



# Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI

## Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

**Witold Roman Lutosławski** was a Polish composer and conductor. Among the major composers of 20th-century classical music, he is "generally regarded as the most significant Polish composer since Szymanowski, and possibly the greatest Polish composer since Chopin". His compositions—of which he was a notable conductor—include representatives of most traditional genres, aside from opera: symphonies, **concertos**, orchestral song cycles, other orchestral works, and chamber works. Among his best known works are his four symphonies, the Variations on a Theme by Paganini (1941), the Concerto for Orchestra (1954), and his cello concerto (1970). During his youth, Lutosławski studied piano and composition in Warsaw. His early works were influenced by Polish folk music and demonstrated a wide range of rich atmospheric textures. His folk-inspired music includes the Concerto for Orchestra (1954)—which first brought him international renown—and *Dance Preludes* (1955), which he described as a "farewell to folklore". From the late 1950s he began developing new, characteristic composition techniques. He introduced limited aleatoric elements, while retaining tight control of his music's material, architecture, and performance. He also evolved his practice of building harmonies from small groups of musical intervals. During World War II, after narrowly escaping German capture, Lutosławski made a living playing the piano in Warsaw bars. After the war, Stalinist authorities banned his First Symphony for being "formalist": accessible only to an elite. Rejecting anti-formalism as an unjustified retrograde step, Lutosławski resolutely strove to maintain his artistic integrity, providing artistic support to the Solidarity movement throughout the 1980s. He received numerous awards and honours, including the Grawemeyer Award and a Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal. In 1994, Lutosławski was awarded Poland's highest honour, the Order of the White Eagle. Through the mid-1980s, Lutosławski composed three pieces called *łańcuch* ("Chain"), which refers to the way the music is constructed from contrasting strands which overlap like the links of a chain. *Chain 2* was written for Anne-Sophie Mutter (commissioned by Sacher), and for Mutter he also orchestrated his slightly earlier *Partita* for violin and piano, providing a new linking Interlude, so that when played together the Partita, Interlude, and *Chain 2* form his longest work. In 1985, the Third Symphony earned Lutosławski the first Grawemeyer Prize from the University of Louisville, Kentucky. The significance of the prize lay not just in its prestige but in the size of its financial award (then US\$150,000). The award is intended to remove recipients' financial concerns for a period to allow them to concentrate on serious composition. In a gesture of altruism, Lutosławski announced that he would use the fund to set up a scholarship to enable young Polish composers to study abroad; Lutosławski also directed that his fee from the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra for *Chain 3* should go to this scholarship fund. In 1986, Lutosławski was presented (by Tippett) with the rarely awarded Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal during a concert in which Lutosławski conducted his Third Symphony; also that year a major celebration of his work was made at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. In addition, he was awarded honorary doctorates at several universities worldwide, including Cambridge.

The **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra** is a composition for solo piano and orchestra by the Polish composer Witold Lutosławski. The music was commissioned by the Salzburg Festival. It was first performed at the festival on August 19, 1988 by the pianist Krystian Zimerman and the Austrian Radio Orchestra under the direction of the composer. Lutosławski dedicated the piece to Zimerman. The concerto has a duration of roughly 27 minutes and is cast in four movements played without pause. The first movement comprises four sections, the first and third of which Lutosławski described as possessing "nonchalant" motifs. Conversely, he described the movement's second and fourth sections as "filled with a broad cantilena, finally leading to the highpoint of the whole movement." The composer called the second movement a "'moto perpetuo,' a quick 'chase' by the piano against the background of the orchestra which ends by calmly subsiding in preparation for the third movement." The third movement begins with a recitative for the soloist, out of which a *largo* theme develops. The orchestra is introduced later in the movement, contrasting the beginning with "moments of a more sudden, dramatic character." Finally, the orchestra again subsides and the cantilena returns, being performed by the soloist alone. The structure of the fourth movement alludes to a Baroque chaconne. Its theme is played by the orchestra and repeated several times while the pianist presents different episodes. The two ideas are cast in a "chain-form" and thus do not begin or end concurrently until near the end of the movement. A shortened version of the theme is played by the orchestra one last time before a brief piano recitative and coda "presto" conclude the piece. The work is scored for a solo piano and a large orchestra consisting of three flutes (doubling piccolo), three oboes, three clarinets (doubling E-flat clarinet and bass

clarinet), three bassoons (doubling contrabassoon), four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, three percussionists, harp, and strings.