**Aleksander Dębicz - *Unity***

about the piece

In 2019, I spontaneously composed a short piano piece, *The Union*, to mark the 15th anniversary of Poland's accession to the European Union. At that time, I realized that *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* – the Polish national anthem – and Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* – the EU anthem – harmonize remarkably well. Both themes became the melodic foundation of the piece as a metaphor for unity.

This year, Poland has assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union, and I have the honor of serving as the musical director for a special concert marking the conclusion of this period. At its core is my new composition, *Unity*, commissioned by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute. This seven-movement work once again seeks to provoke reflection on the idea of unity, which is so crucial today. I am deeply convinced that we, Europeans, can take pride in having one of the richest cultural heritages, yet we still struggle to make it an emotional bond that inspires collective action. And yet, culture has the greatest power to influence emotions. At the same time, I believe that cultivating traditions and preserving the heritage of individual countries is of utmost importance. However, this does not change the fact that every European can enjoy and take pride in these achievements.

I decided to compose this piece for a highly unusual ensemble, which I have classified for naming purposes as the *Unity Ensemble*. For the performance, I invited some of Poland’s finest musicians—outstanding personalities and individualists. In doing so, I wanted to emphasize that even seemingly mismatched elements can create a shared sound and emotion while maintaining their unique individuality. In art, anything can fit together, as long as the creator is guided by an idea they can share with other open-minded artists. But is this also possible in society?

Music is an abstract art, which is why I do not intend to explain the concept of this piece in too much detail. However, even just by looking at the titles of the individual movements, the listener can sense that *Unity* is not only an affirmation of togetherness but also an acknowledgment of the obstacles that may stand in its way. The bearer of hope in this piece is a short motif, whose notes are taken directly from Beethoven’s immortal *Ode to Joy*. I imagine this motif as a kind of superhero. And while this might seem naive or even childish, I believe that this kind of simple emotion is something the European Union needs now more than ever.

Between the movements of *Unity*, I decided to include interludes—excerpts from programs I have co-created with the invited artists. These include original arrangements of music by J. S. Bach in a duet with cellist Marcin Zdunik, F. Chopin with Marcin Zdunik and flutist Michał Żak, M. Ravel with guitarist Łukasz Kuropaczewski, J. Rodrigo with countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński and Łukasz Kuropaczewski, and S. Moniuszko with Jakub Józef Orliński. Through this, I wanted to highlight the extraordinary richness of Europe’s musical heritage while also offering a fresh, modern interpretation. To take this even further, the concert concludes with several pieces from my collaborative album *#LetsBaRock* with Jakub Józef Orliński, in which we proposed an entirely new take on Baroque music.

I believe that *Unity* will inspire reflection and, above all, provide the best possible emotions.

**Unity Ensemble:**

Aleksander Dębicz - piano / composer

Jakub Józef Orliński - countertenor

Michał Żak - flute / hammered dulcimer

Małgorzata Wygoda - bassoon

Konrad Gołda - French horn

Marcin Ułanowski - percussion

Łukasz Kuropaczewski - guitar

Maxima Sitarz - violin

Marcin Zdunik - cello

Wojciech Gumiński - double-bass