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Bedřich Smetana and Stanisław Moniuszko as the Authors of National Operas in the Eyes of the Witnesses of the First Polish Performances of *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor*

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Abstract

The premieres of *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor* in Warsaw and Lviv, which took place between 1895 and 1902, became an opportunity for Polish music critics to compare these works with Stanisław Moniuszko's operas, which in Poland played a similar role to Smetana's operas in the Czechia, representing the national opera on the local and international forum. These comparisons were very critical of Moniuszko, which resulted from the fact that in the relevant period there was a coming to terms with the achievements of the previous decades, characterized by the decline of the national economy and culture. In the part of this discussion that concerned musical culture, Moniuszko – the composer active in the mid-19th century – even became a symbol of this decline, which creates a paradox in comparison with his image of a "national bard" functioning in popular circulation.

The leitmotif of the discussion on the function of Smetana's and Moniuszko's works as representations of national opera was to recall the success of *The Bartered Bride* at the Theatrical and Musical Exhibition in Vienna (1892) and, at the same time, the failure of performances of Moniuszko's operas at that forum. For Polish critics, who regularly downplay the value of Moniuszko's works due to their technical deficiencies, unclear dramatic concept and outdated style of opera, Smetana's works have become a symbol of the rise of national music to the European level. The obvious persuasive intention contained in such statements, often excessively critical of Moniuszko, became a pretext for in-depth reflection on the tasks that should be undertaken by modern composers of national operas who want to become known in Europe.

The second important thread of reflection on Smetana's operas staged in Poland is related to the general attitude of the then Poles towards Czechs. This aspect is also visible in the researched writings on Smetana, showing differences in the approach of critics who shared conservative or liberal political views.

Keywords

Bedřich Smetana; Stanisław Moniuszko; national opera in the 19th century; Czech national music culture in the 19th century; Polish national music culture in the 19th century

Comparisons between Bedřich Smetana and Stanisław Moniuszko usually focused on defining them as national composers active both at home and on the international forum. As Karol Stromenger wrote in his popular *Opera Guide* published in 1959, one tended then to analyze attitudes and achievements of both composers only in general terms, pointing to the similarity of the historical roles of both artists as patriotic activists and authors of emblematic national operas: *The Bartered Bride* and *Halka*.[1] Reflection regarding the concepts of Smetana's and Moniuszko's works and attempts to define their common place on the map of 19th-century opera appeared relatively late in Polish literature. The Polish premieres of Smetana's operas, which took place in Warsaw and Lviv as late as at the turn of the 19th century provided the impetus for this. The confrontation of the two composers' achievements during the Theater and Music Exhibition in Vienna in 1892 also played a significant role as an event that established the position of Smetana's and Moniuszko's operas on the international forum.

Early Reception of Smetana in Polish Professional Music Criticism

Smetana was first introduced to the Polish readers by Jan Kleczyński, a pianist, critic and pedagogue at the Warsaw Music Institute who was one of the pioneers of Polish-Czech rapprochement in the part od Poland ruled by Russians. Kleczyński published some articles on Czech music in the journal "Echo Muzyczne i Teatralne," which he edited, and personally participated in the opening ceremony of the Národní Divadlo in 1883. In 1874, he became acquainted with the piano extract of *The Bartered Bride* published by Matice hudební in Prague and with a review of this publication he found in "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung."[2] On that basis, between 1874 and 1875, Kleczyński published two articles on

[1] Karol Stromenger, *Przewodnik operowy* [*Opera Guide*], new ed. (Warszawa, 1964), 332.

[2] "Anzeigen und Beurtheilungen. Opern im Clavierauszug. Der verkaufte Braut," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, no. 40 (1874): col. 633.

Smetana[3] in which he suggested that the Czech music is national in its scope but at the same time represents a universal, European level. In a sketch penned a dozen years later, after the Warsaw premiere of *The Bartered Bride*, which took place in 1895, Kleczyński used a phrase that became very popular later in Poland: he described Smetana as "a Czech Beethoven." He stressed that his opera "is nice to all, while highly interesting to musicians" due to the author's use of a fully professional compositional technique, comparable to that of a symphonist.[4] Kleczyński's emphasis on the European character of Smetana's music, can be understood as a hidden criticism of Moniuszko's works, which were accused by many witnesses of technical deficiencies and anachronism of concept. Only the 1865 production of *The Haunted Manor* had a chance to change these views. After its premiere, the emphasis was on nothing less than the advancement of his compositional technique towards symphony, placing him among those seeking to "catch up with Europe." However, the opera did not remain in the repertoire[5] and ultimately did not change Moniuszko's image. For Polish observers, he remained primarily the composer of his earlier opera *Halka*.

Moniuszko and Smetana at The Theater and Music Exhibition in Vienna

Due to Warsaw's lack of strong ties with Prague, Smetana's operas reached the local stage rather late. The first performance of *The Bartered Bride* did not take place until 1895, i.e., three years after the memorable confrontation between Smetana and Moniuszko's operas at the Vienna Theater and Music Exhibition of 1892.

The event is worth a closer look, since it became a pretext for comparisons between Smetana and Moniuszko as the representatives of Czech and Polish national opera. The Polish witnesses of Vienna's performances of Smetana's *Bartered Bride* and Moniuszko's *Halka* and *The Haunted Manor* focused on analyzing the sources of the great success achieved by Czech opera and simultaneous failure of

[3] Jan Kleczyński, *Ruch muzyczny* [*Musical Movement*], Bluszcz, no. 44 (1874): 350–351; Jan Kleczyński, "Fryderyk Smetana" [Frederic Smetana], *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 380 (1875): 232.

[4] Jan Kleczyński, "Fryderyk Smetana i jego *Sprzedana narzeczona*" [Frederic Smetana and His *Bartered Bride*], *Bluszcz*, no. 33 (1896): 261–262.

[5] Until the 1980s, mainly due to Moniuszko's biographer Witold Rudziński, the opinion persisted that the reason for removing "The Haunted Manor" from the bill after three performances was a ban issued by the censorship. However, newer research proves that the reason for this event was a deep personal conflict caused by the presence of an Italian opera troupe at the Grand Theatre at the time when Moniuszko's new opera was entering the repertoire. A detailed description of this conflict can be found in my Introduction to the critical-source edition of "The Haunted Manor" prepared by Polish Music Edition [Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne] as part of the series "Moniuszko: Complete Works" (in press). The opera was resumed only in 1874, after Moniuszko's death.

Moniuszko's works. First of all, the wisdom and effectiveness of Czech cultural policy, consistently aiming to promote its own achievements internationally, were highlighted. The columnist of the Warsaw female magazine "Bluszcz" wrote in June 1892:

> One has to know Bohemia and its social and political situation to understand how and why its inhabitants rejoice when they can perform internationally and gain such recognition that somebody speaks and writes about them. This feeling is deep and more tender than vanity, than the pure desire for applause. Bohemians also strive to develop in the field of art in such a way that this art, the Czech art, vitally exists, occupies some place on the international arena and deserves its recognition in Europe. This is why they are so strongly preoccupied also with their divadlo and desire for it originality and individual style.[6]

According to Aleksander Walicki, the author of the first monograph on Moniuszko, published shortly after his death (1873), Poles lacked such wisdom and effectiveness, which resulted in the absence of Moniuszko's operas outside the borders of Slavic countries:

> It is a great pity that during his lifetime only the Slavic lands knew him, because if all of Europe hailed him as a great composer he would no doubt be more prosperous and appreciated in our country.[7]

Even during Moniuszko's lifetime, there were voices saying that Polish music urgently needs someone to gain "an independent position in the world" because, as Józef Sikorski the critic wrote in 1862, "such people are very much needed to liberate art from mediocrity, the pressure of fashion and all the obstacles that impede its free progress."[8] Interestingly enough, Sikorski was a friend and advocate of Moniuszko. But the above quotation was taken from a review of the works of the young musician Władysław Żeleński whom he also supported. Although a dozen years later Żeleński established himself as a worthy successor to Moniuszko as a composer of operas, one of the praises he received for his second one titled *Goplana* (1896) included a very peculiar and revealing statement: it told that *Goplana* towers over Moniuszko's provincialism, representing a direction that gives it a chance to get into international circulation; this remark

[6] "Z Czech" [From Czechia] (end), *Bluszcz*, no. 25 (1892): 199.

[7] Aleksander Walicki, *Stanisław Moniuszko* (Warszawa, 1873), 76.

[8] "Potpourri," *Pamiętnik Muzyczny i Teatralny*, no. 50 (1862): 799.

was immediately followed by a comparison with the success of the Czechs in promoting Smetana's operas.[9]

Most Polish observers considered the presentation of Moniuszko's operas at the Vienna exhibition as an opportunity for Polish music. When considering this opportunity, the names of Moniuszko and Smetana were often mentioned together, as it was expected that the Polish opera would conquer international audiences just like *The Bartered Bride*. One argument was that both works were staged in Vienna for the first time, and therefore they could win over audiences by the sheer force of novelty. "Here [in Vienna] they have so far known as much about him [Smetana] as about Moniuszko, that is, almost nothing"[10] wrote a correspondent of the magazine "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne, Artystyczne." A more rational opinion, based on the presence of Slavic flavor attractive to Western audiences in Smetana's and Moniuszko's operas, was expressed by the leading Warsaw critic Aleksander Poliński:

> Up to the time of the Czech theater's performances, it was feared that the melodies of Moniuszko's operas would not prove sufficient for the palates of the Viennese because of their distinctiveness and certain Slavic sentimentality they include. These fears, however, were soon dispelled after the triumphs of the Czech theater […]. The reception of national Slavic operas by the Germans was so cordial that it seemed to bode well for our performances.[11]

Unfortunately, these good omens proved false since the Polish operas staged during the exhibition did not achieve success either in terms of composition or performance.[12] Polish observers were forced to confirm that the "homely" nature of Moniuszko's music did not attract international exhibition audiences.[13] German and Viennese reviewers, led by Eduard Hanslick, penned many negative statements about the libretto and music of Moniuszko's works, labeling them

[9] Stanisław Tomkowicz, "Goplana. Opera Żeleńskiego" [Goplana. Opera by Żeleński], *Przegląd Polski* 121 (1896): 450.

[10] August Reissmann, "Wystawa muzyczno-teatralna w Wiedniu V (teatr czeski na wystawie)" [Music-Theatrical Exhibition in Vienna V (Czech Theatre at the Exhibition)], *Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne*, no. 457 (1892): 318.

[11] Aleksander Poliński, "Mozaika wiedeńska" [Viennese Mosaic], *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 142 (1892): 181.

[12] The latter was due to the fact that the Russian authorities did not allow the musicians from the Warsaw opera to perform at the exhibition; consequently, the organizers had access only to the less ripe musicians from the Lviv theater.

[13] Zygmunt Sarnecki, "Przedstawienia wiedeńskie" [Vienna Performances], *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 257 (September 4/16, 1892), evening issue, 2.

as outdated and not growing up to the European level.[14] In the following years, some efforts were made to "rehabilitate" Moniuszko in the eyes of international audiences. Among other things, there was a plan to organize a series of Moniuszko performances in Paris, but it did not come to fruition. By the end of the 19th century, an opinion that Polish efforts to gain Moniuszko a high position in the international musical market had failed, was already well-established not only in Poland but also abroad. Among others, Eduard Hanslick, who was respected by Polish critics, made the following diagnosis in 1893:

> The last brilliant and significant Polish composer was Chopin. The talented Moniuszko never accomplished anything outside his own country, and failed to gain European prominence. After him, there is only silence; the Czechs and Russians have recently gained a great advantage over the Poles in music.[15]

After the Premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in Warsaw

The decision to stage Smetana's *Bartered Bride* in Warsaw[16] was no doubt a consequence of the huge success of the work at Viennese exhibition and its further

[14] "Internationale Musik- und Theaterausstellung," *Das Vaterland*, no. 254 (September 13, 1892), 3; h.o. "Die polnische Oper in Wien," *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 4329 (September 13, 1892), 7; "Internationale Ausstellung für Musik- und Theaterwesen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, no. 1327 (September 13, 1892), evening issue, 2; "Feuilleton. Musik. Internationale Musik- und Theater-Ausstellung. XXIV. Dr. h.p. Vorstellungen des polnischen Theaters," *Wiener Zeitung*, suppl. to no. 208 (September 12, 1892), 6; Eduard Hanslick, "Die Musik- und Theaterausstellung. Die polnische Oper im Ausstellungs-Theater," *Neue Freie Presse*, no. 10077 (September 13, 1892), 5. See also Magdalena Dziadek, "Echa prasowe występów opery lwowskiej na Wystawie Teatralno-Muzycznej w Wiedniu w 1892 roku," *Musica Galiciana* 11 (Rzeszów, 2008): 39–48; Magdalena Dziadek, "Dyskusja wokół wiedeńskiej wystawy teatralno-muzycznej z 1892 roku jako antecedens porównawczej metody rozważania problemu narodowości w muzyce" [The Discussion Surrounding the Viennese Theatre and Music Exhibition of 1892 as an Antecedent of the Comparative Method of Considering the Problem of Nationality in Music], in *Topos narodowy w muzyce polskiej okresu postromantyzmu i Młodej Polski* [*The National Topos in Polish Music during the Post-Romanticism and Young Poland Periods*], ed. Wojciech Nowik (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Muzyczny F. Chopina, 2008), 93–105; Magdalena Dziadek, "Recepcja muzyki Moniuszki w 'długim' XIX wieku – główne tendencje i ich tło społeczno-polityczne" [The Reception of Moniuszko's Music in the "Long" Nineteenth Century: The Main Trends and Their Socio-Political Background], in *Życie – dzieło – konteksty. Eseje o Stanisławie Moniuszce* [*Life – Output – Contexts: Essays on Stanisław Moniuszko*], ed. Magdalena Dziadek (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2019), 195–212.

[15] "Der letzte geniale polnische Tondichter war Chopin. Der talentvoller Moniuszko hat nie über sein Land hinausgewirkt und wird nie europäische Bedeutung Erlangen. Seitdem ist Alles still. Die czechen und die Russen haben neuestens in der Musik einen grossen Vorsprung über die Polen gewonnen. Eduard Hanslick, "Feuilleton. Conzerte," *Neue Freie Presse*, no. 10251 (March 7, 1893), 2.

[16] The premiere took place at the Teatr Nowy (operetta) on July 31st, 1895.

triumphant march through European stages.[17] It is worth noting, however, that in the many post-premiere reviews an important thread appeared related to the idea of "Slavic brotherhood." The Warsaw critics' consequent emphasis on the Slavophile background of the premiere of the Czech opera takes on particular significance when we realize that it was undertaken during a period of significant deterioration in Polish-Czech political and cultural relations. The last three decades of the 19th century were marked in Poland by aversion to Russian imperial pan-Slavism and at the same time to the Czechs, who were associated as allies of the Russians. This attitude was symbolized by the collective refusal of Poles to participate in the Ethnographic Exhibition in Moscow in 1867. Moreover, Czech political elites were then viewed in Polish conservative circles as executing measures aimed against Polish national and economic interests in Galicia, due to their support for the pro-Ukrainian policies of the Habsburg government.

In the 1870s and 1880s cultural contacts between Prague and Warsaw were frozen. In 1878, Czech columnist Edward Jelinek, a forerunner of Polish-Czech rapprochement often publishing in Polish periodicals, sent a note to the Slavophile magazine "Lech," published in Poznań, about the creation of Smetana's new opera titled *The Secret.* His note included the following statement:

> About the brilliant composer I note only that to the Czech music and Czech audience he is what the immortal Moniuszko is to the Poles. The only difference is that Czechs know and value Moniuszko's works while Poles do not want to know anything about the excellent Czech operas.[18]

Addressing Warsaw readers a few years later (1884), Jelinek unequivocally diagnosed the reason for this state of affairs:

> If the Slav brothers were not accustomed to look *down* on each other, and if they did not criticize each other far more harshly than they are criticized by outsiders, even Germans, today they would have a better idea of the development of Czech music and its value.[19]

The initiative to stage *The Bartered Bride* in Warsaw in 1895 can be interpreted as an attempt to rectify the omissions described by Jelinek. In this context the premiere gained the significance of a conciliatory gesture and this was clearly

[17] See Jiří Kopecký, "The International Success of Smetana's *Bartered Bride,*" in *Czech Music around 1900*, ed. Lenka Křupková et al. (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2017), 41–60.

[18] Edward Jelinek, "Słowiańskie listy z Czech" [Slavic Letters from Czechia], *Lech* (Poznań), no. 42 (1878): 335.

[19] Edward Jelinek, "Listy z Czech" [Letters from Czechia], *Kłosy*, no. 780 (1884): 230.

visible in the reviews. After the premiere, the reviewer of "Kurier Codzienny," Adam Dobrowolski, referred to Kollár's formula of Slavic "reciprocity," portraying the event as a return of a favor by Poles for the staging of Moniuszko's *Halka* in Prague.[20] His review, focused next on showing *The Bartered Bride* as a kind of bridge between the West and the East, begins as follows: "Yesterday Warsaw reciprocated to Czech Prague, staging in the New Theater the national opera of a brotherly people."[21] When announcing the premiere, the magazine's editors described the opera as "a masterpiece of a kindred muse" and emphasized the interest of the Czech press in the event.[22] The motif of revenge for the staging of *Halka* in Prague also appeared in the review published in conservative daily "Gazeta Warszawska."[23] Its author also referred to the importance of the 1892 Vienna exhibition as a forum that opened the way to a European career for operas written by representatives of "other nationalities" (this means Slavs).

The substantive discussion about the value of Smetana's work, which took into account some comparisons with Moniuszko, once again focused on the assessment of attractiveness of operas by both composers to the Western audiences. In this context, a new aspect of the discussion became clear, concerning the compatibility of their proposals with current trends in European opera art. It is true that Smetana's operas were brought to Polish stages as "old novelties"[24] and this delay enlarged the awareness of the historical distance that existed between Moniuszko and Smetana. As Karol Stromenger wrote in his article *Smetana and Moniuszko* (1926): "*Halka* is only a dozen or so years older than *Bartered Bride*. A dozen or so years in age, but several decades in style."[25]

The point of reference for the discussion of Moniuszko's "delay" and Smetana's "topicality" was the concept of national opera popularized by Eduard Hanslick, which claimed that its ideal was a combination of local elements with

[20] *Halka* was staged in Prague in 1868, 1883, and 1898, see Jiří Kopecký, "*Halka* Stanisława Moniuszki w Teatrze Tymczasowym i Narodowym w Pradze (1868–1898)" [*Halka* by Stanisław Moniuszko at the Provisional and National Theatre in Prague (1868–1898)], in *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki* [*Music Theatre by Stanisław Moniuszko*], eds. Magdalena Dziadek and Elżbieta Nowicka (Poznań, 2014), 313–314.

[21] Adam Dobrowolski, "Prodana nevesta," *Kurier Codzienny*, no. 210 (July 20/August 1, 1895), 1.

[22] "Prodana nevesta," *Kurier Codzienny*, no. 208 (July 18/30, 1895), 2.

[23] B., "Nowa opera" [The New Opera], *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 202 (July 22/August 3, 1895), 2.

[24] Erys [Xawery Sporzyński], "Fryderyk Smetana. *Sprzedana narzeczona*," *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, no. 32 (1895): 371.

[25] Karol Stromenger, "Moniuszko i Smetana" [Moniuszko and Smetana], *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 8 (1926): 132.

a universal European style.[26] In this sense made comparisons between Smetana and Moniuszko Jan Kleczyński, ending his career at the time. Kleczyński returned to the issue of Smetana's belonging to Europe and, against this background, presented Moniuszko as a composer of simple music, not tackling important compositional issues and avoiding confrontation with new currents in operatic art. On the other hand, in Smetana's works he found "a truly German seriousness, hardly infrequent when it comes to Czech composers, who really pay attention to the study of counterpoint and instrumentation."[27] For many former critics, it was an open secret that the composer's musical education left a lot to be desired and that his main national work, *Halka*, had many flaws in terms of compositional technique, being filled, as Józef Kenig put it, with "folksongs" and "stylistically simplistic" arias.[28] Kleczyński seems to have thought the same, yet he expressed it in a more veiled manner adding the subsequent comment that the "elaboration" in Moniuszko's works "developed more and more with time."[29]

A comparison of Smetana's and Moniuszko's operas was also the subject of an anonymous review published in the daily "Słowo." The author noted their similarity in only one respect, claiming that they have poor libretti. Among the advantages that favor Smetana over Moniuszko, he once again points to the Czech's mastery of compositional technique, especially in the area of counterpoint, instrumentation and the way he arranges ensambles. Moniuszko, on the other hand, was said to surpass Smetana with a closer connection between music and lyrics. Nevertheless, the critic's sympathy was with Smetana, whom he called the "Czech Mozart."[30]

Not everyone appreciated Smetana as a composer of technically advanced compositions, placing him among the European classics. There were also those who recognized his importance as a composer pursuing a national program in the conventional sense, drawing inspiration from local folk music and adhering to the model of simple, naive "folk opera." The category of simplicity, so often used to depreciate Moniuszko's achievements, served as a positive ideological framework for Stanisław Ciechomski, a critic of Warsaw's leading daily, "Kurier Warszawski."

[26] See Eduard Hanslick, "Dvořak's Oper *Dmitrij*," *Neue Freie Presse*, no. 6517 (October 17, 1882), 3.

[27] Jan Kleczyński, "Fryderyk Bedřich Smetana" [Frederic Bedřich Smetana], *Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne*, no. 30 (617) (1895): 350.

[28] Józef Kenig, "Teatr Wielki. Halka" [Great Theatre. Halka], *Gazeta Warszawska*, nos. 8–9 (December 30, 1857/January 11, 1858), 1–4; "[No title]," *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 9 (December 30, 1857/January 11, 1858), 43.

[29] Kleczyński, "Fryderyk Smetana," 232.

[30] "Muzyka i teatr. *Sprzedana narzeczona*" [Music and Theatre. *The Bartered Bride*], *Słowo*, no. 176 (July 22/August 3, 1895), 2.

He built the apotheosis of *The Bartered Bride* around it. Even before the premiere, he published a lengthy text about Smetana,[31] the thesis of which was a protest against calling the Czech composer the "Czech Beethoven" or "Czech Mozart." According to him, Smetana's art, developed in complete isolation, based solely on contact with local folk music, became a counterweight to conventional European music, as the embodiment of "simplicity, naturalness, and sincerity." This was precisely what won over the Viennese audience in 1892, open to the proposals of a new direction in operatic art, which was according to Ciechomski "sophisticated simplicity." The critic understood this new direction as overcoming Wagner's proposals, which he considered already becoming a thing of the past.

In the review published in "Tygodnik Ilustrowany"[32] Adam Dobrowolski took a closer look at the qualities of Smetana's work, as an example of a lyrical opera drawing from the sources of folklore. With regard to the Smetana's opera, he used the term "idyll," which had already functioned as a concise label for Moniuszko's music and derived from the theory of idyllism: since the 1820s, idyllic character was considered a prominent feature of Polish (and, at the same time, Slavic) poetry and music, manifesting in the imitation of folk poetry in the stylistic layer and general dominance of lyricism and preference for cheerful moods.[33] The promising trail followed by Dobrowolski was not taken up by other critics – the category of idyllism was never later applied to the considerations of Smetana's music.

The question now arises: what stance did the Warsaw Russian press take on the initiative to stage Smetana's work in the capital of Polish Kingdom? The leading Russian-language organ, "Varšavskij Dnevnik," informed its readers that it did not intend to engage in comparisons with the production performed at the Prague National Theatre and would limit itself to a mere assessment of the

[31] Stanisław Ciechomski, "Bedrzich Smetana" [Bedřich Smetana], *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 206 (July 16/28, 1895), 1.

[32] Adam Dobrowolski, "*Sprzedana narzeczona*. Opera w 3-ech aktach Bedrzycha Smetany" [*The Bartered Bride*: Opera in Three Acts by Bedřich Smetana], *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 32 (1895): 84.

[33] Bolesław Wilczyński, "Stanisław Moniuszko i sztuka muzyczna narodowa" [Stanisław Moniuszko and National Art], *Biblioteka Warszawska* 34 (1874), vol. 1, 40. The best known manifesto of idyllism understood in this way is Kazimierz Brodziński's treatise *O idylli pod względem moralnym. Odczyt wygłoszony na posiedzeniu Królewsko-warszawskiego Uniwersytetu 16/VII 1823* [*About Idyll in moral terms. A lecture delivered at the meeting of the Royal Warsaw University on 16th of July 1823*], Warszawa 1823. As the name of a literary direction or tendency, the term appears, for example, in Stefan Witwicki's *Przemowa* [*Speech*] to the collection *Piosnki sielskie* [*Folk songs*] (Warszawa, 1830). The poet connects the term with imitation of folk poetry, writing: "Although I am far from the idyllism common in poetry […] reading, after all, with the sweetest feeling, some folksongs, I felt the desire to try my own pen in this kind of composition" (Ibid., VII–IX).

performance.[34] Indeed, the review contained not a single word explaining the role Smetana played in the Czechia as a national composer, much less a comparison with Moniuszko's similar role in Poland. The unknown author wrote solely about the performance aspect of the production, while appreciating the efforts of the creators. This attitude is typical of the Russian community in Warsaw, which avoids any political discussions.

Smetana's Operas in Lviv

The discussion after Lviv premieres of *The Bartered Bride* (October 27th, 1896) and *Dalibor* (January 11th, 1898) was focused mainly on the confrontation of the Smetana's operas with contemporary European operatic canon and the basic issue that was taken up in connection with them was "modernity." Therefore, as one can easily guess, in the sphere of comparisons between Smetana and Moniuszko the issue of Moniuszko's anachronism has returned.

The fates of Smetana's premieres in Lviv can be linked to the multicultural nature of that city, where many Czechs lived and worked, and where Czech and German music literature was systematically read. For the citizens of the city under Pełtwia river Smetana was a living figure, representing specific artistic and political views (Lviv authors strongly emphasized Smetana's connections with the progressive Young Czech movement). The political views of Lviv' inhabitants were divided. There were quite numerous opponents of the Czechs and their culture among them so we are not surprised by the appeal of the reviewer of patriotic "Dziennik Polski" to the Lviv audience: "overcome your prejudices and come to see Czech opera."[35] Another patriotic daily "Słowo Polskie," described the premiere of *The Bartered Bride* in a very polite manner as "revenge" for the presence in Prague of Polish operas: Moniuszko's *Halka* and *The Haunted Manor*, and Stanisław Duniecki's *Pages of the Queen Marysieńka*.[36] "Kurier Lwowski" (no. 302 from October 30th, 1896) published letter of congratulations that arrived from the director of Národní divadlo František Šubert.

It is worth mentioning, that the Lviv premieres of Smetana's operas were preceded by trips by the directors to Vienna and Prague to familiarize themselves with local performances of these works – a fact strongly emphasized in the Lviv

[34] "Teatr i muzyka. Prodannaja nevesta" [Theatre and Music. The Bartered Bride], *Varšavskij Dnevnik*, no. 162 (June 21/August 2, 1895), 4.

[35] St. Niewiadomski, "*Sprzedana narzeczona*. Opera Fr. Smetany" [*The Bartered Bride*. Opera by Fr. Smetana], *Dziennik Polski*, no. 301 (October 21, 1896), 3.

[36] Jan Gall, "Z Teatru. *Sprzedana narzeczona*, opera w 3 aktach Fryderyka Smetany" [From the Theatre. *The Bartered Bride*, Opera in Three Acts by Frederic Smetana], *Słowo Polskie*, no. 253 (October 29, 1896), 5.

press. Along with the performance models, Lviv artists adopted the official way of thinking about Smetana, transplanting it to their homeland. Before the premieres, a lot of biographical materials about Smetana were published, containing quotes from Prague writings, a.o. from Emanuel Chvála's Čtvrt století *české hudby* (Twenty Five Years of Czech Music, 1888).[37]

As I noted above, Smetana's operas were welcomed in Lviv as modern works. Jan Gall – popular composer and critic linked this trait of *The Bartered Bride* with a new, original type of comic opera and fresh melodic inventiveness (drawing on local folk patterns).[38] Stanisław Brykczyński presented *The Bartered Bride* as a work that constituted a welcome reaction to the extremism of the "neo-Wagnerian" trend in contemporary opera (Massenet, Puccini) – an example of the "new simplicity," putting classical compositional skills and modernist, refined instrumentation in the service of national music with a folk tendency.[39]

An excellent example of thinking of Smetana's modernity in connection with Moniuszko's anachronism gives us Stanisław Niewiadomski, critic with conservative views, and his staunch opposition to modernist (especially program) music, earned him the monicker "Polish Hanslick." In his review of *The Bartered Bride*, published in "Dziennik Polski" he presented Smetana's opera as an original work, masterfully combining the classical style of the arrangement with inspiration from Czech folklore, and thanks to its artistic simplicity and optimistic tone, offering a moment of respite to an audience "fed mostly by Wagnerian music or bright new things." At the same time, Niewiadomski denied this ability to *Halka*, as a work that was inconsistent in its inventiveness, burdened with foreign influences, and pessimistic in its message.[40]

Reviews written after *Dalibor* premiere Lviv do not bring much new to the discussed issues. The basic observations of critics still concerned the concept of Smetana's model of national opera, combining the local element with the universal and the traditional with modern. In this way presented *Dalibor* Stanisław Meliński – as a combination of the achievements of newer trends with a conventional form of national opera. He called *Dalibor* "a simple, unsophisticated form of old opera" and proposed the following general definition of Smetana's music:

[37] See for example Stanisław Meliński, "Fryderyk Smetana (1824–1884)" [Frederic Smetana (1824–1884)], *Kurier Lwowski*, no. 299 (October 27, 1896), 2–3.

[38] Jan Gall, "*Sprzedana narzeczona (Prodana nevesta)*, opera w 3 aktach Fryderyka Smetany" [*The Bartered Bride (Prodana nevesta)*, Opera in Three Acts by Frederic Smetana], *Słowo Polskie*, no. 255 (October 31, 1896), 4.

[39] Stanisław Brykczyński, "Opera. *Sprzedana narzeczona (Prodana nevesta)*, opera komiczna w 3 aktach, Bedricha (Fryderyka) Smetany," *Gazeta Lwowska*, no. 248 (October 29, 1896), 3–4.

[40] Stanisław Niewiadomski, "*Sprzedana narzeczona*. Opera Fr. Smetany" [*The Bartered Bride*. Opera by Fr. Smetana], *Dziennik Polski*, no. 301 (October 21, 1896), 2–3.

"Melodic motif in […] golden frames of musical expertise." To explain how *Dalibor*, devoid of folkloristic elements, has a national character, Meliński introduced the analogy with Moniuszko's operas: in his opinion, the difference between *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor* were similar to the one between the "folk" *Halka* and "romantic-chivalric-national" *Haunted Manor*.[41] According to Meliński, both types were equally effective in reaching the hearts of the native and "brotherly" audiences, except that in Smetana's case, due to the presence of higher compositional artistry, this effectiveness could also be extended to the "Germans, who are revolting to Czechs." He suggested also that the ideal Czech/Slavic opera[42] should be a compromise between a model based on national color and a universal model using the best features of Italian, French and German opera. The above ideal was hardly his as many Czech national opera publicists spread it; Meliński could have drawn it, for instance, from Otákar Hostinský as the author of the article "Také některé myšlenky o *české* opeře" ("Some Thoughts about Czech Opera"), published in 1872 in "Hudební Listy."[43]

Other reviews worth recalling – all written by Stanisław Niewiadomski! – raise the issue of the relevance of the opera created 30 years ago and solve it with the thesis that the work owes its permanent, inviolable position in the history of operatic art to its universal values.[44] Niewiadomski develops that thesis, already presented in the review from above quoted "Dziennik Polski" in next text, published in "Słowo Polskie," where he described *Dalibor* as a work whose intention was to express a certain ethical idea, similar to that embodied by Beethoven in *Fidelio*. He linked the universalism of *Dalibor* and presents Smetana's as "more artist than national chauvinist." Behind the paradoxical nature of that *bon mot* stood a criticism of the trivialized variety of national opera bearing the "ethnographic stigma."[45]

The above thought was developed and sharpened by Niewiadomski in a review submitted to "Gazeta Lwowska," where he suggested that Smetana modeled his compositions on German music because he wanted to bring Czech music to the heights of European music. The review includes also specific comments about the dependence of *Dalibor*'s form on the Wagnerian ideas. However, the

[41] Stanisław Meliński, "*Dalibor*. Opera w 3 aktach Fryderyka Smetany" [*Dalibor*. Opera in Three Acts by Frederic Smetana], *Kurier Lwowski*, no. 16 (January 16, 1898), 3.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Otakar Hostinský, "Také některé myšlenky o české opeře" [Some Thoughts about Czech Opera], *Hudební Listy*, nos. 36 (1872): 293–295 and 37 (1872): 301–303.

[44] Stanisław Niewiadomski, "*Dalibor*. Opera Fryderyka Smetany" [*Dalibor*. Opera by Frederic Smetana], *Dziennik Polski*, no. 20 (January 20, 1898), 1–2.

[45] Stanisław Niewiadomski, "*Dalibor*," *Słowo Polskie*, no. 12 (January 15, 1898), 2–3.

final conclusion is that Smetana's intention was not to conform to contemporary operatic fashions, but only to create a base for his own invention.[46] Among these fashions, Niewiadomski once again put national opera, or rather a caricature of it which he considers Meyerbeer's opera to be, because of "Meyerbeer politics to deal simultaneously with three nationalities." At the other end of the spectrum he placed Beethoven as a creator of opera with universal qualities, which enabled him to locate Smetana within the circle of influence of Beethoven's "ideal."[47] Obviously, within such a frame, there was no place for comparisons with Moniuszko.

Dalibor in Warsaw

On March 7/20, 1902 in the Warsaw Opera House the premiere of *Dalibor* took place (This was not the first performance of this opera in Warsaw – in the summer of 1901 it was presented there by a group from Lviv). Press announcements and several reviews comprised remarks about the connection between the work's content and the history of the "brotherly nation"[48] and also emphasized the interest of Czechs in the venture[49] but generally the critics were much less interested in presenting the premiere as an act of "Slavic reciprocity" as in the case of *The Bartered Bride* 1895 premiere. The reason should once again be sought in the state of Polish-Czech affairs in Warsaw at that time. The political and cultural elite of the Polish Kingdom's capital was still little interested in establishing closer ties with Prague, having been outpaced in this regard by the inhabitants of Galicia (the part of Polish lands ruled by Austria-Hungary, with the capital in Lviv) who participated in several important Czech initiatives, including František Palacký's centenary celebrations and the First Congress of Slavic Journalists in Prague (1898) (one could see only few Varsavians taking part in them). Although Karel Kramář visited Warsaw in the year *Dalibor* was produced (1902), he was unable to gain any supporters there for his neo-Slavic program. In the Warsaw press of the 1890s, regularly appeared negative commentaries on Bohemian affairs. In the correspondence sended to "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne, Artystyczne" after the Lviv premiere of *The Bartered Bride*, the Czechs were called "Czech

[46] Stanisław Niewiadomski, "Opera *Dalibor* Fryderyka Smetany" [*Dalibor*. Opera by Frederic Smetana], *Słowo Polskie*, no. 13 (January 19, 1898), 4.

[47] Stanisław Niewiadomski, "Opera *Dalibor* Fryderyka Smetany" [Opera *Dalibor* by Frederic Smetana], *Gazeta Lwowska*, no. 13 (January 19, 1898), 4.

[48] See "Z teatru i muzyki" [From Theatre and Music], *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 79 (March 7/20, 1902), 2; Władysław Miller, "W Teatrze Wielkim *Dalibor*, opera w 3-ech aktach Smetany," *Kurier Codzienny*, no. 80 (March 8/21, 1902), 3.

[49] "Z teatru i muzyki" [From Theatre and Music], *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 80 (March 8/21, 1902), 2. The note reported congratulations to the show's creators sent by Umělecká Beseda in Prague.

little folk [Pol: czeski ludek]"[50] who produce not true musicians, but "buskers [Pol: muzykant]" working solely for profit. This state of affairs was supposed to be reflected in the "naive" and "trivial" Czech folk music that Smetana used in his "hardly profound" opera.[51]

Warsaw public opinion was convinced of the Czechs' indifference, even hostility, as glaringly evidenced by the beginning of the review of *Dalibor*'s premiere published by Zygmunt Noskowski, who was a professor of composition at the Warsaw Institute of Music and director of Warsaw's leading musical institution – the Warsaw Music Society. He wrote:

> We have been performing symphonic works by Smetana and Dvořák for many years, we organize exclusively Czech concerts, we are already giving second Czech opera, and yet we do not hear that the "golden" Prague is equally passionate about our music […].[52]

This pessimistic observation determined Noskowski's conclusion's of *Dalibor*: the critic clearly suggested its strangeness for the Polish ear. To explain his idea, Noskowski proposed a comparison between Smetana and Moniuszko, which, exceptionally, worked to the Pole's advantage: Moniuszko's operas were supposed to be the fruit of sincere, natural invention – innate sense of homeliness, while the Czech's work appeared as the result of rational speculation, aimed at assimilating the achievements of the New German School – primarily the ideas of Wagner – for Czech opera.

Other critics were not so radical in their opinions. The leading Warsaw critic Aleksander Poliński, known as great patriot (he took part in anti-Russian upraising in 1863) proposed a synthetic approach to the Smetana's opera, which accommodated both "Europeanness" and homeliness. While not denying the influence of Mozart and Wagner on *Dalibor*, he emphasized the opera's melodic nature as a feature stemming from the use of folk color. The ultimate meaning of this synthesis was indicated by the expression used in reference to Smetana: "The Czech Moniuszko."[53] It is a pity that this comparison was not developed either

[50] "Ludek" is a diminutive and thus ironic variant of "folk" used to belittle the Czech nation. It may be roughly translated as "little folk" because in Polish it appears also in the compound "krasnoludek" i.e., a brownie, a little gnome.

[51] "Odgłosy" [Echoes], *Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne*, no. 718 (1897): 320–321. The excerpt from the column devoted to *The Bartered Bride* is signed with the pseudonym -mb-.

[52] Zygmunt Noskowski, "Teatr Wielki. *Dalibor*. Opera w 3-ech aktach […] muzyka Fryderyka Smetany […]" [Great Theatre. *Dalibor.* Opera in Three Acts […] Music by Frederic Smetana], *Kurier Poranny*, no. 80 (March 21, 1902), 3.

[53] Aleksander Poliński, "Z muzyki. *Dolibor* [sic!], opera w 3-ech aktach, słowa Józefa Weinziga [sic!], muzyka Smetany," *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 80 (March 8/21, 1902), morning issue, 4.

by Poliński or by other critics of *Dalibor* premiere, who, like him, concentrated on considering the presence of European (Wagnerian) and domestic inspirations in Smetana's opera.[54]

The review from "Varšavskìj Dnevnik" contains the promising phrase "national opera," but let's not expect its use to break any political "taboo" – after all, it had been present in Russian discourse, referring to Russian and Polish opera, since the mid-19th century (let's also recall that Smetana's operas did not enter the repertoire of Russian stages – both the productions of *The Bartered Bride* in 1871 and *Dalibor* in 1900 were failures). The point was merely to criticize the creators of the performance for failing to meet the mission of the national opera, which, according to "Dnevnik," was intended for a mass, democratic audience (we read that the realization of this mission was prevented by setting high ticket prices). The opera itself was recognized by the anonymous author hidden under a pseudonym Poor Yorick in a quite conventional way, as the effort to combine inspiration from Wagner's art with local sources.[55]

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To sum up, it should be first emphasized that the 19th-century "Moniuszko vs. Smetana" discussion, which was continued in the two main centers of Polish lands, was quite coherent – similar approaches to Smetana's art were proposed both in Warsaw and Lviv. In the reviews published after the premieres of Czech composer's operas he appeared as a composer of European standing, possessing masterful compositional skills and a clear vision of national music, which was to combine modern tendencies of world opera with the task of incorporating a local element. Strong emphasis was placed on Smetana's success as a composer who introduced Czech music to the world repertoire. Comparisons with Moniuszko made from both perspectives were to the Polish composers disadvantage. The failure to introduce his operas into the international repertoire was recalled and attempts were made to explain the reasons for this, enumerating technical shortcomings, anachronism of style and the lack of clarity of Moniuszko's concept of national opera.

It should be noted that this way of approaching Moniuszko's achievements and significance was typical for the Polish discourse of Moniuszko continued

[54] See Stanisław Dziadulewicz, "Przegląd Muzyczny," *Bluszcz*, no. 15 (1902): 177–178; "W Teatrze Wielkim *Dalibor*, opera w 3-ech aktach Smetany," *Kurier Codzienny*, no. 80 (March 8/21, 1902), 3; Bojomir [Władysław Miller], "Teatr i Sztuka. „Dalibor"" [Theater and Art. "Dalibor"], *Gazeta Polska*, no. 79 (March 21, 1902), 2.

[55] Poor Yorick, "Teatr i muzyka. *Dalibor*" [Theatre and Music. *Dalibor*], *Varšavskìj Dnevnik*, no. 67 (March 9/22, 1902), 4.

in the period of Smetana's premieres (so called "Warsaw positivism" and Young Poland). It was a period of settling accounts with the past a rapid search for ways to accelerate the development of national thought and art. The emphasis on the difference in function of Moniuszko's and Smetana's operas as works intended to represent national music both at home and abroad allowed critics to overlook the historical distance separating them and draw conclusions that were important for shaping the future of Polish music. Polish interest in Smetana contributed to opening up the European horizon in discussion on music in Poland and to the formation of the modern concept of national music as an art that does not give up its universal ambitions.

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