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Karol Szymanowski as Chancellor of the Higher School of Music in Warsaw. New Facts, New Light

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The episode of Karol Szymanowski's short term in office as chancellor of the Higher School of Music at the State Conservatory in Warsaw, which functioned from October 1930 to December of the following year, has been described by witnesses of those events, and by the composer's biographers, in a manner which has created a legend. What turned these reports into a legend was the fact that these narratives were used as a conduit for particular views. I quote an example taken from Marcin Kamiński's *Ludomir Różycki. Opowieść o życiu i twórczości* [*Ludomir Różycki. The story of his life and work*] (1987), where we read:

The Senate of the Music Academy, where the majority was hostile to Karol Szymanowski's progressive reforms, and which held conservative views on the teaching of music, particularly composition (where the department tried to raise quality to the European standard, in accordance with the guidance of the author of *Stabat Mater*), split into two camps busy fighting each other. The majority were against Szymanowski's initiatives, which might not have always been ideal in the area of administration. They conducted a ruthless campaign against him [...]. Szymanowski, in poor health and of weak disposition, was not a suitable candidate for clearing the musical Augean stables. In spite of achieving significant positive results on the teaching front, which were enthusiastically appreciated by the talented group of young people being educated at the Music Academy, the conservative element began to win out [...]. Szymanowski, who was ill, resigned, and Różycki left together with his friend¹.

This narrative clearly distills a specific viewpoint: this is the opposition between progressivism and conservatism, which concerns not only the programme of action proposed by the parties to the conflict, but the values which they represent. I will not comment here on the obvious fact that this, and other descriptions of Szymanowski's term as chancellor of the Higher School of Music, not quoted here for lack of space, were based on statements made by the composer himself, and he tended to reduce the controversy over the Higher School to the struggle between progress and conservatism.

While respecting the legend as the product of a particular tradition, I will nevertheless attempt to re-examine it, especially since there is a need to prepare the ground for a more objective discussion about the role of the Warsaw Academy during the twenty inter-war years. The approaching 200th anniversary of the founding of the School (in 2011) seems a valid reason to reconstruct the story of the battle over the Higher School of Music, using sources dealing with the history of Polish musical education and higher education in general during that period. There can be no doubt that the affair of the Higher School of Music has to be looked at in the context of ideas prevalent at that time, together with their political premises. As a starting point, we need to examine the condition of the organisation when it was reborn in 1919, after more than half a century of functioning under the tsarist management.

The new stage in the history of the Warsaw Conservatory began on 7 February 1919, as a result of a decree creating the State Conservatory in Warsaw. The decree was issued by the Ministry of Art and Culture, which began work in January 1918 under the government of Ignacy Jan Paderewski. The legal act, which had been eagerly awaited at the conservatory, did not bring any revolutionary changes in the School's organisation. The reason for this was that the text of the document, establishing the Conservatory as a state higher education institution, contained a number of gaps and ambiguities. These could be interpreted in such a way as would allow the Conservatory to be treated according to the pre-war norms, i.e., as a vocational school; the document also said nothing about its autonomy (which as a higher education establishment it would have to possess), or the rights and powers of its teachers and graduates.

The decree of 7 February 1919 had been issued before the legislature of the Second Republic of Poland worked out a generally binding statute concerning higher education. That statute was published on 13 July 1920, but art schools were not included in its regulations. During the following years, the Academies of Fine Arts in Kraków and in Warsaw succeeded in obtaining the status of higher educational institutions, through amendments to the statute of 1920. The management of the Conservatory attempted to obtain a similar upgraded status during the 1920s. At the same time, the music-teaching community attempted to bring order from below into the extremely complicated structure of Polish music education. Within its framework there functioned two state schools — the Warsaw Conservatory and the city's Frederic Chopin Higher School of Music (it became a state school on 13 December 1919), as well as an enormous network of self-governing and private schools, whose powers, programmes and standards were impossible to compare. During the early 1920s, Henryk Melcer, director of the Warsaw Conservatory, tried to coordinate work on creating a consistent structure within music education, taking advantage of his close relationship with Stanisław Wojciechowski, who became President of Poland in 1922. On Melcer's initiative, a Convention of Managers of Music Schools took place in Warsaw during 20–22 November 1925. Earlier, immediately after taking up the post of director, Melcer initiated efforts to obtain for the Warsaw Conservatory the status of academic school. He made a practical attempt to reorganise the conservatory in 1925, at the time when the newly appointed Minister for Religious Faiths and Public Education (WRiOP), Kazimierz Bartel (later a Prime Minister in one of the governments under Marshal Piłsudski), undertook the reform of secondary education, which had been awaited by the teaching community. Within the framework of the reforms, the system of secondary school certificate (*matura*) exams and schools accreditation was being reorganised. However, negotiations undertaken by Melcer, aimed at achieving an analogous accreditation status for the Conservatory, were unsuccessful. The impossibility of establishing the credentials of graduates through *matura* certificates was put forward as an argument against granting Melcer's request; moreover, in order to emphasise the status of the Conservatory as a vocational school, the

Ministry gave instructions for the school to be inspected. Melcer was notified about the inspection on 1 December 1926. Reacting with indignation and in the heat of the moment, he wrote a letter of resignation, which was accepted in mid-December. As Zbigniew Drzewiecki wrote a few years later, what happened to Melcer was only seemingly a failure, 'since the matter could not be buried and was bound to arise again, on a much wider platform'². Indeed, the campaign initiated by Melcer had a beneficial effect, in that it awakened the interest of the whole Polish cultural community in the idea of creating a state higher school of music in Warsaw. A number of interviews with leading musicians appeared in the press, giving support to the project. Aleksander Michałowski, Ludomir Różycki and Tadeusz Joteyko expressed their support for creating a 'music academy' in the columns of the periodical *Świat* (1926 No. 3). Różycki put forward an actual proposal for a future academy which, in his view, was to become a 'national conservatory', a model, showpiece establishment. The idea of an elitist Higher School of Music was maintained during the short period of the directorship of Karol Szymanowski, who succeeded Melcer (1927–1928). The concept originated in Szymanowski's general view of Polish musical culture and its problems. The composer declared:

I will try, above all, to turn the Conservatory into a body which stands for musical culture understood in its deepest sense. Of course, since my basic position is that the achievements of contemporary music have to be acknowledged as being of immeasurable and significant value, I will be taking note of the latest developments in that area³.

In a number of texts published by Szymanowski during the period of his directorship at the conservatory, and immediately after it ended, the recurring theme was the need to 'break through the barriers' put up by provincial, conservative pedagogues obstructing the development of young people studying at the Conservatory⁴. Szymanowski was of the opinion that he had succeeded in breaking through these dams, in the sense that he awakened an interest in new music and, more widely, in progressive ideology, of the community of conservative youth⁵. Evidence for this is provided by Szymanowski's correspondence, published by Teresa Chylińska, which shows that young students

of composition, and activists from the Brotherly Help organisation of the Conservatory students, turned enthusiastically to him.

The directorship, which brought with it a surfeit of personal conflict, put a strain on Szymanowski's health. In order to recuperate, Szymanowski left for Edlach in Austria at the end of 1928. By the time of his return, he had already made up his mind to quit the directorial post, foreseeing that his departure 'will quite automatically cause a catastrophe and the ruin of all that has been achieved so far'⁶.

Szymanowski's place was temporarily filled (a Ministry appointment) by Janusz Miketta, Professor at the Frederic Chopin High School of Music in Warsaw, who from 1926 had been official councillor on music matters at the Ministry (WRiOP). At the same time Miketta became the official adviser to the Opinion Formulating Commission of the Ministry (WROiP) on the matter of the System of Music Education in the Republic of Poland, established in October 1928 by Minister Kazimierz Świtalski. The Commission was charged with carrying out a systemic reorganisation of state and private establishments of music education, in order to standardise their structure and programmes. The initiative to establish the Opinion Formulating Commission was a personal achievement of Miketta who, working with the knowledge of Szymanowski, made efforts to bring the matter of establishing a music academy back onto the agenda. It was no accident that this initiative coincided in time with the project put forward by the Director of the Art Department of the Ministry (WRiOP), Wojciech Jastrzębowski, who held that post from September 1928 until May 1930. As a painter, he represented a large and expansive community of plastic artists, and his project was aimed at creating a systemic reform of Polish artistic education together with a cohesive system of its administration. Such a system was expected to overcome the duality which had resulted from the division of responsibilities between the two departments in charge of artistic schools, the Department of Science and the Department of Art. However, the immediate aim of the campaign initiated by Jastrzębowski and his successor, Władysław Skoczylas, was to increase the number of state schools of plastic arts. The theatrical community announced similar aspirations at the same time, demanding the establishment of theatri-

cal education at university level. The activities of both these communities provided considerable competition for the musicians, and significantly influenced the attitude of the government to the resolutions of the Commission on the System of Music Education.

The Commission was composed of prominent professors, representing the most important national music conservatories, and three chairs of musicology, those of Lvov, Kraków and Poznań. The Warsaw Conservatory was represented by Józef Turczyński, Stanisław Kazuro, Piotr Rytel, Kazimierz Sikorski and Zbigniew Drzewiecki (deputising for Karol Szymanowski, who did not participate in the work of the Commission on grounds of ill health); the Frederic Chopin Higher School of Music — Adam Wieniawski and Stefan Wysocki; the Łódź Conservatory — Helena Kijeńska-Dobkiewiczowa; the Poznań Conservatory — Waclaw Piotrowski and Władysław Raczkowski; the Katowice Music Institute⁷ — Stefan Marian Stoiński, the Vilnius Conservatory — Adam Wyleżyński, the Kraków Conservatory — Józef Władysław Reiss and Michał Julian Piotrowski, the Lvov Conservatory — Seweryn Barbag and Mieczysław Sołtys. The delegate from the Lvov musicology department was Adolf Chybiński, from the Kraków one — Zdzisław Jachimecki, and from Poznań — Łucjan Kamiński. Two representatives of the Ukrainian Lysenko Conservatory, Wasyl Barwiński and Stanisław Ludkewycz, were also invited to participate in the work of the Commission. The Commission held its sittings, consecutively, at the following conservatories: Warsaw (19–21 October 1928), Lvov (2–5 January 1929), Poznań (7–9 March 1929), Kraków (22–24 April 1929) and Warsaw for the second time (20–22 June 1929)⁸.

We know in detail the progress of the Commission's work, since its reports were published in Gliński's *Muzyka*, where a discussion about them was taking place concurrently. We thus know that, as early as the first sitting, Janusz Miketta put forward for discussion the proposal to create a uniform three-stage system of music schools, adapted to the system of general education which was at that time being drawn up by the relevant authorities. This idea, very ambitious in its detail (it is relevant to recall here that Miketta consulted Szymanowski about it on many occasions, regarding the composer as the ideological patron of the enterprise), foresaw the establishment of three

types of schools: lower, secondary and higher. There were to be two categories of secondary schools: those with subjects relevant only to music, and those with both music subjects and general education subjects. Schools of the second type — music lycea — were to provide a secondary school certificate on completion, while vocational schools would only provide school leavers with a qualification to practice their craft; those candidates who wanted to enter a higher school would need to supplement their general education.

Janusz Miketta also proposed the formation of two kinds of music education at the higher level: strictly vocational institutions, which would accept graduates from both types of secondary school, and ‘music academies’ for graduates of music lycea. The ‘Academy’ (to start with only one of these establishments was foreseen, at the Warsaw Conservatory) was to have a ‘scientific-musical’ profile, i.e., it was to educate independent specialists in all the research branches of music (Miketta proposed a set of subjects close to the typical programme of musicological studies at university level, plus scientific study of musical performance)⁹. The project of establishing a scientific ‘music academy’ did not gain the support of the Commission. It was rejected *en masse* when it became apparent that graduates of the academy would not be entitled to undertake lectureships at musicology departments at university level¹⁰. The idea of creating an academy was officially abandoned at the meeting in Poznań. However, a resolution was passed calling for the ‘expansion of higher schools to the maximum of equipment, excellence of teaching methods and programmes’¹¹.

The 30 resolutions which resulted from the work of the Commission included a new statute for the State Music Conservatory in Warsaw. It was officially confirmed by the then current Minister for Religious Faiths and Public Education, Sławomir Czerwiński, in a letter dated 17 June 1929.

It is worth recalling that Minister Czerwiński was a teacher-activist, who made a significant contribution to Poland’s independence movement. He had studied Polish at the Jagiellonian University, had worked as a teacher in a private secondary school in the part of Poland under Russian rule during the partition period, and had been active in ‘Znicz’, ‘Zarzewie’ and ‘Drużyny Strzeleckie’ — organisations devoted to the struggle for Poland’s indepen-

dence. In 1923 he obtained a Ph.D. in Polish, and became an inspector at the Ministry (WRiOP). He became a Minister in 1929. By nature he was a social activist, an ideologue whose greatest interest was educational work 'at the roots', and had much less concern for the ambitions of artistic communities¹². His statement made at the session of the Senate on 6 March 1931 echoed throughout Warsaw press:

I do not want it to be thought that, in this difficult economic period, the Government regards art as a kind of luxury. We are not at all complacent at the thought that the Polish State has so far not found sufficient means and forms to safeguard art. This is a very difficult problem, which has perhaps not been perfectly solved in any state. Instead of supporting artists themselves, the Ministry follows the path of raising the artistic level of the masses, which brings about increased demand for artistic production and influences the existence of artists in that way¹³.

In Czerwiński's speech closing the sessions of the Opinion Formulating Commission (on 22 June 1929) we also find the egalitarian emphasis characteristic of him. Members of the Commission are praised there for going beyond 'just the project of the music education system', and for considering 'the very content of musical education [...], the ways and methods of music teaching, evaluating them in the light of their educational results and external effects'¹⁴. Painting his vision of the purpose of aesthetic education in schools, the Minister limited himself to the postulate that artistic subjects should not be a 'wooden saw', but that they should become a 'teaching material which brings the joy of life between the school walls, which are still too gloomy.' The above quotations allow us to suppose that the Minister's attitude to the creation of an elitist music academy would have been one of indifference. This throws an important light on his next moves concerning the issue of the Warsaw Conservatory, of which more later.

The sessions of the Opinion Formulating Commission received much commentary. The journalists who followed the process of reorganisation of the Conservatory expressed their own views as to the desired shape of the future music academy. Texts on this subject quite frequently promoted a maximalist vision of the Higher School as an institution of 'national' rank, whose elevated standard-setting position would be ensured by employing the most

prominent Polish artists (the majority of whom were abroad!). Karol Stromenger suggested that the post of chancellor of the Higher School should go to Paderewski or to the outstanding émigré pianist Zygmunt Stojowski¹⁵. Of some significance in the proposal put forward by Stromenger, a journalist linked to the governing right-wing ‘Sanacja’ movement, was the fact that the two musicians in question were of purely Polish origin (the critic stated directly that a ‘native Pole’ would be preferred), and had a record of not only great professional achievement, but also of unblemished service as citizens (both Paderewski and Stojowski engaged in active politics during the First World War, supporting the cause of Poland and Polish people).

The same article mentioned for the first time in the Warsaw press the name of Eugeniusz Morawski. That artist, a pre-war graduate of the Warsaw Music Institute, a talented composer and conductor, returned to Poland from Paris in 1930, having been forced to emigrate because of taking part in student demonstrations in 1905¹⁶. He was appointed director of the State Music Conservatory in Poznań but did not take up that post, since a faction of the Warsaw music activists who supported the idea of appointing a ‘native Pole’ with the right ideological record as chancellor of the Higher School, identified just those qualities in him and began a campaign aimed at bringing Morawski to the capital. The first move in this campaign was to recommend Morawski as the preferred appointment for the directorship, which was done by Stromenger in *Gazeta Polska*. ‘The appointment of Eugeniusz Morawski as director of the Conservatory in Poznań shows that the Department of Art is looking for a solution to the issue of management of that institution,’ — wrote the critic¹⁷. Morawski’s candidature for the post of chancellor, or one of the managers of the three-level conservatory which was being organised, provided a useful compromise in a situation where bringing Paderewski or Stojowski to Warsaw was an unrealisable dream. Moreover, the virtues perceived in Morawski, such as his energy, enterprise, and ideological commitment, became important arguments to be put forward by those who loudly expressed their concern over the possibility of the directorship of the Higher School of Music going to Karol Szymanowski, which was the aim of Janusz Miketta. This issue is clarified in the following sentence taken from the same article by

Stromenger: 'after all, what is important is the selection of a normal director, and not a fantastical, senseless selection, a selection in order to «recognise the services», for example, as a composer'¹⁸.

The programme profile of the institution to be formed was also a subject of debate. In this area, there were two conflicting ideas: that of creating a music academy with a scientific-musical profile, which had been rejected by the Opinion Formulating Commission but was still being promoted by Janusza Miketta, and the proposal to create a higher school of music with emphasis on teaching professional skills. An article by Miketta on this subject, published in *Muzyka* under the title *Vita nuova warszawskiego konserwatorium muzycznego [Vita nuova of the Warsaw Music Conservatory]* evoked a great deal of response. In it, he put forward a number of arguments supporting the idea of an elite music academy, intended to function as an 'oasis of wisdom', exerting influence 'not only internally, for the benefit of the students, but externally, to educate society in general.'¹⁹ Miketta's arguments, unfolding the attractions of 'a higher atmosphere of scientific, independent investigation of all kinds of creative and performance issues,'²⁰ which were expected to emanate from the academy, were criticised by Karol Stromenger as 'somewhat naïve'²¹. Even earlier, at the time when the decision was made to create a separate higher school within the Warsaw Conservatory, Stromenger was promoting the idea of creating a strictly vocational school, which would have at its disposal practical departments with modern programmes — the idea recommended by the Opinion Formulating Commission. He coined the popular slogan of breaking away from the 'fetish of virtuoso illiterates', widely adhered to by the students of the Conservatory. This was to be achieved by raising the status of neglected general music subjects (classes on chamber music, choir and orchestra, solfeggio, lessons in music literature), which would produce highly professional and generally aware graduate musicians, and not simply competent ones²².

The preparations for the opening of the Higher School of Music in themselves provide little material for recreating the discussion about the programme, since it involved exclusively matters of personnel. The exchange of letters between Szymanowski and Miketta prior to the opening of the School shows that

negotiations concerned mainly the issue of who would be included among the founder-professors; the issue of which specialisms would be represented, and in what manner, was less important. Thus, according to the original version narrated to Szymanowski by Miketta, the founders were to be the generally respected Conservatory professors headed by Piotr Rytel (obviously all conservatives), but in the final version the founders, who had been proposed by Szymanowski, represented the progressive option. This group did not include Eugeniusz Morawski, who, nonetheless, was offered a post at the Conservatory's Middle School, one of the three partially autonomous bodies into which the old Conservatory was divided. The second of these bodies was the Higher School, and the third — a teacher training school, under the management of Stanisław Kazuro.

The inauguration of the Conservatory's Higher School took place on 7 November 1930. In his speech as chancellor, Karol Szymanowski talked again about the need to spread within society an appreciation of music 'which carried undoubted creative values', and the tasks which musician-teachers would face if they were to meet that need; he spoke also about the need to make the teaching reform effective, and to direct it towards expanding the existing narrow system of vocational teaching by adding humanist subjects, which gave the students an 'objective' education²³.

The Higher School under the chancellorship of Szymanowski educated in total some 50 students;²⁴ it did not have the full set of departments. Out of the promised 8 professorial posts, the Ministry allotted only 6, sufficient to fill vacancies in classes of theory, composition, conducting and piano. Szymanowski recruited a number of leading pianists with former links to the Conservatory to take up the professorships in the piano class: Józef Turczyński and Zbigniew Drzewiecki; composition, conducting and theory classes were taken on by Grzegorz Fitelberg, Kazimierz Sikorski and Ludomir Różycki (the latter took on the composition class, while a parallel composition class was opened by Szymanowski himself). One of the tasks of the first professorial body at the School was to appoint the next tier of teachers, in consultation with the authorities; however, Szymanowski succeeded in appointing only one — Hieronim Feicht, a young musicologist who was making a name for himself

and came recommended by Adolf Chybiński. The School was lacking a violin class, as well as classes in other orchestral instruments, singing and ensemble work; Szymanowski also failed to obtain contractual hours for the provision of lectures in history of art and other art subjects. The syllabuses proposed by the Management Council which supervised the Higher School included a large number of classes in the theory of music, compulsory for all students, in order to 'widen the narrow views of instrumentalists.'²⁵ Students were obliged to attend the classes of Rev. Feicht on the history of medieval music, early classical counterpoint and analysis of musical forms²⁶. Such a large number of compulsory classes was criticised by the conservative faction among the professors, who saw it as a threat against the established educational priorities.

The pretext for the first debate about the work of the School was provided by its first and last public concert, which took place in June 1931. It was followed by many critical voices being raised in the press, both in relation to the general programme which the School set for itself, and to the individual solutions applied in its organisation and the system of teaching. An author from *Gazeta Warszawska*, using the pseudonym 'Deputy' (this was Piotr Rytel), wrote about the catastrophic financial consequences of creating the Higher School, and about the chaos reigning throughout the Conservatory as a result of the separation of competences between the managers of the middle school (in charge of school ensembles and the majority of instrumental classes), and the higher school, which basically worked in a vacuum. Karol Stromenger, having considered the 'meagre harvest' achieved by the School during its first year of existence, moved on to criticise the whole idea on which it was founded:

The performance by the Higher School of Music demonstrated its peculiar, artificial and one-sided organisation [...]. The School is unable to justify its separation from the Conservatory [...], its autonomy does not correspond to any identifiable need [...]. With all its centralised means, with all its paths cleared, already in its first year this 'academy' is sick — suffering from the unreality of its existence²⁷.

After the holidays, the press debate about the School flared up again. The first to raise the issue was again Karol Stromenger, who on the first day of the

new academic year asked in the columns of *Gazeta Polska*: ‘Does the current staff of the Higher School of Music [...] possess the attributes appropriate to an establishment providing higher education in music? Are we using relative or absolute criteria of superiority?’ Among comments which drew the readers’ attention to the original idea of the School’s professorial appointments being filled by Polish stars, or perhaps ‘internationally exchangeable professors’, Stromenger also asked a question relating directly to Szymanowski: ‘whether the state of his health will allow this class of composition to be organised so as to undertake some real work’?. He also suggested that the staffing of the theoretical classes was inappropriate, making them ‘isolated from musical practice’. The article’s conclusion, that ‘today [the School] does not demonstrate many features of a practical higher education establishment [...], and does not at all resemble an academy of practical artistry,’ but relates directly to the vision of the academy as a vocational school which would ensure high standard of professionalism, a vision supported by the critic and opposed to Szymanowski’s programme²⁸.

In January 1931 the discussion about the School was joined by Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, writer and music critic who was the ‘éminence grise’ in the Piłsudski-backed government. He identified two issues which were generally regarded as particular weaknesses in the School’s structure: the absence of ensemble music classes, lack of clear separation of the competences of the higher and the middle schools, and the possibility of the Higher School interfering in the affairs of the Middle School²⁹. At another point Juliusz Kaden Bandrowski added another charge to those listed above, which was lack of provision for education at virtuoso level within the academy, resulting in the absence of outstanding achievements among the graduates³⁰.

The negative judgment on the results of the first year of teaching at the Higher School became the pretext for dismissing Miketta from his post of councillor at the Ministry of Religious Faiths and Public Education. His place was taken by Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. From 1 December 1931 a new Head of the Department of Music, Witold Maliszewski, replaced the previous holder of that post, Felicjan Szopski. Maliszewski was discovered by the conservative wing of the Warsaw music community, who regarded him as the new saviour of

music, competent, honest, and, moreover, someone who thought in practical terms. 'The choice of a candidate who is so generally popular and respected must be a cause for satisfaction', was the comment of Karol Stromenger when Maliszewski was awarded the State Music Prize for 1930 in January 1931³¹. Maliszewski's promotion to Head of the Music Department came about as a result of his effectiveness as the director of the Warsaw Music Society (1925–1927), as teacher at the Conservatory and the Chopin Higher School of Music, and also as co-organiser of the first Chopin Competition in 1927. However, the main reason for this choice was the fact that he took the Ministry's side on a matter which agitated the whole artistic community in the autumn of 1931. This involved a reorganisation of the Ministry of Religious Faiths and Public Education, introduced as a financial saving measure. As part of that reorganisation, the Department of Art was combined with the Department of Science. Some representatives of the artistic community interpreted this as a move to liquidate Polish art and destroy the existence of Polish artists. However, Witold Maliszewski defended the Ministry's decision in an exposé published in *Gazeta Polska* (27 September 1931):

If the relationship between the State and Art has a sound ideological basis, and is conducted within appropriate forms, a department within a ministry will be sufficient. However, if that issue is resolved incorrectly, even having a Ministry of Art will be of no use.³²

After directing a number of specific charges against the officials at the former Department of Art (among them the bureaucracy and interference in professional matters), the author gave his views on the matter of 'normal co-existence of the State and art.' He assigned to the State the 'honourable mission of patronage', warning at the same time that 'such help should in no way restrict the freedom of development of art or the institution, since that freedom is the only element in which art can develop'. The last paragraph of the letter concerned the issue of artistic education. On this subject, Maliszewski said:

One of the ways of supporting [it] is the nationalisation of schools, but one should take care that this nationalisation should be conducted in the right form and on

sound principles, so that it should not become a burden, give rise to bureaucracy, or bring the institution down³³.

With this statement, Maliszewski acknowledged the decision which, to all intents and purposes, had already been taken — to dismantle the Higher School of Music; he personally undertook the task of reconstructing the Conservatory in order to reintegrate it.

Immediately after being appointed, Maliszewski presented a new proposed statute for the Conservatory, at a conference held in the building of the Ministry. Those present included: Karol Szymanowski, Józef Turczyński, Zbigniew Drzewiecki (as representatives of the Higher School of Music), Eugeniusz Morawski, Stanisław Kazuro and Waclaw Kochański (as representatives of the Middle School) and leading (according to the then current preferences of the ministerial authorities) representatives of Warsaw's music community: Stanisław Niewiadomski, Adam Wieniawski and Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. This proposal, made public by Maliszewski in an interview given to Gliński's *Muzyka*,³⁴ was adopted by Janusz Jędrzejewicz, who had been the Minister for Education since August 1931, on 20 January 1932. From 1 February 1932 the school was bound by the new statute which created an integrated institution, ready to resume its work from 1 September 1932. Until then the School was to be governed by a Reorganisation Commission, formed from the school's teachers. The Commission included the following: Stanisław Kazuro, Waclaw Kochański, Rydzewski, Wiaczesław (Bronisław) Lewenztajn, Piotr Rytel, Józef Turczyński, and Zbigniew Drzewiecki. The temporary administration of the School was entrusted to Zbigniew Drzewiecki, who was its Vice Chancellor in 1931.

As might have been expected, the decision to close the School caused a heated debate in the press. Szymanowski's supporters presented the ministerial actions as a coup against the great composer, and against Polish music. Those responsible for the reorganisation were accused of incompetence and of acting for personal reasons: kow-towing to authority and to the notorious 'provincialism'. Zbigniew Drzewiecki criticised the fact that the fate of the School was to be decided by Władysław Maliszewski and Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski³⁵. He lodged a complaint, claiming that decisions about the closure of the School

were being taken 'bypassing the opinion of the Conservatory management' and served no good purpose but were instead a return to 'the old discredited forms of organisation'³⁶.

Eugeniusz Morawski answered Drzewiecki's accusations in the columns of *Gazeta Polska*. In a letter to the editor he emphasised that the idea of re-introducing an integrated structure of the Conservatory was not an element of a general campaign 'against the Higher School as such,' i.e., it was not an attempt to deprive the Conservatory of university status (this was considered to have been conferred on it by a decree signed by Piłsudski back in 1919)³⁷. According to Morawski, abandoning the division of the school into higher, middle and a teacher training college reflected the desire to give the School (which was now to have a new structure of 7 independent departments) a 'truly «higher» character', through 'increasing its range of activity and providing a full musical education for young people'³⁸. In conclusion, Morawski enumerated a number of reservations as to the manner in which Szymanowski had governed the School, and declared, on behalf of the school's future reorganisers, a 'striving to create a school that is strong, integrated, dedicated to promoting science and art, free from favouritism, and from having to support individuals unable to work — at the cost not only to the Treasury, but to the interests of young people'.

The 'fiction of creating a showpiece' — was a description used on a number of occasions in an article by Karol Stromenger forming part of this debate. The context for it was provided by the alleged distaste demonstrated by Szymanowski and a number of other Higher School professors for performing their pedagogical duties³⁹. This issue kept surfacing during the battle over the reorganisation of the Conservatory as one of the most sensitive areas. It was explained very directly to the readers of *Gazeta Warszawska* by Piotr Rytel, who claimed that the professors at the School did not work their full contractual hours (because of insufficient numbers of students or for other reasons), and thus their pedagogical activity, amounting to 2–3 hours for 2–3 students was an unnecessary luxury for the School, and of course for the State⁴⁰.

One of the best known decisions by the Reorganisation Commission was to pension off, on 27 February 1932, the three Higher School professors nominated by Szymanowski, who were the ones involved in the issues referred to by Rytel: Fitelberg, Różycki and Sikorski, as well as Władysław Raczkowski, who was employed in the Middle School. (The latter was a highly regarded choirmaster, an excellent performer of *Stabat Mater*, discovered by Szymanowski in Poznań;⁴¹ he was not successful in his work with the school orchestra, which was entrusted to him because of the absence of the orchestra's official director, Grzegorz Fitelberg). As a consequence of the dismissal of Fitelberg and the other professors, Karol Szymanowski submitted his resignation from the Higher School on 6 March 1932. His resignation was followed by that of Hieronim Feicht.

Szymanowski's supporters demonstrated their indignation at the dismissals. Official protests began to arrive from various institutions, such as the Association of Young Polish Musicians in Paris. On 3 December 1931 the Association's management adopted a resolution which said that it 'considers it its duty to draw the attention of all Polish musicians and relevant competent bodies to the danger which threatens the development of Polish music as a result of the campaign [against the Higher School]'⁴². According to Stefan Śledziński⁴³, on hearing the news of Szymanowski's resignation and the dismissal of four professors, the students at the Conservatory began a strike.

In the commentaries on the subject of the 'affair' of the Conservatory, personal issues were dominant. The defenders of Szymanowski suggested that the composer as the Chancellor of the Higher School had become a victim of intrigues. Antoni Słonimski wrote very mysteriously about those who were behind the intrigues: 'I do not know who they are, but I can guess. Tasiemka is not the only one, and not only in Kercelak' (Tasiemka was the 'Polish Al Capone', leader of a gang which at that time was very active in the Warsaw's district of Prague/Kercelak⁴⁴; he had just been caught by the police, and the press was full of that story)⁴⁵. Zbigniew Drzewiecki, in a moment of bitterness, announced that the whole campaign against the School was initiated by those who had not been appointed as professors there

and who — which is worse — being backward and behind the times, ‘hated Szymanowski’⁴⁶.

With the composer’s acquiescence, it became a generally known secret that the main author of the idea to close down the Higher School was the director of the Middle School, Eugeniusz Morawski, and his fundamental motive in the campaign against Szymanowski was his desire to take over the chancellorship of the Conservatory.

At this point, rather than probe further the conflict of personalities in the battle over the Conservatory, it is relevant to return to the historical background to the affair. We need to remember that that battle took place at the height of the great economic crisis, which affected all the spheres of state activity. The adverse economic conditions obviously also affected musical life. The future of the opera and the philharmonia came into question, while unemployment among musicians grew by leaps and bounds. In 1931, *Kurier Poranny* claimed that unemployment in that professional group reached 50%⁴⁷. State expenditure on culture was shrinking systematically. As early as the spring of 1929, Piotr Rytel announced in *Gazeta Warszawska* the ‘fall of music culture in Poland’⁴⁸. Warsaw Opera closed its doors at the end of 1931, the Philharmonia abandoned its concert programme. The divided musical community became depressed, blaming not only the authorities, but also society at large for indifference towards music.

Other state-funded higher education institutions were equally threatened during the years of the Great Depression. Salaries in that sector were cut by as much as 35%. The academic year 1930/31 closed with a serious deficit in the budget of Warsaw University, as a result of cuts in state support⁴⁹. Shortages of equipment forced the closure or limited the activity of a number of departments. The authorities tried to deal with the crisis at the University by making mass redundancies in 1930/31 (i.e., during the period when the Higher School of Music was being created)⁵⁰. This affected both the older personnel, who were willingly being retired⁵¹, and the junior lecturers, who were being replaced by teachers employed to cover specific courses on a casual basis. The years 1931/32 saw another big rise in student fees at Warsaw higher educational establishments, to which the University students reacted with a

strike, and there was a further cut in expenditure on education and science. Cuts in the ministerial budget for universities included administrative costs, scientific grants and benefits, which left only the salaries of the teaching staff. The policy was to concentrate scientific research away from higher education and take it into research institutes, while higher schools would have strictly vocational, practical character. In order to control the critical situation, and to stamp out the rebellious mood of the students and part of the lecturing staff linked to extreme right wing organisations,⁵² the Minister for Religious Faiths and Public Education, Janusz Jędrzejewicz, prepared a reform which drastically curtailed the autonomy of universities.

In his memoirs published in London in 1972, Jędrzejewicz commented as follows on the battle over the finances for education and science which took place during the raging economic crisis:

Under those conditions, work on preparing budget estimates involved unending torment and pain. I sat for hours with Andrzej Nowak, the head of the budget department, the deputy ministers, the departmental directors, trying to extricate ourselves, in a relatively sensible manner, from a totally senseless situation. The task ahead of us was quite simple: make drastic cuts, without cutting out altogether enormous areas of educational, artistic and organisational activity. It was obvious that trying to square the circle would have brought the same degree of success⁵³.

When one reads the texts concerning the statute and the principles of the Conservatory written just before the closure of the Higher School by the proponents of reorganisation, one is struck by how closely they are related to the theses being put forward by Minister Jędrzejewicz. The key thesis was the conviction, already apparent in the attitudes of those previously in charge of culture and education, that their main concern should be ‘making intellectual culture accessible to the masses’, in order to ‘expand the spiritual culture, still so low and poor in our country, because that culture is capable of bringing human masses to consciously participate in the life of the collective, without which the power of the State would be circumstantial or illusory’⁵⁴. Janusz Jędrzejewicz was an enthusiastic proponent of a utilitarian educational programme even before he became a minister. As an educational activist he emphasised that, as he saw it, the ‘utilitarian nature’ of the ‘perceptible

rush to learning in Poland' resulted from the 'harsh realism of life'⁵⁵. The educational policies of Jędrzejewicz were supported by many journalists, who put forward the view that 'our education system has been designed on too large a scale', and that 'we are a poor nation, a nation whose current situation obliges it to be very careful in all undertakings.'⁵⁶

'Great emphasis must be placed on vocational education' says one of the instructions formulated by Minister Jędrzejewicz for the benefit of those who were preparing the educational reform with him⁵⁷. Another instruction says that 'the level of candidates to academic schools should be improved', primarily through a stricter selection of young people than previously⁵⁸. Juliusz Kaden Bandrowski, inspired by these instructions, had prepared as early as mid-1931 a programme of reorganisation at the Warsaw Conservatory. This was supported by an overview of the general situation in the musical profession — an unfavourable situation, characterised by falling prestige and profitability, brought about by competition from sport, radio and mechanical music. According to Kaden-Bandrowski, this situation made it necessary to demand a higher standard from musicians, and therefore their teachers as well.

Music schools must be aware of these factors when selecting candidates and setting the standard of teaching. This selection ought to be stricter than previously, since, while previously it was possible to obtain second-rate jobs in the craft of music, today the living human workforce has been squeezed out of them by mechanical music. The teaching of novices should have higher expectations of itself, taking into account the fact that it needs to produce professionals⁵⁹.

However, what was most important according to Kaden, was to reorganise the aims of teaching, replacing the traditional aim of producing virtuosos by moving towards educating socially useful cadres of average (but valuable) musicians:

As long as the school teaches mainly piano and violin, and thus is unable to produce at its annual concert any orchestral instrumentalists raised to solo level, it will be fulfilling only half of its role. A music school, particularly a state music school, which concentrates on teaching solo instruments, is not fulfilling its function and will not be meeting its true aim. And that aim should surely be the creation of cadres for performing orchestral ensemble music. A virtuoso can be taught at any

private workshop of that master or another. To create orchestral cadres, or, in other words, to create the fundamentals for performing symphonic music — that is the business of a grand state academy⁶⁰.

This was the line being strictly followed by the management of the Conservatory, which was reorganised in 1932, under the leadership of Eugeniusz Morawski. In an interview given to *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* in 1935, we find the following fragment:

Musical culture. In order to spread it, teaching music must be compulsory in all schools, both singing and the playing of instruments. For this we need to prepare a cohort of teachers at the conservatory, and at the same time to provide additional training for itinerant teachers, choir conductors etc. The greater the number of these minor teachers, the higher will be the level of musical culture. I am not a supporter of producing virtuosos at the Conservatory [...], although until now that has been the main course being followed. I am a supporter of training the cadres of music teachers, organists, those people who will go to the provinces and will there organise a musica life⁶¹.

These two tendencies — egalitarian and utilitarian — won out in the conflict over the shape of the Conservatory. They were totally convergent with the policies of the Polish educational authorities in the 1930s, and they were inspired not only by the internal situation, but by the ideas flowing out of Germany and Soviet Union. As we know, they became the basis of the creative programme produced by the (then) young generation of composers, which also included enthusiasts of Szymanowski: Kondracki, Perkowski, Kisielewski, Maciejewski and others. The ideal of ‘applied music’, with an obvious connection to the social and political realities of the 1930s, was the decisive factor in shaping Polish musical culture as a whole during that period (its resonating symbol was the disseminating ‘action’ of ORMUZ [Organisation of Musical Movement]). Looking at the issue from the perspective of the dominant egalitarian model of music culture in the 1930s, one might well ask whether the attempt by Szymanowski and his supporters to create a musical ‘oasis of wisdom’ in Warsaw during the economic depression, might not be accurately described as a classic example of utopia. As a result of the too hasty, and too enthusiastic, introduction of the utopia, obvious mistakes were

made during the establishment of the Higher School of Music. The consequences of these mistakes were borne by Szymanowski, and indirectly by all of us, who now have to search in the still unverified sources to find out how the ‘provincials’ in Warsaw fought Szymanowski and progress in music, and the harm this did to our musical culture.

Notes

- 1 Marcin Kamiński, *Ludomir Różycki. Opowieść o życiu i twórczości* [*Ludomir Różycki. The story of his life and work*] Bydgoszcz 1987, p. 100.
- 2 Zbigniew Drzewiecki, ‘Dookoła reformy ustroju konserwatorium muzycznego’ [‘Concerning the structural reform of the Music Conservatory’]. *Kurier Warszawski* 1931, No. 168.
- 3 ‘Dyrektor Karol Szymanowski o celach uczelni i potrzebie poparcia młodej twórczości’ [‘Director Karol Szymanowski speaks about the aims of the academy and the need to support young artists’]. *Kurier Czerwony* 1927, No. 44.
- 4 Mieczysław Rytard, ‘Na przełomie muzyki polskiej (rozmowa z Karolem Szymanowskim)’ [‘Polish music at its turning point (conversation with Karol Szymanowski)’]. *Świat* 1929, No. 22.
- 5 As above.
- 6 From a letter to August Iwański. Quoted after Stefania Łobaczewska: *Karol Szymanowski...*, p. 587.
- 7 The Institute was a Polish institution, opened before the creation of the Silesian Music Conservatory in Katowice.
- 8 A group of representatives from three top music schools in Warsaw: the Conservatory, the Chopin Higher School of Music and the Warsaw School of Music formed its own subcommission, which held its session on 28 February 1929 in the building of the Ministry, debating the project of a new structure for the State Music Conservatory.
- 9 See: Tadeusz Joteyko, ‘W sprawie ustroju szkolnictwa muzycznego w Polsce’ [‘On the system of music education in Poland’]. *Muzyka* 1929, issue 1.
- 10 See: footnote ‘Od Redakcji’ [‘From the Editor’] to ‘Kronika bieżąca’ [‘The current chronicle’]. *Muzyka* 1929, No. 1.
- 11 ‘Kronika bieżąca’ [‘The current chronicle’]. *Muzyka* 1929, No.3.
- 12 ‘Sławomir Czerwiński’. *Oświata i Wychowanie* [*Education and Upbringing*] 1931, issue 7, p. 1.
- 13 Quoted after: *Gazeta Polska* 1931, No. 66.
- 14 Sławomir Czerwiński, ‘Przemówienie na zakończenie prac Komisji Opiniodawczej ustroju szkolnictwa muzycznego w dniu 22 czerwca 1929’ [‘Speech closing the work of the Opinion Formulating Commission on the system of music education on 2 June 1929’], in: *O nowy ideał wychowawczy* [*Towards a new educational idea*]. Second expanded edition. Warszawa 1934, p. 117.
- 15 Karol Stromenger, ‘O umuzykalnienie warszawskiego konserwatorium’ [‘In aid of making the Warsaw Conservatory more musical’], *Gazeta Polska* 1930, No. 37.
- 16 According to Zofia Nałkowska, the initiative to bring Morawski to Poland came from

- Karol Szymanowski (cf.: Zofia Nałkowska, *Dzienniki* [Diaries] IV. 1930–1939. Part 2 1935–1939. Ed. Hanna Kirchner. Warszawa 1988, p. 204).
- 17 Karol Stromenger, ‘O umuzykalnieniu warszawskiego konserwatorium’ [‘In aid of making the Warsaw Conservatory more musical’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1930, No. 37. In the following texts Stromenger promoted Morawski as composer (see: ‘Eugeniusz Morawski — muzyk literacki’ [‘Eugeniusz Morawski — a literary musician’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1930 No. 127.
- 18 Karol Stromenger, ‘O umuzykalnieniu warszawskiego konserwatorium’, op. cit.
- 19 Janusz Miketta, ‘Vita nuova warszawskiego konserwatorium muzycznego’ [‘Vita nuova of the Warsaw Music Conservatory’]. *Muzyka* 1930, Nos 11/12, p. 658.
- 20 As above.
- 21 Karol Stromenger, ‘Kryzys koncertowy’ [‘The concert crisis’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1931, No. 17.
- 22 Karol Stromenger, ‘O umuzykalnieniu warszawskiego konserwatorium’, op. cit.
- 23 Cf. the text of the speech in: *Karol Szymanowski. Pisma* [Writings]. Vol. I. *Pisma muzyczne* [Writings on music]. Ed. Teresa Chylińska. Kraków, p. 302 and others.
- 24 According to the calculation by Zbigniew Drzewiecki, in: ‘Walka o Wyższą Szkołę Muzyczną’ [‘The battle over the Higher School of Music’]. *Kultura* 1932, No. 3.
- 25 Hieronim Feicht, ‘Wspomnienie o Karolu Szymanowskim’ [‘Reminiscences of Karol Szymanowski’]. *Ruch Muzyczny* 1967, No. 10.
- 26 As above.
- 27 Karol Stromenger, ‘Koncerty i popisy’ [‘Concerts and recitals’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1931, nr 151.
- 28 Karol Stromenger, ‘Wyższa Szkoła Muzyczna’ [‘The Higher School of Music’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1930, No. 276 from 7 October.
- 29 Jkb [Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski], ‘Z muzyki’ [‘On music’]. *Świat* 1931, No. 44.
- 30 Jkb [Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski], ‘Konkurs im. Chopina’ [‘The Chopin competition’] *Świat* 1931, No. 24.
- 31 Karol Stromenger, ‘Muzyka’ [‘Music’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1931, No. 32.
- 32 Witold Maliszewski, ‘W sprawie departamentu’ [‘On the matter of the department’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1931, No. 270.
- 33 As above.
- 34 *Muzyka* 1931, Nos 11/12.
- 35 Zbigniew Drzewiecki, ‘Prawda o wyższej szkole muzycznej’ [‘The truth about the Higher School of Music’]. *Kultura* 1932, No. 1 (6).
- 36 As above.
- 37 ‘Eugeniusz Morawski o konserwatorium’ [‘Eugeniusz Morawski writes about the Conservatory’]. *Gazeta Polska* 1932, No. 17.
- 38 As above.
- 39 Karol Stromenger, ‘Idea postępu czy postęp idei?’ [‘The idea of progress, or progress of the idea?’]. *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1931, Nos 51/52.
- 40 Piotr Rytel, ‘Fałszywe alarmy z powodu konserwatorium’ [‘False alarms about the Conservatory’]. *Gazeta Warszawska* 1932, No. 74.
- 41 The performance with the participation of the choir of the Poznań Conservatory took place in March 1929, during the session of the Opinion Formulating Commission.

- 42 'Muzycy Polacy w Paryżu o Wyższej Szkole Muzycznej' ['Polish Musicians in Paris on the subject of the Higher School of Music']. *Kultura* 1932, No. 2.
- 43 Stefan Śledziński, 'Państwowe Konserwatorium Muzyczne w Warszawie 1919–1944' ['The State Music Conservatory in Warsaw 1919–1944']. In: *150 lat Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Muzycznej w Warszawie [150 years of the State Higher School of Music in Warsaw]*. Ed. S. Śledziński, Warszawa 1960, p. 123.
- 44 Kercelak is the colloquial abbreviation of the name "Plac Kercelego"[Kerceli Square] in the Praga district of Warsaw, which is the location of a famous open market.
- 45 Antoni Słonimski, 'Kronika tygodniowa' ['The weekly chronicle']. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1932, nr 12.
- 46 Zbigniew Drzewiecki, 'Walka o wyższą szkołę muzyczną' ['The battle over the Higher School of Music']. *Kultura* 1932, No.1 (6).
- 47 Jan Adam Maklakiewicz, 'Szczerzy wyznawcy muzyki' ['The true followers of music']. *Kurier Poranny* 1931, No. 282.
- 48 Piotr Rytel, 'Upadek kultury muzycznej w Polsce' ['The fall of music culture in Poland']. *Gazeta Warszawska* 1929, No. 53.
- 49 Cf. *Dzieje Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego...* [*The history of Warsaw University...*], p. 103.
- 50 As above, p. 118.
- 51 It was a year's waiting period, which would be followed by dismissal from the post.
- 52 Which reacted with meetings and strikes to the rises in fees.
- 53 Janusz Jędrzejewicz, *W służbie idei [In the service of an idea]*. London 1972, p. 137.
- 54 Janusz Jędrzejewicz, 'O politykę kulturalną Państwa' ['In aid of state cultural policy']. *Pion* 1933, No. 1.
- 55 Janusz Jędrzejewicz, 'Powszechny uniwersytet' ['Open university']. *Droga* 1924 Nos, 6–7.
- 56 Erpe, 'Kłopoty uczelni wyższych' ['The problems of higher education']. *Kurier Warszawski* 1931, No. 337.
- 57 Janusz Jędrzejewicz, *W służbie idei [In the service of an idea]*. London 1972, p. 140.
- 58 As above.
- 59 Jkb [Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski], 'Konkurs im. Chopina' ['The Chopin competition']. *Świat* 1931, No. 24.
- 60 As above.
- 61 Adam Galis, 'Rozmowy o muzyce' ['Conversations about music']. *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1935, No. 18, p. 345.