Background. One subject of inquiry, not only in musicology but in all disciplines of art, is creative process. But it is psychology which is most dedicated to this topic. With the development of different psychological conceptions, the approaches to the creative process have been changing. Recent psychological studies bring new depictions of this problem allowing the use of data not only from empirical research but also from the self-observations made by artists (Coughlan & Johnson, 2006). Witold Lutosławski was aware of his role as a composer in society. Writing music was for him not only fulfilling his own ambitions but above all self-executing of his obligation to the world in response to the special gift which he understood he had received. Therefore, the confrontation of the manuscripts with his public speeches can be a new approach to the studies of his music which so far have concentrated on particular works (Rae, 1994), musical technique (Thomas, 2001) or his thoughts (Skowron, 2001).

Aims. The purpose of this talk is to present Witold Lutosławski’s conception of his compositional process and its main components, such as, ‘key ideas’, ‘a general view’ and ‘the aim’. Secondly, I will present my research, supported by the analysis of Lutosławski’s sketches (mostly for Piano concerto), and this will be to check if he put the theory into his practice as a composer.

Method. The analysis of Witold Lutosławski’s conception will be conducted with the application of a psychological theory ‘creative interaction’ developed by Edward Nęcka. Although the theory for the first time was presented in 1987 (Nęcka, 1987), it is still relevant (Coughlan & Johnson, 2006). According to this theory, the compositional process is formulated as an entirety without any stages in contrast to psychodynamic conceptions which divide the compositional process into phases. Such an approach to the subject allows to focus on two main elements of the creative process such as ‘trial structures’ and ‘the aim’ which surprisingly correspond to Lutosławski’s elements of compositional process.

Results. Distinguished elements of a compositional process according to Witold Lutosławski correspond to Nęcka’s theory. As the analysis of the sketches reveals, Lutosławski respected his principle that the composer should express his artistic truth while composing.

Conclusions. Self-observations made by a composer became an illustration for the theory of compositional process. However, these results suggest new research hypotheses. As a result of this research, one can conclude that the studies on different genius composers’ creative thinking can also help in composition teaching.

Implications. The mechanisms of creative process are multi-faceted, regardless of whether the issue is musicology, science or business. Analyses of the musical genius’ creative process may help to understand these mechanisms and to control the creative process. With this knowledge, it would be possible to create tests which allow to detect outstanding individuals and to support their creative thinking.

Creative process is one of the biggest mysteries of the human mind. Scientists and psychologists have been using different means to reach the essence of the problem. One possible way to understand it is to ask the genius artists. However, sometimes they try to avoid answering and hedge or turn the reply into a joke like the response given by Witold Lutosławski:

“A painter has been asked: Cellular how do you achieve such a depth in your azures?”.

<<Well, I squeeze out the tube onto the palette and temper the paint>>. And Chagall, answering the question: <<Sir, why do your cows fly?>>, said: <<I don’t know>>" (Gwizdalanka & Meyer, 1999).

Method

Definition of creative process. According to Edward Nęcka, the author of Creative
interaction, the definition of creative process is as follows:

“psychological process leading to production of a new and valuable idea” (Nęcka, 2005).

**Background in psychology.** The issue of creative process has been vivid since the first work of art was created. The understanding of this phenomenon has been changing through the ages. However, it was not until the rise of 20th century psychological theories when it started to be a subject of a scientific research. Edward Nęcka (Nęcka, 2005) distinguishes four main classic theories of creative process:

- Associative theories like Mednick’s theory (Mednick, 1962) according to which the creative thinking is understood as connecting one idea with another by use of chain associations.
- Gestalt theories in which the solving of a problem is defined as completing an incomplete structure.
- Psychodynamic approach based on Freud’s theory and his concept of working of an unconscious mind.
- Behavioural approach in which creativity is understood as “generating new forms of behaviour”.

**Background in musicology.** Musicological formulations of creative process often refer to the psychodynamic approach. One of the most popular theories is Wallas’ theory of incubation where he makes use of Freud’s “unconscious mind”. Wallace distinguishes four stages of creative process:

1. Preparation – this is the stage when a creative person starts preliminaries including data acquisition.
2. Incubation – during this stage the ideas incubate (‘are hatched’) in the subconsciousness.
3. Illumination (revelation) – at this stage a person understands the essence of the problem.
4. Verification is the stage of valuating the new idea or task’s elaboration concerning accuracy, credibility and value.

On the other hand, Polish gestalt psychologists divide the creative process into three or two stages. Kozielecki’s conception (Kozielecki, 1987) speaks about generating ideas and verification. However, as tests on artists and scientists revealed the stages are not so strict. Some of the phases can come back, mix or join. In the last years psychologists have been presenting new theories of creative process among which Creative interaction by Edward Nęcka deserves attention.

**Creative interaction**

In his book Creative process and its limitations (Nęcka, 1987) Nęcka criticizes classic theories for establishing fixed phases of creative process. Instead he presents his conceptual schema of a homogenous creative process. He accepts segmentation of creative process into “units of analysis that could be useful for identification of intellectual operations which appear in the creative process”.

In conception of creative interaction there are two main elements of compositional process: trial structures and the aim. The essence of this formulation of creative process is a constant interaction between these two elements. Trial structures can be any products created in response to the aim. In music it can be musical ideas. The aim can be “anything that doesn’t exist in the so far acquired knowledge or resources of the environment”.

![Diagram of creative interaction according to Edward Nęcka.](image-url)
The function of trial structures is to meet the requirements imposed by the aim. However, sometimes it may be trial structures that cause emerging of the aim. The trial structure can also define the aim, make the artist realise the aim or abandon the aim. The essence of creative process lies in reducing discrepancy between these two elements of creative process. Nęcka states that it is not possible to eliminate completely discrepancy between the aim (the aim is ideal by nature) and trial structures (they are concrete by nature). Therefore the creative process never ends. It is the creator who makes evaluation and determines if the trial structure resembles the aim close enough to stop the work.

**Lutosławski’s theory**

Witold Lutosławski was definitely not a person who liked to give a speech in public. However, as a composer he felt obligated to do this. The analysis of lectures, interviews and other published writings shows that he had his own vision of creative process. Collecting these utterances together can reveal his theory of compositional process. The depiction below does not aspire to become a complete theory. However, it shows the most important elements of his thoughts about creative processes.

**Who is the composer?** According to Lutosławski, a composer is a person who received a special gift and therefore is obligated to the society to redeem his debt and create works. As he says:

“The role of a creative artist is to act in a world of ideas and then to give an expression of this world” (Gwizdalanka & Meyer, 1999).

He believes that the artist comes from the other world and a common man can access that ideal world only through the musical works.

**Who is the auditor?** The auditor is “a creation of Lutosławski’s imagination” (Gwizdalanka & Meyer, 1999) and as a matter of act it is the composer himself. He states that he cannot write for people he does not know. He can compose music for himself and hope that there would be somebody else who would like his works. The auditor plays an important part in the creative process. For Lutosławski the perception of the work belongs to the creative process.

**What is the aim of creative processes?** As he claims the compositional process is “creating complexes of specific psychological sensations to my auditor, fulfillment of which extends usually to a bigger number of performances of the same piece (Gwizdalanka & Meyer, 1999). That is why he could not compose music only to obtain “purely mathematical beauty of elements system”. He uses mathematics but the perception of the auditor is more important to him.

![Figure 2. The schema of compositional process according to Witold Lutosławski.](image-url)

**Definition of creative process.** In Nęcka’s definition of creative process there are two main criteria for the result of creative process: novelty and value. Witold Lutosławski also distinguished those two attributes of musical work. However, for Lutosławski they do not have equal importance. The novelty is a necessary condition for a musical work but it is not sufficient. The more important is the value. How valuable is the work it will be judged by the passing time.

**Achieving the aim.** Lutosławski understands that it is not possible to compose the ideal composition. In his writings he talks that his dreams are in conflict with the reality. This conflict can be equivalent to the discrepancy described by Nęcka. His dreams are the ideal aim and the reality is a trial structure which is limited by his compositional abilities and other obstacles. However, as a creative person he never doubts that his next piece will be at least better than the one he has just finished:
“As an auditor of my own compositions every time I feel a kind of a disappointment. It is an everlasting conflict between a dream and the reality and this is why I never come back to many of pieces I composed. (...) I always hope that the next work will be better than the previous one and this is – what I think – a mechanism of creative process” (Rasmussen 2001).

In his sketches this can be proved by the way he refers to some previous works. In some of the sketches there are verbal inscriptions where he refers to the pieces already finished and performed. In a new piece he wants to achieve a sound effect that he already tried to get in previous works. However, as the result in finished works didn’t satisfy him, he tries to realise a contrive idea in a new composition. Table 1 presents such references that occurred in his sketches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of work</th>
<th>The inscription</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trois poèmes d’Henri Michaux</td>
<td>on the model of Jeux (G) but well</td>
<td>A reference to Jeux venitiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinfonia 2</td>
<td>Rather improved and unsteady J.V. IV</td>
<td>A reference to the 4th part of Jeux venitiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinfonia 3</td>
<td>Not as in KO!</td>
<td>A Reference to Concerto for orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain 2</td>
<td>First version of first part of J.V. but well</td>
<td>A reference to Jeux venitiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano concerto</td>
<td>as in Partita, measure 84 (Chester) but better</td>
<td>A reference to Partita (published by Chester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orchestral “interventions” as in KW after 96 but...</td>
<td>A reference to Cello Concerto (Konzert wiolonczelowy), after measure 96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.** The table presents references to previously composed pieces in the sketches.

The elements of creative process. It is not only the auditor who is the element of creative process. To begin work on a new piece Lutosławski needs to have a few specific ideas (“key ideas”) and at least a vague vision of the piece (“general view”):

“At the start of composing I need to have two things: conjunction of <<key ideas>> and concept of the piece as a whole. (...) I very often imagine an unwritten piece as the city seen from high, from the plane. Then the descending allows me to specify the details of the vision. If one has such a vision and key ideas that can be seen from near then he can start composing” (Lutosławski, 1985). It is worth noticing that the key ideas correspond to Nęcka’s trial structures.

**Realisations of the theory**

General view. The Piano concerto (1987-88) can be an interesting illustration of Lutosławski’s theory of compositional process. The study reveals that at the beginning of the work he had a "general view" of the piece.

Table 2 presents how the concerto changed from the sketches to the final arrangement in the published score. In its final shape it has four parts. It seems that this conception was very strong and did not change through the whole compositional process. The first part was imagined as an introduction. In the second one he thought about a study (Etude) but then he resigned from entitling this part and left only the tempo mark Presto. In his commentary to the piece he talks about a chase which is close to the form of a study. It is clear that he had the most indistinct vision of the last two parts. He knew that he wanted to use a form of passacaglia or chaconne but first it was the third part where he marked it. Finally the last part received this form. However, at first he was not so convinced about using this form. The other possibility was a form of Metamorphoses which he used so far in two pieces: Funeral music and Grave. In the same time he wanted to put a slow segment into the third part even giving it a name Meditations.

There are different ways for writing down the general view: it can be verbal (like in Piano concerto) or graphic notation (like in Jeux venitiens or unfinished Concerto for two pianos).

**Key ideas.** This element can take different shapes. It can be a rhythm, melodic or even a harmonic idea. Sometimes these ideas have additional verbal expressions. For example among sketches for Piano concerto there are some with inscriptions: “poorly”, “capriccioso”, “buffo”, “gloomily”. As the analysis of sketches reveals, these are the ideas for the sound of the theme used in chaconne in the last part of the work which is repeated 17 times (each time with a use of different instruments).
**The final arrangement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I</th>
<th>Part II</th>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>Part IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>Moto perpetuo a fast chase in piano against the orchestra - soothing</td>
<td>Recitativo piano solo - largo - middle segment - cantilena</td>
<td>Ciacona (chain form) - recitativo piano - Coda (presto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Presto - Poco meno mosso - Lento</td>
<td>Piano solo - Largo - Piu mosso - Tempo I - Pochino meno mosso - Tempo I (cantabile)</td>
<td>...Poco meno mosso - Piu mosso - Ancora piu mosso - stasso movimento meno mosso (a piacere) - Presto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 1 [208-0002 up]</td>
<td>“Study” – presto pp solo recitativo</td>
<td>Metamorphoses Ciaconna -&gt; tutti + solo (alternately etc.)</td>
<td>return of tempo “Study” but “joyfully” chorale in the orchestra with decorations by piano,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 2 [208-0054]</td>
<td>A short introduction</td>
<td>Passacaglia (or Metamorphoses) = main part</td>
<td>After culmination Coda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 3 [208-0057]</td>
<td>Study (presto)</td>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>Con moto (!) Coda - Presto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 4 [208-0002 down]</td>
<td>Introduction Recitativo of piano Intesively A shock</td>
<td>Adagio lugubre – Metamorphoses - ciaconna</td>
<td>chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 5 [208-0009]</td>
<td>Adagio = Study’s trio</td>
<td>Metamorphoses – ciaconna - coda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch 6 [208-0004]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.** The table presents how changed the arrangement of the four parts of Piano concerto.

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**Conclusions**

This research shows that the theory (or rather a conceptual schema as the author names it) of creative interaction is very useful in analysis of creative processes of Witold Lutosławski. The main elements of creative process according to Edward Nęcka correspond to main elements of the creative process according to Lutosławski. They both are also convinced of infinity of the compositional process.

On the other hand, composer’s thoughts can be useful for particularizing theory of creative process and can suggest new hypotheses.

Another result is the verification that Lutosławski’s thoughts on creative process correspond with his composing practice. This means that he respected his principles and acted in unison with his artistic conscience.

Findings on mechanisms of creative processes in composing music can be transferred into other disciplines of art or even to science and business.

The paper presents only one example of the aim of a compositional process. The aim can not only be a specific piece but also a composer technique on which Lutosławski worked his whole life. But the primary aim of his life was to create an ideal work which would fulfil his composer intentions. However, as the theory of creative interaction shows, it is not possible to achieve the aim. Lutosławski’s compositional process was interrupted by his sudden death. As his
friends recall his last words on creative process were that there was always something left unfinished (Michalski, 2007). Acknowledgments. This research was supported by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (research grant Witold Lutosławski’s compositional process).

References


\[1\] The sketches for most of the Lutosławski’s works are the part of holdings of the Paul Sacher Foundation’s Archive in Basel (Switzerland).

\[2\] The first part of the number 208- is the number of microfilm in the Archive; the second one means the number of slide.