

Bronisława Wójcik-Keuprulian (1890–1938) —  
the First Union of Musicology  
and Chopin Research

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Bronisława Wójcik-Keuprulian, born in Lvov (now Lviv) on 6<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1890, died in Warsaw on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1938, belonged to the first generation of Polish musicologists. She promoted musicology as an independent discipline, a comparatively new branch of the humanities, and was very active at universities, publishing houses and other institutions dedicated to musical culture. The fact that her activities took place in the period of Polish independence influenced the profile of her interests and obligations. Such an attitude was influenced by her Ph.D. supervisor, Professor Adolf Chybiński, whose early Polish interests and national inclinations were vivid and, considering the political context before WWI, quite justified. When musicology was inaugurated at the university in Lvov in 1912, Wójcik-Keuprulian became one of its first students. However, a year earlier she had started mathematics and philosophy studies at the same university and simultaneously developed her musical competences at the Musical Conservatory in Lvov. She received her Ph.D. during the WWI in 1917; the basis for granting the degree was her dissertation on Johann Fischer von Augsburg (1646–1721) and his musical output. Between 1919–1925, she assisted Professor Chybiński in the Musicological Dept. of Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov and also taught music theory at the Conservatory in Lvov. At the same time, she cooperated with the Lvov Learned Society and publishing houses. Towards the end of the 1920s, she began to concentrate on Chopin's music, the main result of this interest being *Melodyka Chopina* [*The Melody of Chopin*] published in Lvov in 1930. This work enabled her to widen her didactic activities and responsibilities, as she received a *veniam legendi*, that is, the habilitation from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow in 1934. The university lecture cycle connected with this promotion (1934) dealt with the place of musicology within the system of knowledge. As a professor of Cracow's University from 1935, she taught courses on musical styles, musical analysis, works and heritage of Chopin. She was the first musicologist to introduce musical ethnography into the programme of musicology studies in Cracow. A "byproduct" of her marriage (1929) with Garabede Keuprulian, an Armenian engineer, were (the first in Polish literature) contributions on Armenian and Turkish music dedicated to both folk-ethnic and religious origins and traditions.

Doctor Wójcik-Keuprulian was interested in professional music from the Baroque to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Being a polyglot and translator from German, she mastered the West-European musicological literature, thus contributing to the development of Polish musicology as an autonomous university discipline. The first stage of her research work (1918–1929) were articles dealing mainly with music theory. Because she, like her teacher, Professor Chybiński, made intensive use of periodicals and newspapers to propagate musicology as a university discipline, the range of topics had to be wider and cover also music education and cultural policy. Seeking public resonance for musicology, she was active also in broadcasting.

A new stage of Bronisława Wójcik-Keuprulian's research work in the 1930s was linked, as mentioned above, to Chopinology. She transformed this research domain into a scientific field with purely musicological methodology, empirical attitudes, and clear terminology. The newly founded (in 1934) Chopin Institute in Warsaw supported this direction of research. Between 1934–1938, she cooperated with the Chopin Institute as its board member (from 1936), editor of the quarterly *Chopin* (1937) and member of the Editorial Committee (together with I. J. Paderewski, L. Bronarski, J. Turczyński) of Fryderyk Chopin's *Complete Works*.

Her fundamental book on the melody of Chopin is the first study of a single selected musical element in Chopin's works. Her attention focused particularly on the ornamental components. Systematic analyses and typologies proved that ornaments were usually an integral part of the melodic line and this feature was seen by the author as a specific quality of Chopin's style. Going further, it would be possible to interpret whole melodies of, e.g., some late *Mazurkas* as ornamental figures spread in time. The idea that the melody is unified with ornaments coincided with the ethnological finds of Robert Lach. The contemporary interest of musical ethnology in traditional polyphony also had parallels in Wójcik-Keuprulian's studies. She introduced the concept of polymelodics, that is — not strict polyphony but rather episodic or free use of polyphonic means in many of Chopin's compositions.

Wójcik-Keuprulian confirmed the significance of the study of relationships between ethnic (folk) music and Chopin's compositions. The first ethnomusicologist to investigate these correlations was Helena Rogalska-Windakiewicz (1868–1956), the author of the valuable study *Wzory ludowej muzyki polskiej w Mazurkach Fryderyka Chopina* [*Patterns of Polish Folk Music in Fryderyk Chopin's Mazurkas*] (Cracow 1926). Windakiewicz searched for analogies or rather similarities between Chopin's compositions and the patterns of songs and instrumental music in folk practice as documented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Polish ethnographer Oskar Kolberg. She could relate these patterns in Chopin's pieces to sources from the region of Kuyavia, neighbouring on Masovia. It is worth mentioning that it was in the Kuyavian region that Chopin's mother, Justyna Tekla Chopin née Krzyżanowska, was born. The patterns were defined by Windakiewicz according to the degree of complexity, melodic contour and way of performance. She derived the concept of pattern from both ethnic music in Europe and Old Greek tradition (*nomos*). Wójcik-Keuprulian continued this kind of research, but mainly in the field of melody. She also gave a historical review of research into folk elements in Chopin's works and published two general, comprehensive, synthetic articles on Polish folk music based, however, not on contemporary field recordings and reports, which was a postulate of Béla Bartók, Adolf Chybiński and Julian Puliowski, but on the sources collected by Oskar Kolberg in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She in turn developed methods of describing folk (ethnic) music possibly influenced by the outstanding Ukrainian ethnomusicologist living in Poland, Filaret Kolessa, whose works she reviewed in Polish musicological periodicals. Besides, dozens of her reviews attracted a vivid reception and had a wide circulation in international musicological literature. Writing reviews was a standard preoccupation among the musicologists gathered around Adolf Chybiński.

Wójcik-Keuprulian's precise analyses rarely go beyond the study of musical scores, in which she remained true to the typical model of musicology in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her methodology focused on autonomous, formal musical components but interpreted them as a flow of energy, which reminds one of the analytical methods of Ernst Kurth and Hans

Mersmann. Being a pianist, like most musicologists in her times, she was fully conscious of the aesthetic-emotional and symbolic aspects of music. But to turn music study into a “science”, she adopted, similarly as in the contemporary neoclassical style of composing, the scientifically verifiable if somewhat “dry” procedure of analysis and interpretation. Along with Adolf Chybiński, she belonged to the group of musicologists who dedicated themselves thoroughly to the scientific work. She published three books, nearly 50 articles and 32 reviews.

Unfortunately, her premature death put an end to the great promise of her outstanding personality and prospects for a musicological career. Her methodological resonance lasted about ten years after WWII and weakened simultaneously with the crisis of the “morphological” style of musical analysis. Had she lived longer (and survived the WWII), she would certainly have developed new methods of analysis and become one of the main figures in Polish musicology.

## Literature

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