

Stefania Łobaczewska

* 31 July 1888 in Lviv, Österreich-Ungarn/Galizien
(später: Lwów, Polen, heute: Lviv, Ukraine)

† 6 January 1963 in Kraków/Krakau, Polen

Some sources erroneously state 1894 as date of birth.

Musicologist, music critic, educator

„Monografia poszczególnego twórcy jest mniejszym lub większym wycinkiem z obrazu twórczości muzycznej całej epoki. Stosunek tego twórcy do własnej epoki i środowiska, stopień jego związania się z tą epoką i środowiskiem, dotarcia do właściwego im stylu myślenia i odczuwania, który wyraża się w sztuce, do ukrytych poza tym stylem myślenia i odczuwania sprężyn działania całego tła kulturalnego i społecznego, zmiennego w czasie i przetrzeniu, umiejętność przeniesienia tego stylu myślenia i odczuwania na teren dźwięku i wyrażenia go za pośrednictwem form dźwiękowych – to dla estetyki współczesnej główne i podstawowe źródło dla zrozumienia twórczości danego twórcy i jedyne kryterium jego wartości.”

“The monograph of an individual artist is more or less an cross-section image of the musical epoch in which he lived. The relationship of this artist and the degree of his unity with his time and environment, the stamp of a particular style of thinking and feeling which expresses itself in art, the hidden mechanisms of cultural and societal context which vary over the course of time and from place to place, the ability to convey this *Zeitgeist* in thought and feeling through musical art and musical forms – for contemporary musical aesthetics this is to be understood as the primary and ultimate source of productivity for any artist, and represents the sole criteria for its evaluation.”

(Stefania Łobaczewska, „Karol Szymanowski. Życie i twórczość” [Karol Szymanowski. *Leben und Werk*]. Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1950, S. 12)

Profile

Even before the war, Stefania Łobaczewska was a prominent music critic and musicologist. An author with a decisive Marxist attitude, she occupied a leading position in Polish musicology after 1945 along with Zofia Lissa and Józef Michał Chomiński. Her scholarly work focuses primarily on the subject of Polish music history (Chopin,

Szymanowski) and musical aesthetics. She was the first Polish woman to be appointed rector of a university.

Cities and countries

Stefania Łobaczewska lived in Lviv (Galicia) until 1941, with the exception of the years she studied in Vienna (1914-1925). She then lived in Łańcut, Rudnik nad Sanem and Stawisko near Warsaw. As of 1944 she lived in Krakow, where she worked until her death in 1963. She gave lectures on music history, musicology and the aesthetics of music in Prague, Copenhagen, Berlin, Sofia, Vienna and Paris.

Biography

Stefania Łobaczewska was born Stefania Waleria Joanna Gérard-Festenburg on 31 July 1888 in the Polish city Lwów/Lviv (today Lviv, Ukraine), which then belonged to Austria-Hungary. She was the daughter of the doctor Edward Gérard-Festenburg, who came from a French family that had lived in Lviv for three generations. Her mother Helena Sawicka was Armenian. Stefania Łobaczewska studied piano with Wilem Kurz at the Lviv conservatory until 1914. She took private lessons in general education at the same time.

During the years 1910 and 1911 she published her first articles as music critic in the Lviv and Warsaw newspapers. From 1912 to 1914 she attended lectures on musicology by Adolf Chybiński as a guest student. During the First World War (1914-1918), she continued her musicological studies, also as guest student, with Guido Adler in Vienna.

At this time she was already married to the Polish (previously Austrian) army Colonel Wawrzyniec Łobaczewski.

She returned to Lviv in 1925, where she passed her secondary school and diploma examinations as a musicologist (1929). She resumed her work as a music critic in 1925. She was the regular reviewer for the leading Lviv newspaper “Gazeta Lwowska” as well as a correspondent for the “Kurier Poznański” in Poznań and the “Muzyka” newspaper in Warsaw from 1925 to 1935. Her articles also appeared in the scholarly musical newspapers in Lviv (“Lwowskie Wiadomości Muzyczne i Literackie”) and Warsaw (“Muzyka”, “Przegląd Muzyczny”) as well as in various Polish cultural newspapers (“Reduta/Tydzień Polski”, “Pion”, “Życie Sztuki”, “Wiedza i Życie”, “Ateneum”). The fact that she typically never worked with women’s newspapers reveals her distance to the women’s movement on

the one hand. On the other, as a critic she was a typical Polish feminist and was very sympathetic to democracy as a form of government. Politically, she was sympathetic to socialist views. She was the editor of several semi-legal Communist newspapers in Lviv (the titles of these newspapers is unknown). Her areas of interest crystallized as early as the mid-1920s. She occupied herself with a number of issues connected to the dissemination of music in society and with modern music. Łobaczewska belonged to the group of Polish musicians who co-founded the Polish section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. She was an official observer at the festivals of the ISCM in Frankfurt (1927), Sienna (1928) and Liège (1930). In 1927 she attended the Beethoven Congress in Vienna, where she was involved in the preparations for the founding of the Society of Slavic Musicologists under the leadership of Zdeněk Nejedlý from Prague (which, however, was never founded).

In 1930 Łobaczewska completed her doctorate with her dissertation "On the Harmony of Claude-Achille Debussy in the First Period of his Work". From 1931 to 1939 she taught music history at the Lviv Conservatory (today Karol Szymanowski Conservatory of the Polish Music Society in Lviv). Her first book, "Outline of Musical Aesthetics", was published in Lviv in 1938. Starting in September of 1939, after Lviv was occupied by the Soviet Union and annexed by the USSR, she continued her work while teaching music history and music theory at the Lviv Conservatory, which had meanwhile been made a public institution.

Her husband (Wawrzyniec Łobaczewski) was arrested by the Soviets in 1940 and murdered in Katyń, a fact which she had to keep secret along with his relationship to the Polish army before the war. (Personal documents from the period after the war reveal that Łobaczewska's husband was an intellectual. Furthermore, these documents contain the information that she and Wawrzyniec Łobaczewski had divorced.)

She emigrated to Poland shortly before the occupation of Lviv by German troops in June 1941. Until 1944 she lived with relatives in Łańcut and Rudnik nad Sanem and with the Polish writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz at his manor Stawisko near Warsaw. Her stay there was made possible by her acquaintance with the composer Karol Szymanowski who was friends with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. With Iwaszkiewicz's support, she began her longest work – the monograph of Karol Szymanowski.

After the advancement of the Soviet Front in 1944, she

went to Krakow and together with Zbigniew Drzewiecki and other professors, she organized and directed the Krakow Conservatory the next year where she taught music theory until 1962. From 1946 to 1949 she was the dean of the Faculty for Music Theory and Composition. From 1 July 1952 until 30 September 1955 she was the rector of the Krakow Conservatory and prorector from 1 October 1955 to 30 September 1956. In the last years of her life (1957 – 1962) she held the professorship in music theory. Tadeusz Przybylski described the time of her leadership of the Conservatory as a phase of "a slow but balanced growth" [Przybylski, 1994: S. 103], meaning he viewed Łobaczewska's work as rector as fairly average.

In the 1950s she immersed herself primarily in scholarly work. During this time she published her most important books: "Karol Szymanowski: Life and Works" (1950), "Beethoven" (1953), "Musical Styles – Part 1" (1960). She attended several musicological congresses and conferences. In 1946 and 1948 she participated in the Congress of Composers and Music Critics in Prague. From 1952 to 1959 she attended congresses in Copenhagen, Berlin, Sofia, Vienna and Paris. During these years she was also active as music critic in Krakow newspapers and in Polskie Radio [Polish radio] in Krakow. She was a member of the Program Committee of the Polish music publisher, editor of scholarly journals (e.g., "Kwartalnik Muzyczny"), member of the Polish Composers Association and the ISCM.

As of 1950, Stefania Łobaczewska was also a member of the Polish Communist Party (PZPR).

In 1949 she habilitated at the university in Poznań. On 1 October 1951 she took on her next position at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, in the Faculty for Music History and Music Theory. She was appointed to succeed the faculty's Professor in Ordinary, Zdzisław Jachimecki, after his death and was granted the title of professor in 1954.

Stefania Łobaczewska was also a dedicated educator. Under her leadership, 20 Master's theses were generated at the Professorship for Musicology at the Jagiellonian University. The theses that were dedicated to the Polish composers of the nineteenth century (including Chopin, Moniuszko, and others) are of particular importance. As editor with the Polish Music Publisher she published an important series of publications, the "Dokumentacja warszawskiego okresu życia i twórczości F. Chopina" [Documentation of the Warsaw Period in F. Chopin's Life and

Work].

Appreciation

The initial phase of Stefania Łobaczewska's activities was dedicated to music criticism and music journalism. She was a dedicated young reviewer of the Lviv music culture and correspondent for music events abroad. She viewed her main task to be the support of native, Polish artists and the accessibility of music to a broad audience. She wrote quite frequently about the great significance of the popularization of music and musicology in society. The phrase "music for the masses" appears in her writing as early as the 1930s, and has to be understood within the context of her political views. The young Stefania Łobaczewska developed her worldview based on the ideas of the Polish socialist classics (Ludwik Krzywicki, Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, Julian Marchlewski). She adopted their maxim of progress and the belief that participation in implementing this maxim was her civil duty. She called her work as music reviewer a "higher cultural mission" as early as 1929. She did not consider herself a feminist. Only once, in a skit on "Tristan and Isolde" (1933) did she write something about women's position in society: "Biedna mała Izolda, cóż ona mogła wiedzieć o swych prawach do życia, do miłości, do człowieczeństwa". [„Poor little Isolde. What could she know about her right to life, to love, to humanity?“, Łobaczewska, 1933: p. 9].

Her second area of interest as music critic was contemporary music. Although she continually declared her enthusiasm for modernity, she criticized work in the style of the Second Viennese School. She greatly esteemed the music of Claude Debussy (on whom she wrote her dissertation), Maurice Ravel and Alexander Scriabin. The Polish composer Karol Szymanowski was practically her idol. As observer at ISCM festivals she had many opportunities to write about national music. She considered national music the most valuable product of musical work. It is important in this context to emphasize that she had a very positive attitude toward Ukrainian and Jewish music cultures. Her interesting concept was the quest for the "central European idiom" in music.

As young musicologist, Łobaczewska concerned herself with the basic questions of musical aesthetics. Her first book "Outline of the Aesthetics of Music", focuses on problems of musical creation and reception from a sociological perspective.

After the Second World War she returned to the problem

of the popularization of music.

She wrote a number of articles on the tasks of musical education and musicology. They are strongly characterized by a Marxist view of the role of culture in a socialist state. Although she was committed to the promotion and realization of "socialistic realism", she developed a milder version of this doctrine for her own use, one that took the artist's need for freedom and autonomy into consideration. She sets forth her views on these questions in the essay „Próba zbadania realizmu socjalistycznego w muzyce na podstawie polskiej twórczości 10-lecia“ [„An Attempt at an Examination of Socialistic Realism in Music on the Basis of the Work of Polish Composers During the last Ten Years“]. The continuation of these thoughts can be found in her two monographs on Szymanowski and Beethoven (1950, 1953). The first, the monumental work "Karol Szymanowski: Life and Works" proved to be of great importance for Polish musicology, not so much due to the method ("sociologizing" in accordance with Marxism) as to its quality as a collection of documents, as source of information and its proposed analyses of Szymanowski's works.

Reception

Stefania Łobaczewska received several important public awards (including the National Prize 3rd Class, and the prize of the city Krakow), which document the significance of her position within Polish academia. She could not have achieved this position without the "correct" political attitude. Together with a colleague from her school years, Zofia Lissa, she developed a Marxist musicology in Poland and disseminated the doctrine of "social realism".

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Author(s)

Magdalena Dziadek

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Harvestehuder Weg 12

D – 20148 Hamburg