

Musical METAMORPHOSES – home mini concerts with a pinch of history – episode 5.

Welcome to the final episode of the podcast series, "Musical Metamorphoses – Mini Home Concerts with a Pinch of History." My name is Aleksandra Bobrowska, I'm a pianist, and today I invite you to my virtual music salon, where we'll talk a bit about the music of Fryderyk Chopin – please sit back and relax, and let's get started!

The first piece to be heard on our podcast is *Lento con gran espressione*, commonly known as the *Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. posth.* (WN37). Written in Vienna in 1830, it was published only after Fryderyk Chopin's death in 1875. Immediately after its composition, it was sent and dedicated to Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa, née Chopin, Fryderyk's eldest sister. It's impossible not to mention this exceptional figure here. Fryderyk Chopin had two other sisters besides Ludwika: Izabela and Emilka, who, unfortunately, did not live to adulthood. Ludwika was probably the closest to Fryderyk in the entire family: she supported his learning to write and read as a child, and likely also helped him learn to play the piano – the siblings too, shared a teacher - Wojciech Żywny. She was the only member of the family to visit Fryderyk in Paris, twice. Her correspondence with her brother remains a source of much information about the composer's life; she was also present at Chopin's death and cared for him for several weeks before his passing. After Fryderyk's death, Ludwika brought some of his correspondence to Warsaw, likely a lock of his hair, and most importantly, his heart. It was to Ludwika who Jane Stirling, a British student of Fryderyk Chopin, gave a Pleyel piano, which she won at auction after the composer's death (the instrument is now part of the collection of the Chopin Museum in Warsaw). Her closeness with her brother resulted in the breakdown of her marriage (her husband, Józef Jędrzejewicz, deeply disliked Fryderyk and the entire Chopin family, neglected to maintain good relations with his in-laws, and told many unflattering stories about Ludwika's brother. This conflict between the couple was widely known and, unfortunately, almost public, which must have been particularly difficult for Ludwika).

What else do we actually know about Ludwika, beyond the context of her relationship with her brother? She composed; Fryderyk himself wrote in an 1825 letter to his friend Jan Białobłocki that: "Ludwika created a perfect Mazur, the kind of which Warsaw had never danced." Unfortunately, none of her compositions have survived. She actively participated in Warsaw's cultural life and engaged in charity work, wrote for the Warsaw press, and wrote didactic novels, including a book for craftsmen titled "Mr. Wojciech, or the Model of Work and Frugality" (an absolute hit, written with her sister Izabela, and published five times! It was also reissued after Ludwika's death); she also wrote "Short News from the Natural Sciences and Some of the Most Important Inventions" (some malicious critics claimed the book was primarily authored by her husband); and she translated "The Life of St. Veronica" from Italian. She was, therefore, a true Renaissance woman. She died in Warsaw of a cholera epidemic in 1855 (six years after her brother's death, and two years after her husband's). Her death resonated throughout Warsaw circles; she was a widely known and beloved figure. After her passing, matters

related to the care of Chopin's legacy were taken over by her sister Izabela, who lived the longest of the Chopin family, until 1881. As you can see, she was a truly extraordinary figure who played an exceptionally important role in the life not only of Fryderyk himself but also of the entire family and local community. It's no wonder, then, that the composer, in creating a work dedicated to his sister, seems to speak in sounds of a whole range of worries and joys that only those truly close to him could understand.

The second composition on today's list is dedicated to an equally exceptional woman, Delfina Potocka, née Komar. She was a student of Chopin (who also taught her sisters, Ludmiła and Natalia), a woman of extraordinary vocal talent (reportedly also as a composer) and painter, of remarkable beauty and an extraordinary manner. Her marriage to Mieczysław Potocki fell apart due to the abusive nature of the relationship. She traveled extensively throughout Europe, and during one of her trips, she met Zygmunt Krasiński, with whom she embarked on an affair (Krasiński was already married at the time), which did not bode well for her reputation. Throughout Chopin's stay in Paris, she maintained a close friendship with him and it was she who sang to Chopin on his deathbed. Delacroix, a painter, portraitist of Chopin, and friend of his, wrote in his diary in 1849 after hearing Delfina Potocka sing that: 'I have rarely encountered anything so perfect.' Chopin dedicated the Concerto in F minor and the Waltz in D flat major to her; he also included the Prelude in A major, Op. 28, and the song 'Melodia' with lyrics by Krasiński in her album.

In a moment, you will hear *Lento con gran espressione* and the Waltz in D-flat major, Op. 64, No. 2 "Minute"; before I sit down at the instrument, however, I would just like to remind you that the current series of episodes of Musical Metamorphoses is made possible thanks to the support of a grant from the National Reconstruction Plan for Culture, which was financed by the European Union. I also encourage you to visit the excellent website of the Fryderyk Chopin National Institute, which is not only a beautifully designed and transparent information portal but also contains a wealth of interesting information, which – crucially – comes from verified, reliable sources. The Institute's website was exceptionally helpful in preparing today's podcast.

Let the music play! See you in future podcast seasons coming soon!