Title
Myth and Appropriation: Fryderyk Chopin in the Context of Russian and Polish Literature and Culture

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/09b3q63z

Author
Lin, Tony Hsiu

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Myth and Appropriation: Fryderyk Chopin in the Context of Russian and Polish Literature and Culture

By

Tony Hsiu Lin

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Anne Nesbet, Co-Chair
Professor David Frick, Co-Chair
Professor Robert P. Hughes
Professor James Davies

Spring 2014
Abstract

Myth and Appropriation: Fryderyk Chopin in the Context of Russian and Polish Literature and Culture

by

Tony Hsiu Lin

Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Anne Nesbet, Co-Chair

Professor David Frick, Co-Chair

Fryderyk Chopin’s fame today is too often taken for granted. Chopin lived in a time when Poland did not exist politically, and the history of his reception must take into consideration the role played by Poland’s occupying powers. Prior to 1918, and arguably thereafter as well, Poles saw Chopin as central to their “imagined community.” They endowed national meaning to Chopin and his music, but the tendency to glorify the composer was in a constant state of negotiation with the political circumstances of the time. This dissertation investigates the history of Chopin’s reception by focusing on several events that would prove essential to preserving and propagating his legacy. Chapter 1 outlines the indispensable role some Russians played in memorializing Chopin, epitomized by Milii Balakirev’s initiative to erect a monument in Chopin’s birthplace Żelazowa Wola in 1894. Despite their political tension, Russia and Poland came together in the common cause of venerating Chopin. Chapter 2 examines two instances of the Russian-Polish cooperation: Chopin centennial celebrations in 1910 and 1949. These celebrations featured speeches and commemorative concerts that later became the norm. Chapter 3 considers the International Chopin Piano Competition, founded in independent Poland in 1927. As one of the earliest international musical contests of its kind and scale, the Chopin Competition effectively turned Chopin from a national into an international figure. Furthermore, the public nature of the competition led to the engagement of the entire society, involving spectators and the press. Besides the three main chapters, two Interludes survey the representations of Chopin and his music in Russian and Polish literature. In addition to literature, this dissertation analyzes works of visual art and music to consider the process of mythmaking and its implications.
For my parents
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Notes on Quotes, Transliterations, and Translations iv

List of Illustrations v

Introduction vii

Chapter 1. Music Crossing National Boundaries: The Role of Russia and Russians in the Cultivation and Preservation of Chopin’s Legacy 1

Interlude 1. Chopin and Russian Writers: Miatlev, Fet, Severianin, Pasternak and Akhmatova 33

Chapter 2. Chopin Glorified: Chopin Centennial Celebrations, 1910 and 1949 47

Chapter 3. The Institution of the International Chopin Piano Competition and Its Social and Cultural Implications 98

Interlude 2. Chopin in the Works of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz: Lato w Nohant (1936) and Two Poems 139

Coda. Chopin in the 21st Century 156

Bibliography 159
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank the members of my dissertation committee. Anne Nesbet has been a model of combining academic interest with musical passion. She made numerous helpful suggestions that improved the dissertation tremendously. From the beginning of my graduate career, David Frick has inspired me with his scholarly rigor and erudition. Discussions with Robert P. Hughes, who possesses a remarkable knowledge of both music and Slavic literature and culture, are always a source of great satisfaction. James Davies has been very generous with his time and unfailing support.

Before I began graduate studies, I remember Richard Taruskin’s reference to Berkeley’s Slavic Department as a second Music Department. I have taken this reference to heart and devoted a significant part of my studies to the relationship between music and literature. My interests have been refined and nourished over the years by the faculty at Berkeley. In addition to my dissertation committee members, I want to warmly thank Luba Golburt, Olga Matich, Eric Naiman, Richard Taruskin, Ronelle Alexander, Irina Paperno, and Anna Muza. Many professors come to my concerts regularly, and I truly appreciate their taking an interest in my musical endeavors. Lessons with Betty Woo have provided constant enjoyment.

Prior to Berkeley, I am lucky to have studied with some of the finest professors at Northwestern University. I want to thank Irwin Weil for introducing me to Russian literature and culture. His love for the subject and the way he engages his students have been nothing but awe-inspiring. I also want to thank Clare Cavanagh, whose class on twentieth-century Polish literature opened my eyes and, more importantly, my heart to Polish culture.

My research has been generously supported by the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant. I want to thank Marina Kaul in Moscow and Zbigniew Skowron in Warsaw for being my hosts. I wish to thank Izabella Butkiewicz and Mariusz Wrona at the Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina for generously providing me access to the Institute’s rich collections. Likewise, thanks are owed to Magdalena Głodek for her assistance at the Bibliothèque Polonaise in Paris. I also received a research grant from the Europa-Universität Viadrina, and I want to thank Werner Benecke for his guidance while in Frankfurt (Oder).

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my friends in Berkeley and all over the world. Few words can express my debt to Justin Snider, whose intellectual curiosity and work ethic are peerless. Christopher Sullivan, Justin Alley, Sergey Maximoff, Emily Frey, and Polina Dimova have been wonderful companions. I also want to thank Carl Onak for reading over my chapters and refining my argument with his scientific precision. Discussions on Russian literature and culture with Ivan Pechenezhskiy have been extremely stimulating. In Poland, I wish to sincerely thank Łukasz Jonak and Adam Kania for putting up with my numerous questions on the nuances of the Polish language and helping my Polish get to where it is today.

Last but not least, I want to thank my parents, who sacrificed much to provide me a first-rate education. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
NOTE ON QUOTES, TRANSLITERATIONS, AND TRANSLATIONS

I have made minor changes to older Russian texts to reflect modern orthography. Transliterations follow the Library of Congress system, except when an anglicized name has been well-established (e.g. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction
Figure 1: Władysław Szpilman playing for the Nazi officer, from the movie *The Pianist* (2002)
Figure 2: President Bolesław Bierut giving Warsaw mayor Stanisław Tołwiński the urn containing Chopin’s heart on October 17, 1945
Figure 3: Teofil Kwiatkowski, *Portret Chopina* (1849)
Figure 4: Walenty Wańkowicz, *Portret Mickiewicza* (1828)

Chapter 1
Figure 1: Chopin Monument in Żelazowa Wola
Figure 2: The score of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Pan Voyevoda* (1903). On top of the page we see "Памяти Фредерика Шопена" (‘To the memory of Fryderyk Chopin’)
Figure 3: The Ceremony in Żelazowa Wola
Figure 4: Mikhail Vrubel’, *Portraits of Composers* (1890)
Figure 5: *Slavic Composers* (1871-72) by Il’ia Repin
Figure 6: same picture, focusing on Chopin (left), Nikolai Rubinstein and Moniuszko
Figure 7: The first Russian biography of Chopin (1864)

Chapter 2
Figure 1: An invitation to the church service at the Holy Cross Church and the evening concert
Figure 2: Mickiewicz statue unveiled in Warsaw on December 24, 1897
Figure 3: *La mort de Chopin* (1885) by Félix-Joseph Barrias
Figure 4: 1910 Proclamation of the Fryderyk Chopin Monument Building Committee in Warsaw
Figure 5: Jan Ciągliński, *Scherzo in B minor* (1909)
Figure 6: Paderewski speaking at the unveiling of the Grunwald monument in Kraków
Figure 7: The program at the 1910 Lwów celebrations
Figure 8: Portrait of Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1891) by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema
Figure 9: Paderewski’s speech in French translation (1911)
Figure 10: A participant of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising playing a Chopin concert
Figure 11: Resolution (dated March 20, 1948) to declare 1949 the Year of Chopin
Figure 12: Mieczysław Oracki-Serwin, *Polonez As-dur Chopina w kuźni Huty Kościuszko* (1952)
Figure 13: Francisco Mora, *Fryderyk Chopin prowadzący lud do walki* (1949)
Figure 14: Władysław Jahl, *Fryderyk Chopin grający Etiudę Rewolucyjną* (1949)
Figure 15: Tribute of Mexico, The Artist and The Patriot of Poland
Figure 16: Detailed plan (dated June 17, 1948) for Chopin Year concerts
Figure 17: Chopin’s 1830 farewell concert re-created in 1949
Figure 18: The program for the Living Edition of Chopin’s Works
Figure 19: 1949 Commemorative concert for Chopin at the Moscow Conservatory
Figure 20: Lev Oborin with other Soviet winners of the Chopin Competition by the Chopin monument in Żelazowa Wola (which was initiated by their compatriot Milii Balakirev)
Figure 21: Polish President Bolesław Bierut in the box seat at the inaugural concert
Figure 22: Poster for the Fourth Chopin Piano Competition (1949)
Chapter 3
Figure 1: International Anton Rubinstein Competition in 1910 (Glazunov in the center, Artur
Rubinstein on the right)
Figure 2: Jerzy Żurawlew, the founder of the International Chopin Piano Competition
Figure 3: The Chopin statue in Łazienki Park
Figure 4: Competition stage with Polish flags and Chopin bust (1937)
Figure 5: Jury members of the First Chopin Competition
Figure 6: Poster of the First Chopin Competition
Figure 7: Award certificate for Leopold (Stanisław) Szpinalski, second prize winner in the first
competition
Figure 8: A cartoon illustrating participants practicing in private homes, from 1927
Figure 9: Showing the date of the First Competition and the price categories (subscriptions and
individual tickets)
Figure 10: A 1932 subscription ticket to the second Chopin Competition
Figure 11: Participants in the First Chopin Competition
Figure 12: Minister of Culture and Art Stefan Dybowski gives Oborin a medal in 1949 for his
service as a juror in the Chopin Competition
Figure 13: A comic drawing of Churchill and Oborin by Boris Efimov (1927)
Figure 14: Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Zbigniew Drzewiecki and Stanisław Szpinalski award the
first prize to Adam Harasiewicz in 1955
Figure 15: Dismantled Chopin statue being discarded during the Second World War

Interlude 2
Figure 1: a painting by Austrian artist Adolf Karpellus (1869-1919)
Figure 2: A 1945 poster for a production of Lato w Nohant in Kraków“
…każda nuta (Chopina) jest narodową, każda nuta piękną – boską – każda myśl szczętną, niebiańską”

(“...every note [of Chopin] is national, beautiful – divine – every thought is lofty, celestial”)
– Antoni Woykowski (1849)

INTRODUCTION

MYTH AND APPROPRIATION:
Chopin in the Context of Polish and Russian Literature and Culture

Composer and pianist Antoni Woykowski’s quote gives us a taste of the language people typically use when speaking of Fryderyk Chopin – exalted, full of superlatives and deifying rhetoric. The reverence cannot be explained by the love for Chopin’s music alone; one must take into consideration the context in which Chopin’s music was perceived. Between 1795 and 1918 Poland did not exist as a state; Chopin’s music, as it were, came to embody a nation through sound. Thanks in part to Chopin’s music, Polish national identity not only remained intact, but in fact became enriched. However, Chopin’s music did not gain prominence overnight; instead, numerous factors came together to endow his music with national meaning.

An Example of Appropriation: The Pianist

Roman Polański’s movie The Pianist (2002) begins with a performance of Chopin’s E-flat major nocturne by the Polish-Jewish musician Władysław Szpilman (acted by Adrien Brody) over the radio. In the middle of the performance, the Second World War breaks out. Poland fights the invading Nazis for three weeks, and, on September 23, 1939, Szpilman writes in his memoirs: “On that final day at the radio station, I was giving a Chopin recital. It was the last live music broadcast from Warsaw.” Over the course of the war, the pianist suffers and is forced to relocate to the Warsaw Ghetto. In one scene, when a Nazi officer finds Szpilman’s hiding place and discovers his identity as a pianist, the officer asks Szpilman to play something. He plays Chopin’s Ballade in G minor with frozen and shaking hands, yet the melody comes out beautifully and the officer is deeply touched and actually helps Szpilman escape the ordeal.

---

3 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7ZyX61406M (last accessed July 5, 2013).
The movie is largely based on Szpilman’s memoirs, but there is one important discrepancy in this scene. In his memoirs, Szpilman recalls that he played the Nocturne in C-sharp minor for the officer, not the G minor Ballade, which is a much more dramatic and technically demanding piece. Was this detail simply overlooked? What’s at stake is not so much the historical accuracy but the highly symbolic nature of Chopin’s music. The choice of a ballade over a nocturne carries significance as the ballade contains more drama and a passionate Presto con fuoco coda. This scene illustrates a broader issue of appropriation in Chopin’s music; namely, Chopin’s music is politicized to such an extent that listeners endow it with different meanings in accordance with their agenda. It is important to keep in mind that during the war, Chopin’s music was prohibited in Nazi-occupied Poland. However, Szpilman made an audacious gamble and played Chopin’s music, which deeply touched the Nazi officer. In this case, Chopin’s music actually saved Szpilman’s life and, at the same time, proclaimed Polish identity in sound despite the nation’s political nonexistence.

I begin this introduction with an incident dating from the Second World War, because it is the period that most clearly demonstrates Chopin’s significance. In Poland, the war destroyed not only theaters and concert halls but also performers and artists. For example, Jewish pianist Leon Boruński, the winner of the seventh prize at the 1932 International Chopin Piano Competition, was killed in the ghetto in Otwock in 1942. The Nazis attempted to deprive Poland of Chopin by dismantling the Chopin statue in Warsaw and by forbidding the performance of his works. Nevertheless, Chopin’s music did not cease to exist; in fact, the effect of the Nazis’ strict policy ensured that it would spread. Keeping Chopin’s music alive became an integral part of the anti-Nazi struggle; many concerts were held underground, and Chopin’s music accompanied secret meetings of patriots. Furthermore, Chopin’s heart was removed from the Holy Cross Church and hidden to avoid possible damage. Nazis seized it during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and decided to give it to the presbytery of St. Jadwiga in Milanówek, a town 25

---

4 Szpilman, 178.
5 Szpilman, 82.
6 S. M. Khentova, Shopen, kakim my ego slyshim (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Muzyka, 1970), 22. Another famous cinematic example comes to mind, as Polish soldiers dance to a polonaise (played out of tune, which is another highly symbolic event) in Andrzej Wajda’s Ashes and Diamonds (1958).
kilometers southwest of Warsaw. After the liberation of Poland, on October 17, 1945, the heart was returned to the Holy Cross Church.7 Put simply, Chopin’s music and legacy have become issues of national significance. The national pathos with which Poles perceive Chopin’s music has shaped subsequent discourse. This dissertation analyzes the origin of the approach and problematizes it.

Figure 2: President Bolesław Bierut giving Warsaw mayor Stanisław Tołwiński the urn containing Chopin’s heart on October 17, 1945

An Imagined Community

When we examine Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation – “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”8 – and consider Poland before 1918, we find multiple parallels. Anderson's theory does not deal directly with the loss of the sovereignty of a nation, but his theory proves applicable in the case of Poland. Even though Poland did not exist on the map, the sense that the nation still somehow “existed” was never in question. The opening of the Polish national anthem “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła” (“Poland has not yet perished”), with lyrics by Józef Wybicki dating from 1797, attests to the “naród bez państwa” (“nation without state”) mentality two years after the final partition. Even though Chopin was born in the Russian partition and had a Russian passport, his Polish identity was – save for a few exceptions – never questioned.

The German title of Anderson’s book is Die Erfindung der Nation, which can be translated as “The Invention of the Nation.”9 It bears noting that “imagined” and “invented” are not exact synonyms. Imagination leads to invention; in order to “invent” a nation, one needs to create a myth that the nation exists. How does one show that a nation exists? In the case of Poland, cultural artifacts as well as religion are that which sustain the myth and thus the “nation.”

Divided between three powerful empires, Poland survived the nineteenth century and reemerged as one entity in 1918. Chopin’s music embodied the intangible “Polishness” (“polskość”) that allowed Poles to identify themselves as Poles across different boundaries. The

7 Grzegorz Wiśniewski, Bałakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli: w hołdzie Chopinowi (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2011), 55.
9 Throughout the dissertation, all translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
ability to recognize, for example, the middle section of Chopin’s B minor Scherzo as the Christmas carol tune “Lulajże, Jezuniu” provided a thread connecting Poles in three partitions. The “imagined community” thus served as a defense mechanism that endured the loss of the Polish state. Nevertheless, it had the consequence of creating an impermeably myopic perception of Chopin’s music. This dissertation analyzes the problematic nature of such distortion and contends that while Chopin’s music helped the Poles stay cohesive during times of partition, it continues to this day to be viewed and understood through the prism of the “imagined community.”

Was Chopin Forgotten?

Chopin’s national status is often taken for granted today. Like J. S. Bach, albeit for a shorter period, there was a period when Poles neglected Chopin (see Chapter One for more discussion). To be sure, Chopin’s works were played in concert halls, but there were no large-scale celebrations on the dates of his birth and death, and his birthplace was left in obscurity. In the second half of the nineteenth century, American music critic Henry Finck wrote “Chopin’s reputation has been constantly growing, and yet many of his deepest and most poetic compositions are almost unknown to amateurs, not to speak of the public at large.”

While politics and censorship may have contributed to the lack of Polish effort to construct Chopin as a national composer, it is also possible that Poles were slower than other nations to realize the scale of Chopin’s genius. As an example, the first Polish biography of Chopin came in 1873, much later than the French (1852) and Russian (1864) versions. Chapter One discusses the key role Russia played in reviving and propagating Chopin’s legacy.

Cult of Chopin

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the transformation of Chopin into a national hero took place, but once it did, Chopin was recognized not only as the greatest Polish composer but also became a cult figure. Turning Chopin into a godlike figure has serious political, social and cultural implications. Despite the fact that much has been written about Chopin, much still remains unknown. In a recent study, literary historian Kazimierz Maciąg points out, “Życiorys kompozytora – mimo iż opracowany w tak wielu biografiach – wydaje się wciąż pełen zagadek, tajemnic i niejasności, które stawały się podłożem literackich wizerunków artysty” (“The life of the composer – as much as it has been discussed in biographies – still seems full of puzzles, secrets and opacities, which became the ground of literary images of the artist”). One reason is some factions of Chopin studies are more concerned with glorifying Chopin rather than discovering new or reinterpreting old facts about the composer. Prominent Chopin scholar Irena Poniatowska adds: “Chopin studies wants to be something more than an academic discipline; it wants to have a kind of an independent entity and wants to be as great as art, or even surpass it.”

Poniatowska writes that Chopin “[c]ieszył się uwielbieniem, otaczany był owalnym religijnym kultem, sprzęgniętym z owym systemem ideowym, z paratelterią na kulturze Polski okresu zaborów.” (“was adored and surrounded by an almost religious cult, coupled with the ideological system, a patriotic para-theory that was manifested in the whole culture of Poland during the time of the partitions”). There is a

---

consensus among most scholars that the history of Chopin’s reception has gone in a decidedly nationalist direction, a phenomenon one might call appropriation or the “Chopin myth.”

To be sure, appropriation is not unique to Chopin: the same thing happened to astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, whose complex national identity has remained a contentious issue.\(^{14}\) It is understood that in reception history, any reconstruction of a historical figure will be influenced by time and historiography. In the case of Chopin’s reception, it is best to study it by looking at Poland as well as its occupying powers. When we discuss Poland of the nineteenth century, we are bound to address three different Polands. One goal of this dissertation is to show the essential role Russia – a perceived foe – played in promoting the Chopin myth. As this dissertation will show, the “Chopin myth” has been an evolving phenomenon, undergoing reformulations over time. After Chopin’s death, there were tendencies to fix a monolithic image of the composer in the collective imagination. The image was a result of many different, sometimes conflicting agendas. A tension between these opposing tendencies emerged, generating and renewing a viable myth. The appropriation of Chopin is manifested in a few tendencies: the tendency to attach meaning to his music, the tendency to create boundaries via music, and the tendency to place him next to Polish Romantic “bards.”

**Problematic Tendency 1: Program Music**

It is well-known that Chopin avoided giving programmatic titles to his pieces, but the irony is that the less we know about the music’s “meaning,” the more we want to extrapolate meaning from it. Chopin disliked labeling his music, and he became angry when George Sand heard some of his preludes as if they imitated nature.\(^{15}\) By all indications, Chopin was an “absolutist” in that he viewed music as an abstract entity, not necessarily carrying narratives or semantics. So why do we see such a strong and ubiquitous tendency to endow Chopin’s music with meaning? We can begin to answer by considering the fact that “Revolutionary Etude” is much easier to grasp than an “Etude in C minor.” The publishers invented the names largely for the purpose of better sales, but it also brought Chopin’s music – previously the property of the salon and aristocracy – closer to the people. We know that the second half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic change in the demographics of the concert audience; namely, more and more laymen could afford to attend concerts and took part in the process of musical production, such as buying instruments and attending schools of music.

**Problematic Tendency 2: Not A Universal Language?**

In numerous instances, Poles have argued against the notion that music is the universal language; they contend that Chopin’s music can be understood by Poles only. The most notable example is Ignacy Jan Paderewski’s 1910 speech in Lwów on the occasion of the centennial of Chopin’s birth, where he argued that only Poles, with their tragic history and natural disposition, can properly feel and understand Chopin’s music. Another case in point is an article in *Kurier Niedzielny (Sunday Courier)*, published on May 16, 1897, which criticizes Friedrich Niecks, a German biographer of Chopin, for not being a Pole and therefore not able to understand Chopin’s music fully. While the article credits him as having written the best biography to date, it points out its biggest shortcoming is that he is not a Pole:


\(^{15}\) A. P. Koptiaev, *Muzyka i kul’tura: Sbornik muzykal’no-istoricheskikh i muzykal’no-kricheskikh statei* (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1903), 238.
Niecks, jako cudzoziemiec, choć przejęty kultem Chopina, mimo to nie zrozumiał wielu rzeczy w jego życiu, bo na to, żeby je zrozumieć, trzeba być Polakiem, bo inteligentny cudzoziemiec może wiele rzeczy w życiu Chopina zrozumieć, ale nie wszystko odczuje. A Chopina nie wystarcza rozumieć, trzeba go odczuwać.16

(Niecks, as a foreigner, though engrossed in the cult of Chopin, nonetheless didn’t understand a lot of things in his [Chopin’s] life, because in order to do so, one needs to be a Pole, because an intelligent foreigner can understand a lot of things in Chopin’s life, but he cannot feel everything. And it is not enough to understand Chopin, one needs to feel him.)

The comment focuses on the impenetrability of Polish culture to foreigners; the tactic is similar to Paderewski’s 1910 speech, where he used a somewhat racist rhetoric to suggest that physiological difference contributed to perceptive abilities. This exclusivity of Chopin has persevered even today, and the debate is raised at every International Chopin Piano Competition: can a non-Pole properly play Polish genres such as mazurka or polonaise? Even though time and again the answer has been affirmative, as many winners have hailed far from Poland, these foreign pianists who can “feel” Chopin’s have yet to overturn the longstanding notion of “Chopin – for Poles only.”

Problematic Tendency 3: Chopin and the “Bards”

Chopin was a close contemporary of Julisz Słowacki (born in 1809) and Zygmunt Krasiński (born in 1812). Furthermore, Słowacki and Chopin both died in 1849 of tuberculosis. Because of the biographical similarities and the functions he served in Polish society, Chopin has been widely considered a “bard”; more specifically, the “Czwarty Wieszcz Narodowy”17 (“Fourth National Bard”). Anton Rubinstein, when comparing Chopin to other musicians, said: “все до сих пор поименованные великие люди отдавали все свое сокровеннейшее, я бы даже сказал прекраснейшее, фортепиану, но бард, рапсод, дух, душа этого инструмента – это Шопен”18 (“all the great people named so far gave all their innermost – I would even say most beautiful – to the piano, but the bard, rhapsodist, spirit, and soul of this instrument – it’s Chopin”). How does a musician join a rank reserved for poets? In Poniatowska’s article “Chopin – czwarty wieszcz” (“Chopin – the fourth bard”), she speculates that Chopin gained the common epithet “poet” because there was no real research methodology to characterize Chopin any other way.19 Furthermore, as Poniatowska points out, the painter Teofil Kwiatkowski’s portrait of Chopin is almost a copy of Walenty Wańkowicz’s portrait of Adam Mickiewicz, painted two decades earlier (See Figure 3). The striking similarity of both artists resting on the left hand suggests Kwiatkowski’s conception of Chopin in relation to the subject of Wańkowicz’s work. While Chopin attended some of Mickiewicz’s Parisian lectures on Slavic literature, literary influence (both Polish and French) concerned Chopin only to some extent.20 While Chopin had frequent contacts with the three “bards,” his friendly relationship with them is often exaggerated.

---

16 As quoted in Ferdynand Hoesick, Powieść mojego życia, ii (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1959), 236.
17 See, for example, the article by Matti Asikainen, "Czwarty wieszcz narodowy: echa twórczości Mickiewicza w recepcji dzieł Fryderyka Chopina" in Studia Slavica Finlandensia, 15 (1998), 39-48. Incidentally, this is also the title bestowed upon poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid.
18 Anton Rubinstein, Muzyka i eia predstaviteli: razgovor o muzyke (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1891), 95.
20 Koptiaev, 234.
For example, Georges Junien cited poems such as Słowacki’s “Hymn o zachodzie słońca” and “Beniowski” as spiritually close to Chopin’s works, asking “Czyż to nie jest nastrój niektórych etiud i preludjów?” (“Isn’t it the mood of some of the etudes and preludes?”)\(^{21}\) Junien also stated that “Słowacki and Chopin often created kindred works, as if one was writing music to the words of the other, or vice versa” (“Słowacki i Chopin często tworzyli dzieła pokrewne, jakby jeden pisał muzykę do słów drugiego, lub na odwrót”).\(^{22}\) Despite plentiful evidence to the contrary, their affinity for each other is consistently inflated.\(^{23}\) For example, Mickiewicz excoriated Chopin for limiting his political activism to the salon, and Słowacki accused Chopin of “wasting his talent…instead of sowing rebellion with his music.”\(^{24}\)

My rather skeptical view of the relationship between Chopin and the three “bards” has long been voiced by others. For example, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, a prolific writer and music critic, wrote a poem entitled “Spotkanie” (“Meeting”) in 1931. In the poem, which we discuss in more detail in the Second Interlude, the “meeting” between Słowacki and Chopin proves disappointing, as they walk past each other and nothing happens between them.

We can see different treatments of Chopin’s myth by looking at various biographies. If we treat biographies as primary sources and analyze them in their own right, we notice that the opening and the closing of these biographies reveal how differently Chopin was perceived in each given era. For example, biographies published in the Soviet Union contain typical Soviet


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{23}\) Others have also expressed reservations about their relationship. See, for example, Ewa Nawrocka, “Dlaczego Słowacki nie lubił muzyki Chopina?” *Chopinowskie rezonanse*, ed. Magdalena Horodecka (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2012), 17-28.

rhetoric – such as how Chopin’s music contributed to the proletarian revolution and pleased the masses. To trace the evolution of discourse on Chopin, I will draw examples from monographs and newspaper articles, focusing especially on round anniversary years (1899, 1910, 1949, 1960, and 2010) when commemorative texts on Chopin appeared consistently in major newspapers and journals. In promoting Chopin’s music, they helped build Poles’ imagined community, solidifying the sense that despite the lack of political sovereignty, Poland had not yet perished.

Each chapter either illuminates events that have shaped how we perceive Chopin today or challenges stereotypes and popular clichés. For example, as scholar Igor’ Belza notes, scholarship dealing with Chopin’s reception in Russia is often prone to vagueness or inaccuracies, resulting in a lot of conflicting information about Chopin. For example, critics have disagreed on the question of to what extent was Chopin well-known and well-liked in Russia. Using Anton Rubinstein and Mili Balakirev as examples, Chapter One shows that the Russians played an important role in creating and preserving the cult of Chopin. Russians did not consider Chopin’s music “cannons hidden among flowers”; rather, his music embodied the essence of Slavic culture and served as inspiration for their own musical development. In many regards, Russians surpassed Poles in their effort of propagating Chopin’s music. While some Poles showed ambivalence towards Russians’ affinity for their national hero, they came to accept the friendly gesture as a genuine tribute to Chopin.

Incidentally, the centennials of Chopin’s birth and death fell during periods of foreign control. In both 1910 and 1949, Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively, controlled Poland and had the power to decide cultural matters. Russian and Soviet control differed in nature: Poland was integrated into the Russian Empire but became a satellite state under the Soviet Union. How was Chopin’s image affected during these periods of intense political change and upheavals? Chapter Two focuses on the juxtaposition of art and politics, as Poles and Russians worked together for the common purpose of celebrating Chopin’s legacy. In contrast to their political control, the Russian regime was not only tolerant of, but actively promoted Chopin’s music. I argue that through its embrace of Chopin’s music, the Russian regime achieved two purposes: it expressed its sincere affinity for Chopin’s music and offered the Poles a sort of cultural vent, making them less likely to rebel.

It is important to note that not all Poles were uniformly enthusiastic about Chopin’s music. For instance, Stanisław Tarnowski compares Chopin’s music to what he perceives as the negative qualities of Polish poetry, namely because it contains “melancholię przesadzoną i przechodzącą w chorobliwość, wielkie rozdrażnienie i drażnienie nerwów, brak równowagi i rozstrój wewnętrzny” (“exaggerated melancholy, bordering on pathology, great annoyance and irritation of nerves, lack of balance and internal disorder”). After Poland regained independence in 1918, there was a reconsideration of the Romantic era and the Chopin myth, which Poles had been taught to love and propagate indiscriminately for so long. Chopin’s image as a national hero was subject to serious skepticism; and Jerzy Żurawlew – the founder of the International Chopin Piano Competition – decided to correct Chopin’s image. The third chapter discusses the origin and impact of the International Chopin Piano Competition, founded in independent Poland in 1927. As one of the earliest musical contests, the competition became a public arena that brought together various social strata, combining not only young artists and expert judges, but also

25 Another example can be found on page 790 of the Entsyklopedicheskii slovar’ XXXIX, ed. I. E. Andreevskii (St. Petersburg: F. A. Brokgauz, 1903), in which Chopin’s birth year is stated 1809, instead of 1810.
spectators and the press. The implications of the competition reached far beyond its initial intent; it became a watershed, effectively turning Chopin from a national into an international figure.

In addition to the three main chapters, I have included two Interludes that focus on literary texts devoted to Chopin. There are some estimates that Chopin is the subject of at least 500 poems in Polish literature alone, not to mention in other national literatures and in other literary genres. Despite the large literary output, most of the works are cliché-ridden, which may explain why most of them have gone unnoticed. In Henry Dobrzycki’s book *Narodowość Chopina*, published in 1908, he writes "I literatura polska o Chopinie oraz jego narodowości nie stoi na wysokości zadania, gdyż tego, co nam dali nasi pisarze, arcydzielami nazwać nie można..." ("And Polish literature about Chopin and his nationality does not rise to the occasion, because what our writers gave us, one cannot call them masterpieces.") The topic of Chopin in literature has been addressed by Maciąg, who published a book (2010) surveying Polish literary texts inspired by Chopin. While the informative book serves as a good reference, it falls short in problematizing the texts. The English summary of the book rehashes the familiar practice of linking Chopin and patriotism: [Chopin is] a brilliant artist and a good patriot...his patriotism is unquestionable. Maciąg seems to notice the myopic view most writers have adopted, as he states: "The composer’s image...makes it difficult for writers to show the ‘real’ Chopin, not only a great and respected artist, but also a person full of complexes, trauma and life tragedies." Nevertheless, the book rarely goes beyond summarizing the works and discussing how they promulgate the glorification narratives. Even though many of the works were written by now-forgotten authors, being marginal does not exclude them from being symptomatic. This dissertation selects texts that either illustrate the subject of the individual chapter or depart from the beaten track. The goal is to demonstrate literature’s integral part in propagating, preserving, and sometimes undermining the Chopin myth.

---


28  Dobrzycki, 16.

29  Maciąg, 454.

30  Ibid.
“Не знаю, почему я отдаю предпочтение творчеству Шопена, но он меня всегда глубоко трогает. Его музыка родственна душе моей...”

(“I don’t know why I give preference to Chopin’s works. They always touch me deeply. His music is akin to my soul.”)

- Milii Balakirev

CHAPTER 1

MUSIC CROSSING NATIONAL BOUNDARIES:
The Role of Russia and Russians in the Cultivation and Preservation of Chopin’s Legacy

In October 1891, Russian composer Milii Balakirev (1837-1910) made a pilgrimage to Poland and visited two places important to Chopin’s life: Warsaw and Żelazowa Wola. Like many Russian composers (such as Mikhail Glinka, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov), Balakirev greatly appreciated Chopin’s music and even called himself a “zealous devotee of Chopin” (“ревностным почитателем Шопена”). In a letter to Iuliia Petrovna Pypina, wife of the literary historian Aleksandr Nikolaevich Pypin, he described his emotional response upon seeing the pillar containing Chopin’s heart in Warsaw’s Holy Cross Church: “Увидав это я сделался сильно взволнован и едва мог оторваться от драгоценных останков и теперь захожу туда очень часто, так как этот костел находится на пути к Фриде” (“Seeing this, I became very agitated and could hardly tear myself away from the precious remains, and now I go there very often, since the church is on the way to the Frides”).

However, what Balakirev saw during the trip was not Poland’s embrace of Chopin but rather its total neglect of him. When Balakirev arrived in Żelazowa Wola, he found Chopin’s birth house in disarray. There was no museum or monument of any sort; in fact, the house was used as a storage area (на cele gospodarcze), where apples were dried and milk was fermented. Writer and music critic Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz’s was to describe Chopin’s house in the following way: "W dziewiętnastym wieku zapomniano o tej miejscowości. Rozsypywała się ona w proch, niby trumna... Przeszedł przez trudne czasy, kiedy nikt nie pamiętał, kto się w nim urodził” (“That place was forgotten in the nineteenth century. It was scattered in dust, like a coffin... Hard times passed by, when no one remembered who was born there”). In an article in Echo
The house is described as follows:

Dworek znajduje się w niedzielnym, niezamieszkałym, w którym jedna tylko największa komnata, odarta nawet z podłogi, służy za skład mleka miejscowemu pachciarzowi. Mówiono podróżnym, że znajdował się w dworze fortepiano, na którym młodemu Chopinowi udzielano pierwszych początków nauki. Od czasu ostatniej wizytę śp. Odry I Gebethnera przed 10 lat nikt z turystów miejsca tego nie odwiedzał. P. Bałakiriew ma zamiar podobno odwołania się do wszystkich miłośników naszego mistrza w celu urządzenia w Żelazowej Woli museum imienia Chopina lub powstania kaplicy pamiątkowej.8

(The house is in disarray, unoccupied, in which only the largest room, bereft even of the floor, serves as milk storage for local tenants. Travelers were told that there was a piano in the house, where the young Chopin was given his first lessons. Since the visit of the late Odra and Gebethner 10 years ago, no tourist has visited the place. Mr. Balakirev apparently intends to appeal to all lovers of our master for the sake of establishing a museum in the name of Chopin in Żelazowa Wola or creating a memorial chapel.)

After Balakirev returned from Żelazowa Wola, he met with both Polish and Russian reporters to inform them of the situation. Balakirev’s involvement eventually transformed a forgotten village into a mecca for all admirers of Chopin.

Ironically, it took a Russian composer to make the Poles realize that they had neglected Chopin: “W tym to czasie często zjawiają się w prasie polskiej artykuły o Żelazowej Woli, omawiające zupełnie otwarcie stan zaniedbania i brak poszanowania dla domku rodzinnego Chopina”9 (“At the time, articles about Żelazowa Wola appeared frequently in Polish press. They address frankly the state of complete neglect and lack of respect for the family house of Chopin”). The owner of Chopin’s birth house, Aleksander Pawłowski, did not even know who Chopin was.10 Later, when members of the Warsaw Music Society approached him for possibly purchasing the house, Pawłowski set the price so high that it could not be acquired by the Society. Polish composer Zygmunt Noskowski pleaded for Balakirev’s help.11 The original plan to turn the house into a museum was abandoned due to its remote location, making it unlikely to attract many visitors.12 The attention turned to building a monument on the site to commemorate the birthplace of Chopin.

The idea of erecting a Chopin monument had been intermittently suggested but never realized: “[WTM] Opanowane od dawna jedną ideą – wybudowania w mieście pomnika Chopina

---

8 The article was published in Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne (Musical, Theatrical and Artistic Echo), no. 421 (1891). As quoted in Stanisław Dybowski, Aleksander Michałowski (Warsaw: Selene. 2005), 73.
9 Hugo-Bader, 6.
10 Pawłowski owned the place from 1879. Prior to him, the place was owned by several individuals. See http://chopin.museum/pl/museum/zelazowa_wola/id/216 (last accessed August 23, 2013).
12 Chopin’s birthplace was acquired by the State and designated as a cultural heritage site only in 1928. It is curious that in the article in the Russkaia muzykal’naia gazeta no. 11 (1894), p. 222, there is no mention of Pawłowski’s name.
skupiało na tej utopii podejmowane co kilka lat wysiłki.”

“The Warsaw Musical Society was obsessed with one idea for a long time – to build a monument of Chopin in the city – [it] was focusing its effort on that utopian thought every few years”). The Poles’ wishes did not materialize because of the political circumstances. In the post-1863 era, after the failure of the January Uprising, Governor General Józef Hurko and his right hand Aleksandr L’vovich Apukhtin – widely known in Warsaw as the “great disgrace of Russia” (“wielka hańba Rosji”)

– made sure that no patriotic manifestations of any kind would take place. The Poles, beaten down by political oppression, began to lose their motivation and their desire to combat obstacles.

Pawłowski’s behavior exemplified not only the lack of a commemorating mechanism for Chopin but also a larger social and cultural inertia in Poland at the time.

Poles’ neglect of Chopin’s legacy can be illustrated by the inaction between 1880 and 1894. Prior to the Żelazowa Wola ceremony in 1894, there was a small ceremony in February 28, 1880 for storing Chopin’s heart at Warsaw’s Holy Cross Church. Nevertheless, little was done between 1880 and 1894 to commemorate Chopin. In an interview, a Chopin specialist Piotr Mysłakowski was asked why it took so long for the 1880 ceremony to take place. To the question: “Nikt nie interesował się relikwią?” (“No one was interested in the relic [Chopin’s heart – T. L.?”), he answered categorically: “Najwyraźniej” (“Definitely not”).

Mysłakowski’s answer demonstrates the Polish social inertia that is famously portrayed at the end of Stanisław Wyspiański’s Wesele (The Wedding). Furthermore, not all Poles were in agreement in their opinion of Chopin and his music. In addition to French critic Hippolyte Barbedette, who called Chopin’s music “unhealthy,” there were also negative views within Polish society. Despite the tendency to link Chopin to Polish Romantic poets, we know that the relationship between Chopin and Słowacki was cold.

Słowacki was also jealous of Chopin’s relationship with Maria Wodzińska, who did not reciprocate Słowacki’s love. In a letter to his mother, Słowacki wrote, “Mówią, że się Szopen z Marią Wodzińską, a niegdyś moją Marią, ożenił – może poszła za niego trochę z przyjaźni dla mnie, bo mówią ludzie, że Szopen do mnie jak dwie krople wody podobny” (“They say that Chopin married Maria Wodzińska, my Maria at one time – maybe she married him because of our friendship, because people say that Chopin is absolutely identical to me”). In another letter to his mother, Słowacki expressed his distaste for Chopin and his music: “widziałaś, aby kto nazajutrz po rozczuleniu wielkim, przez muzykę Chopina sprawionym, stał się lepszym, piękniejszym, litośniejszym, wyrósł na bohatera?” (“did you see anyone become better, more beautiful and merciful, grew up to being a hero, as a result of

14 Danuta Szmit-Zawierucha, Namiestnicy Warszawy (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Abrys, 2009), 125.
17 See Lin, 49.
18 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz’s poem "Spotkanie" ("A Meeting," analyzed in the Interlude) describes the meeting that fails to produce any kind of relationship besides mutual criticism.
listening to Chopin’s music?”) Third, when Russians exposed the neglect for Chopin and in turn helped revive Chopin’s legacy, Poles obdurately refused aid from Russians qua Russians. Russians’ involvement meant that the notion of Chopin as a uniquely Polish phenomenon was now being contested.

This chapter will first show that music was often spared from the harsh political reality in the Russian partition; it was not censored to the same extent as other forms of expression were. It shows that Russia was fairly tolerant of Polish culture and – rather than forbidding the works of Chopin, or Mickiewicz for that matter – actually became engaged in the Chopin-recuperation project. Russians published complete Chopin editions, composed poems and made paintings featuring Chopin and his music, and, in Balakirev’s case, cooperated with Poles to establish the cult of Chopin. Russian involvement in the revival of the Chopin cult was critical because it was the ruling power. Even though Poland had some degree of artistic autonomy, Russian permission was often necessary in order to publish books or hold large-scale events. Chopin as an underground figure would be very different from Chopin endorsed by the regime. This stamp of approval from the Russians merits more critical attention because Russians’ actions, I argue, inadvertently assisted Poles in the construction of their imagined national community.

Furthermore, current scholarship tends to consider Chopin on a national, not international, basis. The effort culminated in the first Chopin monument in Poland – in Żelazowa Wola – unveiled on October 14, 1894, the eve of the forty-fifth anniversary of Chopin’s death. The actual day of the anniversary featured a special concert. While the monument is not as famous as the statue in Warsaw’s Łazienki Park, its history is unusual in that it was conceived, built, and unveiled entirely in partitioned Poland, with extensive Russian involvement.

![Figure 1: Chopin Monument in Żelazowa Wola](image)

---

No simple paradigm can explain the complexity of the relationship between partitioned Poland and Russia, and the tendency to characterize the relationship as one of animosity does not explain the whole picture. On the one hand, Russia was a powerful empire that imposed oppressive policies on Poland; on the other hand, Russia was an admirer of Polish culture – a fact supported by the interaction between Russian and Polish artists and writers and the frequent publication of Polish works in Russia. For both Russia and Poland, reviving the legacy of Chopin would have serious implications. In the politically tense atmosphere, admiring Chopin’s music had the potential to undermine Russian rule since Chopin was recognized as a national composer writing in Polish genres, which belonged to the broadly defined “West.” Nevertheless, Russians began an active campaign for Chopin, a process that helped solidify Poland’s sense of community. Despite its lack of political sovereignty, Poland had not yet perished as a country.

**History of Chopin’s Reception in Russia**

Balakirev’s activities extended a long and established tradition of the Chopin legacy in Russia. The engagement began while Chopin was still alive, when Polish genres and his music were popular in Russia. Chopin became immortalized as Russian writers, painters and publishers turned to him as a source of inspiration. Chopin’s name also appeared frequently in press; in one of the earliest newspaper articles devoted to Chopin, the author pointed out that Chopin was leading piano music in a new direction. However, some early articles also contained inaccuracies – though it is not clear whether they were intentional. For example, in the “Внутренняя Известия” (“Internal News”) section of one article in *Severnaia pchela* on July 15, 1841, Chopin’s Polishness was underplayed as the author stated that Chopin “воспитывался по большей части в Германии” (“was educated in large part in Germany”). The articles show that Chopin’s public identity was being formulated at the time, and it was an identity that may be quite different from our understanding today. For example, the opening line reads “Отец и мать славного Шопена родом Французы” (“The great Chopin’s parents are of French origin”) – which distorts the fact that Chopin’s mother was Polish. Finally, the article states:

> он уже не принадлежит ни к одной из этих наций, тогда видно его высшее происхождение, видно, что истинная родина его - родина Моцарта, Рафаэля, Гете, царство поэзий. Слушая его импровизаций, думаешь, что видишь перед собой земляка из любезной родины, рассказывающего любопытнейшие вещи, случившиеся там во время нашего отсутствия.

(he doesn’t belong to any of the nations, his higher origin is visible. His true motherland is the motherland of Mozart, Raphael, Goethe, the kingdom of poetry. Listening to his improvisations, you’d think that you are seeing before you a countryman from the beloved motherland, telling a most curious tale that happened there during our absence.)

In the article, Chopin is consistently described as an artist influenced by three nations (“влияние трех различных наций”), which dilutes the emphasis on Chopin’s Polish identity. The de-emphasizing of Chopin’s nationality may be due to the political tension after the failure of the

---

21 See O. Levasheva et al., *Istoriia russkoi muzyki vol. 1* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1972), 271.
22 *Severnaia pchela*, May 14, 1838. As quoted in “Russkie muzykanty i kritiki o Shopene.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5* (1949), 72.
23 *Severnaia pchela*, July 15, 1841.
The political environment led to strong censorship, rejecting any work with words like “freedom, fatherland, censorship, patriotism” (“ wolność, ojczyzna, cenzura, patriotyzm”). However, after Chopin’s death, the understanding of his music evolved, and Russians tended to perceive Chopin’s music in national terms. What had earlier seemed like a dangerous association (Chopin/Poland) gradually became a selling point for Chopin. One goal of this Chapter is to clarify the common misconception that Russia was always hostile to any manifestations of Polish culture; the reality was more complex. In order to understand the Russian attitude towards Chopin, a sketch of the history of Chopin’s reception in the context of Polish-Russian cultural interaction is in order.

The “Chopin phenomenon” – understood as the introduction, reception, and preservation of Chopin’s music – happened rather quickly and naturally in Russia. Contact between Chopin and Russia occurred as early as 1819, when Chopin played for Tsar Alexander I in Warsaw. In Paris, Chopin also gave lessons to Russians like sisters Elizaveta and Anna Sheremet’eva and Mari Kriudener (or Marie Krüdener, friend of Anna Sheremet’eva). Even though Chopin never went to Russia, he gained wide recognition largely because pianists – both Polish and Russian – performed his works in Russia. While it is true that the Russian partition was often stricter in terms of censorship and political repression than the Austrian partition, a closer look shows that there was, at certain times, more leniency and room for negotiation than often acknowledged. In 1825, Tsar Alexander I went to Poland for six weeks, where he exuded goodwill and “dispensed with the high-handed aloofness of his previous visits, and elected to mingle with the people, talk to them and listen to their petitions and problems.” The Tsar also attended balls and concerts and took an interest in all things Polish, including music. For example, when taxidermist and inventor August Fidelis Brunner invited the Tsar to listen to his choralion (a more sonorous version of melodicordion, an instrument invented by August Fidelis Brunner and Fryderyk Jakub Hoffman) in action, the Tsar accepted. The dominant policy of Russification also had its limits and fluctuated depending on the political events of the time. While Russification affected all official institutions and schools, music schools such as the Warsaw Conservatory had very few Russian instructors. At the time, Russia suffered a lack of competent music instructors and could hardly send teachers abroad. Thus, Polish professors still staffed the musical institutions, even at the time when their colleagues in other schools and universities were being expelled. Furthermore, Russification did not erase Polish culture completely, and some Polish culture – particularly in theater – was allowed: “W 1890 roku na około czterdziestu premier przypadło

---

24 The November Uprising was a major Polish rebellion against Russian rule, which had become increasingly repressive after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The rebellion was crushed by the Russian Army.
25 Szmit-Zawierucha, 127.
26 The date has been given as 1825. See Richard Taruskin, The Oxford History of Western Music v. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 347.
27 “Sovremenniki Shopena.” Muzykal’naia zhizn’ (February 2010), 7.
28 Since Poland did not exist after 1795 and a significant part of it belonged to the Russian partition, we should clarify that “Russia” here refers to Russia proper.
31 Ibid.
zaledwie sześć sztuk polskich” ("In 1890 out of forty premieres, merely 6 turned out to be Polish plays"). Although Polish culture was not actively promoted, it was not forbidden either.

Furthermore, there was also a high degree of cultural exchange between Poland and Russia. Since Poland was partitioned and the eastern part belonged to the Russian Empire, many Poles could visit or emigrate. According to one statistic, by 1890 there were 22000 Poles in Petersburg, a figure that increased to 31000 in 1897. In addition to many prominent Polish musicians who received their education in Russia, Henryk Wieniawski (1835-80), a Polish violinist and composer, taught and worked as a soloist for the imperial court and court theaters in St. Petersburg. The relationship was bilateral, as Russian artists also interacted with their Polish counterparts. For example, painter Il’ia Repin (1844-1930) visited Jan Matejko in 1893; Balakirev met Stanislaw Moniuszko in 1856, and Cesar Cui studied with Moniuszko. If the incorporation of Poland into the Russian Empire was a political disaster, the lack of border facilitated more cultural interaction. In Balakirev’s second trip to Poland in 1894, for example, he met with Chopin’s relatives and Polish musicians, such as the violinist Stanislaw Barcewicz.

The relative leniency of Russian cultural policy can be illustrated by the history of Adam Mickiewicz’s reception in Russia. It is well-known that Aleksandr Pushkin began to translate Mickiewicz’s Konrad Wallenrod after hearing Mickiewicz recite it in 1827. In 1862, Pan Tadeusz, translated by Nikolai Berg, began to appear in the journal Otechestvennye zapiski (Notes of the Fatherland); the same is true of Grażyna. Many educated Russians read these works and in turn expressed their preference of Polish works over Western works. Composers also turned to Mickiewicz’s oeuvre for inspiration. For example, in addition to Glinka (1804-57), who knew Mickiewicz personally, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov set several of Mickiewicz’s poems

---

33 Grzegorz Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli: w hołdzie Chopinowi (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2011), 47.
34 Ibid., 39.
36 Edmund Grabkowski, Henryk Wieniawski i jego muzyka (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1990), 126.
37 Apparently Matejko died when Repin was on the way; Repin attended his funeral in Kraków.
38 Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 16-17.
40 “Pis’am M. A. Balakireva o Shopene.” Sovetskaia muzyka no. 10 (October 1949), 61.
42 Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 33. Konrad Wallenrod and Grażyna were published under the title of Konrad Wallenrod; Grazhina, trans. Vladimir Benedikov, illustrations by I. Tysevich (Moscow: Izd. M. O. Vol’fa, 1863).
43 See Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 34. According to Evgeni Anichkov, author of the journal Mir bozhii, Sienkiewicz, Orzeszkowa, Prus, Żeromski and Reyment were widely read in Russia. See E. Tsybenko, “Russkaia literaturnaia kritika vtoroi poloviny XIX-nachala XX v. o russko-pol’skikh otnosheniakh.” Poliaki i russkie v glazakh drug druga, ed. V. A. Khorev (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Indrik, 2000), 84.
to music. In 1862, Balakirev wrote Rimsky-Korsakov that he wanted to write a “scene” to the prologue of Mickiewicz’s Dziady (Forefather’s Eve), which suggests that Balakirev probably read Mickiewicz in Russian.

While the accessibility of Polish literature depended on the availability of translation, Chopin’s music had no linguistic restrictions. In fact, it was not only allowed but loved by many Russians because the public loved the innovative quality of his music, particularly in his use of folk elements mixed with dance. Furthermore, Chopin owed his reputation to some of the earliest pianists to perform his music in Russia: Adolf Henselt, Anton Gerke, Franz Liszt, and Maria Szymanowska. Szymanowska, the renowned Polish pianist and composer living in Petersburg, first performed Chopin’s music sometime during 1828-31 (probably in 1829). Szymanowska was well-connected, and Pushkin, Mickiewicz and other key cultural figures visited her salon frequently. Furthermore, it was at her salon where the Wieniawski brothers met Russian musicians and where Glinka met Karol Freyer, one of Chopin’s close friends. According to an article in Sovetskaia muzyka, Russian interest in Chopin reached its peak toward the end of 1860’s, thanks to the engagement of both individuals and public institutions: the Rubinstein brothers, Balakirev, Russian Musical Society, Free Music School, and university concerts. One should also keep in mind that this was the time of great development in the piano industry, and Chopin’s piano compositions were widely published and became standardized repertoire (an issue to be addressed more fully later). Russians and Poles were unified in their appreciation for Chopin’s music and in turn built a long-lasting friendship that later became the impetus for preserving Chopin’s legacy both in Poland and Russia.

Russians admired the national elements in Chopin’s music – genres such as mazurkas and polonaises being clearly identified with Poland – and even used Chopin as a source of inspiration for advancing their own national music and the idea of Pan-Slavism. Most Russians recognized the innovative quality of Chopin’s music, which was very different from the music played in Petersburg at the time. To many Russians and Pan-Slavists, Chopin became a role model because he created a Slavic – Polish in particular – musical idiom. Musicologist Anne Swartz writes

46 Moniuszko set the third part of Dziady to music, and the work was premiered in Warsaw in 1865.
48 G. Tsypin, Shopen i russkaia pianisticheskaiia tradisiia (Moscow: Muzyka, 1990), 4.
49 The question of who first performed Chopin in Russia is not without some ambiguity. While Szymanowska seems the most likely answer, there are others who suggest that Chopin was first performed in 1834 by Anton Gerke, playing Don Juan op. 2. Gerke taught at the Petersburg Conservatory, and his students include Vladimir Stasov, Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky. See Irina Nikolskaya, “Anton Rubinstein interpreting Frédéric Chopin.” Chopin and His Work in the Context of Culture vol. 2 ed. Irena Poniatowska (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2003), 143.
50 “Russkie muzykanty i kritiki o Shopene.” Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5 (1949), 73.
“Chopin’s artistry allied itself more closely with Nicholas’s broader principles concerning a Slavic national ‘cultural identity’ (narodnost’), however that might be defined.”

Tsar Nicholas I, unlike his predecessors Alexander I and Catherine II, who embraced European culture, sought an empire rooted in Slavic culture. Chopin’s music matched Russians’ political and artistic agendas. The cult of Chopin crossed the national barrier and overturned the image of Poland from being the Slavic world’s renegade (because Poland had looked westward, especially to France, after it lost its independence in 1795) to an integral part of a Slavic culture.

A discussion of Russians’ affinity for Chopin’s music would not be complete without considering the activities of several prominent Russian musicians, who took matters into their own hands and became, in the best sense of that word, propagandists of Chopin. In Russian, the connotation of the word “propagandist” is not always markedly negative; it denotes pushing for a cause in the interest of the society. Glinka and Balakirev were instrumental in cementing Chopin’s legacy and they, as Zaitseva puts it, became “leaders of the Chopin tradition on Russian soil.”

To Zaitseva’s list, one should also add Anton Rubinstein (1829-94) and the “Mighty Five” (“Moguchaia kuchka”), who were generally enthusiastic about Chopin. For example, Cui wrote: “[Мы с]ильно увлекались Листом и Берлиозом. Боготворили Шопена и Глинку” (“We were enthusiastic about Liszt and Berlioz. We worshipped Chopin and Glinka”). Rimsky-Korsakov and Serov used the same verb – обожают (to adore) – to express their affinity for Chopin. In 1903, Rimsky-Korsakov also composed the opera Pan Voyevoda, which he dedicated to the memory of Chopin (see Figure 2).

---

52 Ibid., 39.
53 Tat’iana Zaitseva, Tvorcheskie uroki M. A. Balakireva (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2012), 199.
54 There is no relation between Anton and Artur Rubinstein, the famous Polish pianist.
55 The name of the group came about when music critic Vladimir Stasov wrote in Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti in 1867: “Сколько поэзии, чувства, таланта и умения есть у маленькой, но уже могучей кучки русских музыкантов” (“There is so much poetry, feeling, talent and intelligence by the small but already mighty handful of Russian musicians”). A possible exception to the group’s affinity for Chopin is Modest Musorgskii. In a letter to Balakirev, he talks about how Nikolai Rubinstein “forces Russian pianists in Moscow to play Chopin,” whose works he considers “pièces de salon.” See M. P. Musorgskii, Pis’ma (Moscow: Muzyka, 1984), 33.
56 As quoted in Zaitseva, 104.
In explaining the rationale for composing the opera, Rimsky-Korsakov cited the large influence Chopin had on him; furthermore, in his childhood, his mother had sung many Polish melodies to him.\(^\text{59}\) In choosing a subject for the opera, Rimsky-Korsakov described his request to the librettist Il’ia Tiumenev as follows:

Я заказал ему пьесу из польского быта XVI-XVII столетий драматического содержания, без политической окраски. Фантастический элемент долженствовал быть в ограниченном количестве, например в виде гаданья или колдовства. Желательны были и польские танцы.\(^\text{60}\)

(I ordered from him [Tiumenev] a piece out of Polish life in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries marked by dramatic content, without political overtones. Fantastic elements such as fortune telling or sorcery should be in limited quantity. Preferably there would also be Polish dances.)

The line “without political overtones” shows Rimsky-Korsakov’s reluctance to engage explicitly in political questions concerning Poland, preferring a more historical and “realistic” content (by

\(^{59}\) N. A. Rimskii-Korsakov, Letopis’ moei muzikal’noi zhizni (Moscow: Soglasie, 2004), 414.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
limiting fantastic elements). Since paying tribute to Chopin was the main goal, Rimsky-Korsakov expressed his affinity for Poland via music. He writes:

(The Polish national element in the works of Chopin, which I adored, always aroused my enthusiasm. In the opera based on a Polish topic, I wanted to pay tribute to my delight with that side of Chopin's music, and it seemed to me that I was able to write something Polish, national.)

In the opera, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote several numbers whose genres are closely associated with Chopin, such as polonaise, mazurka, nocturne, and krakowiak. Rimsky-Korsakov continued, rather than founded, the Russian tradition of engaging with Chopin’s legacy; his activities were preceded by a few other composers.

**Mikhail Glinka**

Unlike most Russian composers, Glinka actually lived and composed in Warsaw for a few years beginning in 1848. His stay in Warsaw exposed him to Polish culture and Chopin’s music. In his memoirs, Glinka describes to his friend Valer’ian Shirkov how Chopin’s mazurkas pleased him: “Когда я играю мазурки Chopin, или другие в моем присутствии исполняют те пьесы, которые играла в моем присутствии Александра Григорьевна, мое сердце так живо переносится в прошедшее, что, слыша звуки, душа моя видит вас пред собою” (“When I play Chopin’s mazurkas, or when others play these pieces in my presence, as Aleksandra Grigor’evna did in my presence, my heart is so vividly transported into the past, hearing these sounds, my soul sees you in front of me”). Mazurka as a genre appealed to Glinka; he even composed a small mazurka spontaneously for his travel companion. Critics have portrayed Glinka as a direct line of descent from Chopin:

(Chopin’s style had deep influence on Glinka. Though Glinka did not know Chopin personally, he studied Chopin’s works closely. The Polish master’s creative individuality

---

61 Ibid.
64 Levasheva et al., 501-502.
resonated with his taste and tendencies more than the powerful, orchestral, animated-romantic style of Lisztian pianism. In Chopin’s music, Glinka found qualities of melodic richness and “singing texture” of which he was fond. These qualities were from time immemorial inherent to the Russian school of piano.)

Glinka himself has acknowledged the affinity. In comparing his musical style to Chopin, he said “Это наша с ним родная жилка”65 (“That’s our shared vein”). Glinka outlived Chopin by only five years, and considering the turbulent history of Europe in the late 1840s and early 1850s, it may have been premature to engage in commemorative activities. Nevertheless, Glinka continued to turn to Polish literature for inspiration, an example being setting Mickiewicz’s poem “Rozmowa” (“Conversation,” the Russian title is “О, милая дева” [“Oh, kind maiden”]) to music in the fall of 1849.66

**Anton Rubinstein**

If Glinka composed works à la Chopin, Rubinstein spread Chopin’s music by performing it in concerts; Rubinstein included Chopin’s works in recitals in Frankfurt, Breslau, Pest and St. Petersburg.67 At the end of 1840, Rubinstein performed at the Salle Erard in Paris, with Chopin, Liszt and Meyerbeer in attendance. After the concert, Chopin was so impressed that he invited Rubinstein to his apartment and played the Impromptu in F-sharp major, Op. 36 for the eleven-year old boy.68 This episode left an imprint in Rubinstein; he later wrote “I was so strongly impressed by that visit to Chopin that even today I vividly remember his apartment.”69

Rubinstein would later consider himself an heir of Chopin.70 Like Glinka, he thought highly of Chopin’s music; he even went so far as to claim, repeatedly, that music is finished (“finis musicae”) after the death of Chopin71 and “Chopin has written the last note in music.”72 When asked why Chopin’s music had a particularly strong appeal in Russia, Rubinstein answered: “all possible expressions are found in his works.”73 The fondness for Chopin’s music was coupled with concrete action; for example, Rubinstein kept friendly relations with Poles, frequently performing with Henryk Wieniawski in concerts (in major cities like Paris and London74) and inviting the Polish violinist and composer to come teach for the Russian Musical Society – and

---

66 B. Asaf’ev, Glinka (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1947), 103.
67 Nikolskaya, 149.
68 Ibid., 145.
69 Ibid.
70 A. G. Rubinshtein, Literaturnoe nasledie vol. 1, ed. L. A. Barenboim (Moscow: Muzyka, 1983), 201.
71 Ibid., 115 and 142.
72 Ibid., 95 and 142.
73 As quoted in A. V. Vasil’ev, “Shopen na russkoi fortpeiannoi stsen kontsa XIX – nach. XX vv.” In Shopenovskie chteniia: 200 let so dnia rozhdeniia Friderika Shopena, eds. V. Ia. Selivanovskaia et al. (Orenburg: Regional’nyi tsentr razvitiia obrazovaniia, 2011), 42. We should note that Rubinstein differed from Chopin’s approach to music in one significant way: he considered music highly evocative and often endowed works with meaning. For example, he famously called the last movement of Chopin’s Second Sonata as “ночное веяние ветра над гробами на кладбище” (“night wind blowing over the tombs in the cemetery”). As quoted in Zoia Gulinskaia, Nikolai Iakovlevich Miaskovskii (Moscow: Izdatel’ste Muzyka, 1981), 70.
74 See Józef Władysław Reiss, Wieniawski (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1985), 49, 62. Rubinstein also introduced Wieniawski to his future wife Izabela Hampton.
later the Conservatory – in St. Petersburg from early 1860s.\textsuperscript{75} Furthermore, Rubinstein was one of only a handful of Russian musicians to actually go to Poland to promote Chopin’s legacy. He became a pioneer in attempting to obtain official recognition of Chopin in Poland, and in 1868, Rubinstein tried to persuade the Russian government in Warsaw to erect a monument to Chopin. The Russian governor general of Poland, Fedor Berg (1793-1874), rejected the proposal, but Rubinstein kept trying. In a letter to Edyta von Raden, he remarked that the monument would “meet general approval and would produce a good impression of Russia abroad.”\textsuperscript{76} Ultimately, the obstacles presented by bureaucracy and post-1863 uprising political tension defeated Rubinstein’s plan.\textsuperscript{77} Let us recall the fact that the 1863 uprising occurred during Berg’s rule and there were attempts to assassinate him. Chopin’s piano was defenestrated as a retaliation by Russian troops fighting Polish rebels; Cyprian Kamil Norwid captured this historical event in his poem “Fortepian Szopena” (“Szopen’s piano”).\textsuperscript{78}

Despite the failure to build a Chopin monument in Warsaw, Rubinstein decided to immortalize Chopin through other means: by playing Chopin in his international concerts, which was arguably the best way to cement and spread Chopin’s legacy. In 1869, Rubinstein toured cities such as Riga, Vilnius, Kharkov, Kiev and Warsaw;\textsuperscript{79} in Warsaw, Rubinstein was warmly received and his effort was acknowledged by Apolinary Kański (1825-79), a Polish violinist and pedagogue who reestablished the conservatory (then named Instytut Muzyczny) in 1860 after it was shut down in consequence of the December Uprising in 1830-31.\textsuperscript{80} Perhaps as an expression of gratitude, Rubinstein’s works were frequently performed in Poland.\textsuperscript{81}

In 1885-86, Rubinstein performed a series of so-called “historical concerts” (“исторические концерты”) in major European cities such as Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, Moscow, Leipzig, Paris, London, as well as in Dresden and Brussels.\textsuperscript{82} In the seven-concert series,\textsuperscript{83} Rubinstein presents the most outstanding (выдающиеся) piano repertoire chronologically.\textsuperscript{84} In the series, the entire sixth concert and half of the seventh concert consisted of Chopin’s works.\textsuperscript{85} Eduard Hanslick, the famous music critic, reviewed Rubinstein’s concert in

\textsuperscript{75} Grabkowski, 142.
\textsuperscript{76} As quoted in Wiśniewski, \textit{Bałakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli}, 56.
\textsuperscript{77} The January Uprising in 1863 was a Polish rebellion against the Russian Empire. It occurred after a series of Polish protests were crushed, which led to the conscription of Poles into the Russian Army.
\textsuperscript{78} Szym-Zawirucha, 103.
\textsuperscript{79} Philip Taylor, \textit{Anton Rubinstein: A Life in Music} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 134.
\textsuperscript{80} Czekanowska-Kuklińska, 293. According to Czekanowska-Kuklińska, Kański occupied the same post in imperial Russian court as Henryk Wieniawski and thus knew many key Russian figures. Tsar Nicholas I allowed the institute to be reopened because he believed it would keep young people from going abroad.
\textsuperscript{81} Chechlińska, 152.
\textsuperscript{82} Rubinstein performed part of the historical concerts as early as May 1873 in New York City, which was part of the pianist’s 1872-73 tour of the United States. See Marek Żebrowski, \textit{Celebrating Chopin and Paderewski} (Warsaw: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2010), 4.
\textsuperscript{83} It is important to note that these concerts were lengthy because, for example, in concert no. 4 (dedicated to Schumann’s works) Rubinstein performed the F-sharp minor sonata, Fantasy in C major, Kreisleriana, Symphonic Etudes, Carnaval and other pieces – totaling more than two hours of music. See G. Kogan, \textit{Voprosy pianizma: Izbrannye stat’i} (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe izdatel’stvo sovetskoi kompozitorn, 1968), 174.
\textsuperscript{84} S. M. Maikapar, \textit{Gody ucheniia} (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo “Iskusstvo,” 1938), 54.
Vienna and was not convinced that Chopin had to take such a significant portion of the cycle: “Hingegen dünkt es uns nicht motivirt [sic], Chopin einen ganzen Abend, also den siebenten Theil der gesammten Musiksentwicklung, zu widmen und ihn überdies noch am folgenden Abend mit elf Nummern zu bedenken.” (“However, we do not find it justified to dedicate a whole evening, the seventh part of the development of music series [i.e. historical concerts, T. L.], to Chopin’s music; it is also unjustified to include eleven works by Chopin on the following evening”). Rubinstein clearly found his programming justified; he spoke about Chopin in a way a Pole would, by calling him a “bard.” In his lectures, later published as *Music and Its Spokesmen* (*Музыка и ее представители*), he stated: “все до сих пор поименованные великие люди отдавали все свое сокровеннейшее, я бы даже сказал прекраснейшее, фортепиану, но бард, рэпсид, дух, душа этого инструмента – это Шопен” (“everyone I have mentioned so far are great people who gave all their most precious – finest, I’d say – to the piano, but the bard, rhapsodist, spirit and soul of that instrument – that’s Chopin”).

Rubinstein’s view was not shared by all Russian composers. Some thought he exaggerated the dramatic and tragic elements in Chopin’s music; there were also a few notable figures who did not think highly of Chopin, such as Vladimir Odoevskii – a music critic and author of *The Russian Nights*. For example, Odoevskii complained that Wieniawski assigned his students too many works of Chopin and talked about Klindworth’s performance of Chopin in the following way: “Клиндworth est fait pour la musique de Chopin… il y’a dans son jeu tout le faux et le manière qui se trouvent dans la musique de Chopin, et au bré douillage du compositeur il ajoute le sien avec une grace tout particulière” (“Klindworth is made for Chopin’s music… one finds his playing false and mannered, which are qualities typical of Chopin’s music, and to the muttering of the composer he adds his own with particular grace”). Notwithstanding the few dissenting voices, Chopin’s music appealed to much of Russia’s intelligentsia, not least of which was Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy famously said: “Вот за это одно можно поляков любить, что у них Шопен был” (“One can love Poles based on this alone: they had Chopin”).

Rubinstein’s artistic and political engagement with Chopin’s legacy was not surpassed until Balakirev. Unlike Rimsky-Korsakov, who evaded sensitive political issues, Rubinstein (and later Balakirev) walked a thin line between art and politics. Rubinstein was unapologetic about loving and performing Chopin’s music and, like Balakirev, was a true propagandist of Chopin in every sense of the word. **Milii Balakirev**

A founder of the Mighty Five and influential figure in Russian culture, Balakirev went even further than Rubinstein in grappling with politics. Balakirev’s life has recently received new critical attention, with Grzegorz Wiśniewski and Russian musicologist Tat’iana Zaitseva each devoting a book-length study to Balakirev’s involvement with Chopin (2011) and Balakirev’s musical activities (2012), respectively. In his youth, Balakirev was indifferent to

---

86 As quoted in Irena Poniatowska et al., eds. *Chopin and his critics: an anthology (up to World War I)* (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2011), 321. It is unclear why the all-Chopin concert was the seventh in Vienna and the sixth elsewhere. For more exact description of what was on the program, see Nikolskaya, 150.

87 Anton Rubinstein, *Muzyka i eia predstaviteli: razgovor o muzyke* (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1891), 95.

88 Nikolskaya, 152.


90 Ibid., 228.

Chopin’s music, and Chopin’s works appeared infrequently on the concert programs of the Free Musical School, which Balakirev founded. However, as Balakirev grew older, he became a deep admirer of Chopin, regularly transcribing Chopin’s works for other instruments. The transcriptions made Chopin’s music accessible to other instrumentalists and could be appreciated by an even wider audience. The transcriptions included a string quartet version of the Etude in C-sharp minor, a choral version of the E-flat minor mazurka (1898), solo piano version of the Romance from the E-minor concerto (1905), an impromptu on the themes of two preludes by Chopin (1907), and an orchestral suite based on motives of Chopin (1909). Balakirev went far beyond mere musical engagement with Chopin; he became a propagandist. In some books published during Soviet times, Robert Schumann and Balakirev were both labeled “propagandists” because of their involvement with the establishment of Chopin’s legacy. In Martynov’s book, Schumann is described as follows: “Пламенным пропагандистом шопеновской музыки был немецкий композитор Роберт Шуман” (“German composer Robert Schumann was an ardent propagandist of Chopin’s music”), whereas Balakirev is described as a “пропагандист шопеновского творчества” (“propagandist of Chopin’s oeuvre”).

Balakirev’s Visit To Warsaw/Żelazowa Wola and Subsequent Engagement with Chopin

Balakirev did not transform himself from an admirer into a propagandist without reason. Firstly, he had demonstrated the disposition to commemorate composers in his earlier involvement with the Glinka statue in Petersburg, where he overcame bureaucratic obstacles in order to ensure the erection of the statue. Secondly, Balakirev realized that he was in a privileged position, since he was a recognized and well-connected composer. He could find ways to approach government dignitaries that few Poles could. In the post-1863 era, the relationship between Poland and Russia was strained as Poland was subject to a stricter system of Russification. For example, Aleksandr Apukhtin (namesake of the infamous “noc apuchtinowska,” referring to Apukhtin’s conservative and anti-Polish views), the curator of the Warsaw School District (попечитель Варшавского учебного округа), imposed the rule that besides religion, all textbooks and language of instruction must be in Russian. In 1891, when Balakirev first visited Żelazowa Wola and Warsaw, few Polish works were staged in theaters. As Zaitseva points out, for Balakirev, to love music is to serve it and its creator. In 1891, Balakirev was working for the court choir (придворная певческая капелла), and in his capacity as a courtier (царедворцев), he went to Poland despite the general disapproval “thanks to the exacerbated relationships created by the implacable history between two kindred nations”

---

92 From a manuscript titled “Shopen v zhizni M. A. Balakireva.” RGALI fond 654 op. 4 no. 891, pp. 43.
93 V. Muzalevskii, M. A. Balakirev (Leningrad: Leningradskiaia Filarmoniia, 1938), 64.
94 Grzegorz Wiśniewski, Chopin w kulturze rosyjskiej: antologia (Warsaw: Unia Wydawnicza VERUM, 2000), 11. Also see Zaitseva, 106.
95 Martynov, 35.
96 Martynov, 52.
97 Balakirev even wrote a cantata titled Na otkrytie pamiatnika Glinke (On the occasion of the unveiling of the Glinka statue).
98 See, for example, Theodore Weeks, From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850-1914 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 87. In spring of 1883, many students protested against the harsher regulations and stricter Russification policies. One student (who was actually Russian) became a national hero after he slapped Apukhtin in the face.
99 Balakirev, Issledovaniia, 426.
100 Zaitseva, 110.
When Balakirev was in Warsaw, he met with Apukhtin to get permission to hold events – something that was previously considered impossible. Before 1894, Balakirev obtained a private permit – probably from the Tsar himself – to collect funds for a museum and to build a memorial to Chopin. Nevertheless, he was not allowed to advertise in the press or via posters. In a letter to Dmitri Sipiagin, the Russian Internal Affairs Minister, Balakirev argued that the process of collecting funds could involve newspapers since the same had been done without incident for the Mickiewicz statue. In 1894, Balakirev finally obtained a public permit to ensure that sufficient funds were collected.

Upon returning from the first trip to Żelazowa Wola in 1891, Balakirev spoke at two Russian gatherings about the neglect of a place worthy of reverence. He also gave an interview to Czesław Jankowski, a Polish journalist, during which he discussed issues concerning not only Chopin but also Polish culture in general. Balakirev described the condition of the house in Żelazowa Wola as “depressing,” but he clearly conveyed that Russians liked Chopin and were ready to come to the aid of Poles if necessary. Secondly, he expressed a desire to re-establish the cult of Chopin by involving the entire Polish society. Thirdly, Balakirev pointed out the lack of performances of Polish operas, particularly those by Moniuszko. He said, “Where am I supposed to look for Polish opera, if not in Warsaw?” Balakirev also said: “Consider my journey to Żelazowa Wola … merely as the expression of a sincere, profound, ardent admiration for your Chopin – the expression for your Chopin (emphasis in the original) is a bad one, because he belongs to all mankind!”

After the revelatory interview with Balakirev, Jankowski wrote a series of articles accusing Polish society of abandoning its remarkable son. For example, he wrote: “Byłoby istotnie rzeczą wysoce bolesną dla ambicji narodowej, aby restauracją miejsca urodzenia genialnego twórcy polonézów i mazurków żywiej interesowano się nad Newą niż nad Wisłą” (“It would be a fundamentally highly painful thing for the national ambition if the restoration of the birthplace of the genius creator of polonaises and mazurkas interested those on the Neva more than those on the Vistula”). Jankowski also wrote that Balakirev’s enthusiasm should “dzielnie przyczynić się do rychłego naprawienia niedbałości, która nam – nie owijając słów w bawełnę – wstydz przynosi” (“bravely contribute to the imminent repairing of negligence, which brings us shame – not to sugarcoat words”). Polish press performed its due duty, as Jankowski’s was one in the series of self-criticizing articles. The effect was immediate: Poles (including Paderewski, whom I discuss in Chapter 2) mobilized and collected money – without

101 Zaitseva, 111.
102 Sovetskaia muzyka no. 10 (October 1949), 62.
103 See Russkaia muzykal’naia gazeta, no. 11 (1894), 222. The line reads “после Высочайшего соизволения, памятник был торжественно открыт 2 (14) Октября с. т.” (“after His Highness’ permission, the monument was unveiled on October 2 [14] of this year”).
104 As quoted in Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 93.
105 Garden, 137.
106 Ibid., 136.
107 As quoted in Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 63.
108 Ibid., 89.
109 Ibid., 65.
110 Ibid., 65.
Russian contributions – for a monument.\textsuperscript{111} In short, Balakirev helped initiate the process of collecting funds, but in the event Poles did not want Russian monetary aid, preferring to keep the Chopin monument a strictly Polish matter.

**Chopin Monument Ceremony and Concert in Żelazowa Wola (October 2/14, 1894)\textsuperscript{112}**

Balakirev’s visit to Poland was not met with hostility, of which some Russians were afraid. Balakirev could have easily been a target for demonstrations or assaults, since he was already a renowned composer whose name and biography appeared in the Polish *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna ilustrowana* (*Great Universal Illustrated Encyclopedia*).\textsuperscript{113} Some Russians at first tried to dissuade Balakirev from going to Warsaw, citing possible demonstrations against him.\textsuperscript{114} Nevertheless, Balakirev went to Warsaw despite the reservations. His courage and his sincere desire to help Poles with preserving the legacy of Chopin were met not with verbal or physical attacks but rather with acceptance. In a letter to Zygmunt Noskowski, he wrote: “Благоговея перед [Шопена] памятью, я не могу не питать сердечной симпатии не только к Вам, [но и] к народу, среди которого он родился и от которого получил музыкальное содержание”\textsuperscript{115} (“Venerating Chopin’s memory, I cannot but help feel sincere fondness not only to you but also to the nation in which Chopin was born and from which he got his musical substance”). Balakirev serves as an example of how music could, at least momentarily, alleviate some of the political tension and hostility between Poland and Russia.

![Figure 3: The Ceremony in Żelazowa Wola\textsuperscript{116}](image)

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{112} Throughout the dissertation, dates rendered as “/” denote old/new style calendar.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 52. The encyclopedia was first published in Warsaw in 1890.
\textsuperscript{114} Balakirev, *Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva*, 375.
\textsuperscript{115} Zaitseva, 107.
\textsuperscript{116} Photograph in *Echo no. 577* (October 8/20, 1894), 507.
In a letter responding to the invitation from the Warsaw Musical Society (Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne), Balakirev wrote:

Poczytuję sobie za obowiązek wyrazić gorącą wdzięczność za otrzymane przeze mnie zaszczytne zaproszenie na mające się odbyć w jesieni odsłonięcie pomnika wielkiego kompozytora i pianisty Fryderyka Chopina, zaproszenie, którego wykorzystanie będę uważał sobie za szczególny zaszczyt. Będąc wielbicielem tego genialnego kompozytora, z którego może być dumna Polska, a wrzaz z nią cały świat słowiański, odczuwam zachwyt na myśl, że ostatecznie pamięć jego będzie unieśmiertelniona w jego ojczystych stronach.  

(I deem it my duty to express my deep gratitude for the honorable invitation I received for the autumn unveiling of the monument of the great composer and pianist Fryderyk Chopin, the use of which I shall consider a special honor. Being an admirer of the composer of genius, of whom Poland as well as the entire Slavic world can be proud, I feel delight at the thought that his memory will be immortalized in his native land.)

The short letter shows how the enthusiasm for Chopin crossed national borders, and a Russian composer was essential in beginning the process of Chopin-immortalization (unieśmiertelnienie). The ceremony, which could have been an awkward or thorny event, became an illustration of the rare harmony between Russia and Poland, united in the cause of paying tribute to Chopin. Around two thousand people, representing the intelligentsia, came to the ceremony, along with choirs and an orchestra from Warsaw.  

The ceremony began with the performance of Noskowski’s Cantata to Niemojowski’s “Utrata.” Noskowski then made a short speech, after which the monument was unveiled and subsequently dedicated (poświęcony) by a priest, Sienicki. Then Chopin’s Prelude in A major was sung by a male choir, followed by another sung version of the Polonaise in A major, arranged by A. Münchheimer. Finally, a few pianists (including Michałowski, Jan Kleczyński, and Balakirev) played a concert. Balakirev played the Funeral March Sonata, the Ballade in F minor, and other pieces. He was later given a silver wreath bearing the inscription in Polish, “To M. Balakirev, in memory of the unveiling of the Chopin memorial at Żelazowa Wola. October 14, 1894, from the Warsaw Musical Society.” Balakirev played a newly discovered, unpublished nocturne by Chopin as an encore. The Polish audience was impressed with Balakirev’s pianistic abilities (the pieces are among the more challenging ones Chopin wrote), and the Polish press declared Balakirev one of the best Chopin interpreters. The audience

---

117 As quoted in Dybowski, 90.  
118 Biblioteka Warszawska vol. IV (1894), 403.  
119 M. Radziszewski wrote the lyrics, which reads:  
Brzmijcie trąby i pozony!  
Brzmijcie nam w potężne tony!  
Niosąc okrzyk w świat daleki:  
Chopinowi cześć na wieki!  
120 Echo no. 577 (October 8/20, 1894), 52.  
121 For the list of the complete program, see Garden, 140.  
122 Russkaia muzykal’naia gazeta (1894), 226.
responded so enthusiastically that one listener remarked: “if Chopin himself showed up at that minute, even he would not have received a bigger ovation and honor” (“если бы сам Шопен предстал перед ним в ту минуту, больших оваций и почестей и он не заслужил бы”). In a letter to Iu. Pypina, Balakirev wrote of the concert: “Успех огромный. Мне поднесли лавровый венок” (“it was a huge success. They presented me with a laurel wreath”). In a gesture that symbolized his generosity and deep care for Chopin’s native land, Balakirev proposed that the proceeds from the concert go to the scholarship fund of the Warsaw Conservatory named after Chopin.125

**Another Concert in Warsaw (October 5/17, 1894)**

Three days later, on the anniversary day of Chopin’s death, a special concert was held in Warsaw. Printed in both Russian and Polish (on the left and right half of the program, respectively), the concert program was labeled “A Program of Extraordinary Concert in honor of Fryderyk Chopin” (“Program Koncertu Nadzwyczajnego na cześć Fryderyka Chopina”). The concert took place on October 17, 1894 in Warsaw’s Sala Redutowa, featuring performers such as Aniela Siemianowska, Balakirev, and Gustaw Czernicki. The concert consisted of two parts:

**First part:**
1. Utrata, Kantata na odsłonięcie pomnika Chopina, na chór i orkiestrę; słowa A. Niemojewskiego (by Z. Noskowski) ["Utrata, Cantata for the unveiling of the Chopin monument, for choir and orchestra; lyrics by A. Niemojewski”]
2. Ballade in F minor (Balakirev)
3. “Moja pieszczotka” and “Pożegnanie” (singer Czernicki) ["My Darling” and “Farewell”]
4. Mazurek in A minor, Nocturne in G major, Polonaise in C minor (Balakirev)

**Second part:**
5. Bardzo raniuchno, Śliczny chłopiec, Życzenie (singer: Siemianowska) [“Very Early, A Nice Boy, Wish”]
6. Sonata in B-flat minor (Objaśnienie: nad mogiłą przez wszystkich opuszczoną wyje wicher jesienią wśród którego słychać czyjeś łkania. Ciosy losu kładą koniec cierpieniu) [“Clarification: over the grave abandoned by everyone, the autumn wind howls, amongst which you can hear someone sobbing. Blows of fate put the end to suffering”]
7. Marzenie, Polonez in A major (na chór i orkiestrę; słowa M. Radziszewskiego, układ A. Münchhejmera) [“A Dream, Polonaise in A major for choir and orchestra; lyrics by M. Radziszewski, arrangement by A. Münchhejmer”]

In another letter dated November 17, 1894, Balakirev wrote to Aleksandr Alekseevich Olenin:

В Варшаве я очень приятно провел время и уехал с приятнейшими впечатлениями. Кроме поездки в Желязову Волю на открытие памятника Шопену /2 октября/, где меня заставили первого войдти за решетку памятника, как инициатора, у меня остались приятнейшие вещественные воспоминания о концерте, происходившем в

125 “Dochód z koncertu będzie przeznaczony na utworzenie przy Warszawskim Instytucie muzycznym stypendjum imienia Chopin” (“The income from the concert will be used to fund a music scholarship named after Chopin at the Warsaw Institute”). See Dybowsky, 92.
день смерти Шопена /17 октября/, причем главным действующим лицом был я, и между разными произведениями Шопена, из коих исключительно состояла программа концерта /кроме кантаты Носовского написанной на открытие памятника/я, по случаю дня его кончины, исполнил его похоронную сонату B moll. Дирекция Польского музыкального общества поднесла мне огромную лиру из лавра, с изящным серебряным венком по середине и с польскою на нем надпись.126

(In Warsaw I really had a good time and left with the most pleasant impressions. Besides the trip to Żelazowa Wola for the unveiling of the Chopin monument on October 2 [October 14 in the Western calendar – T. L.] – where they forced me to go first behind the fence around the monument since I was the initiator – I had the most pleasant, tangible memories about the concert that occurred on the anniversary of the day Chopin died, October 17. I was the main character, and between the different works of an all-Chopin concert [except Noskowski’s cantata, written for the occasion], I played Chopin’s B-flat minor Sonata on the anniversary of his death. The administration of the Polish Music Society presented me with a huge lyre of laurel with an elegant silver wreath in the middle and with a Polish inscription on it.)

As a gesture of gratitude, Poles organized a performance of Karol Kurpiński’s Wesele w Ojcowie (Wedding in Ojców) especially for Balakirev because he was interested in Polish folk traditions.127 While listening to Noskowski’s cantata, Balakirev was described by the Russian musicologist Leonid Siniaver as the following: “С чувством глубокого волнения он вслушивается в слова кантаты, написанной польским композитором Зигмундом Носковским к открытию памятника” (“With a feeling of deep agitation he listens attentively to the words of the cantata, which was written by the Polish composer Zygmunt Noskowski for the occasion of the monument’s unveiling”).128

The Polish writer Aleksander Świętochowski (1849-1938) said “Gdyby p. Bałakirew nie był przyjechał z Petersburga, cała ta uroczystość miała być tym świętem Żelazowej Woli z udzieleniem Warszawy. Z za granicy nikt nie przybył, nie nadesłano kwiatów i adresów… Co to znaczy? To znaczy, że geniusz wobec świata otrzymuje znaczenie narodu, do którego należy”129 (“If Mr. Balakirev did not come from Petersburg, all the festivities would have the character of the holiday of Żelazowa Wola, with the participation of Warsaw. No one from abroad came, no flowers or letters were sent … What does it mean? It means that the genius of the world receives the meaning of a nation to which he belongs”). Balakirev’s involvement helped transform Chopin into a world-wide phenomenon; his concern for Chopin’s legacy went beyond borders of Russia and Poland. After the monument was erected in Żelazowa Wola in 1894, Balakirev was concerned about the progress of building a Chopin monument in Paris in a letter to Olenin.130 One can only hypothesize what would happen to Chopin’s fame had Balakirev not visited

126 Olenin, Moi vospominaniia o Balakireve, Glinka Museum Archive, Moscow, p. 13-14.
127 Sovetskaia muzyka, no. 10 (October 1949), 62.
128 L. Siniaver: Shopen (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo, 1951), 88.
129 As quoted in Biblioteka Warszawska vol. IV (1894), 405.
130 Letter dated March 14, 1897. In Olenin’s Moi vospominaniia o Balakireve, Glinka Museum Archive, Moscow, p. 18.
Żelazowa Wola on that fateful day in 1891. Balakirev brought Poles’ attention to Chopin and helped them achieve what they could not on their own.

Nevertheless, not all Poles were equally enthusiastic about Balakirev’s involvement with Chopin. Some Poles found Balakirev’s advocacy problematic; they were not ready to accept the notion of a Russian devoting so much time and energy to helping preserve the legacy of Chopin. Some Russians argued that attempts were made to undermine Balakirev’s labors, as Balakirev’s efforts went unnoticed in some newspapers. In a passage from the October 7/19 issue of the Novoe vremia, the author, using the pseudonym of Novus, wrote about the fact that Balakirev – the initiator of “Chopin’s birthplace revival project” – was not mentioned in the speech at the memorial celebration in Żelazowa Wola, and that even though more and more Russian artists became interested and involved in Polish art, the Poles did not hold a reciprocal relationship and that Polish artists deliberately ignored Russian art. The article asks whether such a one-sided interaction should continue, ending with the following line: “Ввиду такого упорного игнорирования нашего искусства позволительно спросить, не чересчур ли далеко мы иногда заходим в увлечении польским искусством?” (“In view of such stubborn ignoring of our art it is permissible to ask: do we sometimes go too far in our passion for Polish art?”)

A long rebuttal (published anonymously in Nedelia on November 27, 1894) – often attributed to Balakirev – argued that he was one of few individuals to receive an invitation to the ceremony, and that Poles received him warmly. The article – though published anonymously and without the title of the article to which the author was replying – listed Polish periodicals (such as Wiek, Słowo, and Kurier Warszawski) that covered Balakirev’s participation. In the same month, an additional article, titled “Открытие памятника Шопену в Железовой Воле” (“Unveiling of the Chopin Monument in Żelazowa Wola”) appeared in the Russkaia muzikal’naia gazeta, confirming the gratitude Poles expressed to Balakirev – referring to him as “наш симпатичный гость” (“our likable guest”) – and the recognition he received in Warsaw. Evidence shows that Novus’ article was most likely a provocation and an attempt to undercut a rare moment of publicized harmony between Poles and Russians. Balakirev quickly came to the defense of the Poles and denounced the article.

Post-1894

Balakirev’s preoccupation with Chopin did not stop after 1894. At times, Balakirev preferred working on a new edition of Chopin’s works rather than finishing his own compositions. The selfless nature was also evidenced in the fact that in 1897, he offered to donate the honorarium from the publication of his symphonic poem “Tamara” in France to help erect a Chopin monument there. Furthermore, Balakirev was actively promoting a monument in the Polish capital. In a 1908 letter to Henryk Zarzycki (Генрих Заржицкий), he wrote:

Постановка памятника ему в Варшаве была и моей заветной мечтой... мне остается только пожелать Вам от всего сердца скорого и полного успеха предприятому

---

132 As quoted in Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli, 86-87.
133 As quoted in Kremlev et al., Balakirev: Issledovaniia i stat’i, 432.
134 “Pamiatnik Shopenu.” Nedelia no. 48 (November 7, 1894), 1554.
135 Russkaia muzikal’naia gazeta No. 11 (1894), 222.
136 Zaitseva, 112.
137 Balakirev, Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva, 408. As quoted in Zaitseva, 111.
Вами святому делу, и Вы мне доставите живейшую радость, если найдете возможность сообщать мне время от времени о дальнейшем его движении.138

(Erecting a monument to him in Warsaw was my ultimate dream... I can only wish you from my heart rapid and complete success with the steps you have taken for this holy cause. You will bring me the profoundest joy if you find an opportunity to tell me from time to time about its further movement.)

Balakirev considered the monument matter “holy,” and the fact he asked for updates means Chopin was often on his mind. Balakirev did not live to see his ultimate dream realized, as the monument was not erected until 1926.

**Chopin and Russian Art**

The political situation did not deter many artists and writers from turning to Chopin and other Polish art as sources of inspiration. As discussed, Balakirev and Liapunov were two of many Russian musicians who explored various ways to incorporate Chopin’s legacy in music – whether composing music in the style of Chopin, quoting Chopin’s melodies, or transcribing Chopin’s music. Similarly, in the visual arts, Mikhail Vrubel’ (1856-1910) and Il’ia Repin included Chopin in their creative output. Vrubel’, for example, drew a composite of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt in 1890. Vrubel’ previously had shown interest in drawing musical figures, as demonstrated in his earlier paintings of Mozart and Salieri (1884). After Vrubel’ married opera singer Nadezhda Zabela (1868-1913) in 1896, he was able to combine his artistic talent with his musical interest as he designed stage sets and costumes for his wife. In the sketch, Vrubel’ uses blended pencil strokes to connect three composers of distinct nationalities. The placement of the composers may tell us whom Vrubel’ deemed most important – Beethoven above all. The unpublished and (most likely) unfinished drawing is not mentioned in Vrubel’ writings, but it may convey Vrubel’s favorite composers and how they represent the best aspects of the Western musical tradition. It is also possible, however, that Vrubel’ used the sketch as a way to practice drawing composers, since the portraits of the composers resemble other better-known portraits (for example, the Beethoven portrait looks similar to Joseph Karl Stieler’s 1820 portrait).

---

138 Ibid.
While Vrubel’s drawing includes only one Slavic composer, Il’ia Repin painted 22 “Slavic Composers” in 1871-72, including Chopin. As the title suggests, Chopin, along with several other Polish and Czech composers, was perceived as integral to Russia’s Slavic identity, not an antagonist. Even though Chopin is not the central focus of the painting, his inclusion nonetheless merits discussion, particularly on the basis of the controversy surrounding Repin’s work.

139 The drawing, which I found by searching the RGALI online catalog, can be found in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fond 725 op. 1 no. 4.
Repin made the painting for the grand opening of the “Slavic Bazaar Hotel” (“Славянский базар”), owned by Muscovite entrepreneur Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Porokhovshchikov (1833-1918). The Pan-Slavist point of view was very much in vogue at the time, and its adherents were looking for common roots in Slavic languages and folklore. Porokhovshchikov, himself belonging to the reactionary Slavophile movement, commissioned Repin to make the painting in the spirit of creating the “Slavic” atmosphere in the restaurant part of the hotel. Repin had to use a great deal of imagination for the painting since only three of the composers he drew posed for him (Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Napravnik); he consulted portraits for the other composers. Similar to Vrubel’s painting but to a greater extent, Repin’s painting juxtaposes composers of various nationalities and eras and who may not have been on friendly terms with each other; the commonality that connects them to each other is Slavic blood.

The overall artistic value of the work should take into account its political overtone. About two-thirds of the composers are Russians: out of 22, 14 are Russian (Rimsky-Korsakov, Dargomyzhsky, Balakirev, Odoevsky, Glinka, Serov, Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein, Verstovsky, Bortniansky, Laskovsky, Turchaninov, L’vov, Varlamov), 4 are Czechs (Smetana, K. Bendl, V. Gorak, Napravnik), and 4 are Poles (Chopin, Ogiński, Moniuszko and Karol Lipiński).

140 In the foreground we see Glinka talking to Balakirev, Odoevsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. Behind them, Dargomyzhsky sits on the chair. Behind Dargomyzhsky we see Laskovsky and, to his right, L’vov, who is listening to Verstovsky. At the piano we see the Rubinstein brothers. Between Anton Rubinstein and L’vov we see Serov standing. Behind them we see Gurilev, Bortniansky, Turchaninov. On the far right we see Polish musicians: Moniuszko, Chopin, Ogiński and Lipiński (on the background of the door). On the left side we see Czech composers: Napravnik, Smetana, Bendel’, and Gorak.

141 Il’ia Repin, Dalekoе blizkoe (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1953), fn. 2, 481.

142 Ibid., 213.

143 Ibid.
Inevitably, the choice of these composers was subjective and, to a certain degree, arbitrary. Nikolai Rubinstein, then the director of the Moscow Conservatory, made the list given to Repin. The list was not without controversy; what was excluded from the painting merits as much discussion as what was included. For example, Odoevskii was hardly known as a composer, yet he was included, while composers such as Aleksandr Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky and Petr Tchaikovsky were conspicuously left out. Stasov told Repin that it is necessary to “поместить в картине еще две фигуры молодых наших тузов: это Мусоргского и Бородина” (“put two more figures of our young big shots in the picture: Mussorgsky and Borodin”). As we shall see, the list becomes a subject of political contention. Stasov told Repin in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*:

Мы, со своей стороны, можем пожалеть только об одном: именно о том, что в программу картины не вошли некоторые из новейших композиторов русской музыкальной школы, которые должны были бы тут непременно находиться, нераздельно с Балакиревым и Римским-Корсаковым, как преемники и продолжатели Глинки и Даргомыжского. Но, по всей вероятности, не от живописца зависел выбор для картины тех или других личностей, и очень могло стать, что московские заказчики, очень твердо зная Верстовского и Варламова, еще ничего не слыхали о петербургских композиторах новейшего времени, гораздо более замечательных, чем авторы “Аскольдовой могилы” и разных романсов сомнительного достоинства.

(We on our side can regret one thing: that in the painting, a few of the newest composers of the Russian music school were not included, as they definitely should have been, inseparable from Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov, like successors and followers of Glinka and Dargomyzhsky. In all likelihood, the choice of whom to include did not depend on the painter, and it could be that the Moscow customers – knowing Verstovsky and Varlamov very well – still haven’t heard about the Petersburg composers of the newest times, who are much more wonderful than authors of “Askold’s Grave” [Verstovsky’s opera, T. L.] and various romances of doubtful merit.)

The criticism illustrates that personal connections may have played a role in the question of whom to include in the list. Repin followed Stasov’s suggestion and requested to include more composers: “я всё-таки... обратился к Пороховщикову с просьбой разрешить мне прибавить в группу русских музыкантов Мусоргского и Бородина” (“I asked Prokhovshchikov anyway if he would allow me to add Mussorgsky and Borodin to the group of Russian musicians”). Prokhorovshchikov responded:

Вот ещё! Вы всякий мусор будете сметать в эту картину! Мой список имен музыкантов выработан самим Николаем Рубинштейном, и я не смею ни прибавить, ни убавить ни одного имени из списка, данного вам... Одно мне досадно — что он не вписал сюда Чайковского. Ведь мы, вся Москва, обожаем Чайковского. Тут что-

---

144 Ibid., 211.
145 As quoted in G. Bernandt, “О картине ‘Славянские композиторы’ И. Репина.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 11* (November 1950), 89.
146 Ibid., 90.
(Again! You are going to sweep all kind of trash into the picture! My list of musician names was done by Nikolai Rubinstein himself, and I won’t dare to add or remove any name from the list that is given to you…One thing is vexing to me – he did not include Tchaikovsky’s name. Indeed we, the whole of Moscow, adore Tchaikovsky. Something else is going on here… Well, what can one do? I know Borodin, but he is a dilettante in music – he is a professor of chemistry in the Medical-surgical Academy…No, don’t litter the painting with all kinds of trash! That’s easier for you anyway: faster! Hurry up with the picture, everyone is waiting…)
Not everyone was equally enthusiastic about the painting; for example, Ivan Turgenev first told Repin “Какая нелепая идея соединять живых с давно умершими!” (“What an absurd idea to unite the living with the long-dead!”). In a letter dated March 15, 1872, Turgenev wrote to Stasov:

Что же касается до Репина, то откровенно Вам скажу, что хуже сюжета я для картины и придумать не могу - и искренне об этом сожалею; тут как раз впадешь в аллегорию, в казенщину, в худульность, "многозначительность и знаменательность" – словом, каульбаховщину.149

(About Repin, I will tell you honestly that I cannot think of a worse subject for the painting – and I sincerely regret it; here one certainly falls into allegory, the conventional, and pomposity, “significance and remarkability” – in a word, Kaulbach-ism.)150

While Turgenev took issue with the painting’s aesthetic value and veracity, he did not address the fact that the painting captured a moment of impressive Pan-Slavism across time and space. Even though two non-Russian groups (Poles and the Czechs) could hardly represent the entire Slavic world, the inclusion of them affirms the idea that Russian identity is shaped against the backdrop of other Slavic cultures.

Repin’s interaction with other Slavic artists was not limited to the painting alone. He was an acquaintance of Jan Ciągliński (1858-1913), a Polish artist – best known for his portraits151 –

---

149 Ivan Turgenev, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem, vol. ix (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Nauka, 1965), 244-245.
150 Referring to Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805-74), a German painter, whose works (including portraits of Liszt) were considered by Russian Realist artists farfetched and pretentious. See Turgenev, note 5, 559.
living in Petersburg from 1879. Ciągliński, a friend of Anton Rubinstein, was active in the Russian cultural scene. He studied with Repin in 1895, and he made a speech on the occasion of Pushkin’s centennial in 1899. Ciągliński and Repin became colleagues and taught at the Higher School of Art. In addition, they both participated in the fifteenth anniversary of Jan Matejko’s death, held on December 20, 1908. When Repin learned about the centennial celebrations, he recommended Ciągliński to the organizers. In a letter to Liapunov, dated January 29, 1910, Repin wrote: “Рекомендую Вам обратиться к истому рыцарю… поляку — Яну Францевичу Цюнглинскому” (“I recommend that you contact a true knight… Pole – Jan Franciewicz Ciągliński”). Liapunov and other organizers then commissioned Ciągliński to make a Chopin painting for the occasion; the painting was reprinted on the program of the 1910 celebrations in Petersburg (more in Chapter 2).

**Publication of Chopin’s Works in Russia**

In addition to visual art, Chopin’s legacy is manifested in published scores and literary texts. During his lifetime, Chopin’s works were printed mostly by three publishers: one French, one German/Viennese, and one English. In Russia, the *Journal de St.-Pétersbourg* began publishing individual pieces of Chopin in 1841. Propelled by the emergence of conservatories in Petersburg (1862) and Moscow (1866), and thus a higher demand for piano music, F. Stellovskii, with Petr Iurgenson as the engraver and salesman, began publishing the complete works of three German composers and one non-German composer: Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Chopin. Balakirev participated in the preparation of the Stellovskii editions in the early 1860s. In spring 1861, Stellovskii announced the edition in the *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* and writes:

Несмотря на общеизвестность и громкую славу Шопена, ни одна европейская публика не имеет полного собрания его сочинений, потому что они разрознены по рукам музыкальных издателей в разных странах Европы и составляют собственность каждого, и только лишь в России могут быть изданы вместе все его произведения. Поэтому мною предприято издание Полного собрания сочинений

---

151 In addition to Chopin, Ciągliński made paintings of Sergei Rachmaninoff (1908), Leopold Godowsky (1910) and Józef Hofmann (1912). See Maria Górenowicz, “Malarz i pedagog Jan Ciągliński (1858-1913) w Petersbursku. Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej vol. 2 eds. Wojciech Walczak and Karol Łopatecki (Białystok: Benkowski Publishing & Balloons), 351.
152 When Rubinstein died in November 1894, Ciągliński made a post-mortem portrait of Rubinstein at the funeral. See Górenowicz, 355.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid., 354.
155 Ibid., 357.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
159 Swartz, 38.
160 Vainkop, 45.
Notwithstanding the fame and great reputation of Chopin, not one European public has his complete works, because they are in the hands of different music publishers in different countries of Europe and they are the property of each publisher, and only in Russia can all the works be published together. That’s why I have undertaken the task to publish the complete works of Chopin in five volumes, including about 200 pieces on 1200 pages of large format, with the portrait and biography of the author.

The announcement points out Russia’s unique advantage, as other European publishers had only some of Chopin’s works. Even though the Stellovskii edition did little more than simply reprint the other available original editions together, it secured Chopin’s place in music history in Russia and elsewhere. Furthermore, the flyer for the former publication contains a dedication to Poles (Издание это посвящается Полякам). Such a gesture cannot be considered trivial, especially since there was at least one written complaint, dated March 10, 1861, which casted aspersions at Stellovskii on the grounds that he “orders the printing of the dedication to Poles in capital letters and sends it along with posters everywhere in the capital. This act seemed strange and inappropriate to many” (“велят напечатать купным шрифтом свое посвящение Полякам, и разошлет оное вместе с афишами по всей Столице. Многим однако это показалось странным и неуместным”). As demonstrated by Rimsky-Korsakov’s Pan Voyevoda and the Stellovskii editions, Russians were not afraid to engage in such symbolic gestures as dedicating works to Chopin or Poles.

Another complete edition, published between October 1873 and March 1876, was edited by the Moscow Conservatory professor and pianist Karl Klindwort (1830-1916) and supported by Nikolai Rubinstein. In the six-volume edition we see the title: Полное издание произведений Шопена по французскому, немецкому и польскому оригинальным изданиям, критически просмотренное, тщательно корректированное и снабженное для учеников аппликатурой (“Complete edition of Chopin’s works after French, German and Polish original editions, critically surveyed, carefully corrected and furnished with fingering for pupils”). Liszt and Hans von Bülow considered this the best edition to date, and it was reprinted in Germany by Bote and Bock and in England by Augener. While these editions lacked critical commentary, they were easy to read and were arranged by opus numbers. Furthermore, they were considered affordable, costing just 1 ruble 50 kopeks. Although the Klindwort edition did not include the Polish dedication we see in the Stellovskii edition, the fact that another

---

163 Ibid. Some have even disputed that the first complete edition was published by Gebethner and Wolff in Warsaw in 1864. See Édouard Ganche, Frédéic Chopin: Sa vie et ses œuvres 1810-1849 (Paris : Mercvre de France, 1913), 435.
164 See Wiśniewski, Chopin w kulturze rosyjskiej, 9.
165 In Mil’shtein’s description, the dedication adds “living in Russia” (“живущим в России”). See Mil’shtein, 333.
166 GARF, Fond 109, op 2 d 162.
167 Swartz, 43.
168 Ganche, 436.
169 I consulted the score in Moscow’s Glinka Museum.
complete edition was published just a decade after the first suggests there was a high demand and thus vouches for Chopin’s ascendance into the standard repertoire.

**First Chopin Biography in Russian**

In 1864, just a year after the January Uprising in 1863, Stellovskii – which published not only music but also literary works of writers like Fedor Dostoevsky – printed the first monograph on Chopin in Russian. One should note that this biography came after Franz Liszt’s biography, first published in French in 1852, but preceded the first Polish biography of Chopin by Marceli Antoni Szulc, published in 1873. Inside the title page of the short biography, there is the line “Дозволено Ценсурою [sic.], марта 31 дня 1864 г.” (“Allowed by Censorship, March 31, 1864”).

![Figure 7: The first Russian biography of Chopin (1864)](image)

The lack of an author’s name, combined with the fact that Stellovskii was a supplier to the Imperial Court, suggests that the biography can be read as the official view on Chopin at the time. The opening of the biography reads:

Никогда, может быть, биография художника не была так необходима для правильного объяснения и верной оценки его произведений, и никогда, наоборот, сами произведения не были такой полной биографией внутренней жизни художника, как в лице человека, имя которого поставлено в заглавии этой статьи. Шопен весь в своих творениях, и никогда не узнает его глубоко тот, кто вздумает

---

170 See *Krataia biografiia F. Shopena* (St. Petersburg: Stellovskii, 1864).
It is curious that a biography would start with such commentary and criticism of what had been written to date, but we should keep in mind that misinformation – most of which probably unintentional – was in fact commonplace, and the Stellovskii biography may have been published to present more accurately the facts to Chopin’s life. In the same paragraph, the biography mentions the sense of unfulfillment after listening to Chopin’s music. The passage tells us that a holistic approach to Chopin is necessary for “proper” and “correct” understanding of Chopin’s music, which seems to be the implicit goal of the biography. As previously mentioned, many thought Chopin’s music refreshing and innovative, which may mean that the public was in the process of learning how to engage in informed listening or discussion of Chopin’s music. Thus, biography took a twofold role: it was a source of information on the life of the composer, and it taught the public how to listen to and think about Chopin’s music. Another noteworthy biography of Chopin was published as part of the “Жизнь замечательных людей” (“Life of Remarkable People”) series, which had begun in 1890. Even though Chopin’s biography (1892) came after biographies of Wagner and Mozart, it preceded biographies of Beethoven (1893) and Bach (1894). Since it was normal practice to publish biographies of those who were still alive, we can infer that Chopin’s placement among great masters of the past in the series was indicative of his prestige. These biographies largely discuss Chopin’s music in correspondence to facts of his biography, thus establishing a hermeneutic approach to understanding Chopin’s music. Along with newspaper articles and other publications, the biographies effectively shaped the collective consciousness. The implicit agenda of biographies perhaps explains why the publication of biographies tended to skyrocket during the celebration years – the ideal time for influencing the public – of 1899, 1910, 1949, the topic of Chapter Two.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen, Poland and Russia engaged in an extensive cultural dialogue in the nineteenth century, of which Chopin was an essential part. Several Russians – particularly Balakirev – successfully overcame political hostility between the two nations and transformed Polish social apathy into a renewed commitment to Chopin’s cause. Despite the high degree of cultural contact between the two nations, Poland kept an ambivalent attitude toward Russia, in particular in matters related to Chopin. Poles were unsure about how to deal with the Russian affinity for their greatest composer. In matters they deemed of national significance, most Poles

---

171 Ibid., 3.

172 For example, Poles were indifferent about Russian artistic artifacts in general; while Polish literary texts (such as *Lalka* and *Pan Wołodyjowski*) were translated and published in Russia, Russian literature was largely ignored in Poland and no translations, for example, of even *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina* appeared until much later. See Wiśniewski, *Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli*, 46.
preferred to keep them for Poles only. Balakirev described the process of collecting funds for building a Chopin monument: “Because of the thorny relations arising from the inexorable verdicts of the history between our two related nations, no other Russian was honored with an invitation, and since the Poles preferred private arrangements to a public collection of funds, the Chopin enthusiasts in Russia never got a chance to contribute a penny as a token of their love for the famous Polish genius.”173 Balakirev’s statement shows the kind of privileged position he occupied. Thanks to Balakirev’s effort, Chopin lived on not only in the hearts of Poles but also in reality.

---

173 Poniatowska, Chopin and his Critics, 187.
Fryderyk Chopin’s presence in Russian culture went far beyond music; his legacy can be seen in printed text, and his name often surfaces in areas outside music, particularly in periodicals, biographies, and belles lettres. Critics like Gennadii Tsypin, a Russian musicologist, even argue that part of Chopin’s fame is the result of the concert reviews and other publications in the Petersburg and Moscow press. Chopin’s name appeared in the Russian press as early as 1834, when a review of Anton Gerke’s performance appeared. By the early 1840s, Chopin’s name had already appeared with relative frequency in the Russian press, and in 1842, the first known Russian literary text focused on the figure of Chopin and his music appeared. To demonstrate his literary presence, this Interlude considers a sampling of poetic texts and lyric poems by Ivan Miatlev (1796-1844), Afanasii Fet (1820-92), Igor’ Severianin (1887-1941), Boris Pasternak (1890-1960) and Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966). The five works are representative of a much larger literary output on Chopin. Most of the texts deal directly with a performance; two are based on concerts that actually took place. Some poems reiterate the clichéd image and connect Chopin’s music to love and passion; however, Pasternak’s “Ballada” shows a deeper engagement with Chopin and Poland as he demonstrates his knowledge of Poland’s history and inscribes it in a genre Chopin revolutionized. Before beginning our analysis, we should point out that Chopin appeared in Russian biographies as early as in 1864, almost a decade before the first biography in Polish. Another Russian biography of Chopin appeared in 1892 as part of the “Жизнь замечательных людей” (“Life of Great People”) series. The series, which included both foreign and Russian figures, began in 1890 with biographies of Ignatius of Loyola and Victor Hugo. Even though Chopin’s biography came after the biographies of Wagner and Mozart (both published in 1891), it preceded biographies of Beethoven (1893) and Bach (1894). Chopin’s early placement in the series may indicate his prestige in Russia at the time.

Probably the earliest Russian poem that features Chopin’s music is Ivan Petrovich Miatlev’s “Fantaziia na mazurku Shopena, igrannuiu Listom v kontserte 22 aprelia 1842 goda”

175 G. Tsypin, Shopen i russkaia pianisticheskaia traditsiia (Moscow: Muzyka, 1990), 6.
177 Kratkaia biografiia F. Shopena (St. Petersburg: F. Stellovskii, 1864).
178 L. K. Davydova, Fr. Shopen: ego zhizn’ i muzykal’naia deiatel’nost’ (St. Petersburg: Khudekov, 1892).
(“Fantasy on a Chopin mazurka played by Liszt in a concert on April 22, 1842”), written in Petersburg in 1842 and published in 1857. Miatlev, perhaps better known for his humoristic writings, came from a rich aristocratic family and wrote other poems with musical themes, such as “Tarantella” (1840) and “O pevitse Gartsii Viardo” (“About the singer Garcia-Viardot,” 1843). Miatlev was popular in nineteenth-century Russia and was even ranked by Aleksandr Smirdin – a publisher in St. Petersburg – as one of the top one hundred Russian men of letters.179 Here, the long title not only juxtaposes music with literature – since fantasy is both a literary and musical genre – but it also captures an actual event in April of 1842 when Liszt played Chopin’s mazurkas in his Petersburg recital.180 Mikhail Glinka attended the concert and wrote: “я могу теперь еще дать полный отчет в впечатлении, произведенном на меня игрою Листа. Мазурки Chopin, его Nocturnes и этюды, вообще всю блестящую и модную музыку он играл очень мило, но с превычурными оттенками (à la française, c’est avec exagérations de tout genre)”181 (“I can give a full report on the impressions Liszt’s playing made on me. Chopin’s mazurkas, nocturnes and etudes, all the brilliant and fashionable music he played charmingly, but with exaggerated nuances [in the French style, which is with exaggerations of all kinds]”).

180 Other pieces on Liszt’s program include transcriptions of Schubert’s Erlkönig and Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony.
181 Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, Literaturnoe nasledie vol. 1, ed. V. Bogdanov-Berezovskii (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo, 1952), 216.
Мазурку начали... Я с нею,
Я с нею буду танцевать!
Я всё ей высказать успею,
Пора, пора ей всё узнать.
Я ей скажу, как я тоскую,
Как я страдаю, как ревную,
Как я влюблен, как плачу я!

Но вот она, беда моя!
При ней я всё позабываю,
Любовно стан ее роскошный обнимаю
И с ней верчусь, и с ней лечу,
В восторге я!

Но нет, хочу
Ей высказать мои сомненья,
Просить хотя из сожаленья
Мою всю жизнь не отравлять.

Тоску не выплакать мою
Реками слез.
О! Как сердита,
Всех восхищает, как Харита,
А на меня и не глядит,
Ей нужды нет, что я убит.

Я одержу победу над собою,
Ей отомщу, пойду с другою:
Пускай потужит и она.

Ах, как душа моя больна!
Как тяжело мне, как мне скучно!
Мазурка между тем так звучно,
Так весело, так сладостно гремит,
Всех оживляет, всех манит
К восторгу, к радости беспечной,
Мне одному тоски моей сердечной
Не одолеть!.. Не одолеть! Ужель Одна есть только в жизни цель? Я целью оживлюсь другою!

Я в небо унесусь парящую мечтою: Там сонмы ангелов, там пери дивный рой, Они мне возвратят радость и покой, Там отдохнет душа больная.

Победной песне их я мысленно внимая, От всех земных тревог навеки откажусь, В пустыню мрачную от света удалось, Как труженик, вздымая к небу руки.

Бессмысленный! Опять мазурки звуки, Опять она порхнула предо мной, И я опять порабощен душой.

Но что я вижу... Вот подходит! И на меня с улыбкой взор наводит, Меня зовет, меня манит, Со мною ласково, приветно говорит.

Спасибо, ангел мой прелестный! Спасибо... Радости небесной Ты долю мне в сей жизни подала; Как хороша ты, как мила, Мне более уже не тяжело, не скучно.

Мазурка сладостно и звучно, И весело, и радостно гремит, Со мной красавица летит, На крыльях радости душа моя стремится.

Но долго ли мазурка продолжится?

Глинка’s comment may give us one way to interpret Miatlev’s poem. Dominated by the emotional associations Chopin’s mazurka brings, the poem seems excessively sentimental. Filled with plenty of romantic pathos and clichés such as “как я тоскую” and “Реками слез” (“how I yearn” and “rivers of tears”), the poem describes a love story between a girl and the lyric hero. Chopin’s mazurka acts as the catalyst for the lyric hero’s fantasy, and it accompanies his changing moods. The poem’s iambic meter also matches the mazurka’s typical accent on the second beat. The mazurka provides solace, often in stark contrast to the hero’s mood: “как мне
скучно! Мазурка между тем так звучно” (“I’m so bored! Mazurka is so resonant in the meantime”). Even though Chopin’s mazurkas are often noted for their melancholic quality, the mazurka in Miatlev’s portrayal is associated with joy, with the lyric hero constantly referring to it as happy music (“сладостно,” “звучно,” “весело,” and “радостно гремит”). However, the poem ends with ambiguity and uncertainty – while dancing with the beautiful maiden is wonderful, how long will it last (“Но долго ли мазурка продолжится?”)?

In fact, Miatlev’s poem is just one example of how mazurkas have been used in various art forms in Russia. The popularity of mazurka as a ballroom dance at Miatlev’s time was well-established, both in real life and works of art. There was also a trend to use mazurka in literary texts, such as Evgenii Onegin (Eugene Onegin, 1825-32), Pikovaia dama (The Queen of Spades, 1833), and Vladimir Odoevskii’s Kniazhna Mimi (Princess Mimi, 1834). In music, the second act of Mikhail Glinka’s Zhizn’ za tsaria (A Life for the Tsar, 1836) consists of Polish dances such as polonaise, krakowiak and mazurka. Since mazurka is a distinctly Polish dance, what effect did it have upon Russian listeners? In Glinka’s opera, depicting Poles’ killing of Ivan Susanin who sacrificed for the nation, Poland is portrayed as an enemy and the Polish scenes in the opera were sometimes booed, and in an 1866 performance – shortly after the attempt of Dmitrii Karakozov (rumored to be a Pole) to assassinate Tsar Alexander II – the performance turned into a huge anti-Polish rally. Nevertheless, after the premiere in 1836, the Polish dances became widely popular, and the mazurka was published within days of the premiere. In 1841, one critic wrote: “What kind of thinking is it that requires Poles to speak, think, and act to the accompaniment of the mazurka? Is it really possible that all the passions of this nation are confined to three-quarter time and cannot be expressed in any other meter?”

182 Chapter 5, XLII:

183 In Chapter 4, the Countess “...непременно хотела возобновить прерванный разговор; но мазурка кончилась, и вскоре после старая графиня уехала” (“... certainly wanted to resume the interrupted conversation; but the mazurka came to an end, and soon after the old countess left”).


185 As quoted in Goldberg, 81.

186 Ibid., 75.
combined with the treatment of mazurka in Miatlev’s poem, shows us an image of Chopin’s music at the time: full of a passion that provokes an emotional response.

**Шопену**

Ты мелькнула, ты предстала,
Снова сердце задрожало,
Под чарующие звуки
То же счастье, те же муки,
Слышишь трепетные руки —
Ты еще со мной!

---

**To Chopin**

You were glimpsed, you appeared,
Again the heart began to tremble,
Under the bewitching sounds
The same happiness, the same torment,
I hear the trembling hands –
You are still with me!

Час блаженный, час печальный,
Час последний, час прощальный,
Те же легкие одежды,
Ты стоишь, склоняя вежды, —
И не нужно мне надежды:
Этот час — он мой!

---

Бlessed hour, a sad hour,
Last hour, parting hour,
The same light clothes,
You are standing, lowering eyelids —
And I do not need hope:
This hour — it is mine!

Ты руки моей коснулась,
Разом сердце встрепенулось;
Не туда, в то горе злое,
Я несуясь в мое былое,
— Я на все, на все иное
Отпылал, потух!

---

You touched my hand,
At once my heart rose up;
Not there, to the evil woe
I am carried back to my past, —
I for everything, for everything else
flamed out, went out!

Этой песне чудотворной
Так покорен мир упорный;
Пусть же сердце, полно муки,
Торжествует час разлуки,
И когда загаснут звуки —
Разорвется вдруг!

---

To the miraculous song
The stubborn world is so obedient;
Let the heart, full of torment,
Triumph over the hour of separation,
And when its sounds die out —
Suddenly break!

The title “Shopenu” in the dative case may represent a poetic response to the music of Chopin, one of Fet’s favorite composers. Like Miatlev’s poem, the poem is about a love story between a man and a woman, and music accompanies the shifting moods of the lyric voice. However, unlike Miatlev’s poem, references to Chopin in Afanasii Fet’s poem “Shopenu” (“To Chopin”, 1882) are not explicit. In fact, besides the title, there are few clues that would illuminate the relationship between the poem and Chopin. In literary scholar Richard Gustafson’s terms, the poem may “[attempt] to overcome denotative meaning” and thus deal with Chopin only figuratively. Written in trochaic tetrameter, the first foot of which resembles a musical downbeat, the poem is highly musical and contains rich consonants, perhaps inspired by Fet’s

---

knowledge of Polish.\textsuperscript{189} Besides sound references such as “pesnia” and “zvuki” (“song” and “sounds,” respectively), the rich rhyming scheme matches the word “zvuki” with “ruki” (“hands”), “muki” (“torments”) and “razluki” (“separation”). Furthermore, each stanza contains a hyphen, which creates a sense of suspension since it expands the temporal space. At the end, the disappearance of the sound is described using the verb “zagasnut” instead of the more standard “zatikhnut.” “Zagasnut” is often used to describe extinguishing the light, so here the sound conflates with light, introducing another sense of the music’s effect. The nominal form of the unexpected verb “razorvetsia” (“to break”), one should note, can be used in the sense of a heartbreak (i.e. razryv serdtsa). The physicality of the first two stanzas, ranging from hands and eyelids, becomes heart-oriented in the last two stanzas. Similar to Miatlev’s poem, Fet’s poem closely associates sounds with emotions; sounds produced by the hands are connected to strong, often opposing, sensations such as happiness and torment. While it is harder to extrapolate the plot of Fet’s poem in comparison to Miatlev’s poem, the sensuous nature of the poem without clear denotative meaning may illustrate Fet’s notion of pure poetry.\textsuperscript{190}

\textbf{Поэма-миньонет}

Это было у моря, где ажурная pena,
Где встречается редко городской экипаж...
Королева играла – в башне замка – Шопена,
И, внимая Шопену, полюбил ее паж.

Было все очень просто, было все очень мило:
Королева просила перерезать гранат,
И дала половину, и паж истомила,
И пажа полюбила, вся в мотивах сонат.

А потом отдавалась, отдавалась грозово,
До восхода рабыней проспала госпожа...
Это было у моря, где волна бирюзова,
Где ажурная pena и соната пажа.

\textbf{Poem-Mignonette}

It was near the sea, where the azure foam is.
Where one rarely sees a carriage from city...
The queen played Chopin in the tower of the castle
And, listening to Chopin, her page boy fell in love.

It was all very simple, it was all very charming:
The Queen asked him to cut a pomegranate,
And she gave him half, and exhausted the page,
And she fell in love with the page, all immersed in the motifs of the sonatas.

\textsuperscript{190} Gustafson, 165.
And then she surrendered, surrendered stormily,
The lady slept like a slave until sunrise...
It was by the sea, where the turquoise wave is,
Where the azure foam and the sonata of the page are.

Igor’ Severianin (coincidentally, distantly related to Fet) was passionate about music and operas. A proficient pianist, Severianin was also well-read in music theory. In the poem, we see the connection between Chopin’s music and Romantic ideals, a common trope in poems inspired by Chopin. The designation of the poem, “миньонет” (“mignonette”), is a type of poetic form created by Severianin that appeared in another poem in the same year: “Berceuse.” Usually eight lines, mignonette requires either two or three rhymes in a specific arrangement. The poem was written in February 1910, in the midst of the Chopin centennial activities. We can suppose that Severianin knew about the celebrations and perhaps even attended at least one of the numerous concerts in St. Petersburg.

The poem illustrates a degree of stylized sensuality that borders on kitsch, a central tenet of the Ego-Futurist movement founded by Severianin. The poem’s irregular meter, featuring many anapests, has puzzled some critics who in turn call the idiosyncrasy “Severianinian meter” (“severianinskii razmer”). The opening grounds the poem in the past. Most of the verbs are in the past tense, suggesting a kind of nostalgic account of the relation between the page and the queen. The exotic setting is enhanced by a castle tower and the fine foam of the sea waves. It bears noting that the age difference of the protagonists (since a page suggests youth) and the setting may be inspired by the relationship between Chopin and George Sand, who stayed in Majorca in 1838-39. The gerund “внимая” signifies the simultaneity of listening to Chopin and falling in love; the choice of the verb also suggests absorbing and mentally digesting the sounds (in comparison to слушат’). It is Chopin, rather than the queen’s playing, that the page listens to. The transformative power of Chopin’s music is evidenced in the reversal of roles – supported by the word “рабыней” (“slave”) in the instrumental case – where the queen is referred to as a lady sleeping and feeling like a slave.

The famous Russian poet and author of Doctor Zhivago (1957), Boris Pasternak wanted to be a musician before becoming a writer. An accomplished pianist and composer, his autobiography reveals a passion for music rare even in composers. As a fervent admirer of Aleksandr Skriabin, Pasternak wrote two preludes as well as a piano sonata (1909) in imitation of Skriabin’s early style. Pasternak even attended the Moscow Conservatory, albeit briefly, to study music theory and composition. The lyrical and elevated poetic style of Pasternak can be discerned in his music. Conversely, Skriabin’s influence on Pasternak’s music, I argue, extends beyond the time when Pasternak was writing music and can be found in later literary works such as “Ballada.”

---

Баллада

Дрожат гаражи автобазы,
Нет-нет, как кость, взблеснет костел.
Над парком падают топазы,
Слепых зарниц бурлит котел.
В саду – табак, на тротуаре –
Толпа, в толпе – гуденье пчел.
Разрывы туч, обрывки арий,
Недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол.

"Пришел", - летит от вяза к вязу,
И вдруг становится тяжел
Как бы достигший высшей фазы
Бессонный запах матиол.
"Пришел", - летит от пары к паре,
"Пришел", - стволу лепечет ствол.
Потоп зарниц, гроза в разгаре,
Недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол.

Удар, другой, пассаж, - и сразу
В шаров молочный ореол
Шопена траурная фраза
Вплывает, как больной орел.
Под ним – угар араукарий,
Но глух, как будто что обрел,
Обрывы донизу обшаря,
Недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол.

Полет орла, как ход рассказа.
В нем все соблазны южных смол
И все молитвы и экстазы
За сильный и за слабый пол.
Полет – сказанье об Икаре.
Но тихо с круч полет подзол,
И глух, как каторжник на Каре,
Недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол.

Вам в дар баллада эта, Гарри.
Воображенья произвол
Не тронул строк о вашем даре:
Я видел все, что в них привел.
Запомню и не разбазарю:
Метель полночных матиол.
Концерт и парк на крутояре.
Недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол.

Ballad

The depot garages tremble,
Oh no, like bone, the church flashes.
Over the park topazes fall,
A cauldron of blinding summer lightning simmers.
In the garden – tobacco flower, on the sidewalk -
The crowd, in the crowd – hum of bees.
Breaks of clouds, scraps of arias,
Motionless Dnieper, nocturnal Podil.

"He came" – flies from elm to elm,
And suddenly becomes heavy
As if having achieved the highest phase
Sleepless smell of matthiola.
"He came", – flies from couple to couple,
"He came", – trunk babbles to trunk.
Flood of lightning, storm in full swing
Motionless Dnieper, nocturnal Podil.

A blow, another, passage – and immediately
In the milky halo of spheres
Chopin's funeral phrase
Floats, like a sick eagle.
Under it – fume of araucaria,
But deaf, as if he found,
Ruptures ransacked to the bottom,
Motionless Dnieper, nocturnal Podil.

Flight of the eagle, like a course of a story.
In it all temptations of southern resins
And all the prayers and ecstasies
For both the strong and fair sex.
Flight – tale of Icarus.
But quietly podzol creeps from steep slopes,
And deaf as a convict in the Kara region,
Motionless Dnieper, nocturnal Podil.

This ballad is a gift for you, Garri.
Arbitrariness of imagination
Did not touch lines about your gift:
I saw all that led to them.
I will remember and not squander:
Snowstorm of midnight matthiola.
Concert and park on the steep hill.
Motionless Dnieper, nocturnal Podil.
Pasternak’s connection to Chopin may perhaps be traced to Pasternak’s mother, Rosa Kaufman, who was a first-rate concert pianist and studied with the famous Polish pianist Teodor Leszetycki. \footnote{Guy de Mallac, Boris Pasternak: His Life and Art (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 21.} Chopin was frequently played at home, and Pasternak developed an affinity for Chopin’s music early on, in part thanks to his admiration of Aleksandr Skrjabin. As a poet, Pasternak often used Chopin as a literary trope. \footnote{See V. A. Khorev, “F. Shopen v tvorchestve B. Pasternaka.” Otzvuki Shopena v russkoi kul'ture, ed. N. M. Filatova (Moscow: Indrik, 2012), 121-128.} An example is his “Баллада” (“Ballad,” 1930), belonging to the “Второе Рождение” (“Second Birth”) cycle. The poem describes an event that actually took place – a summer open-air concert in Kiev given by the renowned Russian pianist and pedagogue Genrikh Neigauz (1888-1964). \footnote{Christopher Barnes, Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 26.} Pasternak was close friends with Neigauz; Neigauz’s first wife, Zinaida Neigauz, married Pasternak in 1931, the year after the poem was written. In the poem, Pasternak describes the city and a few exotic plants (araucarias, matthiola) before turning his attention to Chopin’s music. \footnote{Critics have disputed which piece exactly was played. Krystyna Pomorska claims that it is a ballade of Chopin’s. See Pomorska, Theme and Variations in Pasternak’s Poetics (Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975), 33. On the other hand, Barnes believes that the “траурная фраза” (“mournful phrase”) refers to Chopin’s E minor piano concerto. According to the report in the newspaper Kievs'ki proletarii, it was Chopin’s E minor concerto. See commentary in Boris Pasternak, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii s prilozheniiami vol. 2 (Moscow: Slovo, 2004), 385. One should note, however, that the adjective “траурная” also seems to point to Chopin’s Funeral March Sonata.} The poem’s allusions to Poland are manifested in a few ways. First, the title “Ballada” is both a literary and a musical genre, and Chopin is acknowledged as the first to write instrumental ballads. Second, some images symbolize or allude to Poland; for example, “больной орёл” (“the sick eagle”) makes reference to partitioned Poland, since the one-headed eagle is the national symbol of Poland. Likewise, “костел” (as opposed to the Russian Orthodox “церковь” or “храм”) is a Catholic church. Finally, the Kara region is a place where Polish prisoners were sent after the failure of the uprisings. Third, the life of Neigauz, the dedicatee of the poem, was in many ways related to Poland. Neigauz studied with the famous Polish pianist Aleksander Michałowski, and Karol Szymanowski was Neigauz’s second cousin. \footnote{It is of interest to note that Neigauz’s grandson, Stanislav Bunin, won the Chopin Competition in 1985.}

The poem provides a chronology of events: people gathering, awaiting the performance, and listening to the performance. The first two stanzas describe the setting and the anticipation of the concert in an unusual way. The description of the concert’s setting juxtaposes nature with daily objects (like garage, sidewalk), and the audience members are described only in the collective: толпа (crowd), пара (pair). Even though the verb “пришёл” (“[he] came”) appears three times in the second stanza, we do not know who it is except that it is a man or a masculine noun. The first time a person is explicitly named is Chopin in the third stanza, but only in the genitive case, not as a subject. The poem does not seem personal until the last stanza we see the name of the dedicatee Гарри, the familiar form of the first name of Neigauz. The impalpable quality of the poem may be attributed to the parallel Pasternak draws between music and partitioned Poland; the powerful music mourns the fate of Poland and those who have lost their homeland and, thus, part of their identity.

The poem’s musical quality is conveyed by regular iambic tetrameter and several alliterations. For example, the consonant “k” is used widely in phrases such as “как кость, взбlesenет костел” and “как каторжник на Кара.” The latter – comparing the Dniepr River and...
Podil to a convict in the Kara region” – adds to the sense of tragedy and horror to the poem, typical of the ballad genre. In addition, several word plays are significant in the interpretation of the poem: “дрожат” and “гаражи” (stanza 1), “полёт” and “ползет” (stanza 4). The words “дрозhat” and “garazhi” illustrate the first of two fundamental oppositions in the poem: static vs. dynamic and top vs. down. Even though they share the onomatopoeic “zh” sound, “drozhat” suggests motion that is absent in “garazhi” as well as the “nedvizhnyi” later in the stanza. The top/down dichotomy is inscribed in the refrain: недвижный Днепр, ночной Подол, which recurs at the end of every stanza. The bustling of Podil, a district in Kiev, contrasts with the calmness of the Dniepr River. In the framework of the concert, the constant juxtaposition of nature with humans also provides a reconciliation between public and lyrical elements, which was becoming increasingly important at the time the poem was written. Both полёт and ползет, which appear in the same stanza as Icarus, share the “pol-” morpheme with “Pol’sha” (“Poland”); the reference to the Icarus parable suggests the tragic story of daring and death caused by striving too high.

Pasternak wrote other works containing references to Chopin, but his literary preoccupation with Chopin reached its height with an enigmatic essay titled “Shopen” (“Chopin,” 1945) written at the end of the Second World War. In the essay, Pasternak lauds realism as an aesthetic principle and cites Chopin and Bach as two masters of realism in music:

Шопен реалист в том же самом смысле, как Лев Толстой. Его творчество насквозь оригинально не из несходства с соперниками, а из сходства с натурою, с которой он писал. Оно всегда биографично не из эгоцентризма, а потому, что, подобно остальным великим реалистам. Шопен смотрел на свою жизнь как на орудие познания всякой жизни на свете и вел именно этот расточительно-личный и нерасчетливо-одинокий род существования.

(Chopin is a realist in the same sense as Leo Tolstoy. His work is thoroughly original not because of the dissimilarity with his rivals, but because it is similar to nature, from which he drew his inspiration. It is always biographical not because of egocentricity, but because like other great realists, Chopin looked at his own life as a means of knowing every kind of life in the world and led a self-absorbed and lonely way of life.)

The ideas found in the essay can justify a more biographical, historically-grounded reading of the poem. Pasternak’s predilection for Realism as an aesthetic principle, as outlined in the essay, is evidenced by the realistic portrayal of a concert that actually took place. In many ways, the poem’s symbolic features and allusions enhance its realistic dimension because they are based on

---

198 See, for examples, “Баллада” (“Ballad,” 1916) and “Опять Шопен не ищет выгод” (“Again Chopin is not searching for benefits,” 1930).
199 Many editors were puzzled by the article when they were considering it for publication in the journal Znamia. For example, Vs. Vishnevskii called the article “весьма туманная” (“quite hazy”); N. Tikhonov called it “стихотворение в prose” (“poem in prose”). The responses from various editorial board members can be found in RGALI, fond 618, op. 11.
historical events and reflect Pasternak’s knowledge of Poland and its history.  

При музыке

Опять проходит полонез Шопена,
О Боже мой! – как много вееров,
И глаз потупленных, и нежных ртов,
Но как близка, как шелестит измена.

Тень музыки мелькнула по стене,
Но прозелени лунной не задела.
О, сколько раз вот здесь я холодела
И кто-то страшный мне кивал в окне.

И как ужасен взор безносых статуй,
Но уходи и за меня не ратуй
И не молись так горько обо мне.

И голос из тринадцатого года
Опять кричит: я здесь, я снова твой...
Мне ни к чему ни слава, ни свобода,
Я слишком знаю... но молчит природа,
И сыростью пахнуло гробовой.

In the Presence of Music

Again Chopin’s polonaise is being played,
Oh my God! – how many fans,
And downcast eyes, and tender mouths,
But how close is betrayal, how it rustles.

Music’s shadow flickered on the wall,
But did not touch the greenish moonlight.
Oh, how many times did I sit chilled here
And someone terrible nodded at me in the window.

And how frightful the gaze of noseless statues,
But leave and do not inveigh against me
And do not pray so bitterly about me.

Pasternak’s numerous translation projects included poems by Juliusz Słowacki and Bolesław Leśmian. See, for example, B. Shupletsov, ed., Zvezdnoe nebo: stikhi zarubezhnykh poetov v perevode Borisa Pasternaka (Moscow: Progress, 1966).
And the voice from 1913
Again shouts: I'm here, I'm yours again...
I do not need fame or freedom,
I know too well... but nature remains silent,
And there is the smell of the grave’s dampness.

Even though she listened to Chopin frequently, Anna Akhmatova only alluded to Chopin twice in her works. In fact, despite her friendship with many musicians (such as Dmitrii Shostakovich), she rarely used musical works as her poetic inspiration. In addition to the first dedication of the “Poema bez geroia” (“Poem Without a Hero,” 1940-65), Akhmatova mentioned Chopin in the poem “Pri muzyke” (“In the Presence of Music”), written in her dacha in Komarovo on July 20, 1958. While the dedication to the “Poem Without a Hero” refers specifically to Chopin’s Funeral March, the poem makes reference to an unidentified polonaise by Chopin. Despite the fact that the pieces alluded to are different, their poetic treatment is similar – in a somber manner that recalls death. Like the previous works discussed, the poem strongly associates music with emotions, but the emotions that pervade the poem are of darker, even macabre nature. The verb used to describe music in the first line, prokhodit, is often used to describe, for example, the end of a season or love; here, with the imminent end of Chopin’s polonaise, it may imply that changes are about to occur.

The poem is preceded by a rather unusual epigraph from Akhmatova’s common-law husband Nikolai Punin (1888-1953) – “Не теряйте отчаянья” (“Do not lose despair”) – which were allegedly the last words Punin said to Akhmatova when he was arrested on August 26, 1949. Four years after the arrest, Punin died in a Gulag camp; Akhmatova’s choice of the epigraph sets the tone for the whole poem. A biographical approach to interpreting the poem may explain the last stanza’s explicit mention of 1913, the year Akhmatova met Punin in a train. It bears noting that 1913 is also an earlier title of “Poem Without a Hero” – “1913 god, ili poema bez geroia” (“The Year 1913, or Poem Without a Hero”) – which contains the only other Chopin (Funeral March) reference in Akhmatova’s oeuvre. Divided roughly into two parts, the first part of the poem describes the experience listening to Chopin’s music, and the second part describes some personal history filled with dark details. In the first part of the poem, we see some common characteristics associated with Chopin’s music: use of exclamation, the emphatic kak and vocative particle O. However, the emotions become physical when the attention is focused on body parts – like eyes and mouths – and when the lyric hero is chilled while listening to music. Darkness continues to permeate the second part of the poem. Recalling the epigraph, which is in a way a triple negative, many words are either negations or contain negative connotations (such as не, ни... ни...,слишком). The physicality of the poem is evident in the last line, when the sense of smell adds to the two senses already mentioned in the first stanza. To sum up, Akhmatova’s poem reaffirms the emotions connected with Chopin’s music, but she focuses primarily on death.

203 Tatiana Patera, A Concordance to the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova (Dana Point: Ardis, 1995), 247.
205 See commentary in Anna Akhmatova, Sobranie sochnenii v shesti tomakh vol. 2 (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1999), 605.
206 Viacheslav Nedoshivin, Progulki po serebrianomu veku: doma i sud’by (St. Petersburg: Litera, 2005), 60.
and its relation to the gloomy nature of the music, which Chopin perhaps epitomized with his
Funeral March.

Conclusion

Russian writers turned to Chopin’s music to reflect Arthur Schopenhauer’s idea – which
was gaining popularity in Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century – that music does not
represent emotions or feelings but in and of itself constitutes emotions and feelings.207 While the
poems are dissimilar, they commonly underscore the emotional potential Chopin’s music carries.
In the poems by Miatlev, Fet and Severianin, Chopin’s music becomes emblematic of passionate
love, the most frequently encountered trope. However, in the poems of Pasternak and
Akhmatova, Chopin’s music takes on a tragic dimension. The allusions in Pasternak’s poem
reflect the fate of the Polish nation in the nineteenth century, while the epigraph and diction in
Akhmatova’s poem convey trauma and personal suffering – with which Chopin was familiar in
his life and conveyed in his music.

207 This aesthetics is elaborated in Arthur Schopenhauer The World as Will and Representation (1818; expanded
edition, 1844) and it was widely known in Russia in Afanasii Fet’s translation (Мир как воля и представление, 1880).
February 22, 1910 marked the centennial of Fryderyk Chopin’s birth. Extensive celebrations occurred in cities such as Warsaw, Moscow and Lwów. In Warsaw – then a part of the Russian Empire – a “committee for celebrating the centennial of Chopin’s birth” (“Komitet obchodu setnej rocznicy urodzin Chopina”) was put together to organize a series of commemorative events that included a church service at the Holy Cross Church – where Chopin’s heart was buried in 1880 – and concerts in the Philharmonic (see the invitation in Figure 1). Similar events were held in Austria-controlled Lwów, and the local newspaper *Słowo Polskie* (*Polish Word*) described the ceremony in the following way:


(Yesterday's inaugural ceremony at the Philharmonic, preceded by a service in the cathedral, was a great manifestation of modern Polish thought, making the nation aware of its glory. Three most meaningful and stately men paid homage to Chopin: Bishop Bandurski in the cathedral, the President of the Academy Count Tarnowski and Paderewski at the ceremony. These names are enough to characterize the moment. There couldn’t be anything more beautiful and deeper entrusted to the word in Poland. We would like to spread their words around the world.)

As the newspaper report clearly shows, the significance of the Chopin celebration went far beyond the realm of music; it was a national event where accumulated history and collective memory became manifest. The commemorative rituals were meant to stir emotions and inspire a sense of unity that, for many reasons, rarely occurred among Poles. In 1910, by which time all who had known Chopin personally would have passed away, celebrating his legacy kept the past alive for Poles. Celebrations thus had a kind of self-serving mechanism, whose goal was to acquaint (or reacquaint) Poles with Polish culture. Moreover, with speeches and publications, Chopin was *made* especially Polish and political during the celebrations. As we know, commemorative rituals do not just look back; they often look forward by providing specific messages. The events that occurred during the celebrations became normalized and were emulated in subsequent celebrations. Embodying what Eric Hobsbawm calls “invented

---

209 “O uroczystościach 100. Rocznicy urodzin Chopina we Lwowie.” *Słowo Polskie*, No. 493 (October 24, 1910).
210 By “accumulated history” I mean the 1910 celebrations extend a tradition of commemorative celebrations going all the way back to Chopin’s death in 1849.
traditions,” the celebrations both reproduced and generated new values and norms that would be reiterated for many years to come.

Figure 1: An invitation to the church service at the Holy Cross Church and the evening concert

While some of the celebrations simply involved commemorative concerts, there were other events that were more elaborate and coordinated, reaching a larger public. This chapter focuses on Chopin celebrations beginning with 1899 (the semicentenary of the composer’s death), followed by 1910 and 1949 (the centenaries of the composer's birth and death, respectively). The chapter aims to shed light on the various tactics employed during celebrations to achieve specific purposes. Furthermore, it investigates the extent to which the Polish people and their ruling powers came together around what could have been a contentious issue. The days of Chopin’s birth and death were celebrated every year, but the celebrations studied in this chapter concern more significant anniversaries. The distinctions between birth and death celebrations per se are marginal, as the moods did not seem to differ. These events received broad coverage not only in music magazines but also in major newspapers, often as headline news.

Scholars have analyzed commemorative celebrations as manifestations of collective memory and cultural-historical palimpsest. Some notable studies include Julie Buckler and Emily Johnson’s edited volume Rites of Place (2013), Stephanie Sandler’s study on Pushkin celebrations (2004), and Patrice Dabrowski’s study on commemorations in Polish culture.
Buckler and Johnson’s volume asks “how cultural memory may preserve, alter, or erase the past” and investigates “the reinterpretation to which commemorative sites are subject in the wake of major sociopolitical changes.” Their broad paradigm can be applied to Chopin centennials, which were dynamic cultural processes representing the product of political, social and economic negotiations. For example, since Russians, Poles, and Germans had different stakes in Chopin centennials, one can ask, how did they come together (or not) in commemorating these significant centennials? To what extent were the celebrations a social mobilization in response to the political and cultural climate of the time?

Dabrowski, a historian, has argued that the final decades of the nineteenth century might well be termed the commemorative age, as many national rituals and traditions were being invented or shaped across Europe. Nevertheless, the Chopin celebrations are conspicuously missing in Dabrowski’s otherwise comprehensive study. In fact, Chopin celebrations have rarely been studied systematically by scholars, despite the abundant materials available in archives and libraries. The interplay between Polish and non-Polish involvement in Chopin celebrations is one focus of this chapter. Evidence shows that Russians perceived Chopin not as a threat but as an integral figure to Russian culture. Despite the oppressive Russification policies, Russia’s role was far more benevolent than detrimental in propagating Chopin’s legacy. Further, we will consider a few key figures in Chopin celebrations, such as Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941), who made a major speech on October 23, 1910 that was instrumental in constructing Poland’s “imagined community.” I will adduce various artifacts such as concert programs and publications that resulted from the celebrations. I hope to illuminate a few fundamental questions: why and how did one celebrate a national hero under a seemingly hostile regime? What was the purpose of the celebrations, and for whose benefit were they held? The celebrations created a milieu in which Poles fostered their sense of community; moreover, since the celebrations I study occurred when Poland was not independent, they reflected the political ideologies of both Russia and Poland at the time.

Prior to 1999, no round (50 or 100) anniversary took place in an independent Poland, but even in the celebration years I study, Poland was not yet lost in the mind of Poles; Poland was a nation without a state (“naród bez państwa”). In 1910 and 1949, much was riding on the celebrations. Poland rarely got an opportunity to organize an event that not only brought many Poles physically together but also exhibited Polish identity in the absence of a political state. By allowing celebrations to take place, the Russians risked potential political instability and jeopardized their perceived superiority in art. After all, the celebrations for the thirtieth anniversary of the 1830 Uprising in 1860/1861 had emboldened Poles to rise up against Russian rule, and Russians had had to violently put down the uprising. Even though Russians were not

212 Buckler and Johnson, 6.
213 Dabrowski, 3.
214 The line “Poland is not yet lost” is, of course, the title of Poland’s national anthem (Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła), which was not adopted until 1926 but was popular and often used by composers ever since Józef Wybicki wrote the lyrics in 1797.
215 Dabrowski, 2.
always enthusiastic about honoring non-Russian composers, they embraced Chopin and worked with Poland in organizing the celebration. Promoting Chopin’s legacy was a win-win proposition; Russians put forth a friendly image and gave Poles fewer reasons to resist their rule.

To understand the events of 1899 more fully, it is necessary to give some historical background. By 1899, Poland had had some experience in organizing large-scale celebrations, such as the Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887) fifty-year work jubilee (Jubileusz 50-lecia pracy) in 1879 and the centennial of Adam Mickiewicz’s (1798-1855) birth in 1898. Some critics claim that after Chopin’s death in 1849, Russia imposed a strict policy of not letting Poles hear or read about Chopin. To be sure, after two failed uprisings in 1831 and 1863, Russification intensified and public manifestations of Polish nationality were forbidden. As a result, Polish was not allowed to be spoken in public, and reading works of Mickiewicz, Joachim Lelewel, Zygmunt Krasiński or Juliusz Słowacki could result in exile to Siberia. However, the legacy of Chopin proved immune to the oppression. As musicologist Anne Swartz points out, Chopin’s music satisfied the artistic demands of both the Slavophiles and the Westernizers; the perception of his music was congruent with Tsar Nicholas I’s vision of Russia as an independent modern state.

However, to claim that Chopin’s music was the only cultural artifact immune to oppression would be an exaggeration. For example, one could encounter Polish culture regularly in theaters and concert halls in Poland because Russian censorship of music and theater was not as strict as for literary art forms. For example, Chopin’s music was regularly performed in concert halls, and the theater became a place where Poles could gather to share their sentiments for a lost nation. An illuminating example of the lax artistic restrictions is evident in language usage. After the 1830 Uprising, speaking Polish in public was prohibited, but Russian was not officially introduced in theater management and administration until more than three decades later, in 1867. Furthermore, the Russian-only rule did not apply to performances; Polish composer Stanisław Moniuszko’s operas were regularly staged and sung in Polish, and Italian operas were usually performed in Polish translation. In short, the Committee of Censorship (Komitet Cenzury) – established in February of 1832 – fluctuated in its strictness, and there were various ways to take advantage of occasional leniency. For example, even though terror was

---

216 A telling example is the placement of composers’ portraits in the Moscow Conservatory – Russian composers have dominant presence. Furthermore, Glinka and Tchaikovsky are placed closer to the stage, ahead of Beethoven and Bach.
217 See Dabrowski’s book for more detailed discussion.
218 Szczepańska-Lange, 69.
220 For example, in 1857, Pauline Viardot-Garcia sang a couple of songs based on Chopin’s mazurkas, one even in Polish, at the Teatr Wielki in Warsaw. See Józef Szczublewski, Teatr Wielki w Warszawie 1833-1993 (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1993), 97.
221 Kazimierz Braun, A concise history of Polish theater from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 78.
222 Halka was frequently staged in Poland; however, Straszny Dwór (The Haunted Manor) was only performed three times before the Russians censored the opera.
223 See, for example, Anne Swartz, “Moniuszko’s Halka and the Revival of the Noble Traditions at the Teatr Wielki.” The Polish Review, LI, 3-4 (2006), 326.
224 Szczublewski, 85.
used during Tsar Alexander II’s rule, some historians considered his reign (beginning in 1855) and series of reforms a period of “thaw.” The loosening control over arts was evident because the censors allowed not only the reappearance of Mickiewicz’s name in print but even allowed the publication of a multi-volume edition of the poet’s works. Even though messianic works like Dziady III (Forefather’s Eve Part III) and Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego (The Books of the Polish People and of the Polish Pilgrimage) could not be published, one could still read some works by Mickiewicz, one of the most fervently patriotic Polish writers.

The relative leniency was evident in theater as well. For example, one could see a play by the Polish Romantic bard-poet Słowacki in the Teatr Wielki in Warsaw in 1872, on the condition that his name was not mentioned:

Juliusz Słowacki, zgodnym wysiłkiem pani Muchanow, prezesa i pani Heleny wreszcie wępchnięty na scenę Teatru Wielkiego. Za cenę tego, że na afiszu nigdy nie będzie ani imienia, ani nazwiska tego antycarskiego i parszywego autora Kordiana, jeno gołe inicjały: J.S.

(Juliusz Słowacki, in accordance with Ms. Muchanow, the chairman and Ms. Helena’s effort, finally was thrust onto the stage of the Great Theater. Under the condition that neither the first nor the last name of the anti-Tsarist and odious author of Kordian will ever be mentioned on the poster, only the bare initials J.S. will appear.)

The play in question was Maria Stuart, a tragedy written in 1830. Under the same condition of anonymity, a fragment from his Mazepa also appeared in the theater soon thereafter. While Russians often punished political dissenters with public execution or exile to Siberia, they granted a certain degree of autonomy in the arts. Theater directors had considerable choice over what to stage and whom to employ, pending the censors’ final approval. According to Polish critic Henryka Secomska, Russians thought permitting some Polish culture would make Poles less likely to rebel, relying on the idea that music and theater provided a kind of release valve: “[Rosjanie] uważali [teatr] za najbezpieczniejszy wentyl dla wzrastających nastrojów rewolucyjnych” (“Russians considered theater the safest release valve for the growing revolutionary sentiments”). In the long run, this decision had a positive effect on Polish artists and the public alike.

If Chopin’s music was “cannons hidden in flowers,” to borrow Robert Schumann’s famous phrase, the cannons were not perceived to be a threat to Russia. Russians did not censor information on Chopin, and Poles had access to information on his travels, the import of his new scores by Warsaw booksellers and his professional achievements outside of Poland. As

---

225 See, for example, Norman Davies, God’s Playground: History of Poland Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 256.
227 Szczublewski, 178.
228 Ibid.
230 Szczepańska-Lange, 63.
discussed in Chapter One, Russians would not have allowed the transformation of Żelazowa Wola into a memorial in 1894 had they deemed such action dangerous. Furthermore, within art, literature was more scrutinized than music; as Elżbieta Szczepańska-Lange stated, limits on the Chopin cult were less harsh and less consequential than those on poets.231 The strict policy reached its height in the aftermath of the two uprisings in 1831 and 1863. However, after Tsar Nicholas II took power in 1894, the control over art loosened somewhat.232 Aleksandr Imeretinskii, the governor-general of Warsaw from 1897 to 1900, tried to improve the relations between Poland and Russia.233

The Mickiewicz Monument in Warsaw

A good indicator of the improving relation was the Mickiewicz monument, unveiled in Warsaw in 1898. It was not the first Mickiewicz statue in Poland as one had been built in Poznań in 1859, under the Prussian partition. One may find it surprising that a Mickiewicz monument was first erected in the oppressive Prussian partition. One possible explanation is that Mickiewicz’s nationalist sentiments were directed at Russians, not Germans. Furthermore, the monument in Poznań was rather modest and not in the city center. In contrast, the Mickiewicz monument in Warsaw was not only bigger but much more conspicuous (on the main street of the city, Krakowskie Przedmieście). When Tsar Nicholas II visited Warsaw in 1897, Poles tried to appeal to the Tsar to permit building a Mickiewicz statue. For example, novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote to the Tsar that “Poland is happily ruled by Nicholas II” (“Polska znajduje się pod szczęśliwym panowaniem Mikołaja Wtórego”).234 Poles also offered one million rubles to the Tsar so he would allow the Polytechnic Institute to be built.235 The Tsar eventually agreed to the appeal, under the condition that no marches or speeches would take place for the unveiling of the Mickiewicz monument. Sienkiewicz had hoped to give a speech, and upon learning the ban, the novelist protested and “obliczył, ile minut trwałoby jego wystąpienie i przez cały ten czas stał wyprostowany, blady, z włosem siwym i miną godną” (“calculated how many minutes his speech would take, and during this time he stood erect, pale, with gray hair and proud face ”).236

231 Ibid., 64.
233 Danuta Szmit-Zawierucha, Namiestnicy Warszawy (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Abrys, 2009), 143-144.
234 Ibid., 150.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
For Mickiewicz’s centennial, the poet’s body was exhumed in Montmorency, France and reinterred in Kraków’s Wawel Cathedral, among the former rulers of Poland. Furthermore, Mickiewicz monuments were erected in both Warsaw and Kraków. In the case of Warsaw, Dabrowski reminds us, the monument marked a clear change in Russian policy because no Polish national monument had been erected in Warsaw since before the 1863 insurrections. As part of the centennial, Józef Kallenbach published his two-volume biography on Mickiewicz (1897), which he ends with the following lines:

Wśród tych szczytnych trudów niech nam upływa życie. Myśmy go bowiem nie objęli całkiem jeszcze i nie prędko obejmiemy. Naród polski musi duchowo dorastać do Mickiewicza. On jest wzorem ducha i miarą serca, wykreślą nam od Boga. Kiedyś naród nasz obejmie od stóp do głów ten kolos wiekowy, przeniknie go i wcieli się weń. I wtedy rozraduje się duch Wieszcza, zanuci już „pieśń szczęśliwą” i z wdzięcznością dla Stwórcy powtórzy te nieśmiertelne słowa: Ja i Ojczyzna to jedno!

(Let our life go by among those noble labors. We haven’t fully embraced him yet and we won’t soon. The Polish people must measure up spiritually to Mickiewicz. He is the model of the spirit and measure of the heart drawn for us by God. Our nation will embrace this giant of the ages from head to toe, penetrate him and incarnate itself in him. Then the spirit of the bard-poet will rejoice and will hum the “joyful song,” and with gratitude to the Creator will repeat those immortal words: I and the Fatherland are one.)

Kallenbach’s closing statement exemplifies the kind of elevated diction and superlative rhetoric often found in anniversary celebrations. The passage cleverly juxtaposes past, present and future

---

237 Ibid.
238 Dabrowski, 133.
tenses to point out the shortcomings thus far and to create a trajectory of where to take Mickiewicz’s legacy. The perfective verb “objąć” (“to embrace”) is negated in two instances, suggesting Poles have not done enough and can never do enough to embrace the greatness of Mickiewicz. Mickiewicz’s unification of himself and the Polish nation becomes a singular identity, reflected by the grammatically singular “jedno” (“one”) at the end of the passage.

The 1899 Celebrations

Mickiewicz’s centennial celebrations in 1898 demonstrated that large public manifestations of Polish identity were possible and, in a way, they paved the way for the semicentenary of Chopin’s death, occurring just one year later. The concerts were organized not only in major European cities like Paris, Prague, Vienna, but also in Russian-dominated or historically Polish cities such as Odessa, Warsaw, Kraków, Lwów, and Łódź.239 Many issues in dealing with the Russian authorities and organizing events emerged, but the goodwill overcame the bureaucracy. In 1899, Nedeliia (Week) published an article that reiterated Chopin’s recognition in Russia: “Шопена знают и любят у нас в России, больше, чем где-либо”240 (“Everyone knows and loves Chopin here in Russia, more so than other places”). The article includes a curious criticism, which was not the fact that Russia celebrated Chopin’s anniversary but rather that it did not celebrate to the extent that Chopin deserved. The article resonates with Kallenbach’s statement that Poles have not yet embraced Chopin fully; more remains to be done. Composer and critic Aleksandr Koptiaev (1868-1941) wrote a book in which he went a step further and criticized Russian musical professionals for not paying enough tribute to the semicentenary of Chopin’s death:

А между тем, наш музыкальный мир собирается, повидимому, обойти молчанием это событие: что-то не слышно о больших приготовлениях к чествованию памяти одного из величайших композиторов. Молчать наши пианисты, созданные им, ему всем обязаные, не подумавшие посвятить своему художественному родителю хоть один концерт. Молчать и наши музыкальные общедства... Где-же естественный взрыв наших симпатий к общему нашему любимцу.241

(And by the way, our musical world plans, apparently, to avoid the occasion [50th anniversary of Chopin’s death – T. L.] with silence. Something is not audible about the large preparations to commemorate one of the greatest composers. Our pianists – created by him, owe everything to him – have not thought of dedicating even one concert to their artistic parent and remain silent. Our musical societies also remain silent... Where is the natural outburst of our fondness for our commonly beloved?)

Koptiaev criticizes Russia’s inaction by using various forms of the word “молчать” (“to be silent”) three times. Chopin, who is described as one of the “величайшие” (“greatest”), has created possibilities for Russian pianists and music, as denoted by the “созданные им” – passive participle followed by the agent in the instrumental case. The expression общий наши (our common) also shows that through Chopin, Russians and Poles are joined together aesthetically.

---

239 See Stanisław Dybowski, Aleksander Michałowski: Rzecz o wielkim chopiniście i muzycznej Warszawie jego czasów (Warsaw: Selene, 2005), 119-121.
240 А. Koptiaev, Muzyka i kul'tura: Sbornik muzykal’no-istoricheskikh i muzykal’no-kriticheskikh statei (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1903), 243.
241 Ibid., 244-245.
Koptiaev’s statement ends with a curious call to action: “Не придет-ли время, когда скажут: 
Шопен – для русских?”242 (“Won’t the time come, when [Russian pianists] will say: Chopin – for Russians?”) The quote can be interpreted differently, but it seems to resonate with Cyprian Kamil Norwid’s obituary for Chopin, which famously begins with the line “Родем Warszawianin, sercem Polak, a talentem świata obywatel” (“A Varsovian by birth, Pole by heart, and citizen of the world by talent”). Chopin’s music is inseparable from his heritage, but his music crosses borders. By celebrating Chopin’s semicentenary and helping spread Chopin’s music, Russians began to change the notion of Chopin as a purely Polish phenomenon.

Poland celebrated 1899 with several events, such as a series of commemorative concerts organized by the Warsaw Musical Society (Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne) and a speech by its director, Zygmunt Noskowski. In the speech, Noskowski posited that in order to understand the essence of Chopin’s music, we can and should study his works continuously.243 He also noted that Chopin was not properly appreciated at the time.244 In the commemorative concerts, Noskowski’s transcriptions of Chopin’s Prelude in C-sharp minor and the Funeral March were performed.245 The pieces were written for chorus and symphony orchestra, which involved many performers and produced more sonorities than the original piano version. One can argue about whether transcribing the pieces for larger ensembles would have pleased Chopin, but the scope of the performance reflected the grandeur that Poles tried to achieve in Chopin celebrations. In 1899, public admiration of Chopin became even more relevant as the idea of building a Chopin monument in Warsaw began to be realized. As Polish art critic Hanna Kotkowska-Bareja writes, “Uroczystości związane z 50. rocznicą śmierci Chopina w 1899 r. były nowym bodźcem do podjęcia myśli o budowie pomnika”246 (“Celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of Chopin’s death in 1899 were the stimulus to take on the idea of building a monument”). As we shall see, the Chopin statue was not unveiled until 1926.

In addition to concerts, periodicals played an indispensable role in the celebrations because they published tributes that were written by influential musicians, critics, or even politicians. Furthermore, the Russification policy did not prevent the Polish press from printing in Polish. These accounts not only reflected the perception of Chopin at the time, but they also shaped the general public’s opinion of his music. The abstract nature of Chopin’s works (which is why many preferred to bestow programmatic titles on his works) means that only a small percentage of the population could play and “access” the music. The clichééd language in talking about Chopin’s music thus came into fashion. For example, in 1899, Noskowski wrote in Kurier Poranny:

W ogóle większość utworów Chopina przesiąknięta jest żałosną nutą. Było to następstwem cierpień osobistych, których los mu nie szczędził, a muzyk, posiadający usposobienie wrażliwe i na wskroś subiektywne, wypowiadał wszystkie swe uczucia

242 Ibid., 244.
243 The speech was reprinted as a book. Zygmunt Noskowski, Istota utworów Chopina (Warsaw: Nakładem księgarni Saturnina Sikorskiego, 1902).
245 Magdalena Dziadek, Polska krytyka muzyczna w latach 1890-1914 (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002), 163.
246 As quoted in Dybowsk. 153.
dźwiękami [...]. Dzieła Chopina dadzą się porównać z naszą jesienią, w której zamierająca przyroda roztańca swą piękność przy bladych słońca promieniach. Wszystko przepojone tam jest tęsknotą: liście spadające z drzew niby łzy z oczu, krajobraz przysłonięty mgłą powiewną, klucz żurawi odlatujących w kraje cieplejsze, na niebie obłoczki sinawe, oto obrazy nasuwające na myśl jedno wielkie uczucie żałości, o której Chopin mówił z pewnego rodzaju lubością, powtarzając sam wyraz po kilka razy. W tym też tkwi owa odrębność pomysłów wielkiego muzyka, nowość kierunku i nieznany do tej pory w sztuce nastrój.247

(In general, the majority of Chopin's works is soaked with a mournful note. This was the result of personal sufferings, which fate did not spare him, and the musician, having a sensitive and thoroughly subjective disposition, declared all his feelings with sounds [...]. Chopin's works can be compared to our autumn, in which dying nature unfolds its beauty in pale rays of the sun. Everything there is imbued with nostalgia: the leaves falling from the trees like tears from the eyes, landscape veiled with airy mist, a flock of cranes flying away to warmer countries, pale blue clouds in the sky, here are images that evoke one great feeling of sorrow, of which Chopin spoke with a kind of delight, repeating the same word several times. The distinction of ideas of the great musician lies in it, a novelty of direction and mood not yet known in art.)

This passage clearly links the melancholic and emotional nature of Chopin’s music – described using the image of autumn – to his biography. The gerund “zamierający” (“dying”) befits the nature of the celebrations (of Chopin’s death) and verbally interprets several paintings that had become famous, one of which is a painting (see Figure 3) by the French artist Félix-Joseph Barrias (1822-1907).

Figure 3: *La mort de Chopin* (1885) by Félix-Joseph Barrias

---

247 Dziadek, 418-419.
With an authoritative tone that hardly leaves room for different interpretations, Noskowski made generalizations about “the majority of Chopin’s works.” Consequently, the public was taught to think about Chopin’s music in a myopic way. The celebrations were meant to bring people who did not know Chopin personally closer to the composer, but the balance was tilted towards more “tell” than “show.” We see a strong tendency to reduce complex matters to a more unified and accessible image. For example, Chopin’s binational background was rarely mentioned because it undercut Chopin’s Polishness, which the celebrations aimed to establish. Therefore, the most obvious and immediate effect of the celebrations was that it molded the public’s thinking. There were efforts to “polonize” Chopin in speaking about his music or even in spelling his name. In 1899, for example, there was a widespread misconception that Chopin was the first to use folk songs in his music. In a speech delivered on the fiftieth anniversary of Chopin’s death in Kraków, Polish composer Władysław Żeleński (1837-1921) said “Chopin was the first to consciously draw from the treasures of our folk songs.” However, composers before Chopin had already used folk songs in their music. For my purposes, the musicological veracity of the rumor is secondary to the conspicuous Polish tendency to endow Chopin’s life and music with national meaning. In the same speech, Żeleński also attacked German music scholar Friedrich Niecks – who wrote a monumental two-volume biography Chopin As a Man and Musician (1888 in English, 1889 in German) – because Niecks criticized mazurkas and considered them inferior to waltzes. Żeleński responded: “This opinion could be expressed only by a man who does not know and does not understand the meaning of our folk songs (emphasis added).” Niecks’ biography of Chopin was published fifteen years after Marceli Szulc’s first Polish monograph on Chopin (1873), but no biography of Chopin was as comprehensive as Niecks’. Nevertheless, his meticulous study was overshadowed by his non-Polish nationality, and Żeleński’s criticism was essentially – to borrow and modify a phrase from Fedor Tiutchev – “Умом Шопена не понять” (“One cannot understand Chopin with the mind [alone]”). The notion that only Poles can understand or play Chopin properly became the norm and was not shattered until foreigners began winning prizes at the Chopin Competition – a topic to be addressed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Ironically, in the same speech, Żeleński warned against the fanatical tendencies of Poles in relation to Chopin’s music. In many ways, he was directing the criticism to himself when he stated “wszyscy zaślepieni naśladowcy, wyłącznie kultowi Chopina oddani, nie tylko jako twórcy, ale nawet jako wykonawcy wpadają w skłniość i manierę” (“all the blinded followers, given totally to Chopin's cult, not only as creators but even as performers fall into excess sentimentality and manner”). He also wrote that “wyłączny i przesadny kult zawsze musi szkodliwie oddziałać na fanatycznych wyznawców” (“an exclusive and exaggerated cult must...”)

---

250 Ibid., 19-20.
251 Tiutchev’s famous quote “Умом Россию не понять” is from a poem written in 1866. The poem ends with the line “В Россию можно только верить” (“One can only believe in Russia”).
252 From Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne no. 837 (October 15, 1899), as quoted in Kompozytorzy polscy o Fryderyku Chopinie, ed. Mieczysław Tomaszewski (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1980), 69.
253 Ibid., 72.
always have a harmful effect on fanatical followers”). But what is a celebration like without some degree of sentimentality and fanaticism? Celebrations by definition invite monumentalism, accompanied by elevated rhetoric and deification. Chopin celebrations are no exception, but what makes them unique is the fact that despite Russia’s involvement and cooperation with Poland, Poland continued to portray Chopin as exclusively Poland’s own. The “Chopin – for Poles” paradigm remained immune to the changing relationship between Russia and Poland in the realm of art. The 1899 celebrations became a catalyst for later public glorifications of Chopin. Writings produced during Chopin celebrations almost always speak in national terms, as I will show in my discussion of Paderewski’s speech.

**The 1910 Celebrations**

A major event occurred between 1899 and 1910 that brought Poland closer to Russia – the 1905 Revolution in Russia. With the common goal of defeating the Tsarist regime, a Polish-Russian Revolutionary Union (Polsko-rosyjski sojusz rewolucyjny) was established. Nevertheless, as in previous examples, binational cooperation between revolutionary groups did not alter the national nature of the discourse on Chopin. For example, in the 1908 book *Narodowość Chopina: Sprawa sprowadzenie prochów Jego do kraju* (Chopin’s Nationality: The Case for Bringing His Ashes to the Country), musicologist and physician Henryk Dobrzycki (1841-1914) argued that the issue of Chopin’s nationality should be determined by a set of criteria, the foremost of which should be the language spoken at home. Since Chopin spoke Polish at home, he was Polish. As a comparison, Dobrzycki mentioned the nationality debate surrounding the famous Polish astronomer Mikołaj Kopernik, whose 400th birthday was celebrated in 1873 and who was incorrectly described as a Prussian by French historian Charles Seignobos in his three-volume History of Civilization (1905). If the Poles do not take action, Dobrzycki warned, there is no guarantee that Chopin will not be characterized as a Frenchman in 50 or 100 years. Poland’s fight for political independence extended to the cultural realm, where Poles clearly would not compromise the Polishness of Chopin. For the Poles, there was a degree of uneasiness in response to foreign glorification of Chopin, and only through highly nationalized language and outperforming foreign engagement with Chopin could they feel more secure about their national hero. In the 1910 pamphlet “Odezwa Komitetu Budowy Pomnika Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie” (“Proclamation of the Fryderyk Chopin Monument Building Committee in Warsaw,” see Figure 4), we again see Poles’ anxiety over the question of whether they have done enough in comparison to other nations.

---

256 Ibid., 11. Dobrzycki incorrectly calls Seignobos an American.
257 Ibid., 12.
The third sentence of the proclamation laments the fact that France had already erected two statues in Paris; however, Poland had to wait fifty years before managing to change a name of a street in Warsaw to Chopin. Of course, the committee did not mention that Poland was under foreign rule and all cultural affairs in Warsaw had to be approved by the Russian authorities. Furthermore, as Russian music critic Mikhail Ivanov (1849-1927) points out, there were unknown issues that prevented the building of the Chopin monument in Warsaw:

Неизвестно почему долгое время наши власти в Польше не разрешали постановки памятника Шопену в Варшаве, даже и после того, как были разрешены сборы на памятник Мицкевичу и самый этот памятник уже был поставлен. Единственно, что было разрешено, это постановка бюста или закладка доски, в Железовой Воле.... Но, сколько помнится, польская печать очень тепло отнеслась тогда к участию русского художника в деле прославления знаменитого Поляка.258

(It is unknown why for such a long time our authorities in Poland did not allow the building of Chopin’s monument in Warsaw, even after the collection of funds for a Mickiewicz monument had been approved and the monument had been built. The only thing that was allowed was the placing of a bust or installation of a memorial plaque in Żelazowa Wola.... But, as far as I remember, the Polish press reacted warmly to the participation of a Russian artist in the matter of glorification of the famous Pole.)

The idea for building a Chopin statue emerged in the nineteenth century, and a sculpture – which guards the urn which contains Chopin’s heart in the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw – was built in 1882.\textsuperscript{259} When one considers the fact that a Mickiewicz monument was first built in Poznań in 1859, it is clear that censorship alone cannot explain the lack of a Chopin monument, as the Prussian partition was not less strict than the Russian partition.

The scale of the 1910 celebrations was substantially larger than in 1899 because there was more international involvement. There were many events held in Poland, and the newspapers covered the events well. For example, the Moscow-based \textit{Russkoe Slovo} published a small article on the “Chopin days” ("Шопеновские дни"): [В] Лоджи зато местные власти издали распоряжение, запрещающее всякие чествования представителей польской литературы и искусства.\textsuperscript{260}

(Polish newspapers are full of articles about Chopin and descriptions of anniversary celebrations of his memory in different cities of Poland. The shops on the main streets are adorned with busts of Chopin with their laurel wreaths placed upon them. From the provincial cities they continue to receive many telegrams of greeting.

Today, from Łódź, news was received that that the local authorities had issued an order prohibiting any celebration of Polish literary and artistic figures.)

The article explicitly mentions that in Łódź, the local government forbade the celebrations. While the Russians celebrated Chopin’s legacy in various Polish cities, not all cities in the same partition could hold the celebrations. In \textit{Russkaia muzykal’naia gazeta}, a commemorative issue was published in 1910 that described how Łódź and Warsaw treated Chopin’s celebrations differently:

\textit{Russkoe Slovo no. 33} (11/24 February, 1910), 5.

\textsuperscript{260}
Обширный костёл был переполнен. Пели оперные артисты и хор. Служило высшее духовенство. Вечером состоялся торжественный Шопеновский концерт в зале Филармонии, также переполненном публикой, среди которой находился цвет польской литературы и искусства. Большой торжеством отличался момент возложения венков на бюст Шопена представителями разных учреждений, корпораций, отдельными лицами. Вся публика встала, как один человек.

Шопеновские концерты будут устраиваться в Польше в течение всего года. Организацию их принял на себя кружок здешних музыкальных деятелей, объединившихся специально с этой целью.

(In Łódź the local authorities issued an order prohibiting any celebration of Polish writers and artists! In Warsaw, Chopin celebrations began with a funeral Mass in the Holy Cross Church. The vast church was packed. Opera singers and a chorus sang. High priests conducted the service. In the evening, a solemn Chopin concert was held in the Philharmonic hall, which was also packed with people, among whom were the elites of Polish literature and the art. The moment of laying wreaths at Chopin’s bust – by representatives of various institutions, corporations and individuals – met with much rejoicing. Everyone in the audience stood up as one. Chopin concerts will be arranged in Poland throughout the year. A group of local musicians came together for the purpose of organizing the details.)

One can perhaps explain the situation in Łódź by considering the city’s history; after the Łódź insurrection (1905) failed, the local government was sensitive to large public demonstrations. 1910 in particular was a time of unrest in Łódź, when the radical anarchist group “Rewolucyjni Mściciele” (“Revolutionary Avengers”) was being formed. It is also important to keep in mind that even though Łódź was a large city, it was mostly industrial and lacked the infrastructure to ensure the success of the celebrations.

In Chapter 1, I discussed Mili Balakirev’s critical involvement in rediscovering Chopin, whom he considered “one of the best piano composers, perhaps the best.”261 After 1899, Balakirev continued to occupy himself with Chopin matters, both musically and politically. For example, he transcribed the Romance from the E-minor concerto for solo piano in 1905 and wrote an impromptu on the theme of two preludes by Chopin in 1907.262 Balakirev complemented his musical love for Chopin with political engagement. He was not afraid to confront his own countrymen on behalf of Poland and at times “became indignant with the brutal despotism of the Russians in Warsaw” (“oburzał się na brutalny despotyzm Rosjan w Warszawie”).263 One can say that Balakirev remained a “Chopin propagandist” – not only in Russia but also in Poland and France – by using his fame and influence to negotiate the political bureaucracy. For example, Balakirev played an instrumental role in the commemorative events in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1910. Working in tandem with Sergei Liapunov (1859-1924), Balakirev organized a concert at the Free Music School in St. Petersburg on February 22 (9th in

---

262 Grzegorz Wiśniewski, Balakiriew w Warszawie i Żelazowej Woli: w hołdzie Chopinowi (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2011), 92.
263 Ibid., 90.
the old style), 1910, one of Chopin’s possible birth dates. Balakirev invited the pianist Josef Hofmann (1876-1957) to perform Chopin’s E minor concerto in his new arrangement. Balakirev offered to publish the score without any honorarium, stating that he considered it an honor to be able to express his deep admiration of Chopin. Furthermore, there were commemorative works such as Balakirev’s orchestral suite based on Chopin’s works and Liapunov’s Symphonic Poem: Zheliazova Volia, Op. 37 (1909). The concert was a great success and took place again two months later, in both St. Petersburg and Moscow (April 8), this time with a larger program and featuring the famous singer Maria Olenina d’Alheim. In the repeat concert, Hofmann played both concerti as well as solo piano works by Chopin. The program for the repeat concert was:

1. Liapunov’s Symphonic Poem, Zheliazova Volia
2. Chopin’s E minor piano concerto (Josef Hofmann, soloist)
3. Balakirev’s Suite for Orchestra: Preambule (etude), Mazurka, Intermezzo (nocturne), finale, scherzo
4. Chopin’s F minor piano concerto (Hofmann as the soloist again); Hofmann will play a few works by Chopin for encores

Liapunov’s composition was probably a combination of his genuine interest in Chopin and his friendship with Balakirev. Prior to Zheliazova Volia, Liapunov had composed a “Polish” Symphony in D major, Op. 16, in 1902. Musicologist Mikhail Shifman wrote: “Это произведение с рельефными темами, открывающееся торжественными фанфарами, создает праздничное, приподнятое настроение и производит впечатление пышного шествия” (“It is a work with striking themes, which opens with triumphant fanfares and creates a festive and animated mood and gives the impression of a magnificent procession”). Liapunov’s close relationship with Balakirev, exemplified by a 1911 biography written a few months after Balakirev’s death and a Romance titled “In the Memory of Balakirev,” may have played a factor in his engagement with Chopin. Aleksandr Alekseevich Olenin, a Russian musician and author of an unpublished manuscript on Balakirev’s life, described the relationship between Balakirev and Liapunov as follows:

---

264 The Free Music School, “Бесплатная музыкальная школа” in Russian, was founded by Balakirev in 1862. It should be noted that the Free Music School carries symbolic significance because it was once a propaganda center of Russian music, used extensively by the “Mighty Five.”
265 Hofmann was a student of Anton Rubinstein. Considering Rubinstein’s effort of propagating Chopin’s music through his historical concerts, it seems fitting that Balakirev would invite Hofmann.
266 RGALI, fond 654 op. 4 no. 891, pp. 43. It is Liapunov who negotiated the details with Hofmann. See Sovetskaia muzyka 9 (September 1950), 95, fn. 3.
267 Shifman, 98.
268 Ibid., 103.
269 Ibid., 104.
270 Fond 39, no. 127, Glinka Museum, Moscow.
271 Shifman, 54.
272 Ibid., 104-105.
273 Ibid., 141.
Они были земляки, оба нижегородцы и даже в их внешнем облике было что-то общее, не говоря уже про внутреннее содержание и по своим политическим и религиозным взглядам они как бы сливались воедино. Очень скоро Ляпунов стал самым близким, даже нужным Балакireву человеком.274

(They were fellow countrymen, both from Nizhny Novgorod, and even their appearances had something in common, not to mention the internal quality; in political and religious views they were like one entity. Liapunov very quickly became the closest, even the most needed person to Balakirev.)

From their correspondence, we know that Balakirev would ask Liapunov to edit his scores, and Liapunov would similarly ask Balakirev for compositional advice.275 Balakirev also gave advice regarding the symphonic poem: “В одном только предостерегаю Вас, боюсь, чтобы Вы не ввели панский элемент, не представляющий из себя ничего другого, как испорченного того же народного европеизмами... Если панский элемент и мог иметь влияние на музыку Шопена, то только вредное”276 (“I will just warn you in one thing: do not introduce the ‘Polish noble’ element, which is nothing but the national one, corrupted by Europeanisms... If the ‘Polish noble element’ could have had influence on Chopin’s music, it could only be harmful”).

Originally, Balakirev had suggested setting the legend of Kazimierz III and the Jewish woman Esther to music, but he was dissuaded from the idea by literary historian Aleksandr Pypin (1833-1904), who thought it more appropriate to choose idyllic, non-political subjects.277 The object of the musical portrayal thus became Chopin’s hometown. In his letter to Olenin, dated April 5, 1910, Balakirev described the piece as follows: “[Ляпунов] желал показать музыкально народную обстановку этой маленькой деревушки, в которой родился Шопен. Сочинение очень красивое….”278 (“[Liapunov] wished to musically show the national atmosphere of that small village where Chopin was born. The composition is very beautiful.”) In Zheliazova Volia, Liapunov includes a preface in the score and reveals the motifs and melodies from Chopin's works – the Mazurka in A minor and the Berceuse in D-flat major:

Желязова Воля – маленькая польская деревня, имя которой навсегда сохранится в истории музыки, как название местечка, где родился и провел свое детство Фредерик Шопен. Давая такой заголовок своему произведению, автор имел намерение изобразить народно-бытовую музыкальную атмосферу, которая окружала детство великого музыканта и дала ему первые впечатления. Воображение автора рисует сначала польскую деревушку во всей ее примитивной простоте, пастушескую свирель на рассвете, крестьянскую песню на берегах Утраты, веселые деревенские игры и танцы. На этом мирном фоне раздался первый крик гениального ребенка. Колыбельная его успокаивает и ребенок засыпает.

274 Olenin, Moi vospominaniia o Balakireve, 32. This part was crossed out in the manuscript. Glinka Museum, Moscow.
275 See Balakirev’s letter to Liapunov, as quoted in Sovetskaya muzyka no. 9 (September 1950), 95.
276 Ibid., 94.
278 “Moi vospomeniinia o M. A. Balakireve” (fond 39, no. 127 in Glinka Museum, Moscow).
Nothing changes around him, life goes on its way, and no one suspects the greatness of what will happen.

To reproduce the folk element, the composer used two Polish folk songs, borrowed from Oskar Kolberg’s collection, and also a few means of harmonization of Chopin himself. The main motif of Chopin’s “Berceuse” goes into the composition as an episode.

Musical quotation is certainly not a new phenomenon, as composers have borrowed others’ ideas for various purposes: to pay tribute, mock, or emulate. On an occasion such as Chopin’s centennial celebrations, it would seem fitting to quote some of his melodies. Liapunov did not treat the quotations as restrictions because he molded the melodies organically into his composition. In effect, what Liapunov created was a kind of musical biography: he narrated Chopin’s life with notes and familiar tunes. The idea of a Russian composer incorporating Chopin’s music in his work is the ultimate gesture of affinity and homage. Surprisingly, as Polish musicologist Zofia Lissa points out, Liapunov’s work was not followed up by a Polish counterpart; even in 1949, no Polish composer had composed a work devoted to Chopin’s birthplace. She writes: “It is very surprising that the birthplace of Polish musical genius did not catch the eye of any Polish composer, and that it was a Russian composer who did so!”

---

279 Ibid., 397-398. N.B. There is a slight discrepancy in the second paragraph, which does not affect the meaning of the passage. In pages 97-98 of Shifman (1960), the second paragraph reads: “Для того чтобы полнее представить народный элемент, автор использовал две польские песни из сборника Оскара Колберг (изд. 1857 г. стр. 36: "U zimnego zdroju" ["У студеного ключа"], стр. 49: "Jasio konie poil" ["Ясик коня поил"], а также некоторые гармонические приемы, типичные для Шопена. Основная тема "Кольбельной" (Шопена) входит в качестве эпизода в авторскую композицию.”

280 For a good musicological study of various kinds of musical borrowing, see J. Peter Burkholder, All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

not inspire any Polish composers to write similar kinds of work, and it was a Russian composer who did so!"

In the 1910 celebrations program, we also see a portrait of Chopin by Polish artist Jan Ciągliński (Ян Ционглинский), who was recommended by Il’ia Repin (see Chapter 1). Ciągliński had been living in Petersburg since 1879, and in 1910, on behalf of Poles, he asked for the Tsar’s permission to erect a Chopin statue in Warsaw. In addition, his painting (see Figure 5), entitled Scherzo in B minor, was featured during the celebrations. The title invites us to consider the relationship between the painting and the musical work. One striking characteristic of the scherzo is the middle section, in which Chopin strongly alludes to a Polish Christmas carol “Lulajże, Jezuniu.” Ciągliński sought to connect Chopin with nature and the Polish folk by blending his body with the landscape. Blending with nature reminds us that at Chopin’s funeral in 1849, a jar of Polish soil (which had been given to Chopin when he left Poland) was buried along with his body in Paris. Even though Chopin spent his professional career outside of Poland, the painting embeds Chopin firmly in Polish soil. The painting resonates with Liapunov’s Symphonic Poem which is designed to capture the idyllic environment in which Chopin was born.

Figure 5: Jan Ciągliński, Scherzo in B minor (1909)

1910 was the last year of Balakirev’s life; yet he held the celebrations despite physical and financial difficulties. We know, for example, that the Free Musical School, where Balakirev was the director, was undergoing hard times: “Уже в последние годы жизни Балакирева положение школы стало очень тяжелым; субсидии, получаемой ею (в размере 500 руб. в год), хватало лишь на уплату за помещение. Концерт в память Шопена, устроенный в 1910

---

282 Maria Górenowicz, “Malarz i pedagog Jan Ciągliński (1858-1913) w Petersburgu. Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej vol. 2 eds. Wojciech Walczak and Karol Łopatecki (Białystok: Benkowski Publishing & Balloons, 2010), 357.

году, принес только убыток”284 (“In the last years of Balakirev’s life, the situation of the school became very difficult; the subsidy received [at 500 rubles a year] was only enough for renting the space. The concert in memory of Chopin, held in 1910, brought only loss”). Balakirev’s affinity for Chopin knew neither financial restrictions nor national boundaries. Just months after the conclusion of the Chopin celebrations in Russia, Balakirev died on May 29, 1910. Polish musicologist Grzegorz Wiśniewski calls Balakirev’s involvement with the Chopin centennial celebration in Petersburg “the last chord of his earthly path” (“ostatni akord ziemskiej drogi”).285 It is not an exaggeration to state that Balakirev singlehandedly resurrected Chopin’s legacy not only in Poland but also in Russia. Wiśniewski even claims that during Balakirev’s life, “Россия становится [в последней четверти XIX столетия] самой большой, самой компетентной и самой доброжелательной аудиторией для польской культуры за пределами Польши – и по сути дела, за исключением, может быть, сталинского периода, сохраняет это первенство до наших дней” (“Russia becomes in [the last quarter of the nineteenth century] the biggest, most competent and the most benevolent auditorium for Polish culture outside of Poland – and in fact, with a possible exception of the Stalinist period, preserves that priority to this day”).286

Celebrations outside of Russia

In the Słowo Polskie coverage of the centennial celebrations, we know that there was an organizing committee that consisted of people from different walks of life: Aleksander Tchorznicki (1851-1916), a judge and official; Stanisław Niewiadomski (1859-1936), a composer and music critic; Ernest Till (1846-1926), a lawyer and member of the Polish Academy of Learning (Polska Akademia Umiejętności); and Maria Krauz, widow of the philosopher Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz. As part of the 1910 celebrations, several important books were published, including Niewiadomski’s O Fryderyku Szopenie w setną rocznicę urodzin (About Fryderyk Szopen in the hundredth anniversary of his birth). Niewiadomski’s patriotic disposition was apparent at the tender age of twenty-one, when he made his debut as composer in Vienna and Leipzig with the cantata Akt wiary (Act of Faith, 1880), commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the November Uprising. Thirty years later, the publication of his book provided valuable information on how Chopin was perceived at the time. For example, Niewiadomski engaged in the familiar tactic of juxtaposing Chopin with one of the bards, Juliusz Słowacki. Niewiadomski says Chopin has a volatility of imagination and dazzling language in common with the author of Balladyna (“[Chopin] Z autorem ‘Balladyny’ ma wspólną lotność wyobraźni i język olśniewający”).287 Parts of the book read like a political pamphlet, encouraging the public to create a cult of Chopin:

Обязаны нас на земле возвышать, створять повинный культ Szopena, а разуметь тен культ не только, якого дах треба, але добре знать, що постійний досвід відомого композитора, лірика, який вивчав всі аспекти його творчості, дає нову перспективу на феномен Сюзена. През цей культ Szopena, не можна нічого змінити, але треба зрозуміти, що музика він створив, є музикою в серці землі, у сердці нашого світу.288

---

284 A. Liapunov, “S. M. Liapunov.” Sovetskaia muzyka no. 9 (September, 1950), 93.
285 Wiśniewski, 95.
287 Stanisław Niewiadomski, O Fryderyku Szopenie w setną rocznicę urodzin (Lwów: Nakładem Komitetu Obchodów Szopenowskiego, 1910), 5.
288 Ibid., 59.
(Our obligations emerge from here and should create a cult of Chopin, we should understand the cult not only as intensive work toward popularizing the works of the great composer, or as a continuous illumination of his character and creative activities… Through the cult of Chopin, one must therefore understand cultivation of music in his spirit.)

Together other organizing committee members, Niewiadomski sought the involvement of Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) in the celebrations. Paderewski had all the qualities one needs in an advocate: he was an internationally-renowned concert pianist and he supported the idea of art serving a cause. Recently, pianist and composer Marek Żebrowski published a book entitled Celebrating Chopin & Paderewski in 2010, an official publication devoted to the occasion of Chopin’s bicentennial. As the author points out, there has been little comparative study on the connection between Chopin and Paderewski. Few occasions better illustrate the relationship between Chopin and Paderewski than the 1910 speech in Lwów.

Prior to 1910, Paderewski had made numerous statements linking music to politics and patriotism, such as “Patriotyzm i muzyka były ze sobą ścisłe spłecone” and “Ojczyzna najpierw – potem sztuka” (“Fatherland first – then art”). Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in featuring the national anthem in the only symphony he composed, Symphony in B minor, Op. 24 (1909), subtitled Polonia. However, in contrast to what his political outlook might suggest, Paderewski did not play Chopin or Polish works exclusively. In fact, before the First World War, he seldom played all-Chopin concerts. In the 1899 concert tours in Russia, for example, Paderewski played works by Bach, Beethoven, Schumann (all Germans for the first half of the program), Chopin, Rubinstein, and Liszt. Chopin and Paderewski became inextricably linked during the First World War, when the number of polonaises performed grew dramatically. For example, Paderewski was helping the Polish cause in the United States in 1915 and 1916, and he performed polonaises at least 32 times, most often the A major “Military” Polonaise.

**The Grunwald Monument Speech**

In 1910, three months before the Chopin celebrations, Paderewski had helped to collect funds for the Battle of Grunwald Monument in Kraków. Bearing the line “Praojcom na chwałę, braciom na otuchę” (“To the glory of the forefathers, to uplifting of the brothers”), the statue

---

289 Paderewski’s desire to serve Poland through art is well-documented. See, for example, Ignace Jan Paderewski and Mary Lawton, The Paderewski Memoirs (New York: De Capo Press, 1980).
290 Marek Żebrowski, Celebrating Chopin and Paderewski (Warsaw: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2010).
291 Ibid., ix.
293 Ibid., 7.
294 The program consists of Bach’s Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, Beethoven’s Sonata, Op. 111, Schumann’s Sonata Op. 11, Chopin’s nocturne, mazurka, prelude, etude and waltz (exact pieces unknown), Rubinstein’s barcarolle, and Liszt’s Fantastic Krakoviak Concertant and Rhapsody No. 10. See Ts. A. Kiui, Izbrannye stat’i (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo, 1952), 493.
295 Szczepański, 13. Paderewski’s performance of the A-major polonaise is also featured in the “historii głosy naszej 80-lecie Polskiego Radia” commemorative CD.
celebrates the Polish victory at Grunwald in 1410. On July 15, 1910, the five-hundredth anniversary of the battle, the day became a public manifestation of Poland’s national identity. Without amplifiers or microphones, Paderewski gave a speech (see Figure 6) to over 150 thousand people. Paderewski’s speech, while short (one page long), challenged those who were present: “Niech każdy Polak i Litwin każdy, z dawnych dzielnic Ojczyzny, czy zza oceanu, spoglądaj na ten pomnik jako na znak wspólnej przeszłości, świadectwo wspólnej chwały, zachętę do wspólnej a owocnej pracy” (“Let every Pole and Lithuanian, whether from the former territories or across the ocean, look at this monument as the sign of a common past, a witness to our common glory, and the incentive for fruitful common work”). The Grunwald speech elevated Paderewski from a musician to a national leader. Paderewski described the reaction in his memoirs:

The unveiling of the monument produced a great effect on the mind of the public, not only in the city of Kraków, but throughout the whole country. People came from all parts of Poland. There were some difficulties in crossing the frontier, but many people found it possible to come on foot, not to be noticed by the officials, and so to attend that ceremony. It was, without any exaggeration, an event of great importance, because there was to a certain extent a prophecy in the air – that war was approaching and that we Poles should all stand together.298

The speech was published and provoked strong emotions in novelist Władysław Reymont (who read it while living in France), who called Paderewski “najdroższy człowiekowi polski, dusza polska” (“dearest Polish person, Polish soul”).299 With the involvement in the Grunwald monument and his musical background, Paderewski became the perfect candidate to represent Poland in such a symbolic event as the centennial celebration of Chopin.

Figure 6: Paderewski speaking at the unveiling of the Grunwald monument in Kraków

298 Paderewski and Lawton, 375.
Paderewski’s biography

A closer look at Paderewski’s personal history reveals that he clearly believed in the mission that art and music carried. Despite (or because of) his Polish patriotism, he performed in Russia, with the first tour taking place in 1876, after completing the first year at the Warsaw Conservatory.\(^{300}\) In 1899, already an established pianist who had concertized widely in Europe and America, Paderewski again performed in Russia. He played three recitals and an orchestral concert and met notable figures such as composer Ts‘esar’ Kiui (or Cui, 1835-1918). In Paderewski’s memoirs, we learn that although his concerts had been very successful, he encountered hostility at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.\(^{301}\) Paderewski explains: “I do not know whether it was because I was a Pole, but certainly [the Russian audience] wanted me to realize that no other pianist could expect to be appreciated in Rubinstein’s land, and by his devoted followers.”\(^{302}\) The feelings of Rubinstein’s devotees were hurt because the Russian press liked Paderewski’s performances (which included works by Rubinstein) and considered him the successor of Rubinstein.\(^{303}\) Kiui did not believe that the reaction was hostile and instead attributed the dissatisfaction to purely artistic reasons. In his largely positive review of Paderewski’s concert, Kiui wrote: “…он оставлял некоторую неудовлетворенность у нас, петербуржцев, воспитанных на традициях игры простой, здоровой, выражения чувства сильного и глубокого” (“…he left some dissatisfaction in us, Petersburgians, raised in the traditions of simple, healthy play and expressions of strong and deep feeling”).\(^{304}\) The hostility Paderewski encountered in Russia was probably not due to his being Polish or his patriotism, but rather a rite of passage for a rising star replacing an old master. Kiui came to Paderewski’s defense and wrote:

…во-первых, необходимо считаться с личным темпераментом артиста: то же самое чувство может быть разными лицами выражено совершенно иначе и одинаково правдиво; во-вторых, в этой женственной нежности есть также своего рода прелесть; в-третьих, это единственная сторона дарования Падеревского, которая нам чужда и не отвечает установившимся у нас взглядам и привычкам.\(^{305}\)

(…first, it is necessary to reckon with the personal temperament of the artist: the same feeling can be expressed by various people in very different ways that are all equally true; secondly, in the womanly tenderness there is also a unique kind of charm; thirdly, it is only one side of Paderewski’s gift that is foreign to us and does not meet our established views and practices.)

The hostility Paderewski perceived did not prevent him from returning to Russia, as he went there a second time in 1904. Compared to the first visit in 1899, Paderewski was treated even more poorly. In Paderewski’s words:

\(^{300}\) V. Chechott, I. I. Paderewskii: Biograficheskaia zametka (Kiev: Tipografiia Petra Barskogo, 1899), 3.

\(^{301}\) Paderewski and Lawton, 283.

\(^{302}\) Ibid.

\(^{303}\) When a Polish musician played a great concert, the Russian press was not afraid to print glowing reviews. For example, critic T. Bulkharin praised Wieniawski brothers’ Petersburg concert highly in Severnaia pchela. See Edmund Grabkowski, Henryk Wieniawski (Warsaw: Interpres, 1985), 17-18.

\(^{304}\) Kiui, 494.

\(^{305}\) Ibid.
The visit to St. Petersburg at that time was not pleasant at all. That was a time of most severe treatment of all the nationalities conquered by Russia. The structure of that despotic absolute monarchy was then evidently shaking. The government… started that particular persecution of all aliens within the Empire…. The sentiment of the people in Russia was very much against the aliens… and very particularly against the Poles. There was a rage against all Poles.  

As the relationship between Poland and Russia deteriorated, Paderewski began to fall out of favor in Russia and gain more support in Poland. Poles began to endow Paderewski’s performances with national meaning. Musicologist Magdalena Dziadek wrote of Paderewski’s concerts:

Jego koncerty w Polsce w latach 1899, 1901 i 1904 prasa trzech zaborów zinterpretowała jako wydarzenia o wymowie patriotycznej i wielkim znaczeniu ideowym, mobilizujące społeczeństwo i inspirujące zainteresowanie sprawą narodową na kanwie dumy z zagranicznych osiągnięć rodaka.  

(The press from the three partitions interpreted his concerts in Poland in 1899, 1901 and 1904 as events with patriotic significance and great ideological meaning, mobilizing the society and inspiring interest in national matters on the canvas of pride in the compatriot’s achievements abroad.)

Poles were looking for a spiritual leader, and they found that leader in Paderewski. Paderewski kept Poland alive through music, and his international concerts earned recognition not only for himself but for his native country.

The Lwów Celebrations

Paderewski’s speech in Lwów brings us to a brief discussion of the city’s relevance to our topic. Lwów was an important Polish cultural center of the time, largely because of the relatively lax policy of the Austrian Partition. It was also a major city with a population almost twice that in Kraków. Furthermore, Lwów was where Chopin’s pupil Karol Mikuli (1819-1897) worked as the director of the conservatory from 1858, where he taught such notables as Niewiadomski and Michałowski. Paderewski was originally invited to perform, but he declined, citing “fear of the piano” (“wstręt do fortepianu”). Instead, he made a speech at the six-day centennial celebration of Chopin’s birth. The inaugural ceremony (uroczystość inauguracyjna) took place at noon on Sunday, October 23, 1910, in the concert hall of the Philharmonia. The ceremony opened with Noskowski’s Z życia Narodu (From the Life of the Nation), followed by

306 Paderewski and Lawton, 331-332.
307 Dziadek, 423.
308 I have encountered contradictory information. A 2010 report in Kurier Galicyjski claims that Paderewski performed Chopin’s F minor concerto at a Gala concert on October 24, 1910.
speeches of Tchorznicki, Stanisław Tarnowski, and Paderewski, concluding with Elsner’s Te Deum.

Figure 7: The program at the 1910 Lwów celebrations

As we see, Paderewski’s speech stands alone in the program, unlike the speeches of Tchorznicki and Tarnowski, which symbolizes its uniqueness and significance. The now widely known and cited speech – written and spoken in Polish and delivered to a Polish audience – was intended for a very specific audience. The speech, however, produced strong resonance and was translated into several languages soon after its delivery to reach a broader public.

Precedent for Paderewski’s speech

Paderewski’s Chopin speech of 1910 was not the first major speech devoted to a Slavic artist. Thirty years earlier, Fedor Dostoevsky made a speech for the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow. The connection between the two speeches is greater than has been acknowledged to date. Even though Paderewski probably did not know the content of Dostoevsky’s speech, the two speeches shared many similarities and achieved comparable effects. Dostoevsky made his speech at an indoor meeting of the Общество любителей

---

Tarnowski was the rector of Jagiellonian University.

Российской словесности (Society of Lovers of Russian Literature), with about 2000-3000 attendants; Paderewski’s speech too was indoors, with no more than 1460 people in the audience. The indoor setting, unlike the open-air Grunwald Monument speech in Kraków, fostered a more intimate atmosphere (not to mention better acoustics) in which the connection to the speakers was more palpable.311 Both speeches were parts of larger events, but they became the defining moments that not only uplifted the spirits of those who were present but also elevated the statuses of the speakers tremendously. Paderewski’s speech in Lwów was part of a larger celebration that included the first Congress of Polish Musicians (I Zjazd Muzyków Polskich) from all three partitions and a competition for composers named after Chopin (Konkurs Kompozytorski im. Chopina).312 Dostoevsky’s speech, part of a four-day Pushkin Festival, has been consistently referred to as prophetic.313 The audience included most of the intelligentsia: the Pushkin family, the mayor of Moscow, the minister of education, the brothers Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein, and Petr Tchaikovsky.314 Dostoevsky wrote about the reception of his speech extensively in his A Writer’s Diary:

I was interrupted at absolutely every page, and sometimes at every sentence, by a thunder of applause. I read loudly, with passion. Everything I wrote about Tatiana was accepted with enthusiasm…. When I proclaimed at the end the idea of universal unity of people, the hall was as if in hysterics; when I finished – I won’t tell you about the howl, the wail of rapture: strangers among the audience wept and sobbed, embraced one another and swore to one another that they would be better, that they would not hate each other in the future, but would love.315

Literary scholar Marcus Levitt writes that the reaction to Dostoevsky’s speech “exceeded the wildest imagination.”316 Publisher and journalist Gleb Uspenskii (1843-1902) similarly writes: “When [Dostoevsky’s] turn came, he ‘quietly’ came to the podium and within five minutes he had complete control over the entire audience, all their hearts, their thoughts, all the souls of the people who came to the meeting…. Dostoevsky, after his speech, did not receive just an ovation, but rather the apotheosis of an idol.”317 Paderewski’s speech, similarly, was received “with crazy enthusiasm” (“z szalonym entuzjazmem”).318

Paderewski’s speech differed from Dostoevsky’s in several important ways. Unlike Dostoevsky’s speech, Dostoevsky’s speech acknowledged the influence of other writers (such as Lord Byron and Évariste de Parny) on Pushkin; in Paderewski’s eyes, Chopin was a purely

311 Here again I encounter contradictory information in Kurier Galicyjski, which states that Paderewski made his Chopin speech from the balcony of the Hotel George.
312 The 28-year old Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) won the composer competition.
313 See The Dostoevsky Archive: Firsthand Accounts of the Novelist from Contemporaries’ Memoirs and Rare Periodicals, ed. Peter Sekirin (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 244-245.
314 Sekirin, 247.
317 As quoted in Sekirin, 239.
Polish phenomenon and his name was not linked to any other composers in the speech. Even though Dostoevsky, as he claimed, did not speak as a literary critic, he discussed several specific works (such as Eugene Onegin, Gypsies) to illustrate his point. On the other hand, Paderewski never talked specifically about particular compositions. Both Dostoevsky and Paderewski discussed their heroes in terms of how closely their works resemble the reality and life of the native land. For example, Dostoevsky said that Eugene Onegin is “not far-fetched but palpably realistic, a poem in which actual Russian life is embodied with a creative power.” Paderewski even called Chopin genius patriae (native genius) because he “exported the spirit of the native land, which did not leave him until death” (“wywiozol ducha ziem ojczystej, który nie opuscił go aż do zgonu”). Paderewski’s speech resembled a sermon, as it left little room for discussion. What is significant is that Paderewski, perhaps inadvertently, taught people how to listen and make sense of Chopin’s music. Though Chopin wrote music without a clear story (i.e. absolute music), Paderewski and his followers were eager to transform it into program music – music that is based on a narrative or resembles one. For example, Paderewski described how a typical Polish listener should approach Chopin’s music:

Czy to tańce rodzinnego Mazowsza, czy tęskne Nokturny, czy dziarskie Ziemi Krakowskiej odgłosy, czy tajemne Preludia, czy zamaszyste Polonezy, czy żywiolowe, a przedziwne Etúdy, czy burzliwe a epickie Ballady, czy też bohaterskie Sonaty – on wszystko rozumie, odczuwa wszystko, bo wszystko to jego, polski.320

(Be it the dances of the native Mazovia, or yearning nocturnes, or brash sounds of Kraków, or secret preludes, or sweeping polonaises, or lively and amazing etudes, or stormy and epic ballads, or heroic sonatas – he understands everything, feels everything, because everything is his, Polish.)

Dostoevsky discussed Pushkin as a universal phenomenon and at the same time national. The inherent paradox – the ability to be both national and universal at the same time – is not new in reception history studies (Shakespeare comes to mind). For example, Dostoevsky said Pushkin had a special “capacity to respond to the whole world” and an ability to “infuse his spirit into the spirit of other nations.” Yet, this remarkable capacity is a wholly Russian capacity, a capacity Pushkin “shares with our People.” Although Chopin was also often described in such a paradoxical manner – that his art was uniquely “Polish” but appealed to all people – Paderewski limited his discourse on Chopin very much to Poland. Poland and Chopin, as he saw it, were inseparable entities, an idea perhaps best illustrated by the well-known phrase “cała Polska żyje, czuje, działa: ‘in tempo rubato’” (“the whole of Poland lives, feels and operates ‘in tempo rubato’”). Paderewski also said that Poles know “że [Chopin] wielki naszą wielkością, że on silny naszą siłą, że on piękny naszem pięknem. On nasz, a my jego” (“that Chopin is great

319 Dostoevsky, 1284-1285.
321 Dostoevsky, 1291.
322 Ibid., 1293.
323 Ibid., 1292.
with our greatness, that he is strong with our strength, that he is beautiful with our beauty. He is ours, and we are his").

The ending of the Dostoevsky speech is somewhat puzzling, in contrast to that of Paderewski. Dostoevsky said:

I repeat: at the very least we can now point to Pushkin and to the universality and pannahumaness of his genius. He could accommodate the geniuses of other nations within his soul as if they were his own. In art, in his artistic work, at least, he showed beyond dispute this universal striving of the Russian spirit, and that in itself reveals something important. If my idea is a fantasy, then in Pushkin, at least, there is something on which this fantasy can be founded. Had he lived longer, perhaps he would have shown us immortal and grand images of the Russian soul that could have been understood by our European brethren and might have attracted them to us much more and much more closely than now; he might have managed to explain to them the whole truth of our aspirations, and they would have understood us more clearly than they do now; they would have begun to divine our purpose; they would have ceased to regard us as mistrustfully and haughtily as they do now. Had Pushkin lived longer, perhaps there would be fewer misunderstandings and disputes among us than we see now. But God did not will it so. Pushkin died in the full flower of his creative development, and unquestionably he took some great secret with him to his grave. And so now we must puzzle out this secret without him.324

Uspenskii voiced the concern that the speech was not easy to understand and at times bordered on a flight of fancy. The audience, Uspenskii suggested, did not really understand Dostoevsky’s riddle-ridden speech and was reacting in a purely emotional manner.325 While there was a certain amount of Aesopian language in Paderewski’s speech (e.g. discussing the misfortunes of Poland without naming the occupying powers), Paderewski’s speech was more straightforward and provoked equally strong emotional response.

Paderewski’s speech was as lengthy as Dostoevsky’s. Paderewski by no means glorified Poland without reservation; he actually criticized certain aspects of Poland with phrases like: the national "nielad uczuć" ("disarray of feelings"), "zamęt pojęć" ("confusion of ideas"), "niestałość i niemoc wytrwania" ("instability and inability to persevere"), "brak… zbiorowego działania" ("lack of …collective action"). But foreign barbarism made internal shortcomings negligible: "ucisku, którego bezprzykładne okrucieństwo tylko jakąś bezmyślną, dziką na niewinnych zemstą za długie jarzmo tatarskie wytłumaczyć można" ("repression, the unparalleled cruelty of which could only be explained by some ruthless, wild revenge on the innocent, long Tatar yoke"). Paderewski pointed out the repressive nature of foreign rule: "wzbroniono wszystkiego, co święte: mowy ojców, wiary przodków, czci dla świętych przeszłości pamiątek" ("everything holy was prohibited: the ancestors' speech, the forefathers' faith, honor for relics of the past") and "precz z Polską, niech żyje ludzkość - wola w - jak gdyby życie ludzkości ze śmierci narodów powstać mogło" ("down with Poland, let humanity live – they call out – as if life of humanity could arise from death of nations").

324 Ibid., 1295.
325 Sekirin, 251.
In the speech given on the occasion of the Chopin celebrations, Chopin did not take prominence until the second half of the speech. Paderewski opened the speech by referring to his Grunwald Monument speech in Kraków and did not even mention Chopin until a quarter of the way into the speech. He began the speech by stating that art must carry national elements: “Sztuka…musi nosić cechy plemienne, music mieć narodowe piętno” (“Art…must carry tribal characteristics and must have a national imprint”). Paderewski then turned to music and described it as a living art (“żywa sztuka”) that is everywhere and reaches further and higher than human words can reach (“...jest wszędzie i sięga dalej i wyżej niż słowo ludzkie sięgnąć może”). Paderewski then segued to Chopin and discussed his music in a highly national manner. He said that Chopin’s music “mówi, gra, śpiewa i narodu duszą” (“speaks, plays, sings the spirit of the nation”), further attested to by the fact that Paderewski insisted on spelling Chopin the Polish way: Szopen. For example, in Paderewski's eyes, even the act of listening to Chopin is very different for a Pole versus a non-Pole: "Tak Polak słucha Szopena. Tak słucha on rasy swej całej wielkiego głosu." ("This is how a Pole listens to Chopin. This is how he listens to the great voice of the whole race"). When a Pole listens, according to Paderewski: "Słucha Polak i roni łzy czyste, rzęsiste. Tak my wszyscy słuchamy. Bo i jakże go słuchać inaczej, tego z Bożej mocy piewcy polskiego narodu?" (18) ("The Pole listens and clear tears drop, copious tears. We all listen like that. Because how else to listen to him, the glorifier of the Polish nation from God's kingdom?").

In his speech, Paderewski endowed Poland with the capacity to experience rich emotions: "Zaś, że żaden z narodów na świecie nie może się poszczycić takiem, jak nasz, bogactwem uczuć i nastrojów" (“No nation in the world can pride itself on the wealth of moods and sentiments like ours”). Only Chopin’s music can convey Polish feelings: “A muzyka, tylko jego muzyka, mogła oddać tę falistość naszych uczuć, tę ich rozlewność aż w nieskończoności i to ich aż do bohaterstwa skupienie, te szaleńcze porządy, co zda się, skały skruszą, i tę niemoć zwątpienia, w której i myśl się mroczne i chęć do czynu zamiera” (“And music, only his music, could convey the wave-like character of our feelings, the expansiveness reaching infinity itself and the focus that reaches the heoric, these outbursts of fury, which seems to crumble rocks, and the impotence of doubt, in which thought darkens and willingness to act dies”).

Paderewski pointed out Poles’ enhanced capability to feel Chopin’s music and not to the music of German masters. In a rhetoric that recalls Leo Tolstoy’s What is Art?, where Tolstoy dismisses “non-functional” music and prefers a peasant march to a Beethoven sonata, Paderewski considered German music lofty and outlines the unique quality of Chopin for Polish listeners:

Zwyczajny “krwi polskiej” słuchacz, z wielką sztuką muzyczną nieoswojony, arcydzieł Bacha, Mozarta, Beethovena słucha niechętnie, czasem niecierpliwie. Kunsztowna wielogłosowość, bogactwo przeróżnych dźwiękowych powikłań, jasne dla wyćwiczonego umysłu, niedostępne dla jego ucha. Myśl jego się gubi w misternych fugach, uwaga się błąka i rozprasza wśród marmurowych kształtów pięknej, lecz germańskiej sonaty, w przedziwnych gmachach klasycznej symfonii zimno mu jakoś i nieswojo, jak w obcym kościele; prometeusowego bólu największego z muzyków świata on odczuć nie potrafi. Ale niech się tylko odezwą chopinowskie dźwięki, nasz słuchacz krwi polskiej zmienia się od razu. Słuch się natęża, uwaga skupia, oko błyszczy jaśniej, krew szybciej krąży; raduje się serce, choć cień spadają na lica.

326 Ibid.
(The ordinary listener of “Polish blood,” not comfortable with the great musical art, listens to masterpieces by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven reluctantly, sometimes impatiently. Elaborate polyphony, richness of various aural intricacies, while clear to the trained mind, are inaccessible to his ear. His thought is lost in the delicate fugues, attention wanders and disperses among the marble shapes of the beautiful, but Germanic sonata, in the strange edifices of the classical symphony he somehow feels cold and uncomfortable, as in a foreign church; he cannot feel the greatest Promethean pain of the musicians of the world. But let the sounds of Chopin only appear, our listener of Polish blood changes immediately. Hearing intensifies, attention focuses, the eye shines brighter, the blood circulates faster; the heart rejoices, though the tears fall on the face.)

The repeated use of the word “nieswojo” describes the uncomfortable reaction of a Polish listener to foreign music (German in this particular case); the word “nieswojo” – a compound of “nie” and “swój” (“not” and “one’s own,” respectively) – strongly emphasizes the otherness of non-Polish music. The foreignness of the other music is inscribed in the word itself, and foreignness is tied to discomfort in this case. In Paderewski’s description, Poles react to Chopin’s music very physically, as if induced by drugs. The phrase “Polish blood” in quotes underscores the racial aspect of the speech; the difference in perception results from inherent, physiological differences. The final phrase – with the contradiction between a rejoicing heart and a tearful face – has come to embody the stereotypical reaction of Poles upon listening to Chopin.

Paderewski’s speech assumed a rhetoric typical of Polish messianic Romanticism – that Poland is a martyr. Paderewski referred to the partitions as “the triple murder of our Fatherland” and he continues: “thunderbolt after thunderbolt strikes the harried nation, blow after blow falls; it’s not fear but terror that shakes the whole trembling Fatherland” (“Grom za gromem uderza w naród znękany, cios spada po ciosie; nie lęku, lecz zgrozy dreszcze cała wstrząsają Ojczyzną.”). Without naming a specific nation, he emphasized the misfortune that befell Poland and the fact that Poland had been stripped of its culture; however, Chopin remains irremovable: “Zabraniano nam wszystkiego!...Zabraniano nam Słowackiego, Krasińskiego, Mickiewicza. Nie zabroniono nam tylko Szopena” (“Everything has been forbidden for us!... Slowacki, Krasiński, Mickiewicz. Only Chopin has not been forbidden for us”). Paderewski’s statement reaffirms the aforementioned idea that control was stricter for literature than for music. Paderewski concluded his speech in an encouraging light: “Więc krzepmy serca do wytrwania, do trwania, myśli skrójmy do czynów, do dziennych, sprawiedliwych, uczucia podnośmy do wiary, do silnej, bo nie ginie naród, co ma taką wielką, nieśmiertelną duszę” (“Let’s strengthen hearts to endure, to persevere, let’s cut thoughts to suit action, for the brave, just actions; let’s lift feelings to faith, to strong faith, because the nation that has such a great and immortal soul will not perish”). Though \textit{wytrwanie} and \textit{trwanie} are based on the same root, \textit{trwanie} means duration, whereas \textit{wytrwanie} implies perseverance and has a connotation of survival. The “nie ginie naród” also resonates with the famous opening of the Polish national anthem “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła” (which was famous by the early nineteenth century but adopted only in 1926).

In retrospect, Paderewski said the following about the speech in his memoirs:

\begin{quote}
przemowa moja najzupełniej zastąpiła koncert. Choć nieświadome, ale było to moje pierwsze rzeczywiste wystąpienie na gruncie politycznym, sam początek kariery, której
\end{quote}

\footnote{Szczepańska-Lange, 63. The spelling of Szopen is changed to Chopin in the Biblioteka Narodowa edition (1991), p. 19.}
w najśmielszych wyobrażeniach nie mogłem przewidzieć... Kiedy wystąpiłem z patriotycznym zamiarem wystawienia pomnika (grunwaldzkiego), po raz pierwszy wydałem się niektórym kimś w rodzaju wodza... Przemówienie moje o Chopinie wrażenie to spotęgowało.328

(my speech most completely took the place of a concert. Without knowing, it was my first real political speech, the very beginning of a career, which I couldn't foresee in my wildest imaginations... When I performed with a patriotic intention at the unveiling of the [Grunwald] monument, for the first time I became some sort of leader ... My speech about Chopin intensified that impression.)

Paderewski’s involvement with the Grunwald monument and the Chopin centenary celebration effectively transformed him from a piano virtuoso to a prominent politician and the voice of the nation. Previously he had touched people with his playing, but now he roused fellow Poles with public addresses, which were reprinted in newspapers like Słowo Polskie for wider impact. Dostoevsky’s Diary was a huge success, selling some 3000 copies in three days.329 Like Dostoevsky’s Pushkin speech, which was published in A Writer’s Diary in 1880, Paderewski’s 1910 Chopin speech was published shortly after it was delivered.330 It was quickly translated from Polish into English by British novelist and poet Laurence Alma-Tadema (1865-1940).331 Alma-Tadema’s father, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), had painted a famous portrait of Paderewski in 1891 (see Figure 8). In the same year, the speech was published in Paris in French (see Figure 9).
The speed of translation and publication can perhaps attest to the desire to designate Paderewski as Poland’s national spokesman. Even after Poland regained independence, the speech was published again in both Polish and French in 1926.332 The following statement prefaces the French republication:

Le fond sur lequel le génial orateur voyait apparaître l’immortelle figure de Chopin a changé : une nouvelle Pologne est ressurgie, libre et indépendante. C’est pourquoi ce discours, prononcé au moment d’une violente tourmente marquée par des vexations sans nombre, revêt, a l’heure qu’il est, l’importance d’un témoignage historique. Ces paroles qu’on lira attesteront devant les générations futures, le commun et inlassable effort de l’âme entière vers l’indépendance et la libération, dans lequel ont communiqué les deux plus grands représentants des plus hautes valeurs spirituelles de la Pologne : Chopin et après lui, le plus digne héritier de sa tradition, de nos jours.

(The background against which the brilliant orator wished the immortal figure of Chopin to appear has changed: a new Poland has resurged, which is free and independent. That is why this speech, delivered at the moment of a violent storm marked by innumerable vexations, has a historic significance now. The words we read will attest to future

---

generations the common and unrelenting effort of the entire soul towards independence and liberation, in which the two greatest representatives of the highest spiritual values of Poland have shared: Chopin and after him, the worthiest heir to his tradition of our day.)

The 1910 speech complemented Paderewski’s established connection to Chopin (namely, in repertoire and the way of playing). After Poland regained independence, Paderewski did not lose relevance. In fact, his spiritual leadership turned into tangible political leadership.

**Another Speech in Kraków by Edmund Krzymuski (1852-1928), June 20, 1910**

There was another important speech in the Austrian partition that took place prior to Paderewski’s Lwów speech. As part of the celebrations that took place in the City Theater in Kraków (Teatr Miejski w Krakowie), lawyer and professor Edmund Krzymuski (also chairman of the musical society) made a speech that was later published under the title “Ku Czci Chopina” (“In Honor of Chopin”). Notwithstanding the many similarities with Paderewski’s speech, Krzymuski’s speech shows how the key figures of the celebrations did not have a uniform view on Chopin. For example, when describing Chopin’s music, Krzymuski holds that it is both Polish and universal (“nie przestawszy być polskiem, stało się wszechludzkiem”). As we will learn, Paderewski considered Chopin to be a purely Polish phenomenon, accessible only to Poles. Furthermore, Krzymuski explicitly mentions that Poland is partitioned. The speech uses many familiar tactics, such as (over)using superlatives and linking Chopin to the bards. In an illustrative sentence, Krzymuski calls the time Chopin lived “lata natchnień naszego najgenialszego wieszcza w muzycie” (“years of inspirations of our most brilliant bard in music”). In contrast to Paderewski, who elaborates on Chopin’s connection with Polish folk music, Krzymuski categorically stated “Muzyka Chopina była muzyką polską, ale nie była muzyką ludową” (“Chopin’s music was Polish music, but not folk music”). Opposing Żeleński’s 1899 speech, Krzymuski argued that Chopin “nie brał tematów z pieśni, przez lud nuconych, ani z obertasów i mazurków wywijanych na zabawach i weselach wiejskich, na murawie przede dworem pańskim lub w karczmie przy dźwiękach skrzypiec i basetli. Nie!” (“did not take themes from songs hummed by people nor from obereks and mazurkas danced at parties and village weddings on the grass before the lord’s manor or with the sounds of the violin and string bass in the tavern. No!”). While both Paderewski’s and Krzymuski’s speeches address the public, Krzymuski spends the last part of his speech evoking Chopin, which endows the speech with a strong homage quality. For example, Krzymuski says: “Ale dzisiaj cześć najosobliwsza Tobie, o cudowny tonów poeto, w tym setnym od Twej kolebki… O wielki, nieśmiertelny Duchu, obyś te nasze hymny mógł stamtąd słyszeć i cieszyć się niemi!” (“But today in your most special honor, oh wonderful poet of tones, on the hundredth anniversary of your birth... Oh great, immortal Spirit, may you hear and rejoice at our hymns”).

---

334 Ibid., 5.
335 Ibid., 7.
336 Ibid., 4.
337 Ibid., 7.
338 Ibid., 10.
339 Ibid.
340 Ibid., 13-14.
Paderewski’s other speeches

After 123 years of partitions, Poland finally gained sovereignty in November 1918, and Paderewski became Poland’s prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in 1919. After his Grunwald and Chopin speeches in 1910, Paderewski delivered many speeches on behalf of Poland on his ascension to political power. For example, he gave a speech at the Polish Benefit Concert in Chicago in 1916 where he devoted significant attention to Chopin. He described Chopin as a “poet” who reveals the genius of the Polish race and expresses the pain and joy, doubt and faith, loss and hope that Poland endured. 341 While there are many similarities between the 1916 and 1910 speeches – the misfortune of Poland, Poles’ temperamental nature, just to name a few – Paderewski was much more modest and less chauvinistic in 1916. For example, Paderewski asked his audience not to expect a “sensational statement” and that he would “accuse nobody” because he simply wanted “to arouse some interest in the fate of [his] people.” 342

The speech in 1916, as different as it was, helps us better understand the implications of the 1910 speech. The 1916 speech was delivered in English to Americans, 343 whereas the 1910 speech was delivered in Polish to Poles. Paderewski had to give a summary of Polish history to the audience in 1916; the audience in 1910 was living in that history. The 1910 speech expressed resentment for foreign domination in an unambiguous manner, and the tone contained high pathos.

The Chopin Statue in Łazienki Park, Warsaw

As part of the 1910 celebration, a Chopin statue (which is in the Łazienki Park today) was to be erected, but for various reasons – high costs, selecting the sculptor, bureaucracy and the outbreak of the First World War – the statue was not erected until 1926, when Poland had become an independent country. As with the Mickiewicz monument, funds were collected from among individual citizens. To help bring more funds for the monument, Polish pianist Aleksander Michałowski (1851-1938) played a series of concerts. 344 The effort to collect sufficient funds lasted a substantial period and involved many other artists such as Henryk Melcer and Bolesław Domaniewski. 345 Building a Chopin statue in the capital city in the Russian partition was understandably an arduous process. After all, Chopin was considered a great patriot by many Poles and his statue could provoke Poles. Nevertheless, the Tsarist regime gave permission for the statue to be built. 346 As we shall see, the Russian regime did not consider art or music as a threat to the same extent the Nazis did during the Second World War. For the most part, the Russian regime did not forbid the expression of Polish culture altogether. Leniency for Chopin thus became useful for both Poles and Russians alike: Poles still had Chopin if nothing else, and Russians could use Chopin to show their friendly gesture toward Poland.

Chopin During the Second World War

The changes that took place in Poland between 1910 and 1949 are too great to enumerate. With the newly-gained independence in 1918, the rhetoric and clichés the Poles so often relied on suddenly became obsolete. Many began to question, for example, the relevance of “bards” to

---

342 Ibid., penultimate page.
343 Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that there would have been a sizable Polish-speaking people in the audience since the event took place in Chicago.
344 Dybowski, 137.
345 Ibid., 156.
346 For more, see Kotkowska-Bareja, Pomnik Chopina, 6-7.
Polish culture. In this context, the next chapter will discuss the International Chopin Piano Competition, which was an effort to counter the revisionist tendency. We can begin to understand the significance of the 1949 Chopin Year – where celebrations yielded many tangible results – when we compare it to Nazi Germany’s treatment of Chopin just several years before.

When Poland was occupied by the Nazis, Chopin’s music was forbidden for some time. Unlike Russia, which not only recognized Chopin’s Polishness but even promoted it, Nazi Germany did not want any manifestation of Polish culture as long as they occupied Poland. However, the problem is more complex than complete prohibition of Chopin’s music alone. First, they completely banned Chopin’s music during the first years of the occupation, and only in 1942 did they lift the ban except for the polonaises, mazurkas, and the “Revolutionary Etude.” In a tactic that recalls the previously mentioned staging of Słowacki’s play in 1872, Chopin’s music could be played as long as his name was given as “Frederick Schopping.” Despite the stringent policy, Chopin’s music was played on clandestine radio: Музыку Шопена польские патриоты слушали тайком по радио…И музыка Шопена поддерживала в их сердцах надежду на скорое освобождение из гитлеровской неволи” (“Polish patriots listened to Chopin’s music on clandestine radio…And Chopin’s music supported the hope in their hearts for a quick liberation from Hitler’s occupation”). The Nazi regime did not simply forbid Chopin; instead, as historian Michael Meyer points out, there was an effort to appropriate Chopin and Germanize him. For example, Ernst Krienitz, the chief editor of Die Musik-Woche attributed Chopin's genius to the influence of German-Bohemian teachers. The paradox is extreme: while Germans banned Chopin's music to prevent fermentation of national sentiments, they were quick to claim Chopin’s genius as theirs. The nation that was considered incapable of cultural achievement and was to be reduced to slavery had produced a genius. As a result, some exceptions were made to the ban on Chopin. For example, the Ministry of Propaganda issued a decree on February 15, 1942, which stated: “With reference to the decree on the programming of German music during the war, it is ordered that the sale of gramophone records originated by enemy countries, or containing works by authors or performers of enemy status has to cease within the territory of the German Reich.” However, as musicologist Erik Levi points out, works by Chopin, along with Bizet’s Carmen, were among the only exceptions made to this ruling. Nazis’ treatment of Chopin's legacy was much harsher than that of the Russians, yet they acknowledged the power of Chopin’s music and used it for their purposes.

349 Mikhail Dolgopolov, “Shopenovskii god v Pol’she.” RGALI, fond 654 op. 3 no. 143, pp. 60.
The 1949 Celebrations

Music was very much part of the postwar recovery effort. In the year the Second World War ended, the Soviet Union held the 1945 Musical Competition (музыкальный конкурс 1945 года), in which musicians such as Mstislav Rostropovich and Sviatoslav Rikhter won prizes. Chopin’s heart, which was hidden during the war to avoid possible harm, was returned to Warsaw’s Holy Cross Church in a solemn ceremony. As Poland’s “liberator,” the Soviet Union took control of Poland after the war. However, not unlike the situation in Imperial Russia, there was some autonomy in music and a fair amount of cultural interaction between Poland and the Soviet Union. For example, a lot of Soviet music was played on Polish radio after the war. In addition to Shostakovich’s film music Hamlet and Prokofiev’s The Love for Three Oranges, transcriptions of Polish songs by Soviet composers such as Vladimir Ivannikov, Marian Koval, Viktor Belyi were played on the radio. The main music publishing company, the Russian State Music Publishing House (Muzgiz), published at least six volumes of Polish folk songs, such as

352 As reported in D. Rabinovich, “Muzykal’nyi konkurs 1945 goda.” Sovetskaia muzyka no. 1 (1946), 90-96.
Ivannikov’s *Pol’skie pesni*, (1944), *Piat’ pol’skich narodnykh pesen* (1946) and Koval’s *Shest’ pol’skich narodnykh pesen* (1945).  

The Soviet Union very much continued the affinity for Chopin that was already deeply rooted in the Russian Empire. One change was that discourse on Chopin had to include standard Communist rhetoric. For example, in a biography published in 1938, Chopin’s legacy is described as follows:

> Творческое наследие Шопена принадлежит всему миру, но в буржуазных странах оно не стало действительным достоянием народных масс и менее всего в ныне “самостоятельной” Польше. Горячий отклик широчайших аудиторий музыка Шопена находит только в Стране Советов, где влияние и значение его наследия исключительно велико, а культура исполнения поднята на огромную высоту десятками и сотнями талантов, заботливо взращиваемых социалистическим обществом.

> Законный наследник всех культурных завоеваний человечества – Страна Советов высоко чтит великих сынов всех наций и народов, внесших свой вклад в сокровищницу мировой культуры. Одно из наиболее ярких имен среди них – имя творца бессмертной музыки – Шопена.  

> (Chopin's creative legacy belongs to the world, but in the bourgeois countries, it did not become a real property of the people, least of all in the now “independent” Poland. Chopin’s music finds enthusiastic response by the broadest audiences only in the Soviet Union, where its influence and meaning is exceptionally high, and the culture of performance is raised to a great height by tens and hundreds of talents, carefully cultivated by socialist society.

> Rightful heir to all of humanity’s cultural achievements – the Soviet Union honors the great sons of all nations and peoples who have contributed to the treasure house of world culture. One of the most prominent names among them is – the creator of immortal music – Chopin.)

While the rhetoric seems exaggerated, there was a certain truth to the devotion the Soviet Union displayed for Chopin. Even to a larger extent than during 1899 and 1910 celebrations, the year 1949 represented the most comprehensive effort to celebrate the cult of Chopin to that date. Lasting more than eight months, the celebrations represented a joint Polish-Soviet effort. Even though the Second World War destroyed most of Warsaw and brought many cultural activities (such as the Chopin Competition) to a halt, the process of rebuilding was quickly underway under the Soviet-controlled regime, culminating with the Chopin celebrations. The celebrations were planned more than a year in advance, as the Polish prime minister Józef Cyrankiewicz (1911-1989, in office 1947-1952) issued a resolution to declare the year 1949 the Year of Chopin on March 20, 1948, (see Figure 11). Holding Chopin celebrations so soon after the war could be interpreted in two ways: 1) it would carry the message that Poland had recovered enough from

---

354 N. Briusova, “Pol’skie narodnye pesni.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5* (Sep/Oct 1947), 104.
356 Altberg, 7.
the calamities to organize such events; 2) Chopin was so essential to the Polish morale that celebrations had to be held at all costs.

Figure 11: Resolution (dated March 20, 1948) to declare 1949 the Year of Chopin

The resolution lists the specific tasks to be accomplished, such as establishing an honorary committee (komitet honorowy) with prominent politicians and artists as well as a performance committee (komitet wykonawczy) that is supposed to do the following:

1. Publish the collected works of Chopin, edited by Ignacy Jan Paderewski.
2. Publish scholarly works and monographs related to the life and works of Chopin.
3. Publish for the broadest 'layers' of working people of cities and country and for the youth, spreading the knowledge of Chopin’s works (“wydawnictwa dla najszerszych

warstw ludu pracującego miast i wsi oraz dla młodzieży, upowszechniające
znajomość twórczości Fryderyka Chopina”).
4. Organize artistic activities devoted to Chopin in the country, as well as abroad,
   especially the International Chopin Piano Competition.
5. Organize national and international conferences, exhibitions and conventions.

Cyrankiewicz’s resolution clearly states that the Minister of Culture and Art, along with
Minister of the Treasury (Minister Skarbu), is supposed to report “the use of necessary sums to
cover the expenses related to the organization of ‘The Chopin Year’” (“uruchomienie sum
niezbędnych na pokrycie wydatków, związanych z organizacją ‘Roku Chopinowskiego’”). In
1949, the state took over financial responsibility, unlike in previous celebrations. Furthermore,
the government undertook the organizational burdens of the Fourth Competition, which was a
main component of the celebrations as laid out in the Cyrankiewicz resolution.

By and large, the goals were met. In addition to the Chopin Competition, numerous
manuscripts were published, including the 1949 jubilee edition of Iu. Kremlev’s biography of
Chopin, which was dedicated to the Polish nation (Польскому народу посвящает автор), like
the dedication of the first Russian complete edition of Chopin.358 A number of paintings and
propaganda posters were created for or after the centennial, such as Mieczysław Oracki-Serwin,
Polonez As-dur Chopina w kuźni Huty Kościuszko (Chopin’s Polonaise in A-flat major in the
Forge of the Kościuszko Foundry):

Figure 12: Mieczysław Oracki-Serwin, Polonez As-dur Chopina w kuźni Huty Kościuszko (1952)

358 Iu. A. Kremlev, Frederik Shopen: ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva (Leningrad and Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe
muzykal’noe izdatel’stvo, 1949).
What is unusual about the painting is that the concert takes place in a factory, and the audience consists of workers dressed in their working outfits. Oracki-Serwin juxtaposes the grey factory setting with a concert (suggested by the bouquet of flowers and the pianist’s formal attire), suggesting that music does not require comfortable seats or fancy dresses. The distance between Chopin’s music and the factory workers is erased, and listeners are shown as mesmerized by the music and listening attentively.

Besides Oracki-Serwin, both Mexican artist Francisco Mora and Polish artist Władysław Jahl portrayed Chopin as a revolutionary musician, whose music inspires people to fight. Like the Oracki-Serwin work, both paintings feature Chopin with multiple people; in these paintings, Chopin is accompanied by fighters and weapons. We can also see musical notes, suggesting that music serves a purpose.

Mora’s nationality also merits attention. We know that Chopin was also celebrated in Mexico (see Figure 15). The 1949 celebrations were truly international, and, as we shall see later, the involvement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was instrumental.
After Cyrankiewicz’s initial resolution, a more detailed plan was laid out on June 17, 1948, dividing the celebrations into international and national programs (program światowy/krajowy). The international program included plans such as the “historical concerts,” which stated that there should be approximately eight concerts that would take place on important days such as Chopin’s first concert in Warsaw, in Vienna, in Paris, in London, in Manchester, and in Glasgow. The question of who to perform these concerts is stated clearly in IIA (see Figure 16): “Jeżeli względy budżetowe i dyplomatyczne pozwolą koncerty te winny być organizowane i odtworzone w autentycznych miastach i wykonawcami winni być pianiszczy policy” (“If budget and diplomatic aspects allow, the concerts should be organized and recreated in the actual cities [of Chopin’s performances] and performers should be Polish pianists”). If this were impossible, IIB states: “należy przez porozumienie z Unią Radiofoniczną zapewnić odtworzenie tych koncertów przez najlepszych pianistów danego kraju przy ogólnej światowej transmisji radiowej” (“we should make sure to recreate these concerts by using the best pianists of the given country, and with the understanding that the Union of Broadcasting transmit the concerts over the radio”). In other words, having the best pianists to perform is a secondary concern to having Polish pianists. Symbolic events such as Chopin celebrations demanded not necessarily quality performances but rather performances that would evoke pathos; having Polish performers was deemed indispensable, if not outright required.
Figure 16: Detailed plan (dated June 17, 1948) for Chopin Year concerts

The “historical concerts” also included domestic components that were meant to recreate the life of Chopin through concerts. These concerts took place in towns and cities where Chopin had been (such as Warsaw Conservatory and Duszniki-Zdrój), and they occurred around the date of his birth, his debut concert in Warsaw, and his death. For example, there was a “pożegnalny koncert Fryderyka Chopina” (“farewell concert of Fryderyk Chopin”) to commemorate the final concert Chopin gave in Warsaw exactly 119 years earlier on October 11, 1830.

359 The Chopin Year 1949 (Warsaw: The Executive Committee of Chopin Year, 1949), 22.
Figure 17: Chopin’s 1830 farewell concert re-created in 1949

The “historical concerts” recalled the past by bridging the gap between Poles and Chopin, between the worshippers and the worshipped. Ordinary citizens could ostensibly relive the events that occurred a century ago. The “reappearance” of Chopin among the living had great symbolic valence. Dabrowski has argued that commemorations served as miniature history lessons, citing the fact that by the late nineteenth century, history as an academic discipline was barely half a century old in the most advanced parts of Europe.\(^{360}\) Compared to the printed word, which targets the mind, commemorations target the heart. In the 1949 celebrations, we can see how Poles, in paying tribute to Chopin, attempted to uphold Polish national identity whenever possible. For example, in the program of the so-called historical concerts, we see the line: “The historical concerts will be performed only by Polish pianists both in the world and local broadcasts program of the Chopin Year” (emphasis mine).\(^{361}\) Performances of Chopin’s works by Poles seem, at least to the authority’s eyes, to be more authentic and credible than performances by non-Poles. The sentence recalls the rationale for selecting an all-Polish jury for the First International Chopin Piano Competition (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). Even though the jury diversified after 1927, the official statement in 1949 takes us back to the pre-war mentality evident in Paderewski’s 1910 speech – Chopin is the property of Poland and his music can be understood only by his compatriots. Other evidence of Polish self-proclaimed superiority on Chopin matters can be seen in a cycle of fourteen concerts titled “ Żywe Wydanie Dziej Chopina” (“Living Edition of Chopin’s Works”), which was broadcast by the Polish Radio.\(^{362}\) Polish pianist Henryk Sztompka’s (1901-1964) opening concert on February 23 would be “followed by the recitals of the most eminent Polish pianists. On April 3, 1949 the collective

\(^{360}\) Dabrowski, 5.

\(^{361}\) The Chopin Year 1949, 22.

\(^{362}\) Altberg, 7.
recital of young Polish pianists will end the concert series.” “Polish” is mentioned in each of the sentences, showing that the celebrations played an important role not only in promoting Polish musicians but also for reaffirming the Polishness of Chopin. Indeed, as we see on the program (see Figure 18), not one Russian or foreign pianist performed in the cycle.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on Polishness, the celebrations took place in many parts of the world. Figure 19 shows a commemorative concert in the Great Hall of the Moscow

Figure 18: The program for the Living Edition of Chopin’s Works

\[363\text{ Ibid.}\]
Conservatory. The concert, conducted by the famed Kirill Kondrashin (1914-1981), featured the Soviet Symphony Orchestra and Liapunov’s *Zheliazova Volia*, a piece that was performed repeatedly in 1910 commemorative concerts.

![Figure 19: 1949 Commemorative concert for Chopin at the Moscow Conservatory](image)

As mentioned, the 1949 celebrations reached a truly international level, in no small part thanks to the role of UNESCO. In June 1949, the newly-established UNESCO announced that they would organize a concert as well as fund two fellowships to allow Polish composition students to study at the Paris Conservatoire.\(^364\) Somewhat later than the intended September concert date, on October 3, 1949, the concert “Hommage à Frederic Chopin” took place in Paris. At the concert, short works by seven composers of various nationalities – Alexandre Tansman (Polish), Heitor Villa-Lobos (Brazilian), Gian Francesco Malipiero (Italian), Jacques Ibert (French), Florent Schmitt (French), Carlos Chavez (Mexican) and Howard Hanson (American) – were performed. UNESCO clearly wanted the “musical memorial” broadcasted.\(^365\) In addition, UNESCO published a biography of Chopin by French musician Roland Manuel (1891-1966), the opening of which reads:

> Chopin in the hundred years that have passed since his death, has been involved in an adventure which is not his own. The most admired, the most unusual, and altogether the most popular among modern composers, – no other’s works are often performed or


\(^{365}\) Ibid. The composers were asked to write pieces that do not exceed fifteen minutes and for five or fewer instrumentalists.
commented on in such minute detail – he is also the least understood, and in the letter and the spirit of his message is most often betrayed.  

UNESCO played an active role in preserving Chopin’s legacy and declared the year 1960 as well as 1999 Chopin Years again. Furthermore, Polish composer Florian Dąbrowski (1913-2002) wrote a cantata titled *Odejście Fryderyka* (*The Passing of Fryderyk*, 1949). Compared with the 1910 celebration, the scope of the Chopin celebrations had increased dramatically, reaching far beyond the borders of Poland, the Soviet Union and even Europe. The celebration events in 1949 featured most of the prominent politicians of the time. For example, the minister of culture and art Stefan Dybowski (1903-1970) opened the Chopin Piano Competition by saying: “…mam zaszczyt powitać przybyłego na dzisiejszą uroczystość Obywatela Marszałka Sejmu, ObywatelaPremiera, członków Rządu, członków jury, uczestników Konkursu i wszystkich szanownych gości” (“I have the honor of welcoming those who are present at today’s festivity: Comrade Speaker of the House, Comrade Prime Minister, members of the government, members of the jury, participants of the competition and all respected guests”). The presence of numerous dignitaries shows the deep connection between politics and the 1949 celebrations. Lev Oborin, the winner of the First Chopin Competition in 1927, was invited as a jury member (vice chairman [wiceprzewodniczący], to be exact) and performed a concert in Warsaw. The event had symbolic significance because, with the presence of a pre-war celebrity, it shows that Poland had recovered and returned to the dynamic artistic scene of the interwar period. With a few other Soviet pianists, Oborin also made a symbolic trip to Żelazowa Wola. The photo (see Figure 20), taken next to the statue built thanks to Balakirev’s initiative, suggests the continued Soviet affinity for Chopin’s music.

---

Figure 20: Lev Oborin with other Soviet winners of the Chopin Competition by the Chopin monument in Żelazowa Wola (which was initiated by their compatriot Milii Balakirev)  

Figure 21: Polish President Bolesław Bierut in the box seat at the inaugural concert

370 I thank the Fryderyk Chopin Institute in Warsaw (NIFC) for providing me the photograph.
Curiously, the patronage of the president is not mentioned on the competition poster (see Figure 22), unlike the first competition poster, which will be discussed in Chapter 3), and the poster remained in Polish and French. In a speech at the inaugural concert, Polish President Bolesław said:

Jesteśmy dumni z wielkich tradycji i wspaniałych osiągnięć naszej kultury narodowej. Szczycimy się tym dorobkiem i czynimy go własnością nie uprzywilejowanych grup, jak dawniej, nie szlachty, czy elity burżuazyjnej, lecz własnością mas pracujących, własnością całego narodu.371

(We are proud of great traditions and splendid achievements of our national culture. We boast of this possession and make it property not of privileged groups as it was in the past, not of gentry or elite bourgeois, but property of working masses, property of the whole nation.)372

Beirut reiterates the familiar Communist rhetoric, effectively shifting Chopin’s music from its salon and aristocratic milieu to the working class. A painting illustrates how the political regime appropriated Chopin’s music in accordance with its artistic doctrine:

Figure 22: Poster for the Fourth Chopin Piano Competition (1949)

372 The English version of the booklet is published as The Chopin Year 1949 (Warsaw: The Executive Committee of Chopin Year, 1949). However, it contains unusual number of typographical mistakes. On page 5 alone, we see words like “acquest” and “priviledged.” One can see a fragment of the speech: http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=en/node/5401 (last accessed August 12, 2013).
For the first time in history, the Chopin competition took place during a Year of Chopin.\(^{373}\) The reestablishment of the first post-war Chopin Competition in 1949 testifies to the relative lenience of the policy for art in the Soviet-controlled Poland. In accordance with the general postwar rebuilding effort and Poles’ desire to reestablish Polish culture, the competition was the longest to this day, lasting a full month (from September 15 to October 15). The competition took place in the Roma Hall, as the original competition venue was destroyed during the war. Critic Stanisław Dybowski writes: “Gdy patrzyło z góry,… linie poszczególnych rzędów zacierały się, na krzesłach siadywały po dwie osoby plus nieraz trzecia na poręczy, a każdy centymetr wolnego miejsca od drzwi wejściowych aż do estrady szczelnie wypełniali ludzie, stojący w tłoku i gorącu, bez ruchu zasłuchani w dźwięki płynące z czarnego pudła na scenie”\(^{374}\) (“When one looked down at the hall from above... the rows were commingled, two people sat in one seat and at times a third person on the armrest, and every centimeter of free space from the door to the stage was filled with people standing in crowd and heat, immobile and lost in the sounds coming from the black box on the stage”). Quite tellingly, for the first time in the competition’s history, a Pole won the competition as one of the two winners \textit{ex aequo et bono} – Polish pianist Halina Czerny-Stefańska and Soviet pianist Bella Davidovich – a decision that invites us to speculate on the role of politics in music competitions.\(^{375}\) According to Davidovich’s memoir, she was the frontrunner until the finals, when Czerny-Stefańska played the concerto better and most judges wanted to award the first prize only to her. After multiple rounds of voting and failure to reach consensus, President Beirut was told the situation and instructed the officials to award two first prizes.\(^{376}\) The Performance Committee (Komitet Wykonawczy) became involved and, in Dybowski account, arbitrarily changed the score so that there would be two first-prize winners.\(^{377}\) The competition was broadcasted on the radio, where a special channel was created by the Radio Committee of the Polish People’s Republic.\(^{378}\)

**Post-1949 Celebrations**

The 1949 celebrations brought some unprecedented success. It is estimated that in 1949, more than 150000 people visited Żelazowa Wola.\(^{379}\) On December 18, 1950, a Chopin exhibition opened in the Moscow Conservatory, which was discussed in a book (1951) by music critic Leonid Siniaver. In the book, titled \textit{Shopen} and part of the \textit{Shkol’naia Biblioteka} (School Library) series, Siniaver discussed how Chopin figured in the exhibition on the occasion of the twenty-sixth anniversary of Lenin’s death in 1950:

\(^{373}\) There would be two other occasions, in 1960 and 2010.
\(^{375}\) In Dybowski’s account, Czerny-Stefańska had the highest point total, 47.88, compared to Davidovich’s 47.71. See Stanisław Dybowski, \textit{Halina Czerny-Stefańska: epizody z życia chompinistki} (Warsaw: Selene, 2006), 77.
\(^{376}\) Bella Davidovich, \textit{Moi vospominaniiia} (Moscow: P. Jurgenson, 2013), 45.
\(^{377}\) Dybowski’s account clearly shows the political manipulation of the Committee. He also mentions that the result of the 1949 competition was not something that was discussed. See Dybowski, \textit{Halina Czerny-Stefańska}, 76-78.
\(^{379}\) “Zarubezhnaia khronika: V Zheliazovoi Vole.” \textit{Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5} (May 1950), 91.
К двадцать шестой годовщине со дня смерти Владимира Ильича Ленина Московская консерватория открыла выставки, посвященную памяти великого вождя трудящихся. В одной из витрин были собраны любимые музыкальные произведения Ильича. Рядом с революционными песнями Замучен тяжелой неволей и Варшавянка, рядом с Патетической симфонией Чайковского и сонатами Бетховена можно было увидеть сборник 24 прелюдии Шопена. Ленин охотно слушал эти прелюдии. Он высоко ценил все прекрасное, что создано передовым искусством всех стран и народов. К этим богатствам культуры принадлежит и творчество Фридерика Шопена, гениального польского композитора и пианиста.380

(For the twenty-sixth anniversary of Vladimir Il’ich Lenin’s death, the Moscow Conservatory opened an exhibition dedicated to the memory of the great proletariat leader. In one of the sections, favorite musical works of Lenin were collected. Next to the revolutionary songs “Tormented to death by a heavy captivity,”381 “Warszawianka,” next to Tchaikovsky’s Pathétique Symphony and Beethoven sonatas, one could see the 24 preludes of Chopin. Lenin listened to these preludes with pleasure. He highly appreciated all that is beautiful, created by the progressive art of all nations and peoples. The work of Friderik Chopin, Polish composer and pianist of genius, belongs to the richness of the culture.)

As we have seen, some of the celebrations concerts took place in high-profile venues such as the Moscow Conservatory. With Stalin still alive, we can infer that Chopin’s music was not only acceptable but ideologically sound. From the memoirs of President Harry Truman, we know that Stalin was fond of Chopin’s music.382 Approvals from Stalin and Lenin not only meant full Soviet support in Chopin celebrations but also a good dose of Soviet rhetoric in speaking about Chopin. For instance, music critic Iulian Vainkop’s wrote in his book:

Столетие со дня смерти гениального сына польского народа, отмечаемое народно-демократической польской республикой как праздник национальной культуры, нашло широкий отклик в нашей стране, где имя Шопена окружено почетом и уважением, а созданная им музыка стала достоянием миллионных масс трудящихся.383

(The hundredth anniversary of the death of the prodigious son of the Polish nation, celebrated by the National-Democratic Polish Republic as a holiday of national culture, found wide resonance in our country, where the name Chopin is accompanied by honor and respect, and the music created by him has become the property of the millions of the working mass).

Rhetoric aside, there was a real effort to bring Chopin to the common people, as concerts were organized in big cities as well as in small villages. By one estimate, five thousand of these

381 A well-known song written by Grigorii Aleksandrovich Machtet (1852-1901).
382 See *Life* magazine, Vol. 39 No. 16 (October 17, 1955), 184.
“commonly-available” ("общедоступные") concerts were given in 1949.³⁸⁴ Chopin’s name would appear regularly in the Sovetskaia muzyka (founded in 1933), and a language to speak about him was gradually developed. Even though Chopin was associated more with salon culture and the aristocracy when he was alive, Soviet discourse nevertheless made his music the property of the proletariat. The passage by Vainkop confirms that Chopin’s Polishness was warmly embraced in the Soviet Union, which appropriated Chopin’s music to fit its agenda.

Conclusion

While Poland did not exist politically in 1899 or 1910, it existed spiritually. Commemorations were highly symbolic and politicized events that played a critical role in fostering a sense of national identity. Despite strong Russification policy, Russians and Poles came together in establishing celebratory events and eulogistic rhetoric that would later become the norm. Thanks to the numerous publications and speeches made during the celebrations, Poland was mobilized and unified under politically unfavorable circumstances. The 1949 celebrations further confirmed the ability of two nations to join together for a common cause, ensuring the largest celebrations to that date.

³⁸⁴ RGALI, fond. 654 op. 3 no. 143, pp. 57.
CHAPTER 3
The Institution of the International Chopin Piano Competition and Its Social and Cultural Implications

The International Chopin Piano Competition, founded in 1927, has rarely been the subject of scholarly analysis. Every five years, the competition generates excitement among the general public and showcases young musicians, but few know about its origin beyond the date of the first competition. Nevertheless, the competition played an important role in propagating Chopin’s music. The understanding of musical culture in Poland and of the history of Chopin’s reception in the 1920s would not be complete without considering the Chopin Competition seriously. My approach has been to critically study memoirs of the relevant individuals, coverage and reviews in the press, and competition-related publications. As musicologist Rafał Nowacki points out, a large amount of the competition-related materials is merely propaganda, chronicles and press polemics. Nevertheless, these materials have sociological and historical implications that need to be studied as part of the discourse. By examining the competition’s founding process, sponsorship, participants and public reception, I show how the Chopin legend was perpetuated in competition affairs. My discussion will consider the broader cultural context as well as several literary portrayals of the competition.

Musical competitions did not become an established, institutionalized rite of passage until the end of the nineteenth century. With conservatories producing more and more skilled performers, the supply of pianists exceeded the demand, which made it necessary to find a medium to guarantee the best pianists a chance to start their careers. Competitions became a sort of quality-control mechanism, an enterprise where one’s talent ostensibly went through objective evaluation and received a grade and a verdict. Competition is as much a musical event as it is a social and cultural one. As sociologist Lisa McCormick notes, the meaning of a musical competition requires cultural construction. Musicians and jury members are just two small parts of a competition, as a competition requires a great amount of organizational work, sponsorship and public interest in music. The Chopin Competition played an instrumental role not only in ensuring continuous involvement in Chopin’s music but also in transforming Chopin from a national icon to an international figure.

Precursors

An influential forerunner of the Chopin Competition was the International Anton Rubinstein Competition, founded by Anton Rubinstein himself in 1890 and held every five years until 1910. The competition was for both pianists and composers. The first competition, with Rubinstein himself as the chairman of the jury, was held in St. Petersburg in August 1890. Professors from Kiev, Kharkov, Moscow, Munich, Amsterdam, Stockholm and the American Peabody conservatories constituted the jury; but other authorities like Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-

---

387 There was at least one other documented competition before the Rubinstein Competition: the Warsaw Musical Society (Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne) organized a competition for composers in 1886, which received 44 submissions competing for three prizes. For more, see Stanisław Dybowski, Aleksander Michałowski: Rzecz o wielkim chopiniście i muzycznej Warszawie jego czasów (Warsaw: Selene, 2005), 42.
Korsakov declined to participate for various reasons. Similar to the Chopin Competition, the Rubinstein Competition offered substantial prize money, which came directly from Rubinstein’s concert tour earnings. However, the competition only attracted seven contestants (two in composition and six in piano with one – Ferruccio Busoni – participating in both categories). Jury members outnumbered the participants, and the competition lasted only three days. The competition also failed to attract a large audience, as a reviewer wrote “there weren’t many outside audience members at the competition.” Busoni (1866-1924) won the composition contest, and many critics, even some jury members, considered him the best in the piano competition as well. Nevertheless, the jury wanted to award the first prize to a Russian pianist and awarded the top piano prize to Nikolai Dubasov (1869-1935):

[N]есмотря на свое явное превосходство над остальными конкурентами, Бузони не получил пианистической премии: последняя большинством голосов была присуждена Н. А. Дубасову. Некоторый свет на мотивы этого – в своем роде исторического – решения бросает замечание другой газеты о том, что “особенную радость и естественное чувство национальной гордости возбудило постановление о назначении первой премии юному и талантливому русскому пианисту Н. Дубасову.”

([D]espite his clear superiority over the other competitors, Busoni did not receive the first prize in piano: it was awarded to N. A. Dubasov by a majority vote. Another newspaper sheds some light on the motives of this decision – historical in a way – “the decision to award the first prize to the young and talented Russian pianist N. Dubasov aroused special joy and a natural sense of national pride.”)

The decision caused controversy and many in the press criticized the jury for not awarding the top prize to Busoni, but one can perhaps understand the role nationality played in the jury’s decision. Awarding the first prize of the first Rubinstein Competition to an Italian when an acceptable Russian was present would have been incomprehensible. Nevertheless, protests by some jury members led to a compromise wherein Busoni would receive the first prize in composition, despite his mediocre composition: “само жюри чувствовало несправедливость своего решения и попыталось загладить эту несправедливость присуждением Бузони композиторской премии ‘в зачет его выдающихся качеств пианиста’” (“the jury felt the unfairness of its decision and attempted to make up for it by awarding Busoni the composition prize ‘on account of his outstanding qualities as a pianist’”).

---

388 G. Kogan, *Voprosy pianizma: Izbrannye stat’i* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe izdatel’stvo sovetskii kompozitor, 1968), 175. I have not yet been able to identify specific reasons for their non-participation, but one can speculate with at least the following rationales: 1) they deem competitions, where a subjective art is supposed to be judged, as against art (see page 43 in this chapter), 2) they are too busy with their concert/teaching schedules.

389 Rubinstein earned 80463 rubles from the concerts, from which he designated 25000 rubles to be used for the competition prize money. The winners in each category received 5000 francs, and the runner-ups received 2000 francs. See Kogan, 174.

390 Ibid., 178.

391 Ibid., 176.

392 Ibid., 177.
The Rubinstein Competition helped build Busoni’s international fame, and the victory in Russia led to his teaching appointment in Moscow that year.

Busoni’s victory/defeat illustrates the fact that competition and controversy often go hand in hand. Even though Busoni was deemed the best in both categories, he could not sweep the prizes due to politics. Even if politics were not an issue, disagreement is almost inevitable in questions of musical taste. To cite another example, the third Rubinstein Competition, held in Vienna in 1900, was won by the Russian composer Aleksandr Gedike in composition and the Belgian Emil Boske in piano. According to the memoir of Aleksandr Gol’denveizer, an influential Russian musician, there was hostility towards Russian pianists on the part of jury members, since they would not award the two top prizes simultaneously to Russian musicians.393 Perhaps for this reason, the demographics of the jury changed drastically in the 1910 competition, with the jury consisting entirely of Russians, headed by Aleksandr Glazunov.394 Paradoxically, when the stage was set for a Russian victory, it was not a Russian but a German pianist, Alfred Höhn, who won the pianist competition in 1910. In this competition, the renowned Polish pianist Artur Rubinstein only received an honorable mention.

![Figure 1: International Anton Rubinstein Competition in 1910](Glazunov in the center, Artur Rubinstein on the right)

The decision to award Höhn the first prize, according to Artur Rubinstein’s account, was the work of The Grand Duke of Hesse, who asked for help from his sister Tsarina Aleksandra

---

394 *The Music Times*, October 1, 1910.
Fedorovna, the wife of Tsar Nicholas II. The next Rubinstein Competition was scheduled in 1915, but due to the outbreak of the First World War, the Competition was canceled and not reestablished until 2003 in Dresden, Germany. Similarly, the Second World War also interrupted the Chopin Competition, but the competition was not halted for long; in fact, one of the post-war reconstruction priorities was to reinstate the Chopin Competition in 1949 (discussed in Chapter Two).

At first glance, the Rubinstein and Chopin Competitions shared similarities such as the goal of helping young musicians and the presence of international contestants and jury members as well as controversies. The main difference, however, was the Rubinstein Competition’s lack of “national agenda” – hereby defined as facts and activities that advance a nation’s interest. For example, unlike the Chopin Competition, which is always hosted in the Polish capital, the Rubinstein Competition was held in different cities (St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna and Paris). The Rubinstein Competition was open to male musicians aged 20 to 26 from all national, religious and social backgrounds. The Chopin Competition, as we shall see, was at first dominated by participants from Slavic nations but later became more diverse, and female participants were always allowed. Furthermore, the Chopin Competition always focused entirely on the oeuvre of Chopin, whereas the repertoire requirement of the Rubinstein Competition was at first determined by Anton Rubinstein himself. After Rubinstein’s death in 1894, the required repertoire consisted of works by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt. Unlike the Chopin Competition, which enjoyed wide sponsorship, the Rubinstein Competition was funded largely by Rubinstein himself. The Chopin Competition was founded 78 years after the composer’s death, and its main purpose was arguably to revive interest in Chopin’s music in a time when its popularity was in question.

Before the Chopin and after the Rubinstein Competitions, Walter Naumburg, a devoted amateur cellist and a member of the Naumburg banking family, established a competition in his name in the United States in 1925. The competition was open to pianists, singers, violinists and cellists. The jury members of the Naumburg Competition functioned more like a board of examiners who could stop the contestants at any time. The format of the Chopin Competition was very different because contestants played works in their entirety, making each competitor’s performance essentially what we know today as “Koncert Chopinowski” (which can be rendered as “all-Chopin concert”).

**Impetus**

Establishing an international musical competition did not occur in a vacuum; rather, it can be explained by considering the status of Chopin’s music a century ago. Unlike today when...
Chopin is a household name and his music is played by almost all pianists, the status of Chopin’s music was by no means universally positive at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the Soviet Union, for example, pianist Lev Oborin points out in his memoirs that prior to his participation in the Chopin Competition, there were negative attitudes toward Chopin’s music: “Moskovskie nashe kompozitora s lekoy ruki Miaskovskogo toge ne ostayot ot kritikov, считаю музыку Шопена импотентным салонным бульканием...” (“Our Muscovite composers, thanks to [Nikolai] Miaskovskii, are not falling behind the critics, deeming Chopin’s music impotent salon gurgling”). Even in Poland, there was a decline of interest in Chopin’s music and its status after the First World War. While it would be an exaggeration to claim that Chopin fell out of favor altogether, his music became a target of a general criticism of Romantic artists and their works, and they were often deemed obsolete. Polish Romanticism, epitomized by the writer Adam Mickiewicz, was then seen as an epoch full of promises but few results. The image of Chopin – the musical, fourth national bard (“czwarty wieszcz narodowy,” see discussion in the introduction) – was likewise fading.

A savior came in 1923. Jerzy Żurawlew (1886-1980, see Figure 2), a professor at the National Warsaw Conservatory (Państwowe Konserwatorium Warszawskie), decided to organize an international competition devoted exclusively to Chopin’s music because he was unhappy with the perception of Chopin’s music at the time. Żurawlew, as suggested by his name, was of Russian heritage. Born in Rostov-on-Don to a Russian father and a Polish mother, Żurawlew grew up in a bicultural household. His mother not only founded a junior high school

Figure 2: Jerzy Żurawlew, the founder of the International Chopin Piano Competition

---

405 Ibid., 82.
406 The music school was founded by Józef Elsner in 1810 and has had different names; in 1979 it was named Akademia Muzyczna im. Fryderyka Chopina.
in Rostov but also hosted regular gatherings—attended by well-known Russian writers and artists—where Chopin’s music was often played. Żurawlew played for Ignacy Jan Paderewski in 1895 and the master pianist was highly impressed. Despite the failure at an all-Russian competition for pianists in 1911, Żurawlew had a few successful years concertizing in Russia before moving to Warsaw in 1917. In Warsaw, Żurawlew studied with Aleksandr Michałowski, a famous performer of Chopin’s music. After the First World War, Żurawlew began his teaching career in Warsaw. Even before founding the Chopin Competition, Żurawlew was already associated with Chopin because the composer’s works constituted a large part of his repertoire; his effort in organizing the competition firmly established him as a forerunner in preserving and promoting Chopin’s legacy.

While the idea of organizing a Chopin Competition had been in the air for a while, the trigger was pulled in 1925 when Żurawlew overheard a conversation between two students on a train. The conversation went as follows: “Moim zdaniem Chopin jest nudny i przestarzały. Powinno się go usunąć z programów koncertowych i pedagogicznych” (“In my opinion Chopin is boring and obsolete. One should remove him from concert and teaching programs”). The other student responded: “A nawet szkodliwy. Muzyka jego jest zniewieściała i jakaś chorobliwa. Niepotrzebnie roztkliwia i osłabia ducha” (“And even harmful. His music is effeminate and unhealthy. It makes one unnecessarily sentimental and weakens the spirit”). The conversation recalled some earlier criticism of Chopin’s music and reflected the negative attitude toward Romantic artists at the time, which enraged Żurawlew. He then thought the best way to ameliorate the situation was to organize an international competition in which young musicians would work hard and compete, all the while playing only the works of Chopin. Żurawlew’s idea also meant that regardless of the competition outcome, every contestant would acquire a large Chopin repertoire and would be able to program the composer’s music in future concerts.

Żurawlew’s idea of “rehabilitating” Chopin represented a unique way of preserving and propagating the legacy of Chopin. We recall that in 1894, Russian composer Milii Balakirev helped transform Chopin’s birthplace in Żelazowa Wola from a forgotten small town to a major

407 Maria Szraiber et al., Nestors of Polish Pianistics vol. 2 (Warsaw: Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music, 2005), 53.
408 Viktor Model’, “Pervyi Mezhdunarodnyi Konkurs pianistov im. Shopena.” Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fond 654 op. 4 no. 914, pp. 1. Alexander Glazunov described Żurawlew’s playing as follows: “Отсутствие простоты и естественности в передаче. Чрезмерная сила удара. Встречались неверно заученные ошибки. Техническая отделка тщательная, но общее впечатление – карикатура” (“Lack of simplicity and naturalness in the delivery. Excessive force of attack. Incorrectly-learned mistakes were heard. Technically proficient, but the overall impression – a caricature”).
409 Drzewiecki, 54.
410 Żurawlew was called up for service in the Russian army and sent to Minsk but he did not engage in combat activities. See Drzewiecki, 56.
412 For example, French composer and critic Hippolyte Barbedette considered Chopin’s music unhealthy and called Chopin “a sick man who enjoyed suffering.”
413 There were intermittent discussions of whether to broaden the repertoire requirement at the Chopin Competition (requiring contestants to play a Prelude and Fugue by Bach, for example). The consensus was reached later that in order for the Chopin Competition to be one of its kind and “compete” with other competitions, it was necessary to limit the repertoire exclusively to Chopin. See Józef Kański, as quoted in Stefan Wysocki, Wokół Konkursów Chopinowskich (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Radia i Telewizji, 1982), 89.

103
pilgrimage site for admirers of the composer. Another major event occurred on November 14, 1926, when the famous Chopin statue in Łazienki Park in Warsaw was erected.414

Figure 3: The Chopin statue in Łazienki Park

Whereas the Łazienki monument and the birthplace memorial ensure a public display of Chopin’s stature in Poland, the competition guaranteed active international artistic and social engagement with Chopin’s music.

Apart from Żurawlew’s initiative to improve the understanding of Chopin’s music, the competition was founded in no small part because of the era’s relatively relaxed political atmosphere and general preoccupation with sports. The First Competition came only eight months after Józef Piłsudski’s May coup d’etat. The dominant political movement of the time, “Sanacja,” promoted the primacy of national interest in all endeavours; Żurawlew’s effort with the competition matched the general political agenda of the time. Despite the “international” tag in the competition’s name, Poland was foregrounded and there was clearly a deliberate effort to eulogize Chopin in the competition. For example, at the opening of the competition, the lights would be dimmed and a reflector would shine on Chopin’s bust – all while the audience remained silent.415 In describing the “cały rytuał rozpoczynania wszystkich przesłuchań” (“the whole ritual of inaugurating the auditions”), critic Stefan Wysocki (b. 1920) says:

...wygaszenie świateł, reflector punktowy oświetlający stojące na estradzie, na smukłym cokole, popiersie Chopina, nad którym, wmontowane między piszczalki organów, zwieszają się flagi państw, których obywatele biorą udział w konkursie. Nasza flaga jest długa i – ukosem przecinając piszczalki – w dole sięga popiersia, udrapowana u jego stóp. Tamże – wciąż świeże kwiaty w wazonie. Cisza. Pół minuty. Potem światła zapalają się, wychodzi zapowiadacz i prezentuje kolejnego kandydata...416

(... the extinguishing of the lights, the spotlight reflector standing on the stage, on the slender pedestal, a bust of Chopin is mounted between pipes of the organ, above which hang the flags of countries whose citizens participate in the competition. Our flag is long

414 The ceremony, attended by many prominent politicians and artists alike, is available on video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9_UVStEbZ4 (last accessed October 23, 2012).
415 See Życie Warszawy, February 22, 1965, front page. It is unclear when this ritual was first observed, but according to the article, the bust of Chopin is “jak zawsze” (“as always”) there.
416 Wysocki, 70-71.
and crossing the pipes at a slant – goes down to the bust, draped at its feet. There, too – still fresh flowers in a vase. Silence. Half a minute. Then the lights come on, the announcer goes out and presents the next candidate ...

As we can see in Figure 4, the Polish flag is prominently displayed on stage during many Chopin Competitions, explicitly reasserting Chopin’s Polishness.

Figure 4: Competition stage with Polish flags and Chopin bust (1937)

While the Chopin Competition partly stemmed from the era’s political agenda, it took inspiration from the era’s fanaticism for sport. Wysocki characterizes the epoch right after the First World War as sport-fanatic.417 In fact, according to pianist Marian Filar’s (1917-2012) account, Żurawlew one day came across a well-attended boxing match at the circus next to the Warsaw Conservatory and thought: “Why can’t we take these people away from the circus and bring them to the Conservatory? If everyone likes competitions so much, why not have a competition of music instead?”418 The display of flags at the Chopin Competition matched the tradition of displaying flags at the Olympic Games. Like the Olympic Games, the Chopin Competition was the largest event of its kind. The long five-year interval between competitions fomented suspense and excitement. Like athletes, musicians practice and prepare for years in order to outshine others in the short time they are given in the competition. Similar to a sporting event, the Chopin Competition featured a large international spectatorship, attractive awards, and

417 Wysocki, 6.
418 Marian Filar and Charles Patterson, From Buchenwald to Carnegie Hall (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 8.
the possibility of a lucrative career. The stakes were high, as a good performance could bring fame and fortune, and a bad performance could effectively erase a promising musician’s future.

Żurawlew stated that his primary motivation in staging the competition was to rehabilitate Chopin; however, it is possible that the Chopin Competition was staged to demonstrate the artistic superiority of newly-independent Poland. Let us recall that in 1958, just months after the launch of Sputnik, the first Tchaikovsky Competition took place in the Soviet Union. The competition had been staged to display Soviet superiority in art, but ironically, the American pianist Van Cliburn won the competition. A Pole’s winning the Chopin Competition would send a clear message to the world that Poland had reemerged not only politically but also artistically in the twentieth century. Unlike later competitions, the composition of the jury seemed ripe for such an occasion since it consisted exclusively of Polish pianists and pedagogues.419

Figure 5: Jury members of the First Chopin Competition

Żurawlew justified the makeup of the jury by saying: “On the assumption that the Polish character of Chopin’s music can be fully appreciated only by his compatriots, only Polish specialists were invited to sit on the jury of the first competition.”420 In solidarity, Witold Maliszewski, the chairman of the jury, said in his opening address of the competition on January 23:

May the celebrations of our Compatriot’s greatness manifest also our spiritual greatness, may it justify our belief in the sublime mission of the Polish nation, the belief so strongly augmented by the superb flights of the national genius achieved in his art. We do not strive to impose a Polish interpretation of Chopin on the world, yet, we hope it is not

419 According to Stanisław Dybowski, German pianist Alfred Hohën (who won the Rubinstein Competition in 1910, as discussed in this chapter) participated in the adjudication process in the last day of the competition. See “Kto do Jury” in Chopin Express, October 6, 2010, p. 6

presumptuous to consider our judgment, the judgment of exclusively Polish experts, of particular significance and universal interest.421

Maliszewski uses typical Polish Romantic messianic rhetoric by linking the Chopin Competition to the “sublime mission of the Polish nation.” There is a certain pride in the phrase “exclusively Polish” as he implies that a Pole is in a better position to understand Chopin. With an all-Polish jury, 422 the road to a rousing Polish victory was paved, but this did not turn out to be the case, a fact that will be discussed later.

While the Chopin Competition resembled a sort of musical Olympiad, the fan base was very different. The organizers of musical competitions could not count on the same number of enthusiasts to spend money and energy on their cause; thus, they had to search for sponsors who could provide them with financial help as well as prestige. Żurawlew stated that “dla rozgłosu konkurсу za granicą muszę mieć do pomocy nasze placówki dyplomatyczne, a tych nie zdobędę bez protektoratu prezydenta”423 (“to publicize the competition abroad I needed the help of our diplomatic agencies, which I cannot get without the patronage of the president”). Initially, when Żurawlew asked Polish President Stanisław Wojciechowski for his patronage, the president declined, and another minister said “nie ma na to środków” (“there are no resources for it”).424 Some musicologists were likewise skeptical of Żurawlew’s idea, arguing that the greatness of Chopin’s music would defend itself (“Chopin jest tak wielki, że sam się obroni”).425 But Żurawlew did not give up. When Ignacy Mościcki became the president in 1926, Żurawlew asked him to serve as the sponsor of the first Chopin Competition. The president agreed, and his sponsorship is prominently highlighted on the competition poster by Polish artist Ludwik Gardowski (1890-1965).426 The poster, written in Polish and French, strikes one as odd since there were no French participants. We also know that the award certificate was bilingual in Polish and French.427 One can interpret this in different ways: the organizers wanted to show Chopin’s binational roots; it was a way to legitimize the competition since French was still a powerful global language; it was an implicit political message to separate Poland from German and Russian influence. We know, however, that not all French critics were enthusiastic about the event. On the eve of the second competition in 1932, for example, André Suarès proclaimed “Le pauvre Chopin!” (“The poor Chopin!”) in Les Nouvelles Littéraires and expressed disapproval for the quinquennial competition.428

421 Ibid., 19.
422 Curiously, some of the most famous Polish musicians were not on the jury, such as Karol Szymanowski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, and Artur Rubinstein.
423 See Stanisław Dybowski, “Jak to wszystko się zaczęło,” in Chopin Express (October 2, 2010), 7.
425 Ibid..
427 Award certificate, 1927. RGALI. Collection of Lev Oborin, fond. 2754, op. 1.
After gaining political sponsorship, the organizers had to secure financial sponsorship. Żurawlew ran into problems again as few were willing to donate money for a cause whose significance had yet to be proven. After much frustration, Żurawlew was able to solicit help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Religion and Public Enlightenment (Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego), the Warsaw Music Society (Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne), The Fryderyk Chopin High School of Music and privately from individual citizens, including a significant 15,000 złoty donation from Henryk Rewkiewicz, a personal friend and the director of a match company. The sponsorship not only ensured large exposure of the event but also covered all participants’ expenses as well as significant cash and other awards for prizewinners. For the first competition: 5,000 złotych for the first prize, 3,000 for second, 2,000 for third.

429 The poster prints the inaccurate date of October 15, 1926 rather than the actual competition dates, January 23-30, 1927, because the competition was supposed to coincide with the unveiling of the Chopin monument in Łazienki Park. The construction of the monument, designed by Wacław Szymanowski, was not completed on time (the statue was unveiled on November 14, 1926), so the competition was postponed for three months.

430 Jerzy Żurawlew, “Cel Osiągnięty.” Stolica 42 (October 18, 1970), 12.

The lengthy list of sponsors is a testament to Żurawlew’s bureaucratic skills and determination. The way the Chopin Competition dealt with logistical issues – such as lodging, practice facilities (using private homes\(^{432}\)), scheduling, and the order of performance (by way of drawing lots\(^{433}\)) – became a model for later competitions.

\(^{432}\) For information on private home practice, see Jerzy Ossowski, ed. *The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in photographs, 1927-2010* (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2010), 34. Contestants practiced in private homes for the first four competitions, but space was made available by the local music schools from the fifth competition onward. Beginning with the fourth competition in 1949, contestants were housed in Hotel Polonia, see Janusz Ekiert, *Chopin wiecznie poszukiwany: Historia Międzynarodowego Konkursu Pianistycznego im. Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie* (Warsaw: MUZA SA, 2010), 44.

In addition to extensive competition coverage in periodicals and on the radio, the competition received significant public involvement and spectatorship. In fact, the turnout and enthusiasm for the competition almost made the premise for founding the competition – rehabilitating Chopin – seem unnecessary and irrelevant. Fans followed competitors closely and picked their own favorites, and the entire public was engaged in competition affairs, actively discussing performances and the jury’s verdicts. According to the fifth issue of the newspaper Świat in 1927, the competition was well-attended thanks to the availability of reasonably cheap tickets. The venue, the 1660-seat Filharmonia Narodowa, offered subscription tickets (ranging from 2.5 to 12 złotych) as well as individual tickets (ranging from 50 groszy to 3 złote):

Alongside laymen, high officials were also part of the audience. One spectator described his impression: “Rozglądamy się po sali, jest pełno nawet na tych uroczyście pustych zawsze

---

435 Waldorff, 39.
balkonach filharmonii... W pierwszych rzędach, zarezerwowanych dla „śmietanki” stolicy, organizatorzy konkursu, cały świat muzyczny, dość licznie obesłany korpus dyplomatyczny”436 (“We look around the hall, it is full even on those solemnly always-empty balconies ... In the first row, reserved for the “cream” of the capital, [there were] the organizers of the competition, the entire musical world, and significant diplomatic corps”).

Figure 10: A 1932 subscription ticket to the second Chopin Competition

The atmosphere in the hall was highly charged, as Iwaszkiewicz wrote in his “Wspomnienie o Filharmonii” (“Reminiscence of the Philharmonic”): “Finały, ciągnące się do drugiej nad ranem, wśród zapału i zakładów jak na wyścigach – tu triumfuje prawdziwa miłość dla naszego rodzimego sportu: pianistyki” (“The finals, extending to two o’clock in the morning, amidst fervor and race-like bets – here the true love for our native sport triumphs: piano playing”).437 One account even mentioned that the crowds exhibited sophisticated concert etiquette by not clearing their throats, coughing, speaking or even clapping for the performers, because they were concerned with negatively affecting the pianists and influencing the jury’s decisions.438 The competition effectively created a forum in which both lay people and professionals could express their opinions about Chopin’s music. The format of a public competition facilitated a wide engagement from diverse social strata, effectively thrusting Chopin into the spotlight.

436 Świat no. 5 (1927), as quoted in Ekiert, 9.
438 “Pierwszy wielki Turniej artystyczny w Odrodzonej Ojczyźnie,” Świat 5 (1927), as quoted in Kronika, 16.
The presence of the crowd at the Chopin Competition illustrates the notion of an “imagined community.” The act of attending an all-Chopin event represents what Benedict Anderson calls “unisonance.” At the competition, audience members wholly unknown to each other listen and react to the same music and talk about it. Chopin runs as a common thread in various discussions. Furthermore, during the performance, all members of the audience are bound by some commonalities: they look in one direction, they listen to the same music at the same rate (unlike reading), and they abide by concert etiquette. The sense of a community takes on a different dimension when the audience is immersed in one composer’s music, and the stage is decorated with a Polish flag and Chopin’s bust. The Chopin Competition, taking place as a performance, became an ideal means of reconciling society's divergent views of Chopin and celebrating the composer.

Notwithstanding the enthusiastic public, the scale of the first Chopin Competition was modest, with only 26 pianists representing eight nations; and there were only two rounds (compared to four rounds plus a qualifying round [eliminacja] today). Sixteen out of 26 pianists were Polish, and the rest came from the Soviet Union, Austria, Switzerland, Latvia, Belgium and the Netherlands. The first competition lacked participants from the more powerful European nations such as Germany, France, and England, possibly due to insufficient advertisement and international communication. While radio and competition posters were available for advertising the competition, their effectiveness outside of Poland was greatly diminished. Furthermore, it may have been difficult to interest foreign pianists because Warsaw was still dealing with problems lingering from the time of partitions and lacked attractions that other capital cities had.

Figure 11: Participants in the First Chopin Competition

---

440 The competition had only two rounds until the fourth competition in 1949. See Wysocki, 62.
441 According to Viktor Model’, Vladimir Horowitz and Vladimir Sofronitskii were supposed to be sent to the competition but were not present. See Model’, 3.
After two rounds – where contestants played Chopin’s solo and concerto works, respectively – the result was announced at the end of the week. According to one of Żurawlew’s students, Miroslaw Dąbrowski, the result came as a shock because Russians took two of the top four prizes, with Lev Oborin, then only 20 years old, winning the coveted first prize.\(^{442}\) The victory of Soviet pianists carried a significant political meaning. Even though Russia had been supportive of Chopin affairs (publishing the complete edition and helping with the monument in Chopin’s birthplace, for examples), the relationship between newly independent Poland and the Soviet Union was far from friendly. Poland had just won a war against the Soviet Union in the Polish-Soviet War (1919-21), and much anti-Soviet propaganda was fed to the Polish public. In the account of Dmitrii Shostakovich, who was part of the Soviet delegation in the 1927 competition, Poland treated Soviet contestants cautiously, if not hostilely: “Официальная Польша двадцатых годов настороженно, даже недружелюбно встречала посланцев молодой Советской страны” (“Official Poland in the 1920’s cautiously, even hostilely met the envoys of the young Soviet Union”).\(^{443}\) Many Poles were certain that a Polish pianist would win, as the Polish press extolled the Polish pianists as the only legitimate interpreters of Chopin’s music and thus the only possible candidates for the top prizes.\(^{444}\) In Oborin’s memoir, the competition was clearly more than an artistic event; he felt the tension of representing his country in an event whose significance went far beyond art. Russian pianist and pedagogue Konstantin Adzhemov (1911-85) writes:

Впервые на международном соревновании молодых исполнителей посланец Советского Союза заявил о величине музыкальной культуры Советской России. Буржуазная Польша отнюдь не склонна была приветствовать достижения молодой Советской республики – успех был завоеван Обориным в самых трудных условиях.\(^{445}\)

(An envoy of the Soviet Union showed the greatness of the musical culture of the Soviet Russia for the first time in the international competition of young performers. Bourgeois Poland was not ready to welcome the achievement of the young Soviet republic – success was won by Oborin in the most difficult conditions.)

Here the two nations are portrayed as opposing each other, with Poland carrying the Marxist tag of “bourgeois.” The quote suggests a hostile Polish reception and that a Soviet victory was virtually impossible, given the political conditions. Oborin himself has said that the Soviet pianists “не рассчитывали на победу, слишком все было неясным”\(^{446}\) (“were not counting on victory as everything was too unclear”). Mikhail Voskresenskii, a pupil of Oborin and professor

---

442 Dąbrowski, 46.
444 Khentova, Lev Oborin, 72.
445 Adzhemov, 38.
446 Ibid., 45.
of Moscow Conservatory, pointed out that in 1927 many musicians treated Soviet pianists with distrust and prejudice (недоверие и предубеждение).\footnote{Mikhail Voskresenskii, “Oborin – Artist i uchitel’.” In E. K. Kulova, ed., \textit{L. N. Oborin – Pedagog} (Moscow: Muzyka, 1989), 6. Voskresenskii made a factual mistake by saying Oborin also won the prize for best performance of mazurkas; in fact, Henryk Sztompka who won this prize.}

By all accounts, if the jury had included considerations of nationality and political inclination, a Russian pianist would not have won. We know now that the jury wanted to award the first prize to a Pole, as Maliszewski said, “жюри с болью в сердце присудило премию не поляку”\footnote{Khentova, \textit{Lev Oborin}, 75.} (“the jury awarded the prize to a non-Pole with pain in the heart”). Żurawlew, despite his Russian heritage, was well-known for his dislike of Soviet pianists.\footnote{See Bella Davidovich, \textit{Moi vospominaniia} (Moscow: P. Jurgenson, 2013), 45.} However, when the result was announced, it was Oborin who won the first prize. At the winners’ concert, curiously, Oborin was the one who did not play with the orchestra, as Stanisław Szpinalschi and Roza Etkinówna both played the F minor concerto; Oborin played the F minor fantasy, Nocturne in C minor, two preludes and the F-sharp minor polonaise.\footnote{RGALI, Lev Oborin collection, fond. 2754, op. 1, no. 82.} A Polish newspaper stated:

\begin{quote}
Sąd konkursowy pod przewodnictwem prof. Michałowskiego, ogłaszając motywy wyroku, nadmienił, że udzielając pierwszą nagrodę cudzoziemcowi, synowi bratniego narodu słowiańskiego, kierował się odwieczną tradycją polską, która kazała na zawsze działać w imię prawdy i sprawiedliwości.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

(The competition jury chaired by Prof. Michałowski, announcing the reasons of the verdict, mentioned that giving the first prize to a foreigner, the son of a brotherly Slavic nation, was guided by the age-old Polish tradition, which commanded one to always act in the name of truth and justice.)

In a way, the decision of the all-Polish jury paid back the debt Poles had owed Russians, since Russia’s affinity for Chopin was often met with ambivalence on the part of Poles in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, there were others who viewed the result in a more pessimistic way. Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski – a writer and publicist who was a member of the organizing committee for the first Chopin Competition, and later a jury member in the second Chopin Competition – wrote in the newspaper \textit{Świat (The World)}: “Cały szereg dobrych patriotów rozpacza, że w Konkursie Chopinowskim zostaliśmy pobici przez Rosjan. \textit{Finis Poloniae} – powiadają”\footnote{As quoted in Stanisław Dybowski, “Konkurs dla Polaków?” in \textit{Chopin Express}, October 12, 2010, 6.} (“A whole group of good patriots laments that we were defeated by the Russians in the Chopin Competition. The End of Poland [\textit{Finis Poloniae}] – they say”). It bears noting that the Latin phrase \textit{Finis Poloniae} is often attributed to Tadeusz Kościuszko when he lost the battle of Maciejowice in 1794;\footnote{Norman Davies cites the phrase but claims that the legend is baseless. See Davies, \textit{God’s Playground: A History of Poland}, \textit{vol. 1} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 541.} Oborin’s victory was perceived by some as a national disaster on the same level as the Battle of Maciejowice since it devastated the Polish hope of producing an international star. Ultimately, artistic criteria and objectivity won over political bias, as Oborin truly stood out from the rest of
the competitors. Another jury member said: Этот только что окончивший консерваторию москвич поразил меня глубже, чем такие зрелые мастера, как Орлов и Боровский... Феномен! Ему не грешно поклониться, ибо он творит красоту.”454 (“That Muscovite, who had just graduated from the conservatory, affected me more deeply than mature masters like Orlov and Borovskii… he is phenomenal! It’s not a sin to bow to him, for he creates beauty”). It became an undisputed fact that the level of Polish pianists was not nearly as high as the Russians because Poland was in no way comparable to other countries in terms of organized musical affairs and opportunities for young pianists. For example, the Soviet Union organized several rounds of internal competitions to select the pianists to play in Warsaw.455 When the five pianists were selected, they played a concert in the Great Hall of the Conservatory on the eve of the competition, January 23, 1927. The program printed the line: “Концерт 5-ти Пианистов, участников Международного конкурса пианистов им. Шопена, организуемого в Варшаве 23-го января т. г.” (“Concert of five pianists, participants at the International Chopin Piano Competition, organized in Warsaw on January 23 of this year”). One line stands out in the program: “Порядок исполнения будет установлен жеребьевкой до начала концерта” (“The order of performance will be determined by a drawing of lots before the beginning of the concert”), in order to imitate the conditions of the competition.

In comparison, during the final round where all contestants had to play a concerto with the orchestra, some Polish participants played with an orchestra for the first time in the rehearsal preceding the performance.456 Mateusz Gliński – a conductor and music critic and a member of the organizing committee for the first Chopin Competition – was even more critical and wrote:

Po smutnych doświadczeniach pierwszego konkursu można było z góry przewidzieć, że polska ekipa pianistowska spotka … poważnych współzawodników. Należało pracować w ciągu pięciu lat (tak, jak czyniono to w Rosji czy na Węgrzech)..., ściągając co najwybitniejsze siły pianistowskie, rozproszone w kraju i za granicą, i stosując surowe wstępne rozgrywki eliminacyjne. Tymczasem ekipa polska...okazała się zespołem najzupełniej przypadkowym. Obok kilku jednostek wybitnych, w gronie tym znalazło się wielu adeptów początkujących, którzy swą grą wywarli przygnębiające wrażenie. Skutki były fatalne: ekipa polska nie tylko przegrała z kretesem swą sprawę, ale przedstawiła z najgorszej strony polską grę fortepianową i polski styl Chopinowski.457

(After the sad experiences of the first competition one can tell in advance that the Polish team would face … some serious rivals. They should have worked in the last five years [just as they do in Russia or in Hungary], getting the most outstanding talents around the country and abroad, and putting in place strict preliminary trials. Instead the Polish team has proven itself an entirely accidental group. Next to a few great individuals, there were a few adept novices whose performances made a miserable impression. The effects were appalling: the Polish team not only completely failed their cause, but they showed the worst side of the Polish piano school and the Polish Chopin style.)

454 As quoted in S. Khentova, Shopen, kakim my ego slyshim (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Muzyka, 1970), 18.
455 In 1949, for example, there were five rounds of internal competition in the Soviet Union. See Davidovich, 40.
456 Some accounts claim that there were no rehearsals due to lack of funds. See Khentova, Shopen, 17.
Oborin’s triumph had multifaceted meanings: it brought him fame and jumpstarted his teaching career at the Moscow Conservatory in 1928\textsuperscript{458}; it also showed the jury’s impartiality and commitment to their responsibility. But more importantly, Oborin’s success shattered the longstanding notion that only Poles could play Chopin properly. In an attempt to comfort Poles and heal their wounded national pride, one critic wrote:

Sąd konkursowy oddał palmy pierwszeństwa rosjaninowi, synowi narodu, który złączony jest z Polską wspólnoty korzeniami słowiańskimi, narodu, który wydał znanych krzewicieli kultu szopenowskiego: Balakirewa, Czajkowskiego, Arenskiego, Glazunowa, Rachmaninowa, Skrjabina. Wynik konkursu obudził pewne poruszenie. Ale z pewnością nie zadowoli on zbytnio tych, którzy w zdrowym świetle widzą sprawy muzyczne naszej epoki, ani też nie “zrani” naszej ambicji narodowej, która czerpać powinna prawdziwe i szczerze zadowolenie ze stwierdzenia, że duch wieszcza polskiego tak bliski i tak zrozumiały jest w obcym, dalekim dziś środowisku, że dzieła jego, przesiąknięte sokami narodowej poezji polskiej, ukazują się na obczyźnie w tak pięknej szacie wykonalczej.\textsuperscript{459}

(The jury gave the first prize to a Russian, the son of a nation that is connected with Poland by mutual Slavic roots, of a nation that produced famous propagators of Chopin’s cult: Balakirev, Tchaikovsky, Arensky, Glazunov, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin. The result of the competition caused some agitation. But it won’t surprise those who see the musical matters of our time in a healthy light; it also won’t “hurt” our national ambition, which should derive true and honest satisfaction with the fact that the spirit of Polish bard is so dear to and understood in foreign and faraway environment. His works, soaked with the essence of national Polish poetry, appear in foreign lands in such a beautiful performance attire.)

While Oborin’s victory undermined previously assumed Polish superiority in Chopin’s music, it improved the perception of Russians in Poland. Poland embraced Oborin despite his Russian identity, because his playing of Chopin deeply touched Poles and transcended national boundaries. The longstanding Polish prejudice towards Russia and Russians thus dissipated for a moment. The breaking of the ice was clear during the competition, as Oborin described the change in the public’s reception: “Я ощущал эту взаимную насторожённо...Играя первую пьесу (Соль-мажорный ноктюрн), Я вдруг почувствовал по реакции публики, что возникает хороший контакт, и подумал: ‘Не пропаду’” (“I felt the mutual wariness...Playing the first piece [G major nocturne], I suddenly felt by the reaction of the audience that good contact was arising, and I thought: ‘I will do well’”).\textsuperscript{460} After the competition, the Soviet pianists performed all over Poland.\textsuperscript{461} Renowned Polish writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz even invited Oborin and other Soviet pianists to his house.\textsuperscript{462} It would not be an exaggeration to compare Oborin anachronistically to Van Cliburn, who has been beloved in Russia to this day since he

\textsuperscript{458} Kulova, 3.
\textsuperscript{459} Muzyka: miesięcznik ilustrowany (February, 1927), 72.
\textsuperscript{460} Khentova, Lev Oborin, 72.
\textsuperscript{461} Lev Oborin: stat’i, vospominaniia, 18.
\textsuperscript{462} Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina, 156.
won the Tchaikovsky competition in 1958.\footnote{Incidentally, Oborin was on the jury of the Tchaikovsky Competition that Cliburn won. See Howard Reich, \textit{Van Cliburn} (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 105.} Similar to Cliburn’s victory in the Soviet Union, Oborin quickly became a favorite in concert halls all over Poland and later even returned to the Chopin Competition as a juror.\footnote{Dąbrowski, 46.} Likewise, he became a hero in the Soviet Union. Even a poem was written in his honor. The poem, by S. Bolotin, was published in \textit{Sovetskoe Iskusstvo}, no. 5 (1933):

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Oborin}

\begin{quote}
Как дэнди лондонский одет,
Как балерина знаменит,
Он вундеркиндом средних лет
В волнах шопенистых звенит.
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Oborin}

\begin{quote}
Dressed like a London dandy,
Like a famous ballerina,
He is a middle-aged wunderkind
Rings in Chopin-esque waves.
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

This highly metaphoric and compact poem, written in iambic tetrameter, can be read as an ode. It is somewhat peculiar to describe Oborin as a dandy and a ballerina (and the gender of \textit{ballerina} does not match the gender of its modifying adjective) and to call him a “middle-aged wunderkind” when he was only twenty-six years old at the time the poem was written. It seems that Bolotin juxtaposes two somewhat similar names – “Oborin” and “Onegin” (the protagonist of Alexander Pushkin’s \textit{Eugene Onegin}) – and compares Oborin’s playing to Onegin’s character. The line “Dressed like a London dandy” is a direct quote that describes the eponymous character from Chapter 1 Canto 4 of \textit{Eugene Onegin}. Even though Onegin is in many ways the antithesis of the Soviet positive hero, linking Oborin to Pushkin’s famous work attests to Oborin’s achievement. Besides the similarity in the name, Bolotin may have chosen Onegin because he noticed the implicit reference to Chopin and Poland in the same canto, which reads “Легко мазурку танцевал” (“He could easily dance a mazurka”). One can argue that Oborin’s triumph at the competition and his ability to play Polish music convincingly match Onegin’s skill at dancing a mazurka.
Oborin’s victory was caricatured by a well-known Soviet political cartoonist, Boris Efimov, who drew an illustration in 1927 for the newspaper Izvestiia entitled “Bol’shevistkie intrigi” (“Bolshevik intrigues”). The cartoon puts two worlds – represented by contrasting ages and colors – in diametric opposition: the inept West and the promising Communism. The cartoon shows that Winston Churchill (who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time) has just learned of Oborin’s victory in Warsaw. Churchill in response says “Ч-чёрт! И тут действуют руки Москвы!!” (“The devil! The hand of Moscow is at work here!”). Prime minister Stanley Baldwin adds: “Несомненно агент Коминтерна” (“Undoubtedly [the work of] a Comintern agent”). Represented by Churchill, people in the West are depicted as envious and flustered and attribute Oborin’s victory to Communist political manipulation. The caricature shows the tension between the West and the Soviet Union, where even a musical triumph was politicized.

---

465 In Adzhemov’s commentary, he even compares the two worlds as “дряхлость уходящего мира” (“decrepitude of the outgoing world”) and ”молодость мира” (“youth of the world”). See K. Adzhemov, “Lev Nikolaevich Oborin” in Lev Oborin, 134.
466 Khentova, Lev Oborin, 74.
As mentioned above, the first Chopin Competition lacked participants from more powerful European nations. Even though there were no contestants from England in the first competition, Churchill was used to symbolize the West, whose superiority in art had been surpassed by the Soviet Union, represented by Oborin. We notice Oborin as the youngest and tallest one standing straight in the illustration, in contrast to Churchill. We note the air behind Churchill’s ankle, which can be interpreted as some kind of braking motion, symbolizing the fact that the West’s superiority in art and military power are halted in comparison to the Soviet Union.

After the First Competition: Polish and Russian Responses

The following periodicals covered Oborin’s triumph: Рабочая газета (The Worker's Newspaper), Известия (Izvestiia [News]), Правда (The Truth), Вечерняя Москва (Evening Moscow), Красная газета (Red newspaper), Новый Зритель (New Spectator), Жизнь Искусства (Life of Art), Заря Востока (Dawn of the East), Современная музыка (Contemporary Music), Огонек (Spark), Красная Нива (Red Field), Музыка и революция (Music and Revolution). The official newspaper Pravda, known for its dryness, published an article by Evgenii Braudo on February 4, 1927, entitled “Победители на всемирном конкурсе пианистов” (“Winners at the world competition for pianists”). Instead of the usual modifier “mezhdunarodnyi” (“international”) to describe the competition, the article’s title uses the word “vsemirnyi” (“universal”), which implies a larger territory, symbolizing that the Soviet Union has conquered the world musically. The article states:

467 RGALI, Lev Oborin collection, fond. 2754, op. 1.
Successes of our pianists in Warsaw showed that during the years of the Revolution, the Russian piano school not only has not lost its former position, but has proved to be at the height of the most stringent demands of the modern virtuoso art of the West.

Elsewhere we find similar rhetoric – that the success of Soviet pianists was related to the success of the political system. Nation played a greater role than individual talent and effort; the competition became elevated on a national level. For example, music historian Anatolii Solovtsov states that the Russian rendition of Chopin captures the essence of Chopin, in contrast to salon-mannered or mechanical interpretations in capitalist countries. Vainkop adds that the victory of Oborin showed the “indisputable superiority of Soviet interpretation of Chopin” (“неоспоримое превосходство советской интерпретации Шопена”). The Russian involvement with Chopin’s legacy as well as Russians’ superior ability to play Chopin gradually became an accepted matter of fact, as the 1949 Chopin Competition winner Halina Czerny-Stefańska stated: “Wiedzieliśmy od dawna, że pianistyka radziecka zajmuje przodujące miejsce w świecie… wiemy, jaką czcią i kultem otaczana jest w Związku Radzieckim pamięć Chopina. Dopuszczenie wszystkich pianistów radzieckich do rozgrywek ostatecznych nie jest dla nikogo niespodzianką” (“We knew early on that the Soviet piano school is among the world’s best… we know the kind of reverence and cult that surrounds Chopin’s legacy in the Soviet Union. The fact that all the Soviet pianists got into the finals is not a surprise for anyone”).

It was not clear whether the competition would be a one-time event or an ongoing one. Evidence shows that the subsequent competitions were not completely expected nor announced far in advance. In an interview with the winner of the third Chopin Competition in 1937, Soviet pianist Iakov Zak (1913-1976) noted that potential contestants did not know whether the competition would take place until December preceding the competition. When the competition was announced, a screening competition (“отборочный конкурс”) had to be established quickly in order to select pianists to represent the Soviet Union.

The influence of politics may be debated, but in comparison with the second Chopin Competition in 1932 – where anti-Soviet circles and particularly the White émigrés did everything to interrupt the performances of Soviet musicians – the Soviet pianists were treated with respect and “[п]ублика с обострённым вниманием отнеслась к выступлениям пианистов из Советского Союза” (“[t]he audience listened to the performances of the Soviet pianists with acute attention”), a fact attested by several reviews of the competition. Polish composer Karol Szymanowski praised the performance of Russian pianists highly, saying that

---

468 A. Solovtsov, Shopen: Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1949), 133.
469 Iu, Vainkop, Friderik Shopen (Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1950), 46.
470 Stanisław Dybowsk, Halina Czerny-Stefańska: episody z życia chopinistki (Warsaw: Selene, 2006), 68.
471 A. Vitsinskii, Besedy s pianistami (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2007), 174.
472 Khentova, Lev Oborin, 104.
473 Adzhemov, 45.
474 See, for example, Kronika, 15-17.
they “просто покорили наш музыкальный мир. Пришли, поиграли и победили... Это нельзя назвать успехом, даже не фурором. То было сплошное победное шествие, триумф!”
(“simply conquered our musical world. They came, played and won… One can’t call it success, or even a furor. It was an utter victorious procession, a triumph!”). The competition received coverage in Polish periodicals such as Świat, Wiadomości Literackie, and Przegląd Muzyczny – the first two were literary weeklies, and the latter a musical journal. Karol Stromenger, a prominent music critic, emphasized the fact that non-Poles could play Chopin as well as his countrymen and that the competition was mainly between Poles and Russians. In Wiadomości Literackie, Iwaszkiewicz, who later wrote not only a biography of Chopin but also a well-known Chopin-inspired play Lato w Nohant (Summer in Nohant, 1936, discussed in Interlude 2), spoke enthusiastically of the competition and its promising future. He praised the organization of the competition, saying that “doskonała myśl zorganizowania Konkursu Chopinowskiego nie zawiodła i w realizacji przeszła wszelkie oczekiwania” (“the perfect idea of organizing the Chopin Competition did not disappoint, and the implementation went beyond all expectations”).

Even though the competition was not a great success in terms of showcasing Polish pianists, it was very successful in transforming the image of Chopin and putting him back in the center of Polish cultural life.

However, Iwaszkiewicz also expressed his concern for the future of the pianists: “Technicznie młodzież bije najlepszych pianistów starego pokolenia - ale co się stanie z tą przeważającą hiperprodukcją pianistyczną?” (“Technically the younger generation beats the best pianists of the old generation, but what will happen with the overwhelming pianistic hyper-production?”). Iwaszkiewicz’s use of “hyperproduction” not only compares musical institutions to factories, producing a multitude of rank and file musicians who often fall short of being artists, but it shows a changing perspective on music. The implication of modernity and technology shows the clash between the old and the new view of music. The overproduction of pianists in conservatories exists side by side with the mechanical reproduction and mass consumption of radio and recordings (to be discussed later). Iwaszkiewicz’s review sums up the phenomenon of the Chopin Competition and expresses his ambivalence toward it. On the one hand, the competition presented a unique opportunity for musicians and the public alike to engage deeply with Chopin’s music; on the other hand, the competition format evaluated music, a highly subjective and non-quantifiable art, with supposedly objective criteria and performance standards – not to mention the stress that contestants endured. Iwaszkiewicz’s review echoed what critic Jeremy Eichler and composer Bela Bartok later would say about competitions, namely how competition as an institution discourages individual expression and produces mediocre pianists.

Iwaszkiewicz continued to attend the competition and later became involved in its organization. He also wrote about the Chopin Competitions; for example, in a letter written shortly after the 1960 competition, he confirmed the continuing interest of the Warsaw public in the competition and its utmost respect for the performers and the music:

Jeżeli co mi się podobało w tym konkursie… to warszawska publiczność. Była jak zawsze warszawska publiczność – taka nieznośna, że chwilami chciało się ją wychłostać

475 Khentova, 75.
476 From Wiadomości Literackie no. 7 (1927). As quoted in Wysocki, 22.
477 During the fourth competition in 1949, special attention was paid to objectively judging the performances. In the first two rounds, contestants played behind the curtain and thus were invisible to the jury. See Wysocki, 57-58.
– a czasami tak kochana, że wprost wzruszająca... Jestem przecież stałym bywalcem konkursów i pamiętam, co zeszłym razem działo się z Ringeissenem, a jeszcze dawniej przed wojną z Sagałowem, kiedy cała sala tupała i skandowała: „dru-ga, dru-ga!”; bo jej faworytowi przyznano tylko czwartą nagrodę... Ale tym razem publiczność słuchała uważnie, cierpiała męki niewygody, odróżnie śledziła wszystkie błędy i omyłki – a co najważniejsze chwilami potrafiła mimo szalonego przepelnienia Sali stworzyć takie chwile śmiertelnej ciszy, jakie świadczyły o prawdziwym przejęciu się muzyką i interpretacją.478

(If there was something I liked in this competition ... it was the Warsaw audience. It was Warsaw audience as usual – so unbearable that at times I wanted to whip them – and sometimes so dear and simply touching ... I am a regular at competitions and remember what happened last time with Ringeissen and, before the war, with Sagałow – when the entire hall stamped and chanted: “se-cond, se-cond,” because the audience favorite only received the fourth prize. .. But this time, the audience listened attentively, suffered torture of discomfort, followed all the errors and mistakes – and most importantly, even at times when the hall was packed beyond capacity, it was able to create those moments of deadly silence, which testified to real reception of music and interpretation.)

Figure 14: (from the left) Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Zbigniew Drzewiecki and Stanisław Szpinalski award the first prize to Adam Harasiewicz in 1955

The Role of Radio in the Competition and the Propagation of Chopin’s Music

The Chopin Competition received widespread publicity thanks to the press and, more importantly, the radio (and in later competitions, television and the Internet).479 While no official figures exist, a Polish composer and critic Zygmunt Mycielski estimated in 1960 the number of people following the competition to be somewhere in the millions. Titled “Znaczenie konkursu” (“The meaning of the competition”), Mycielski’s article states:

478 The article appeared in Nowa Kultura nr. 14 (1960) and is reprinted in Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina, 182.
479 The most recent competition, in 2010, was webcast live around the world.
Several million radio listeners and television viewers listen to the competition, and thousands of people are very keen on the way of [piano] playing, acquainting themselves with the work of Chopin – instead of sport ring and field, in the tram one hears discussions about mazurkas and ballades, about the playing of Chinese, Persian or Mexican pianists. Art is going through a process of massification. An intimate experience becomes the subject of disputes and bets. Thanks to the radio and television reproduction, [the competition] reaches corners of which the founders never dreamt.

The passage shows the sense of community created by the Chopin Competition. Thanks to the radio, the community is not limited to inside the concert hall but includes ordinary places, like inside the tram. The neologistic word “umasowienia” (“massification”) captures the importance of the radio since it contributes to the ubiquity of Chopin’s music. By juxtaposing Chopin’s music with performers of various origins (e.g. Chinese, Persian and Mexican), the passage indicates the changing status of Chopin from a uniquely Polish phenomenon to a universal figure. If we discuss the phenomenon using Anderson’s “imagined community,” we see that the members of a community can be connected not only by language, religion, or blood but also by their common love for Chopin’s music. In this sense, the community consisted not only of Poles and Slavs but also Asians, Latinos, and Africans. In racially homogeneous Poland, the Chopin Competition continues to show extraordinary diversity in terms of its contestants.

**Radio and Chopin in the Soviet Union**

In the Soviet Union, there were several radio programs about Chopin in 1936. The radio programs contained a narrative of Chopin’s biography interspersed with his music, including the “Revolutionary Etude,” the “Raindrop Prelude,” Nocturne, Waltz in E minor, Heroic Polonaise, Mazurkas and the Second Piano Sonata. In the transcripts for these programs, published as “Микрофонные материалы Управления местного вещания ВРК” (“Audio materials of the VRK local station”), Chopin was the fourth in the concert cycle “Romantics” (“Концерт Цикла ‘Романтики’”), preceding Liszt and Wagner. Later, in 1940, when Poland was occupied by Nazi Germany, there were more radio programs about Chopin in the Soviet Union: a cycle of four programs about Chopin 1810-1849 (Цикл четырех передач о Шопене 1810-1849).

---

480 Published in *Ruch Muzyczny* (1960), as quoted in Wysocki, 80.

481 There were contestants from Africa. Furthermore, Czesław Miłosz wrote a poem in 1953 entitled “Na małą murzynkę grająca Chopina” (“On a little black girl playing Chopin”), in which he juxtaposes Chopin’s music and the black race. In the poem, Miłosz addresses Chopin and says: “If you had seen [the black girl playing your music], you’d have said it was all worth it.”

1. Юности Шопена (“Chopin’s Youth”)
2. Шопен на острове Майорке (“Chopin on the Island of Majorca”)
3. Шопен в Ногане (“Chopin in Nohant”)
4. Последние годы Шопена (“Chopin’s Last Years”)

The transcript of the radio program shows that the format is similar to that of the 1936 program: musical works interspersed in biographical narrative. The difference is that the 1940 program traces Chopin’s life from the very beginning, with the Mazurka op. 6 no. 2 followed by Rondo in C minor. The program interestingly concludes with the C minor Prelude.

**Radio and Chopin in Poland**

Even though the scale of the first Chopin competition was rather modest, the number of applicants/contestants for the second and third competitions grew almost exponentially: 34/26 in 1927, 200/68 in 1932, and 250/79 in 1937. The competition reached a much broader audience thanks to the broadcast from the Polish Radio (Polskie Radio), which was founded in February of 1925 and began broadcasting in April of 1926, just months before the competition. We know that the radio was broadcasting Chopin’s music because Oborin was apparently listening to other people’s performances when he was not performing. In one account, he spent time “у радиоприемника, слушая концерты первого и второго туров, транслировавшиеся многими радиостанциями мира” (“at the radio receiver listening to concerts of the first and second rounds, which were transmitted by many radio stations of the world”). Radio was also used to communicate the results, both within Poland and abroad. After the announcement the reporters and press would transmit the news to their respective countries.

At first the strength of the radio was weak – only 0.5 kilowatts, but in December 1926, the radio station moved and strengthened its wave to 10-kilowatts. The Polish Radio hired two anchors – Tadeusz Bocheński and Janina Sztompkówna – and musicians, such as the Szymanowskis (Karol and Feliks, the latter a pianist) and, later, Władysław Szpilman began to perform on the radio regularly. A critic describes the radio and its dissemination as an explosive bomb that is impossible to contain. A commemorative recording entitled “Głosy naszej historii: 80-lecie Polskiego Radia” (“Voices of Our History: Eightieth Anniversary of the Polish Radio,” 2005) confirms that Chopin’s music played an integral role in the history of the Polish Radio from the very beginning. For example, Chopin's Polonaise in A major (also known as the “Military Polonaise”) was played at the beginning of the broadcast as “sygnał Warszawy I” (“Signal of Warsaw I,” CD 1, track 1). During the Second World War, Paderewski’s performance of the same polonaise was aired (CD 1, track 18). Notwithstanding the poor quality of the transmission, performances were aired on the radio throughout Poland. The Polish

---

483 *Tsikl chetyrekh peredach o Shopene* (Moscow: Na pravakh rukopisi, 1940). The text of each program is available in Moscow’s Lenin Library.


485 Khentova, 105.

486 For example, in 1932 results were announced at 1 am and in 1937, 2:30 am. See *Międzynarodowe Konkursy im. Fryderyka Chopina*, 19.


488 Waldorff, 42.

489 Ibid., 42.
Radio also took on an active role in promoting national culture under the auspices of the Chopin
Competition; from the first competition, it sponsored a special prize for the best interpretation of
mazurkas, the first of which was won by Henryk Sztompka in 1927.490

Musicologist Józef Kański points out the affinity of Polish Radio for Chopin’s music:
“Chopin ma dziś zreszta wiele “świątyń” w Polsce; pierwsza – to chyba… Polskie Radio; te
miliony abonentów to przecież miliony słuchaczy Chopina, z których część już zdolała otworzyć
swe serca na muzykę Chopina. Albo rzesze młodzieży szkolnej, której się mówi o Chopinie,
której się go daje słuchać.”491 (“Today Chopin has a lot of ‘temples’ in Poland; the first is
probably Polish Radio; the millions of subscribers means millions of listeners of Chopin, a part
of whom already opened their hearts to Chopin’s music. Or masses of school children, to whom
Chopin is talked about and played”). Technology and the interest in Chopin’s music represented
a dialogic relationship. The popularity of Chopin relied on technological tools to disseminate his
music, but at the same time technology helped foster interest in Chopin’s music. Thanks to radio
transmission, the competition became a unifying event for a large number of Poles to overcome
distance and in a way “come together” as a community to listen to Chopin’s music
simultaneously. Stanisław Ziembicki’s poem, to be discussed later, illustrates how listening to
the radio transformed what was previously available only in the concert hall into an experience
shared by different groups of people.

The Chopin Competition in Polish Literature

The Chopin Competition stabilized the legacy of Chopin in Polish culture, and the music
contest itself in turn became mythologized. We will consider three poems and one play: Jerzy
Ficowski’s “Oczy Imre Ungara” (“The Eyes of Imre Ungar,” 1948), Stanisław Ziembicki’s
“Piąty Konkurs Chopinowski” (“The Fifth Chopin Competition,” 1955), Irena Chylanka’s
“Chopinowski Konkurs” (“Chopin Competition,” 2000) and Andrzej Pytlak’s Konkurs
Chopinowski: Sztuka telewizyjna (Chopin Competition: a television play, 1996). These literary
works document various aspects of the competition such as the audience, the participants, and
the radio broadcast. However, these works are better read not for their historical accuracy but for
the common tropes they use and the emotional sentiments they convey. Even though the texts
vary in their quality and often rely on clichés, they constitute part of a larger literary canon that
deals with Chopin’s music and serve to reaffirm Chopin’s role in Polish culture.

The first poem we will consider is written by Jerzy Ficowski (1924-2006), who published
the poem in Dziennik Literacki:
Oczy Imre Ungara
Oczy masz większe niż ludzkie.
Widzę je, kiedy zamknę powieki.
Dali ci bukiet czerwonych goździków,
a ty – nie wiesz, że są czerwone.
Prowadzili powoli twą twarz podniesioną
i oddali muzyce, aby wiodła dalej.
Innym – oczy patrzą tkliwie, lub drapieżnie.
Ty – dziesięciorgiem palców, sam na sam z
muzyką,
tkasz dźwięki jakbyś dotykał motyla,
łub jak chmura zwiastujesz burzę.
Nie chcę bieli klawiszy, światła lamp,
nie chęć głowy twej, co jak posąg
widzialna jest szczodrze wszystkim,
lecz niewidząca.
Bo kiedy mnie oświetla muzyka Chopina
spod rąk twych, co widzą lepiej niż inne –
- zielonym blaskiem nokturnu,
błękitnym niebem mazurka,
czy czarnoziemną żałobą marsza,
z którego jak srebrny gołąb,
umyka płacz dzwonów i serc –
widzę oczy Imre Ungara –
większe niż moje, wszechobejmujące,
co się poczęły z melodyi.
Zasobny w słuch, dotyk, smak i powonienie.
Daleś mi skarb swój, który
Przekracza pojemność moich pięciu zmysłów.
I nie pomieszcę go w sobie, nawet
gdy zamknę oczy, moje oczy,
które widzą kolor kwiatów i twarz twą:
maskę muzyki zapatrzoną w ciemność.
Dali ci bukiet cynobrowych kwiatów.
Pachną w twych rękach i są tak czerwone!
Czerwieńsze o całą twoją niemożność
ujrzenia.
Ubożsi od ciebie – nie mamy oczu takich,
które by mimo światła, mimo barw
odkryły – wolne – tyle barw i światła,
wbrew wyrokom nieuchronnych kształtów –
po tamtej stronie widzalnego.

The Eyes of Imre Ungar
You have eyes greater than human ones.
I see them when I close my eyelids.
They gave you a bouquet of red carnations,
and you – don’t know that they are red.
They led your lifted face slowly
and gave it to music to lead further.
For others – eyes look tenderly, or predatorily.
You – with ten fingers, one on one with the
music,
you weave the sounds as if you were touching
a butterfly,
or as a cloud heralding the storm.
I don’t want whiteness of keys, light of lamps
I don’t want your head, which like a statue
is generously visible to all,
but unseeing.
Because when Chopin’s music illuminates me
under your hands, which see better than others
– with green glow of a nocturne,
azure sky mazurka,
or black soil funeral march,
from which like a silver dove,
cry of bells and hearts escape –
I see the eyes of Imre Ungar –
greater than mine, all-encompassing,
which were conceived from melody.
Rich in sound, touch, taste and smell.
You gave me your treasure, which
Exceeds the capacity of my five senses.
And I won’t hold it in myself, even
when I close my eyes, my eyes,
which see the color of flowers and your face:
the mask of music staring into the darkness.
They gave you a bouquet of cinnabar flowers.
Smell in your hands and are so red!
They are redder with all your inability to see.
Poorer than you - we do not have such eyes,
which despite the light and color
discovered – free – so much color and light,
against the judgments of inevitable shapes –
on the other side of what one can see.

Imre Ungar (1909-72), a blind Hungarian pianist, won the second prize in the Second
Competition in 1932 and began to concertize frequently in Poland and Europe. Ungar had
received critical acclaim during his competition performance. Stanisław Niewiadomski wrote of his performance:

Idealnego laureata znaleźliśmy. Był też nim bez najmniejszej wątpliwości Imre Ungar, nie dlatego, że każde serce tklwjszej natury czuło się osobistymi losami silnie wzruszone, lecz dlatego, że skupienie wewnętrzne, będące następniew nieszczęsnej doli niewidomego, wytworzyło w grze jego oddźwięk tragedii, wstrząsającej słuchacza każdą niemal frazą muzyczną. Więc tu nie sam odniósł zwycięstwo, lecz jakoś moc duszy ludzkiej, wolna od wszelkich konwencji światowych. I wszelkich naleciałości z zewnątrz. A materialna strona tej gry przecudnej stała się tylko formą, która moc ową przybrała. [...] Powiodło się odkryć i światu pokazać artystyczną duszę tak niezwykłą.

(We have found the ideal laureate, who was without the slightest doubt Imre Ungar, not because every heart of more affectionate nature felt and was strongly moved by [his] personal fate, but because [his] inner concentration, a consequence of unfortunate lot for the blind man, created in his playing a resonance of tragedy, stirring the listener with almost every musical phrase. Thus he did not come out victorious on his own, but rather was moved by the strength of the human spirit, free of all worldly conventions and all the traces from the outside. And the material aspect of his wondrous playing simply became a form of this force [...]. It is fortunate to discover and show the world such an extraordinary artistic soul.)

Ficowski’s poem can be read in tandem with Niewiadomski’s comment. Both texts foreground Ungar’s blindness; Ungar’s handicap separates him because it puts him in another realm and allows him to understand the nature of tragedy – a perceived requirement to perform Chopin well – on a personal level. Ungar’s eyes are not described as a defect; instead, they are described as “greater than human” and something “we don’t have.” Ungar’s blindness is not seen as a disadvantage since his four senses outperform laymen’s five senses; for example, Ungar sees not with his eyes but with his hands, and his fingers are endowed with the ability to have a tête-à-tête with music. The adversity Ungar endured puts him on par with the notion of the Romantic suffering artist of which Chopin was an archetype. Like the Romantic ideal, Ficowski portrays the whole being of Imre Ungar as personification of music, particularly with the line “[oczy Imre Ungara] się poczęły z melodii” (“[the eyes of Imre Ungar] were conceived from melody”).

Ficowski’s poem is written from the first-person point of view, observing and responding to Ungar’s playing. Written in an exalted Romantic style, the poem reinforces some of the familiar language and tropes that we have come to associate with Chopin, such as treasure, nature, color and light. For example, each musical genre mentioned (nocturne, mazurka, and funeral march) is linked to a natural phenomenon, and Ungar’s playing is compared to touching a butterfly or a cloud heralding the storm. Through this poem, we see how Ficowski further underscores the lack of artificiality in Chopin’s music and suggests the intimate relationship between Chopin’s music and Polish landscape and countryside. Furthermore, the predominant

---

492 Ungar was actually tied for first prize, but the regulation did not allow for two first prizes. Thus, the first prize was decided by a coin toss, which Ungar lost. The first prize was given to Alexander Uninsky, a Russian-American pianist.

493 Taken from http://pl.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/persons/detail/name/Imre_Ungar/id/28/ (last accessed November 18, 2012).
The theme of the Chopin Competition appears in poetry again in Stanisław Ziembicki’s poem, “Piąty Konkurs Chopinowski” (“The Fifth Chopin Competition”), which stands out from a handful of poems dealing with the Chopin Competition because it combines both the mystical and mundane aspects of the Chopin legend. The poem, first published in Nowa Kultura (New Culture, 1955), is divided into two parts, each representing music in a different world. The first part rehashes the mythical description of Chopin, while the second describes a family listening to the competition on the radio. The two parts complement each other; the first describes the elevated status of music, whereas the second illustrates the juxtaposition of music – ostensibly representing high culture – and daily life.

Piąty Konkurs Chopinowski (1955)

I.
Czyja ręka dorówna Chopinowskiej dłoni,
Nie pokłóci się z sobą, a tak się nachyli
Jakby między palcami grającymi motyl
Miał przelecieć, nie tracąc na skrzydłach pożółty,
Chociaż ręce grające szybsze są od chwili
I płyną, jak czas płynie, dzwonią, jak deszcz dzwoni...

Czyje ucho wśród dźwięków tysiąca odnajdzie
Nawet listek, co zaraz zacznie się zielenić
I nagle zaszeleści w topniejącym sadzie,
I zabłysnie, by wszystkie lasy opromienić,
Kto oprze swoje palce na płatkach sto kroci,
Kto muzykę posrebrzy i ciszę pozłości...

Czyja ręka połączy surowe klawisze
Tak jak dłonie najdroższe, które się rozstają,
By po latach, po chwili, do siebie powrócić,
Kto potrafi uciszzyć nawet samą ciszę,
Aby można posłuchać, jak kolory grają.
Jak niebo się kołysze i jak gwiazda nuci...

II.
Matka igłę odkłada, syn zamyka książkę,
Córka długo chleb trzyma, zanim go odkraje.
Ojciec zdjął okulary i na progu staje,
I słucha, obracając na palcu obrączkę.
Zasłuchali się wszyscy. Powoli zanika
Igła, książka, stół, profil... zostaje muzyka.

494 Ziembicki was the author and editor of Prowrót do Miasta and Warszawa Twoje Miasto, respectively, and was involved with the Sztuka i Naród (Art and the Nation) underground monthly literary magazine, published from 1942 to 1944. He also wrote the lyrics to Piosenka o Pałacu Kultury (1953), with music by Władysław Szpilman.
Matka igłę nawleka, syn książkę otwiera,
Córka w chlebie powoli srebrny nóż zanurza,
A ojciec okulary na oczy zakłada:
Igła błyszczy jak gwiazda nie gasnąca, wierna,
Chleb pachnie jak wniesiona do pokoju róża,
Na okularach ojca srebrna kropla siadła.

The Fifth Chopin Competition (1955)

I.
Whose hand can equal that of Chopin’s,
It won’t argue with each other, and it will lean
As if a butterfly should fly over between the playing fingers, not losing glitter on its wings
Though playing hands are faster than an instant
And they float, like time floats, ring, like the rain rings

Whose ear will find amongst a thousand sounds
Even a small leaf that will soon turn green
And suddenly rustle in a melting orchard,
And sparkle, to brighten all the forests
Who will lean his fingers on the flakes of daisies
Who will make the music silver and silence gold…

Whose hand will connect the raw keys
Like the dearest hands, who will part ways,
So that after years, after a while, they return to each other,
Who will be able to silence even silence itself,
In order to listen to how colors play.
How the sky swings and the star hums…

II.
The mother puts the needle aside, the son closes the book,
The daughter holds the bread for a long time, before cutting it.
The father took off glasses and stands on the threshold,
And listens, turning to the wedding ring on his finger.
Everyone got lost listening. Gradually there fade away
Needle, book, table, profile… music stays.

The mother puts thread in the needle, the son opens the book,
The daughter slowly plunges the silver knife into the bread,
And the father puts his glasses on:
The needle shines like a star, not extinguished, loyal,
The bread smells like a rose carried into the room,
On the father’s glasses settles a silver drop.

The structure for the first part of the poem is built on a series of questions. The question word “czyja” (“whose”) begins each stanza; combined with the frequent use of “kto” (“who”),
the first part of the poem creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and suspense, further enhanced by the ellipses that conclude each stanza. The first stanza zooms in on the hand and fingers and reinforces the familiar image of Chopin’s hand, using words such as ręka, dłoń, palce and ręce (hand, palm of hand, fingers, and hands, respectively). The poem opens with the line: “Czyja ręka dorówna Chopinowskiej dłoni” (“Whose hand can equal that of Chopin’s”). No single contestant is named, but one can sense the excitement of the competition where everyone wants to know who will win. In the poem, hands are endowed with the ability to float and ring (płyną, dzwonią) and make a raw keyboard (surowe klawisze) come to life. Similar to Ficowski, in Ziembicki’s poetic imagination, music is endowed with transformative powers and synesthetic qualities, as exemplified by the juxtaposition of color and sound. The poem links tangible objects such as instruments and hands with intangible things – colors, the sky and stars (kolory grają, niebo się kołysze, gwiazda nuci). In the second part of the poem, the objects in the first stanza are transformed in the second: a needle shines like a star (igła błyszczy jak gwiazda), bread smells like a rose (Chleb pachnie jak wniesiona do pokoju róża). Both needle and bread are objects that symbolize family warmth; the mundane objects now co-exist with music. Cutting the bread (Chleb), which is mentioned twice in the second stanza, is described not with the usual “kroić” but with the unusual verb “zanurzać” (“to submerge”).

Ziembicki’s poem fittingly illustrates the notion of the “holy triangle” of the musical experience, which states that the three elements of a musical experience (composer, performer, listener) are equally important in constituting a musical experience.\footnote{Benjamin Britten, \textit{On Receiving the First Aspen Award} (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 20.} English composer Benjamin Britten says:

[The magic of music] comes only with the sounding of the music, with the turning of the written note into sound – and it only comes (or comes most intensely) when the listener is one with the composer, either as a performer himself, or as a listener in active sympathy. Simply to read a score in one’s armchair is not enough for evoking this quality.\footnote{Ibid., 18.}

One must face the fact today that the vast majority of musical performances take place as far away from the original as it is possible to imagine: I do not mean simply \textit{Falstaff} being given in Tokyo, or the Mozart Requiem in Madras. I mean of course that such works can be audible in any corner of the globe, at any moment of the day or night, through a loudspeaker, without question of suitability or comprehensibility. Anyone, anywhere, at any time, can listen to the B minor Mass upon one condition only – that they possess a machine. No qualification is required of any sort – faith, virtue, education, experience, age. Music is now free for all... Music demands more from a listener than simply the possession of a tape-machine or a transistor radio. It demands some preparation, some effort, a journey to a special place, saving up for a ticket, some homework on the program perhaps, some clarification of the ears and sharpening of the instincts.\footnote{Ibid., 19-20.}

In other words, music demands as much effort of the listener as it does of the composer and the performer. A piece of music becomes futile and powerless if it lacks listeners who not only appreciate but ultimately propagate it. Like Ficowski’s poem, Ziembicki’s poem focuses on
the listeners, as it contextualizes the reaction to the competition by grounding it in a typical family. Traditionally, concert halls have been considered spaces designed to set music apart from mundane social life, where laymen are separated from high culture and consequently do not play a role in its development. Ziembicki’s poem, however, juxtaposes a familial setting with Chopin’s music, thus blending high culture with everyday circumstances. With evolving technology (i.e. radio), Chopin’s music can now be disseminated widely and reach an unprecedented number of people. Chopin is no longer the property of aristocrats and salon attendees, but of ordinary people of all backgrounds.

The two stanzas in the second part resemble a mirror reflection, with the same subject but opposite actions (e.g. closing → opening book, removing → putting on glasses). The first stanza describes how each family member paused his or her mundane activities (such as sewing and cutting bread) to listen attentively to the competition, first with the regular verb “słuchać,” and then with a more descriptive “zasłuchać się”, which implies being engrossed in the process of listening to music. One realizes that even though the four characters mentioned are each doing their own task in different places (e.g. kitchen and study), they stop their respective activities and unite when Chopin’s music comes up. Here, listening to the radio reinforces the notion of “unisonance,” as radio makes it possible to engage in a common activity at the same time in different places. In the final line of the poem, we see that the father has shed tears, being overwhelmed by the emotional experience of listening to Chopin’s music. Ziembicki’s poem leads us to consider the significance of radio. First, the act of listening to the radio is an intimate experience. Unlike a public performance in a concert hall, radio is usually listened to at home or in other more private settings. Second, radio emphasizes hearing as seeing becomes irrelevant (an interesting echo to Ficowski’s poem). Third, a performance on the radio is inherently anonymous. Even though the performer is announced, one may not necessarily know who he or she is and will not see the performer. Not only is the performer largely anonymous, so are the listeners. All the characters in Ziembicki’s poem are referred to by their role and not by name, because the name of the characters does not matter as much as the role they play. The focus is not on the individuals but rather the collective. Anderson has written “[The community] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Ziembicki’s poem shows the effectiveness of a twentieth-century technological invention in disseminating and preserving Chopin’s legacy.

The Chopin Competition had gained a high social and political status before the outbreak of the Second World War. Even though the Filharmonia Narodowa (National Philharmonic) building – where the Chopin Competition had been held prior to the war – was completely destroyed, the Chopin Competition was one of the post-war reconstruction priorities. After the war, the Chopin Competition became even more relevant, because a large number of national competitions were established (such as the Busoni and Paganini Competitions). As a part of the centennial celebration of Chopin’s death in 1949, the fourth competition took place in a smaller hall called “Roma,” which was a movie theatre before the war. According to Żurawlew, the first post-war competition became a manifestation of the cult of Chopin, and the whole country came together to realize the event (“realizacją IV-ego Konkursu zajęło się Państwo”). Poles also made a special effort to increase their competitiveness. In 1937, an in-country qualifying round

---

498 Anderson, 6.
499 Dąbrowski, 84.
eliminacja”) was created, wherein selected candidates could perform with an orchestra before
the competition for the purpose of rehearsing. By 1949, candidates received scholarships and even concert attires from Moda Polska so they could devote their full attention to competition preparation after the internal qualifying round. The designated contestants lived in special housings in Łagów Lubuski (in western Poland, not far from the German border) and received professional training from the top Chopin experts and professors until the time of the competition. The Ministry of Culture and Art funded an orchestra – the Filharmonia Poznańska – to accompany the young pianists for their concerto rehearsal. Polish Radio even provided recording services to allow the pianists to listen to themselves. This effort had immediate results, as Poles (Halina Czerny-Stefańska and Adam Harasiewicz) won the next two competitions in 1949 and 1955. However, after the 1955 competition, the “boot camp” training method was abolished because some critics complained of the lack of artistic personality resulting from collective training by various professors.

As the competition progressed through the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century, each competition was subject to reflection and evaluation. Even though the consensus for the first competition had been positive, one shortcoming was the lack of non-Slavic participants. The lack of diversity changed gradually, as the “international” nature of the Chopin Competition became more pronounced in subsequent competitions. As we know, Hungarian pianist Imre Ungar received the second prize in 1932. In the first competition there were only European participants. In the second competition (1932), there were already Brazilian and American participants and there was significant sponsorship from the Polish-Japanese Society in Tokyo. In the third competition (1937) two pianists from Japan and one pianist from Palestine were represented. The question of non-Poles playing Chopin is a complex one that cannot be answered by the cliché of “music is the universal language” alone. Rather, the issue of Chopin in relation to race and Polish nationhood is a long-standing issue that dates back to late nineteenth century, when even the spelling of Chopin’s name was debated. Post-1945 Poland was decidedly racially homogenous, but the Chopin Competition always attracted a large number of foreign participants and spectators. Newspaper articles frequently featured foreign, and indeed, “exotic” (such as Mexican, Iranian) pianists’ participation in the competition. The motivation behind such coverage is certainly to attract attention, but mentioning exotic pianists playing a Polish composer is an act of universalizing Chopin’s music. The competition demonstrated that Chopin was not the specialty of only Poles and Slavs; instead, the “community” was larger and more diverse than the one they imagined.

500 Ekiert, 17.
501 RGALI, fond 654, op. 3, no. 143, pp. 59.
502 Ibid., 34. Also see Dybowski, Halina Czerny-Stefańska, 64.
503 See front page of Ruch Muzyczny, no. 13 rok V (September 1949).
504 Twórczość (November 1949), 101.
505 Ibid.
506 Ekiert, 36.
508 Kronika, 21-23, 37-38.
510 Iranian pianist Tania Achct is featured on the front page of Express Wieczorny in 1949 and Mexican pianist Andreas Acosta is on the front page of Życie Warszawy on February 22, 1965.
The third poem shatters the conception that Chopin is the exclusive property of Poland, which is a belief so pervasive in the first competition but has since evolved. Being Polish had previously meant de facto understanding of a nation’s tragedy and an individual’s nostalgia as embodied in Chopin’s music, but now, with more and more pianists performing Chopin more convincingly and, indeed, in a fashion more “Polish” than the Polish pianists, the belief has been seriously questioned, if not abandoned altogether. In the poem entitled “Chopinowski Konkurs” (“The Chopin Competition”), Irena Chylanka juxtaposes Chopin’s music with Chinese performers, who have incidentally done very well in the Chopin Competition:

**Chopinowski Konkurs (2000)**

gąszcz splątanych rozmów, myśli, interpretacji
jak dzikie wino z aureolą zielonych pieśni

dojrzałość kreacji i debiutancka trema
w jarzębinowej jesieni maluje nuty

muzyka świętoowania ogarnia stolicę
wierzby bez łez rozkołysane w Łazienkach

wyczucie frazy chopinowskiej to uderzenie
polskiego serca bliskie tylko wielkim artystom

gdy muzykalne ogrody zakwitają tęsknotą
za koncertem romantycznym przełomu wieków

wirtuozeria chińska zdobywa laur i podziw
w polonezowym rytmie ku sławie


a thicket of tangled conversations, thoughts, interpretations
like a wild vine with a halo of green songs

the maturity of creation and newcomer’s stage-fright
paints the notes in rowan autumn

musical celebration engulfs the capital
tearless willow trees swaying in the Łazienki Park

intuition of a Chopin phrase is a strike
of the Polish heart close only to great artists

when musical gardens bloom with nostalgia
for romantic concert from the turn of the century

---

511 Taken from Irena Chyła-Szypułowa, ed. Poezja Polska w Darze Chopinowi (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Pani Twardowska, 2003), 114.
Chinese virtuosity receives the laurels and admiration in polonaise rhythm toward glory

Chylanka, a professor at the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, is a poet, composer and visual artist. Written in 2000, the poem reiterates some of the familiar tropes associated with the Chopin Competition such as discussion of musical interpretations and the Romantic tradition in Poland. Furthermore, it emphasizes the idea of the Chopin Competition as an institution. Participants and winners change from year to year, but Chopin’s music remains a staple. The diction (tangled, engulf) implies that the whole city is surrounded by Chopin’s music. A musical phrase is linked to the heart, reemphasizing the emotional response to Chopin’s music that we have already seen in previous poems. In the poem, the competition is linked to romantic concerts symbolizing nostalgia for Poland. In the Chopin Competition, one can play every note perfectly but still be considered a bad pianist for not playing Chopin the right way. Even though it is notoriously difficult to define just exactly what the right way is, despite numerous articles on “How to play Chopin” (“Jak grać Chopina”), the Poles clearly still claim their authentic understanding of Chopin’s music. Over the years, the conception of the right way has evolved from one’s nationality and mother tongue to intangible elements such as the pianist’s rendition of dynamics, legato playing and distinct Polish rhythm.

Even though the title of the poem is “konkurs” (“competition”), the event is described by the word “świętowanie” (“celebration”), a word that resembles święty (“saint”) or święty (“holy”). Indeed, the atmosphere in Warsaw during the competition is truly bustling and festive: newspapers, radio, and later television and even Internet blogs all follow the competition closely, and the discussion often centers not on “how did he/she play” but on “how Chopin did he/she play”? In the second half of the poem, Chylanka shows that Chopin’s music can be mastered by non-Poles, by “wielkim artystom” (“great artists”) and not necessarily Polish. The last couplet shows the juxtaposition of Chopin’s music with Chinese pianists. She makes reference to the fact that two Chinese pianists, Sa Chen and Yundi Li, won the best polonaise award (and Yundi Li won the first prize, which had not been awarded since 1985) in the 2000 competition. The modifier “chińska” comes as a surprise especially since the poem contains several references to Poland (e.g. Łazienki Park and Polish heart), but the juxtaposition illustrates Chopin’s new status from a Polish phenomenon to a truly international name. The fact that Chinese pianists would take two of the top four prizes and sweep the polonaise award would have been unthinkable in 1927. It was not until 1955 when non-European pianists began to win important prizes, with the Chinese pianist Fu T’sung winning the third prize and the best performance of mazurka – a result which was undisputed. Beginning with the Sixth Competition in 1960, the Slavic pianists’ monopoly of the first prize was broken as Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini won that year.

Just two years before Fu T’sung’s success in the Chopin Competition and a half-century before Yundi Li’s victory, Czesław Miłosz’s published the poem “Na małą murzynkę grającą Chopina” (“On a small black girl playing Chopin”) in 1953:

---

512 See, for example, Jean Kleczynski (Jan Kleczyński), The works of Frederic Chopin: their proper interpretation, trans. Alfred Whittingham (London: W. Reeves, 1913).
513 Wysocki, 62.
Na małą murzynkę grającą Chopina

Gdybyś ją widział, panie Fryderyku,
Jak ciemne palce kładzie na klawiszach
I kędzierzawą głowę pilnie schyla,
Jak nogę szczupłą stawia na pedale
Śmiesznie dziecinną, w zdeptanym buciku,
A kiedy sala nagle się ucisza,
Pierwiosnek dźwięku powoli rozwija.

Pewnie powiedziałbyś, że było warto.

On a small black girl playing Chopin

If you saw her, Mr. Fryderyk,
How she places her dark fingers on the keys
And bends her curly head diligently,
How she puts the slim leg on the pedal
Hilariously childish, in a trampled boot,
And when the hall suddenly quiets down,
Primrose of sound slowly grows.

You would certainly say it was worth it.

The poem deals directly with the issue of Chopin and race, because the poem foregrounds the little black girl (murzynka), whose vivid physical descriptions are juxtaposed with the familiar descriptions of Chopin. The performance is described in a somewhat clichéd way – for example the piano carries concerns (fortepiano twoje troski niesie) and the sounds fly (dźwięki fruną) and the words such as “witraże” (“stained glasses”) and “kolumna” (“column”) carry religious connotation. The poem shows Chopin as a world figure whose music transcends cultures and races. The little black girl’s features stand in diametrical opposition to those of Chopin since she has dark fingers, curly hair, a black face (ciemne palce, kędzierzawą głowę, czarną twarzą). In the second stanza, as the performance begins, the black girl assumes the role of the intermediary between the composer and the audience and Miłosz for a moment draws our attention away from the skin color to music. The structure of the whole poem is based on the subjunctive: if you were to see..., you would have said that it was worth it. This poem foreshadows the fact that non-Poles can also be effective messengers of Chopin, as is evident by the huge presence of Asian pianists in recent Chopin competitions.

In contrast to the elevated tone of the poems, Andrzej Pytlak’s 1996 television play *Konkurs Chopinowski* (*Chopin Competition*) seems like a soap opera. The play portrays the lives of several young music students whose lives are influenced by the competition in one way or another, but much of it is based on their love story. The relationship among the main characters is intertwined: Miłosz loves Krystyna, who loves Julian – who is in love with Hanka. Even though the play overemphasizes pathos, it effectively presents an intimate view of the competition scene to lay audiences. Divided into parts like “Eliminacje” (“Qualifying Round”), “Dziwny Wieczór” (“A Strange Evening”), and “Lekcja u Żurawskiego” (“A Lesson with Żurawski”) the play dramatizes love and friendship, teacher/student relationship, public
reception of music and racial diversity in the competition. For example, there is a scene where Julian and Hanka make love while playing nocturne. While some jury members are portrayed as adamant about playing a certain style or representing a certain pianistic school, others are outright unprofessional and engage in sexual relations with students or contestants. For example, in “Marylka u Renkego” (“Marylka at Renken’s place”), the contestant Marylka sleeps with the judge Renken in exchange for favourable results. Furthermore, chairman of the jury Blumstein is also shown as someone who is fond of young female pianists.

Pytlak’s play, which was probably never realized on television, touches upon several important themes that we have discussed. The audience is portrayed as enthusiastic; the press and radio are actively involved in promoting the competition, conducting interviews with the participants. In “Posiedzenie Jury” (“Jury Deliberation”), Krystyna is seen listening to the radio as the emcee announces Julian as the next contestant. Like Chylanka’s poem, race is problematized in the play. After a performance, the audience is seen as talking about the contestants: “Byłam na wszystkich, ale żadnego czarnego nie ma – a mówią, że z całego świata” (“I went to every performance, but there is not a single black person – and they say that contestants come from all over the world”). In response someone says “Murzyni nie grają Chopina, tylko jazz” (“Blacks don’t play Chopin, only jazz”). In the concluding “Ostatni Wieczór” (“The Last Evening”), for example, Jurek remarks that there are many beautiful (foreign) girls and grips the hand of a young Japanese girl (“ściska rękę jakiejś młodej Japonki”). Furthermore, the protagonists also wonder whether some contestants are Indians or Arabs.

Conclusion

The institutionalization of the Chopin Competition had not only artistic but also commercial and societal implications. It posed the question of whether art could be quantified and judged. Skeptics such as Jeremy Eichler, an American music critic, asked: “Can something as complex and subtle as a musical performance be judged like a track and field event? And what exactly do we measure when we try?” Eichler’s view echoes Bela Bartok’s famous statement that “competitions are for horses, not artists” – referring to the mental and physical strength necessary to do well in a competition. Some famous pianists, like Claudio Arrau, have refused to participate in competitions either as contestants or jury members. As we have seen in the writings of Iwaszkiewicz, the traditional notion of music and concert was changing in the modern era due to advancing technologies and conservatories. Competition gained importance as it became the fastest way for an aspiring musician to gain exposure and recognition. Sergei Dorenskii, a well-known professor at the Moscow Conservatory and a frequent judge at the Chopin Competition, even said: “All of us are at the mercy of competitions.” By virtue of having a competition in his name, Chopin became ingrained in the Polish society. With serious

516 Ibid., 145-146.
517 Ibid., 151.
518 Ibid., 173.
519 Ibid., 177.
520 Ibid., 169.
521 Ibid., 177.
522 Ibid.
523 As quoted in McCormick, 13.
524 G. Tsypin, Shopen i russkaia pianisticheskaia traditsiia (Moscow: Muzyka, 1990), 92.
implications in money and politics, Chopin’s music became a preoccupation in and out of the concert hall thanks to the competition.

Figure 15: Dismantled Chopin statue being discarded during the Second World War

After 1927, the Chopin Competition grew in size and scope quickly. Though interrupted by the Second World War, the competition was one of the top priorities for Poland’s reconstruction effort after the war. Judging from the abundance of articles, speeches and even literary texts devoted to the event, the Chopin Competition served not only musical purposes but also social and political ones. Iwaszkiewicz later wrote a foreword to a book on the Chopin Competition (1954), stating that the competition “nie była jakimś pomysłem sztucznym, ale odpowiadała potrzebie naszych muzyków i naszej publiczności” (“was not some kind of artificial idea, but it answered the need of our musicians and our audience”).525 The Chopin Competition considered but abandoned the idea of having other composers’ works as part of the repertoire requirement. To this day, it has remained one of very few competitions, and perhaps the only one, devoted exclusively to the works of one composer. The event offers opportunities for pianists who wish to launch their career, but it has been equally important in establishing and maintaining the global status of Chopin. Today, Chopin no longer needs a competition to encourage aspiring young people to play his music, nor does Poland need to rely on Chopin for upholding its community. Nevertheless, Poland still needs Chopin. Frequent appearances of prominent figures in the audience – ranging from Queen Elisabeth of Belgium to President Bronisław Komorowski – demonstrate that the competition is comparable to a national affair. Żurawlew, who founded and served on the jury for the first seven Chopin Competitions, achieved much more than to push the public to reconsider Chopin’s music. Indeed, the event has succeeded beyond his expectations. What began as a kind of experiment for fighting negative stereotypes of Chopin’s music turned into a major international musical event that has lasted to this day. In fact, the Chopin Competition is a founding member of the World Federation of

International Music Competitions (1957), a UNESCO subsidiary based in Geneva that promotes music competitions around the world. An examination of the competition’s founding process, sponsorship, participants and public reception shows that the Chopin Competition played a critical role in reaffirming the legacy of Chopin not only in Poland but also abroad.
INTERLUDE 2
CHOPIN IN THE WORKS OF JAROSŁAW IWASZKIEWICZ: NTERLUDE 1
Lato w Nohant (1936)\textsuperscript{526} and Two Poems

Short Biography of Iwaszkiewicz

Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1894–1980) was not only a prolific writer but also a musicologist. His many achievements related to music include biographies of Fryderyk Chopin (1938) and J. S. Bach (1951),\textsuperscript{527} chairing the performance committee (Przewodniczący Komitetu Wykonawczego) of the Fifth Chopin Piano Competition, and heading the Fryderyk Chopin Society.\textsuperscript{528} His extensive involvement in Chopin affairs reflects his personal affinity for Chopin and his music. Iwaszkiewicz even said he felt he knew Chopin so deeply that he could practically hear his voice and see his gestures and facial expressions.\textsuperscript{529} One can trace Iwaszkiewicz’s connection with Chopin’s music to his childhood, when his mother played Chopin and taught him music.\textsuperscript{530} Iwaszkiewicz was serious about music, studying law in Kiev University and piano in Kiev Conservatory concurrently. He became a highly proficient pianist and even considered a career in music; he could play demanding pieces such as Beethoven’s C minor Piano Concerto and Chopin’s \textit{Berceuse}.\textsuperscript{531}

Growing up in Kiev as a Pole, Iwaszkiewicz was removed from the hostility towards Russians typical of Poles in Poland. Literary critic Ryszard Matuszewski (1914–2010) wrote in his biography of Iwaszkiewicz:

 Nie było tam [w Kijowie, T. L.] charakterystycznego dla ziem polskich w czasach caratu konfliktu między patriotycznymi nastrojami środowiska polskiej młodzieży a zapędami rusyfikatorskimi szkoły. Symbioza kultur – jeśli oprzeć się na wspomnieniach autora \textit{Sławy i chwały} – układała się harmonijniej i wytwarzała, przynajmniej w tym kręgu, w którym się on obracał, swoisty klimat ponadnarodowego kultu „czystej sztuki”.\textsuperscript{532}

(There was no conflict [in Kiev] between the patriotic mood of Polish youth and the zealous Russification of the schools, which was characteristic of Polish territory in the Tsarist period. According to the memoirs of the author of \textit{Glory and Praise}, a harmonious and enduring cultural symbiosis existed, at least in the circles which he frequented – a special supranational cult of “pure art.”)

\textsuperscript{526} All quotes taken from Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, \textit{Dzieła: Dramaty} (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1980), 71-190.
\textsuperscript{527} When Iwaszkiewicz was a teenager, he was obsessed with Bach’s \textit{The Well-Tempered Clavier}. He would read through all the preludes and fugues, often skipping meals. See Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, \textit{Książka moich wspomnień} (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1975), 86.
\textsuperscript{528} Janusz Ekiert, \textit{Chopin wiecznie poszukiwany} (Warsaw: MUZA SA, 2010), 44. One can listen to Iwaszkiewicz’s speech at the conclusion of the competition: \url{http://www2.polskieradio.pl/chopin/mowia/artykul134469.html} (last accessed August 9, 2013).
\textsuperscript{529} Jaroslav Ivashkevich, \textit{Liudi i knigi}, ed. N. Podol’skaia (Moscow: Raduga, 1987), 129.
\textsuperscript{531} Iwaszkiewicz, \textit{Dziedzictwo Chopina}, 132.
\textsuperscript{532} Ryszard Matuszewski, \textit{Iwaszkiewicz} (Warsaw: Agencja Autorska, 1965), 8.
Iwaszkiewicz’s upbringing was multicultural; he wrote with equal fluency in Russian and knew the literature of both Russian and Polish cultures very well. Iwaszkiewicz’s unique background allowed him to be a maverick, dissenting from the general tendency to put nationalist labels on Chopin. In his writings on Chopin, Iwaszkiewicz kept a certain distance from the composer’s cult and was much more careful in articulating the relationship between Poland and Chopin’s music. In writing about the 1960 Chopin Congress, he described many people as “weirdos” (“dziwaków”) or “maniacs” (“maniaków”), who were prejudiced and stubborn. He presented the view that being a Pole alone does not grant one special connection to Chopin’s music:

(We don’t know anything about Chopin's life. Yes, we know how he dressed, how he slept, how he traveled, how he had a fight with his house servant, and how Mrs. Sand’s children annoyed him. But of what he thought and what he felt – and most importantly, where that internal rupture, that immeasurable grief, spiritual gap came from, which certainly existed and was the source of his inspiration – we do not know.)

**Background of the play**

By and large, the image of Chopin has been crafted to conform what one would expect of a national hero. Some writers, such Iwaszkiewicz, did not completely reject this view, but they took issue with the monolithic image. As an illustration, I analyze *Lato w Nohant* (Summer at Nohant), a 1936 play in three acts dedicated to Polish actress and theater director Maria Przybyłko-Potocka (1873-1944). Iwaszkiewicz wrote the play as part of a larger Chopin project, which also included a biography on Chopin. The Russian translation of the biography was published 1949, and it received both praise and criticism. In a review published in the *Sovetskaia muzyka* journal, the reviewer criticized Iwaszkiewicz for downplaying Chopin’s nationalism:

[Ивашкевич] ни слова не говорит о революционном прошлом отца композитора и о той насыщенной национально-освободительными идеями атмосфере, которой дышал Шопен с юных лет среди родных, друзей и знакомых, составлявших передовую часть польской интеллигенции.  

Желая опровергнуть все ложные, реакционные теории, искажающие подлинную сущность творчества Шопена, Я. Ивашкевич, к сожалению, не говорит об отношении к Шопену выдающихся представителей русской классической музыки - Глинки, Балакирева, Римского-Корсакова и других. Не говорит он и о той

---

533 Iwaskievič, 18.
534 Iwaszkiewicz, *Dziedzictwo Chopina*, 179.
536 First published as *Fryderyk Szopen* (Lwów: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1938).
огромной любви, которой пользуется творчество гениального польского музыканта в стране победившего социализма, о выдающихся победах советских музыкантов на международных конкурсах имени Шопена.538

([Iwaszkiewicz] does not say a word about the revolutionary past of the composer’s father or the atmosphere saturated with national-liberation ideas. Chopin, from his earliest years, was surrounded in this atmosphere by his relatives, friends and acquaintances, who form the leading part of the Polish intelligentsia. Wanting to refute all the false, reactionary theories that distort the true essence of Chopin’s works, J. Iwaszkiewicz, unfortunately, does not speak about the relationship between Chopin and important figures of Russian classical music – Glinka, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and others. He does not talk about the enormous love of the victorious nation of socialism for the works of the genius Polish musician. He also does not talk about the prominent victories of Soviet musicians in International Chopin Competitions.)

The play was not a spontaneous work but rather a product of prolonged interest, dating back to 1925.539 By the time the play was written, Iwaszkiewicz had already written some of his best known works, such as the libretto to Karol Szymanowski’s 1926 opera Król Roger (King Roger) and the short story Panny z Wilka (The Wilko Girls) in 1933. His fame as a writer was recognized by a gold academic laurel award (Wawrzyn Akademicki) in 1936 and the L. Reynel Prize – for the play Lato w Nohant – in 1937. The play firmly established Iwasziewicz as a Chopin specialist: “Pewnym paradoksem jest, że dopiero literacki wyraz zainteresowania pisarza postacią Fryderyka Chopina, komedia Lato w Nohant z 1936 roku i jej komercyjny sukces nadały autorowi sztuki wręcz społeczną rangę ‘specjalisty od Chopin’” (“It’s a paradox that only until a literary expression of the writer’s interest with the figure of Fryderyka Chopin – in the 1936 comedy Summer at Nohant – and its commercial success even gave the author of the play the social rank of ‘specialist of Chopin’”).540

I propose reading the play as Iwaszkiewicz’s response to the Chopin myth. Some critics have pointed out that the portrayal of Chopin in this play is far from stereotypical images we associate with him.541 Literary critic Radosław Romaniuk claimed that Iwaszkiewicz ascribed Szymanowski’s way of composing to Chopin in the play.542 Even though the work was written during the interwar period by a renowned Polish writer, the play is far from a sentimental romance typically found in other Chopin-inspired literary texts. In fact, Iwaszkiewicz originally called the play a comedy (“Komedia w trzech aktach”), when comedy is hardly a noun one uses in discussing Chopin.543 As a reviewer points out, Iwaszkiewicz does not make his characters pleasant, and the portrayal of Chopin is “quite free from patriotic pride and prejudice.”544 In fact,

538 Ibid.
540 Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina, 375.
541 Maciąg, 277.
542 Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina, 373.
543 The 1937 and 1949 editions carry such a title, whereas the 1980 edition calls it with the neutral term “play” (“Sztuka w trzech aktach”).
the portrayal of Chopin is anything but flattering, because Chopin appears as an isolated artist – a
great one at that – who is separated from the rest of the society. A more appropriate way to
describe the play would probably be what Neil Cornwell calls an “Artist-story,” where Chopin
assumes the role of an artist, whose genius comes at the expense of fulfilling human interactions.

Iwaszkiewicz fills a void in Polish reception of Chopin; namely, he casts doubt on the
traditional stereotypes about Chopin. Polish composer Karol Szymanowski, commenting on the
Chopin myth, has written that Chopin is all too often taken "as is"; there are no attempts to
interpret his legacy creatively, let alone critically:

Twierdzimy śmialo, że w znacznej mierze przyczyną tego jest fakt, - paradoksalny
niemal, - iż przy całym bezkrytycznym, religijnym prawie kulcie Chopina – bohatera
narodowego, nie był on nigdy w całej pełni zrozumiany jako wielki polski artysta,
wskutek czego jego bezcenne dzieło pozostało bezплодne, pozostało wartością samą w
sobie, na marginesie niejako dalszej polskiej twórczości muzycznej.

(We boldly assert that to a large extent this is due to the fact – almost paradoxically – that
the whole uncritical, almost religious cult of Chopin – a national hero, he was never fully
understood as a great Polish artist, so that his invaluable work remained infertile,
remained a value in itself, as if it were further on the margins of Polish musical creation.)

Szymanowski describes an ideal candidate to undertake Chopin’s biographical studies:

Może się zjawi kiedyś ów idealny biograf artysty i twórczy krytyk jego dzieła – w jednej
osobie. Będzie nim ten, co, dążąc bez lęku drogą, wiodącą wprost ku tajemnicy wielkiej
sztuki Chopina, potrafi u jej kresu stopić w ogniu zapału największy dla niej podziw z
najgłębszym jej zrozumieniem w jedną nierdzewiejącą bryłę istotnego poznania.

(Maybe one day he will come, this ideal biographer of the artist and creative critic of his
work – in one person. He will be the one who demands without fear the path leading
directly to the mystery of great art of Chopin; at its end he can melt in the fire of
enthusiasm the greatest admiration for his art with deep understanding into a stainless
lump of essential knowledge. The direction we need to take is emerging more and more
clearly today. Let this be a justification that we try to make small progress on this road in
the present study.)

Iwaszkiewicz embodies the individual Szymanowski describes. He has said that he is interested
in the creative maniac quality of artists, and he considers Chopin one of his beloved heroes
because Chopin, like Mickiewicz and Pushkin, personifies the incompatibility between genius
and everyday life.

545 Neil Cornwell, “The Musical-Artist Story: Hoffmann, Odoevsky and Pasternak.” Comparative Critical Studies,
vol. 5 (2008), 35-55.
547 Ibid., 7-8.
Ci wszyscy szaleni, co w ciszy nocnej przyjmują odwiedziny tajemniczych i bardzo różnorakich Muz, a którzy w dzień niczym się nie odróżniają od innych ludzi, pociągali mnie swoim odwiecznym dramatycznym konfliktem pomiędzy codziennością ich bytu a tajemnicą niczym niewytłumaczalną twórczości. Dwoistość ta tragiczna występuje moim zdaniem najjaskrawiej u Chopina, Mickiewicza, Puszkina, moich ukochanych bohaterów, o ile chodzi o biografie.

(All those who are crazy, who in the dead of night are visited by mysterious and multifarious muses, who do not differ from other people during the day, attracted me with their age-old dramatic conflict between everyday life and the inexplicable mystery of their works. In my opinion, this tragic duality manifests itself most vividly in Chopin, Mickiewicz, Pushkin, my beloved heroes, at least when it comes to biographies.)

Iwaszkiewicz’s digression from the standard discourse on Chopin, which is often filled with clichés, shows how he understood Chopin better. Iwaszkiewicz’s play generally affirmed the scholarly consensus on the relationship between Chopin and Sand, which is one without the flaming vie passionelle; in fact, as Chopin specialist William Atwood describes it, they “organized their lives to enhance their productivity as artists, which resulted in an orderly existence that was generally quiet and routine.”

Text

The play is a hybrid of historical facts mixed with fictional dramatic elements, portraying the interactions between Chopin and George Sand and her two children, Maurice (Maurycy in Polish) and Solange. In Nohant, Sand had an eighteenth-century house that she inherited from her paternal grandmother; it was a place of retreat that Sand regarded as her “nest.” In real life, Chopin spent most summers in Nohant with Sand from 1839 until 1847, when he ended their relationship. The play describes the twilight of their relationship, but Iwaszkiewicz does not specify the exact year, leaving it as 184…. Historically speaking, Chopin composed the B-minor piano sonata in Nohant in 1844, but Iwaszkiewicz shifts the focus away from historical veracity and towards the reality as portrayed in the play.

In his other writings, Iwaszkiewicz referred to the play as “a dramatic play about Chopin’s B minor sonata” (“sztuka dramatyczna o jego Sonacie h-moll”). Indeed, music saturates the entire play as Iwaszkiewicz describes the stage setting as “Atmosfera jest przepełniona muzyką” (“The atmosphere is filled with music”). The play juxtaposes musical creative processes and mundane aspects of daily life. Chopin’s character illustrates the intricate interplay between the two, as he is immersed in music and composition but rather awkward in conversations. Furthermore, even though Chopin is mentioned throughout and the first person on the list of characters (not in alphabetical order), he does not appear in the play until the end of Act 2. For example, at the end of Act 1, Sand tells him it is lunchtime:

548 Iwaszkiewicz, Książka moich wspomnień, 263.
550 Atwood, 10. Atwood also describes the property in great detail.
551 Iwaszkiewicz, Dzieła, 72.
552 Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina, 178.
553 Iwaszkiewicz, Dzieła, 72.
Muzyka na dobre dolatuje z pokoju Chopina, kompozytor przegrywa zaaferyowane scherzo. Pani Sand podchodzi do drzwi Chopina i stoi przez chwilę.
Fryderyku! (bardzo stanowczo) Fryderyku!
Muzyka się urywa.
Obiad! Mam nadzieję, że nie zapomniano o twoim bulionie. Znowu kaszlałeś dziś w nocy. (idzie ku przodowi sceny, Chopin próbuje coś na fortepianie) No, chodź już nareszcie! Ach ta muzyka! Kiedy się zagra, o niczym nie pamięta! Nawet o jedzeniu. (do siebie) Nawet o szaradach Solange. (112)

(Music constantly flies from Chopin’s room; the composer plays the restless scherzo. Ms. Sand comes to the door and stands there for a while.
Fryderyk! (sternly) Fryderyk!
Music breaks off.
Lunchtime! I hope they didn’t forget your bouillon. You were coughing again last night. (She goes to the front of the stage, Chopin tries something on the piano) Come at once!
Oh, that music! Once he starts to play he forgets everything. Even about eating. (to herself) Even Solange’s charades.)

George Sand is portrayed as banal and impatient, especially with the frequent use of exclamation marks. Chopin, on the other hand, speaks with music. Without words, he engages in a quasi-conversation with Sand, as Sand seems to understand what he means perfectly. Some critics believe that the banal nature of other characters is used to set Chopin apart. For example, critic Matuszewski summarizes the play:

“[Iwaszkiewicz] potrafił ... oddać sugestywnie nieuchwytną atmosferę oddziaływania osobowości artystycznej Chopina na ów krąg ludzi nie zawsze przecież – jak sama George Sand – nieprzeciętnych a pospolitość i małostkowość ich codziennego życia. Potrafił znakomicie nastrojowo wygrać ów kontrast prozy życia i promieniującej swoją wielkością sztuki.”
(“Iwaszkiewicz was able to suggestively present an elusive atmosphere of influence of Chopin’s artistic personality on the circle of people who are not always extraordinary – like George Sand herself; he conveyed the ordinariness and pettiness of their daily lives. He wonderfully portrayed the contrast between normal life and his art that shines with grandeur.

In another instance, Chopin hears only music and nothing else, even a looming storm. Music takes over Chopin as it assumes the grammatical subject. His friend Antoni Wodziński says:

Frycek, Frycek! Zamknij okno, burza nadchodzi...
_Muzyka nie milknie._
Nic nie słyszy. Na dworze burza... (127)

(Freddie, Freddie! Close the window, the storm is coming...)

---

554 Matuszewski, 30.
Nevertheless, to claim that Iwaszkiewicz portrayed Chopin as an angelic character would be inaccurate. His devotion to art comes at the expense of meaningful personal interactions. Iwaszkiewicz often portrays him as a temperamental, methodical, and unpleasant person. For example, when Wodziński leaves the door to Chopin’s room open, Chopin is shown in the following way: “Muzyka nagle milknie, Chopin zatrzaskuje drzwi, które otworzył Wodziński” (Music suddenly stops. Chopin slams the door that Wodziński opened.) Furthermore, in the beginning of Act 3, Chopin appears angry for some unknown reason. We learn quickly that he is infuriated because he is given a chicken leg instead of white meat: “Ona doskonale wie, że ja nie znoszę nóżki. Jadam tylko białe mięso.” (She knows perfectly that I can’t stand the leg. I only eat the white meat.) Throughout the play, Chopin is shown as fiercely individualistic, not an ordinary man who is occupied and satisfied with having a family and taking care of children. Sand appropriately poses the question to Solange: “czy możesz sobie wyobrazić jego jako ojca rodziny otoczonego dziećmi, jako szwagra tego dziwaka Antosia.” (can you imagine him as a father surrounded by children, as a brother-in-law of that weirdo Antoś.) Indeed, Chopin is portrayed as an outcast “z tym parszywym arystokratycznym chłodem” (“with a contemptible aristocratic coldness.”)

Toward the end of the Act II, Chopin finally makes his entrance into the play. However, instead of an elaborate monologue or catchy phrase, his first words can hardly be more ordinary: “Wysechł mi atrament” (“My ink dried up”). The entrance can be described as prosaic because nothing significant happens; his entrance is literally marked as “nothing special, not great”:

Chopin wchodzi, wejście jego nie ma nic znaczącego, nic wielkiego. Skrada się pośpiesznie i cichutko, trzymając w ręku pióro i kawałek papieru nutowego, z którego nie spuszcza wzroku. Idzie do biurka pani Sand i tam szuka czegoś, wreszcie zabiera stamtąd kalamarz i wraca do swojego pokoju. Wtedy dopiero spostrzega Solange i Clésingera. Uśmiecha się jak dziecko przyłapane na gorącym uczynku. (my emphasis, 149)

(Chopin enters, his entrance has nothing of significance, nothing great. He creeps up quickly and quietly, holding a pen and a piece of music paper, on which he keeps his eye. He goes to the desk of George Sand and is looking for something there, and he finally takes the inkwell and goes back to his room. Only then he sees Solange and Clésinger. He smiles like a child caught in the act.)

Iwaszkiewicz shows Chopin as a decidedly mysterious and intimate composer, instead of an outspoken and passionate Polish patriot. Chopin’s lines are anticlimactic, bordering on mundane, and his actions do most of the speaking for him. Even in the context of the play, we find out more about Chopin from those around him, not from himself. For example, we learn about the nature of the relationship between Sand and Chopin through Sand. In initiating a platonic relation, she is quoted to have said to Chopin:

“Mój drogi Chopin, tobie potrzeba czego innego, zupełnie czego innego. Musisz mieć wolne życie. Twoja kochanka to muzyka. Nie powinieneś mieć żadnej innej. Basta,

(“My dear Chopin, you need something else, something else entirely. You must have a free life. Your lover is music, you should not have any other lover. Enough, it’s done. We are friends from now on. Do you want it?” And what did he have to say then. He was interested in publishing those preludes. He never says anything – and especially regarding those issues. The only time something really interested him – it's Antoś’s sister [Maria Wodzińska].)

Sand expresses her frustration at Chopin as she describes his action with three negations: “On nigdy nic nie mówi” (“He never says anything”). What Sand refers to as “those issues” are practically non-issues for Chopin; Chopin is concerned only with music. While those around him speculate about his relationship with Sand, he remains oblivious to personal issues and completely devotes attention to composition. In another instance, Iwaszkiewicz describes the scene: “Z pokoju Chopina dobiega starannie wykuwany jakiś pasaż” (“The sound of a meticulous crafting of a passage comes from Chopin’s room.”)

Iwaszkiewicz’s portrayal of Chopin undercut the composer’s image that has been overexposed to Poles. Yet, Iwaszkiewicz does not entirely dispel the Chopin myth. In one instance, Iwaszkiewicz portrays Chopin as a sentimental artist who is nostalgic for Poland: “Ciekawy jestem, czy się tam bardzo zmieniło? Ten dom, gdzie teraz mieszkają rodzice, doskonale sobie wyobrażam. Chociaż tam nigdy nie byłem. Pamiętasz ten dom, tyle razy koło niego przechodziłem… Wiesz, taki niski, koło samej Wareckiej, z kolumnami……” (167-168) (“I am curious, has it changed a lot over there [in Poland]? I can imagine perfectly the house where my parents live, though I was never there. Do you remember that house where I walked by numerous times… You know, the low, next to the Warecka, with columns….”) The use of ellipses indicates pause in speech, signifying Chopin’s emotion as he speaks these words. Chopin recalls details of Warsaw; for example, he remarks that Warsaw has a better orchestra than Paris: “Warszawa wielka, wolne miasto…wielkie sale koncertowe, orkiestry lepsze o d paryskiej…” (Warsaw is a great, free city… great concert halls, orchestras are better than those in Paris…168)

The way Chopin is portrayed in the play almost makes one believe he is not the main character. Indeed, if one’s criterion is the amount of lines spoken, Chopin would only be a minor character compared to Sand. Iwaszkiewicz, however, may be aiming at an aesthetic typical of Chopin: one does not have to write large-scale works like symphonies or operas to be considered great. What sets Chopin apart, musically and verbally in the play, is not the grandiosity but rather the modesty coupled with a commitment to his art. That said, in depicting the idiosyncratic nature of the relationship between Chopin and Sand, the play suggests that they were lovers (by using the word “kochanek”) but the relationship has transformed to a platonic – even maternal – one. In one instance, Sand says to Chopin: “Stałeś się moim trzecim dzieckiem i kochałam cię może z uszczerbką dzieci prawdziwych” (“You have become my third child and I loved you maybe to the detriment of my actual children”) (157). Sand shows an intimate understanding of Chopin’s personality. She knows, for example, that Chopin does not like people listening to him work; she scolds Solange for eavesdropping on Chopin: Znowu podsłuchiwałas Chopina. Nie masz najmniejszego szacunku dla jego pracy. Wiesz, jak on tego nie cierpi. (136) (You
eavesdropped on Chopin again. You don’t have any respect for his work. You know that he cannot stand that.) Sand speaks of Chopin from a perspective of someone intimately acquainted with his personality. Sand says “A co do Chopina, to może być bez grosza, a dla rodaka zawsze coś się gdzieś znajdzie.” (92-93) (“As far as Chopin goes, he can be without a penny, but he always finds something when a fellow countryman is in need”). In the play, Sand plays the critical character who not only accompanies the genius but also understands and endures his eccentricities. Contrary to some critics’ opinion, Sand can be considered a hero of the play for her ability to recognize – and tolerate – Chopin’s genius. If we change our angle for a moment, we can conceivably read the play as a story centered on Sand. Without Sand’s care and sacrifice, Chopin may not have had the same kind of artistic freedom. One revealing passage, alluding to Wyspiański’s Wesele, shows how Sand listened to Chopin’s heart that beat to the rhythm of his work: “Serce artysty to serce zupełnie specjalnego rodzaju. Ale myślę, że ma on coś w родzącu serca. Słyszałam je nieraz, jak biło przyspieszone. Galopowało jak rytm utworów.” (“The heart of an artist is of a special kind altogether. But I think he has something like a heart. I heard it more than once, how it beats quickly. It galloped like the rhythm of his works”) (142). Sand’s deep understanding of Chopin comes at a price, as she is frequently reduced to a caretaker figure, having to put up with Chopin. Iwaszkiewicz’s portrayal of Sand met some resistance in post-1945 Poland:

Twierdzono niegdyś u nas, że moje Lato w Nohant nie może być odpowiednie dla krajów demokracji ludowej ze względu na potraktowanie postaci George Sand, która była przecież demokratką i nawet revolucionistką. Otoż moja George Sand to anioł w porównaniu z tym, co zrobił z niej Belza. 556

(It was stated at one point that my Summer in Nohant may not be appropriate for the people's democracies because of the treatment of George Sand’s character, who was, after all, a democrat and even a revolutionary. Well, my George Sand is an angel compared to what Belza did with her. 557)

The relationship between Chopin and Sand is neither romantic nor perfect. Sand repeatedly says that she is not Chopin’s lover (105), and she has not been one for seven years: “od siedmiu lat już nie jestem jego kochanką” (142) (“I have not been his lover for seven years”). When one of Chopin’s students, Rozjerka, asks Sand whether she loves Chopin, she asks “co to znaczy miłość? Jaka miłość? Tyle jest jej rodzajów…” (100) (“what does love mean? What kind of love? There are so many kinds…”). Chopin and Sand disagree on a variety of issues, particularly on Chopin’s artistic pursuit. For example, Sand expresses her opinion by saying “…w twojej muzyce za dużo dla mnie krwi i melancholii, zgrzytów i szelestów, szkieletów i łańcuchów” (“…in your music there is too much blood and melancholy, grinding and rustle, skeletons and chains for me”). Chopin responds: “Mylisz się – to są tylko pasażę, akordy i modulacje…” (“You are mistaken – they are just passages, chords and modulations…”

555 Other characters of such nature include Louise in Vladimir Odoevsky’s “Beethoven’s Last Quartet” and Magdalena in “Sebastian Bach.” Indeed, there are striking similarities in the role played by women in these artist stories.
556 Iwaszkiewicz, Dziedzictwo Chopina. 233.
557 In his biography of Chopin, Belza introduces George Sand by mentioning her unpleasant qualities and her scandalous behaviors. See, for example, Igor’ Belza, Shopen (Moscow: Muzyka, 1991), 95.
In another scene, which clearly shows Iwaszkiewicz’s knowledge of Chopin’s letters, Sand says: “Jak Mickiewicz wyobrażałam sobie ciebie jako twórcę wielkiej opery narodowej w guście Meyerbeera…” (“Like Mickiewicz I imagined you as the creator of a great national opera in the style of Meyerbeer…”) to which Chopin responds “Mickiewicz nie zna się na muzyce” (“Mickiewicz does not know music”) (158).

Sand perceives Chopin’s coldness towards her: “I w pewnym znaczeniu muszę powiedzieć, że go kocham. Tyle lat wspólnego życia tutaj, w Paryżu. I zawsze ten sam chód, ta sama dyskrekcja z jego strony. Zawsze ta wyniosła obojętność, za którą kryje się jak za tarczą....” (“And in a sense, I have to say that I love him. So many years of living together here, in Paris. And it’s always the same coldness, the same discretion on his part. He always hides himself behind that lofty indifference like a shield….“). In describing Chopin, Sand says, “Od dziewięciu lat zdążyłam się przyzwyczaić do niego i do jego manier. Nawet do tej muzyki, (wskazuje na drzwi) a to przecież jest nie do zniesienia. Słyszysz, jak on powtarza po piętnaście razy każdy takt? I co ja mam z tego wszystkiego? (“For nine years I became used to him and his manners. Even to that music, [pointing to the doors] which is hardly bearable. You hear how he repeats every measure fifteen times? What am I supposed to do with it all?”) (94). Interestingly, she turns negative aspects of life into creative energy, not unlike Chopin. Sand refers to her own 1847 novel Lucrezia Floriani, which is widely acknowledged as a personal account of her relationship with Chopin: “To bohater mojej najnowszej powieści. Powieść nazywa się ‘Lucrezia Floriani’. Przetransponowałam tam mój stosunek do Chopina.” (“It’s the hero of my newest novel. The novel is titled ‘Lucrezia Floriani.’ I transported my relationship to Chopin there.”)

Iwaszkiewicz’s play captures the strained relationship between Sand and Chopin as arguments abound. Sand complains to Chopin about him being a difficult person: “Nie myśl, że przychodzi mi to z ławtością. Nie jesteś w pożyciu najłatwiejszym z ludzi” (“Do not think that this is easy for me. You are not the easiest person to get along with in life”) (156). The tension – accompanied by the worsening weather with storm and thunder – turns into a confrontation, which leads to their breakup.

After terminating his relationship with Sand, Chopin continues to go to the piano and tries out passages, seemingly unaffected by the breakup. Similar to the beginning of the play, music does not stop (muzyka nie milknie 127). Chopin’s final monologue involves a comparison of his third sonata and Bach’s C major prelude from the Well-Tempered Clavier. We can see Chopin speak tentatively to his friend Antoni Wodziński, and his stage directions often exceed his spoken lines in length:

"Wiesz, tak zupełnie jak u Bacha, rozłożone akordy... tylko trochę inne w E-durku. 
Rozumiesz? (rzucasz kapelusz i siadasz do fortepianu) I widzisz – u Bacha jest tak. (pokazujesz początek preludiu C-dur, potem przesuwasz je do E-dur) A u mnie będzie tak...
(szkicujesz pierwsze takty środkowej części largo z sonaty h-moll) Mniej więcej tak...
(zaczynasz grać środkową część largo od taktu dwudziestego dziewiątego aż do końca) (190)

("You know, just like in Bach, broken chords ... just a little bit different in the E-major one. Do you understand? [throws the hat and sits down at the piano] You see – in Bach it’s like this. [shows the beginning of the prelude in C major, then transposes it to E major] And in mine it will be this ... [sketching the first few measures of the middle
section in the largo of the Sonata in B minor] More or less so ... [starts to play the middle section of the largo from measure twenty nine to the end])

The concluding lines sum up the play as a whole. Sand asks Jan not to bother Chopin and Chopin is focused on making music, not noticing others around him: Chopin nie zwraca na to uwagi, gra nie przerywając, z zamkniętymi oczami. Kurtyna powoli spada (190) (“Chopin does not pay attention to it, he plays uninterruptedly with closed eyes. The curtain slowly falls.”) The play has no dramatic denouement. In terms of action, Iwaszkiewicz leaves us unfulfilled. The entire play takes place in George Sand’s estate. When Chopin is about to leave, having said his goodbyes, he gets carried away by music. Essentially, we are back to where we began: with music.

![Figure 1: a painting by Austrian artist Adolf Karpellus (1869-1919)](image)

Linguistically, the play often mixes French with Polish. In real life, Chopin and Sand communicated in French, but in the theatrical reality, Iwaszkiewicz extends the tension to the linguistic realm. In the play, Sand complains that Chopin “nie umie mówić po francusku” (“cannot speak French”) (138). Iwaszkiewicz’s portrayal reaffirms the fact that Chopin, despite his French origins, considered himself foreign in Paris. In the play, Sand talks about Chopin as a foreigner, referring to Poland as “his” Poland and says: “[Chopin] to jest cudzoziemiec. Najtrudnie jest kochać cudzoziemca” (“[Chopin] is a foreigner. It’s the hardest thing to love a foreigner.”) (147). In a dialogue with Chopin, Sand says she does not understand Poles, drawing a line between the French (as us) and the Poles (as them) (159). Likewise, Chopin did not feel he belonged in Paris and made numerous references to the city as an unpleasant place. In the play, Chopin says: “Prędzej przestanę rozróżniać dur od moll, niż Francuz zrozumie Polaka” (“I will stop distinguishing major from minor sooner than a Frenchman will understand a Pole”). Sand responds: Nareszcie powiedziałeś to wyraźnie, o czym chciałam już dawno mówić. Nie rozumiemy was. Wy jesteście przeczulone duchy, unoszące się jak Ariels nad kalibańskimi mieszkańcami waszych barbarzyńskich ziem. A my, my (z dumą) Francuzi – nie możemy was odczuć ani zrozumieć! Tak, to prawda – my myślimy inaczej... (“Finally you said what I wanted to say for a long time. You Poles are oversensitive souls, like Ariels hovering over Caliban...”)
residents of your barbarian lands. And we, we (proudly) Frenchmen – we cannot feel or understand you! Yes, it is true – we think differently…”) (159)

**Reception/Other Media**

The play was published in fragments in the *Skamander* magazine and was quickly staged and premiered on December 4, 1936 in Warsaw’s Teatr Mały (Small Theater). According to musicologist Małgorzata Komorowska, there were 38 productions by 32 theaters since the 1936 premiere, including the Teatr Emigracyjny in London. 558 Besides England, the play was premiered in the Soviet Union (titled *Лето в Ноане*) in 1976 at the Vakhtangov State Academic Theater in Moscow, with August Kowalczyk (1921-2012) as the director.559 The play was translated into several languages: into English by Celina Wieniewska in 1942 and into Czech by Jaroslav Simonides in 1982.560 Iwaszkiewicz’s play was not only staged but also turned into television series (in 1963, 1972 and 1980561) and a film adaptation in 1999 by Agnieszka Glińska (on the occasion of the sesquicentennial of Chopin’s death). Notably, *Lato w Nohant* was staged shortly after the end of Second World War, in both Łódź562 and Kraków (see Figure 2):

![Figure 2: A 1945 poster for a production of *Lato w Nohant* in Kraków](image)

---


560 Matuszewski, 30.


As the poster shows, the performances were daily from August 28, 1945 and included a live pianist, Jerzy Broszkiewicz, who wrote a novel *Kształt miłości* (*Shape of Love*, 1950-51) based on Chopin. The frequency of the performance, taking place so soon after the war, attests to the significance of both Chopin and Iwaszkiewicz’s play. Most recently, as part of the 2010 Chopin Year celebration, *Summer at Nohant* was staged in Płock to mixed reviews. Outside of Poland, the play was not well-received when it was staged in Great Britain in 1946. In the British weekly magazine *Punch*, *Summer in Nohant* was described in this way:

The picture of middle-aged *poseuse* [George Sand] striding about in trousers igniting enormous havanas and making jejeune remarks about the sanctity of her work is something out of the gummer side of Hollywood; it cannot be more than a very superficial one of a woman with George Sand’s record both in life and letters. The outlines are no doubt true enough, the cool, calculating character, the male attitude to love, the maternal instinct strong even to the point of sublimating passion in a steady stream of beef-tea, and the conviction that the children, whom she has dominated, spoilt and ignored at will, have enjoyed to a rare degree the benefits of a mother’s tender care; but the author has failed to fill them in so as to suggest strength either of mind or attraction, and Miss Lally Bowers, though she plays the part gracefully, does so in terms of the misunderstood heroine of a seaside feuilleton.563

The critic points out the lack of substance in the dialogues between such geniuses as Sand and Chopin, but the prosaic quality of the play is precisely the point Iwaszkiewicz wanted to make. For nearly a century, the public has been fed with lofty statements about Chopin and a canon of literary works has emerged; Iwaszkiewicz’s play refreshingly challenges the status quo. The original designation of the play as a comedy is a case in point. While some critics have read the play as a comedy, the humor in *Lato w Nohant* does not make one laugh. Some may consider, for example, Chopin’s childish behavior funny, but one can also convincingly interpret it as Chopin’s unearthly character, which is not easily understandable to laypeople. Since Chopin was appropriated in matters related to national identity and existence, his name and “comedy” could hardly be more incompatible. Yet, Iwaszkiewicz did not conform to what was expected of him as a writer. Having written a biography on Chopin, Iwaszkiewicz was uniquely qualified to contribute to the Chopin myth, and he chose not to take Chopin's myth for granted.

**Other Chopin oeuvre by Iwaszkiewicz**

---

**Spotkanie**

Na ulicy na szarym rogu się spotkali.
Wiatr rozwiewał im fałdy włóczkowych szalików.
Szopen miał ócz emalię na kształt medalików Częstochowskich; pan Juliusz źrenice ze stali.
Słowacki, że to wiatr mu wyrwał połę z ręki,
Zatrzymał się, płaszcz pragnąc naciągnąć na ramię,
I nagle go porwało wspomnienie – te dźwięki.
Szopen szukał nazwiska, czyli mu nie skłamie Pamięć, co mu się zdała jak starta paleta.
Stali tak. Może nawet nie przeszła sekunda.
Szopen sobie przypomniał: ach, to ten... Poeta Bez talentu. Słowacki westchnął: moribunda.
Który z nas pójdzie pierwszej... tam? – myśleli wieszcze.
I minęli się. Dzisiaj mijają się jeszcze.

**Meeting**

On the street on a gray corner they met.
Wind blew the folds of their wool scarves.
Szopen had eye-glaze on the shape of medallions of Częstochowa, Mr. Juliusz had pupil (of eyes) of steel.
Słowacki, the wind blowing the coattail off his hand,
He stopped, wanting to pull the coat over his shoulder,
And suddenly the memory caught him – these sounds.
Szopen was looking for the name, that memory won’t lie Which seemed to him like blurred palette.
They stood like this. Maybe not even a second passed.
Szopen recalled: oh, this ... the Poet
Without talent. Słowacki sighed: the dying one.
Which of us will go first ... there? – thought the bards.
They passed each other. They still pass each other today.

This rather enigmatic poem, written in 1931 as part of the cycle titled “Powrót do Europy” (“Return to Europe”), describes a “meeting” between Juliusz Słowacki and Chopin. The title alone leaves much room for the imagination, since "spotkanie" suggests something more than merely seeing other; it often denotes a significant meeting that results in something substantial. It is also a more personal meeting in comparison to words such as “zebranie” and “posiedzenie.” However, nothing happens between the two artists except for mutual criticisms. Chopin describes Słowacki as a poet without talent (poeta bez talent) and Słowacki calls Chopin moribund. In real life, Chopin is known to have said, “Do you know what is the biggest disaster for a poet? That he himself is more interesting than his poems. I am afraid that Słowacki is such a case” (“Czy wiesz, co jest największą klęską dla poety? Gdy sam jest bardziej interesujący niż jego wiersze. Obawiam się, że tak jest z panem Słowackim”).564 The “meeting” of the two artists

---

564 As quoted in Józef Opalski, Chopin i Szymanowski w literaturze dwudziestolecia międzywojennego (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1980), 135.
ends with: “I minęli się. Dzisiaj mijają się jeszcze” (“And they passed each other. Today they will pass each other again”).

It is possible that Iwaszkiewicz is alluding to Słowacki’s play Kordian, where the hero disappoints everyone when he faints at a crucial moment in his attempt to assassinate the Tsar. Building pathos to an anticlimactic denouement is a familiar trope in Polish literature (another well-known example being Stanisław Wyspiański’s The Wedding [Wesele]), and this poem is no exception. The opening of the poem – gray and windy – may symbolize the adverse situation Poland faced, thus setting the stage for possible transformations. The line “nagle go porwało wspomnienie – te dźwięki” makes the reader associate sounds with strong sentiments and imagine something Romantic. Iwaszkiewicz also uses the spelling Szopen to emphasize the Polishness and perhaps even his affinity with Słowacki (with both names beginning with the same letter). However, they do not think highly of each other and make comments filled with biting irony, and the arrogance of each artist overwhelms his desire to acknowledge the other. The result is a complete letdown. The five verbs that use third person plural, grouping Chopin and Słowacki further confirms the disappointment of the meeting: się spotkali → stali → myśleli → minęli się → mijają się (they met → stood → thought → passed each other → passing each other).

The poem has recently received some critical attention. For example, literary scholar Ewa Nawrocka published a book chapter, titled “Why Słowacki did not like Chopin’s music,” in which she closed with Iwaszkiewicz’s poem. In another book chapter titled “Dlaczego się minęli,” literary scholar Maria Cieśla-Korytowska discusses the poem as manifestation of the similarities and differences between Słowacki and Chopin. For example, she discusses how both artists kept distance from other people, which is precisely why they never met. Cieśla-Korytowska’s discussion would be enhanced by considering more fully Iwaszkiewicz’s involvement in Chopin studies. The poem, like Lato w Nohant, reflects Iwaszkiewicz’s revisionist view, casting doubt on the relationship between Chopin and the “bards” and probing the very notion of Chopin as a “bard.”

Iwaszkiewicz wrote another poem on Chopin’s theme on June 16, 1949, as part of the “Ciemne ścieżki” (“Dark paths,” published in 1957) collection. The poem was written just months before the centenary of Chopin’s death:

Nachylony nad ziemią, schowany w krzak bzu
Słucha, jak śpiewa słowik, jak dziewczyna nuci,
Zbiera z listka bzowego kroplę zimnej rosy,
By ją na ziemię rzucić, gdy ziemię porzuci

W salonie osłabiony rękę jak łabędzie
Opuszcza na klawisze jak Bojan Igora,
I zadziwione damy bledną niby kwiaty,
A ich mężowie mówią: ta muzyka chora.

I dusząc się o sercu myśli: by umarłe
Wróciło w tamte strony, gdzie burza za burżą

566 Maria Cieśla-Korytowska, Romantyczne przechadzki pograniczem (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 81.
Niszczy drzewa, katedry, serca, poematy.
I wróciło t
o serce, i płonie niby wieczna róża.\textsuperscript{567}

Leaned over the ground, hidden in the lilac bush
He listens to the nightingale sing and the girl hum,
Collects the leaf of lilac and drops of cold dew,
To throw it on the ground when he gives up the earth–

In the salon, weary, he lowers his hands, like swans
On the keys, as Igor’s Bojan,
And surprised ladies pale like flowers,
And their husbands say: this sick music.

And he thinks about the heart, has trouble breathing: the dead
Could come back to the place where storm after storm
Destroys trees, cathedrals, hearts, poems.
And the heart returned, and it burns like eternal rose..

There is a curious change of setting between the first and second stanzas. While the first stanza takes place in the nature, the second stanza depicts a concert. The lack of a period between the first two stanzas suggests continuity between nature and music. In the first stanza, where we see nightingales singing and girls humming, music is not explicitly mentioned. Moreover, except for the title, the poem never mentions Chopin by name, giving it an ethereal tone. The rich imagery – enhanced by several similes following “jak” and “niby” – underscores the characteristics typical of Chopin, as someone who is pale and fragile. Death and illness, as well as war, are alluded to in the poem, suggesting the connection between Chopin’s suffering and Poland’s fate. The poem, however, ends on a positive note and makes reference to Chopin’s heart, which was returned to Warsaw unharmed from the perils of the war.

The poem describes the end of Chopin’s life, when he is already weak (osłabiony) and plays music that some deem “sick.” The adjective may seem inappropriate in describing Chopin’s music, and to be sure, Iwaszkiewicz thought very highly of Chopin’s music. Nevertheless, there were critics – such as French composer and critic Hippolyte Barbedette – who indeed considered Chopin’s music “unhealthy.”\textsuperscript{568} In any case, the union of the adjective “sick” with music conveys the idea that Chopin’s whole being is integrated with music. Perhaps that is why the last stanza – with the use of enjambment and frequent commas – creates the sensation of Chopin’s physical illness, namely the tuberculosis.

The word “serce” (“heart”) appears three times in the last stanza alone; one can state that the third stanza contains the most biographical and historical allusions, such as the fact that Chopin wanted his heart returned to his native Poland. The “storm after storm” ostensibly refers

\textsuperscript{567} Taken from Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, \textit{Wiersze vol. 2} (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1977), 88.

\textsuperscript{568} Barbedette describes Chopin as follows: “Chopin was a sick man who enjoyed suffering, and did not want to be cured. He poured out his pain in adorable accents – his sweet melancholy language which he invented to express his sadness… Chopin’s music is essentially unhealthy.” As quoted in Richard Taruskin, \textit{The Oxford History of Western Music} v. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 355.
to Poland’s turbulent history, with partitions and wars destroying its culture. Interestingly, Poland is not mentioned by name – only “w tamte strony” (“back to the place”). Furthermore, the storms destroy different sorts of objects: nature, buildings, texts, and hearts. However, in the next line, Iwaszkiewicz describes the return of Chopin’s heart that is eternal and cannot be destroyed even by the most violent storms. The juxtaposition of the rhyme between storm and the rose (“burza” and “óża,” respectively) illustrates the close relationship between Chopin and Poland. Even though the poem includes somewhat typical images and metaphors associated with Chopin, it nonetheless surprises us with the explicit allegation that Chopin’s music is sick. If we consider Chopin’s personal illness side by side with Poland’s history, we know they are linked together by suffering. As the last stanza points out, war can destroy hearts but not Chopin’s heart, because it has come to embody the victorious Poland.

**Conclusion**

Iwaszkiewicz’s literary output on Chopin represents a synthesis of fact and fiction. His artistic goal was not to apotheosize Chopin but rather to give a balanced account of who Chopin was, as he saw him. Iwaszkiewicz’s engagement with Chopin, both in literature and real life, has not received enough critical attention. This Interlude shows that unlike most Polish writers, Iwaszkiewicz did not follow the Chopin myth blindly; instead, he based the portrayal of Chopin on his understanding of music and history, both of which he studied extensively. Iwaszkiewicz’s Chopin oeuvre represents a dissonant yet noteworthy voice in the canon of Polish literature dealing with Chopin.
The 2010 Celebrations

Like the centennial in 1949, the bicentennial was named “Rok Chopinowski” (“The Chopin Year”). The decision to make 2010 the year of Chopin was reached by the lower house of the Polish Parliament, the Sejm in 2008, which means that the bicentennial involved careful planning and high-level government officials. Through an extensive and deliberate process of appropriation, begun long before 2010, Chopin’s music has come to embody both “polska” and “Polska” (“Polish” and “Poland”). In the resolution to declare the year 2010 the Year of Chopin, the then-speaker of the Sejm (current president), Bronisław Komorowski, stated that Chopin’s music “played a significant role in shaping our consciousness” (“…odegrał wyjątkową rolę w kształtowaniu naszej świadomości”). Komorowski’s resolution also notes that Chopin stands out for his “talent of drawing examples from Polish folk music” (“umiejętność czerpania wzorców z polskiej muzyki ludowej”). In 2010, there were numerous speeches to reaffirm the Polishness of Chopin. For example, the rector of Warsaw’s Chopin Music University (Uniwersytet Muzyczny Fryderyka Chopina), Stanisław Moryto, gave a speech on February 22 to outline Poland’s mission of carrying on Chopin’s legacy;569 literary historian Danuta Mucha gave a speech on June 17 in Paris, titled “Patriotyzm Fryderyka Chopina” (“Fryderyk Chopin’s Patriotism”), in which she reiterated the already familiar cliché of Chopin’s devotion to Poland.

Like the centennial celebrations, many nations came together in celebrating the Chopin Year in 2010. For example, the patronage of the Chopin Year included international organizations such as the UNESCO as well as the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland. In Poland, as at the centennial celebrations, the presence of political dignitaries at the bicentennial celebrations demonstrated the national significance of Chopin’s music. For example, ministers and members of the parliament attended Moryto’s aforementioned speech, and President Komorowski attended the International Chopin Competition in October 2010. The effort to instill Chopin into the daily lives of Poles is evident in the number of events organized; according to one estimate, there were over 2600 events related to Chopin in Poland.570 In addition, there was a major push to build or renovate commemorating and research infrastructure. The main objectives for the Chopin Year included building a Chopin Center (Centrum Chopinowskie), renovating and enlarging the Chopin Museum and the park in Żelazowa Wola. These goals were by and large achieved, and the new Chopin museum and center (in Ostrogski Castle) opened on March 1, 2010. In addition to the manor and the concert hall in Żelazowa Wola, the church in Brochów (where Chopin was baptized) was also renovated.571 The renewed effort to increase the visibility of Chopin in public life, one must add, complemented other existing objects, such as the Chopin Airport in Warsaw, a ship, various music schools, statues, and even vodka.

Chopin in Poles’ Daily Lives

As I have shown in this dissertation, musicians, politicians and authors alike have all played a significant role in shaping the reception of Chopin’s life and music. Former Polish President Lech Wałęsa wrote that the Chopin Year should “zmobilizować rodaków do głębszego

---

571 Waldemar Dąbrowski, “Źródło dobrej energii.” Chopin Express (October 1, 2010), 3.
przypomnienia naszej tragicznej historii oraz szanowania tej wolności, jaką zdobyliśmy.”572 ("mobilize our fellow countrymen to remind ourselves more deeply of our tragic history and to respect the freedom that we gained"). To what extent do Polish listeners heed Wałęsa’s advice? Zofia Budrewicz has published a volume in which the idea of Poles’ familiarity with Chopin’s music is seriously questioned. In a study by Barbara Pabjan, Poles were tested for their knowledge of Chopin’s music, and the conclusion is that Chopin, both his music and character, is neither popular nor well-known by the majority of Polish society. Even though Chopin is treated as an iconic figure in Polish culture, knowledge of his music is superficial and stereotypical. In fact, only the intellectual and cultural elite seem to listen to and recognize Chopin's music.573

Pabjan’s study is not the only one exposing the deficiency of the Polish public’s knowledge about Chopin’s life and music. For example, Warsaw’s mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz stated that in 2009 only 20 percent of Varsovians knew that Chopin grew up in Warsaw.574 Perhaps the effort to reeducate Poles has somewhat paid off; the figure rose to 33% in 2011, the year after the Chopin bicentennial. Nevertheless, 33% of the population in, of all places, Warsaw seems underwhelming considering Chopin’s fame around the world. The critical voice within Poland again emerged in the staging of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz’s *Lato w Nohant*, discussed in Interlude 2. Iwaszkiewicz’s play, staged in Płock by director Jan Skotnicki, was performed three times in March and April of 2010. Marek Mokrowiecki, the director of the Płock theater, said that Iwaszkiewicz’s play was frequently staged in 1960s and 1970s, but it has become a “forgotten text” (“tekst zapomniany”) and only thanks to Chopin’s celebrations was the play staged again.

Undercutting the bicentennial festivities, Pabjan’s study reveals the necessity for other nations to join Poland in commemorating Chopin’s legacy. In the introduction to a booklet *Wydarzenia Roku Chopinowskiego* (*Events of the Chopin Year*), the longtime jury chairman of the Chopin Competition Andrzej Jasiński states: “Chopin nas nie potrzebuję, ale my potrzebujemy Chopina” (“Chopin doesn't need us, but we need Chopin”). As the veteran chairman of the jury for the International Chopin Competition, Jasiński is used to seeing diverse pianists representing various countries. To illustrate the state of Chopin’s popularity, he makes an interesting comparison between Poland and China, Japan and Korea. Jasiński points out the importance of combatting Polish reluctance and taking examples from other nations: “W każdym zakątku świata Fryderyk Chopin jest znany, ale czy u nas trafił pod strzechy? W Chinach, Japonii, Korei kochają go i grają miliony pianistów, zachwyconych pięknem jego muzyki. Może z nich powinniśmy brać przykład?” (“In every corner of the world Fryderyk Chopin is well-known, but has he become a household figure in our country? In China, Japan and Korea millions of pianists love and play him; they are captivated by the beauty of his music. Maybe we should follow their example?”) The idea of Poland turning to other nations to remind itself of the greatness of Chopin is not new, as we have seen in the extensive involvement of Russians in recuperating Chopin’s legacy in Chapter 1.

In the nineteenth century, Poles came to recognize the possibility that “polonizing” Chopin may bring: not only can Poland claim her prodigious son, who spent half of his life in Paris, but through him, Poland can reaffirm its spiritual existence. After the nineteenth century, Poland’s situation understandably changed, but the need to claim Chopin has not decreased. It

---

572 Lech Wałęsa, “Spelniony sen o wolności.” *Chopin Express* (October 1, 2010), 5.
574 Ibid.
seems fitting to conclude the dissertation with Paderewski’s metaphor from the 1910 Lwów speech: “the whole of Poland lives, feels, and moves, ‘in Tempo Rubato.’”575 While “Tempo Rubato” (literally, “stolen time”) implies a certain degree of instability, it does not compromise the coherence of the music nor its character. Like Tempo Rubato, the history of Chopin’s reception was by no means a steady process. It was subject to the influence of Poland’s occupying powers and, indeed, Poland’s own internal political agendas. When the rubato reached the end of a (negative) spectrum, such as the neglect of Żelazowa Wola in the nineteenth century and the abundance of critical voices in Poland after the First World War, there were other forces to keep the tempo from stalling. With the Russian help that began in the nineteenth century, the image of Chopin peaked after the centennial celebrations of 1910 and 1949. With the International Chopin Piano Competition, founded in interwar Poland in 1927, Chopin became a truly international figure, whose music may find wider resonance outside of Poland today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


---------. “Pamiatnik Shopenu.” *Nedelia no. 48* (November 7, 1894).

---------. “Russkie muzykanty i kritiki o Shopene.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5* (1949).

---------. “Sovremenniki Shopena.” *Muzykal’naia zhizn’* (February 2010).


---------. “Pis’ma M. A. Balakireva o Shopene.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 10* (1949).


Bruisova, N. “Pol’skie narodnye pesni.” *Sovetskaia muzyka no. 5* (Sep/Oct 1947).


Davydova, L. K. *Fr. Shopen: ego zhizn’ i muzykal’naia deiatel’nost’.* St. Petersburg: Khudekov, 1892.


Dąbrowski, Waldemar. “Źródło dobrej energii.” *Chopin Express* (October 1, 2010).


----------. “Jak to wszystko się zaczęło.” *Chopin Express* (October 2, 2010).

----------. “Konkurs dla Polaków?” *Chopin Express* (October 12, 2010).

----------. “Kto do Jury.” *Chopin Express* (October 6, 2010).


----------. “Kaden o Chopinie.” *Wiadomości Literackie, no. 21* (1938).


Liapunov, A. “S. M. Liapunov.” Sovetskaia muzyka no. 9 (September, 1950).


----------. “Wpływ Chopina na muzykę rosyjską.” Ruch Muzyczny (February 15, 1949).


Novus, “Otkrytie pamiatnika Shopenu.” *Novoe vremia*, no. 6684 (October 7/19, 1894).


Poniatowska, Irena et al., eds. *Chopin and his critics: an anthology (up to World War I)*. Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2011.


----------. *Muzyka i ee predsdaviteli*. Moscow: Iurgenson, 1891.


Walęsa, Lech. “Spelniony sen o wolności.” *Chopin Express* (October 1, 2010).


----------. “Cel Osiągnięty.” *Stolica 42* (October 18, 1970).