Interview by Robert Schulslaper, Review by Karl F. Miller,

Joanna Kurkowicz and The Joy of Discovery

By Robert Schulslaper

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Although Joanna Kurkowicz is no stranger to *Fanfare*, having previously participated in David DeBoor Canfield's interview with her colleague, composer John McDonald (*Fanfare* 37:3), this is her first solo venture into feature territory. It's high time, as she's a superb violinist with an adventurous spirit that impels her to seek out the new and unexpected. Having enjoyed many of her recordings, I was eager to learn more about her multi-faceted career, as well as about her newly released world-premiere recording of Belgian composer Robert Groslot's Violin Concerto, for which she is the dedicatee.

When did the violin enter your life?

I began playing violin at the age of six. At the time, in the

mid-1970s, the system of education in communist Poland was very clear: Musically talented children were chosen to go to the music school. After many exams children with a better ear were encouraged to play violin, and that is what happened with me. In a sense the violin was chosen for me. I loved the piano and after few years of playing violin I started playing piano as well. There was a moment when I basically practiced all the time, either violin or piano. But then, I had to make a hard decision as to which instrument I would primarily devote myself to. I had already some success in violin competitions so I chose the violin, the instrument closest to the human voice.

Who were some of your most memorable teachers?

I was lucky in my education and career to have had really great teachers at the right time. Each of them influenced my playing in a different way. I studied in Poznań with Professor Jadwiga Kaliszewska, who mentored an amazing group of young violinists, competition winners who later on had brilliant careers in music. These were the golden years of the Polish School of Violin playing. I remember that at any given time each of us would be preparing for some competition or other. Jadzia (Professor Kaliszewska's nickname) was a strong personality and was like a mother to us. She was a demanding teacher and encouraged us to learn a lot of repertoire and to go out into the world and "go for it."

Professor Charles Treger, a Galamian student, gave me a very strong technical boost. His almost clinical approach to achieving precision and quality in the sound production put a stamp on the way I play violin forever.

Last but not least, there was Professor Masuko Ushioda, my

amazing mentor. A student of Joseph Szigeti, she was very charismatic, creative, a really great violinist. She made me realize who I am as a violinist, what my strengths are. She was one of those amazing teachers who guides you in how to find your own personality as an artist.

I should also mention mentors who were not my violin teachers but who have influenced my career indirectly: Gunther Schuller, Ben Zander, Larry Lesser, and Professor Michael Frischenschlager.

Judging from your discography it's clear that you have eclectic tastes in music. Has this open-mindedness always been a feature of your personality?

Early on in my career, I realized I am an artist who is interested in discovering new, unknown, unfamiliar repertoire. I see this as my mission. I would like to let the public know that these gems exist and that they are worth listening to. In my repertoire I have standard concerti and sonatas which I love to play (for example, I recently recorded all the Brahms sonatas for violin and piano, to be released in the near future), but my consuming interest is to discover something new. This attitude toward the new certainly connects with open-mindedness. If I come across a composer whose music speaks to me, I jump into the project with energy and passion. I am not afraid to learn new styles when necessary. In preparing for Shirish Korde's *Concerto for Violin and Tabla, Svara Yantra*, I had to learn a completely new left-hand technique to achieve Indian-style slides; in Ileana Perez Velazquez's Violin Concerto, I had to study fascinating complex Cuban or Latin rhythms; in David Kechley's sonata, I immersed myself in jazz. Once you sense that particular style, you have to become

it. You feel it and morph your whole being into it.

Let's take a closer look at some of the composers whose music you've recorded, specifically Gazyna Bacewicz, Sirish Korde once again, John McDonald, Alfred Schnittke, and of course Robert Groslot, whose Violin Concerto is featured on your new CD.

In the case of Grażyna Bacewicz I discovered the *oeuvre* of a Polish woman composer of incredible talent who left six violin concertos. She actually wrote seven, but No. 6 was never published and she eventually destroyed it, as she thought it included too many repetitions of material from her other concertos, and consequently she didn't feel comfortable presenting it to the public. She also left many works for violin and piano. The idea of recording them came to me after the simple realization that these fabulous works for violin belong among the masterpieces of the violin repertoire and should be known worldwide. Yet they are virtually unknown, especially outside Poland. It was clear to me that Bacewicz deserves much wider recognition than she has received to date. Her use of Polish folk elements, her lyricism, originality, and melodic identity, are all precious to me, an American artist, a native of Poland, longing for familiar musical syntax. I am grateful that, with the interest and help of Chandos Records and a great collaboration with conductor Łukasz Borowicz and the Polish Radio Orchestra, my Bacewicz recordings (2009 and 2011) were distributed to almost every country in the world. They received many awards (including the prestigious Diapason d'Or, among others) and overwhelmingly fantastic critical acclaim. In my program notes I wrote, "It has been for me a tremendous journey through the incredible music of this

fascinating composer. It has also been a journey that put me in touch with my Polish heritage. It proved deeply personal and satisfying on many levels. I hope that violinists around the world will take up these concertos and that listeners will enjoy them. They are like rare stones. You have to find them, but once found they prove to shine brilliantly."

***You probably don't know that I began my tenure at* Fanfare *writing about Indian music, an interest that dovetails perfectly with your idiomatically sensitive performance of Shirish Korde's Violin Concerto,* Svara-Yantra.**

I first encountered the music of Shirish Korde when I was invited to perform one of his pieces, *Cranes Dancing*, inspired by Japanese shakuhachi music. [The shakuhachi is a Japanese longitudinal end-blown bamboo flute.] I was so inspired by Shirish's music, I immediately started talking about the possibility of commissioning a violin concerto. This led to the release of some remarkable, varied, and striking music in the *Concerto for Violin and Tabla, Svara-Yantra* (Neuma 450-107). This haunting work, richly imbued with Indian colors and musical tradition, offers something unique and powerful, with all manner of exotic and imaginative instrumental textures. One finds oneself responding to the myriad of haunting and exotic sounds conjured up in this impressive work, which is dedicated to me and was premiered in 2005 with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, Poland, conducted by Ruben Silva. Subsequent performances in Europe, New Zealand, and Boston were enthusiastically received.

My preparation for it was very thorough. I remember many listening sessions with Shirish, who introduced me to a lot of

original Indian players (singers and violinists) and explained stylistic details. I studied recordings of Indian violinist Dr. L. Subramanian in detail. I remember a hands-on lesson with an Indian violinist. The rest was a "try and learn from your mistakes process." It was helpful that Mr. Korde notated everything precisely in the score, but he would always say "It has to sound like you are improvising." It was an experience which made me think outside the box and made me really play with unusual freedom. It was freedom of expression, rhythm, and phrasing. I wrote my own cadenza, which also was a new journey for me. It was quite a liberating experience altogether. This music gave me also an opportunity to explore sound color. My imagination would go wild! Yet another aspect was collaborating with a fantastic tabla player, Samir Chatterjee, who did not read music but had the amazing flexibility to be my partner.

Each of the composers you've chosen to record have distinctive musical profiles, but does John McDonald's style often set him apart from the rest? Did his aesthetic pose any particular challenges?

In 2009 I premiered John McDonald's *Airy* for violin and piano with the composer at the piano. The conception of the 2013 recording, *Airy*, for Bridge Records was born right then. For me this was an exercise in restraint, in finding the expression in the simplest phrases and Zen-like moments, the art of musical haiku. It was something again completely different from what I had done before. The pleasure of collaborating with John, who is also a wonderful pianist, was immense. There will be other commissions from him that I am planning in the future. As a participant in John's feature

interview in *Fanfare* [issue 37:3] I said, "John McDonald's music has very different challenges than I find in other composers' music. Of course in the solo sonata, or even in *Airy*, certain passages are complex and difficult, and one has to practice and struggle a bit to make it work. It is not as difficult and complex, though, as for example Gunther Schuller's music in terms of notes. What is hard in McDonald's work are the soft dynamics and fragile harmonics in very slow tempos, which require amazing bow control. One has to work hard conceptually to find meaning in the simplicity of certain passages. There is no obvious answer there. The meaning is hidden."

I should also mention here the 2014 world premiere of Ileana Perez Velazquez's Violin Concerto with the Berkshire Symphony. This talented Cuban-born American composer wrote for me an absolutely amazing violin concerto, with an unconventional cadenza featuring unusual percussion instruments. The concerto uses some complex Cuban rhythms and has a beautiful, thoughtful slow movement. The *New York Times* has praised the "imaginative strength and musical consistency" and the "otherworldly quality" of her compositions. Her Violin Concerto is yet to be recorded, but I have no doubt we will find suitable partners to do it soon.

Alfred Schnittke was a composer whose music has inspired volumes of commentary and analysis, partly because he "felt free to draw upon all compositional techniques, both ancient and modern, surveying them from a historical and artistic distance" (Harlow Robinson). In addition, "Many of his large symphonic compositions are works of awesome complexity, density and cosmic sorrow." What was it about

his compositions for violin and piano that inspired your recording (Bridge 9104)?

I became intrigued by Alfred Schnittke's music during my studies at the New England Conservatory. I performed his music often. One memorable performance was of *Quasi Una Sonata* [Violin Sonata No. 2] at the Boston Cyberarts Festival, with light design controlled by sensors attached to my bow arm, engineered by Teresa Nakra. For the Bridge 1998 recording project I chose some of the most dramatic and striking pieces. Schnittke's sense of drama and sadness really touched my soul. At the time I was attracted to the art of Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian. I drew comparisons to their abstract art using the language of geometry. When playing Schnittke's music I imagined it in the visual form of aggressive straight lines, often black and white. His music also opened my imagination to even more possibilities of tone color.

Robert Groslot's music was unknown to me until I listened to your recording of his Violin Concerto, but one hearing was all it took to realize that this was a composer worth investigating.

In 2011 I collaborated with composer/conductor Robert Groslot in a performance of Grażyna Bacewicz's Violin Concerto No.7 with the Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra in the Warsaw Music Gardens Festival. We had a wonderful chemistry. Very shortly after, I learned that Robert would like to write a concerto for me, which I was thrilled about. Robert is a brilliant and accomplished pianist (1978 Queen Elisabeth Competition Laureate, Brussels), and a prolific composer who during the last eight years has written 20 concertos for

different instruments! He is an educator as well, and in 1995 he was appointed artistic director of the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, the position he has held for many years. He is one of the most important living Belgian composers. He is also someone who constantly writes music, so no wonder the number of works he has written. I am really grateful that our paths crossed and I had the pleasure to record his music. I predict that the 2018 Naxos release of his Violin Concerto and Concerto for Orchestra will be very successful. His music deserves to be heard here in America as well as worldwide. It is unique, moving, and exciting for the performer and the listener.

How do contemporary composers come to your notice, and are there any you're working with now?

I do a lot of research and in general I am aware who is who in the composers' world. Some composers send me their music and sometimes I choose to include it in my recitals. I keep my eyes and ears open for new personalities and young new talents. I have good intuition in what would potentially interest me. If somebody's music speaks to me and I feel a personal connection to it, I start a conversation and jump into a project with passion and energy.

Recently I commissioned John McDonald to write a piece for violin and chamber orchestra for me. Thomas Stumpf, who is on the faculty at Tufts University, is working on a new piece for violin and piano, and I am in conversation with a wonderful composer, Allen Shawn, as well.

Before leaving this topic I'd also like to mention a few other composers whose works I premiered and collaborated with in the past: Gunther Schuller, Zygmunt Krauze, Arthur Berger,

David Kechley, Laura Koplevitz, Lansey McLoskey, Barbara White, Marc Farris, Ralf Gawlick, Roberto Toscano, Simon Andrews, and others. Each project was an amazing and creative journey. I find the process of preparing a piece for the first performance, the world premiere, very creative. Searching for the best solution for the musical ideas in these works, finding a way technically to produce the best sound in difficult passages, and having inspiring conversations with composers, makes me understand music in a much broader sense. The moment of giving the first performance of the piece just being born is also unique. It has a special meaning for me.

What is it that attracts you to any particular composer's music from whatever era?

I look for the sensibility, meaning, and the message—depth if you will. It has to have a certain emotional content. I like drama and contrast. I am also more interested in some styles rather than others. I look for the music that would give me a chance to explore different possibilities and colors of the sound. It is a very intuitive process. As I've said, I do my research to learn about new composers. Then, it is a sheer audio experience, listening to someone's music and deciding if I want to explore more of it.

Do you prefer to meet the composers if possible and to interact with them while preparing their music, or do you feel that it's best to approach it only from your own perspective? If I'm not mistaken, Glenn Gould once said, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that composers don't understand their own music.

I feel that it is absolutely essential for the performer to interact

with the composer. You have to understand his or her personality, style, and ideas. Sometimes I encounter some difficult passages and suggest solutions. Often at the beginning of our work together we talk about the concept of the piece. Occasionally I sense that there is even more potential than what is written, so I start asking questions and encourage the composer to write something in particular or to explore specific instrumentation. I do not agree with Gould's comment. I actually think most of the better composers understand their music well. That is why their music is good and their ideas are clearly unambiguous.

You're living what must be a very satisfying musical life. Not only are you an admired soloist, chamber music musician, respected teacher, and enthusiastic contemporary music advocate, you're also a concertmaster of long standing.

I've served as a concertmaster of the Boston Philharmonic for the last 20 years and the Berkshire Symphony for the last 15 years. In the past, I had the pleasure to be concertmaster of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Vermont Symphony. It is both an exciting and important leadership role that I take very seriously. I had many opportunities to play the great concertmaster solos by Richard Strauss in *Ein Heldenleben* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in Mahler and Brahms symphonies, and in other works in the best concert halls in America such as Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Hall, Jordan Hall, and Sanders Theater in Boston.

The concertmaster creates the sound of the section. From my long experience I know that if you have a sensitive section playing with you, the members will respond to the smallest

details of your own playing, as long as you are clear and visually convincing. You have to be a really good leader, decisive and with impeccable command of your own playing. You also have to be responsive, tactful, and diplomatic, because the orchestra is like a very complex family with its own issues and problems. Lastly you have to be able to convey and interpret properly the conductor's message and gestures. I do think I have this ability. I am told that I am very expressive in my playing, which really helps others in the string section. Certainly, it is a different performance than that of a soloist, and in many ways more difficult. You have to become a soloist for those few moments of your solo, and then immediately switch back to blend with others in the next moment. I learned so much and gained a different musical experience from being a concertmaster. I was lucky to work with wonderful conductors; they are my best musical colleagues and mentors.

What are some of your thoughts about teaching?

I started teaching when I was very young. I was asked to help out and teach during my high school years, and I did the same with my friends during my studies in the Poznań Academy of Music in Poland. I taught as an assistant to Professor Charles Treger at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and my mentor Professor Masuko Ushioda often asked me to teach her students at the New England Conservatory of Music. Now I am teaching at three different universities, and give sectional coaching for the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, the orchestras of the New England Conservatory, and the Boston Philharmonic. I have taught and given masterclasses in Europe and Canada. It gives me a true satisfaction to work

with young people.
I was lucky to have amazing teachers in my past. They gave me a large amount of attention, care, and expertise. Now I would like to give it back to my students, to pay it forward. I would like to also preserve the tradition of the particular school of playing that I was influenced by—certainly the Russian/Polish school, but also the Galamian school of violin playing.

How do you strike a balance between teaching and performing?

The balance between teaching and performing is very tricky. It comes in waves. Sometimes I feel I only want to perform, to express. I have a strong need to play a lot and to be creative on stage. Then I have my moments of real enjoyment of teaching, sharing my knowledge and hearing my students grow as musicians. You have to be like a chameleon and have a talent to change your role and personality quickly, from soloist to concertmaster to teacher to chamber musician. Luckily I have that ability. At this point, I cannot imagine discarding any part of my life as a musician yet, so I will continue to do everything.

I don't think the violinists among our readers would forgive me if I didn't ask you to say something about your violin.

For the last 20 years I've played on a violin made by Petrus Guarnerius in Mantua, in 1699. My violin has a dark timbre, velvet color, warm sound, and wonderful projection. I am really grateful to the owner who is lending it to me for such a long time. My focus is always to work on the sound quality and to find new colors in it. I am really fortunate to be able to grow as a violinist with this amazing instrument.

Before moving on to an in-depth discussion of the Groslot Violin Concerto, I'd like to return to Bacewicz for a while. I recently happened upon a mention of a recording of her Fourth Sonata for Violin and Piano featuring her and her pianist brother, Kiejstut. It's probably something of a rarity but I'd love to hear it. Have you had the opportunity to listen to any of her extant recordings? If so, how did she impress you as a violinist? (I understand she was also a first-class pianist.)

Grażyna Bacewicz was an excellent violinist and pianist. She was the principal violinist of the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Grzegorz Fitelberg (the same orchestra I recorded her concertos with). Also, she used to sit in the back of the section to hear the orchestration from another point of view. She could have had a long career as a violinist and pianist, but she loved composing. I am grateful for her decision to focus solely on composition later on in her career. The only reliable recording of hers I've come across on YouTube is the recording of the *Presto* from her *Solo Sonata*. It is really well played, clear, precise, perhaps with less dynamic contrast than how I recorded it but with amazing energy. "I run, not walk. I speak fast, even my pulse beats faster than normal, and I was born two months premature," she used to say. It is evident here, the music exemplary of her style.

In my program notes for the 2011 CD (Concertos Nos. 2, 4 and 5 on Chandos 10673), I wrote, "I find the concertos of Bacewicz instrumentally brilliant. Written by a violinist who knew the technical challenges of the instrument, these works are indeed difficult. But at the same time they seem natural

and convey musical ideas with absolute clarity. It is obvious that Bacewicz herself studied each passage from the kinaesthetic point of view to provide the best solution for achieving the desired sound. Her choices of sonorities, articulations, tempos—even fingerings—in the musical text suggest a deep understanding of the instrument, which draws me even closer to her music."

There's an interesting article about Bacewicz on the Polish Music Center website. At one point it uses the term "Sonorism" to describe a musical approach she adopted in the latter stages of her career and contrasts her version of it with that of Penderecki and Gorecki. Briefly, I interpret this term to refer to texture and timbre as important musical elements, along with the use of "sound masses" in place of themes, motifs, etc. But however it's defined, the authors believe that she has more in common with "the elegant sonorities of Witold Lutosławski." (This might tie in to your opinion that "Bacewicz bridges the gap between the neo-romanticism of Karol Szymanowski and the modernism of Witold Lutosławski.")

I do think that she has more in common with "the elegant sonorities of Witold Lutosławski" in her later period. Her Violin Concerto No. 7, the last one, is an absolutely beautiful and imaginative display of colorful instrumentation. Just listen to the second movement and catch all the percussion instruments—bells, xylophone, vibraphone, celesta, tam-tam, and others. To quote myself once more: "The second movement in particular transports me to a world of surreal narrative, articulated by her resourceful orchestral instrumentation and, in solo passages, her brilliant use of

dynamics, harmonics, *sul ponticello* technique, and combinations of trills and glissandos. The inventiveness of Concerto No. 7 puts it on the same artistic level as the concertos written by Alban Berg, Witold Lutosławski or Henri Dutilleux."

This is no longer Szymanowski's romanticism; it is clear Modernism. Her *Pensieri notturni* for chamber orchestra (1961) and *Contradizione* for chamber orchestra (1966) represent this Modernism. Had she lived longer, I suspect she would have transitioned into a great modernist of Lutosławski's caliber.

Where there many recordings of her violin music available before your three CDs arrived on the scene? And after the fact, do you feel that you've played an important part in focusing the attention of the music world on her achievements?

Before the release of my two volumes of violin concertos (Chandos 10533, 10673) and the Music for Violin and Piano CD (Chandos 10250), there was very little recorded, mainly on small Polish labels. Her music was known and performed frequently only in Poland. After the success of all three CDs, Krystian Zimmerman released her piano sonatas and also her piano quintets in 2011. In 2014 Naxos released her quintets with Ewa Kupiec. Recently Chandos also released her string quartets with the Silesian String Quartet. I am so grateful that I started a good recording path for this amazing composer. I am thrilled that I became a specialist of her string music. It gives me real satisfaction because I am always promoting women composers in my work. There are so many who deserve much wider recognition. And yes, I accomplished my

mission, which was to make Bacewicz known to the world.

On the Schnittke disc you play a piece for violin and tape. Have you done much of this sort of thing? How about fusions of electronic/acoustic music or multi-media performances?

I did not fully delve into electronic/acoustic music exploration. I am most comfortable in the 20th-century classics, Eastern European music, and working with living composers who use more or less conventional sounding though still innovative language.

I had my moments of searching for new experiments, combining the media. Worth mentioning would be the performance of the Pärt/Vasarely project at the Massaging Media Conference at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston. That was an interactive projection onto a screen controlled by muscle sensors and the sound of the violin. I had the pleasure of collaborating with my husband, artist Jan Kubasiewicz, who designed a beautiful animated composition that I could partly control by movement of the bow and the sound of my instrument.

In my upcoming recording project, entitled *Mystical Voices of Eastern Europe*, I am considering the inclusion of a piece for solo violin and tape by the Polish/Dutch woman composer Hanna Kulenty. I performed that piece twice already and the audience responded to it enthusiastically.

I wouldn't want our conversation to end without delving a bit more into the Groslot Violin Concerto. After all, it's one of the highlights of the new Naxos disc.

Robert Groslot's Violin Concerto is absolutely gorgeous—it's a masterpiece. The solo violin part from time to time blends in

with the orchestra but also shines with its own light. The concerto is very imaginative and displays a rich palette of sound colors. The one-movement structure has several clearly defined sections with a brilliant cadenza in between. It is very rhapsodic. It begins with a haunting, stunning motive written for solo violin in a very high register on the E-string. The first note, a D ♮ , is probably the highest note that sounds strong and resonant on the violin. That beautiful reflective motive reoccurs later in a few places, and each time it comes back it makes a strong, powerful impression.

Each section of the piece has its own distinct character. Some parts are very energetic and fast, some are more lyrical and contemplative, and some are thoroughly rhythmic and forceful. The result is very dramatic, partly because of the contrasts, partly because of their innovative sound quality. My personal favorite moment is when all of a sudden the composer introduces an eerie, bizarre waltz. This very simple and delicate moment is very theatrical and should probably be choreographed—it is quite brilliant. There are parts in this concerto that I feel as being in another reality, while playing or listening to it—a combination of a wonderful playfulness and a sublime meditation. At the end of the cadenza for example, the solo violin collaborates with an intricate subtle celesta in soft dynamics and then later with the lower strings, this time in a dramatically grandiose character. The instrumentation throughout the concerto is captivating. The coda brings the unusual rhythmic pairing of solo violin with timpani above the orchestral texture. It is very effective. It was for me a real joy to record Robert Groslot's Violin Concerto with the Brussels Philharmonic with the composer

conducting. I hope the 2018 Naxos release of this piece will give it appropriate and well-deserved recognition.

Are there other violin concertos among his 20? If not, would you like to play some of his chamber music?

So far there is only the one Violin Concerto. Chamber works that attract me include his *A Sonata for Violin and Piano … e poi torna alla luce* (2014), and *Surrounded Melody for Solo Violin*, a spectacular work, very difficult and complex (2017). There is also a beautiful *Duo for Violin and Viola* (2017). I would love to play these pieces and record them as well. I've also had the chance to listen to his Cello Concerto and Piano Concerto. Again, these are truly amazing works.

What is your opinion of the following synopsis [from the CD booklet]? "Robert Groslot (b. 1951, Mechelen, Belgium) fuses Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Latin elements into a new and highly malleable language. Form, virtuosity, sound refinement, 'rediscovered' tonality and rhythmical adventure are the keystones of his music. Groslot often draws inspiration from other art forms, especially poetry and painting."

I absolutely agree with the term "rediscovered tonality" in the context of Robert's music. His musical language seems tonal with a "twist." I do not think though that his ultimate goal is just to write more accessible music; he is not longing for simplicity. His music is actually rather complex. I think he feels comfortable writing in a wonderful, balanced mixture of consonant and dissonant harmonies, which is now very rare. Often you hear pieces which are very hardcore dissonant. Some contemporary composers stay away from "soft" tonality. It might be a sign and reflection of our complicated

times, with their overload of information and constantly changing technology.

Do you find that audiences in general are receptive to new (or at least unfamiliar) music, or is an interest in contemporary music still pretty much limited to the few?

It is true that in general the presenters and distributors are afraid of new names in contemporary music. So is the public. But it was always like that through the whole history of music. However, when even the most complex contemporary works are performed well, with passion and conviction, the audiences respond very enthusiastically. In my experience I often get a great feedback from the most obscure pieces—music of completely unknown composers. It is important to advocate something new and extraordinary and to believe in it. On the other hand, even if only a limited part of the audience is open and receptive to new music, it is still worthwhile to play for them.

One of the reasons I love recording these lesser-known works is that they will reach much bigger audiences. The potential is huge, especially now with the new technologies, social media, and the speed of connectivity available. Without the huge Chandos distribution Bacewicz's music would certainly still be unknown.

Any exciting projects on the horizon?

During last season, I performed the program I mentioned earlier, *Mystical Voices of Eastern Europe*. Releasing that program on CD is my next project. It features music written for solo violin by the 20th- and 21st-century composers who come from Eastern Europe. This includes such names as Aram Khachaturian, Krzysztof Penderecki, Valentyn

Silvestrov, Vytautas Barkauskas, Lera Auerbach, Hanna Kulenty, and Elena Firsova. These are undiscovered gems of repertoire for solo violin. It is a program inspired by ranges of emotion—from reflection and mystery, to sadness and lamentation, to ecstatic virtuosity and passion. It is unconventional yet inspiring.

Mystical Voices of Eastern Europe is only the beginning, however, as recently I realized that on my desk there is a list of 12 projects that I would like to do. Some of them are with the orchestra, big and ambitious; some are for just violin and piano; many focus on a particular composer in mind. There are some that require me to work from the manuscripts because they were never published. There are some that connect with my Polish heritage and some which explore great American composers. I only wish to have enough energy to be able to finish them all. Meanwhile there will be other inspirations and new relationships … I hope.