

Colloquium May 1, 2026

Malwina Marciniak (Nowowiejski Academy of Music and Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Temple University)

Title: “Narrative Negations in 21st Century Polish Piano Concertos”

Abstract:

Concerto may be considered a highly narrative genre due to the relationship between the two opposing sound objects, the tendency to build an overarching dramatic-architectural whole, and the virtuosic, showpiece endings, which are a kind of narrative gesture inherent to the genre. The concerto genre remains popular today, though its narrative qualities are often influenced by the aesthetics and techniques typical of postmodernism, with new approaches to temporality and the shape of musical plot, and with solutions that negate the traditional, teleological, and straightforward course of the narrative.

During this talk, I will present analyses of selected new piano concertos through the lens of the strategies proposed by Nicholas Reyland, under the title *narrative negations* (2013). *Disnarration*, *denarration*, *subjunctive narration* and *bifurcated narration*, adopted from the literary theories by B. Richardson, G. Prince, M. Fitzpatrick, and A. Soldofsky, place the plot category at the center, understood as ‘a teleological sequence of events linked by some principle of causation.’ Reyland presented methods of shaping the plot in which the traditional, linear, causal development of musical events has been modified in various ways. These categories became one of the perspectives employed in my recent project dedicated to new narratives in 21st-century piano concertos. I will present the main assumptions of the aforementioned strategies and illustrate them with a selection of piano concertos by foremost Polish composers (i.e., Krzysztof Penderecki, Zbigniew Bargielski, Agata Zubel, Aleksander Nowak). I will show how they affect the musical structure, the narrative qualities of a discourse, and the meanings they convey, reflecting important aspects of postmodern culture.

Bio: Malwina Marciniak is a pianist and theorist, who holds a PhD in music theory for a dissertation on 21st-century piano concertos by Polish composers in the context of genre transformations and theories of musical narrative. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, Poland, a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Temple University for the Spring Semester 2025-26. Her research interests include contemporary instrumental music, piano literature, and new analytical methods, including semiotic and narratological theories.

Malwina is the author of a number of scholarly articles in reviewed music periodicals; she is also a speaker at national and international scientific conferences (Italy, Serbia, Spain, Portugal, the U.K. and U.S.A.). She has given guest lectures in music conservatories in Rome and Parma. As a pianist, Malwina is a multiple-time winner of international piano competitions and has performed at assorted venues in Poland and abroad. She joined the European Union Youth Orchestra tour, performing at St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna and at the Bolzano Music Festival. Malwina frequently undertakes interdisciplinary projects comprising theory and performance.