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The Role of Jane Wilhelmina Stirling in Fryderyk Chopin's Life and in Preserving Memory and Legacy of the Composer

Abstract

The role of Jane Wilhelmina Stirling in Fryderyk Chopin's life as well as in preserving his legacy is nowadays underestimated. Jane Stirling was not only Chopin's pupil, but also his patron. She organized a concert tour to England and Scotland for him and tried to support the composer financially. Moreover, she defrayed the costs of the composer's funeral and erecting his gravestone. After his death, she focused on what Chopin had left passing away. It is thought that she purchased most of the items from his last flat; she acquired also the last piano the composer had played. She tried to protect the autograph manuscripts he had left, and attempted to arrange the publication of compositions that had been retained only in a sketch form.

Keywords

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling, Fryderyk Chopin, Romantic music, Chopin's heritage

Nowadays, Jane Wilhelmina Stirling is almost forgotten. Commonly, when we think about women that influenced Fryderyk Chopin's life and art, we mention names of Konstancja Gładkowska, Maria Wodzińska, George Sand, her daughter Solange Clésinger, Delfina Potocka or Marcelina Czartoryska. Meanwhile, Jane Stirling is not widely discussed in biographies of Chopin that are recognized as basic.¹ She is usually mentioned as a person who partly caused the premature death of the composer as she organized his exhausting journey to England and Scotland, or as a student who unrequitedly loved Chopin. Most people are not aware of the fact that Jane Stirling played a significant role in the composer's life and in preserving memory of him after his death. As Bożena Weber writes: "we still cannot completely recognize how much we owe her effort and forethought."² In my article, I would like to bridge these gaps, trying to present—systematically and in one place—all information concerning Stirling, her relation to Fryderyk Chopin and her role in cultivating the memory and heritage of the composer.

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling and Her Relation to Chopin. Biographical Context

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling was born on the 15th of July 1804³ in Kippenross House in Dunblane, but in *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* we can read that she was baptized yet on the 8th of April 1804.⁴ She came from the aristocratic family, she was the thirteenth and the youngest child of John Stirling and Mary Stirling, the second daughter of William Graham from Airth.⁵ We have almost no information about her life. It is

¹ E.g. those written by Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Zofia Jeżowska and Adam Czartkowski.

² B. Weber, *Chopin*, Wrocław 2000, p. 192.

³ This date is indicated by e.g. David Wright and the descendents of Jane Stirling. Compare: D.C.F. Wright, *Frederick Chopin*, [online] <http://www.wrightmusic.net/pdfs/frederick-chopin.pdf> [accessed: 29.08.2016], p. 11; [online] <http://janestirling.com/Obchody-urodzin-Jane-12.html> [accessed: 18.02.2017].

⁴ *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women. From the Earliest Times to 2004*, ed. E. Ewan, S. Innes, S. Reynolds, Edinburgh 2006, p. 345.

⁵ [Author unknown], *Clan Stirling Online*, [online] <http://www.clanstirling.org/pdf/AirdofKippendavie.pdf> [accessed: 20.11.2016], p. 3.

confirmed that, because of the premature death of her parents, Stirling spent her childhood in Scotland, where she was under protection of her sister Katherine Erskine. In the second half of 1826, Jane together with her sister Jane went to Paris and since that moment she she was continuously travelling between Scotland and the capital of France.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to say when Jane met Fryderyk Chopin. According to several sources, she was his student since 1842,⁶ while others indicate year 1843.⁷ Audrey Eleven Bone claims that their acquaintance may have started yet in 1832,⁸ but it is not proved by any document. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, however, mentions that Jane had been taught by Lindsay Sloper⁹ before she was introduced to Chopin. Sloper lived in Paris in years 1841–1846,¹⁰ therefore alleged contacts of Stirling and Chopin in the 1830s, as Bone suggests, are rather doubtful. Sloper himself, when talking to Frederick Niecks, admitted that Jane desired to be a Chopin's student, so he decided to introduce her to the Polish composer. It is believed that Chopin appreciated Jane's play, and he also liked her very much.¹¹ That time, he allegedly said: "One day you will play very clearly, very well."¹² He valued her as a student. After the death of Fryderyk, Jane also studied with Thomas Tellefsen.

Memories and notices of people who knew her bring us closer to this extraordinary person—the memory of her remarkable kindness, devotion to others, wisdom and piety is present in all of them. Solange Clésinger wrote and Jane and her sister in this way:

⁶ P. Willis, *Chopin in Britain. Chopin's Visits to England and Scotland in 1837 and 1848. People, Places and Activities*, Durham 2009, p. 55.

⁷ [Author unknown], *Kalendarium życia Chopina. Rok 1843*, [online] <http://pl.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/life/calendar/year/1843> [accessed: 21.11.2016].

⁸ A.E. Bone, *Jane Wilhelmina Stirling, 1804–1859. The First Study of the Life of Chopin's Pupil and Friend*, Chipstead 1960, p. 39.

⁹ J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach swoich uczniów*, transl. into Polish by Z. Skowron, Kraków 2010, p. 227.

¹⁰ F. Niecks, *Fryderyk Chopin jako człowiek i muzyk*, transl. into Polish by A. Buchner, Warszawa 2011, p. 486.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

¹² Translation of a citation from: [Author unknown], *Osoby związane z Chopinem. Jane Wilhelmina Stirling*, [online] <http://pl.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/persons/detail/id/457> [accessed: 21.11.2016].

During lessons, when you visited the Master you could meet two tall persons, typical Scottish women, skinny, pale, in indefinite age, serious, dressed in black, never smiling. Under this quite gloomy appearance, there were lofty, noble and devoted hearts.¹³

God played a crucial role in the life of Jane. Everything what she did was in accordance with religion, she always paid attention to its value. Many times, she mentioned it in her letters to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, a sister of Chopin: “one day, one hour can change so much in life! Let us be courageous and face God with pure heart, in order to arrive in a friendly house.”¹⁴

At this moment, the special relationship between Jane and Chopin should be mentioned. Until today, we are unable to state what was the essence of this relation. Many researchers suggest that Stirling was in love with the composer. In a sense, she took a position of George Sand—as a nurse—in the Chopin’s life, when George broke up with the composer: she took care of him, they spent a lot of time together. In accordance with this, a part of a Fryderyk Chopin’s circle of friends started to think that the composer would marry Stirling in a short time. However, he never planned a marriage with Jane, what is proved by a letter to Wojciech Grzymała, written in Scotland on the 30th of October 1858:

My Scottish girls [are] kind-hearted [...], but so boring, God save them! Every day I receive letters, but I do not respond to any, and when I only go somewhere, they are going with me, if they can. Maybe because of that someone could think that I plan a marriage; but some physical attraction is needed, and the one without a husband is too similar to me. You cannot kiss yourself... Friendship is friendship, I have stated clearly, but it does not give right to anything.¹⁵

Why did Chopin write to Grzymała with such a definite statement? He usually avoided the topic of his feelings, because this sphere of life was a taboo topic for him. He was probably angry because of the rumours about his hypothetical marriage. Also Adolf Gutmann, the

¹³ Translation of a citation from: J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach...*, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

¹⁴ A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, the 3rd January 1850, translation of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy Jane Wilhelminy Stirling do Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowej*, “Rocznik Chopinowski” 1980, No. 12, p. 76.

¹⁵ A letter from Fryderyk Chopin to Wojciech Grzymała, Edinburgh, the 30th October 1848, translation of a citation from: B.E. Sydow, *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1955, p. 285.

favourite student of Chopin, said that the composer told him once: “They married me to Miss Stirling, she would take the death for a husband as well”.¹⁶

The contemporary of Chopin who knew the composer and Jane Stirling face to face, often wrote about the remarkable relation between the master and his student. For example, a lady called Mistress Łyszczynska, a wife of Professor Łyszczynski—Chopin spent a few days in his house in Scotland—said to Niecks that Jane was devoted to the composer; she was much older than Chopin, and her love was very strong but platonic.¹⁷

This unusual feeling of Jane towards the composer did not disappear after his death, apparently. Until the end of his life, she thought that Chopin was an extraordinary person. In her correspondence, we can frequently find fragments in which she wonders what Chopin would say in given situation, how he would react, what he would find appropriate. She also took notice of the details: e.g. when she left flowers on the composer’s grave, she bought them in the florist’s that he had chosen when he had lived.¹⁸ At this moment, it is worthy to show fragments of the correspondence between Stirling and Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, cited before. Jane writes e.g.:

I felt guilty because I did not write about the illness to Mistress Franchomme. Chopin would not do that. He always wanted to make their friends suffer less.¹⁹

and:

When it comes to art, there is nobody who could replace him, and we all feel like we were out of mind. I do not know what to say, I would like to ask him—he understood so many concepts, so many individual feelings that others did not know.²⁰

Therefore, we do not have any direct source that would prove the theory of Jane feeling something more than friendship towards Chopin; the only notices about her love to the Polish composer can be found in indirect

¹⁶ F. Niecks, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

¹⁷ F. Niecks, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

¹⁸ M. Karłowicz, *Niewydane dotąd pamiątki po Chopinie*, Warszawa 1904, p. 336.

¹⁹ Translation of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁰ A letter of Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, from 9th to 11th February 1850, translation of a citation from: *ibid.*, p. 95.

sources. The correspondence between Stirling and Jędrzejewicz shows how much honor and respect she had to Chopin, what can imply her feelings toward him. Stirling never married anyone and perhaps he was the first that she loved. However, we will probably never know the truth about it.

The Role of Jane Stirling in the Life of Fryderyk Chopin

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling not only had piano lessons with Fryderyk Chopin, but also was engaged in helping her master as much as possible. For example, she organized the tour to England and Scotland for the Polish composer (in 1848). This journey was described several times,²¹ so I will not focus on it in this paper. However, it is worth mentioning that without help of his student, Chopin probably would not leave Paris for such a long journey, he would not have chance to play so many concerts and to have so comfortable and prosperous conditions of his stay in England and Scotland. As he wrote in his letter to Wojciech Grzymała: “Kind-hearted Erskines thought about everything, even about the chocolate, not only about a place to stay, that, however, I am going to change, because since yesterday, there is better one on the same street for 4 gw.”²² Jane thought about every detail when renting a flat for Chopin: from finding an adequate place to subtle amenities for the composer so that he felt in England very well. Chopin himself without doubt noticed this effort: “You will not believe, how good [they are]; only now I can see that the paper that I use is with my number and I met much such small gentleness.”²³

Today, it is difficult to assess if Jane Stirling made a good choice taking Chopin do England. The journey was supposed to improve the financial situation of the composer, although it could have been only a pretext and Jane could have taken him because of selfish motives, wanting to spend as much time together as possible, to make him dependent on her help, maybe even to persuade him to the future marriage. As Kazimierz Wierzyński writes:

²¹ See: e.g. P. Willis, *op. cit.*; F. Niecks, *op. cit.*

²² A letter from Fryderyk Chopin to Wojciech Grzymała, London, the 21th April 1848, translation of a citation from: B.E. Sydow, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

Indelicacy of Miss Stirling, who wanted to help her loved man, but did everything to quicken his death, seems to be incomprehensible [...]. We can assume that the problem was [her] childish, unhappy love. [...] Greedy in her feeling, she was obsessed with the thought that after leaving France Chopin would belong to her, that he can stay in England and need help. Miss Stirling probably searched for the proof for this hope, and Chopin probably avoided it.²⁴

Nevertheless, the effort that Stirling made in order to organize the whole journey, is priceless. We can speculate whether the composer would have lived longer if he had stayed in Paris. It is intriguing how would he earn for living.

The financial situation of Fryderyk Chopin after his return from London was not the best. At the beginning of 1849, the composer reduced the number of lessons he gave and did not take new students. It is why Jane Stirling, probably, tried to support him financially, also by anonymous donations.

From the letters of the composer, we discover that he received the donation of 25.00 francs on the 26th of July 1849. The money was given by the anonymous messenger of Mistress Étienne, who spread the letters and took care of the composer's flat since 1845.²⁵ However, the woman did not give him the charity, but she hid it "in the furniture next to the bed".²⁶ Chopin received the shipment after the mess connected with reclaiming it, in which even mysterious Alexis Somnambul was engaged.²⁷ The reaction of the composer when he saw the content of a shipment is well shown by the citation from the letter to Grzymała from the 28th of July 1848:

²⁴ K. Wierzyński, *Życie Chopina*, Białystok 1990, p. 566.

²⁵ The notes from the Chopin's letters tell us about the role of Mrs. Étienne. For example, in his correspondence with Maria de Rozières, on the 21st of July 1845, he mentioned: "I write about this all because I would like you to take care of delivering the second letter, that I send, to a man called Mikuli. Mrs. Étienne knows his address. Please ask her to deliver the letter and take a receipt." Transl. of a citation from: B.E. Sydow, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

²⁷ The composer discovered that somebody had sent him a letter that he had not received. Probably, he asked the messenger why he had not deliver the letter. The messenger went to Alexis Somnambul and asked for explanation. Alexis explained to him the "he does not have is, he gave it to some woman in the dark room when one has to go two stairs down". Translation of a citation from: *ibid.*

It was not unsealed and there was 25,000 inside, not touched. Mrs. Erskine unsealed it in my place, I was present there and this man as well. What can you say? This somnambul!!! This package, forgotten long time ago, not touched!!! It is unbelievable, such incidents.—It can be assumed that I did not take the donation, and I could write a lot about it.²⁸

We do not have a direct proof who was a sender of this package. In the letter to Wojciech Grzymała from the 28th of July 1849, Chopin wrote about further events:

After your response and her letter I felt confused and I did not know if she has hallucinations or her *afides* is a thief or Mrs. Étienne, or I am scatterbrained or insane, I mean—I was frustrated. She came to me with confession, and her sister did not know anything, supposedly, and finally I had to say many truths and that I would never understand such generous gifts, maybe from English Queen or Miss Coutty etc.²⁹

Therefore, this letter does not say who came to Chopin with confession, but the notice about a sister made the researchers think about sisters Jane and Katherine. In the same letter to Wojciech Grzymała, Chopin mentions: “Today morning, this mister *afides* is coming to me with Mrs. Erskine from Alex”,³⁰ what proves that the person who came earlier to explain her behavior was a sister of Jane Stirling. Besides, the composer writes in the next letter to Grzymała: “about my special incident, many, many things are that even with magnetism, and with lie of hallucination (P. St[irling—P.P.]) and with decency of Mrs. Étienne I cannot link.”³¹

Only Cecilia and Jens Jorgensen doubted the truth of above-mentioned conclusions.³² They created the hypothesis that Chopin had matrimonial plans connected with Jenny Lind and that this Swedish singer and not Jane Stirling was the one “without a husband” from the letter to Grzymała written on the 30th of October 1949. Jorgensten also claimed that a citation

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 311. Bolds in this one and following citations were made by Fryderyk Chopin.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

³² C. Hordensen, J. Hordensen, *Chopin and the Swedish Nightingale*, Brussels 2003.

from mentioned letter of the composer “went to Alex Somnambul” is about Lind, who in 1848 had the title role in the opera *La Sonnambula* by Bellini. Therefore, also next notices of Somnambul in the letters to Grzymała from the 28th of July and 3rd of August 1849 would indicate Lind. Moreover, Swedish researchers think that the citation “this Alexis in my mind” refers to the Chopin’s feeling toward Lind.³³ Alexis Somnambul, mentioned by Chopin, is a historical figure: he was a person specialized in magnetism, sleepwalking, daydream,³⁴ and presumably it is the reason why he was called Somnambul (English: sleepwalker), what addresses his profession and not Jenny Lind that allegedly had this nickname.

Nevertheless, this hypothesis is based mainly on speculations and conclusions are frequently based on the fragments of translations (into English and French) of Chopin’s letters, without their wider context. As a result, it is inconsistent and not professional. In spite of this fact, several researchers, e.g. Irena Poniatowska or Hanna Wróblewska-Straus, have not the precise opinion about it³⁵ and try to be rather general, not negating nor approving the theory of Swedish researchers. It is worthy to mention the thought of Wróblewska-Straus from the 13th of October 2003:

This theory will be useful if in the future, maybe in the near future, it will be possible to find the documents that will solve the argument for ever. I do not exclude that Jenny Lind fell in love with Chopin and had matrimonial plans connected with him.³⁶

For the time being, such documents have not been founded despite the fact that over ten years have passed. Jane Stirling remains the most probable donor.

³³ However, the composer probably just thought about Alexis, who discovered—only on the basis of the lock of hair—where the package with money is hidden.

³⁴ B. Méheust, *A Historical Approach to Psychological Research. The Case of Alexis Didier (1826–1886)*, [online] <http://bertrand.meheust.free.fr/documents/conf-esalem.pdf> [accessed: 3.09.2015].

³⁵ *Jenny Lind. An After-construction*, [online] www.iconssofeurope.com [accessed: 3.05.2015].

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The Activity of Jane Stirling After the Composer's Death

After the death of Chopin, Jane Stirling started organizing his funeral. No direct sources prove this fact but the opinion of the researchers is clear:³⁷ It was Jane who—as a help for Ludwika Jędrzejewicz—took care of the preparation of his ceremony, starting from the choice of a church, through preparing invitations, to inviting the best singers of Paris to perform *Requiem* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Presumably, Jane paid for current expenses connected with the funeral, what Ludwika treated as a loan, that she faithfully paid off later. The proof for that is the letter from Katherine Erskine to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, in which the Jane Stirling's sister thanks for “[...] sending 4529 francs and adds that she destroyed receipt prepared by Mrs. Jędrzejewicz”.³⁸

Few days after the funeral of the composer, on Friday, the 30th of November 1849, on the Jeûneurs Street No. 42,³⁹ the sale of Chopin's belongings took place, and Jane participated in it.⁴⁰ We do not know what part of the Chopin's heritage was bought by Stirling, we can only assume. Édouard Ganche thought that “Stirling bought everything that was kept in the flat [...] and the half of it she gave to Ludwika.”⁴¹ The name of Jane does not exist in the sales record, but many objects were bought anonymously. It seems likely that they could have been obtained by Stirling, because, as Delapierre suggests, “as we know her tactfulness and discretion, she would prefer to remain anonymous”.⁴² It is confirmed by the correspondence between Stirling and Ludwika Jędrzejewicz. We discover from it that many objects that belonged to Fryderyk were obtained by Jane who successively sent them to the composer's family in Warsaw as well as to his friends. The following are examples of the citations from Stirling's letters to Ludwika:

³⁷ Compare: M. Steen, *The Lives and Times of the Great Composers*, Oxford 2004, p. 132.

³⁸ M. Karłowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁴⁰ “I was on time to oppose selling the lingerie. I would not let it happen, to give it to one or another”. A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, the 12th of June 1850, transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁴¹ É. Ganche, *Dans le souvenir de Frédéric Chopin*, Paris 1925, pp. 103–149.

⁴² A. Delapierre, *Spadek po Chopinie*, “Rocznik Chopinowski” 22/23 (1996/1997), p. 244.

In the chest with books there was not enough space for the curtains. We put it into the another chest having two parts, in the second half we put flowers. You will plant them in the pots with Polish ground.⁴³

A small chair is sent together with a piano. You already have the cushion from leather that he put on the chair so frequently by himself.⁴⁴

Some the tokens of remembrance Stirling left for herself and, using them, created “museum of Chopin” in Scotland.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know much about it. It was a special room in Caldar House, “there was Pleyel piano in there [...], lavishly and artfully inlaid casket from Rothschild; a collection of all the cuttings from English and French newspapers [...], further covers, carpets, armchairs, pillows [...] and variable small bibelots”.⁴⁶ In accordance with her will, all objects from the “museum” were delivered to Chopin’s mother and sent to Warsaw. The majority of them was destroyed in 1861, during the Soviet Army’s brutal actions in Warsaw.⁴⁷ The greater amount of tokens was placed in the Izabela Barciska’s—a sister of Chopin—flat and its equipment was burned in retaliation for the attack on Russian General Fiodor Berg.

Jane thought that the tokens should be kept by people that Chopin valued. Therefore, when duchess Elżbieta Czernyszew wanted to buy the former composer’s table from Stirling, she replied that she gives it for free on behalf of Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, because she knows that duchess and her daughter loved Chopin.⁴⁸ Jane Stirling treated Chopin’s belonging like relics, and she did not feel that she was their owner (in the similar way she treated the compositions left by Chopin, what is proved by the following citation: “I showed him a double in D minor. [...] He insisted on me to let him copy it on the spot. [...] I said that I cannot decide about what does not belong to me”).⁴⁹

⁴³ H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴⁵ M. Karasowski, *Fryderyk Chopin. Życie—listy—dzieła*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1882, p. 209.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴⁷ D.C.F. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ M. Karłowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁴⁹ A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, from 2nd to 3rd of July 1852, transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

Jane Stirling also bought the last piano, which Fryderyk Chopin had played. The instrument was another gift for the sister of the composer, Ludwika Jędrzejewicz. Jane bought it directly from Camille Pleyel. She cared a lot to make it safe during delivery to Poland, e.g. she bought special chest from white galvanized steel sheet to keep it dry.⁵⁰ Stirling's care is illustrated also by the following citation: "according to information from Mrs. [Ludwika Jędrzejewicz—P.P.] you share the view that the piano should be sent by sea [...]. I would like to take it with me to take care of it in the best possible way".⁵¹

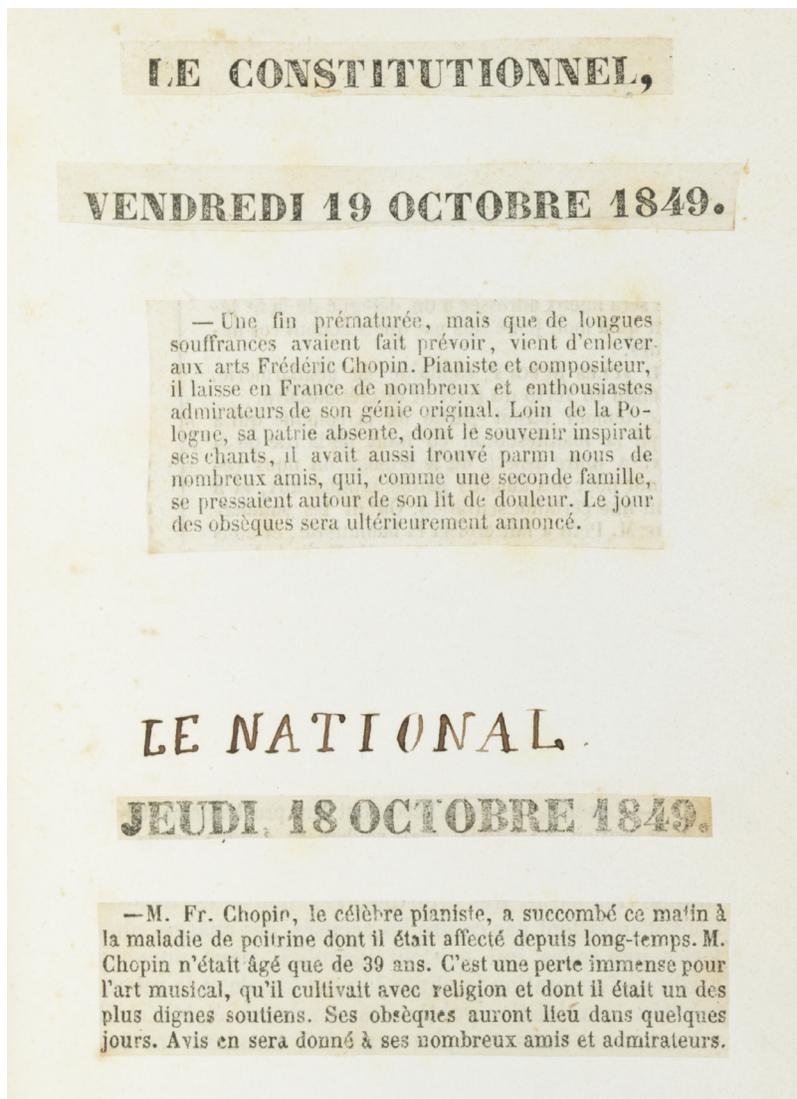
The piano belonged to Ludwika's family for the next generations. Her granddaughter, Maria Ciechomska, sold it on the 3rd of November 1924 to The National Museum in Warsaw for 3108 zloty. During the Second World War, the instrument was sent out from Poland to the Fishorn Palace in Austria. After war, it returned to Poland and in 1968 the National Museum gave it to the Fryderyk Chopin's Society in Warsaw. Today, the piano belongs to the Fryderyk Chopin Institute and is presented in the Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw. It is worth adding that identification of the piano after war was possible thanks to the hand-written annotation made by Jane Stirling on the drawbar in the tail of the instrument: "pour Louise". After the Fryderyk Chopin's death, Jane Wilhelmina Stirling had also an album in which she collected cuttings from the newspapers concerning the composer. The mentioned diary consists of 103 pages and cover. The first notice that is placed there is from the 19th of October, and the last from the 4th of December 1849; together there are 24 cuttings from newspapers.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁵¹ Transl. of a citation from: *ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵² There are fragments of the following newspapers: "Le Journal des Débats" (4), "Le Constitutionnel", "Le Courier Français", "Le Credit", "Le National", "Le Messenger des Théâtres et des Arts", "L'Ordre", "L'Opinion Publique", "Revue et Gazette des Théâtres", "La Presse" (2), "Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris", "La Gazette de la France Musicale", "L'Illustration. Journal Universel", "La Tribune des Peuples", "L'Artiste. Revue de Paris", "The Daily News", "John Bull", "Le Pays" (2), "Le Siècle" (2), "L'Assemblée Nationale", "Revue de la Quinzaine", "La Réforme", "Journal de Rouen".

As a result, in one place all the information appearing in newspaper directly after the composer's death are put together. In 1850, Stirling gave the album to the painter Teofil Kwiatkowski. Today, the document is in the collection of the NIFC (cat. No. M/2948) and is presented in the Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw.



Illustr. 1: A page of the Jane Stirling Album (M/2948).

It should be underlined that Stirling prepared the album at the time when nobody thought that newspapers would be objects of scientific research, that they would be collected, digitalized and shared. The album is very important source of information about the composer. We find there the evidence for the facts concerning the death and funeral of Chopin (e.g. who sang during the ceremony and since when public knew about his death). There are primarily informational articles collected: information about death, date of the funeral⁵³ etc. Also memories⁵⁴ and short biographies of the composer are present there.

The next object of Jane's interest directly after Chopin's death was to delegate Auguste Clésinger to prepare a death mask of the composer. Few hours after Chopin's death, Clésinger made two negatives of the mask and then he prepared the plaster casts according to them. Thanks to Jane, the composer's family received the negative of the death mask (it contained a great amount of his hair in the plaster). Jane Stirling strongly desired to get this negative, although we do not know why. From the letters themselves, we can assume that she just wanted to deliver the priceless relic to the family of the composer, because they were its "legal owner".⁵⁵ The negative was kept by the composer's relatives until the year 1922, when Maria Ciechomska gave it to the National Museum in Warsaw. It was destroyed during the Second World War. However, the positive was preserved, and today it is placed in the collection of the NIFC (D/157).⁵⁶ Beside the negative of the mask, Stirling commissioned from Clésinger "plaster mold of marble"⁵⁷—idealized painting of the death mask in a form of marble

⁵³ "Mister Fr. Chopin, a famous pianist, died for the chest illness, from which he suffered for a long time. [...] It is a great loss for art of music. [...] His funeral will take place in a few days time." "Le National" 18.10.1849.

⁵⁴ "After long and horrible agony, Chopin died. [...] His weakness and suffering become so hard that even a conversation made him disturbingly tired. [...] It caused this isolation. [...] Wrong explained by many, attributed by some to the scorned pride, by others to black melancholy, to the features that are equally strange for the character of this charming and excellent artist." "Le Journal de Débats" 27.10.1849.

⁵⁵ Transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁵⁶ H. Wróblewska-Straus, „*Za miesiąc z Paryża więcej Wam napiszę*”. *Nowe pamiątki Chopinowskie w zbiorach TiFC*, "Ruch Muzyczny" 1978, No. 25, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

sculpture (the photograph of the sculpture is in the collection of the NIFC with cat. No. M/606).

Auguste Clésinger also took care of the project of the gravestone for the composer's grave, and Jane from the beginning supervised the process of building the monument (in collaboration with, among others, Eugène Delacroix, who presided the committee of the gravestone's building),⁵⁸ she took care of the smallest details and contacted Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, delivering the family's suggestions to the creators of the grave, what can be exemplified by the following fragment of a letter to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz from November 1850: "I told the men [builders of the grave, committee—P.P.] that in the fence, as Mrs. Jędrzejewicz wishes, the door should be located to put flowers inside."⁵⁹ Stirling consulted also all the ideas with the composer's family. When any new project appeared, she immediately wrote to Ludwika:

[...] in the letter No. 17 Miss Stirling writes [to Ludwika—P.P.], that the project emerged to add the following text on the gravestone: "né le 1-er mar 18... en Pologne, à Zelazowa-Wola, palatinat de Masovie, de Nicolas Chopin, et [...]"⁶⁰

Does Mrs. Jędrzejewicz have certain momentous day in June that she would like to spend on unveiling [of the gravestone—P.P.]? Does the family wish to engrave any citation from the Bible on the monument?⁶¹

Stirling also decided that a special hole should be made in the monument to put the selected objects in there. She was also responsible for the choice of these objects. Among them, there were two medallions from Bovy's, a chest with stuff from Warsaw, a piece of paper with dates of birth and death of the composer, a cross from Jane, a medallion from Tellefsen and coins from the dates of birth and death of Chopin.⁶² Therefore, there were objects from the closest family and

⁵⁸ A. Chybiński, *Fryderyk Chopin i Eugeniusz Delacroix*, "Gazeta Lwowska. Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki" 1907, No. 7, pp. 600–601.

⁵⁹ A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, Noveber 1850, transl. of a citation from: M. Karłowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 337.

from one of his favourite students that Jane had contact with. The fact that in the hole there was also a cross from Jane, is extremely significant, it shows—as we can suppose—that she perceived Chopin as the most important person in her life, whose grave she equipped with this crucial symbol, in accordance with her deeply religious views. The act of unveiling the gravestone itself was an important event for Stirling—this moment separated her from the composer forever; it was a symbol of the definite separation. It is clearly seen in her correspondence with Ludwika Jędrzejewicz:

I will be sorry when everything will be prepared with pedantic symmetry.
I would prefer to sustain the actual state.⁶³

I will feel bad when, in the middle of this, there will be a marble dividing
us from him, when everything will be prepared and finished.⁶⁴

Jane often visited the composer's grave, what is proved by letters to Ludwika, frequently mentioned before. She always brought the fresh flowers to the cemetery. She knew how much Chopin loved his homeland, so she asked Ludwika for sending a jar with Polish ground to throw it on the grave.⁶⁵ It happened that she left flowers on behalf of the composer's family, what proves how she felt close not only to Chopin but also to his relatives:

We were on the 7th. I put 12 wreaths of heather from his beloved Mother, Sister and her husband, from You and your husband and your children, from the Aunt Zuzanna and from both of us. We go there with great... pleasure, it is not an appropriate words, but maybe it is when there is lack of words.⁶⁶

Besides caring for the grave and the actions made directly after the composer's death, Stirling tried in many ways to protect and preserve his heritage. She took care e.g. of the protection of the composer's

⁶³ H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

autographs. As we know, Chopin desired to burn all the autographs that were not printed during his lifetime,⁶⁷ but it did not happen. Jane Stirling strongly desired to publish them. She was in constant contact with Franchomme and Fontana, and their letters prove that they counted on her opinion:

I send you [...] what Franchomme managed to read from the last Mazurka [...]. At the beginning, he brought it to me on two sheets, because he did not feel brave enough to conjoin the parts, but he added one note in the bass (e) to (b) what creates the unity.⁶⁸

In the letter prepared between the 2nd and the 3rd of July 1852, Jane Stirling put the list of songs—a kind of the catalogue of the holographs and accessible copies. The list is a significant document. On this basis, Fontana published his later publication. What is more, beside known songs, there are also three songs that are hitherto lost: *O, nie mów*, *System filozoficzny podstarościego* and *Że Bóg jest*. Thanks to it, we know as well how many autographs of songs belonged to Stirling, how much attention she paid to them and how she took care of them.⁶⁹ “I entrust the manuscripts to Mrs. Veyret, who is going to take special care of them and will keep this deposit like a relic.”⁷⁰

Also in this case, Jane Stirling consulted everything with Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, she did not want to make an ultimate decision of publishing them by herself. She thought that it is not her role, but the family’s, but she wanted to have an impact on what would be published if the sister made a decision to do it. She highlighted it clearly in her letters to Ludwika: “If you decide to publish Melodies by Fontana and Elsner’s effort...”; “If I would be allowed to give you advice, I think that it would be good to give it [...] to Fontana...”⁷¹

⁶⁷ “The rest without exception should be burnt by fire, because I have a huge respect to the public and I do not want to, as my responsibility and under my name, the pieces not dignified for public would be published.” A letter from Wojciech Grzymała to August Léo, Paris, the end of October 1849, transl. of a citation from B.E. Sydow, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

⁶⁸ A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, the 18th of June 1852, transl. of the citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Stirling also asked Ludwika for making the list of published compositions of Chopin and adding the pieces preserved in holographs. Thanks to this list, the next generations would not have problems with checking the authenticity of Fryderyk Chopin's pieces. In this way, the kind of thematic catalogue was created, titled as *Kompozycje niewydane* (in English: *Not published compositions*).⁷² A letter in which Jane asks Ludwika for it is not preserved, but Karłowicz saw it and described in his priceless publication.⁷³ This list is preserved in the collection of the NIFC (cat. No. M/301). There are 9 pieces included there that we do not have the holographs. So without Stirling's meticulousness, probably today we would not even know about their existence.

Besides persuading Ludwika to write a list of not published compositions, Jane Stirling systematically tried to contribute to preservation of Chopin's heritage: she wrote numerous lists, registers etc. Today, we cannot even say how many of them were created. In the collection of the NIFC there are following registers: *Spis dokumentów będących własnością Fryderyka Chopina* (English: *A list of documents which belonged to Fryderyk Chopin*, M/314), *Wykaz uczennic i uczniów Fryderyka Chopina* (English: *A register of students of Fryderyk Chopin*, M/459) and *Wykaz nadawców listów do Fryderyka Chopina* (English: *A register of senders of letters to Fryderyk Chopin*, M/460). These catalogues have not been described scrupulously yet. *Spis dokumentów będących własnością Fryderyka Chopina* is presented on the exhibition of Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw; it was mentioned only in the *Katalog Zbiorów Muzeum TiFC catalogue of the Collection of Fryderyk Chopin Society's Museum* from 1971⁷⁴ and in two articles: by Hanna Wróblewska-Straus⁷⁵ and by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger.⁷⁶ This list was important because, thanks to the information collected by Jane in a single place, we are able to recreate the programme of

⁷² The list of all the compositions included there is e.g. in: M. Karłowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 377–378.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁷⁴ *Katalog zbiorów muzeum. Rękopisy, druki, grafika, fotografie*, Warszawa 1971, p. 88.

⁷⁵ H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Za miesiąc...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–5.

⁷⁶ J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Koncerty Chopina w Paryżu w latach 1832–1838*, "Rocznik Chopinowski" 1987, No. 17.

dates of several of concerts by Chopin. In *Wykaz nadawców listów do Fryderyka Chopina* Stirling counts letters from e.g. duchess de Sutherland, countess Gainsborough, duchess Somerset, Miss Trotter⁷⁷ and H.F. Broodwood.⁷⁸ Jane sent this list together with the note addressed to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, writing: “I made a list of this correspondence and I placed it together with letters”.⁷⁹ The part of these letters remains lost until today, so the list made by Stirling is the only evidence of their existence.

The documents mentioned above indicate how important for Stirling was preserving every piece of information about the composer for next generations, even if—at the moment of preparing the registers—it appeared to be insignificant. Creating them was the effect of her love to everything that was connected with the beloved master, and also of the predilection to order and meticulousness that were characteristic for her every action. Because of complicated and sometimes tragic fate of the composer’s heritage, these lists appeared to have a huge documental value.

There are also 7 volumes of Fryderyk Chopin’s works that are preserved after Jane Stirling and were used during her classes. There are a precious source, supplementing knowledge of his pieces, performance esthetics and pedagogical techniques of Chopin, because they contain hand-written annotations of the composer and Jane Stirling, such as: fingering, additional remarks about tempo and character, use of pedals, dynamics, phrasing, articulation or agogics, text modifications, realization of ornaments. Annotations of this type are present in 63 pieces. Jane Stirling’s scores are not the only evidence showing Chopin’s work with his students—currently, we have several similar documents, from which the most important ones are sheet music of Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Camilla O’Meara-Dubois and Auguste Franck. Many annotations written by the composer are in the class materials of all the mentioned students. However, for exemplary fingering in *Mazurka in F minor* Op. 7 No. 3 or *Nocturne in D \flat major* Op. 27

⁷⁷ Preserved in the collection of the NIFC, cat. No. M/445.

⁷⁸ Preserved in the collection of the NIFC, cat. No. M/434, M/436.

⁷⁹ A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, the 12th of June 1850, transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, op. cit., p. 115.

No. 2 is only in Stirling's collection. It is also worth noticing that Jane had access to Ludwika's sheet music and she made many annotations there. On the other hand, a part of the annotations that we find in Stirling's sheet music was copied by her from the Ludwika's scores.⁸⁰

In these seven volumes, there were collected almost all the Chopin's compositions.⁸¹ At the end of the last volume, there is a kind of table of contents made by Chopin with a table of all the musical incipits. Probably, this table as well as hand-written Chopin's annotation next to Op. 47: "I edited all these scores myself", were going to be a kind of guarantee for the hypothetical publisher and a proof of the authentic of all these pieces in this collection.⁸² Perhaps it as a table that Chopin wrote about in his letter to Wojciech Grzymała from the 30th of October 1848 from Scotland: "I wrote a kind of order with my staff to do in case I would die somewhere."⁸³ It is also probable that Chopin made this record encouraged by Jane Stirling. Mentioning again her meticulousness, we should mention also a statement written by her concerning the compositions from the seven volumes that she played during her studies with Chopin, which part of fingering was made by him and who prepared the table of contents.⁸⁴ In the light of this information, it is not surprising that J.-J. Eigeldinger said: "among annotated notes [...] belonging to students or relatives of Chopin, Stirling's scores are the most important source"⁸⁵

In 1927 all the volumes were obtained the French researcher Édouard Ganche that received them from the Stirling's heir, Anne Hunson. Soon, on the base of them *The Oxford Original Edition of Frédéric Chopin* (Oxford University Press 1928–1932) was published.

After Chopin's death, there was a consternation concerning the person who should write the first biography. It was obvious that it would

⁸⁰ J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach...*, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

⁸¹ There is lack of *Polonaise in G minor*, *Mazurkas in G minor and B♭ major*, *Grand Duo Concertant in E major*, *Variations VI from Hexameron*, *Mazurka* published in 1841.

⁸² J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach...*, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁸³ Transl. of a citation from: B.E. Sydow, *op. cit.*, p. 283

⁸⁴ J.-J. Eigeldinger, *Chopin w oczach...*, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

be done soon after the funeral. Probably, Wojciech Grzymała was a first one who wanted to do it.⁸⁶ However, the first work concerning life and art of Fryderyk Chopin was wrote by Franz Liszt in 1852. We know that Stirling played a role in creating both these biographies. Grzymała consulted his work directly with Jane; she thought that a part of a paper is good, but another part should be corrected.⁸⁷ Another situation took place in the case of the biography written by Liszt and strongly criticized by Stirling. On the 14th of November 1849, the Hungarian composer sent Ludwika a questionnaire concerning the composer's life, but she did not answer the questions of Liszt. Instead of that, Stirling answered the questions and asked Ludwika to correct them, what may indicate that the composer's sister could have asked her for help in this task.

What do Jane's answers show? Primarily, they prove that she knew a lot about Chopin's life (the information about his father is present, as well as of Warsaw's School and the circumstances in which the composer left Poland), and also that she strongly desired to show the best side of the composer: "his death was a death of the pure soul, full resign and faith. In his last moments, even the lightest fear of the after-death life did not appear."⁸⁸ In her answers, she tried to persuade Liszt to not to write too much about relationship between Chopin and George Sand. Her answer for the question "What were the feature of the last episode of his relations to Mrs. Sand?" was as follows: "the Chopin's domestic life was his temple, that he did not give access to; he was not detailed enough to focus on it in his biographies."⁸⁹ Answering the next question, she added: "he did not mention her [George—P.P.] in the last moments of his life."⁹⁰ Today, it is difficult to say if these answers are true or are influenced by the obvious and strong reluctance of Jane towards the longtime companion of the composer's life.

⁸⁶ M. Karłowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Probably the Jane Wilhelmina Stirling's answer for Franz Liszt's letter, rather the 14th of November 1849; transl. of a citation from: *ibid.*, p. 364.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

The biography written by Franz Liszt is a subject of controversy in the music environment until today—as Mieczysław Tomaszewski claims, “it [is] a strange mixture of facts and lies”.⁹¹ Chopin was not described as a perfect person, so the Stirling’s opinion could not have been positive, what was expressed by her in the letters to Ludwika:

A totally competent person evaluated him citing the common phrase: He spat on the plate to disgust the food of others—he wrote it to make it unattractive to write for anybody else. I proposed my Friend from the country to read the letters together in order to indicate falsities that should be highlighted.⁹²

It appears that Stirling had a grudge against Liszt, because he used her answers in the wrong way. It is proved by the citation from the letter to Ludwika from the 2nd and 3rd of July 1852. Jane writes to the Chopin’s sister that she should not feel regret as she did not answer the questions: “he would use them by chance, and then you would be made responsible for it”.⁹³

Conclusion

Jane Wilhelmina Stirling always remained in the shade of Fryderyk Chopin. The Chopin’s personality, his merits as a composer and a great Polish citizen are so huge that even in the process of writing this paper, the soul of the brilliant artist often dominated the modest, “boring Scottish girl”.⁹⁴ The role that she played in Chopin’s life and in cultivating the memory of him is priceless. Therefore, she is worth placing her in honourable position in the pantheon of people meritorious for Fryderyk Chopin and for Polish culture. I hope that this article will contribute to the fact that we will start to see Jane Stirling not only as

⁹¹ M. Tomaszewski, *Liszt fantazja, parafraza i wariacja*, interview with M. Nadzieja, [online] <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/2979-liszt-fantazja-parafraza-i-wariacja.html> [accessed: 20.05.2016].

⁹² A letter from Jane Stirling to Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Paris, the 5th of March 1852, transl. of a citation from: H. Wróblewska-Straus, *Listy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹⁴ B.E. Sydow, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

a student being in love with the composer, but primarily as a person who contributed to preserving his heritage.

How prophetic and still valid are her own words from the letter to Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa: “it will always remain something to do for him [Fryderyk Chopin—P.P.]”⁹⁵ We should not forget about these words, but we should not also forget about their author. Paraphrasing her thought: it will always remain something to discover about Jane Stirling.

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