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The Guitar in Poland 1901–1939 – Wojciech Gurgul’s Bibliography as a Source of Knowledge on Its Role in Musical Culture

Review – Wojciech Gurgul, *Polskie druki muzyczne z udziałem gitary wydane w latach 1901–1939. Bibliografia i analiza wybranych publikacji* [Polish musical publications featuring the guitar issued in the years 1901–1939. Bibliography and analysis of selected publications], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 2022, ISBN 978-83-66536-65-4, 94 pages, 22 illustrations, appendix

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Wojciech Gurgul’s bibliography of Polish musical publications featuring the guitar, from the years 1901–1939, is an example of an extensive research project and archival work which has enabled researchers to, among other things, understand the role of the guitar in the context of Polish music of the period in question. On the one hand, traces of the instrument’s function can be identified in solo and ensemble music in all its forms during that period. On the other hand,

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it facilitates the recreation of the social, national and professional circles that were once passionate about the guitar prior to its emergence as the symbol of a new musical era following the Second World War. At the time, the 'boy with a guitar', later electrified, was considered a perfect match for fashionable girls, until they too began to dominate the guitar, as exemplified by Maryla Rodowicz and numerous other Polish singer-songwriters. The decline of the guitar in previous centuries must also be considered in this context. From the second half of the 19th century, the guitar evolved from an instrument associated with the upper classes, particularly prevalent among the bourgeoisie and the so-called intelligentsia (e.g. Ignacy Rzecki in *The Doll* by Bolesław Prus), to become a popular instrument among the working class as well. During the 20th century, the presence of mandolin and guitar ensembles from a variety of cultural societies, educational institutions and universities was already a common occurrence throughout Europe.

In Poland, the utilisation of plucked string instruments was observed among diverse cultural and social groups¹. An exemplification of the popularity of such musical ensembles could be demonstrated by Edward Ciuzsza's mandolin orchestra. Founded in 1922 in Vilnius, it became so popular throughout the country that, following the expulsion of Poles from that city in 1945, and the end of the Second World War, the authorities allowed the entire ensemble to immigrate to Łódź. Here, it enjoyed a period of considerable popularity, both through live performances and radio broadcasts, until 1971. Ensembles of string instruments were a significant element in the musical development of society, particularly within the context of youth clubs, workers' clubs, and educational institutions. I myself became infected with playing music in such a club, initially playing the guitar, before the big-beat and jazz fever of the '60s reawakened our appetites for other repertoire and instruments (I was not the only one who dreamt of playing the saxophone, but due to the lack of one, I ended up with a slightly dented trumpet and stayed with it until my final exam at the music school of the second degree).

The bibliography under discussion is, however, intended primarily for performers of classical guitar music. Its purpose is to encourage the use of sheet music from the first four decades of the 20th century, both as concert repertoire and as teaching and practice material. With a few exceptions, however, this is not music of high concert merit and perhaps that is why it is so little known so far in the contemporary repertoire, performance or recording. Following a section devoted to the bibliography in question, the author discusses selected works in

¹ The popularisation of playing music on plucked string instruments, inter alia among the so-called fair sex, albeit not necessarily from the 'upper classes', is also illustrated by another excellent book by the same Author; see: W. Gurgul, *Zofia Zdziennicka-Bergerowa. Wirtuozka cytry, kompozytorka i działaczka społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, Częstochowa 2023.

more detail, highlighting, among other things, their artistic level, performance difficulty and other features. The work concludes with a further selection of specific guitar pieces and their scores, with notation adapted to contemporary editorial requirements. These are also accompanied by critical commentary.

The work as a whole deserves a very high rating, with perhaps one exception, not at all inconsiderable. The issue pertains to the editorial aspect, which has been progressively neglected in contemporary Polish literature and writing due to the dominance of smartphone communication aesthetics. An example of this is the contemporary press, which pays great attention to the visual aspect, but increasingly exhibits deficiencies in linguistic correctness (syntax, spelling, style, etc.). Consequently, the responsibility for the accuracy and compliance of the content with the rules of the Polish language and spelling is shifted to the authors. In any type of essay, a capital letter, quotation marks, italics or indentation signals something to the reader. Notably, the notation of titles has not been updated to align with contemporary standards, as is typically observed in sheet music. Furthermore, the superfluous capital letters in the titles have not been removed. For instance, on page 34, the pieces are entitled 'Pierwsze spotkanie (Romans cygański)' [First Meeting (Gypsy Romance)] and 'Dźwięki wschodnie (Walc)' [Eastern Notes (Waltz)]. If the initial parts of the examples constitute the title of the work, it is imperative that they are distinguished by either quotation marks or italics. The second part of the examples is apparently an indication of the genre and does not require a capital letter. That is to say, it should be: *Pierwsze spotkanie* (romans cygański); *Dźwięki wschodnie* (walc). If, on the other hand, one wishes to show the original notation in the sheet music, the complete title, including these capital letters, should be enclosed in quotation marks, as above.

Other examples where there is a lack of consistency in the use of so-called markers are present on page 66:

'Aria *La donna è mobile* z opery *Rigoletto* Giuseppe Verdi [z op. Rigoletto]'. [Aria *La donna è mobile* from the opera *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi [from op. Rigoletto]]"

Why was the title of the opera not italicised the second time? The same applies to:

'*Miserere* z opery *Trubadur* Giuseppe Verdi [Miserere (Z opery Verdi)]' [*Miserere* from the opera *Il trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi [Miserere (from the opera by Verdi)]]

Furthermore, what is the rationale behind the utilisation of the capital letter 'Z' in a simple preposition. A similar shortcoming occurs in the spelling of the Latin word *opus*, the abbreviation of which (op.), is erroneously written with a capital letter. Note the following example:

„Fragment [2] z wodewilu *La corde sensible* Clairville [Tamerlan (z Op. Czufa struna)]". [Excerpt [2] from the vaudeville *La corde sensible* by Clairville [Tamerlan (from Op. La corde sensible)]]

The incorrect use of capital letters can also be seen further down the same page, e.g.:

„[...] (znaczące, ale i zabawne jest zestawienie polskiej melodii *Góralu czy Ci nie żal* z amerykańską piosenką *My Old Kentucky Home*)”. [(Significant, but also amusing, is the juxtaposition of the Polish song *Góralu czy Ci nie żal* with the American song *My Old Kentucky Home*)]

On page 77 it says ‘PIĘĆ ŁATWYCH UTWORÓW (z Wielkiej szkoły gry na gitarze)’ [FIVE SIMPLE PIECES (From the great school for guitar)], while it should read: (z *Wielkiej szkoły gry na gitarze*). Regrettably, such inaccuracies in the fundamental principles of marker usage, in addition to instances of editorial disarray, are abundant in the work being reviewed. The question of whether the responsibility for this issue lies with the author or the editor remains unresolved.

The publication features several indexes of notable significance, including those of composers, authors of arrangements, and authors of lyrics. It also provides a comprehensive index of works by cast and an index of libraries. Another complication arises from the exclusive utilisation of catalogue numbers for individual editions in the lists, e.g. ‘Ábrahám Pál 48:1’. It is a traditional system that necessitates laborious research to locate answers in numerous lists and chapters of a work. It would have been preferable to provide the page number of the work, or even both values (page and data from the main set of editions under discussion), in this case: Ábrahám Pál – 26/48:1.

A significant aspect of the work under consideration is the selection of music examples and the critical discussion that accompanies them. Also, examples of covers from various editions are provided to illustrate both the popular instruments of the time and the users to whom they are dedicated. These include patriotic associations, individual instrumentalists, ensembles of plucked string instruments, music lovers. An intriguing element in this regard is the illustration of an edition of *Mandolinata*, Op. 7 No. 1, by Stanisław Łukasiewicz, composed for a mandolin quartet comprising mandolin I, mandolin II, mandola, and guitar. The cover displays an illustration of a lady performing on what appears to be an archaic square piano, however, the lower vignette depicts a crossed mandolin and a guitar (p. 41).

On page 53 it reads:

Published in the 1930s by Bronisław Rudzki in Warsaw, Zofia Zdziennicka’s *Nowa praktyczna szkoła* [New Practical School] is the most comprehensive school for the Spanish guitar published on the territory of Poland after the year 1900 and before the Second World War. It was dedicated to the 6-string guitar and lute, however not to the historical lute (baroque or renaissance) but rather to an instrument that was popular in German-speaking areas for playing music at home: the romantic lute, otherwise known as the guitarolute. The instrument featured a sound box that resembled the traditional lute. However, it is notable that the number of strings and their tuning were consistent with those of the Spanish guitar. The instrument’s range was found to be more limited in the

upper register when compared with that of the guitar, from E to g², although on occasion, the range was extended downward by adding bass strings².

The term *guitarolute*, employed by the author, suggests an instrument that is both a guitar and a lute, which is not accurate. The instrument under discussion is a lute guitar (German: *Lautengitarre*), which was popular in German-speaking areas in the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, and whose sound box is modelled on the lute (convex)³. The term *romantic lute* is arguably also an exaggeration. The regional names used are often misleading. In Sweden, the so-called Swedish lute (*svensk luta*) can be traced back to the late 18th/19th century. It is an instrument similar to the lute guitar, derived from the cittern and lute as well as the English guitar, with two headstocks (theorbo'ed). The second headstock, reinforced with a metal bracket, is a rod supported by the instrument's sound box. It is designed for additional bass strings, which are not pressed, otherwise known as bourdon strings. Nevertheless, it is a guitar instrument.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the aforementioned editorial shortcomings, the bibliography of guitar music published in the first four decades of the 20th century within the Polish cultural area compiled by Wojciech Gurgul constitutes a significant addition to the research concerning the role of this instrument in the context of Polish musical culture throughout history. In addition to music historians, this volume is of primary interest to contemporary guitar teachers and performers of classical guitar music.

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² W. Gurgul, op. cit., p. 54.

³ See Benjamin Vogel, *Kilka uwag na temat współczesnej polskiej terminologii instrumentologicznej*, [in:] 'Studia Musicologica Calisiensia' 2023, vol. 3, ed. K. Rottermund, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, pp. 136–137.