



NATIONAL  
CENTRE FOR  
CULTURE  
POLAND

# Dobrawa Czocher & Guests: *Sounds of the Souls*

20 November (Wednesday) — 7.30 pm

Mała Warszawa  
14 Otwocka Street

After a long streak of solo performances, Dobrawa Czocher saw her *Eufonie* festival concert as an opportunity for a new beginning. This means new arrangements of older music and completely new pieces, full of energy and affirmation of life. We will hear them performed by a trio composed of herself and artists close to her: Natalia Czekala (synthesizers) and Agnieszka Podlucka (viola). The entire programme is watched over by the spirit of Johann Sebastian Bach, whose works – in the form of quotes, adaptations, improvisations – co-create Czocher's musical story.

## Concert programme

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Unpublished new compositions  
by Dobrawa Czocher  
Piece inspired by Johann Sebastian  
Bach's Cello Suites\*  
Material from the album *Dreamscapes*  
(2023)

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### Performers:

**Dobrawa Czocher**  
composer, cello

**Agnieszka Podlucka**  
viola

**Natalia Czekala**  
synthesizers

\* *Eufonie* festival commission

## Dobrawa Czocher & Guests: *Sounds of the Souls*

### The Journey Continues

Dobrawa Czocher's debut album was heralded by a personal reflection: '*Dreamscapes* is a journey through dreaming, a moment when we truly meet with our subconscious mind. What can we experience there and how does that impact our life? This album takes us to the space out of this world, full of colours and unlimited possibilities of dreaming and dreams.<sup>1</sup> This journey – initiated with *Dreamscapes* – has been going on for the last year, has crossed the boundaries of the album appreciated by critics and listeners and has taken place in the space of subsequent concert halls. Poland, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom... Czocher has been presenting pieces from her first album in a special way. On stage, she is alone with the cello. There is also a looper at her feet: an electronic device that allows you to build harmonic structures, musical landscapes drawn with sequences, added gradually, line by line. The above results in compositions resembling sound fabrics. You close your eyes and hear a polyphonic ensemble and the texture of a quasi-cello orchestra – dense and deep. However, the possibilities offered by electronics come at a price. All music – its form, energy and expression – rests in the hands of one person. Solo performance offers the privilege of independent creation, but it is also a great responsibility, not to mention the related hardships. Solo can mean: lonely.

The *Eufonie* festival is a time of encounters, dialogue and conversation. The invitation to participate in this event coincided with Czocher's need for a change, for a new opening and the desire to do something special – this time with other people. The time of her solo journey has come to an end. The cellist has invited to the new project artists she has known for years, with whom she shares the past of making chamber music together and whose artistic activity she highly values. These are the pianist Natalia Czekala and the violist Agnieszka Podlucka. Piano, cello, violin – a classic piano trio? Is this a dialogue with early music, one of the themes of this year's edition of the *Eufonie* festival? Yes and no: the trio refers to the past, but this time, Czekala trades the piano (so close to her) for synthesizers.

The time preceding the *Eufonie* festival coincided with the period of creative ferment, searching for inspiration, creating new compositions – already in the trio. In Dobrawa Czocher's artistic quest, the synthesizer appeared as a natural partner of the looper, expanding and complementing the sound capabilities of the cello and the viola. The looper itself also works differently here: it no longer builds multi-layered structures; instead, it takes second place, creates ambient atmospheres and a colourful background against which the musical conversation of the three artists takes place.

The *Eufonie* concert is one of the first opportunities to listen to new music by Czocher. Music different from what can be heard on *Dreamscapes* and showing where the solo journey has led the artist. What is this music like? In our conversation, she describes it eloquently: 'These are works that show that I am in a different place as a person and as a composer. There is more strength and less melancholy, which accompanied me on the first album. They bring new energy, a special affirmation of life.'<sup>2</sup> An affirmation that largely results from meeting other artists, from musical coexistence on stage, mutual inspiration, stimulation, listening. You can see how much it affects her compositions by listening to the pieces from the *Dreamscapes* album – they will appear in the prepared programme in a changed version, written for three performers. The same, and yet completely different.

Dobrawa Czocher's older and newer music is watched over by... What should we call him? The good spirit? The master? The friend? Johann Sebastian Bach. His cello pieces, a staple for this instrument, have accompanied the artist for many years. A festival combining the new with the old is an opportunity for her to return to playing Bach. However, this is not an opportunity for a new interpretation of the text of these masterpieces, but rather for playing memories of Bach, experiences of his music and its message, inspirations from it, influences, emotions, stories. Therefore, in Czocher's music, there are flashes and afterimages of pieces by the Leipzig cantor. Sometimes woven into original compositions, and sometimes flashing between them, in the foreground or in the background – like musical palimpsests, traces of old slides. An attentive ear will recognise motifs, quotes, fragments, crumbs of the *Preludes* from Suites Nos. 5 and 6 for solo cello or of the *Sarabande* from Suite No. 4. Weaving motifs of the Baroque master's music into her own works is also a kind of encounter, looking for inspiration in a dialogue with another artist.

As Dobrawa Czocher says: 'It is impossible to build such energy alone, as when you have another person next to you, who is a different type of artist, who introduces a new quality. This is something that has always fascinated me, something that I love: this understanding in music, when we exchange ideas, support each other with a personal vision. This is something that I have missed and that I will be able to enjoy again on the occasion of the *Eufonie* festival.'<sup>3</sup> Let us also enjoy it. From lonely melancholy to the affirmation of life, encounters and joy. The journey continues.

Mariusz Gradowski

<sup>1</sup> Dobrawa Czocher's website, <https://dobrawaczocher.com/> (accessed 14.08.2024).

<sup>2</sup> Dobrawa Czocher in a telephone conversation with Mariusz Gradowski, 16.07.2024.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Dobrawa Czocher – composer, cello



Skarbek, photography

Dobrawa Czocher (b. 1991) is a Polish cellist and composer. She graduated from the Chopin University of Music in Warsaw in the cello class of Piotr Hausenplas and from the

Hochschule für Musik in Detmold (Germany) under Alexander Gebert. Prizewinner in a number of competitions as both a soloist and chamber musician; she has also participated in numerous international masterclasses and music festivals. Between 2018–2023, she was a soloist/leader of the Mieczysław Karłowicz

Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in Szczecin; she has also performed in many prestigious concert halls in Poland and abroad. For many years, Dobrawa Czocher has been cooperating with her close friend, the pianist Hania Rani. In 2015, the artists released the album *Biała Flaga [White Flag]*, featuring arrangements of Grzegorz Ciechowski's music. The album received excellent reviews, attracting interest not only of the music community and journalists, but also of the audience. The next album by the Rani-Czocher duo, *Inner Symphonies*, was released in 2021 by the legendary label Deutsche Grammophon. Thus, the artists became the youngest composing duo in the label's history.

In 2023, Dobrawa Czocher released her debut solo album *Dreamscapes* on the BMG Modern Recordings label, on which she included her own compositions for cello. In the same year, the album was nominated in six categories (including instrumentalist of the year and composer of the year) for the prestigious German Opus Klassik award. The artist has presented her music in various concert halls all over Europe, including in London, Berlin, Leipzig, Bari and on the Spanish island of Lanzarote. Since the release of *Inner Symphonies*, she has been constantly expanding her compositional output, writing music for theatre plays and music installations.

## Agnieszka Podlucka – viola



Skarbek, photography

Graduate of the Chopin University of Music in the violin class of Jan Stanienda and in the viola class of Piotr Reichert and Katarzyna Budnik. Between 2019–2021, she served as deputy leader of

the violas in the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. Since December 2021, she has been employed at the Warsaw Philharmonic as a violist. In addition, Agnieszka Podlucka is an assistant in a viola and a chamber music

class at her alma mater. Between 2020–2021, she studied period violin in the class of Martyna Pastuszka at the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. Since 2021, she has been a member of the Tansman Trio, which released its debut album *Tansman Trio Plays Tansman* in December 2023. She has won a number of prizes in such competitions as the first 'Primuz' International Strings Competition in Łódź (2021, first prize), the second International Bach Solo Competition in Poznań (2021, first prize) or the eleventh Michał Spisak International

Music Competition in Dąbrowa Górnicza (2017, first prize in the viola category). Agnieszka Podlucka has participated in a number of prestigious masterclasses and festivals, including the International Summer Academy of the mdw in Vienna, Heidelberger Frühling, the International Chamber Music Festival in Miesbach, the International iPalpiti Music Festival in the USA and the International Musethica Chamber Music Festival (Spain, Sweden, Germany). She has performed in the Netherlands, Austria, the USA, Germany, Japan and South Korea.

## Natalia Czeakała – synthesizers



Maria Biel

Pianist, composer, vocalist, mom of Miłka and Ninka. She studied classical music for seventeen years, which she divided between three cities: Poznań, Warsaw and Vienna. After graduation,

she decided to trust her own musical instincts and began composing. At the beginning of this path, she established the ethno-jazz band T/Aboret, in which she still plays and creates. Since then, she has worked in many musical fields: she has composed music for over thirty plays and performative readings, animated cartoons, radio plays and short

films; she has also been active as a music educator – Natalia works with people with disabilities in the 'Tośmy są' Unhampered Music Creation Club. She co-creates many of her projects with Krzysztof Guzowicz, combining family life with travelling and music. In music, she looks for emotions, in life – for awe. Above all, she values touching moments.