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The Mysterious Glow of the Star: Stanisław Moniuszko and Kazimierz Lubomirski

ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to the analysis of vocal works by Polish composers of the Romantic period. The article reveals the closeness of ethical and aesthetic beliefs of Stanisław Moniuszko and Kazimierz Lubomirski. It has been found that the musical education in the German tradition received by the natives of the regions of the cultural borderland gave them an impetus to serve Polish culture. In the works of both authors, there is an image of a star, which they interpret in a romantic dimension. The song 'Little Star' by S. Moniuszko and the song 'Star' by K. Lubomirski bear the imprint of Polish musical folklore. The use of elements of the national musical vocabulary clearly shows the composers' national identity.

KEYWORDS: vocal miniature, star, Polish romanticism, Polish school of composition, national identity, borderland culture, musical poetry, romanticism, serving the Motherland

Every time we look up at the starry night sky, we admire the fanciful arrangement of the bright stars and more distant ones. Adam Mickiewicz (2018, p. 249) wrote:

*Gwiazda jedna, druga
Błysnęła; już ich tysiąc, już milion mruga*

Facing the moon one star, now two, were glimmering;
Now came a thousand, now a million shimmering (Pan Tadeusz, *Book 8*)

Sometimes we look at the stars to guide us on the road, and sometimes we try to get closer to solving the mysteries of heavenly bodies. But even the latest telescopes and a variety of modern astronomical accessories do not solve the mystery; mankind has always admired the vast, starry sky.

Like the stars, figures from the past shine on us the spiritual light of their actions and accomplishments, which, despite the passage of time, have not dimmed, but have become a guide for future generations. It is no accident that the star has become an integral attribute of social recognition (fame). Art is a good analogue

of the brilliance of talent and the elevation of a creative personality to the status of an astronomer.

For example, in October 1856, Naum Prygoworka (the pen-name of Belarusian writer Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz, n.d.) wrote these lines, referring to Stanisław Moniuszko, Apolinary Kątski and Władysław Syrokomla, who had acquired the status of great national figures:

*Zasviatsili try zviozdachki w paru nam shehasliwu!
Zaliatsieli try sokaly dyj na nashu nivu*

Happy times for us three stars are shining!
Three falcons soaring over our field!

Naturally, the Moniuszko bicentenary celebrations emphasise the image of the astronomer, but projected into contemporary pop art, which blurs the boundaries between past and present, high and low culture. The exhibition *Vivat Moniuszko!* at the Warsaw Opera Gallery (curated by Marcin Fedisz) seems to offer new perspectives for bringing the father of Polish national opera closer to the cultural continuum of the present.¹

Each era seems to endow a creative personality with markers that are socially relevant to the historical and cultural situation. In the nineteenth century, recognition by the Polish public and critics of Moniuszko's achievements as a composer was expressed in epithets like 'prince of our music' (Wrocki) and 'king of Polish song' (Hulewicz) (Kaczyński, 1961). In this context, it would be interesting to draw a comparative parallel between Stanisław Moniuszko and Count Kazimierz Lubomirski, a representative of a powerful magnatial family renowned as an amateur composer.

Of course, this is only a formal pretext for exploring the configuration of the Romantic-era galaxy of Polish composers, whose imagination was captivated by the poetical image of celestial light, leaving us refined vocal miniatures: 'Little Star' [Gwiazdeczka] by Moniuszko (words by Volodymyr Benedyktov, in an anonymous Polish translation) and 'Star' [Gwiazdka] by Lubomirski (words by Wiktoryn Zieliński), which will be analysed later.

First of all, in Moniuszko Year, we should focus our research on the context of the composer's work: the influence of the environment on the formation of his outlook and aesthetic beliefs and the motivation behind his creative self-realisation. By comparing two creative personalities of the same generation, it is possible to define more clearly and fully the contours of national and cultural progress during the difficult period for Poles of non-statehood ('aghost now freedom's lost'; Mickiewicz, 2018, p. 3). Although their contribution to the world and to Polish music is not equal, the spiritual parallel between Moniuszko and Lubomirski is obvious. Both of them, inspired by the heavenly bodies, contributed to the art of their nation to the best of their abilities. And therefore they deserve the admiration of the poet (Mickiewicz, 2018, p. 325):

¹ See <https://moniuszko200.pl>.

*Polak, chociaż stąd między narodami słynny
Że bardziej niżli życie kocha kraj rodzinny.*

The Poles who – as all nations understand –
More than life even, love their native land (*Pan Tadeusz*, Book 10)

In general, there is much in common in the biographies of Moniuszko and Lubomirski. Both had difficulty starting their careers and achieving success in their home country – each for different reasons, of course. The ideological and artistic closeness of these two figures of nineteenth-century Polish musical culture stems in part from the similarity of the macro and micro environments where they were born and raised, and later from the influence that German musical tradition had on their formation as creative individuals.

So let us try to discover the ‘guiding star’ in the life of both artists and to understand the most significant features of the composer’s ‘self’ through significant milestones in their lives.

It is worth emphasising that Moniuszko and Lubomirski were united by a cultural border, which in the nineteenth century lay at the intersection of the geopolitical interests of great empires and ethnic communities. From their childhood, the artistic consciousness of both artists was formed in the context of different ethno-cultural traditions. Ubiel near Minsk, where Moniuszko was born, and Chernivtsi in Podolia, where Lubomirski came from, both belonged to the Russian Empire, but in reality they represented the ethno-cultural model of the Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Ukrainian borderlands.

Kazimierz Anastazy Karol Lubomirski (1813) and Stanisław Moniuszko (1819) were born at a time of crushing disappointment and lost hopes for the Polish liberation movement. They grew up under the Russian Empire’s reactionary regime, and their talent flourished between the national uprisings of November 1830 and January 1863. The Moniuszko and Lubomirski families, which supported the Napoleonic campaign and did not abandon their dreams of rebuilding their country, suffered severe censorship, harassment and persecution, and the price they paid for their political unreliability almost ruined them. However, forced into the imperial yoke, the Polish nobility found different ways to preserve their patriotic spirit and nurture their own identity.

In a sense, the preservation of ethnic identity and the awakening of civic consciousness were achieved through art, which was an indispensable attribute of cultural life among the Polish aristocracy and nobility. For example, we know from available sources that Prince Fryderyk Lubomirski (Kazimierz’s father) retained a small orchestra and a court painter at his palace in Rivne. Art was of similarly great importance for the Moniuszko family, too: the future composer’s father Czesław liked to draw, and his mother Elżbieta loved to play piano and sing. This means that from a very young age, in their family environment, Moniuszko and Lubomirski enjoyed the fine arts, to which they would later add their own ‘creative voices’, primarily for the performance of music in the home and at aristocratic salons.

The family environment provides a vital impulse for the formation of creative personalities. The powerful aura of the Princes Lubomirski and the noble

Moniuszko family had a tremendous impact on the rise of Polish culture. The members of these families did a lot for the country and their compatriots. Of course, the contribution made by the magnatial family and the gentry family was of a different scale, but they both pursued lofty goals.

The merits of Prince Fryderyk Lubomirski are manifested through the development of Rivne and the establishment of a Gymnasium (college) there. Being the owner of Rivne and Alexandria, in 1835 he gifted a plot of land and funds for the construction of an educational institution, to which he subsequently donated a greenhouse and a library with books from the magnatial estate, among other things. And that was at a time when, after the November Uprising of 1830, 'by supreme decree of the Russian tsar', all Polish schools were closed in that region! Opened in 1838/1839, the Gymnasium in Rivne developed rapidly, became an important centre of education and science in Volhynia and, despite the oppression of the Russian tsar, contributed to the activation of the liberation movement.

It is worth mentioning Henryk Lubomirski, Kazimierz's uncle. While living in Lviv, he supported Józef Ossoliński's idea of founding a scientific and artistic institution. In 1823 the prince gifted to the famous Ossolineum (National Ossoliński Institute) a family collection of literature and art works, archaeological finds and rare items, which served as the foundation of the Lubomirski Museum (Wołoszyn, 2017). As we can see, the patronage of the Lubomirski family was channelled into the cultural and educational domain. Presumably, taking care of their compatriots' cultural development compensated Polish magnates for their forced removal from public affairs. And for Kazimierz, it was a good example of public service.

Stanisław Moniuszko's uncles Dominik and Kazimierz Moniuszko similarly distinguished themselves in public service. Both Vilnius University graduates, they accomplished a great deal in the fields of culture and education. Kazimierz Moniuszko was the inspector of schools for Lithuania and Volhynia, while Dominik turned his estate into an oasis of education and freedom. He divided the land among his peasants and set up two schools for their children. Faced with the country's lack of political freedom, he took care to nurture a sense of inner freedom in the younger generation. The family's noble impulses undoubtedly reflected the worldview of Stanisław Moniuszko, who saw it as his duty to awaken people's deepest and finest feelings through music, releasing them from the burden of everyday cares (Drucka, 1966).

It is necessary to mention the educational background to the musical activity of Moniuszko and Lubomirski. For both, their formation as composers was based on the principles of German romanticism. Living and studying in the capital of Prussia or Saxony became an important factor in mastering the prevailing style of composition at that time. Moniuszko acquired his professional skills from Carl Friedrich Rungenhagen, head of the Berlin Singakademie, whereas Lubomirski took private lessons from Friedrich Dotzauer, a cellist with the Dresden Royal Court Orchestra. Their Slavic artistic natures were impressed by the aesthetics of romanticism, with its preference for chamber music and the poetry of small forms, its connection with national folklore, and its lyrical imagery and

emotional expression. Early samples of the two Polish composers' works attest to the organic adaptation of the Romantic musical vocabulary to their creative ideas.

The scale and artistic value of the works of Moniuszko and Lubomirski are certainly not equal. To begin with, Lubomirski's music was primarily an element of his aristocratic etiquette. In accordance with convention, literature and music, painting and theatre were at the centre of prince's secular interests and entertainment. However, Lubomirski devoted most of his time to creative and artistic activities, at the expense of other things. To outsiders, this seemed to be the frivolity and light-heartedness of a spoiled Polish tycoon. For example, one of the teachers at the Rivne Gymnasium, Avtonom Soltanovskiy (2014, p. 201), said that, at the age of 40, 'a boisterous life in the capitals and abroad turned him [Prince Lubomirski] into a weak, grey-haired grandfather'.

Lubomirski certainly deserved recognition in the Polish society and artistic environment; first of all for his active participation in the musical life of Warsaw. The period between 1852 and 1858 was the most productive for this artistic aristocrat in terms of creativity. Lubomirski was vice-president of a society that supported sick musicians (Towarzystwo Wsparcia Podupadłych Artystów Muzyki), chaired the Jozef Elsner Heritage Committee, translated Elsner's *Summarium meiner Musikwerke* from German into Polish (*Sumariusz moich utworów muzycznych*; Elsner, 1957) and gave financial support to several young artists, including Jan Kleczyński. He also ran a weekly music salon at his Warsaw residence for the aristocratic and artistic elite. In the Romantic outlook of this Polish magnate, art was a true glimmer of freedom – of liberation from the unbearable reality.

Lubomirski wrote more than 60 vocal and instrumental miniatures, dedicated mainly to a narrow circle of his friends and acquaintances. His works were published in Dresden, Leipzig, Vilnius, St Petersburg, Hamburg and Warsaw. It is no secret that potential performers of the prince's music were primarily representatives of the Polish nobility. His work is typical of an amateur composer who, in the spirit of his time, tried to express his intimate thoughts and feelings through music. The value of his music lies not in its innovativeness, but in his desire to 'illuminate the path' for national cultural progress in the 'darkness' of non-statehood.

In the nineteenth century, Lubomirski enjoyed growing interest in his achievements as a composer and public recognition as one of the most celebrated Polish musicians. For example, in 1858, the newly formed Music Society in Lviv decided to invite to its ranks well-known musicians recognised as artists of the land. The choice fell on Stanisław Moniuszko, Ignacy Dobrzyński and Kazimierz Lubomirski (*Ród Lubomirskich w muzyce*, 1899). So the two figures whose public activity is the subject of this study appear alongside one another here, just as their works were published during their lifetime in the same editions (Kluczniok, 2016).

However, it should be remembered that Stanisław Moniuszko was guided by other intentions: for him, music was not a hobby, but a career. His brilliant talent revealed itself in his composing, performing (as a conductor, organist, pianist and singer) and teaching work. He left a significant mark on the historical process of Polish music, which is still impressive today. Moniuszko's musical works are well known not only in Poland but around the world. The national bard Adam Mickiewicz (2018, p. 141) would have had Moniuszko in mind when writing:

*I szła muzyka coraz szersza, coraz dalsza,
Coraz cichsza i coraz czystsza, doskonalsza,
Aż znikła gdzieś daleko, gdzieś na niebios prog!*

The sounds went on and on, growing quieter,
Ever more consummate, ever more pure,
Until they faded where the sky began! (*Pan Tadeusz*, Book 4)

Interestingly, the accuracy of Mickiewicz's poetical metaphor gives impetus to further reflection on the psychological portrait of Moniuszko, his distinctive handwriting, the social resonance of his music... However, reaching the point 'where the sky begins', let us try to grasp the nuances of the star image in the composer's life and works.

Like most Romantics, Moniuszko repeatedly used the symbolism of the cosmos. His artistic soul seems to have connected with the astronomer and with the multifaceted meaning of human love in the artistic, religious, national and intimate dimensions. For example, in one of the letters to his beloved Olesya, Moniuszko wrote:

I love beyond my expectation [...] and thinking of you constantly, I think of my music, which will be so successful under such a bright star as your heart is, as our love is.²

Like his letters, his music also conveys spirituality and an awe of feelings. One of his inspirational works, the song 'Little Star' generates a myriad of semantic overtones. Benedyktov's verse in Polish translation allows us to sense the vastness of figurative-metaphorical associations. The lyrical character's touching appeal to the star is expressed by Moniuszko through elegant refined sonorities. The song has an AB structure with tonally contrasting sections (B flat major, G minor), while maintaining an Allegretto tempo and an unchanged 12/8 metre. The sweet and sincere melody glides easily over the colourful harmonies of the piano accompaniment, which is highly individualised.

Przykład 1. S. Moniuszko, *Gwiazdeczka* [Little Star]

The melodic line seems to fly far from earth, soaring into the sky, which the human imagination connects to the dreamy world of beauty in all its manifestations, from the mundane to the spiritual. In addition, the filigree texture and

² 'Kocham nad moje spodziewanie... i myśląc ciągle o Tobie, myślę o muzyce mojej, która jakże świetne będzie miała powodzenie pod wodzą tak jasnej gwiazdy jak jest Twoje serce, jak jest miłość nasza' (Moniuszko, 1969, p. 51).

dynamic design of the song's verse form seem to free the listener's imagination to interpret the music's meaning in their own way.

Did Prince Lubomirski work in the same way with a poetical text? Let us try to find the answer using as an example his song 'Star', to words by Wiktoryn Zieliński. The Polona online database actually contains at least two completely different works to Zieliński's text citing Lubomirski (as the composer: 'Star' and 'Oh Little Star' ('O gwiazdeczko'; c. 1855, 1916). The only common musical feature of both vocal miniatures is the mazurka formula in Moderato tempo. The first work was published in Leipzig, and most likely was written by the prince. The second piece appeared in 1916 in the series *Pieśni nasze* [Our songs], published by Leon Chojecki. This version of the song features in Jerzy Antczak's film *Chopin: Desire for Love*.

It is possible that Chojecki mistakenly attributed 'Oh Little Star' to Lubomirski. It bears the features of lyrical song and is characterised by the 'musicalisation' of all the elements of the text (Sulek, 2016, p. 89). On the other hand, 'Star' presents the composer's individualised approach to the musical interpretation of the poetical text. However, the composer paid more attention to the expressive intonation of the poem and less to deepening the emotional-psychological subtext of the poetical image.

The nostalgic mood that reigns in the vocal miniature 'Star' is enveloped in playfully graceful hues. This work has a tripartite form, typical of Romantic songs (G-E flat-G). The musical expressiveness is based on contemporary vocal, melodic clichés. The accompaniment duplicates the vocal line and is not individualised:

O! Gwia-zde - czko coś bly-szcza - ła, gdym ja uj - rzał świat

Przykład 2. K. Lubomirski, *Gwiazdka* [Star]

The mazurka formula adopted in 'Oh Little Star' (E minor) expresses the nostalgic mood of the song. Indeed, the standard rhythm and intonation of the Polish dance are most relevant to Zieliński's poem.

con espres.

O gwyi-de - czko coś blysz-cza - ła gdym ja uj - rzał świat

Przykład 3. K. Lubomirski, *O, gwiazdeczko* [Oh, Little Star]

The poetic words are organically interwoven into an elegant mazurka pattern filled with a wonderful blend of joy and sorrow. By the way, such a synthesis of emotions was noticed in the Polish dance by Ferenc Liszt (2010), who called the mazurka a national poem of the enslaved people. This song also fanned the flames of patriotic feeling in its melody, touching people's hearts and raising their spirits.

Finally, I would like to state that the coverage of the chosen topic has raised many questions that need further research and study. In particular, the available materials have failed to establish possible meetings or communication between Moniuszko and Lubomirski (Sulek, 2011). However, there is no doubt that in the darkness of the imperial enslavement of the Polish people, two stars shone in the artistic sky, lighting a path for the disadvantaged people to a better life.

Translated by John Comber

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