



Kwartludium & Jacaszek: *Kolchida*

22 November (Friday) — 10.00 pm

Mała Warszawa
14 Otwocka Street

The *Kolchida* album took its starting point from field recordings of Georgian songs, plunging into the stream of time going back to the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece. The titles of the works evoke places and heroes of the myth (Medea, Aeëtes, Argonauts), but the music by Kwartludium and Jacaszek is far from being a mere illustration. The exploration and revival of the myth, inspired by Georgian polyphony, takes place in sonic landscapes. They are created by flickering parts of acoustic instruments and ambient electronics, merging into a musical narrative as if in a trance.

Concert programme

Material from the
Kolchida (Colchis) album (2022)

Performers:

Kwartludium:

Dagna Sadkowska
violin

Piotr Nowicki
piano

Michał Górczyński
clarinet, bass clarinet

Paweł Nowicki
percussion instruments

Jacaszek
electronic instruments

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Music & Myth

The cover of the Kwartludium and Jacaszek album says a lot about the music it contains. Blue and gold, like water and fleece. The structure captured in the photograph by Jerzy Osiennik is impressive: a wooden sculpture or installation winds and falls into waves, locks, weaves... The typography of the title leads to Greek, but instead of the proper name of the former territories of today's Georgia – Κολλίς (Kolchís), the white letters read: Κολλίδα (Kolchída). Behind the ancient alphabet, there is a Polish title. This may be the key to this music: encounter, intertwining, overlapping.

The lines connecting Poland, modern Georgia and the former Colchis often intersect. For many years, Polish archaeologists have been discovering traces of the past at sites located in Georgian cities, for example, in the city of Kutaisi (Colchis Aia), where the remains of an ancient settlement dating from the thirteenth–twelfth centuries BC were discovered. Interestingly, it was then that the Argonauts' mythical expedition allegedly took place. In April 2019, the Kwartludium ensemble arrived in Kutaisi, which was part of a study visit, at the invitation of the Polish Institute in Tbilisi. Musical encounters, ethnographic and archaeological research and the atmosphere of discovering the past – all of the above inspired the instrumentalists. They came back with field recordings, which became the starting point of a new project. The project took shape three years later, after Michał Jacaszek joined the undertaking. The musicians knew each other well: their first joint work, *Catalogue des Arbres* (*Catalogue of Trees*, 2014), showed how fruitful this agreement is and how sonically interesting the marriage of acoustic instruments (violin, piano, bass clarinet, percussion instruments) and electronics can be.

The same applies to the *Kolchida* album. The publisher's description states that the featured music is 'inspired by Georgian polyphonic songs' and the 'history of ancient Colchis'.¹ Indeed, traces of such songs appear in the compositions, but I have the impression that the key is rather the word 'polyphony' understood as the idea of voices crossing each other, of intertwining lines, motifs and colours. However, Georgian polyphony – essentially close to the one we know from our part of Europe – is different. It explores the boundaries of consonances and dissonances in a bolder manner. There is something sublime to it, something archaic. The exploration of polyphonic electronic and acoustic knots in the works featured on the *Kolchida* album is carried out in a wide range of tone colours. Jacaszek's electronics – soft, grainy, blurred in reverberations and delays – comes from a distance, from behind a nearby curtain. In addition to space, it also touches time and resembles the sound from years ago, preserved on an old, worn tape. The above provides the background for the Kwartludium instruments. Four parts telling their stories among the

electronic scenery, presented in both conventional and extended performance techniques and dosed in a subdued manner, rarely sharper or more ferocious.

From the polyphonic quest, a second dimension of this story is born. Is it possible to discover sounds like successive layers of earth discovered in archaeological excavations? Is it possible to look for a former, ancient sonic landscape in the planes of these works? Can music reflect the shape of a myth? Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss thought it possible. Myths – in all their diversity – are provided with a structure that can be compared to musical notation. It allows for the creation of subsequent variants, just as the score combines parts that may present similar but different shapes of music. Graphic notation – close to Kwartludium and Jacaszek – shows this affinity between music and myth, tangible in the relationship between the structure and its implementation, even more clearly.

Therefore, the *Kolchida* music carries a profound, mythical narrative, developing unhurriedly, in the turns of phrases, rhythms and tone colours. There is concentration, mystery, sometimes horror: the myth is beautiful, but also dangerous, of which we are reminded by the Eleusinian Mysteries from a different part of the Greek world, distant from Colchis. Sometimes, a trance pulse appears in the music by Kwartludium and Jacaszek; sometimes, the polyphonic parts flicker together, resembling warps and threads of one fabric. Just like on the album cover, where the frayed matter sparkles like the golden fleece. The musical visions are reinforced by the pieces' titles. *Argonauts* – monotonous phrases work like the strokes of Argo's oars; the dissonant screeches are like the foreboding vision of misfortunes that the capture of the golden fleece will bring. Here is *Phasis*, a river and a city of the same name to which the Argonauts came, as well as *Khvami*, the mythical mountain they climbed during their quest. There is the king of Colchis Aeëtes (*Aeeta*), who hung the golden fleece dedicated to Ares on a sacred tree. There is also the sorceress *Medea*, his daughter, thanks to whom Jason achieved the goal of the expedition.

The dialogue between music and myth resonating in the works on the *Kolchida* album produces an almost theatrical or film-like narrative, but it is very far from a mere illustration. Generally dark, focused and demanding, only rarely does it create calmer, luminous landscapes. There is something ceremonial and sublime to it, which reminds of the roots of the theatre, which, after all, originated from ancient Greek rites and rituals. I have the impression that all this makes *Kolchida* more than music. It is an attempt to enter the space of a myth in which different times converge – an archaeologist lays down the earth, Georgian voices sing, the golden fleece shimmers. It is worth listening to this music live to experience directly this particular timelessness. Here and now.

Mariusz Gradowski

¹ Requiem Records, <https://requiem-records.com/pl/sklep/kolchida> (accessed 14.08.2024).



Kwartludium

Kwartludium is co-created by Dagna Sadkowska (violin), Piotr Nowicki (piano), Michał Górczyński (clarinets) and Paweł Nowicki (percussion instruments). The ensemble was established in 2002. From the very beginning, they have been focused on the performance of new music created specifically for this unique instrumental combination. The musicians have performed several dozen world and Polish premieres. Contemporary improvised music is also an important part of their activity. The ensemble's repertoire

includes graphic pieces by the most outstanding new music representatives as well as numerous original music projects.

Kwartludium has performed in the USA, Australia, China, South Korea, Georgia, Turkey and in most European countries. In 2009, the musicians took part in the prestigious *Re:New Music* project promoting distinguished European composers. In 2012, they were re-invited to the subsequent edition of the *New Music: New Audiences* programme. The ensemble has also performed as soloists with the Polish

Radio Symphony Orchestra, NOSPR, NFM Leopoldinum and the Berg Orchestra in Prague. Kwartludium has recorded numerous CDs for such record labels as DUX, Touch and Requiem Records. In 2022, the musicians were honoured with an award of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of their artistic activity. Moreover, the ensemble has received an Honorary Award of the Polish Composers' Union for their merits in the promotion of Polish contemporary music.

Jacaszek

Composer, producer and sound artist. He creates electroacoustic music combining electronically developed sounds with acoustic instruments (several solo albums).

He also works with other artists, in a variety of media including video, visual arts, choreography and photography. In addition, the artist composes film scores and live

theatre music. Member of the Polish Society for Electroacoustic Music and of the Polish Film Academy. He lives in Gdańsk, Poland.

