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Paulina Rivoli – Moniuszko’s heroines and a Falcon soprano?

ABSTRACT: Paulina Rivoli was the first Warsaw Halka and then the first Countess in Moniuszko’s operas. In this article, I will relate how the singer, who at first frowned on Moniuszko’s proposals, launched the performance tradition of two great Moniuszko operas in which she created the title roles. Her immediate successors had to deal with the inevitable comparisons.

Unfortunately, Rivoli suffered from serious vocal complaints. This was nothing unusual: phoniatric disorders plagued singers throughout Europe at that time, when massive changes were occurring in the aesthetics of solo singing. Rivoli was excellent in bel canto repertoire – a style of singing favourable to a maturing voice, which allowed her to develop fully. What was Halka’s original singing style? That was probably a mature period for Rivoli’s voice, which did not necessarily correspond to the notion of a modern, very ‘light’, even Donizettian approach to singing this role.

Some of the circumstances surrounding the twilight of Rivoli’s career allow us to draw a comparison between her and another great singer whose career ended prematurely. Cornélie Falcon famously sang the role of Rachel in Halévy’s *La Juive*, which contributed to her legendary demise, and she had lost her voice irrevocably five years after her debut. Rivoli and Falcon sang similar repertoire, including Alice in Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* (Falcon’s debut and an early role for Rivoli), Donna Anna in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and Valentine in *Les Huguenots*, but Rivoli’s downfall was spread over a longer period, as her career lasted more than 20 years. Nor was her loss of voice as drastic as that of Falcon, who was literally left voiceless during a performance of Niedermeyer’s *Stradella*. Rivoli’s problems grew gradually, peaking after the premiere of *The Countess* [Hrabina]. It was probably this last burst of energy that ultimately depleted her powers altogether.

KEYWORDS: Paulina Rivoli, *Halka*, *The Countess*, Stanisław Moniuszko, singers, singing, history of singing, Falcon soprano, vocal problems, voicelessness

Ludwika Rywacka – the Halka manquée

The part of Halka was originally to have been performed by the 30-year-old Ludwika Rywacka – that was the plan when Moniuszko travelled to Warsaw to negotiate a production of the opera. He led a few rehearsals with artists, in which Paulina Rivoli also took part, but in the role of Zofia. The cast, and also the voice registers, for the *Halka* proposed at that time differed considerably from that of the ultimate premiere performance. Moniuszko (1969, p. 120) mentioned this concept in a letter to his wife, and his enthusiasm is signalled by

three exclamation marks which he placed by information about the possible engagement of Rywacka: ‘and Mrs Rywacka (Halka!!!)’.

In some lexicons, we find information that Rivoli’s name was an Italianised version of the surname Rywacka¹. Consequently, the Halka manquée is often confused with Ludwika Tekla Rivoli, Paulina’s sister, who later performed under the name Tomaszkievicz.² Ludwika Rywacka (née Morozowicz, 1817–1858) was slightly older than Paulina and Ludwika Tekla. She also made her debut eight years earlier than Paulina, in 1828, as a child (Orman, 1991–1992). Trained at the Singing School attached to the Grand Theatre (Teatr Wielki) in Warsaw by Józef Elsner, Karol Kurpiński and Jan Stefani, she also honed her skills in Italy, where she specialised in Rossini repertoire. Moniuszko (1969, p. 311) compared Princess Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein to Rywacka: ‘Princess Wittgenstein, in whose home that great artist [Liszt] lives, is a shrew, like Rywacka, but uglier than her, although the defunct was hardly a paragon of beauty’. It is difficult to say whether Moniuszko had in mind the supposed maliciousness of both Rywacka and the princess or perhaps their unattractiveness. This letter is dated 15 June 1858, so four months after the singer’s death (d. 19 February 1858).

We may speculate about the singer’s character on the basis of information that Rywacka, due to behind-the-scenes conflicts at the Grand Theatre, left Warsaw and began to perform in Lviv. Unfortunately, she died in the year *Halka* was premiered in Warsaw. It was a sudden death, during a stagecoach journey, witnessed by the tenor Julian Dobrski, who subsequently funded her gravestone at the cemetery. Due to the inscription on the gravestone, her ‘grateful brother’ Dobrski is wrongly assumed to have been Rywacka’s brother.

Paulina Rivoli

Paulina Rivoli came from a family of travelling actors performing in the theatrical companies of Wincenty Raszewski and Kasper Kamiński. Her surname was not a pseudonym; her family had Italian origins. It should also be stressed that it was not an Italianised form of the surname Rywacka. Despite his Italian roots, the father of the first Halka used the Slavic-sounding Christian name Waclaw (1783–1829), possibly connected in some way to the fact that he lived in Bohemia for some time (Orman, 1988). Yet the surname Rivoli was to be

¹The authors of the *Großes Sängerlexikon* makes this assertion, but it is not clear why (Kutsch, 2003, p. 3950). They conflated Ludwika Rywacka with Ludwika Tekla Rivoli as Ludwika Rivoli, which is in fact Ludwika Rywacka. The date of death is given as 1858, whereas Ludwika Tekla is known to have died in 1878. Similarly, Ludwika Tekla’s sister Julia is erroneously identified as Ludwika Tekla herself. It is asserted that she adopted the surname Tomaszkievicz following her marriage. This surname was that of Ludwika Tekla’s husband. The date of Julia’s death is given as the date of Ludwika Tekla’s death.

Rivoli herself is also sometimes confused (*Bibliografia muzyczna polskich czasopismo niemuzycznych* [Music bibliography of Polish non-musical periodicals]) with Maria Pauline Mecenseffy (1848–1877), who used the misleading pseudonym Maria Rivoli Bolzano (Orman, 1991–1992).

²This error was perpetuated by Karol Stromenger (1972), among others, who wrote that the first Warsaw Lucia di Lammermoor was the sister of the first Warsaw Halka.

found in Polish lands,³ and the Italian origins of the actress's family could have been quite distant. After Paulina Rivoli's debut, a polemic arose in the Warsaw press between the indignant author 'St. Sk.', writing in the *Kurier Warszawski*, and the correspondent of the Leipzig-based *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, using the pseudonym 'Diamond' (1837). That correspondent commented on the origins of young Warsaw singers, claiming that Sztolpe came from German stock and Paulina Rivoli from an Italian family. St. Sk. (1837) refuted those allegations, stating that Sztolpe 'cannot speak German, and his mother is a born Polish woman', while 'Paulina Rivoli's grandfather could not even speak Italian', and her mother was also a native Pole. This is probably the only existing evidence of the singer's origins.

Wacław Rivoli was a tenor. The family also included Barbara Rivoli, Paulina's aunt, so probably Wacław's sister. We know that in 1810 she made her Warsaw debut as Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*,⁴ with the part of Tamino in the same production taken by her brother. Wacław's wife was Małgorzata Remiszewska. They had four daughters, three of whom were associated with the theatre. The eldest was Ludwika Tekla, born in 1812⁵, continued to sing after marrying, under the surname of her husband, Teodor Tomaszewicz (Orman, 1988) in 1843. In 1851, however, she lost her voice, and from then on performed in plays. In 1856 the *Kurier Warszawski* reported that she had been granted a pension of 162 roubles as a former artist with the Warsaw Theatres (Najjaśniejszy Pan..., 1856). Another sister, Julia (1815–1878⁶), ended her career after marrying Julian Kaciuciewicz.

Wacław and Małgorzata Rivoli had two more children about whom little is known: a daughter Małgorzata Marianna, baptised in Białystok in 1819,⁷ and a son Wacław Kacper Piotr, baptised in Vilnius in 1821.⁸ The youngest was Paulina, about whom there remain serious doubts concerning her date of birth. The range of dates given by biographers stretches over seven years. Sometimes cited is the date from her death certificate or police records. Her baptismal certificate is another document confirming that she was born in 1823; for some unknown reason, Paulina Rivoli was baptised as an adult woman on 3 April 1862, at the age of 39, at St Andrew's parish in Warsaw.⁹ She was brought to the church by her

³This surname was also borne by a pioneer of forestry in Polish lands – Professor Józef Rivoli (1838–1926), who worked at Poznań University.

⁴She previously performed as Queen of the Night at a theatre in Kalisz.

⁵Baptised Tekla Ludwika – according to the birth register of the Roman Catholic parish in Łęczycza. Most encyclopaedias and lexicons give the date 1814, which is inconsistent with the information given in the parish records.

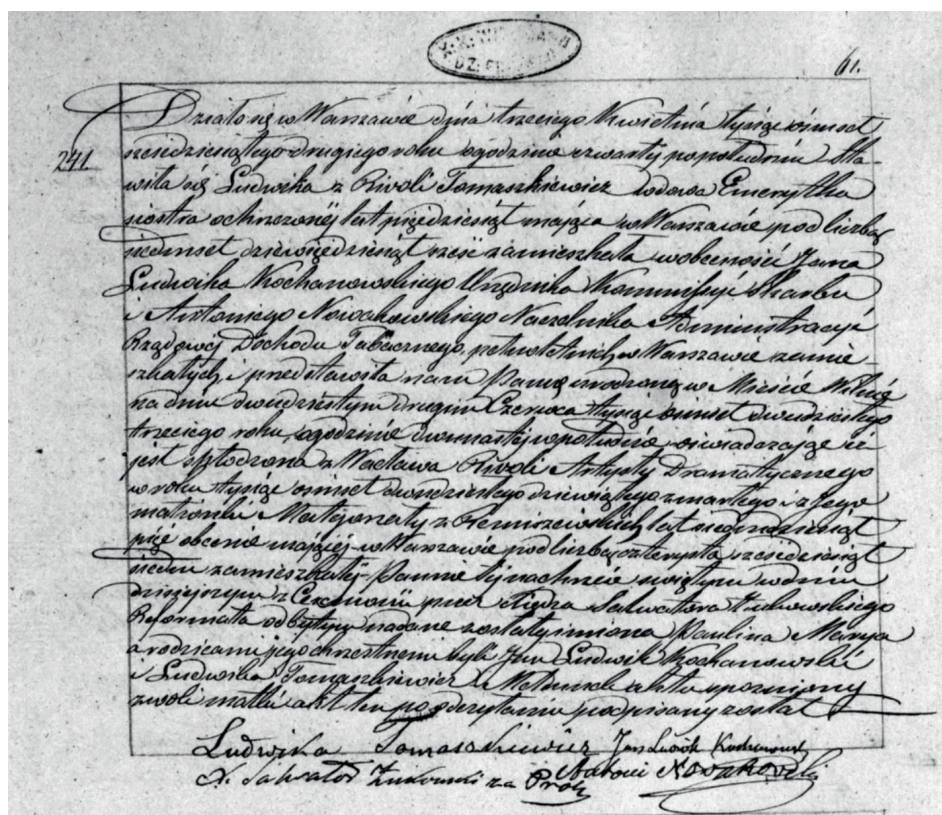
⁶Sometimes 1810 is given as the date of birth, but her birth certificate in the civil records of the first district ('circle') of the city of Warsaw bears the date 1815.

⁷*Księgi metrykalne parafii rzymskokatolickiej Wniebowzięcia NMP w Białymstoku* [Registers of the Roman Catholic Parish of the Assumption of the BVM in Białystok] c 604-58/12/4 (births, marriages and deaths 1819–1820).

⁸*Vilniaus šv. Jonų RKB gimimo metrikų knyga* [Registers of the Roman Catholic Parish of St John in Vilnius], K 152 GD.

⁹*Akta stanu cywilnego parafii rzymskokatolickiej św. Andrzeja w Warszawie* [Civil records of the Roman Catholic Parish of St Andrew in Warsaw] UMZ-1862/241.

sister Ludwika (Tekla) Tomaszewiczowa. Paulina's siblings were baptised in the Roman Catholic rite. In the registers, the name of Waclaw Rivoli is followed by the abbreviation 'imć' or GD (Generosus Dominus), indicating the noble family lineage and, possibly, links to the Italian noble family of Rivoli. The question arises as to why she was not baptised as an infant. In the historical context of Poland, individuals baptised at such an advanced age were often converts from other religious traditions, predominantly Jewish or Protestant, but that is unlikely in this particular case. The underlying reasons remain unclear, but not baptising this daughter could have been due to parental negligence. She could have been born shortly before the family moved home, but it is unlikely that we will ever know the truth.



Akt chrztu Pauliny Rivoli, 1862, August 03. 0159d (Akta stanu cywilnego parafii rzymskokatolickiej św. Andrzeja w Warszawie) UMZ-1862/241

The singer's father performed in Vilnius from 1821 to 1823 (Rivoli, Rywoli Waclaw, 1973). The uncertainty over her age caused confusion with regard to the moment when she made her stage debut. Rudziński and Reiss state that she was born in 1817. She certainly made her debut in 1837, which would make her 20, and that would have been quite an advanced age for a debutant in those days.

A 14-year-old singer as Zulma also seems unlikely, although we must remember that *L'Italiana in Algeri* was a school production. If the lexicons are to be believed, Paulina's mother was born in 1780, so the latest date for the singer's birth becomes increasingly dubious. A reviewer for the *Gazeta Warszawska* estimated Paulina Rivoli's age to be around 15 when, as a pupil of the theatre school of singing, she appeared as Isabelle in a school production of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* in July 1838. This age is consistent with the one indicated on the baptismal certificate. The reviewer, who has signed as I. Sz.....ski (1838) devoted a whole paragraph to Meyerbeer's Isabelle as interpreted by the young artist:

With the first performance by the aforementioned pupils in *L'Italiana*, we were dealing with debutants, with children, whom it would be a misdeed not to indulge. But a year at a young age is a vast expanse of time, and if one of the local periodicals announced the staging of the *young Robert* as an examination for students, then we consider it our duty to give a detailed report on their progress and abilities.

Let us begin with the young *Paulina Rivoli*. She had a perilous task. The role of Isabelle is one of the most difficult in seria opera. Meyerbeer wrote it for an accomplished singer possessing all the virtues, constituting an artist. Hence we cannot demand perfection of a 15-year-old girl. Our audience sensed this very well, and received Miss Rivoli most sympathetically from beginning to end. Her voice gained considerably in power and range, and there were places where virtually nothing was left wanting. These included the first aria in the second act and the song 'Grace!' in the fourth. Her very appearance, the innocence and charm painted on her face and on the whole figure of this appealing young performer won everyone's heart. In a year's time, we hope to be able to speak of Paulina Rivoli as an artist.

The *Słownik muzyków polskich* [Dictionary of Polish musicians] relates that Paulina attended the School of Singing attached to the Grand Theatre in Warsaw from 1835, when she was aged 15.¹⁰ This debut came two years later, so when she was 17. She was given a place in the permanent ensemble of the Warsaw Opera a year after her debut. She performed mainly in bel canto repertoire – roles in Donizetti operas and Italian parts in operas by Meyerbeer. She was also not averse to lighter repertoire, performing in works of lesser calibre at the Variety Theatre (Teatr Rozmaitości) and, whenever the opportunity arose, at the Grand Theatre as well. After that debut in the part of Zulma, subsequent roles included parts in Stanisław Prószczyński's farce *Siedem dziewcząt pod bronią* [Seven girls under arms], based on the vaudeville *Les Femmes soldats, ou la forteresse mal défendue* by Armand d'Artois and Emmanuel Théaulon, and the magical opera *Galganduch, czyli Hultajska trójka* [Galganduch, or three ne'er-do-wells], based on Johann Nepomuk Nestroy's popular play *Der böse Geist Lumpacivagabundus*.¹¹

¹⁰ From May 1836. From January 1835, Paulina's sister Ludwika had attended the same school. The number of pupils could reach up to several hundred; singers already appearing at the Warsaw Opera were still obliged to complete their training at the theatre's school (see Nowakowski, 1891).

¹¹ This work is in an interesting genre to which Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* is also sometimes ascribed. *Galganduch* dates from 1833, and it reached Poland quite quickly. Rivoli performed in it in Warsaw just two years after the world premiere in Vienna. The version presented in Warsaw was adapted to Polish realities. The composer of the music, Józef Damse, not only translated the libretto and made those adaptations (including Polish names for the main characters, the cabinet-maker Sto-

The unwanted Halka

The singers exerted a considerable influence on the shape of the work. Rivoli issued numerous postulates concerning the form of the part assigned to her in Moniuszko's opera. Yet the composer reacted unfavourably to her propositions (Moniuszko, 1969, p. 268). Rivoli did not want to perform the part of Halka. Moniuszko (1969, p. 257) mentions that she had to be talked into it, which he saw as a bad omen. The composer was not accustomed to what he called 'the whims of prima donnas' (Moniuszko, 1969, p. 157). He wrote that he had in reserve a pupil of Matuszyński's who would be willing to replace Rivoli.¹² It is difficult to say who that could have been.

Adam Münchheimer (1900), in an article published in a special issue of the *Echo Muzyczne, Artystyczne i Teatralne* marking the five-hundredth performance of *Halka* in Warsaw, stated that Rivoli's aversion to the part of the poor, ill-starred highland lass resulted from the singer's character, and not from doubts concerning the musical material:

Miss Rivoli, that refined artist, so generally appreciated for her impeccable character, long demurred over accepting this part, but not for the music, rather on account of the thorny content of the opera. Then Dobrski, that ideal Jontek, barely took up his part, under coercion, but what a lot of chatter there was, how much irritation!... But nor can one lay the blame entirely with him.

'Halka should be first loved, then sung', wrote Moniuszko (1969, p. 257). The composer considered that the singer's goodwill accounted for as much as half the success of the entire opera (Moniuszko, 1969, p. 275). So Matuszyński's assurances that the singer was starting to like the part of Halka were met with great joy. Yet the composer's patience was sorely tested, since Dobrski (Jontek) also began voicing numerous reservations. Moniuszko (1969, p. 275) asserted, however, 'I won't coddle him'. In the event of any problems, he was ready to replace Dobrski with Bonoldi, for whom the part was written.

larski [Carpenter], the journeymen carpenter, tailor and cobbler Wiórek [Chip], Igielka [Needle] and Szydełko [Bodkin], Puncz [Punch] as an innkeeper, Pirożek [Dumpling], involved in gastronomy, Topór [Chopper] the butcher and a character named Fiutyński [Dickson], whose profile can only be guessed; the libretto also contains other interesting concepts, such as Brylantyna as a woman's name), but he also added several ditties. Thus he left out the music composed by Adolf Müller senior, which had been commissioned by Nestroy, the playwright himself (Kydryński, 1996).

¹² Leopold Matuszyński was a highly influential singing teacher in Warsaw during the mid-nineteenth century. A pupil of Kurpiński's and director of the Warsaw *Halka* and of *Straszny dwór* [*The Haunted Manor*], he himself sang as a tenor. Moniuszko corresponded with him over questions related to the staging of his operas. One of the most interesting pieces of information to be found in those letters between them is that when considering the setting for *Halka*, they were planning to locate the action on the banks of the Cheremosh (letter from Moniuszko to Leopold Matuszyński: see Moniuszko, 1969, p. 275) – a river in Hutsul territory, in Eastern Carpathia, and not in Podhale. The switch was possibly aimed at removing associations with the fairly recent Galician Slaughter. The people of Cracow referred to in Wolski's poem were not mentioned by any of the characters in the libretto. The Hutsul location of *Halka* was supposedly one of Wolski's ideas.

‘Rivoli moves one to tears’¹³

‘Rivoli’s convulsions and Dobrski’s caprices are hindering the running of the opera’ – that hellish pair gave Moniuszko (1969, pp. 333–334) no end of trouble during his early months at the Warsaw Opera. Yet despite all her objections over accepting the part of Halka, Rivoli owed to it her greatest success and the pinnacle of her career. Her success meant that her relations with Stanisław Moniuszko grew warmer. Dobrski and Rivoli were so good that Moniuszko included them in the cast of *Flis* [*The Raftsmen*]. When the rehearsals came around, Moniuszko (1969, p. 328) complained about her frequent indisposition (‘Rivoli out of action again’). The composer wrote for her the ‘Pieśń z wieży’ (‘Song from the tower’), and she took part in a concert organised by Maria Kalergis. That was a charity concert to collect funds to send Moniuszko on a trip to Paris, where he was to familiarise himself with the latest trends in music and make valuable contacts. In the concert, five thousand roubles were collected – enough to cover the costs of the composer’s trip. Unfortunately, the journey proved a fiasco, mainly due to Moniuszko’s reserved character.

In the press, the singer was affectionately dubbed Rivolka. It was written that people came from all over the country to hear her sing.¹⁴ Delighted listeners would shower her with flowers and expensive gifts, such as a famous diamond bracelet inscribed ‘to Paulina Rivoli – Halka’:

One of the most conspicuous symptoms of that dual appreciation manifested itself at a performance of *Halka* on 4 inst. with a tribute paid to the talent, merits and noble aspirations of Miss Rivoli, presenting her leading role so excellently that in the collection of her roles, Halka will remain no doubt the most beautiful bloom. Thus the artist was honoured with a shower of flowers, distinguished among which were a symbolic wreath of white camelias and a huge bouquet of the same flowers on which, sparkling like drops of dew, were the diamonds of a bracelet turned into a talisman by means of these words inscribed on it: ‘To Paulina Rivoli – Halka’. Although small, these tokens of public tribute speak volumes, and their significance was further enhanced by the extended and continuously renewed applause and cries of those assembled. The tears of the artist and of many of those present attested to the old, but unspoken alliance concluded in the name of art among all those sensitive to its essential goodness; and they renewed that alliance, involuntarily bringing it to the surface from the depths of their souls. Hence Miss Rivoli’s fellow artists, as well as all of those present – and absent – at this show, were honoured by this tribute paid to the artist, if their hearts resound with an echo of the idea to which tribute was being paid. Miss Rivoli’s triumph grew immensely thanks to that contribution of the public in general. The principle for which millions of hearts beat, supported by them with almost personal passion, with a power not enforced by reasoning, must be vivid and true. All those espousing it may be certain of the love and homage resulting from it, which they are also ensured by the heart and the mind. It was those two moral levers of every sure principle that comprised the tribute paid to Miss Rivoli, a tribute long since merited, and necessary since the first performance of *Halka*. We are glad in a way that circumstances hastened it, or more accurately improvised it; that may be the best proof of its genuineness, of the enduring admiration [of the artist], which only a suitable opportunity was needed for it to be put into practice. The collective heart of our compatriots, their collective notion of art was reflected in it with an echo that reverberated around perhaps every corner of the land and triggered an echo in praise of Rivoli – Halka!

¹³ Quotation from the letter from Moniuszko to his wife (Moniuszko, 1969, p. 292).

¹⁴ *Biesiada Teatralna*, 1881, 304.

[...]

This past week, as regards opera, *Halka* and *La favorite* were performed at the Warsaw theatre. The title of the latter work is due from us far more to the former; hence, besides that which was noted above on account of Miss Rivoli, let us add a few words which may be formulated as follows: everyone performing in this opera nearly always does what they can, and although that occurs in almost every opera, the performance of *Halka*, galvanised virtually from the outset by the tribute paid to Miss Rivoli, seemed to us in its entirety more successful than usual. And it is difficult to remain a vigilant Argus after such a thrill by which the writer of these words was doubly affected: as the intermediary between the artist and the audience paying tribute to her and as a sympathetic witness to the general manifestation. Whether it had a magnetic effect on Mr Dobrski or rendered the listeners more sensitive, suffice it to say that everyone declared that Jontek was incomparable; Mr Dobrski did indeed sing like never before. We at least have never seen him in this role so transformed by emotion, and yet he has thrilled us before as well! O Moniuszko! Why were you not with us? But hush! Let us not upset him; and let us whisper among ourselves that a ball is also being readied for him. When the day arrives, let us muster a levy in mass for his benefit, so that the composer of the music to *Halka* might devise for us a new heroine as quickly as possible, and then another, and so forth... If one does not bring him captive to us, does not release him from his Vilnius enslavement, then two... Forgive us, brothers from over the Nemen! But charity begins at home! (Rivoli – Halka, 1858)

Critical voices regarding Rivoli appeared only rarely, and mostly at the start of her career. After one of her performances in lighter repertoire, in Nicolas Dalayrac's *Gulnare, ou l'Esclave persane* [*Gulnara, niewolnica perska*], the reviewers for the *Gazeta Warszawska* (Sz....ski, 1838b) accused her of certain shortcomings:

The young Paulina Rivoli was very pleasant. We would wish her more life in her playing, and above all louder enunciation.

Rivoli's association with the Warsaw stage was rather tumultuous. In 1851 she left the theatre for a while following a conflict with Borys Halpert, director of the Warsaw Government Theatres, over the casting of the part of Adalgisa in *Norma* (Orman, 1988). Like Rywacka, Rivoli travelled to Italy at that time. She returned to the theatre the same year, but some time later she began to be afflicted by health problems. We know that in 1856 she travelled to take the waters (Orman, 1988). For many years, she performed at both the Variety Theatre and the Grand Theatre.¹⁵ The press is rife with complaints over the cancellation of a show due to the singer's illness.

Hence *Fra Diavolo* has also been performed a couple of times since our last report, and were it not for the slight (no doubt) frailty of Miss Rivoli, it would no doubt have been shown more times to date (Kronika Krajowa, 1857).

¹⁵ It is particularly interesting that press reviews and accounts concerning performances at the Grand Theatre, especially in European repertoire, are dominated by the original spelling of her name: Rivoli. Mentions of performances at the Variety Theatre, meanwhile, often give her surname in a Polish form: Riwoli.

She was also mentioned, after her retirement, within the context of her poor health:

The opera *Halka* by our composer Mr S. Moniuszko will soon be celebrating its one-hundredth performance on the Warsaw stage. For that reason, let us summarise how this so beloved opera has fared over these last few years. It was first performed on 1 January 1858, so less than eight years ago, and were it not for the enduring infirmity of our prima donna over that period, Miss Rivoli, performing the role of Halka, the centenary would have been celebrated long ago (Wkrótce opera 'Halka', 1865).

The twilight of Paulina Rivoli

A year after the premiere of the Warsaw *Halka*, a revival was planned, but it was ultimately thwarted by Rivoli's throat complaint, which appears to have been serious, given the break of around six months that occurred in performances that year. It was for her, the star of the Warsaw stage, that Moniuszko prepared the eponymous part of the Countess in *Hrabina*, initially called Countess-Dianna. The premiere was postponed several times, because Rivoli's voice had deserted her. Moniuszko described this situation in his letters, rueing that the theatre's directors were forced to cancel the sold-out shows.

On 10 February 1860 Rivoli sang in a charity performance of *Halka*, the revenue from which went to support the Warsaw Charitable Society. Miss Rivoli grew hoarse during her performance (Orman, 1988), and the doctors prescribed the waters of Szczawnica, widely recommended for throat complaints. That is precisely the kind of ailments treated by the oldest springs in Szczawnica, the sodium-bicarbonate chloride water of which was first used in the early nineteenth century. The singer followed doctor's orders (*Gazeta muzyczna*, 1860). She stayed in Szczawnica for a long time, but her voice never recovered its former splendour. Moniuszko had planned to cast her as Zuzia in *The Raftsmen*, but ultimately that part was sung in the premiere by Bronisława Dowiakowska, who later played the role of Hanna. Rivoli ultimately left the stage after two performances of *The Countess*, and that part was also taken by Dowiakowska.

Despite spending more than 20 years on the operatic stage, Rivoli received a very modest pension, amounting to just one-quarter of the full sum: 500 roubles, 50 kopeks. She lived with her mother, initially in the Praga district of Warsaw, then later on Senatorska Street (Orman, 1988). She died on 12 October 1881. At her funeral, held three days later, speeches were made by her fellow artists Julian Dobrski and Wilhelm Troszel. The service also included a rendition of the aria 'Gdyby rannym słonkiem' ('If in the morning sunshine'), the inclusion of which in *Halka* is owed by Polish music history to the capricious prima donna.

In terms of both stage presence and vocal delivery, Paulina Rivoli, who initially rather frowned on Moniuszko's propositions, launched the performance tradition of two great Moniuszko operas in which she created the titular roles: *Halka* and *The Countess*. Her immediate successors had to deal with the inevitable comparisons.

Rivoli's numerous indispositions necessitated a search for singers who could double her roles. Several successors to the first Halka soon appeared, but in the eyes of the critics they could not measure up to their great predecessor. They included Maria Gruszczyńska (1837–1916) and Bronisława Dowiakowska (1840–1910), who gradually took over the roles previously created by Rivoli.¹⁶ Many years after Rivoli's retirement, her successors were still failing to satisfy the tastes of the critics. Here the reviewer for *Wiek*, a meticulous expert on vocal performance, accounts for his dissatisfaction with a performance given by Maria Macharzyńska (1851–1900):

Ostensibly, the part of Halka, which rarely exceeds a high *a*, seems suited to the range of a limited soprano, and many an amateur, when easily humming at the piano the aria 'If in the morning sunshine', assumes that she could tackle the entire role with the same facility, both on stage and with the accompaniment of an orchestra. And yet the part of Halka, based almost exclusively on the notes from *c* to *a*, can only be conquered by a voice for which those notes are in the middle range, and not the highest, and so which can command them at length, intensively and without weariness. Hence – passing over other artistic conditions – there has yet to be a better representative of this charming creation of Moniuszko's than Miss Rivoli, whose wide-ranging voice, reaching up to a high *c*, could do justice to this part which, relative to the compass of her voice, lay principally in the medium. Mrs Macharzyńska, on the contrary, possesses a quite melodious voice up to *e*, but not too strong, and notes lying higher – precisely those around which the whole part gravitates, are faint, weak. Combining this shortcoming with the overcharged orchestral accompaniment – since in this opera, no instrument rests for a moment – we will understand why the most striking passages failed to make any impression on the listeners and elicit an ovation for the singer.

Insofar as we were able to evaluate the debutante's voice from a single performance, we opine that it would be better suited to less dramatic and less powerful parts. In *semiseria* operas, it would find the right scope for itself, and we must add that Mrs Macharzyńska possesses three important qualities: quite clean intonation, suppleness and good, clear enunciation. Not all the artists of our opera can pride themselves on those three united virtues (*Szcześnie przepłynięcie Charybdy*, 1974).

Voice problems afflicted many singers in those times. Paulina's sister, Ludwika Tekla, lost her voice, as did the first Halka's stage partner, Wilhelm Troszel, who even underwent an operation on his throat.¹⁷ Yet phoniatic disorders plagued singers across Europe at that time. It was a period of massive changes in the aesthetics of solo singing, as is also shown by the calendar of Rivoli's life and

¹⁶ Interestingly, unlike singers of the previous generation, Dowiakowska did not stop performing after she married, but her maiden name became her pseudonym. She was renowned for her versatile voice, which enabled her to perform a great range of parts. Her repertoire included both Valentine and Marguerite (*Les Huguenots*). She did appear alongside Rivoli, including in the premiere of *The Countess* in 1860, later performing the titular role when the work was revived in 1867.

¹⁷ After the operation, he continued to sing for another four years. His problems worsened, but his dismissal from the theatre was motivated by political considerations (his commitment to performances in aid of victims of the January Uprising). After retiring, he enjoyed success teaching and composing short works (Kleczyński, 1887).

the parts she performed. She began to sing on stage in the late 30s. She was excellent in bel canto repertoire. That vocal style, favourable to a maturing voice, allowed her to fully develop. The maturing of her voice can be gauged, for instance, by the choice, order and time intervals of the parts she performed in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*: in 1848 she sang the part of Donna Elvira, before ten years later tackling the more dramatic and statuesque Donna Anna. During the 50s, Verdian parts began to appear in her repertoire. She began with Gilda, oscillating between late bel canto and dramatic singing, but that same year she also sang the demanding part of Lady Macbeth. In 1857, on the page of *Ruch Muzyczny*, there were calls for Rivoli to be given the part of Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani* (Kronika Krajowa, 1857).¹⁸

Around that time, *Halka* was given its premiere. That moment shows that for Rivoli's voice it was a mature period, which does not necessarily chime with concepts of a very 'light', even Donizettian approach to singing that part. The repertoire choices may confirm the singer's date of birth, estimated at 1820. When *Halka* was premiered, Rivoli was probably approaching 40 – an age when the quality of her voice may have altered. Could Lady Macbeth have contributed to the demise of Rivoli's vocal splendour? It is difficult to say, since at that time she was far more prominent in the part of Rachela in Halévy's *La Juive*. That role was her calling card at that time. Moniuszko grumbled in one letter that *La Juive* was filling up the box office. By 1937, 449 performances had been given (Grubowski, 2000, p. 32), with revivals every few years. *Macbeth* was not so successful on the Warsaw stage. The part of Rachela is among the more demanding; significantly, it led to the legendary demise of another great singer – Cornélie Falcon, who lost her voice irrecoverably five years after her debut. Rivoli and Falcon performed similar repertoire (Alice in Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* brought Falcon's debut and was an early role for Rivoli; Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Rachela in *La Juive*, Valentine in *Les Huguenots*), but in Rivoli's case, it was spread over a longer period of time, since her career lasted more than 20 years.¹⁹ Her voice loss was also not as drastic as in the case of Falcon, who was struck down as if by lightning, without her voice, when she passed out during a performance of Flotow's *Stradella*. Rivoli's problems grew gradually, peaking after the premiere of *The Countess*. It was probably that final gathering of strength that led to her ultimate exhaustion.

¹⁸ Those calls were motivated by a wish for the cast to be entirely Polish and the whole opera performed in Polish. In those days, parts were sometimes performed in the language in which the performer had learned them. So it was by no means rare to find performances in which one of the characters sang in a different language.

¹⁹ Falcon's name is used for a voice type corresponding to this singer's vocal profile. If we had the chance to hear Rivoli's voice, this is probably the epithet we would use.

Parts performed by Paulina Rivoli

Date	Composer	Work	Part
1837 (17 June)	G. Rossini	<i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i>	Zulma
1837	G. Rossini	<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> ²⁰	Rosina(?) ²¹
1837	S. Prószyński	<i>Siedem dziewcząt pod bronią</i> [<i>Les Femmes soldats, ou la forteresse mal défendue</i>] ²²	
1837	Józef Damse	<i>Galganduch</i> [<i>Der böse Geist Lumpaciv-agabundus</i>] ²³	
1838	N. Dalayrac	<i>Gulnare, ou l'Esclave persane</i> [<i>Gulnara, niewolnica paryska</i>]	
1839	G. Meyerbeer	<i>Robert le diable</i>	Alice Isabelle
1839	G. Donizetti	<i>L'elisir d'amore</i>	
1839	D. F. Auber	<i>Le cheval de bronze</i>	Peki
1840	D. Cimarosa	<i>Il matrimonio segreto</i>	
1840		<i>Une visite à Bedlam</i> [<i>Szpital wariatów</i>] (comedy opera)	
1840 (Variety Theatre)		<i>Posel</i> [The envoy]	
1841	F.-A. Boieldieu	<i>Le calife de Bagdad</i>	
1841 (Variety Theatre)	J.W. Krasieński (translator) (?)	<i>Krętosz</i> [<i>Le Valet sans maître</i>]	
1842	A. Adam	<i>Le brasseur de Preston</i>	

²⁰ It is not certain whether this was Paulina or one of her sisters.

²¹ Rivoli's name is given first, which suggests she performed the lead.

²² It is not known whether this was Paulina or one of her sisters.

²³ As above.

Date	Composer	Work	Part
1843	D. Auber	<i>Le lac des fées</i>	
1844	J. Damse	<i>Kontrabandzista</i> [<i>Le contrebandier</i>]	
1844	G. Donizetti	<i>Anna Bolena</i>	
1845	G. Donizetti	<i>Le rénégat</i>	
1846	F. Flotow	<i>Alessandro</i> <i>Stradella</i>	
1846	G. Donizetti	<i>Don Pasquale</i>	Norina
1846 (9 Dec.)	S. Moniuszko	<i>Loteria</i> [The lottery]	Anna
1848 (Variety Theatre)	L. Angely (J.S. Jasiński, translator)	<i>Paris in Pommern</i> [<i>Icek</i>]	
1848	W.A. Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Donna Elvira
1848	L.A. Dmuszewski (poet)	<i>Wezbranie Wisły</i> [The swollen Vistula], comedy opera	
1850	F. Flotow	<i>Martha</i>	Lady Harriet
1850	D. Auber	<i>Marco Spada</i>	Angela
1850	D. Auber	<i>Fra Diavolo</i>	Zerlina
1850	G. Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Gilda
1850	G. Verdi	<i>Macbeth</i>	Lady Macbeth
1853		<i>Bravo</i>	
1855?	F. Halévy	<i>La Fée aux roses</i>	
1857 (18 Feb.)	F. Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>	Rachela
1858 (1 Jan.)	S. Moniuszko	<i>Halka</i>	Halka
1858	G. Meyerbeer	<i>Les Huguenots</i>	Valentine
1858	W.A. Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Donna Anna
1858 (24 Sep.)	S. Moniuszko	<i>Flis</i> [The Rafts- man]	Zosia
1860 (7 Feb.)	S. Moniuszko	<i>Hrabina</i> [<i>The Countess</i>]	Countess
?	C.M. von Weber	<i>Der Freischütz</i>	

Well-known likenesses of singers associated with Moniuszko can be found on a print by Bronisław Puc (1883) and Józef Buchbinder entitled *Pierwsi wykonawcy dzieł Moniuszki na scenie warszawskiej: (Julian Dobrski, Józefa Leśkiewiczowa, Paulina Rivoli, Ludwika Rywacka, Wilhelm Troszel, Alojzy Żółkowski)* [The first performers of works by Moniuszko on the Warsaw stage: Julian Dobrski, Józefa Leśkiewiczowa, Paulina Rivoli, Ludwika Rywacka, Wilhelm Troszel, Alojzy Żółkowski]. Source: Cyfrowe Mazowsze.

In December 1901, the *Kurier Warszawski* published information about an oval photograph which had been donated to the Moniuszko Section of the Warsaw Music Society (Wizerunek Pauliny Rivoli, 1901), on which Rivoli was supposedly posed resting her hands on a balustrade. The photograph was donated by Dr Jan Kahl, the singer's cousin, but it remains unknown.



Figure 1. Image of Paulina Rivoli by Aleksander Regulski and Józef Buchbinder (source: Cyfrowe Mazowsze)



Figure 2. An engraving depicting a highland woman at a fence by unknown authors, (source: Cyfrowe Mazowsze)



Figure 3. Image of Paulina Rivoli by Aleksander Regulski and Józef Buchbinder
(source: Cyfrowe Mazowsze)

According to the findings of Andrzej Spóz, an engraving depicting a highland woman at a fence was included in two score reductions of *Halka* published in Vilnius in the early 1850s. This image may have been used as a model for the characterisation, but it certainly does not depict Paulina Rivoli (contrary to the caption under the picture), although it is often attributed to her. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Professor Grzegorz Zieziula for this valuable information.

Translated by John Comber

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