

# SoundLab.Talks

---

Maciej Kaczmarek

# SoundLab. Talks

*Concept and text by:* Maciej Kaczmarek

*Coordination:* Dorota Serwa – Director of the Szczecin Philharmonic,  
Maciej Cybulski, Maciej Skrzetuski, Patrycja Proczak – Information  
and Promotion Centre

*Cooperation:* Kinga Rozkrut – Concert planning and Artistic Department  
Manager, Paulina Stok-Stocka – Fundraiser

*Proofreading:* Krystyna Pawlikowska

*Translation:* Marta Jesswein

*Special thanks to Arkadiusz Marcin Zieliński for consultation regarding the English  
language.*

*Graphic design and DTP:* Patrycja Kuracińska

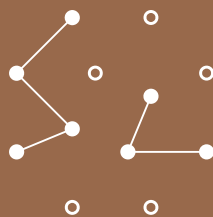
*Photography authors:* Press kit, pages: 10, 17, 20, 52, 64, 74, 88, 114, 128, 142;  
Maciej Cybulski, pages: 27, 30, 48-49, 60-61, 73, 85, 124–125, 138–139,  
150–151;  
Bartek Barczyk, pages: 110–111

*Publisher:* The Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic in Szczecin  
ul. Małopolska 48  
70-515 Szczecin  
[www.filharmonia.szczecin.pl](http://www.filharmonia.szczecin.pl)

© Copyright by Filharmonia im. Mieczysława Karłowicza w Szczecinie, Szczecin 2017

*All rights reserved. No excerpts of this publication may be published or reproduced  
in any form without the written permission of the publisher.*

*All of the interviews have been authorised.*



S O U N D L A B

*The project “SoundLab – the philharmonic laboratory of  
electronic music” has been co-financed by  
the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage*

**Ministry of  
Culture  
and National  
Heritage of  
the Republic  
of Poland**

*Media sponsorship for the SoundLab cycle – AMS*

**ams**

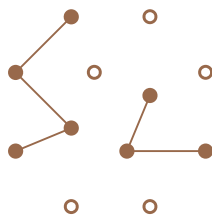
Conducted by

## Maciej Kaczmarek

Author of the book *Bóg w sprayu. Filozofia według Philipa K. Dicka*.

Columnist at [Nowamuzyka.pl](http://Nowamuzyka.pl) and the music department of [Onet.pl](http://Onet.pl).

Has written for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Trans / wizje*, and *AlterPop*, among other publications. Member of The London Institute of 'Pataphysics.



S O U N D L A B

## SoundLab. Talks

---

Zuzanna Solakiewicz  
Marek Biliński  
SBB  
Brandt Brauer Frick  
Andrzej Smolik  
Atom String Quartet  
Richard Devine  
Sound Factory Orchestra  
Tomasz Makowiecki  
Tangerine Dream

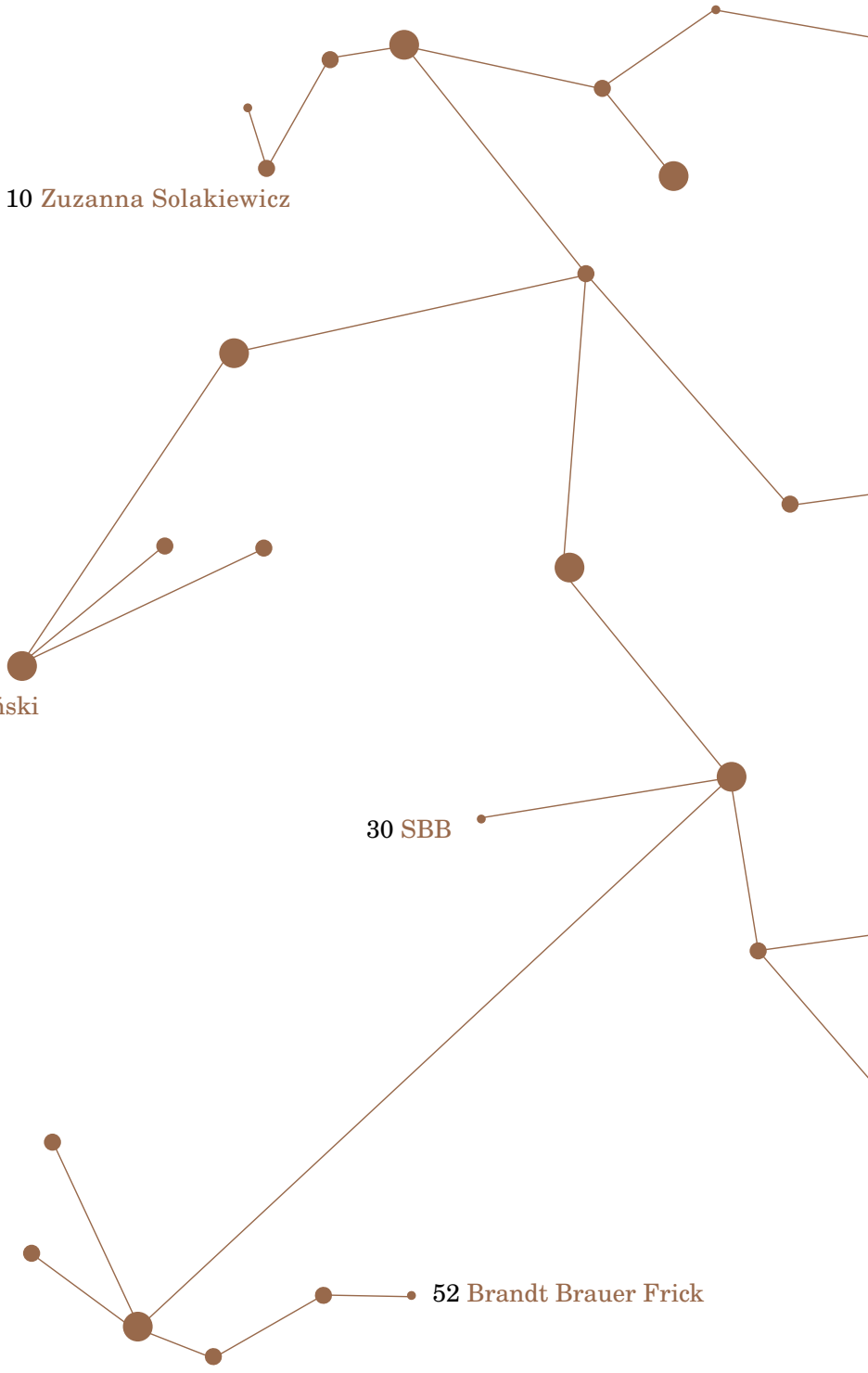
The Philharmonic in Szczecin 2017

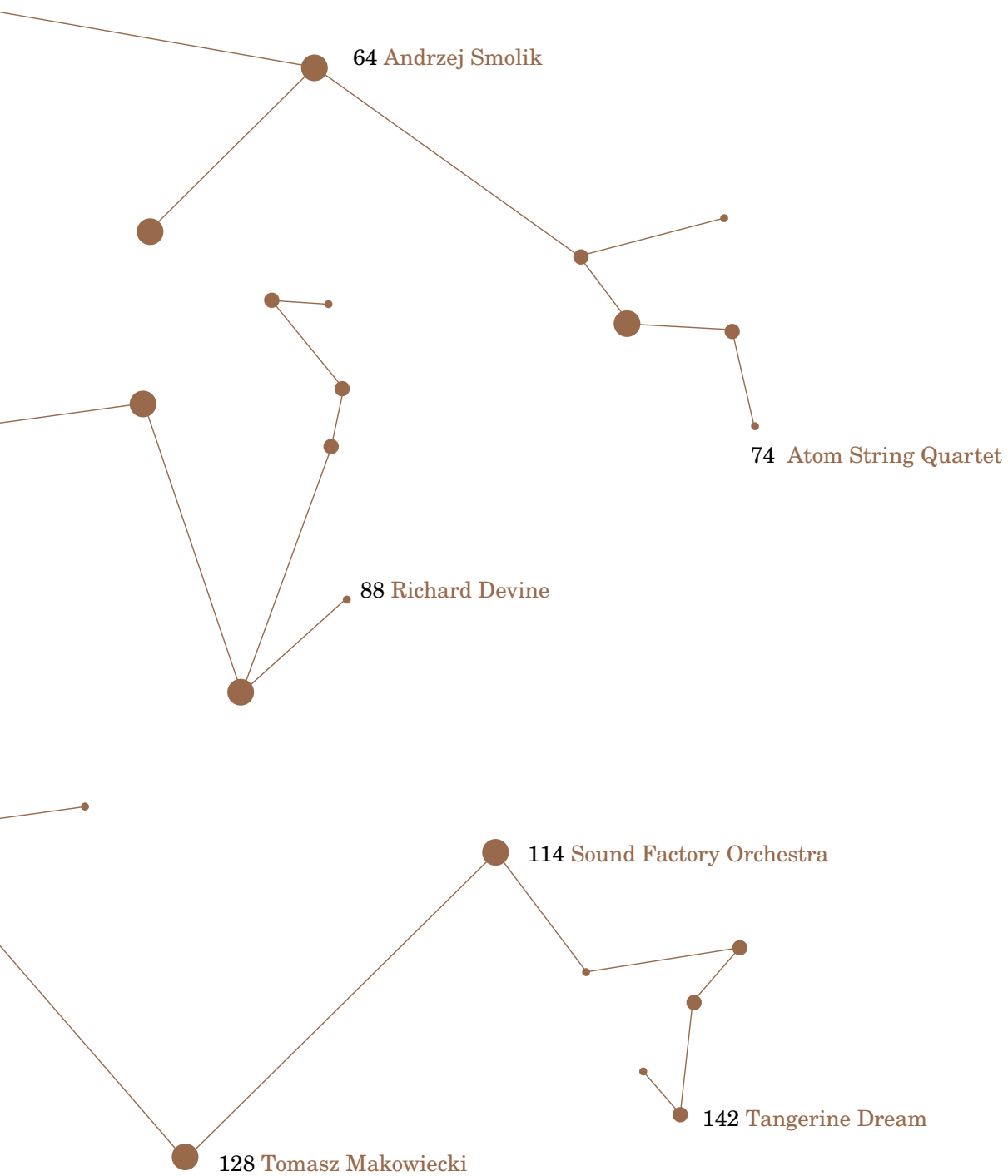
10 Zuzanna Solakiewicz

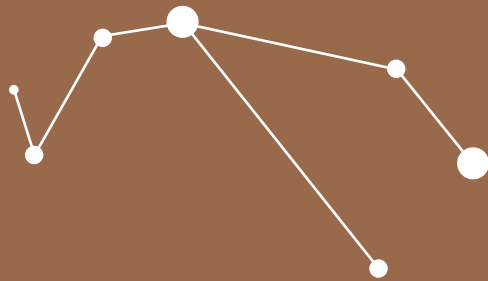
20 Marek Biliński

30 SBB

52 Brandt Brauer Frick









# Lab 0: El-prologue

---

15.10.2015  
*Chamber Hall*



## Zuzanna Solakiewicz

Director, writer of essays and stories. Studied film directing at the Sam Spiegel Film & TV School in Jerusalem and at the Film School in Łódź. Author of essays on history and anthropology, as well as documentary films: *Cabaret Polska* (2008), *So It Goes* (2010), *Yorzeit* (2012), and *15 Corners of the World* (2014).

An October evening, the chamber hall of the Philharmonic. The inauguration of the SoundLab cycle – a screening of *15 Corners of the World*,\* a film on Eugeniusz Rudnik. This unconventional documentary focuses on sound rather than the man behind it. It is not a classic cradle-to-grave biopic, but a kind of original interpretation of an extraordinary sonic universe created with a pair of scissors and thousands of kilometres of magnetic tape. That is all Rudnik needed to revolutionise the concept of how electroacoustic music was made. He composed meticulously in the Polish Radio Experimental Studio, which took him in from almost nowhere. He stayed there for over half a century, producing both his own compositions and those by Krzysztof Penderecki and Arne Nordheim. Even once he retired, he still had his own room at the radio station, where he worked almost until his very last days.

There is a scene in this film, where the elderly blazer-clad man says “I wanted to get closer to electronic sound, to make it warmer, to humanise it.”

The screening is followed by a meeting with director Zuzanna Solakiewicz, for whom *15 Corners of the World* (the title is a reference to the composer’s notes on his piece *Triptych*) is a feature début. Previously, she has produced short and mid-length forms: *Cabaret Polska* (2008), *So It Goes* (2010), *Yorzeit* (2012). Historian by education, she is not only a filmmaker but also a recognised author of essays and stories. Her cinematic impression on Rudnik, that “phonopoet and soundwriter,” as the press had named him, won her awards at festivals in Locarno, Belgrade, and Bratislava.

“The film has already participated in many festivals, including Doc Leipzig, Festival del Popoli in Florence, SXSW in the USA, Ambulante Gira de Documentales in Mexico,’ says Solakiewicz. ‘We have had screenings at every possible film event in Europe. We then proceeded to cinema distribution, the picture has been shown in art-house cinemas. Before the end of this year the film will probably also be broadcast by its co-producer, TVP Kultura. I think there is a growing interest in Eugeniusz Rudnik’s music, and *15 Corners...* is both an example and a cause of that, as it always goes both ways. We have spent 4 years making this film and when we were starting, the interest was much smaller. The topic’s growing popularity

\*The film is available via NINATEKA: <http://ninateka.pl/film/15-stron-swiata-zuzanna-solakiewicz> (accessed on: 25.01.2017).

resulted in press articles not just about our film, but also about the work of Polish Radio Experimental Studio employees, including Rudnik himself.’

How did she come across the works of the visionary from Nadkole and what did she find fascinating in them?

‘It was by chance, and I got fascinated by absolutely everything. From the beginning, sound played a very important role in this film. I wanted sound to be the main character. More often than not, this theoretically audio-visual medium is actually more visual, with audio pushed to the background, complementary, illustrative of the characters’ mental states and feelings. I asked myself if – in light of this tradition that we bring to the cinema and the way we watch films – it was at all possible to create a picture where perception would follow sound and the visual aspect would complement it, and not the other way around.’

Straight away, however, she calls it a utopia.

‘Of course, such a task is basically impossible, but the idea established the course of our future search. Since the film was to be a documentary, I wanted to find an artist for whom picture would be in some particular way connected with sound. On a side note, Eugeniusz Rudnik has created music scores to over three hundred short forms, but that’s not the type of connection that I meant. I took on a different perspective: Rudnik’s method is to physically attach pieces of tape together. He never got to using the computer due to artistic reasons. For him it is about being able to literally shape sound with one’s own hands. He has created hundreds of compositions this way. So I thought that since for him sound is tangible, corporal, for it can only exist on tape (it is “a piece of the tape” as Rudnik himself puts it), it is also visible. And since it is visible, it connects with my idea of filmmaking, where sound is the picture.’

Following this concept, the production of *15 Corners of the World* was unconventional.

‘First we have created the film’s soundtrack in an editing program, composed of Rudnik’s music and statements,’ the director explains. ‘Apart from the strictly documentary fragments and a few scenes that include external sound, everything you hear in the film is Rudnik’s music. We had listened to it with the cinematographer, sound designer, and editor. The soundtrack was therefore created first, and it is largely the backbone of the film in its final shape.’

‘And how did you meet the master?’

‘A simple chain of coincidences, as is often the case. My previous film *Yorzeit* was about the orthodox Jew Meir Moskowicz, whose spiritual leader was rabbi Cwi from Rudnik. Around the same time I was recording video footage of a concert at Instytut Awangardy, which was curated by Michał Libera. The program included a piece by Eugeniusz Rudnik, performed by Mikołaj Pałosz. Rudnik-the-town naturally brought to my mind Rudnik-the-person. When I discovered who the man was, I asked for his phone number. Later, as I have already said, I became fascinated with everything. I don’t think I have to tell you how amazing an artist Rudnik is. But he is also a person of great charisma. Not every author can be the protagonist of a documentary film, for not every author has a certain magnetism that the camera likes, and one that “transfers through the screen,” as filmmakers like to say. And Rudnik would be able to fill ten films of very different sorts, and there would probably still be something left. It’s a meeting with a volcano.’

In one of the final scenes of *15 Corners of the World* the artist faces technical difficulties in the studio, and is angry with the technician. Was it easy to persuade Rudnik into cooperating, and have there arisen any difficulties while working together?

‘I came to him almost as a complete novice. Even though I had made documentary films before, this was my first feature-length film, which was still nothing when compared to his artistic experience. I convinced him that I wanted to make a film about his music rather than about himself. Was our cooperation difficult? There’s plenty of anecdotes, for instance: I have been thrown out from the set twice, but then we made up,’ Zuzanna smiles. ‘I must admit that Rudnik understood our roles outstandingly well from the very beginning and was able to define them. He said that it was my film and therefore he would not interfere. He just wanted to see the cover in the end, naturally – like any protagonist. I was very tempted to shape this film together, but it was him that dismissed the idea, because if you have two sides trying to come to terms, the results are neutral. A compromise, not a film. I believe that it is a part of Rudnik’s greatness that he trusted me and stayed in the shadow. He was also very consistent in that regard. There was not one situation where he’d come and say: “All right then, let me take a look at what you’ve got there.”’

‘Did he like the final cut?’

‘I believe so. He said it was the first artistic film of the Third Polish

Republic. I felt, of course, incredibly flattered, I was very happy. Let us not forget that Rudnik is also a specialist on documentary film, he has been in many competition juries. Interestingly, with that comment he shed light on a certain phenomenon. Contemporary documentary cinema focuses on social issues, important problems. Polish film, however, especially its short and documentary forms, is very extensive and comprises experimental, artistic works. I feel there's very little of that in today's documentary cinema, far less than there used to be.'

'You mentioned that Rudnik twice threw you out from the set.'

'Yes, it's slowly becoming an anecdote. When documentary films were made back in the day, you had Krystyna Janda come in a Nysa-type van with a cameraman and microphone-man with a boom pole,'\*\* she says and then points at the small voice recorder on the table. 'And what he gets is some lady coming at him with this and saying: "Hello, so I'd like to get an interview, oh and I'm going to have a budget in three years when I get my funding from the Polish Film Institute." Accustomed to an entirely different tradition, Rudnik was convinced that I'm a total amateur and that the whole thing is going to be a flub. Up until that point our conversations were just social, but when I told him that I'd bring a recording device to the next meeting, for him that meant that we were starting production. For me that was more like the start of pre-production of pre-production of pre-production.'

Zuzanna giggles.

'That was the first time. The second quarrel was also, say, technical in nature. From the very beginning I had wanted to make the film on tape and it was very important to me. The problem is that tape and the entire production process that comes with it is very expensive these days. For this reason we shot the footage using a digital camera. The studio scenes are digital material which we "grained up" in post-production, visually adjusting them to match the tape recordings. When we got the funding, we were able to buy tape and rent a camera. We came to Rudnik with all that and I told him that now we would shoot as he was doing his miniatures, because he was in fact working on new things all the time. And he says: "What do you mean, again? We've already shot that." I tried explaining

\*\* A reference to Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble*.

that we have a new camera and tape. That's when I got kicked out for the second time, because you don't shoot the same film twice. It turned out, however, that there was a way around it after all, so we resumed our cooperation,' she laughs.

"Analogue media is closer to us because we, too, are imperfect" – the director said in one of her interviews. Was the decision to use 16mm tape, a charmingly old-fashioned medium for the digital era, a reference to Eugeniusz Rudnik's work methods?

'I really like the term "old-fashioned," but I wouldn't use it to describe the sixteen. For the same reasons why Rudnik disagrees with the opinion that creating to tape is backwards or dated. Technical evolution does not determine artistic change. You can't say that everyone who used tape needs to switch to a computer just because it has been invented. It is simply a medium you may or may not choose. In the real world we are often limited by funds and technical issues. For example, there are fewer and fewer assistants for the analogue camera. It is no longer that easy to find someone capable of working with such equipment and this is one of the reasons why filmmakers are switching to the digital format. When it comes to this film, however, I knew from day one that the analogue medium is relevant and justified. It wasn't about bringing back something that was old-fashioned, it was rather about finding a medium that would be right for the topic. It's another thing that we did buy some of the last reels of tape available in Europe, because it really is ending.'

Solakiewicz spent a few days with Rudnik in his home in Nadkole to conduct an extensive interview. Will it be published in book form?

'We are looking for a publisher. Not actively, perhaps, as I've done nothing to make it happen so far, but we did talk about having it published from the start. If you have an idea as to where we could publish it, I'm all ears,' she says jokingly. 'When creating things like that you always get more material than will make the final cut. What remains in the film is just a selection, the author's interpretation. There have been many, many more such talks, both in Nadkole and in Warsaw. We will publish them one day.'