The letters of Ignacy Jan Paderewski as a source of knowledge concerning cultural relationships of Europe

The issue of the cultural relationships that have existed without doubt over the centuries between Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Western Europe also finds its reflection in, among other places, the correspondence of Ignacy Jan Paderewski, distinguished Polish pianist, composer and politician. Today, furthermore – after a lengthy break during the post-war years (caused in large measure by conditions of political nature) – his person is again an object of interest for both researchers and music lovers, as well as performers of music. Likewise, his letters – treated as a source of knowledge essential in research on history (including music history) – are presently the object of increased interest, separate studies and analysis, of which an example is the subject matter of the present conference.

In the area of historical methodology in Poland, it has been observed that the letter, known in various forms and contents from time immemorial, until recently was neither defined, nor qualified from a categorization viewpoint in the literature on source research. It is, however, useful to researchers in the history both of ancient and of more modern times; the Polish historian Stefan Krakowski wrote on the subject, proposing at the same time – only in 1986 – his own definition of the letter, based on the

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*To receive the editions of letters, please contact hloos@rz.uni-leipzig.de

1 Krakowski, Stefan: *List jako źródło historyczne, uwagi w sprawie definicji i kategoryzacji* [The letter as a historical source, notes on the subject of definition and categorization], in: *Sprawozdania z Czynności i Posiedzeń Naukowych Łódzkiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* [Reports on the Activities and Academic Sessions of the Łódź Academic Society], 1986, no. 8, pp. 1-8. The author, however, cited a work by Miśkiewicz, B.: *Wstęp do badań historycznych* [Introduction to Historical Research], Poznań, most recent ed. 1985), who also devoted some space to letters treated as a documentary source (as did methodologists M. Handelsman and S. Kościalkowski, as well as several foreign-language authors of methodological and source-research works).
reflections and practice of the medievalist. The author also put forth a proposed categorization of the letter by type, showing that there exists a need, or even a necessity (also taking into account the theses of earlier source researchers and methodologists) to distinguish a separate group, that is, the group of epistolary sources — or (as another author put it) “epistolary, epistolographic or letter-type” sources.

Different aspects of the usefulness of the source (in the broadest sense: transmission of information) represented by the letter, were considered in musicological research, as I know, during a conference in Mainz in 1996, in reference to the most important creators of 19th-century German music.

In Poland (as everywhere in Europe), up to the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, correspondence represented the most universal and reliable method of communication, in a time of democratization of life and of an increased tendency towards travelling. While in the 20th century, we did not completely give up the necessity of writing letters, that era did nonetheless incline us, as we know, to have recourse to means of communication which transmit mental shortcuts (telephone, telegram) more often than to take care of the beauty of the word on the pages of letters to friends and loved ones. Today’s methods of correspondence – I shall pass over in silence.

For researchers of history, however, letters are still a valuable source of historical, historico-cultural and sociological information, they are a “witness” of earlier times. Beyond this, they can provide compelling reading. Their usefulness is also understood in Poland, and without knowledge of the correspondence of Chopin, Moniuszko or Karlowicz (or, from among other disciplines, for example, Modrzejewska, Wyspiański, Sienkiewicz) it is difficult to

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2Krakowski, List jako źródło (see footnote 1), pp.6-7. His definition reads as follows: “The letter is a written source, possessing a sender and a recipient, which creates between them a spatial distance; and containing a wide variety of content, not defined by any formal or customary limitations”.

3In this case, of Handelsman and Kościakowski.

4Miśkiewicz, Wstęp do badań historycznych (see footnote 1).

imagine the modern biography, or music editing or solid analysis of their œuvre.

Thus, it is worthwhile to mention the most recent publication in Poland of an edition of successive volumes of the complete Korespondencja Szymanowskiego (Correspondence of Szymanowski)\(^6\) – which significantly expands our knowledge concerning the composer and his works, as well as the environment in which he lived and worked. A similar event was also the publication some years ago of a Polish version of the letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart\(^7\).

I hope that in the not-too-distant future, an essential informational role will also be fulfilled by the publication of the letters of Paderewski to his father, as well as to Helena Górksa (later Paderewska), which will be discussed here. A full version of the letters in the original language is now being prepared for printing\(^8\).

The collection is comprised of 317 items representing letters written from 1872 to approximately 1894: it includes 117 letters to Paderewski’s father\(^9\), as well as 200 letters to Helena Górksa\(^10\) – for many years his confidante, friend (and at the same time wife of Władysław Górski\(^11\), Paderewski’s closest friend). In 1899, after the annulment of her first marriage, Helena Górksa became the wife of Ignacy Paderewski.

The story of the discovery of the aforementioned autographs is interesting, but we will not discuss it here. It is worth adding only that Helena Paderewska kept her husband’s letters (secretly from

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\(^8\)In the future the printing of a complete English version is also planned.

\(^9\)From 1872–1874 (9 items), 1876–1886 (87), 1888–1892 (21).

\(^10\)Including nine undated letters, 179 letters from 1880–1894, and one letter from 1924.

\(^11\)This was a violinist with whom he performed concerts many times.
him) her whole life, at the end of which she turned them over to her trusted secretary, Helena Lubke. After Helena Lubke’s death (after 1986), the collection ended up in the hands of the daughter of Paderewski’s secretary, Anne Strakacz-Appleton, in California. In 1991, which marked the 50th anniversary of Paderewski’s death (and therefore the end of the legal protection for the correspondence), Appleton permitted me to inspect and to make handwritten copies, at first only of fragments concerning Paderewski’s œuvre but after some time of the letters in their entirety. In 2001, she donated the entire collection to the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, which made possible the present preparation for their publication on the basis of the originals.

The publication of the aforementioned letters will be just the beginning of this kind of publications, which in the future – in their entire fullness – will testify to the character and scope of Paderewski’s artistic contacts with the music community of Europe (as well as the United States), over the many years of his pianistic career. For the archives contain huge amounts of correspondence, especially the letters sent to Paderewski in particular abundance (as is understandable) during the best years of his pianistic success. Meanwhile – with the exception of documents and letters of political and historical character, as well as individual

12 Their father’s letters were no doubt kept by the artist’s sister, Antonina Wilkońska, who probably transported them after their father’s death to Switzerland (where she lived with her brother).

letters of the artist to his friends (which I shall mention below), which also touch on matters of artistic nature – the remaining bulk of Paderewski’s correspondence still awaits painstaking, laborious editing work, and perhaps – in the future – publication.

Though today, there exists no small quantity of Polish and foreign-language publications (especially of biographical type\textsuperscript{14}) concerning the life and diverse activities of Paderewski, which creates a superficial impression of abundance and thoroughness of research concerning his diverse activities, but this impression is only superficial. For, in the course of research on the artist’s pianistic\textsuperscript{15} and compositional\textsuperscript{16} activity, it turned out that, among

\textsuperscript{14}Including the memoirs of the artist himself, committed to writing at the end of his life: The Paderewski Memoirs, dictated to Mary Lawton (London 1938). Polish translation by Wanda Lisowska, Teresa Mogilnicka, Kraków 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. 1972, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed. 1986, as well as: Pamiętniki 1912–1932, dictated to Mary Lawton. Translation, introduction, notes, appendices, index: Andrzej Piber, Kraków 1992.

\textsuperscript{15}See Perkowska, Małgorzata: Poczatki i rozkwit kariery pianistycznej Paderewskiego [The Beginnings and Prime of Paderewski’s Pianistic Career], in: Muzyka 1977, no. 3, pp. 39-59, as well as, by the same author: Dnia koncertowy Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego [Concert Diary of Ignacy Jan Paderewski], Kraków 1990.

other things, we did not even know until recently the total number of works left behind by the composer, or, for example, the place where his musical autographs were kept. In view of the preparation of a new edition of the Complete Works of Paderewski (NB. of which, presently, eight volumes of the planned twelve have been published)\textsuperscript{17}, thorough investigative research has turned out to be all the more a priority. It was this research which led to the discovery of the collection of the aforementioned letters of Paderewski in a private archive, giving us the possibility of revision and filling in of gaps, as well as straightening out many issues concerning, above all, his œuvre\textsuperscript{18}.

Despite the fact that the letter – as the saying goes – is a “conversation of one who is absent with one who is absent”, at the present stage of editorial and research work, return correspondence (i.e. from H. Gorska and the artist’s father – addressed to Paderewski\textsuperscript{19}) has not been included, though this correspondence (in part) is to be found in the New Files Archive (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw. It is, however, abridged from a quantitative standpoint, and above all, limited in terms of time\textsuperscript{20} relative to the letters of Paderewski\textsuperscript{21}; besides this, it is not very useful for direct research on the life, and especially the œuvre of Paderewski\textsuperscript{22}. There also ex-

\textsuperscript{17}Dzieła wszystkie Paderewskiego [Complete Works of Paderewski] (ed.-in-chief M. Perkowska), Kraków, Musica Iagellonica, 1997 (vols. 4 and 10); 1999 (vol. 3), 2002 (vols. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8).

\textsuperscript{18}I deal with these issues in a large work entitled: Historia utworów Paderewskiego w świetle nieznanych źródeł [The History of Paderewski’s Works in Light of Unknown Sources], (Kraków, Jagiellonian University manuscript [ca. 500 pages]).

\textsuperscript{19}However, in especially important cases, these particular letters were included in part, in the form of commentary on their content, in the footnotes to Paderewski’s letters.

\textsuperscript{20}It begins with 1887 (in Helena’s case), and 1888 (in the case of his father).

\textsuperscript{21}This could indicate significant losses, e.g. destruction of letters by Paderewski.

\textsuperscript{22}Which was and is the main subject of interest of this author. NB. The artist’s father, as a tenant of landed property, normally reported on problems with farming and lack of harvest, as well as the illnesses and progress in school of the artist’s half-siblings. Likewise, H. Górski normally wrote about worries and problems with Paderewski’s home and family.
isted, obviously, correspondence of Paderewski with other persons, conducted during an analogous time period to that of the letters to Gór ska and his father; it too, however, has been included only in a marginal manner (i.e. in the form of summaries of their content in the footnotes). This, however, concerns only letters printed (usually in fragments) in several existing biographies).

It would be a truism to speak here of the cultural significance of the discovered autographs of letters to Paderewski’s father and Helena Gór ska, or of their informational, even artistic/literary content, in a day of mentalité-type intertextual research. I shall, however, present the topical content of the whole in brief, and then the content of the selection made for the purposes of today’s conference.

The aforementioned letters give us the possibility of finding out about, among other things:

1. Paderewski’s interpersonal relationships from 1872 to 1894; they are testimony to his friendships and acquaintanceships made in, among other places, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Kiev and the United States.

2. They are an abundant source of biographical information, also giving insight into issues of family and “regional” traditions taken

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23 Here we are speaking mainly of letters of the artist’s friends in Warsaw (Władysław Górski, Antoni Rutkowski, Edward Kerntopf) quoted in Andrzej Piber’s biography: Droga do sławy. Ignacy Paderewski w latach 1860–1902 [The Road to Fame. Ignacy Paderewski from 1860–1902], Warsaw 1982, as well as of excerpts from correspondence with A. Yesipova, Duchess R. de Brancovan and H. Bibesco quoted in Werner Fuchs’ biography: Paderewski: reflets de sa vie, Geneva 1981, 1999, as well as in Adam Zamoyski’s biography: Paderewski, New York 1982; Polish ed. Warsaw 1992). Also published were a few letters of Paderewski (and his wife) to S. Niewiadomski of Lviv, see Martynenko, Oksana: Nieznana korespondencja Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego. Listy do Stanisława Niewiadomskiego [Unknown Correspondence of Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Letters to Stanisław Niewiadomski], in: Ruch Muzyczny 1994, no. 6; these are, however, a bit later than the correspondence under discussion here, they also are mainly of courtesy character, or else associated with a specific situation (the Grunwald celebration in 1910), thus, they have not been included in the present work.
from home into the Polish cultural heritage in confrontation with the “outside world”.

3. They provide unique factography concerning the composer’s œuvre, making it possible to determine its actual significance in the life of the future virtuoso, as well as enabling us to determine the genesis of his works\textsuperscript{24}, as well as establish the chronology and periodization of his entire œuvre (or at least of a significant majority of his works).

4. The letters also present, though to a lesser degree, the artist’s aesthetic and philosophical views (but we will not yet find here, for example, references to modernist trends).

5. The letters present responses to and views of the most important socio-political events – which testifies to the sensitivity to these issues from his early years of the statesman-to-be.

6. They are a place for presentation of the composer’s opinions of the works of other artists as well as performers – both from the Polish community and from abroad (and here as well, there are still no references to the œuvre of innovators).

7. They are testimony to the responses of the composer and performer to critics’ reviews, to the first successes, especially those achieved outside Poland.

Though for the moment it would be difficult to yield to the temptation of an exhaustive typology of Paderewski’s letters, it is worth mentioning that in significant part, obviously, they vary depending on the time of writing as well as on the addressee. Generally, however, we have to do (let us emphasize this again) with the letters of a young artist, only just climbing the successive rungs of the career ladder – not with those of a fully mature, world-famous virtuoso.

Depending on the addressee, the letters vary in character, i.e. the degree of intimacy or formality (in the sense of depth or superficiality of confidences). Thus, one form is taken by the monologue (or dialogue – when it represents an answer to questions brought up

\textsuperscript{24}Here understood as the circumstances and time of composition of a given work.
by the correspondent) in letters to the artist’s father; another form is taken by the confessions and revelations on personal or artistic topics, contained in letters to his lady friend. This fact – clearly – has an essential cause which lies, among other things, in the sphere of issues of psychological nature. It is worth adding that some letters to Góriska – aside from being a peculiar chronicle of the life (as well as chronicle and “history” of his œuvre) – are a mirror of the young composer’s spiritual life as well. There are also some letters to Góriska which are a beautiful example of love correspondence (so popular, universal in earlier times, when the love letter represented a “genre” unto itself); they are at the same time devoid of any elements of triviality, “sensation” or “scandal”.

A more detailed profile and discussion of the entire content (among other things, from a source-research viewpoint), will be found in the aforementioned Polish edition. Thus, it will create the possibility of further studies, comparison with the correspondence of other artists of that era.

The letters of Paderewski to his father and to Góriska also vary in style, literary qualities, and are, furthermore, a value in and of themselves, as an important document of his artistic abilities in this area as well, a testimony of Paderewski’s mental, emotional and spiritual development over the years. Years in which he grew and developed from a 12-year-old, provincial youth from the former eastern territories of Poland (now part of the Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania – CET), barely able to speak proper Polish, to an educated (NB. basically self-taught), erudite man of the world.

A certain concept of this literary aspect of Paderewski’s correspondence can no doubt be given by the letters chosen for the present collection; they contain, among other things, interesting descriptions of nature, of travelling abroad, or of historic buildings in cities visited by the artist (Berlin, Vienna, Paris).

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25Paderewski was known during his years of political activity as a superb orator and speaker.

26Cf. examples of travel descriptions: to Strasbourg (via what is now known as the Czech Republic, Bavaria, the Duchy of Baden), or to Basel and Paris.
The selection of letters was made mainly from the viewpoint of presentation of factography; thus, above all, it had the aim of showing the most important events in the life of the composer, as well as of acquainting us with Paderewski’s relationships and contacts with the musical world outside his native country, at the moment when the artist entered that world.

Thus, the first few of the selected letters show the moment when the composer took his first steps in Berlin (at the beginning of the 1880s), during the first stage of his compositional studies with Friedrich Kiel (in 1882). Next is the moment when his first Berlin composer’s concert was organized (in 1883). Also an event which was to become important was the meeting with the publisher Hugo Bock from Berlin, and later with other Berlin publishers (Erler, Simrock). Further on came his second stay in Berlin and studies with Heinrich Urban (1884). The next step on his career path is illustrated by an example from the letters written during his stay in Strasbourg as well as in Vienna (where he stayed for piano studies with Theodor Leszetycki). Next in order are the efforts and preparations for his first performance in Paris 1888. Treated here as the final stage on his way to fame are the first concerts of his grand tour in the USA (1891–1892) – thus, a description of concerts played in Boston and New York closes the presentation of the selected letters.

On his artistic path, as has been mentioned, Paderewski met no small number of distinguished and less-known figures in the music world of Europe from 1880 to 1890 and participated in artistic events. For the presentation of this issue, shorter or longer descriptions of meetings with Pablo de Sarasate, the young Richard Strauss, Anton Rubinstein, Joseph Joachim and others have been cited in the selection of letters; mentioned are also the contacts with the pianists Anton Door, Julius Epstein or violinist Florian Zajic and the composer Edouard Lalo besides the already-mentioned contacts with pedagogues in Berlin and Vienna (Kiel, Urban, Leszetycki and his wife Annette Ysipova), and publishers (from the firms of Bote und Bock, Ries und Erler and Simrock).

Among the artistic events in which the composer participated (such as visiting galleries, going to concerts), we meet a distinctive – unflattering – opinion after the première of Brahms’ *Symphony no. 3*, and a more favorable opinion after hearing his pia-
no concerto; beyond this, he writes about Rubinstein’s *Paradise Lost*, Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis*, about performances by Auer, d’Albert, Ondříček, Scharwenka, Grünfeld and others.

Against the background of the above sources, also visible are some examples of Paderewski’s responses to the first favorable reviews of his works. Reviews of this type (if we are speaking of press printed outside his native country), were written by Hanslick, Köhler, Door and Somborn. Other letters also show the composer’s response to, for example, the publication success of the *Menuet in G major* (for which the artist himself did not spare words of “contempt”, being dissatisfied with the popularity of this particular work). Other letters illustrate his response to the growth in popularity of compositions performed on the stages of Europe by the well-known pianist A. Ysipova. Those compositions included the *Variations in a minor* op. 11, the *Album de mai* op. 10, as well as the *Piano Concerto* op. 17. Let us recall and emphasize here that the première of the *Concerto in a minor*, written by the not yet well-known Polish artist, took place in Vienna at the great Musik-Verein hall under the direction of Hans Richter. This represented, until the times of modern Polish composers’ achievements, a unique event on the scale of Polish music history. It should also be emphasized that Paderewski’s career as a pianist was preceded by his fame as a composer, which was gained by, among other things, the publication of his *œuvre* in Berlin and the performances of A. Ysipova. It appears that the popularity of the composer’s later works (the *Polish Fantasy*, as well as his opera and his symphony) could have been in some measure determined by the artist’s legend as a performer. Nonetheless, it is worth remembering that these works gained – as sources show – enormous success all over the world; they saw many performances of highest standard (with the participation of famous ensembles and conductors). The reflection of these facts we will read only (as far as the composer’s accounts are concerned) in the full edition of his letters.

In the present selection of letters, the echo of Paderewski’s pianistic successes abroad is shown – in Strasbourg (e. g. of a concert in collaboration with Maria van Zandt, or of a recital in substitution for Eugène d’Albert), in Vienna and Paris – which brought such unexpected, great applause of audiences and critics.
However, one of the more interesting letters appears to be one of the 23-year-old artist, testifying to his views of music education, on the example of the Conservatory in Kiev, during the directorship of Władysław Puchalski. Long before his Paris debut, Paderewski went there for a concert and, having gotten to know the local music community, he related his impressions in a letter to Helena Gór ska. He gave both a mature analysis, of the – in his opinion – exemplary artistic and pedagogic relationships prevalent at the Kiev conservatory, in comparison with the very sad state of teaching in Warsaw, under the rule of the Russian government.

At the same time, the above sources induce us to reflect on the manner in which such interesting contacts were made, in view of the impressive degree of Paderewski’s knowledge of the contemporary musical oeuvre, trends and current artistic fashions, as well as his personal relationships with artists – already in years significantly preceding his worldwide fame. In his time, European unity, especially in the artistic field, was an obvious thing and there existed close bonds between – conventionally speaking – East and West, which can be (as has already been mentioned) traced fruitfully on the example of the biographies of Paderewski. Not only him, however: many of his predecessors and successors went abroad, or maintained contacts with representatives of other countries, including masses of forced political émigrés.

These voluntary contacts were made, furthermore, in the most natural manner. As can be easily observed: via, first of all – concert activity on the part of distinguished artists of “the West” (especially performers), who included in their concert tours the stages of the Music Societies in Poland (Cracow, Warsaw, Lviv, etc.)27. This is how friendships with local musicians were formed.

The second “manner” was of opposite direction – Polish artists, experienced and beginners, went to the main musical centers of Europe and to the United States, led by artistic curiosity and the

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27 See *Z dziejów polskiej kultury muzycznej* [From the History of Polish Musical Culture], vol. I *Kultura staropolska* [Old Polish Culture], Kraków 1958, vol. II *Od Oświecenia do Młodej Polski* [From the Enlightenment to Young Poland], Kraków 1966.
desire (or rather necessity\textsuperscript{28}) to complete their education abroad. In the years of Paderewski’s youth, the European musical Mecca was not yet Paris, but rather Berlin or Vienna.

Another distant echo of Paderewski’s contacts with the artistic world abroad is the national awareness which reveals itself in the pages of several of his letters – an awareness essential, after all, in his future role as the co-creator of Polish independence. We meet statements testifying to “pro-family” and pro-patriotic motivations in obtaining education and fame already in Paderewski’s very early letters; but with time abroad, his attitude appears to have been consolidated and strengthened, and even translated into artistic attitudes\textsuperscript{29}. So distinctive is the statement here, cited in one of the selected letters, which refers to his \textit{Polish Dances} op. 9. When the Berlin publisher complained to the composer that the works were “zu Polnisch”, Paderewski was prepared rather to withdraw them from publication than to (as he put it) “here in Berlin, shed my Polish skin”.

Thus, external political circumstances certainly influenced not only the moral attitudes of Paderewski, an artist who, furthermore, like many Poles during Partition times, was decidedly adversely disposed towards representatives of the authorities and administration of the Partition states. In principle, however, this did not translate into negative attitudes towards their citizens and especially towards representatives of “enemy” capitals with whom he was friendly.

Acquaintances and friendships made by Paderewski during his first stays abroad did not in general survive in the long run (with the exception of Leszetycki, Ysipova, Bock et al). Without doubt, however, just the possibility of such personal contacts with distinguished musicians and other artists, as well as the artistic experiences he gained abroad, the opportunity to participate in

\textsuperscript{28}On account of the low level of teaching in Poland, a country maintained by the neighboring Partition states in a state of economic collapse, with all the attendant consequences.

\textsuperscript{29}The 24-year-old artist also expressed his apotheosis for Slavic music in one of his music correspondences sent from Berlin to Warsaw, printed in \textit{Echo Muzyczne i Teatralne} 1884, no. 18, p. 26. However, this cannot be explained exclusively by the post-Romantic “ideology in force”, with its most important assumptions.
events, left their mark on the artist’s personality. They shaped his musical attitudes and tastes, influenced his intellectual and psychological development. No doubt, without these experiences, without the opportunity to confront his own gifts with the expectations of audiences in foreign countries, Paderewski would not have achieved such spectacular successes in Vienna, Paris and New York. An artist not known to anyone, travelling straight from far-away Warsaw, would no doubt not have been able, despite talent, to surpass many famous local artists.

Translation Cara Thornton