

11 o'clock at night has passed.

Radio 357.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Good evening. Agnieszka Sz wajgier at the microphone. Like every Sunday, I welcome you all on this beautiful night, and I invite you to the next meeting with classical music, old music, and an extraordinary man who will be our guest in a moment. But before I present him, I will say that today you will hear many different, unique names of instruments. Renaissance instruments that we used in olden days in Poland. These will be names such as Cornamuse, Chalumeau, Rauschpfeife Corneto, Flute, Traverso, Schalamo. All these instruments, maybe not all of them, but we will try to make most of these instruments be heard today during the broadcast. This is because soon in our studio with us, there will be a man who can make these instruments, who spends hours in his studio so that he can listen to these amazing sounds. In a minute, Grzegorz Tomaszewicz, well, what should we call someone who makes wind instruments? In a moment, we will ask Grzegorz about this, and now we will get a bit into a renaissance mood.

- music

Like I said, it would give off a feeling of the Renaissance. We heard a sham, an olden day brass instrument, which was played mainly in the open air. This loud instrument was also played at the Royal Courts. This instrument came from the workshop of Grzegorz Tomaszewicz. Good evening.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Good evening.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Tell me, what to call such a person who makes wind instruments? A luthier, a maker, an artisan?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

There is no term in Poland. There is no name for a man who does what I do. If someone calls me a luthier, I'd say I'm not a luthier because the term luthier simply describes very precisely a person who makes string instruments.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

So I'm I'm going to refer to you as a maker, craftsman, maybe these two words interchangeably. What does your studio look like?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

My workshop is quite large

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

But you are the only one inside.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Yes, I am. It's me and my loneliness in making these instruments. I do not have employees because I have no patience to keep correcting them. These instruments are a small obsession that has been with me since I was 15. I don't know why.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Have you demonstrated such a passion for making things yourself already as a little boy? Do you have an artist in mind?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

When I was a small child, about 10 years old, I just always constructed something. We had a group of friends in the neighborhood, and for example, I was constructing, I made slingshots for

them, and it was great fun shooting with a slingshot. One time, one of my friends almost lost his eye. I kept making boats for them. I built crossbows for them with arrows.

When I was nine years old, I was taking apart and putting back together bikes. Yeah, it somehow happened naturally.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
Do you remember your first instrument?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Oh, yes. As a young man, I played the transverse flute and the basoon, and one day, I went to London. Being a young man, I had to earn money. I was renovating houses and that basoon I sold. I went to French institute where I borrowed an album with old music, and I just felt as if someone had hit me. Suddenly, I heard that this is the music, this is the vibration, That is in me. It was French music, the troubadour from the 13th century. And I knew right then and there that I wanted to play only such music. There were already early music ensembles playing here, but it was still in the early stages then. In London, with my first weekly salary I bought, I remember I went to the early music shop and bought my first flute. My whole salary went to it. I returned to Poland. Suddenly, it turned out that other instruments were also needed. I couldn't afford it. It should be remembered that we were not earning enough in Poland then. I made the first instrument, I'm not kidding, out of the shovel handle. Truly, I did not have seasoned wood, and I came up with the idea that such seasoned wood would be in the handle of a shovel because they must be seasoned, they must be strong.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
And did you make holes in it?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Yes, I did. I made an instrument out of it, and and toured for three years playing concerts on it.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
You performed concerts on a shovel? No, no. But a plate, it had just Do re mi, fa , sol. La? right? It had all the sounds, right?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Yes, of course. I made a professional instrument. And Anyway, this instrument was liked by my colleagues so much that I started receiving orders.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
Wow, so you probably keep this shovel somewhere. You certainly didn't throw it away.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Well, I do have this first instrument. Yes, I do.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
But tell me one thing, because there was a moment when your life took a turn, you were a musician, you played, you toured around Europe. What happened that you decided to leave all this and chose to build instruments regardless? After all, you had your band that toured.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
I had great colleagues in the band, and one of them was a lady. At one point, we had a tour of 30 concerts within a month around all of Poland. It was winter. We were returning from Zgorzelec from the last concert. Everyone was just on such an adrenaline rush that we had a great tour that we played cool concerts. Then I notified my friends that I'm leaving and leaving the band to them, that they are free to use all the materials as well as the band's brand name, because I just want to do something else in my life. It is to make these instruments. I was already I was already making instruments at that time, but I wanted to focus solely on it.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:
Were you not sorry to leave it all?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
I played a lot of concerts. I fulfilled myself as a musician. I've done what I wanted to do, such as recording CDs, television programs, and teaching. I had about a thousand students who learned from me. I was a director of various festivals. I realized myself as a musician. I did what I wanted to do, and I decided to do something different in my life.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:
One of the makers, builders of instruments from the Netherlands, confessed that when he was making one of his first instruments, it was a corneto. We can tell you that this is a former wind instrument popular in Italy. Resembling in sound a bit that of a trumpet, he admitted to me that when he made one of his first corneto and had to give it to the client who ordered it, he slept with this instrument that night before parting with it. I'm curious, have you ever had a similar experience of not wanting to give it away?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
I've never had such extreme stories to sleep with an instrument. However, yes, people who do such work are quite eccentric. This is accompanied by great emotions, maybe not the ones with sleeping, but I experience it in slightly different way.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:
So how was it for you?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
First of all, in my case, when I was 15, I couldn't play any instrument. In my family, a few people played instruments, but I couldn't. I dreamed of flutes. I simply dreamed that I played flutes. Complete obsession.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:
But you must have seen something in some kind a movie.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Exactly. This mystery has stayed with me all my life because these were persistent dreams that kept returning, that I touched the flutes, that I played them. In the end, one of my colleagues took pity on me, and he bought one somewhere. Just got an old 19th century transverse flute made out of ebony wood. He gave it to me and it was the most beautiful day in my life. Later there were obviously more of them. And yes, now when I meet my colleagues, they ask: Grzesiek what do you do? And I say, well, I'm an entrepreneur, I make instruments. But you are a musician. I say, yes, I used to perform a lot of concerts. Now I have been a manufacturer of instruments for 25 years. 2 or 3 friends even told me, you know, that back in school you said that you would make musical instruments.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:
Okay. But the names of the instruments that can be seen on your website and which you make, we would say, sound mysterious, like a pomrot, rauschpfeife, cynk, There might also be a flute. These are the names that today you know, might bring out a smile, because we have absolutely no idea what these instruments are. I even think that we might not be able to recognize the sounds of these instruments.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
Sure. Yes, because my work is about recreating old instruments. I produce instruments that existed in the Middle Ages. Renaissance, Baroque and classical period. I can also make contemporary flutes, for example folk instruments or 19th century. Very beautiful English flutes. Copies.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

But you have some kind of radar when you are walking around the museum, for example, and see a painting on which there are musicians. Do you try to somehow figure out how this instrument was made? How do you recreate these instruments?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

This is complicated because in fact, as you said, these instruments have very strange names and are very strange overall, but our ancestors played them. Usually these were the instruments that were used at the royal courts. Some instruments have survived. There are original instruments in the museums. And frankly, very often it's so happens that there are drawings in these museums, detailed drawings on how this instrument is made. There are simply are some dimensions described?

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Well, yes, but dimensions are not everything.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

To make instruments, you need to have a lot of knowledge from various fields. You have to know metalworking, woodworking, chemistry and have an imagination. Even if we have such accurate plans, we are not sure if it will result in a good instrument. Because these fluids, throughout all these centuries to our modern times, have undergone smaller or greater destruction or deformations. Therefore, a man like me must know where to improve this instrument so that it plays the way it did, for instance, in the 18th century.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

In a moment mr Grzegorz tell us what the process of the woodwind instrument master who built the instruments looked like. But among the instruments you make, we mentioned, this name cornamuse. Now, I would like to invite you to listen to the sound of this instrument. Well, now we can hear it. This is not a corn. Amused yet? For now it's a lute. And in a moment, here it is.

- music

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

We have just heard the instrument, which is called the Cornish Muse, an instrument with a double reed hidden under the so-called cap. One plays this instrument by blowing the air inside. It has holes for the fingers, so we play it by letting the air in and covering the holes. Simply put, it's just that in the studio we have Grzegorz Tomaszewicz- the woodwind instrument maker. The process of making these instruments alone seems to be fascinating. But tell me from the beginning, where do you start? What is the very first step?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

The process is the same as it was 500 years ago or 400 years ago. In principle, one follows the same path that the instrument maker went through in the 16th and 17th century. So let's start with the choice of wood. There's a lot of instruments. In the olden days were made out of three species that grew in Europe. In Poland we have lakes, we have sea, plains, mountains, everything. And in our beautiful mountains, excellent species of trees grow, such as cherry like mountain sycamore like maple, which are great for instruments. It all starts with looking for wood. I have a supplier who has been supplying me with wood for 20 years. He solidly prepares the wood for me for my instruments. First of all, it has to be very well and naturally, whether it's for 6 or 7 or even eight years. So it is cured naturally. It is turned over every year, moved. It is raised and the wind whips it. Sometimes some water falls on to it if it rains.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Well has such former master not gone to the forest?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

He has done exactly so, Yes. Of course. Yes. I have it easier here. I have the would already prepared. But former Masters, very often were going to the forest and simply selecting their wood themselves like they would pick one piece because it had a good winding and was lying on a

good slope. They would know, for example, that the mineral composition of the soil is very good there, so it will resonate well. This was done by Stradivarius, for example, with his violins. Everyone is trying to solve the mystery as to why these violins play like that.? There is a lot involved in selecting the proper wood.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I have heard that it has to do with the varnish, but no, it is not true.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

It is not just the varnish, it is the craftsmanship of this man. Because these are things in musical instruments, there are, in fact, dozens of small elements that actually affect each other, and the sum of their interaction gives the effect that either it sounds well or not. For instance, when making a transverse flute or any other instrument, if you make a mistake in building the channel, in resizing the flute channel and make a mistake of a half a millimeter. This flute may stop sounding at all or will have a poor sound, or, for example, will have a bad intonation.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Remember, I once watched such a movie Purple Violin. You probably know it. The story went that the master added to the instrument. Probably he added it to the varnish, the blood of his late wife. And this violin was unique. It was purple because it was dyed with this blood.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

This is just a publicity stunt.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

That was the blood added?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Absolutely not. It's nonsense.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I am relieved.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

He knew how to advertise the violin. Because this is a trade too. It must be remembered that in addition to this great pleasure of mine, I still have to be able to sell these instruments and interest musicians in them.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

How much time does it take for you to make such an instrument? How long does it take?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

About a month. One and a half. What I'll be. First you shape it, then you drill holes for the lips. Holes for the fingers. Some flutes have flaps. Some have no flaps. Then special oils are used. And that's what this art is all about.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

We hear that this process of creating an instrument is complicated, but that is an understatement.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Very complicated.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Yes, honestly. How many times are we ready to give up this job? How many times have you had the flute crack in your hands?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Very often. Very often? No. Well, at that moment, very ugly words are just flying around a small piece of grenadier or ebony. Cause let's suppose to make a flute. It costs €150. Well, now it is. It will be about a thousand zlotys. So the wood itself is already very expensive. And now let's imagine that we are making this flute, and this flute has cracked. It can be only thrown away. These are emotions. It is, it is. Especially when there is an exceptionally beautiful piece of wood that has, for example, already produced a good sound. Suddenly something happens that what we broke it is just annoying. Yeah, and here is where a nature misstep. Because when a man reaches his highest, greatest potential, because he has a knowledge skills and now it is all dying. But it makes no sense.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

What do you feel when you hear your flute playing somewhere at the concert? Do you get recordings? What can it be compared to?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Well, it is like, uh, always. It is always a reward. A very nice reward. And to hear your instrument in the hands of a good musician. To know the path of this instrument that I was talking about earlier. So I just bring wood out of the mountains and later an instrument is made of it. It is somewhat fairy tale like, you can say, and later on the stage the musician plays the concert and there is a strange reaction. Firstly, because he plays beautifully, but secondly because of people are sitting and listening to his music and it affects them. This whole process from the forest later making the instrument in solitude. A great deal of concentration, is not to make mistakes. Later it goes to the musician and then people can and be full of admiration. These are emotions. We convey emotions through instruments.

-music

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

And you just made me realize that we often overlook this path of creation by the master craftsman. I mean, we actually have the music we hear and it touches us, but we don't think about the instrument, how important the instrument is, and also that it was created by someone. There's always an audience present as well

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

But that's how it is with everything that surrounds us. We are sitting in a studio where there is a computer, where there is a microphone, just like an entire team designs cars and later others are impressed by them. I have a friend who works for a company that constructs cars, and he boasted that he has been creating an interior for roof trimming for some German car for a year and a half.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

Right now we can hear one of the flutes that were created in your studio. A crystal clear sound. Beautiful. What kind of reaction? One that you remember. Some kind of compliment. The admiration from a musician.?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

I once sent a set of flutes to Italy, where they lay these flutes a lot. That musician said he was so happy to have them because he felt as if they were like his second skin. They made him feel good.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

Yes, I heard this as well. Many people say that the instrument is an extension of your body and it isn't stupid at all.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

It is not stupid. It is an absolutely normal phenomenon. For example, when I was still a student. My bassoon broke down because I played bassoon too. So it broke down and I had to get it fixed. So I had nothing to play for a few days. And I got one from my professor. He lent me his

bassoon. I got used to it, and it became quite natural for me that for 2 or 3 days I played it just like him. You see, you have to remember that the same instrument played by many musicians will sound differently for each of them. This is actually a beautiful thing. We simply blow into the instrument, our energy, our air, something what is only ours. And please imagine that I played my professor's bassoon for 2 or 3 days, sounding like him. In time, it quieted down in a way, as if the sound of this instrument was becoming my own.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I know that's how it is, because this also happened to me at the Musical Academy and also borrowing the oboe.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

You see, I let someone explain this to us.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I wanted to ask you for an explanation. Is there any logical explanation for how it is recorded in the wood?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Oh, indeed. There is a puzzle there as to why it works like this.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I remember when you once said that a straight flute is paradoxically, the most difficult instrument to make for the woodwind master craftsman.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Yes that's true. I'm currently not making straight flute my former company in Cracow. T&S produced straight flutes. We were a small company, but for a few years we released thousands of flutes. Thousands. It is hard to believe that.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Can it be that our listeners or their children played with them at schools?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Very likely.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

It is probably still the case that straight flutes are still played at school in music class. I don't think this has changed. Or has it?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

The fact is that our politicians sometimes ...

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

Perhaps we shouldn't go there...

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

I will not talk about politics, but unfortunately someone once we used to have , we had musical education in Polish schools. Learning to play instruments such as flutes. And it was good. It was a good idea.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:

I'm realizing many things during this conversation, and I think that my generation, for example, when we played flutes in primary school or when our listeners did or their children, there was a good chance that we might have played your flutes.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Have played my flutes for sure. Because there were thousands of these flutes. We have made about 30, 35,000 of these.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

You can imagine how many people hate you now because they had to practice. Mary had a little lamb..

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Life without flutes is chaos...

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

This would be a good punchline, but I still want to roast you a bit longer. Forgive me. Just bear with me. Since you said something interesting that you were a schoolteacher, you were musician. You performed at the concerts. You organized festivals. You were the artistic director of the early music ensembles. And now, look, you chose the path of a loner surrounding yourself by four walls...

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

No, I consciously chose this path. Sometimes it is annoying, because I'm alone in the studio. I work for a very long time. I joke that it's eight days a week. Sometimes I finish my work at midnight. I come back home so exhausted that I crash.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

Well, you're by yourself.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

I chose this way. It suits me. The fact that I am alone and doing something is - I'll say it this way. Yes, this type of concentration is a little bit addictive. The concentration is so intense that you could say the air sparks around when you work. For example, I made a very complicated early baroque flute for one flutist. It is called an Asisi, named after a place in France. It has very complex construction. It takes a lot of concentration to make one set.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

You've said air sparks?

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Yes, it sparks. It sparks because you have to be focused so much. That is why this loneliness very rarely gets to me. Because I just don't think about it. Because I don't have time. I simply have to get certain things done.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

When people go to the shooting range, I imagine that this is a place where you can paradoxically disassociate even though you can hear bangs around you, just like the noise of your machines. Your focus must be so great that you can't think about anything else.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

Yes, yes. That's it. Oh, yes. That's what it's like.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

Maybe this is some kind of reset. That's how I imagine it. You know,

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:

I can't allow this to happen while working with machines. I cannot think about other things because these are machines. If I make a mistake, then this machine can injure me. Many people forget about that. But sometimes, es, sometimes I have crises and then I just have to do something else. It works for me. I wait for the holidays to just go to Italy and stroll around a bit. That's where I feel best.

Agnieszka Szwaigier:

Thank you very much for this pleasant conversation.

Grzegorz Tomaszewicz:
It's time to go to sleep. It's late.

Agnieszka Sz wajgier:
Let's do so.