

Musical METAMORPHOSES - mini home concerts with a pinch of history – episode 1.

I warmly welcome you to my new podcast with the somewhat mysterious title ‘Musical METAMORPHOSES – mini concerts with a pinch of history.’ My name is Aleksandra Bobrowska, I’m a pianist, fascinated by the history of classical music, and I love meeting listeners to share my musical passion with and I’m thrilled you’re with me today! Why is the podcast called Metamorphoses? The word metamorphosis comes from the Greek *metamórphōsis* (μεταμόρφωσις), composed of the elements: *meta* (beyond, change) and *morphē* (shape, form), literally meaning "transformation of form" or "transformation"; the term denotes a fundamental change in one’s form, appearance, character, or way of thinking, often – but not always – a radical and sudden change.

So what will undergo a metamorphosis during our meetings? I sincerely hope that they will bring about a certain change in the way we perceive classical music, a history of which contains countless fascinating chapters, many of which don't always reach a wide audience through popular media. Each podcast episode will follow a simple format: first, a short (or longer, depending on the situation! :)) introduction to the history of a specific piece or group of works, and immediately after the story, I will play a mini piano concerto featuring the music previously discussed. Importantly, the podcast is recorded at my home, so it's not a perfect production created in the sterile conditions of a recording studio - its format is an attempt to capture the everyday and natural experience of music. Our meetings will therefore look a bit like sitting together in my living room over a warm cup of tea. While I'm telling you about music, I'll play something to illustrate the story on the piano next to it. Sometimes, in podcasts, the quiet sounds of the street outside my window or everyday home life may appear in the background, also my performances don't aim for interpretive perfection—they will focus primarily on the simple, natural message of the music presented. In the end of the day, we are at home, what counts here is the authenticity, not the perfection.

I hope that thanks to the podcast format mentioned above, classical music will become a daily pleasure for you, and that your encounters with it will take on new, fresh forms. I also believe that each of us can see ourselves reflected in music, as if in a mirror – I do hope that the short musical examples presented in the series will give you space to be with yourself and listen to your own emotions, as well as help you to engage in a dialogue with them. Music is a universal language that serves interpersonal communication, enabling a journey through time and space, connecting us with people who lived hundreds of years before us. Let's discover their stories together, listen to what they have to say to us today, and enjoy the immense wealth of musical diversity that we now have at our disposal.

Here starts our adventure – today, to begin with, a piece full of exceptional charm, although very short and simple in its structure. We're talking about "Memme Musi" by Arvo Pärt, a now ninety-year-old composer from Estonia who, like few others in music, demonstrates that sometimes less is a whole lot. In the 1960s, Pärt worked at the Estonian State Puppet Theatre, writing music for a total of seven performances. The piano piece "Memme Musi" comes from the famous 1968 children's play of the same name by Elar Kuus, which tells the story of a wonderful family of bunnies. In the play, a mother's kiss is a powerful secret weapon for the bunny children – it gives them courage and protects them from all dangers. Arvo Pärt said that this symbol has a deeper meaning: "When a child leaves home in the morning, they always receive a kiss from their mother or a hug on the way. But in reality, it's for life – like a mother's blessing." The composer dedicated the piece to his mother.

To stay within the context of "family," home-based music-making, to kick things off, I'll also be reaching for "La chanson de ma grand-mère," which literally means "My Grandmother's Song"- a piece by Mario Foscara, or rather Marie Foscara Damaschino, who wrote under the pseudonym Mario Foscara - a Paris-born composer of Italian descent from the Romantic era. Interestingly, her first husband, Fernandès Patrikios, was Greek, which is why Mario Foscara is also considered a Greek composer by some Greeks. And why did she even use a pseudonym? She lived at a time when women still had great difficulty publishing their works freely. I'll be sharing the reasons for this situation and the stories of many other female composers throughout the centuries in more detail in our series starting in January, so if this topic resonates with you, I invite you to follow along! Meanwhile, before I give you a musical kiss from Arvo Pärt and present how Maria's grandmother from Paris used to sing, I will just add that the first five episodes of the Musical Metamorphoses series are possible thanks to the support of a scholarship from the National Recovery Plan for Culture, which was financed by the European Union.

And now, let's hear some music! I will only tell you that Arvo Pärt is going to be present, although in a version completely different from today's cheerful and bright one, in our next episode too - see you soon!