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## **The 1<sup>st</sup> Competition. The Difficult Beginnings.**

**23<sup>rd</sup>–30<sup>th</sup> January 1927**

For a 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholar, studying the history of the earliest Chopin Competitions (ChC) held before World War II is like conjuring up ghosts of the past, which continue to exert an impact on the present even though they have left few traces behind. We have no sound recordings of the first three editions of the Chopin Competition, either official (since they were not commissioned) or unofficial ‘bootleg’ recordings (the latter simply could not be made using the then available technology). Nor can we obtain new eyewitness accounts, since the persons participating in the prewar editions as organisers, performers, jurors, critics, reporters, live or radio audience – have long been dead. The names of the contestants, even the prize winners from that period are for the most part unknown to present-day music lovers; even more rarely do they relate in the minds of the audience to any specific performances. Eventually, nearly the whole official documentation of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ChC editions perished during WWII, as it was most likely stored in the Warsaw Philharmonic building, which was already bombed in September 1939 and further devastated during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944.

What the present-day researchers therefore have at their disposal are the published memories of those present at the early ChC editions (Jerzy Żurawlew, Jerzy Waldorff, Stefan Wysocki), which offer an individual, selective perspective on the events recollected after many years by authors who were strongly, professionally related or emotionally involved in what they undertook to describe. Apart from such sources, notably we also have a surprisingly large number of reviews and press reports at our disposal<sup>1</sup>, as well

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<sup>1</sup> A valuable though incomplete list of such reviews and accounts can be found in R. Ciesielski’s survey paper *Jak grać Chopina? Polska krytyka muzyczna o wykonaństwie muzyki Chopina w kontekście pierwszych Konkursów Chopinowskich (1927–1932–1937)* [*How to Play Chopin? Polish Music Criticism in the Context of the Earliest Chopin Competitions (1927–1932–1937)*], “Muzyka. Kwartalnik Instytutu Sztuki PAN” 2010, No. 3, pp. 95–121. Wherever I quote the reviewers’ life dates and their professions hereinafter, I omit their affiliations; nevertheless, most of them were professors of music conservatories.

as a small number of surviving documents. Everything else can only be sensed or heard by the scholar's and the reader's inner ear.

Events that cyclically attract a large audience are usually believed to originate in some spontaneous collective impulse which leads to a no less spontaneous audience experience. In reality, however, they require an enormous organisational effort, financial outlay, promotion, and, just as importantly, someone who will bring them about. Just as there would be no modern Olympic Games without Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, so the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw would most likely not have happened without the initiative and persistent efforts of Professor Jerzy Żurawlew (1886–1980). Several years after Poland regained its independence, the professor made up his mind to counteract the negative trends in Chopin performance practice.

Jerzy Waldorff explained the motives behind the organisation the first ChC as follows:

[Chopin] was too outstanding a personality to be reduced to a mere supplier of salon music, but he could not help his oeuvre being put through the sieve of salon-type judgments, which branded his output for decades as oversophisticated, hypersensitive, and morbid art.

Also Chopin's own pupils – the actual ones and the Master's self-styled apostles, who usurped this name in full confidence that the deceased composer would not be able to protest – contributed to this assessment. Those early successors to Chopin's style began to interpret the *Études* and *Preludes* with a hysterical rubato, playing the left hand slightly before the right hand melody, and introducing arpeggiated chords. They blurred the *Nocturnes* with the excessive use of the pedal, and in the *Polonaise* they banged on the keyboard till the strings nearly broke, which was supposed to symbolise compassion for Poland then kept in fetters and the readiness to make heroic bids for the country's independence<sup>2</sup>.

The European conventions of music notation do not allow composers to represent their idea of the music unequivocally to the performers. A literary work (except for audiobooks, where the reader's timbre of voice is more important than text interpretation) gets 'performed' only in the readers' minds. A work of music, on the other hand, has to be performed by a 'third party' in order to reach the audience. Each instance of performance depends on the artists' individual interpretation of the score and on their individual skills and qualities. The presence of this middleman has given rise to a great debate among musicologists, critics and music lovers as to 'which performances are the best'. This controversy has continued ever since people started paying attention to such elements of the musical work as 'composer's

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<sup>2</sup> J. Waldorff, *Wielka gra [The Great Game]*, in: idem, *Wybór pism [Selected Writings]*, Vol. 4, Warszawa 1993, pp. 58–59.

intention', 'performer's intention', and their respective relation to the score. This was also the origin of the idea of 'misrepresented music', in which the concept of misrepresentation had not only aesthetic, but also political connotations. As Waldorff wrote:

Among those 'overdoing' Chopin interpreters, two Polish aristocratic ladies played a special role, both of considerable merit to their generation, and genuinely patriotically-minded. Both, too, were pupils of Chopin. They were Marcelina Czartoryska née Radziwiłł [1817–1894] and Mrs Maria Kalergis [1822–1874] [...]. Thanks to their wide social connections throughout Europe, supported by their substantial fortunes, these noble ladies reached many circles with Chopin's music, presenting it as a banner of the nation in bondage, adorned with mourning crape. When asked whether his works must really drip with tears in every performance, they had one irrefutable argument: "We heard with our own ears how the Maestro played!"<sup>3</sup>

In fiction and in other textual creations, such as philosophy and historiography, the dispute concerning author's intention and the 'true' meaning of the given text has also continued since time immemorial. Already in the Library of Alexandria commentators wrangled over the interpretation of Homer's epics. 20<sup>th</sup>-century attempts to announce the 'death of the author' have proved short-lived. The majority of readers still think that verbal messages have some specific meaning. Nevertheless, in case that meaning is disputed, we can always fall back on the relatively stable substance of the text. Here are the author's own words, available in black and white. We may argue about their significance, but their form is unified – unless it has been distorted by transmission in manuscript or by censorship. In music we do not have this comfort. The musical text usually does not bring meanings comparable to those carried by statements in a natural language. The latter consist of words that people use to speak to one another. Chopin's music poses a double difficulty since he was the first performer of his own works and therefore not only authored the notated scores<sup>4</sup>, but also set the standard for their

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> The text of Chopin's works constitutes a separate problem in musicology and philology. The composer frequently sent several copies of the manuscripts of his new works to different editors (the copies were not always identical). He also introduced handwritten corrections in the already published scores. This means that a single urtext of Chopin's compositions simply does not exist, and which version is the final one is a matter open for debate. Work on establishing the 'pure' text of his music continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At present, the canonical versions are the ones printed in the National Edition initiated by Jan Ekier, and participants of the Chopin Competition are advised to make use of this edition. It needs to be stressed, however, that the textual differences that have been the subject of source research make little difference to listeners who are not Chopin scholars or professional musicians. Problems of editing Chopin's works have been presented in detail in: J. Ekier, *Wstęp [Introduction] to Wydanie Narodowe Dzieł Fryderyka Chopina [The National Edition of the Works of Fryderyk Chopin]*, Warszawa 1974 [supplemented electronic edition in 2008].

acoustic actualisation. However, his performances could only be heard by those present, and their only trace in later times were the impressions of such audience members, recalled in later texts. Such experiences quickly become distorted and effaced from individual memory, even more so if they become the subject of that game of ‘Chinese whispers’ which we call intergenerational transmission.

We should also add to this the more obvious elements discussed in specialist publications; namely, the changes in performance practice, instrument construction, and style of perception. Waldorff summed up this entire complex of factors as follows:

As a result of one-sided commentaries and stage interpretations of Chopin’s music, when neoclassicism with Stravinsky and Prokofiev in its lead came to rule supreme after World War I in Paris, which was the very hub of contemporary art, young pianists completely turned their backs on Chopin, whom they considered as a representative of musty sentimentalism<sup>5</sup>.

Such, then, was the context in which Jerzy Żurawlew put forward the idea of holding a competition as an event that would combine evaluation of music performances with an audience-oriented spectacle, inspiring powerful emotions in the listeners – similarly to sports events, though less ludic in character<sup>6</sup>. Apart from determination and enthusiasm, Żurawlew’s project was in a way legitimised by his own music education. He was a gifted pianist, pupil of Aleksander Michałowski (1851–1938), who as a young person had taken lessons from Karol Mikuli (1821–1897), who in turn had been a pupil of Chopin. Lacking those features of character that are needed to make a star, Żurawlew was able to divide his time between his own concert career and promoting the idea of artistic competition among music performers.

In the preface to the first historical overview of the Chopin Competition, published in 1970, Żurawlew wrote:

The idea of holding a Chopin Competition originated in 1925. At that time, not long after the end of World War I, young people found sports immensely exciting; their ways of thinking and outlook on life were thoroughly realistic.

I frequently met with the view that Chopin is overly romantic, moves the soul too much, and makes the psyche vulnerable. Some even believed that for these reasons Chopin should not be included in music school syllabuses. All these symptoms of a total incomprehension of Chopin’s music were very painful to me.

<sup>5</sup> J. Waldorff, *Wielka gra*, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. L. McCormick, *Performing Civility*, op. cit. The concept of such events originated only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at present the Chopin Competition is the oldest of its kind in the world. Only a few other piano contests had been held before its inception, the most important of which was the Anton Rubinstein Competition (1890–1910, for both pianists and composers).

[...] I decided to counteract this. While observing the enthusiasm for sports feats among our youth, I finally hit on a solution – let us stage a competition! What palpable benefits could it hold for the young Chopin performers? First of all – the prize money, secondly – the conquest of the world’s stages [...] Considering the difficulties that young musicians had to face at that time in order to make it to the Philharmonic stage, such a contest could lure them strongly. The future proved I was right.

Like every new initiative, also this one encountered many obstacles; first and foremost, enormous financial problems, coupled with the reluctant attitude of the higher authorities, even of the society at large. The situation seemed hopeless<sup>7</sup>.

In another text he recalled:

A member of the Society [i.e. the Warsaw Music Society, responsible for the practical aspects of organising the ChC] provided 15 thousand zlotys from the WMS’s own funds, which made the launch of the Competition possible. I was aware, however, that for the event to win recognition abroad I must enlist the help of our diplomatic posts, which would not be possible without the [Polish] President’s patronage. President Wojciechowski refused our request for patronage. We seemed to have reached a dead end. However, soon after the May events [i.e. the May Coup of 1926] the post of President [...] was taken over by Mościcki, whom we addressed with our request for patronage. I took advantage of my friendship with Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, and was received by the President. I felt we had won and I was not mistaken. Several days later I was telephoned and asked to visit the ministry, which was hostile to the competition idea, but was henceforth made responsible for its successful implementation<sup>8</sup>.

In January 1927 Poland was still trying come to terms with the consequences of the coup d’etat that took place in May of the previous year and significantly weakened the young Polish parliamentary democracy (after less than a decade of its functioning), which gave way to the authoritarian rule of Marshal Piłsudski and his followers. One might think that the Sanation [political movement] was not particularly favourable to the artistic world. Still, as we can learn from Żurawlew’s memories, it was Ignacy Mościcki, the then newly

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<sup>7</sup> J. Żurawlew, *Konkursy Chopinowskie [The Chopin Competitions]*, in: *Międzynarodowe Konkursy Pianistyczne imienia Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie 1927–1970 [The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw 1927–1970]*, ed. J. Prosnak, Warszawa 1970, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> J. Żurawlew, *Jak zrodziła się inicjatywa Konkursów Chopinowskich [How the Initiative of Chopin Competitions Was Born]*, Press Office of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Chopin Competition, 1955, quoted after: *Kronika Międzynarodowych Konkursów Pianistycznych im. Fryderyka Chopina 1927–1995 [Chronicle of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition 1927–1995]*, eds B. Niewiarowska, I. Jarosz et al., Gdańsk–Warszawa 2000, p. 9. Cf. also, idem, *Dzieje inicjatywy Konkursów Chopinowskich [The History of the Chopin Competition Initiative]*, “Muzyka”, a monthly edited by Mateusz Gliński, 1937, No. 3, pp. 69–73.

elected President of the Republic of Poland, who accepted the patronage of the prospective piano competition, previously refused by his predecessor Stanisław Wojciechowski. The Competition was initially planned to start on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1926, in conjunction with the unveiling of Chopin's monument (sculptured by Wacław Szymanowski) at Warsaw's Royal Łazienki Park. This is also the date that we find on the frequently reproduced poster. However, since the event was put off until 14<sup>th</sup> November, and logistic problems hindered the organisers, the ChC was postponed until January 1927<sup>9</sup>.

The idea of organising a competition for music performers failed to engender general enthusiasm at first. One of the reasons was that music competitions as an institution of the modern European society were still not common. First and foremost, however, one needed to obtain funding. One of the authors writing about the Competition summed up this situation with bitter irony:

Jerzy Żurawlew's idea only came true after two years of endeavours, after the Polish Match Monopoly (PMZ) [state monopoly on match production and imports] demonstrated its true love of Chopin, and its director Henryk Rewkowicz offered the substantial sum of 15,000 zlotys<sup>10</sup>.

Institutions of culture in the interwar Poland received no practical support from the state. Their funding came partly from private sponsors, who were not easy to find in a country enfeebled by a world war and only just revived

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<sup>9</sup> On the history of this monument and the difficulties related to the project, cf.: W.G., *Dzieje jednego pomnika* [*The Story of One Monument*], "Świat", 13<sup>th</sup> November 1926, No. 46, pp. 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> J. Ekiert, *Chopin wiecznie poszukiwany. Historia Międzynarodowego Konkursu Pianistycznego im. Fryderyka Chopina w Warszawie* [*The Eternal Quest for Chopin. A History of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw*], Warszawa 2010, p. 7. Rewkowicz (correct surname: Rewkiewicz) was the unnamed Warsaw Music Society (WMS) member mentioned by Żurawlew. In his monograph of the Society, Andrzej Spóz presents the whole affair in even bleaker terms: "[Żurawlew's] unprecedented project met with great scepticism on the part of the WMS committee as far as the chances for its implementation were concerned. Eventually, however, thanks to the declaration made by Henryk Rewkowicz (a WMS board member) that he personally guaranteed he would cover the possible budget deficit, the implementation of the Competition project was entrusted to the Music School [now the Fryderyk Chopin State Music School No. 2 in Warsaw]" (A. Spóz, *Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne 1871–1971* [*The Warsaw Music Society 1871–1971*], Warszawa 1971, pp. 53–55). It was only in 1995 that the fortnightly "Ruch Muzyczny" printed H. Cieszkowska's article (*Przyczynek do genezy Konkursu Chopinowskiego* [*Toward the Study of the Origins of the Chopin Competition*], "Ruch Muzyczny" 1995, No. 20, pp. 10–11), which, apart from correcting the surname of this Competition sponsor, also specified that the sum he contributed did not come from the funds of the Polish Match Monopoly but from his private capital. Cf. also D. Rewkiewicz-Niemirska, *O pierwszym chopinowskim* [*On the First Chopin Competition*], "Przekrój", 29<sup>th</sup> October 1995, No. 2627, p. 18.

after more than a hundred years of being partitioned between Russia, Prussia (later Germany), and Austria-Hungary. The other source of income was self-financing. For instance, Warsaw Philharmonic was, on all days apart from the Friday and Sunday concerts, a cinema hall, and earned in this way for the maintenance of both the building and the orchestra. Its various smaller halls played the role of a theatre room, a music school, and even a dance club<sup>11</sup>.

The interwar period was a hard time for philharmonic music, not only for economic reasons. The late Romantic cult of the genius-composers and virtuoso performers was gone, and its secondary revival through the agency of mass culture had not yet begun. Mahler's death in 1911 marked the symbolic end of the Romantic giants. The years following 1918 witnessed a rapid spread of popular music. The music record industry and the radio developed very fast, and these novelties forced both the composers and the performers to change their *belle époque* habits – which did not come easy. Finally, the internal logic of the evolution of musical forms led to an exhaustion of the Romantic paradigm, which ruled in music for a longer time than in any other art (its eventual demise only came with the death of Richard Strauss in 1947, though it had been pushed outside the mainstream of musical life many years earlier). The first avant-garde had already entered the scene, and now functioned side by side with neo-Romanticism. A hundred years later we can hardly realise how far-reaching and violent these transformations really were.

In the face of these changes, music performance practice as developed a century earlier in the heyday of the first stage of musical Romanticism became problematic, not only because (as the Competition founders rightly observed) the principles of performance had been blurred and the models set by composers – forgotten, but also because of the doubt that had arisen (though was not openly expressed) whether music could withstand the rapid civilizational change at all and still play the same social functions, assigned to it in the previous century by Romantic ideologies. In such a context, Żurawlew's initiative appears as even more daring.

Despite all the unfavourable circumstances, the first Chopin Competition was solemnly inaugurated on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1927 at Warsaw Philharmonic. "Kurier Warszawski" ["The Warsaw Courier"] reported as early as 14<sup>th</sup> January:

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month a meeting of the organisation committee of the Fryderyk Chopin international competition for pianists was held. The competition has been organised by the Chopin higher school in Warsaw [...] At the meeting,

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<sup>11</sup> J. Waldorff, *Wielka gra*, op. cit., pp. 62, 80–81.

the programme was decided for the competition's opening ceremony, to be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month at 11 a.m. in the Philharmonic's great hall. On the same day at 10 in the morning, the order of participating artists' performances will be drawn. 4 to 5 pianists will play on each day<sup>12</sup>.

26 pianists from 8 European countries took part in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of ChC. The jury consisted exclusively of the Poles<sup>13</sup>. It was a conscious decision, aiming to focus the assessment criteria on the supposed norms of the Polish piano school. Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski<sup>14</sup>, who reported on the Competition for the "Świat" weekly, commented on this decision of the organisers a long time before the opening ceremony:

We believe this to be quite right. Our country is indeed the source of a Szopen<sup>15</sup>[Chopin] tradition that has yielded many a master of the Chopin piano style [...]. The organisers [therefore] assume that our own musicians are the most competent with regard to defining and mapping out the actual Chopin tradition for the future<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> [N.N.], "Kurier Warszawski", 14<sup>th</sup> January 1927, No. 19, p. 4. The first ChC consisted of two stages, in the second of which the contestants were to perform only two movements from either of Chopin's concertos with orchestra. The same rules were repeated for the next two ChC editions.

<sup>13</sup> The German pianist Alfred Höhn (Hoehn, 1887–1945), listed in some secondary sources as a jury member, in fact only took part in the final auditions.

<sup>14</sup> Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski (1885–1944) was one of the central figures of Polish cultural life in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a journalist and author of novels stylistically akin to expressionism; his writings co-founded the self-identity of Polish elites in the interwar period. He also performed many public functions and had a professional diploma as a pianist (but gave up his concert career after breaking his hand).

<sup>15</sup> In Polish the composer's name was spelled either as Chopin or Szopen. This dual spelling was already in use in his lifetime (the composer himself used both forms) and had no political or ideological significance at that time, though later it temporarily took on such connotations in political propaganda (cf. [N.N.], *Na marginesie: „Chopin” i „Szopen”* [Notes on the Margin: 'Chopin' and 'Szopen'], "Słowo Polskie" 1910, No. 88). At present the rules of Polish normative orthography treat both spellings on a par, but in practice 'Chopin' is the preferred form (also in all records and publications related to the Competition). We should note that in the Polish version of the present publication we have consistently applied the form 'International [Fryderyk] Chopin [Piano] Competition' in our own text, but in the quoted press articles and notes we have retained the inconsistencies of both the surname spelling and the Competition's name. Those inconsistencies have been omitted, however, from the English translation except when they are semantically relevant, as when e.g. the Competition is referred to as a 'Congress' (cf. footnote 21 below).

<sup>16</sup> 16 jkb. [J. Kaden-Bandrowski], *Międzynarodowy Konkurs Szopenowski w Warszawie* [The International Chopin Competition in Warsaw], "Świat" 1926, No. 18, p. 14. Kaden also wrote: "the Warsaw competition will no doubt generate great interest [...] in the world of European pianism." He thus expressed a hope that initially proved futile and would only be fulfilled during the subsequent ChC editions.



Kaden-Bandrowski's opinion was shared by the entire Polish music environment, and so he became a spokesperson for the 'Polish-ness' of both Chopin's music and for the coming Competition. In an extensive programmatic article published on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1926, the day before the Chopin monument was unveiled at the Royal Łazienki Park, the writer argued that:

By establishing this tournament, we are attracting to Poland an entire host of young performers, who will not only compete for laurels as pianists, but also most likely get to know the Maestro's homeland, at least in some part – his birthplace, the city where he grew up, the landscape, and Polish culture. We are convinced that those few days of their stay will make the young artists aware – better than any genealogical studies – that Chopin's genuine Polish-ness is undoubtable and indisputable. [...] The question remains, however, of whether representatives of foreign pianism and music should serve on the jury. The importance of the Competition verdicts, as well as the rules of courtesy and hospitality, demand that foreign musicians be given a certain representation in the jury [...] if not for any other reason, then at least so that they do not say, in case a Polish pianist wins, that we awarded the prize to ourselves<sup>17</sup>.

In later texts on this subject, Kaden insisted on his vision of the Chopin Competition as a celebration of the best hitherto musical traditions of the Polish nation: "It is of paramount importance that the most eminent and famous representatives of the Chopin style should sit on the jury. The persons I have in mind are, first and foremost, Śliwiński and Michałowski."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, as the date of the inauguration was drawing near, Kaden also began to complain about the more and more evident logistic deficiencies:

Funds for this purpose [i.e. ensuring that the ChC would become a cyclic event] must be found, not only for the sake of the propaganda effect, but also for deeper reasons. What is at stake is the establishment of the great tradition of the Polish piano style, and the complete identification of Chopin's art with the city where he was raised and with Poland. [...] Talking of the 'wide masses', it is also evident that the Competition's press office has not demonstrated sufficient flexibility. Neither the foreign countries nor Poland have, until the very last moment, received suffi-

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<sup>17</sup> jkb. [J. Kaden-Bandrowski], *Międzynarodowy konkurs Chopin'a w Warszawie w styczniu 1927 r.* [*The International Chopin Competition in Warsaw in January 1927*, "Świat" 1926, No. 46, pp. 3–4. In the last paragraph the author took care to criticise the Parisian Pleyel company for sending to the Competition as a gift a wrong (chamber-music) model of a piano and asked the (hopefully only rhetorical) question: "Could this instrument be exchanged in the same manufacture for a more powerful one?"

<sup>18</sup> jkb. [J. Kaden-Bandrowski], *Międzynarodowy konkurs im. Chopin'a w Warszawie* [*The International Chopin Competition in Warsaw*], "Świat" 1927, No. 2, p. 14. In his account of the opening ceremony (*Pierwszy wielki Turniej artystyczny w odrodzonej Ojczyźnie* [*The First Great Artistic Tournament in Our Reborn Fatherland*], "Świat" 1927, No. 5, p. 13) Kaden revealed that Józef Śliwiński did not join the jury because he took offence at the organisers for sending him the invitation at too late a date.

cient information concerning the preparations for the Competition. [...] For such a momentous event for Polish music and pianism, the organising committee ought to have obtained a number of railway fare reductions, and ensured the presence of delegations from, for instance, the higher years of conservatories and higher schools of music from Kraków, Lwów [now Lviv], Poznań, Wilno [now Vilnius], Katowice, etc.<sup>19</sup>

However, neither these proposals nor Kaden's recommendations concerning the national profile of the ChC had much to do with the Competition's realities<sup>20</sup>.

In his speech for the inauguration of the first ChC, Witold Maliszewski (1873–1939), president of the jury, said:

We cannot impose on the world our Polish understanding of Chopin's music. Nevertheless, we the Polish jurors wish to speak out concerning the interpretation of Chopin since we are convinced that the judgment of an exclusively Polish jury takes on a unique significance and must be of particular interest to foreigners<sup>21</sup>.

This declaration, similarly as Kaden's rather boastful remarks, reflected the organisers' fundamental belief (also shared by Żurawlew and by the public interested in the event) that Chopin's oeuvre is, as Polish national music, the property of the nation, with all the consequences of such a state of affairs. This crucially led to the supposition that Chopin is best performed by his compatriots. In this context (though it was not openly admitted), the Competition's international scope was mostly meant as a way to propagate the ideal Polish school of piano performance abroad, so that pianists from other countries would be able to experience personally and directly model performances during the contest. In this way, albeit losing to the Poles, they would at least be able to learn straight from the horse's mouth how Chopin should really be played<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> jkb. [J. Kaden-Bandrowski], *Przed pierwszym międzynarodowym konkursem im. Chopina w Warszawie* [Before the First International Chopin Competition in Warsaw], "Świat" 1927, No. 4, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Another telling detail was Kaden's complete omission of any information concerning pianists from the USSR about to take part in the 1<sup>st</sup> ChC, though he emphasised at the same time that musicians from such countries as Germany, France and England were to participate in the Competition (which did not happen). Most likely Kaden envisaged the ChC as crowning proof of the Polish-ness of Chopin's music and as its exhibition, targeting and addressing Western Europe – a stance which obviously left no room for 'Bolsheviks' displaying their pianistic skills.

<sup>21</sup> [N.N.], *Międzynarodowy Kongres [sic] pianistów im. Chopina* [The Chopin International Congress [sic] of Pianists], "Epoka", 24<sup>th</sup> January 1927, No. 23, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> The origins of the conviction that Poles are the best Chopin interpreters were concisely discussed by M. Dziadek in her article *Polak potrafi!* [Poles Know How] ("Ruch Muzy-