Dobosz: *Don Quixote* (1970, concrete sculpture)
- Marian Kratochwil: *Farewell to Don Quixote* (1982, painting)
- Sławomir Witkowski: *Don Quixote* (1984, etching)
- Dominik Rostworowski: *Don Quixote with the Lions* (1987, painting)
- Dominik Rostworowski: *Winter Don Quixote* (2001, painting)
- Wojciech Siudmak: *Don Quixote* (2014-2016, drawings, illustrations)
- Józef Wilkoń: *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (series of paintings, 2016)

As for the cinema, a good example of the fervent reception of *Don Quixote* in Poland is the fact that a fragment of the novel—the sentence in which the death of the knight is announced—was quoted in the film *Ashes* (1965) by Andrzej Wajda (Sawicki, 2006: 99-100).

The reception of Cervantes' *magnum opus* has also proven to be very fruitful in Polish music. In the field of classical music, two of the most outstanding examples are the operetta *The New Don Quixote* (1841) by Stanisław Moniuszko—based on the aforementioned comedy by Aleksander Fredro—and the symphonic poem *Don Quixote* (1912) by Eugeniusz Morawski-Dąbrowa.

In Polish pop music, many songs inspired by Cervantes' novel or its protagonists can be found, for example:

- Stefan Zach: “Don Kichote” (1981; *chanson*, pop-rock)<sup>169</sup>
- Jacek Kaczmarski: “Teza Don Kichota” (1990; singer-songwriter, folk)<sup>170</sup>
- Szymon Zychowicz: “Don Kichot z La Manchy” (1996; singer-songwriter, folk)
- Veto ft. BRX: “Sancho Pansa” (2004; hip-hop)
- Grzegorz Bukała: “Don Kichota monolog z Szefem” (2008; singer-songwriter)
- Andrzej Kołakowski: “Ballada o don Kichote” (2013; singer-songwriter)<sup>171</sup>
- Sequel (Michał Kolasa): “Don Kichot” (2014; hip-hop)
- Hetman (Jarek Hertmanowski): “Don Kichot” (2016; folk-rock)
- Five Stitches: “Krucjata Don Kichota” (2017; heavy metal, rock)
- Solo OLàs (Aleksander Schmidt): “Don Kichot” (2017; singer-songwriter, pop)<sup>172</sup>
- *Życie Raz*: “Dulcynei swej Don Kichot” (2019; pop)
- Siory: “Don Kichot” (2020; electronic music, hip-hop)<sup>173</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Music by Alina Piechowska, lyrics based on the poem by Stanisław Grochowiak. See also the observations on Krzysztof Komeda in the present article.

<sup>170</sup> Jacek Kaczmarski wrote several other songs inspired by Cervantes and *Don Quixote*, for example, “Cervantes” (1979) and “Teza Sancho Pansy” (1993).

<sup>171</sup> Composed and recorded around 1990-1995.

<sup>172</sup> Not on album; part of the soundtrack of the film (and the homonymous music and film performance) *Tom Bishop* by Jakub Kopeć and Aleksander Schmidt. The song is available on YouTube.

<sup>173</sup> With the exception of Stefan Zach's *chanson*, all songs on this list are available on YouTube.

As for incidental music created in Poland, special mention should be made of the album *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (2005) by Janusz Grzywacz. This record comprises nineteen short instrumental compositions defined on the album cover as “theatre music”; the total length of this disc is 25:12 minutes.

Furthermore, it should be noted that popular Polish expressions such as “donkiszoteria” (quixotism, quixotry, folly), “błądny rycerz” (knight-errant), and “walka z wiatrakami” (tilting at windmills) also illustrate the profound influence and the living legacy of Cervantes’ novel in Polish culture (August-Zarębska, 2005, p. 67).

#### 4. The reception of *Don Quixote* in Polish jazz

##### 4.1. Marian Rentgen: “Dulcinea” (1927)

Amid this backdrop of a strikingly rich and varied reception of *Don Quixote* in Polish culture, it is no surprise that various significant examples of compositions and recordings inspired by or dedicated to Cervantes’ novel or its main characters can also be found in Polish jazz.

The reception of Cervantes’ masterpiece in Polish jazz starts in the 1920s with the song “Dulcinea”, composed by Zygmunt Wiehler (music) and Andrzej Włast (lyrics). It was first recorded in 1927 by singer Marian Rentgen with the Orchestra and Choir of the Perskie Oko Theatre in Warsaw. On the original record produced by the Syrena label, the song has a duration of 02:37 minutes and this version is available on YouTube and on the website *Stare Melodie*<sup>174</sup>.

Marian Rentgen (1888-1940) was the pseudonym of Polish singer, actor and director Marian Antoni Güntner, a pharmacist born in Bochnia, in southern Poland, who often accompanied himself on the guitar and became a well-known artist in Warsaw’s interwar period theatres. An officer and pharmacist in the Polish army, he was captured by the Soviets in September 1939 and confined in the Starobielsk prison camp; he was murdered by the NKVD—the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or secret police, of the Soviet Union—in the Katyń massacre in April 1940.

Providing Rentgen with the score for “Dulcinea” was Zygmunt Wiehler (1890-1977), a musician and composer from Kraków; in the 1920s and 1930s, he was a musical manager and director in several Warsaw cabarets. Wiehler composed hundreds of songs, as well as film music, operetta and ballet music. Working as lyricist alongside Wiehler was Andrzej Włast (aka Gustaw Baumritter, 1885-1942 or 1943), a Polish Jewish songwriter, born in Łódź. It is most likely that Włast was assassinated in the Warsaw Ghetto or in the Treblinka extermination camp during World War II.

The hit song “Dulcinea” was created originally around 1926 as a number of the revue *Warszawa znów się bawi* (Warsaw is having fun again) at the Perskie Oko Theatre in Warsaw. On the original record, this piece is categorized as “Slow-Fox”, whereas on the original score, it is classified as “Fox Trot”. It could be described as a jazz-inflected popular tune in

<sup>174</sup> It has been speculated that the true performer on this recording might be singer and cabaret actor Tadeusz Olsza (Roaring 20s Poland: *Dulcinea* [...], 2014; Piosenka: “Dulcinea”, April 14, 2015). However, there is no confirmation of this hypothetical mistake on the label of this record. For another version by Tadeusz Olsza, see below.

the typical style of cabaret songs of the years between World War I and World War II. As will be seen below, the jazz-tinged form of the song soon began to inspire jazz orchestras in Poland and other countries to record their own versions, both vocal and instrumental. The fascination with this song has lasted throughout the twentieth century and into the present, as is attested to by the fact that recordings in different genres and styles have proliferated since its original appearance almost one hundred years ago.

One of the most notable characteristics of the song “Dulcinea” by the songwriting duo composed of Wiehler and Włast is the contrast between its cheerful—or even merry—general mood, and the alternation between parts written in minor and major keys. The ironic effect created by this contrast can also be observed in the lyrics. These lyrics focus on ridiculing Don Quixote’s unrequited platonic love for Dulcinea and his futile romantic wooing; in fact, virtue itself is described as a mistake and a chimera, a deceitful fantasy that leads people down the wrong path and to uselessly fight against windmills, as seen in the English translation of the song’s third verse: “And today virtue fools us too, / we are knights-errant ourselves. / We often fight windmills, / singing Don Quixote’s song”<sup>175</sup>. All in all, “Dulcinea” is a humorous, ironic and slightly irreverent song that, in the spirit of the “Roaring Twenties,” the Jazz Age, playfully prompts its listeners to abandon any sterile sense of virtue and romantic ideals of love, encouraging them to instead enjoy life and sensual love.

As mentioned above, one of the most fascinating aspects of the history of this song is the long list of versions that have been recorded over the years, many of them by jazz orchestras and singers. Among the first vocal versions was the one recorded in 1927 by comedy actor and singer Adolf Dymśa<sup>176</sup>. Instrumental versions of Wiehler’s “Dulcinea” were recorded in the same year by American jazz trumpeter and bandleader Arthur Briggs<sup>177</sup> and by Polish composer and orchestra director Henryk Gold and his Symphonic Jazz Orchestra<sup>178</sup>. One year later, in 1928, Efim Schachmeister’s Jazz Symphonians recorded another instrumental version for Polydor in Germany<sup>179</sup>. Probably some years after World War II, singer and actor

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<sup>175</sup> “I dziś nas także cnota mami, / rycerze błędni myśmy sami. / Walczymy często z wiatrakami, / śpiewając Don Kichotów pieśń” (Piosenka: “Dulcinea”, April 14, 2015). All translations in this article (of song lyrics, titles, poems, quotes etc.) are the author’s unless otherwise indicated (see also the acknowledgements).

<sup>176</sup> Dymśa’s version is available on the website Stare Melodie (Piosenka: “Dulcinea”, April 14, 2015). This recording was also released by Syrena Records, as was Marian Rentgen’s of the same year. Adolf Dymśa (1900-1975) was a popular Polish singer and comedy actor.

<sup>177</sup> US-American trumpet player Arthur Briggs (1901-1991) and his Savoy Syncop’s Orchestra (aka Arthur Briggs and his Savoy Syncopators) recorded their instrumental rendition of “Dulcinea” in 1927 for the German label Clausophon; it is available on YouTube and on Spotify. From 1927 to 1928, Briggs lived in Berlin. In 1935, he participated in the recording of “Blue Moon” with Coleman Hawkins and Django Reinhardt. In World War II, he was imprisoned in France by the German occupiers. Briggs died in Paris in 1991.

<sup>178</sup> Henryk Gold (1902-1977) recorded “Dulcinea” with his Symphonic Jazz Orchestra in 1927 for Syrena Records; this version is available on YouTube. Henryk Gold was born in Warsaw to a Jewish family with a strong musical background. Together with his brother Artur Gold, the brothers Jerzy and Stanisław Petersburski, Zygmunt Karasiński and Szymon Kataszek, among others, he was one of the pioneers of Polish jazz. Arthur Briggs’ and Henryk Gold’s recordings of the song “Dulcinea” are almost identical; it would be interesting to investigate how these virtually indistinguishable versions came about.

<sup>179</sup> Born in Kiev to a Romanian Jewish family, Efim Schachmeister (1894-1944) studied music in Berlin from 1910 to 1913, after which he developed a successful career as an extraordinarily versatile jazz violinist and bandleader until 1933. One of his most well-known works is the 1927 recording of W. C. Handy’s “St. Louis Blues”.



Tadeusz Olsza recorded a new vocal version<sup>180</sup>. Other recordings of the song “Dulcinea” include those by Polish pop group Studio M-2 (1965)<sup>181</sup>; Mieczysław Wojnicki (1966)<sup>182</sup>; Bohdan Łazuka (1980)<sup>183</sup>; Mariusz Kalaga (2011)<sup>184</sup>; and Jazz Band Młynarski-Masecki (2019)<sup>185</sup>.

The popularity of this song and the fascination it seems to incite to this day can only partially be explained by the fact that it is a catchy, upbeat, jazz-influenced tune that corresponded easily to the musical tastes of different eras in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. An important aspect that might have played a role in the success of Wiehler and Włast’s “Dulcinea”, especially in its initial diffusion, might have been the song’s capacity to suggest—precisely due to the sensuous, exuberant attitude towards life that it evokes—the possibility of a kind of escape from a time period characterized by numerous threats, such as the political and economic uncertainties and upheavals resulting from World War I and the Polish-Soviet War, the rise of fascism in Germany, or the upsurge in antisemitism.

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Schachmeister was famous for playing violin in the gypsy style, occasionally adjusting to a more Blues-influenced technique. Schachmeister’s recording is available on YouTube.

<sup>180</sup> Olsza’s version is available on YouTube. It was included on the compilation album *Od “Momusa” do “Ali-Baby”*. *Przeboje teatrzyków i kabaretów starej Warszawy* (1978, Muza Records). On the cover of this album, the years 1926-1927 are indicated as the recording date; however, the kind of arrangement and the quality of the recording suggest that it was done after World War II. Tadeusz Olsza (1895-1975) was a cabaret singer, actor, dancer, and director born in Warsaw. In 1939, after the German invasion of Poland, he fled to Romania, and later to France and Scotland. After the war he returned to Poland where he worked as an actor until 1971. From 1972 until his death in 1975 he lived in London.

<sup>181</sup> The Polish Radio Orchestra Studio M-2 was a recording group or project led by pianist, composer and orchestra director Bogusław Klimczuk (1921-1974). The other musicians of the band included guitarist Leszek Bogdanowicz (1934-1984), saxophonist Jan “Ptaszyn” Wróblewski (1936-2024), and pianist, trombonist, and composer Andrzej Kurylewicz (1932-2007), among others. The arrangement of “Dulcinea” recorded by Studio M-2 is a modern and distinctly jazz-inflected version, which is longer than the previous recordings (03:35 minutes). One of the most remarkable elements of this rendition is the long saxophone solo (00:51-02:29), which serves as the centerpiece of the entire recording. This version is included in the album *Stare Przeboje – Nowe Rytm*y (1965, Muza Records). It is not available online.

<sup>182</sup> Polish singer and actor Mieczysław Wojnicki (1919-2007) recorded his version of “Dulcinea” with Bogusław Klimczuk’s Instrumental Ensemble. It is included on the album *Zakochani są wśród nas...* (1966, Muza Records). A video of the TV recording of Wojnicki’s version is available on YouTube.

<sup>183</sup> Actor and singer Bohdan Łazuka was born in 1938 in Lublin. His version of “Dulcinea” was recorded for the TV miniseries *Kariera Nikodema Dyzmy* (1980); a video of this performance is available on YouTube.

<sup>184</sup> Kalaga’s version of “Dulcinea” is included in the album *Wracam* (2011, Box Records); it is available on YouTube. Pop musician, country singer, and guitarist Mariusz Kalaga was born in 1959 in Strzemieszyce (Dąbrowa Górnicza).

<sup>185</sup> In 2019, the Jazz Band Młynarski-Masecki consisted of the following musicians: Jan Młynarski (vocals, banjolin), Marcin Masecki (piano), Kuba Więcek (alto saxophone), Tomasz Duda (alto saxophone), Jacek Namysłowski (trombone), Tomasz Dworakowski (trombone), Emil Misk (trumpet), and Maurycy Idzikowski (trumpet), among many others. Jan Młynarski was born in 1979 in Warsaw and is the son of singer and poet Wojciech Młynarski—who in 1971 recorded another song inspired by *Don Quixote*—and actress Adrianna Godlewska. Pianist Marcin Masecki was born in 1982 in Warsaw; he has worked in many groups and projects, with musicians such as Tomasz Stańko, Michał Urbaniak, and Wojciech Waglewski, among many others. The version of “Dulcinea” recorded by the Jazz Band Młynarski-Masecki is quite long (06:05 minutes), and it is based on a modern, contemporary jazz arrangement; it is included in the album *Płyta z zadrą w sercu* (2019, Toinen Music). This recording of “Dulcinea” is available on YouTube and Spotify, among others.

#### 4.2. 4 Asy: “Don Kichot” (1946)

In 1946, the Polish label Melodje Records released a recording of the song “Don Kichot”, written by Zbigniew Drabik (music and lyrics). The disc was recorded by the vocal ensemble 4 Asy, or Cztery Asy (4 aces), with piano accompaniment. The version of Drabik’s “Don Kichot” recorded by 4 Asy has a duration of 02:25 minutes; this version is available on YouTube and on the website Stare Melodie (Piosenka: “Don Kichot”, February 18, 2015).

The identity of the musician who played the piano on this recording is unknown. Drabik himself could not have participated in the recording session for this disc, since he was killed in the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944, two years before the record was released, and it is extremely improbable that the song could have been recorded at that time. Besides the fact that he was born around 1907, probably in Warsaw, not much more is known about this composer and lyricist, who sometimes used the pseudonym Ar-Gus. Having debuted in Warsaw’s musical scene around 1930, he was the composer and lyricist of several songs, such as “Fabryczna dziewczyna” (lyrics co-written with Jerzy Ryba) and “Dowidzenia, Madame”; in addition, he also wrote the lyrics for many songs by other composers, namely “Stary Walc” (music by Adam Lewandowsky), and “Granada śpi” (music by Ryszard Frank and Jerzy Gert) (see: Zbigniew Drabik [...] kompozytor, n.d.; and: Zbigniew Drabik [...] autor tekstów, n.d.).

The vocal ensemble 4 Asy, founded in 1945 at the end of World War II, consisted of close-harmony singers and actors Rajmund Fleszar (1917-2008), Kazimierz Łabudź (1909-2001), Czesław Mroczek (1920-2012), and Mieczysław Ziółowski (1905-1995)<sup>186</sup>. This group was the successor to the hugely successful Chór Dana, one of the numerous choirs of the Jazz Age in Poland who performed in the style of the US-American group The Revelers<sup>187</sup>. The ensemble 4 Asy disbanded in 1952, due to the restrictions imposed by the communist authorities on the representatives of so-called “bourgeois” culture.

Just as Zygmunt Wiehler and Andrzej Włast’s “Dulcinea” twenty years before, Zbigniew Drabik’s “Don Kichot” is a lively, jazz-inflected tune—tagged as a “Rumba” on the original record’s paper label—with ironic and irreverent lyrics; it is performed by 4 Asy in a playful close-harmony style. Drabik’s lyrics can be described as an extremely condensed, parodic retelling of the story of Don Quixote, with the emphasis placed on satirizing the quest for love that takes him all over Spain. While on the one hand he is characterized as a “brave adventurer,” on the other hand, he exposes himself to the ridicule of the people, especially the numerous ladies he adores and courts<sup>188</sup>. At the end of this piece’s version of the story, although he seems to find happiness with Dulcinea, Don Quixote is once again cruelly disappointed when she runs away with Sancho Panza, supposedly his most faithful servant and friend: “Dulcinea / His pride and hope / With his squire / She ran off, Heaven knows where / And so the story ends / Olé!”<sup>189</sup>. As should be clear from these brief observations,

<sup>186</sup> Sometime between 1946 and 1949, Fleszar was replaced by singer and actor Eugeniusz Barski.

<sup>187</sup> For a list of recordings by the 4 Asy ensemble, see Cztery Asy [...] (n.d.). For the history of the Polish close-harmony ensembles of the Jazz Age, see Bretan (2020).

<sup>188</sup> “Aj, odważnym przecież był junakiem” (“Oh, he was a brave adventurer after all”) (Piosenka: “Don Kichot”, February 18, 2015).

<sup>189</sup> “Dulcinea / Ta jego chluba i nadzieja / Z jego giermkim / Uciekła lichu wie, gdzie / I tak historia kończy



Drabik's "Don Kichot", just like Wiehler and Włast's "Dulcinea", is a humorous, ironic jazz song—in the cabaret style of the interwar period—that satirizes the ideal of romantic love. Against the background of the horrors of fascism, the Holocaust and World War II, this burlesque jazz song must, of course, be taken as an implicit recommendation to seek refuge and solace in a hedonistic attitude towards life.

Zbigniew Drabik's "Don Kichot" has only been re-recorded once. In 2012, the Polish close-harmony ensemble Voice Band and singer-songwriter Anita Lipnicka released the album *W siódmym niebie*, which included a slightly longer version of the song (04:02); this version—a cheerful, hyperbolic, tongue-in-cheek jazz arrangement in a neoclassical swing style—is available, for example, on YouTube and Spotify<sup>190</sup>. The musicians who took part in this recording included Tomasz Warmijak (vocals), Arkadiusz Lipnicki (vocals), Grzegorz Żołyński (vocals), Piotr Widlarz (vocals), and Waław Turek (accordion). Singer Anita Lipnicka did not participate in the recording of the track *Don Kichot*.

### 4.3. Krzysztof Komeda: "Sketches for Don Quichotte" (1967)

One of the most impressive musicalizations of Cervantes' book and its protagonist, not only in Polish jazz but in this genre worldwide—and possibly in music in general—is Krzysztof Komeda's composition "Sketches for Don Quichotte" (1967). It was first recorded in a short version (02:22 minutes) for the album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat – Dichtung & Jazz aus Polen* as an accompaniment for the recitation of the poem "Don Kichot – Ritterballade" by Polish poet Stanisław Grochowiak (1934-1976)<sup>191</sup>. The German translation used on this recording is the work of Karl Dedecius (1921-2016). The album, also known under the title *Jazz & Poetry*, was recorded in Cologne (Germany) in 1967 (October 7-10) and produced by German jazz critic Joachim-Ernst Berendt (1922-2000); it was released by Columbia/EMI Records. The musicians on this recording included Krzysztof Komeda (piano), Roman Dylag (double bass), Zbigniew Namysłowski (alto saxophone), Rune Carlsson (drums), and Tomasz Stańko (trumpet, flugelhorn), a group composed of some of the finest European jazz musicians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries<sup>192</sup>. Austrian actor and theatre director Helmuth Lohner (1933-2015) recited the poems. The album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat*

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się / ;Olé!". For the song lyrics, see the previous footnote.

<sup>190</sup> See also YouTube for a TV live performance of Voice Band's version of this song.

<sup>191</sup> Grochowiak's famous poem was published in the book *Ballada rycerska* under the original title "Don Kiszot". Grochowiak is considered a representative of the Polish "turpism" school of writers and artists, who focused on the motifs of ugliness, decay, death, and destruction, as an aesthetic means of authenticating their pessimistic view of the world (Sawicki, 2006, pp. 109-110; Czerwiński, 1994, pp. 134-136). As mentioned before in the present article, Grochowiak's poem "Don Kiszot" was also used by Polish singer Stefan Zach (1940-2003) as lyrics for his song "Don Kichote", included on Zach's 1981 album *Idę*.

<sup>192</sup> Krzysztof Komeda (1931-1969) is considered a pioneer of modern and avant-garde jazz in Poland and many other European countries. Today, he is perhaps best known for his scores for Roman Polanski's films *Knife in the Water* (1962), *Cul-de-sac* (1966), and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968). Komeda's album *Astigmatic* (1965) is widely considered to be one of the most important albums of both Polish and European jazz; equally famous are his compositions "Ballad for Berni" and "Knife in the Water". Roman Dylag (1938-2023), Zbigniew Namysłowski (1939-2022), Rune Carlsson (1940-2013), and Tomasz Stańko (1942-2018) are among the most renowned European jazz musicians of their generation.

was released as part of a series entitled *Jazz und Lyrik* that Berendt had been producing since 1960<sup>193</sup>.

A much longer instrumental version (11:03 minutes) of “Sketches for Don Quichotte” was recorded later the same year by the same group in the studio of Polish Radio in Warsaw, under the title “Don Kichot”. This recording was included on the 1974 album *Muzyka Krzysztofa Komedy*, released by the label Polskie Nagrania Muza (and re-released in 1989 by Poljazz and by Anex/Poljazz in 2007); it is also available on the CD reissue of the album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat* (2012, Anex/Polish Jazz Masters), on the album *Muzyka filmowa oraz jazz i poezja* (2016, Polskie Radio), and on YouTube and Spotify. The original, short version from the 1967 album, however, is not available online.

The title “Sketches for Don Quichotte” is a homage to the Miles Davis album *Sketches of Spain* (1960), one of the most outstanding examples of the third-stream style, a fusion of orchestral jazz, European classical music and various currents of world music; it is widely regarded one of the most important jazz works of the twentieth century. Because of the unmistakable allusion to this influential jazz work, Davis’ album must be considered a significant source of inspiration for Komeda’s composition and his approach to Grochowiak’s poem and to Cervantes’ novel (Berendt, 1967/2012, pp. 13-15).

“Sketches for Don Quichotte”—both in the original form and in the extended version under the title “Don Kichot”—is an avant-garde jazz piece which blends influences from post-bop, cool jazz, modal jazz, and free jazz. It is a piece that, on the musical level, interweaves narrative form with melancholy motifs, thus obtaining the effect of a tragic story told in an elegiac tone, a dramatic account that, from the first bars, conveys the mood of a musical lament. Several musical elements are particularly striking, such as Roman Dylag’s dry and sonorous “flamenco bass” (Berendt, 1967/2012, p. 13), which is heavily present from the beginning, and which is sometimes reminiscent of hoofbeats on dusty earth. Other attention-grabbing musical elements in this piece are the fanfare-esque, yet mournful, melody that Tomasz Stańko intones on the trumpet as a recurring motif—especially in the long instrumental version—and the alternation between the quiet, flowing, romantic sections and the rhythmic, faster moving parts that evoke the adventures of Don Quixote.

Against this musical background, the poem recited by Helmuth Lohner—in the short version of Komeda’s composition included on the album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat*—has a striking, almost brutal effect. In the drastic imagery, the sarcastic tone, and the disillusioned, utterly unromantic perspective of these twenty verses, Grochowiak sketches—with just a few strokes—a picture of a cruel, meaningless world in which even art ultimately serves no purpose, since it has no real function of its own. Don Quixote is portrayed as a vagabond, a rowdy drunkard, and a philanderer; neither his existence nor his infatuation with Dulcinea—whose name is not even mentioned—are considered significant in any way, nor is his final passing. Sancho Panza, for his part, is a dumb, starving servant who whips his own donkey to death, and who, after his master’s demise, ends up doing nothing but bringing a bunch of children into the world. By the conclusion of the piece, the poet appears in this bitter tale as one of the grandchildren of this simpleton, a lost descendant of Sancho’s whose

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<sup>193</sup> For details and further information regarding the recording of this album in general, and the composition “Sketches for Don Quixote” in particular, see Berendt (1967), Granat (2012), Balkiewicz (2013), Hagedorn (2019, pp. 198-199), Grzebałkowska (2020, pp.354-357).

works are not understood by anyone—no matter who—and whose verses can only serve as wrapping paper for quickly rotting goods, such as fish: “And in the store they even wrap the herrings / In my poems – Sancho Panza’s grandchild”<sup>194</sup>.

Grochowiak’s ironic, sarcastic, and irreverent retelling of the story of Don Quixote thus appears as a grim rejection of the romantic spirit and of idealism, but also of the materialism personified by Sancho Panza. In the end, not even poetry—standing in ultimately for all literature and all art—is of any value, as it is neither read, nor understood, nor respected. In Komeda’s “Sketches for Don Quichotte”, the striking dialectic contrast between the solemn, melancholy music and the gloomy, sarcastic poem creates a particularly ironic effect, a strangely touching amalgam of the deepest sorrow—sorrow in the face of the tragedy of a vanished world, of bygone greatness and lost ideals—and an utterly disillusioned view of humanity.

While in the beautiful, extended instrumental version, “Don Kichot”, the idealistic-romantic, tragic mood of the music comes more clearly to the fore, it is this short version on the album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat*, with Grochowiak’s poem recited by Helmut Lohner, that leaves the listeners with far deeper questions and speaks more clearly to their conscience. In 1967, when this album was made, both the instrumental version and the original recording containing the recitation of the poem represented a statement in the historical, cultural, social and political context of the time. Twenty-two years after the end of World War II and the Holocaust, in midst of the Cold War decades, when the communist government in Poland was controlled by the Soviet Union, and when expressions related to a desire for freedom, cultural criticism, and interest in Western culture were suppressed by state censorship, the dismissal of both idealism and materialism expressed in Komeda’s “Sketches” and the adoption of a disenchanting, melancholy, and at the same time ironic perspective was tantamount to a repudiation of the “official” culture and the worldview and doctrine prescribed by the ruling communist authorities of 1960s Poland.

In this context, it must also be pointed out that, just like Grochowiak’s poem, the entire record *Meine süsse europäische Heimat* should be understood within this ideological, cultural-historical and political background. Not only are the album title and the Polish composer’s “Sketches for Don Quichotte” meaningful in this regard, but the other tracks included on this disc—with evocative titles such as “Dirge for Europe”, “Hameln Is Everywhere”, and “Canzone for Warschau”—leave no doubt that, with this entire album, Komeda unequivocally addressed both twentieth-century European history in general and the specific conflicts between Eastern and Western Europe, while also commenting on the philosophical, cultural and political currents and events that significantly shaped the continent in the decades preceding the composition and recording of these pieces. The collapse of Europe into fascism, the Holocaust and World War II, the brutal German attack on Poland and the ensuing orgy of violence, oppression and annihilation, the destruction of Warsaw, the traumatic division of Europe into the ideologically hostile, hermetically separated worlds of the capitalist West and the communist Eastern Bloc: all of these are themes that are dealt

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<sup>194</sup> “I nawet w sklepie obwiną ci śledzie / W moje liryki – wnuka Sanczo Pansy” (Grochowiak, 1956, p. 7). In the German version recited on the recording of Komeda’s “Sketches for Don Quichotte”, the last two verses of Grochowiak’s poem are as follows: “Sogar den Hering packen sie dir ein / in meine Lyrik, Sancho Pansas Enkel” (Hagedorn, 2019, pp. 198-199).

with on *Meine süsse europäische Heimat* and that give this masterpiece of European jazz its special contours and its extraordinary emotional and intellectual depth. As Zbigniew Granat (2012, pp. 202-203) explained:

Coming at the time of Europe's profound division into two blocs, solidified only six years earlier by the construction of the Berlin Wall, Komeda and Berendt's album, with its provocative title, openly crossed over that divide on several levels: historical, geographical, political and cultural. One reason such a multi-layered bridge occurred lies in the fact that the recording, through the spoken word, succeeded in communicating a candid critique of the contemporary European condition. [...] the combination of these two arts allowed Komeda to deliver a thoughtful commentary on Poland's political situation through his work. [...] the album also articulates a broader, utopian notion of a "European country", free from the divisions symbolized by the recently constructed Berlin Wall.

The fact that a fundamental work of European literature and culture such as *Don Quixote*—a novel that revolves around themes that are central to European and Western culture, such as individual freedom and idealism—is being reinterpreted in the context of an album that addresses all these themes and ideas is a coherent, revealing, and thought-inspiring artistic pronouncement, and a further sign of the high aesthetic and intellectual demands that Krzysztof Komeda placed on his own work<sup>195</sup>.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that different versions of Komeda's "Don Kichot" have been recorded in 2013 and 2016 by the Jan Pastzyn Wróblewski Sextet<sup>196</sup>.

#### 4.4. Wojciech Młynarski: "Ballada o późnej starości Don Kichota" (1971)

In Polish popular music of the period between the late 1960s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find some other cases of jazz-tinged compositions inspired by *Don Quixote*. Since the influence of jazz is less obvious and less important in these pieces than in the previous examples, they will only be briefly presented.

In 1971, popular singer-songwriter, translator, and writer Wojciech Młynarski (1941-2017) released the album *Recital '71* (on the label Polskie Nagrania Muza), which had been recorded during a live performance in the Chamber Music Hall at the Warsaw Philharmonic. In this show, Młynarski was accompanied by a jazz quintet consisting of Paweł Jarzębski (double bass), Czesław Bartkowski (drums), Marek Bliźniński (guitar), Adam Makowicz (piano, bandleader), and Michał Urbaniak (saxophone, violin). One of the songs included in this album is the piece titled "Ballada o późnej starości Don Kichota", a short, jazz-influenced *chanson* (03:06 minutes) written by Młynarski (lyrics) and Maciej Małecki (music). The song is available on YouTube and Spotify, among other streaming platforms. The album *Recital '71* was an unmitigated success, being re-released at least four times (1973, 1989, 1996, and 2017).

Just like the other compositions previously examined in the present study, Młynarski's

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<sup>195</sup> For the ideas on which the album *Meine süsse europäische Heimat*, the piece "Sketches for Don Quichotte," and Grochowiak's poem are based, see Granat (2012, pp. 202-203, 212-226), Berendt (1967/2012, pp. 1-6, 16-23), and Sawicki (2006, pp. 109-110).

<sup>196</sup> These recordings are included in the album *Komeda: Moja Słodka Europejska Ojczyzna* (2018, Warner Music, Polskie Nagrania Muza).

ballad is characterized by an irreverent, ironic approach to Cervantes' novel, its protagonist, the story it tells, and the ideas it discusses. The song is about an aged Don Quixote who wistfully remembers his adventures from long ago, still daydreaming about going into battle against the windmills. Lost in memories and reveries, he does not realize that ultimately, of all the battles and high ideals, nothing remains but a few faint reminiscences. As a sort of conclusion, the author of the ballad begs God to give people the ability to avoid any ill-timed idealism when the time for quixotic ventures is over, and to rely on a more stoic attitude as a positive counter-balance with which to face life's trials with serenity.

#### 4.5. Grzegorz Turnau: "Sancho (dytyramb)" (2002)

On his 2002 album *Nawet*, released on the Pomaton EMI label, Polish singer-songwriter, pianist, and accordionist Grzegorz Turnau (born in 1967 in Kraków) included a track dedicated to Don Quixote's squire and faithful companion, under the title "Sancho (dytyramb)". This piece, a slightly jazz-inflected pop-rock song written by Turnau (music) and Bronisław Maj (lyrics), could be described as a four-minute paean to Sancho Panza's love for life, a homage to freedom, and a vehement, irreverent rejection of all idealism, of sacrifice and obedience, and of everything transcendental. It was recorded by the following musicians: Grzegorz Turnau (vocals, piano, keyboards, accordion), Sławomir Berny (drums), Robert Kubiszyn (electric bass), Jacek Królik (electric guitar), Maryna Barfuss (flute), Mariusz Pędziulek (oboe), and Leszek Szczerba (saxophones, clarinet), among others. "Sancho (dytyramb)" is available on YouTube and Spotify, among other streaming services; live versions can be found on YouTube.

As the subtitle suggests, this piece is a modern version of a dithyramb, an ancient Greek chant of vehement character and irregular form which was originally performed in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility, joy, celebration, chaos, and irrationality. On the musical level, this exorbitance is expressed through, but not limited to, the irregular rhythms, the joyful melody and the jubilant tone of the song. In the lyrics, the foolishly delirious knight and his ineffective quest for a better world, his sterile idealism, and his cold perfection are contrasted with the squire's devotion to celebrating life and to the simplest earthly and sensual pleasures. Don Quixote is not mentioned by name, but he is easily recognizable in the figure of the knight-errant, who cannot begin to imagine life as Sancho experiences it. Consequently, "Sancho (dytyramb)" can be summed up as a dismissal of Don Quixote's idealism, a musical celebration sparkling with energy and *joie de vivre*, a modern ode to joy. This triumphant hymn to individual freedom, happiness and an untroubled life undoubtedly fit in well with the new time period that had begun in Poland: thirteen years after the collapse of the communist regime, the end of the Cold War, and the establishment of democracy, three years after becoming a full member of NATO and two years before joining the European Union, Turnau and Maj's composition can be understood as an optimistic welcoming song for the new era and a buoyant, nostalgia-free farewell to the dull, unproductive idealism of the past.

## 5. Conclusion

As I have tried to show in this essay, the diverse, colorful, and highly provocative reception of Cervantes' masterpiece in Polish jazz is a good example of what Piotr Sawicki (2006: 100) has called "the vitality of the myth of Don Quixote in our culture, our literary and artistic tradition, and in our reflection on the positions we have taken or are taking today in the face of the most crucial problems of our contemporaneity".

A comparison with the international jazz scene is also instructive in this context. While it is true that compositions and recordings inspired by or dedicated to the Spanish classic are not as numerous in Polish jazz as in jazz from other countries such as the USA, France, Great Britain, Germany, Brazil, or Italy (Hagedorn, 2022, pp. 107-108), some of the examples analyzed in this study are particularly significant. For example, Wiehler and Włast's song "Dulcinea" is among the first *Quixote*-influenced jazz compositions worldwide, while Krzysztof Komeda's "Sketches for Don Quichotte" and the instrumental version, "Don Kichot", are—due to their complexity and the implied political statement that has been described here—two of the most impressive instances in the history of jazz which make reference to Cervantes' renowned novel.

Furthermore, the remarkable presence of this milestone of world literature in jazz and jazz-influenced music created in Poland has some striking features that shed light on the way this novel and its protagonists are perceived and looked upon in the Polish culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that compositions and recordings inspired by *Don Quixote* or dedicated to the novel or its main characters in Polish jazz and jazz-inflected music are almost exclusively songs—the only exception being Krzysztof Komeda's instrumental version of his "Sketches for Don Quichotte"—while in jazz in other countries, instrumental pieces clearly predominate among the works related to Cervantes' novel (Hagedorn, 2022, pp. 114, 119-120). This peculiarity may well be regarded as an indication of a decidedly literary, intellectual and singularly profound interest of the Polish jazz musicians—and their audience—in the work of the great master of Spanish literature.

The results presented in this article suggest that the reflection on the story of the Knight of the Sad Countenance and its musical and textual translation usually have a particularly critical, distanced, irreverent, ironic, satirical, and even sarcastic coloring or quality that is unique to the case of jazz and jazz-influenced music in Poland. In the compositions and recordings analyzed, the figure of Don Quixote does not appear to have a positive connotation, but is rather consistently viewed as a gloomy, miserable fool, the epitome of a ridiculous, unproductive attitude towards life. In general, no benefit is attributed to his idealism, but it is understood as a mindset that is hostile to life and that calls for an alternative, more effective—or at least more tolerable—counter-model. This is true even in the case of Krzysztof Komeda, whose composition "Sketches for Don Quichotte" is characterized, among other elements, by a certain melancholy which is accentuated in the instrumental version, thus showing some influence from the romantic interpretation of *Don Quixote*. But regardless of these nuances, the analysis carried out has shown that the compositions and recordings inspired by Cervantes' novel in Polish jazz or jazz-related genres or styles can only be fully appreciated and understood when they are placed in the specific historical, political, and cultural context



from which they emerged.

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