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## Manuscripts of violin works by Marcelli Popławski from the collections of the National Library in Warsaw

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### Abstract

The paper presents unknown compositions by a forgotten Polish composer, educator and organizer of musical life, active in the first half of the 20th century, in various centres in Poland and abroad. The main content is preceded by a biographical sketch, based on biographical notes in encyclopedias and lexicons. The works, most of which have not been published and which have been preserved in manuscripts, are discussed on the basis of the author's own source research and two publisher's commentaries. When dealing with the main subject, a descriptive method of analysis of a musical work has been applied, which focuses on the musical form, including the compositional technique and taking into account the specificity of violin playing and the expressive aspect. The presentation concerns 22 compositions by M. Popławski: *Berceuse for violin and piano*, 1906; *Prelude. Etudes pour violon avec accomp. Piano*, 1907; *Prelude and dance "W górach"* (en. "In the mountains") for violin and piano, 1908; *La fleur fanée for violin and piano*, 1908, *Passage for violin and piano*, 1908; *Sonata in F-sharp minor for violin and piano*, 1908; *Drei Skizzen for violin and piano*, 1908; *All Ongarese, Chansonete, Eroticon, Sonata in E minor for solo violin*, 1911; *Suite "W słońcu"* (en. "In the sun") for violin and piano, 1912; *Variations „Za tobój Lizet” for violin and piano*, 1913; *Reverie for violin and piano*, 1913; *Valse for violin and harp*, 1916; *Menuetto for violin and harp*, 1916; *Mazurka for violin and harp*, 1916; *Rigaudon for violin and piano*, 1918; *Polka for violin and piano*, 1918; *Etude for solo violin*, 1918; *Menuetto (ancient style) for violin and piano*, 1920; *Caprice for violin and piano*, 1922; *Air for violin and piano*, without date.

The analyses conducted allowed the following assertions regarding M. Popławski's compositions: — the composer's output comprises works of various genres (dance, lyrical, virtuoso, sonatas) and is classified as Neoromantic style;

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- the compositional technique is characterised by the principle of “permanent evolution” in the shaping of musical narration and makes use of intensive chromaticism;
- later pieces tend to modernize the sound language;
- the preserved Popławski’s works constitute the last stage of the late-Romantic virtuoso style in Polish violin literature.

**Keywords:** Polish violin music, Neo-Romanticism in Polish music, violin music genres, Marcelli Popławski.

The collections of the National Library in Warsaw include microfilms of over twenty manuscripts of compositions for violin by a forgotten Polish violinist, composer, educator and organizer of musical life, **Marcelli Popławski (1882–1948)**. The creative output of this constantly active composer, who was Karol Szymanowski’s peer, and who was simultaneously involved in various educational and organisational activities, has not been presented in any detailed analytical study so far. For the time being, there are only brief biographical notes in lexicons and encyclopedias<sup>1</sup>, references in synthesizing studies<sup>2</sup> as well as a posthumous outline published in 1948 in “Poradnik Muzyczny” by Wawrzyniec Żuławski<sup>3</sup>. On the basis of these scarce sources, it is possible to write a biographical sketch of the musician, but there is no possibility to define the style of his works since none of the studies contain a description, even of a cursory nature, of the works of M. Popławski. Each of them is limited only to providing a list of selected works. Brief commentaries on two compositions have been provided on the basis of his own opinion by a composer and columnist, Wawrzyniec Żuławski.

## Biographical sketch of the composer

**Marcelli Popławski** was born on June 22, 1822 in the Pieńkówka estate in Podolia. He began his musical education in Kiev, where he also studied law and technology. Like many of his Polish contemporaries learning composition at the

<sup>1</sup> J. Prosnak, *Popławski Marcelli*, [in:] *Słownik Muzyków Polskich*, vol. 2, M–Z, ed. J. Chomiński, PWM, Kraków 1967, p. 124; [no author’s name], *Popławski Marcelli*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyki*, ed. A. Chodkowski, PWN, Warszawa 1995, p. 71; E. Kowalska-Zajac, *Popławski Marcelli*, [in:] *Łódzkie środowisko kompozytorskie 1945–2000*, leksykon, Akademia Muzyczna w Łodzi, Łódź 2001, p. 155–156; E. Kowalska-Zajac, *Popławski Marcelli*, [in:] *Kompozytorzy polscy 1918–2000*, vol. 2: *Biogramy*, ed. M. Podhajski, Akademia Muzyczna im. F. Chopina w Warszawie, Akademia Muzyczna im. S. Moniuszki w Gdańsku, Gdańsk – Warszawa 2005, p. 778 (biographical sketch copied from *Łódzkie środowisko kompozytorskie 1945–2000*); T. Baranowski, *Popławski Marcelli*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Muzyczna PWM, Część biograficzna*, ed. E. Dzieńbowska, part *pe–ż*, PWM SA, Kraków 2004, pp. 157–158.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. J.M. Chomiński, K. Wilkowska-Chomińska, *Historia muzyki polskiej*, vol. 2, PWM, Kraków 1996, p. 121 (the authors list Popławski among the composers of underground fight songs).

<sup>3</sup> W. Żuławski, *Ś.p. Marcelli Popławski*, “Poradnik Muzyczny” 1948, no 5, p. 21.

turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, he continued his studies abroad. As an instrumentalist, he was a violinist. His mature compositional education was marked by the names of distinguished personalities of that time: Max Reger, Vincent d'Indy and Alexander Glazunov. From 1907 to 1909 he studied under Reger's supervision and simultaneously violin under Hans Sitt at the Leipzig Conservatory<sup>4</sup>. W. Żuławski gives a different order of stages in the course of M. Popławski's education than J. Prosnak:

He initially studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he was considered one of the most promising pupils in Glazunov's composition class. Then he continued his studies in Leipzig, where, in 1908, he received the Leipzig Conservatory diploma with honours in composition (under Max Reger) and violin (under Hans Sitt).<sup>5</sup> [own translation]

According to the authors of biographical notes, Parisian education in Vincent d'Indy's class between 1909 and 1911 was the second stage of his foreign education, after which he went to St. Petersburg for another year to attend the class of the aforementioned A. Glazunov<sup>6</sup>. It can be assumed, on the basis of the style of the preserved violin works, that all three mentors of the art of composition left their mark on Popławski's creative workshop, either by influencing the sound language, or in the selection of the composed genres. The greatest influence was exerted by Max Reger, under whom the future composer studied for the longest time. He marked himself mainly in the sound language, the use of a strong chromaticism and an evolutionary development of the initial sound structure. The education in Paris probably drew Popławski's attention to the stylisation of old dance forms (e.g. *minuet*, *rigaudon*). His studies under Glazunov resulted in a composition on a theme of a Russian folk melody (variations "Za tobój Lizet" for violin and piano from 1913). Dating included in manuscripts by M. Popławski as well as annotations and titles of works support the assertion concerning the order of studies given by J. Prosnak and T. Baranowski. Apart from violin works, M. Popławski composed, during the period of his studies and immediately afterwards, orchestral works, including symphonic poems: *Faun tańczący* (en. *Dancing Faun.*) and *Nad przepaścią* (en. *Over the Abyss*). His predilections for programme music also appeared in some violin compositions.

Immediately after his studies, M. Popławski began his pedagogical work in Jarosław on the Volga river. At the next stage of his professional career, he took charge of the musical direction of the Theatre Studio in Kiev. According to W. Żuławski, after the First World War, he was intensively involved in the revival of musical life in his reborn homeland. In the 1920s, he took over the directorial position of the operetta in the Municipal Theatre in Toruń (1921–1925). At the same time, he taught violin at the Music Conservatory of Pomeranian Music So-

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<sup>4</sup> J. Prosnak, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> W. Żuławski, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> J. Prosnak, op. cit.; T. Baranowski, op. cit.

ciety, of which he was a co-founder and director. He managed it until 1930. Then he moved to Równe, where he took part in the organisation of musical life<sup>7</sup>. A number of musical illustrations for theatre plays date from the period of his activity in Toruń. He also wrote numerous songs, *String Quartet*, *Cello Sonata and Piano Variations* “Week”, which were awarded the first prize at the composition competition of the Society for Contemporary Polish Music in 1938. W. Żuławski wrote about this composition:

The seven variations, each of which is titled after the different day of the week, are characterised by a sophisticated variation technique and an outstanding piano texture. The last variation, which includes a *fugato* extended to a monumental size, bears the hallmarks of a truly Reger’s counterpoint artistry<sup>8</sup>. [own translation]

In 1934, the composer moved to Warsaw, where he founded a representative railway symphonic orchestra. He was its conductor until the World War II and gave regular concerts in the Soldier's House in Warsaw’s Praga district. He spent the years of the occupation in the capital too. During this harsh time, in 1940, he composed – as it is written by W. Żuławski:

[...] one of his most outstanding pieces: a sonata for viola. It consists of four movements: the first one in sonata form, based on a broad full-blown first theme and a concise second theme. It is followed by a melancholic *andante* in the form of a slow minuet with subtle harmony, then a temperamental *scherzo* and in the end the finale, which is a combination of a sonata-allegro and a fugue. A thorough knowledge of the technique of string instruments let Popławski make the sonata one of the most valuable pieces in viola literature.<sup>9</sup> [own translation]

The collections of the National Library comprise the manuscript of this sonata, entitled *Sonata - fantasia for piano and viola* with the exact date of its composition: 29 February –23 September 1940, Guzów (Mus. 2435).

Shortly after World War II, Popławski recommenced his work on the reconstruction of musical education. In 1945 he settled in Łódź. There he conducted the violin class at the Ludowy Instytut Muzyczny and the Łódź branch of the Polish Composers' Union elected him chairman. At the same time, he established a pre-war music school in Pabianice, which he headed as headmaster for three years, until his death on May 1, 1948<sup>10</sup>.

The life story of the composer suggests that his main activities were educational and organisational work, which at the time when he lived – after regaining independence in 1918 and after World War II – was particularly important in Poland. In view of the enormous losses suffered by the Polish musical culture, what was necessary was above all the organizational activity, to which Popławski devoted himself in the greatest measure. Although he composed regularly, he

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> W. Żuławski, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

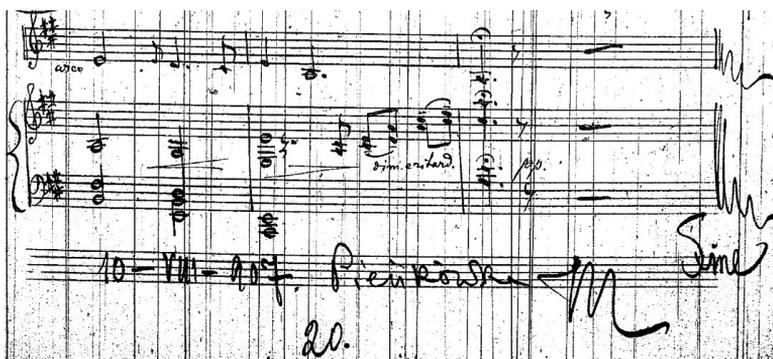
probably regarded it as an activity of secondary importance. In his encyclopaedic biography, T. Baranowski wrote:

[...] during the occupation, most of his compositional output, consisting of over 200 works, was destroyed<sup>11</sup>. [own translation]

The collection of manuscripts of violin works by M. Popławski, preserved in the collections of the National Library in Warsaw, deserves closer attention due to its high artistic value and genre diversity.

### Presentation of Marcelli Popławski's pieces

Violin compositions by M. Popławski, which have mostly been preserved in manuscripts, represent the genres which can be classified as: lyrical, dance pieces, variations, virtuoso études. Apart those have also been preserved 2 sonatas and a suite. Nearly all of them were provided by the composer with the exact date of completion, indicating also the name of the town and placing his own signature at the end of the score. He had the habit of writing the year without the first digit in the following way: 27 – II – 906. He closed the notation with a characteristic graphic sign, often with the mention *Fine*. The graphic symbol after a double bar line in the form of a drooping wavy line is a distinguishable feature, a trademark of his manuscripts. Almost all works have the score and the violin part. Should we take a close look at successive manuscripts, the composer may be “accused” of not always having been meticulous enough about the correct notation of the key signature (e.g. in *Berceuse*, in F-sharp minor key, the symbol “G-sharp” is written as the first one next to the clef, the symbol “F-sharp” as the third one. Virtually every piece has a number in the upper right corner (also on the title page), which probably indicates the numbering adopted by the composer.



**Example 1.** Marcelli Popławski, *Mondschein etude*, the last section of the score with the date and the composer's signature

<sup>11</sup> T. Baranowski, op. cit., p. 157.



Example 2. Marceł Popławski, *Berceuse* (1906), the first bars of the score

Chronologically the first preserved composition is the above illustrated *Berceuse* for violin and piano composed in 1906 (Exemple 2), composed in Kiev (BN, Mus. 2447). It is a lyrical miniature cast in the reprise form, in which strict temporal proportions of three sections are maintained: A (83 bars), B (46 bars), A<sub>1</sub> (46 bars). A broad elaboration of the exposition section was a frequent occurrence in the lyrical miniatures of the Neo-Romantic era. The melodic is characterized by simplicity and calm narration. The theme opening the piece has an eight-bar structure, but in the phrase formation it does not exhibit periodical characteristics. It constitutes a “material basis” from which the course of the whole work emerges on the basis of evolutionary development, which refers to the principle of motivic spinning and variations of melodic phrases. The piano accompaniment creates a swaying figure, repeated *ostinato*, according to the Romantic lullabies genre tradition. The middle section B in the key of the A major parallel brings changes to the material in the accompaniment (compact chords on syncopes), and the violin melodic is based on structures similar to the melodic phrases of the first section A. This creates a subtle expressive contrast. The composer preserves the substance unity of the cantilena material here. *Berceuse* is influenced by Romantic patterns, but the shaping of the course of music has its source in the late Romantic convention. This early piece reveals already a characteristic feature of Popławski’s technique, which is the principle of continuous evolutionary development in shaping the initial musical theme on the basis of the original theme. This property can be described as the “permanent evolution”, which characterizes all subsequent works, regardless of their genre. It should be pointed out that Popławski’s constant and continuous development of the initial thematic thought, as well as drawing up derivative motifs, is deprived of any caesura or breath throughout the entire section. In this way, he creates a homogenous substance plane.

In the summer of 1907 (dating: 18 VII–24 VIII) was written a cycle of five virtuoso études with an introductory prelude. The cycle was entitled in French: *Prelude. Etudes pour violon (avec accomp. piano)*, (Mus. 2431). Four études of this collection (I, II, III and V – according to the composer’s numbering), without the preliminary *Prelude*, were published by PWM in 1983, arranged by Irena Du-

biska, with the title *4 caprices for violin and piano*. Thus, the fourth étude, a very long one, consisting of 345 bars, is missing. Perhaps the lengthiness of the material of this piece made the author exclude it from publication. An outstanding Polish violinist and teacher wrote in her commentary for the edition of the four études by M. Popławski:

These *4 caprices* for violin with piano accompaniment are clear-textured characteristic miniatures with programme titles. The edition was prepared on the basis of the manuscript offered to me by the composer. The exposed violin part of the *Caprices* is in itself a cycle of impressive pieces with a specific technical and instrumental theme, which brings them closer in nature to Henryk Wieniawski's *Caprices* op. 10. Technically, they are difficult for both hands and not always comfortable.<sup>12</sup> [own translation]

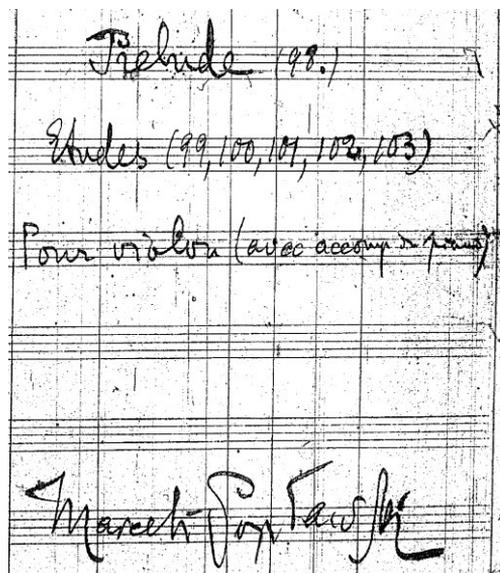
It must have been the author of the study who termed these works “caprices”, as she rightly notices the similarity to Wieniawski's caprices. As for programme titles, in the manuscripts which I have analysed, they can only be found in the études: I entitled *Walka* (en. *Fight*) and III entitled *Mondschein etude*. However, in the published collection of four caprices, all pieces have programme titles. The first and the third have the same titles as in the manuscript. In the case of Etude II, the title is *Złośliwy żartowniś* (en. *Malicious Joker*) and Etude V is entitled *Melancholia deszczu jesiennego* (en. *Melancholy of the Autumn Rain*). It is possible that what Popławski gave to Dubiska was a different manuscript, slightly different in some details from the one that is microfilmed in the National Library. He could also have suggested to the author of the arrangement to give programme titles to all the works. The programme titles, which are not displayed in the manuscripts, could also have been given by the author of the arrangement.

On the basis of the analysis of the manuscripts of the cycle in question, stored in the National Library, it can be said that *Prelude* plays a role which is typical of the introduction. It has the character of a free improvisation, with a strong emphasis on motifs. It does not seem to be divided into smaller sections. Its constitutive elements are the leading motif and motivic dialogues between the instruments. Popławski draws on the Baroque tradition, in which multi-movements pieces began with the prelude as the introductory part.

*Etude I*, in C-sharp minor entitled *Walka* (en. *Fight*) (*Maestoso grave*), adopts the standard scheme of the ABA<sub>1</sub> form. The figurative structure with a jump over the strings is the main technical task here. It has two variants with a sixth dyad at the second or third note. The adopted technical element, metaphorically referred to as “fight”, appears in the motoric rhythm and is sequentially moved and performed by all the violin registers. For contrast, the middle section introduces a concise cantilena. In *Etude II*, which is called *Złośliwy żartowniś* (en. *Malicious Joker*) in the PWM edition, Popławski adopts a polytechnic model, juxtaposing various technical means: jumping over strings, flageolette passages (including

<sup>12</sup> I. Dubiska, *Komentarz do wydania*, [in:] Marcelli Popławski, *4 kaprysy na skrzypce i fortepian*, PWM, Kraków 1983, p. 2.

double flageolets, combined with a left-hand *pizzicato*), the *saltando* technique, difficult dyad structures reaching the twelfths (requiring a very large span of the left hand) in various configurations. Some of them are taken over directly from the scope of N. Paganini's virtuoso technique, such as: double flageolets (bar 32), left-hand *pizzicato* combined with *staccato* (bars 32, 33).



**Example 3.** Marceli Popławski, title page of the cycle *Prelude. Etudes pour violon (avec accomp. piano)* with the composer's numbering

**Example 4.** Marceli Popławski, *Etude II* (entitled in the edition: II. *Złośliwy żartowniś* (en. *Malicious Joker*), *saltando* flageolets and double flageolets with the left-hand *pizzicato*, bars 27–35

*Etude III* in A major (*Andante molto sostenuto*) highlights long *legatos* on the strings on bariolage structures (changing of strings on each note). This is the “shimmering” figures technique in a monorhythmic style, to which the composer gave the subtitle *Mondschein etude* (translated in the edition as *Poświęta księżycowa* (en. *Moonlight*). Undoubtedly, with his programme suggestion, Popławski wanted to emphasize the colour sense of the playing method used, close to the aesthetics of Impressionism.



**Example 5.** Marcei Popławski, *Etude III, Mondschein etude* (entitled in the edition: *III Poświęta księżycowa* (en. *Moonlight*), bars 28–30

*Etude IV*, (*Allegro moderato giocoso*) in F major is written in polka style. It does not have a subtitle in the manuscript (in the PWM edition – as already mentioned above – it has not been published). The technical problem is made of “bouncy” figures on the strings. Evidently the technical element containing rapid shiftings of the bow was particularly favoured by Popławski, also in other compositions. The theme of this “étude – polka” is abundantly processed using intensive chromaticism. Multiple sequential repetitions of an isolated motif, its transition to various tonal systems caused an excessive, exaggerated development of the étude, which had a negative impact on the form of the piece. Both *Etude IV* and *Etude V* have a reprise structure, with a slightly contrasting middle section. *Etude V* does not bear a subtitle in the manuscript, but in the aforementioned edition it has a programme title *Melancholia deszczu jesiennego* (en. *Melancholy of the Autumn Rain*). The metaphor in question, which makes a comparison with a natural phenomenon, is reflected in a steady *perpetuum mobile* in triple rhythmic pulse, combined with three-note figuration of the scale. I. Dubiska advises the performers which technique of the right hand should be used here:

Distinct and even *spiccato* will probably be the best way to perform it. The central syncopated movement should be played a little more calmly, with a light flying bow – as if imitating sighs (Chopin’s *Ballade in A flat major* might have been the composer’s inspiration for this section)<sup>13</sup>. [own translation]

The piano part assumes the role of harmonic accompaniment in the cycle, using simple chord structures and counterpointing motifs. The etudes in question

<sup>13</sup> I. Dubiska, op.cit.

have an inversely proportional correlation between the technical baggage and harmony: a greater range of violin technique elements (e.g. in *Etude II*) correlates with simpler harmonic means in the piano voice, and monotekhnical etudes (e.g. *Etude III*) contain a higher degree of chromaticism and a stronger modulation in the accompaniment part. Etudes are, by definition, intended to be technical exercises covering all the registers of the instrument. However, they are not devoid of artistic and stage value. In Polish violin literature, they are a late representative of the virtuoso movement, which still resounded in the first years of the 20th century. They are also certainly a testimony to Popławski's considerable skills as a violinist. Unfortunately, the materials available to me do not contain any information as to whether he was involved in concert activity. It can be assumed that his simultaneous deep involvement in pedagogical and organisational work "choked" his virtuoso ambitions. Moreover, polytechnic and law studies undertaken in his youth prove the composer's versatile interests.

Next year, 1908, brings 5 compositions. It was the time of his studies under Max Reger and simultaneously his violin studies under Hans Sitt. In his 1907 and 1908 compositions, Popławski did indeed include a very wide range of technical means. All of them were created during the composer's stay in his family estate, Pienkówka.

A short lyrical miniature with the title in French *La fleur fanée* (dated Jan 9, 1908, Mus. 2443), in a pastoral style, is similar – as for cantilena and harmonic means employed – to *Berceuse*. The miniature in E-flat major, which has a two-part aa<sub>1</sub> scheme, displays a figurative cantilena against the background of a steady "lullaby" piano accompaniment. The melodic is delicately ornamented. *La fleur fanée* belongs to the genre of *morceau caractéristique*, popular in the 19th century. Similarly, a January date (18 I 1908) is marked in the manuscript entitled *Fragment* (en. *Passage*) which has the same call number as the previous miniature. The notation analysis leads to the conclusion that it is indeed a "fragment" of a larger composition. The three-page notation displays a cantilena piece with irregular phrases, constant changeability of violin registers, extended piano texture (broad chords) and Neo-Romantic expressive convention.

A different kind of composition is represented by the diptych *Preludium i taniec "W górach"* (en. *Prelude and dance "In the mountains"*) (1 VII 1908, Mus. 2430). *Prelude* is composed in a chordal-cantilena texture. The violin voice develops from a simple phrase to a strongly figured form, with progress to an increasingly higher register. Such a development strategy in lyrical compositions was generally accepted in Romantic violin music. What is noticeable in the piano texture is the principle of doubling chord structures in the right and left hand. The dance following *Prelude* in a duple meter has a lively character and is undoubtedly a stylization of Podhale dances. This is evidenced by frequent syn-copating rhythms, a frequent use of the Lydian fourth in melodic progression. The flow of music is dominated by a motoric sixteenth-note motion and, of

course, built up by an evolutionary “spinning” of the initial theme. The violin part illustrates the playing of the lead player of a highlander folk band. The continuous sound action without rests leads to an ever-increasing intensity of chromaticism and the introduction of increasingly difficult technical means (double-note figures, octaves in the high register, *arpeggio* technique which counterpoints thematic phrases of the piano). As in his earlier compositions, the “highlander” theme develops into a broad structure in section A. The contrasting section B accentuates even more the folk archetype. There are “peasant motifs” in equal quarter and eighth notes, fifth drones in the left hand of the piano which imitate the basses of a highlander folk band.



**Example 6.** Marceł Popławski, *Dance* from the diptych “*W górach*” (en. “*In the mountains*”), bars 152–158

The four-movement *Sonata in F-sharp minor* (28 VII 1908, Mus. 2448) has two manuscripts. One of them is incomplete and contains only two movements, I and II. The individual sections are only marked with Roman numerals. The movement I (without tempo marking) is based on the initial march motif, which is repeated nearly *ostinato* in the piano part, and complemented by compact chords. The seed-motif grows into a broad structure of the first theme. The violin part enters after a broad piano introduction and undertakes figurative counterpoint. The figurative material prevails. The second theme is a variant of the first theme, and in the development it builds a rich figurative material in a similar way as in the structure of the first theme. In the development section dominated by motivic work with the technique of sequential shifts, the composer introduces virtuoso means, including brilliant passages to the highest register. The movement II (without tempo marking) has an A B A<sub>1</sub> form. The short section A presents a uniform theme in terms of material, the section B develops – in a more lively rhythmic movement – a new musical thought led to an expressive climax, and in the section A<sub>1</sub> recurs an extended thematic material. The movement III is freely shaped with the ornamental melodic of the violin, accompanied by broad

piano chords. In Movement IV, Popławski builds a sonata form, which he treats freely, introducing numerous melodic motifs in the development section. Throughout the *Sonata in F-sharp minor*, the composer builds structures of nearly a symphonic-scale, supported by a massive texture of the piano, thus creating a typical Neo-Romantic sonata. The influence of Reger's texture of composition is apparent, as he shaped the young composer's technique during the creation of the *Sonata in F-sharp minor*

Example 7. Marcei Popławski, *Sonata in F-sharp minor*, part II, bars 80–85

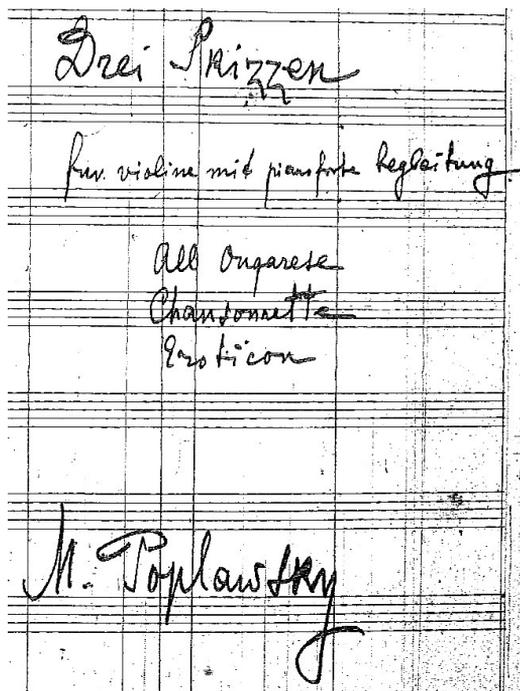
When discussing the preserved Popławski's works, reference should be made to information contained in lexicons, which provide lists of only some of them. In the list of Popławski's chamber music in the biographical note about the composer<sup>14</sup>, E. Kowalska-Zajęc mentions the *Sonata in F-major* for violin and piano, with the date 1906. She does not mention the *Sonata in F-sharp minor*. In the light of the fact that a large number of the composer's works have been destroyed, it is difficult to unequivocally verify the credibility of information provided in lexicons. This can only be done for the works whose manuscripts are available. The same biographical note provides erroneous dating of the following works: — *W górach* (en. *In the mountains*) 1904 (without genre designation); the manuscript is dated 1908;

<sup>14</sup> E. Kowalska-Zajęc, *Łódzkie środowisko kompozytorskie 1945–2000*, p.155.

- *Eroticon*, 1904; the manuscript is dated 1908;
- *3 Szkice* (en. *3 Sketches*), 1904; the manuscript is dated as above (these two items are listed as separate works whereas *Eroticon* is the third piece of the triptych *Drei Skizzen* (*3 Sketches*). In the microfilms there is also a separate manuscript of this work, apart from the triptych.
- *W słońcu* (en. *In the sun*), 1910 (without genre designation); two manuscripts of this suite come from two different years: the earlier one is dated at 1912, the later one at 1940. Popławski probably rewrote this suite many years later.

Comparative analyses of lexical sources show that the author of the aforementioned biographical note reiterated information concerning the dating of some pieces after Jan Prosnak<sup>15</sup>, although she does not mention this source in the bibliography. As bibliography she cites only a sketch by Wawrzyniec Żuławski<sup>16</sup>.

September 1908 is the date of creation of the triptych (mentioned above) with the title in German *Drei Skizzen für violino mit piano forte begleitung*, which contains three miniatures: *All Ongarese*, *Chansonette*, *Eroticon*. The German title suggests that these works were closely related to the composer's studies in Leipzig. He even wrote down in the German version: M. Poplawsky.



**Example 8.** Marceł Popławski, fragment of the title page of the triptych *Drei Skizzen* (*3 Sketches*)

<sup>15</sup> J. Prosnak, op. cit.

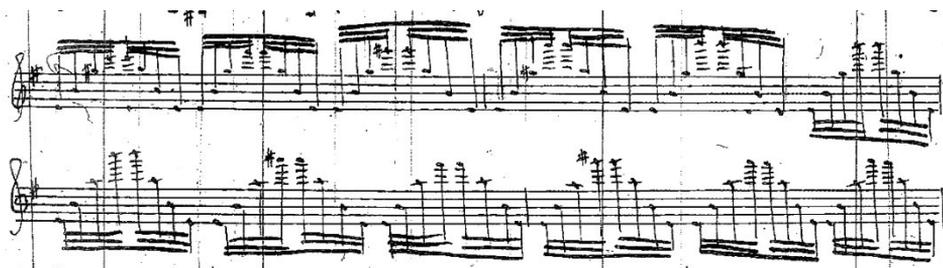
<sup>16</sup> W. Żuławski, op. cit.

In the National Library collection, each miniature has a separate call number. *Drei Skizzen* (3 Sketches) form a set of three compositions of very different expressive category. *All Ongarese* (Mus. 2444) is a stylization of the csárdás. Popławski used there a reprise arrangement of form, which is unusual for this Hungarian dance. The introductory slow movement returns at the end of the work. According to the “csárdás convention”, the slow *lassan* highlights a winding cantilena performed on the lowest G string and a syncopating harmonic backing. It flows smoothly into the vivid part, which consists of two sections: the fast-moving one and the contrasting one with a dignified broad phrasing (following V. Monti’s model). The second piece of the triptych, *Chansonette* (Mus. 2445) is a virtuoso miniature of a grotesque and also dance-like character (the stylization of polka is perceptible). Its material is constituted by various means of violin technique, used alternately, especially fast figures in thirds, figurations with artificial string harmonics. The element emphasizing the virtuoso character is the short solo cadenza before the return of the reprise.

Example 9. Marcell Popławski, *Chansonette*, bars 25–36

The third composition with a very suggestive title *Eroticon* (Mus. 2446) in a *Lento cantabile* tempo is lyrical, favouring a wide cantilena. And the composer builds it again according to “his own post-Romantic recipe”: starting from calm melodics, he gradually creates more and more vivid phrases, while progressing towards higher violin registers. As in other cantilena pieces, the piano accompaniment is based on a constant (here syncopated) rhythmic pattern.

Another piece in the chronology of preserved manuscripts is the one-movement *Sonata in E minor for solo violin* composed in 1911 (exact date: 6 VII 1911, Kijów, Mus. 2436). This composition is undoubtedly the consequence of the composer's studies in Leipzig. It should be reminded here that Reger reactivated the Baroque sonata genre for solo violin without keyboard accompaniment at the dawn of the 20th century, referring directly to Bach's model. That was probably him who inspired his student from Poland to his compositional attempt in this form. The influence of Bach's famous *Ciaccona* from the *Partita in D minor for solo violin* is strongly apparent in the *Sonata in E minor* by Popławski. It is maintained in the form of constant variations. Their basis is made of a nine-bar theme, in the form of a single leading line accompanied by chords on strong bar parts (imitating the chords in Bach's violin fugues). The theme is followed by a cycle of 10 variations flowing smoothly one into another. The factors differentiating between different variations are technical means and the rhythmic. Popławski uses polyphonic texture, octave playing, wide spread *arpeggios*, and also high registers, making a symbiosis between the Baroque original and the elements of the violin technique of Romantic origin.



Example 10. Marceł Popławski, *Sonata in E minor for solo violin*, *arpeggio* variation, bars 119–122

It should be pointed out that this sonata is the first Polish sonata for solo violin composed at the beginning of the 20th century.

1912 is the year which brings a pastiche of the Baroque suite in Popławski's compositional portfolio, which is the *Suite "W słońcu"* (en. "*In the Sun*"). It is worth reminding that it has two manuscripts. The earlier one bears the date 4 – 27 VI 1912, Granville, Mus. 2433), the second one was written many years later, during the occupation, in 1940. The composer attached great importance to dating and writing down the place where the piece was created. This is evidenced by the earlier autograph of the suite in which, after the third movement *Sarabande*, he wrote down next to the date the annotation: "between Berlin and Cologne in the Braunschweig rail carriage" [own translation]. It can be assumed that the *Suite* was probably aimed at young violinists who were still continuing their education (it does not contain virtuoso means). This is in 1912 that the composer began his pedagogical activity. The *Suite "W słońcu"* (en. "*In the sun*") consists of four movements: *Arioso*, *Minuet*, *Sarabande*, *Bourrée*. The basic genre features of the

old-time suite are preserved here, namely the metro-rhythmic contrast between the movements and tonal unity with a switching to the parallel minor key in movement II (I, III, IV: E major, II: E minor). Movements I and III in a slow tempo draw on the two-movement baroque AA<sub>1</sub> form, whereas *Minuet* and *Bourrée* adopt the ABA<sub>1</sub> scheme. The *Bourrée* deviates the most from its historical model, and in Popławski's view it inhabits the style of the grotesque with large jumps over the strings and short articulation. The whole *Suite* contains simpler elements of instrumental technique, but retains the language of extended tonality, despite the strict general tonal plan. He makes use of chromaticism to a moderate degree. Piano accompaniment with extended chords and frequent octave progressions adds more volume to the sound.

**Example 11.** Marcei Popławski, *Bourrée* from the *Suite W słońcu* (en. *In the sun*), the initial bars of the violin voice

The next two pieces date from 1913. They are: *Variations "Za tobój Lizet"* and *Reverie*, both for violin and piano. The scores are annotated in Russian, so it can be assumed that they were the echo of St. Petersburg studies. The *Variations* are earlier, and bear the date 21 V 1913 (Mus. 2437). This is another virtuoso piece in Popławski's oeuvre. It opens with a recitative introduction *Andante tranquillo*, in which the theme is announced in the form of the first phrase, repeated several times in the piano part. Improvisational figurations and paraphrases emerge from there. The broad theme of the song *Za tobój Lizet*, covering 31 bars, is intoned by the violin with a polyphonic piano accompaniment. The cycle of variations which follows comprises three dance variations. Only the first variation belongs to the ornamental variation type and is developed in a heterophonic manner (the melody in the piano entwined by the violin with sixteenth-note figurations). The *Variations II (Tempo di saltarella)* and *III (Valse)* emphasise selected technical means (*ricochets*, *staccato* passages, chord playing). The influ-

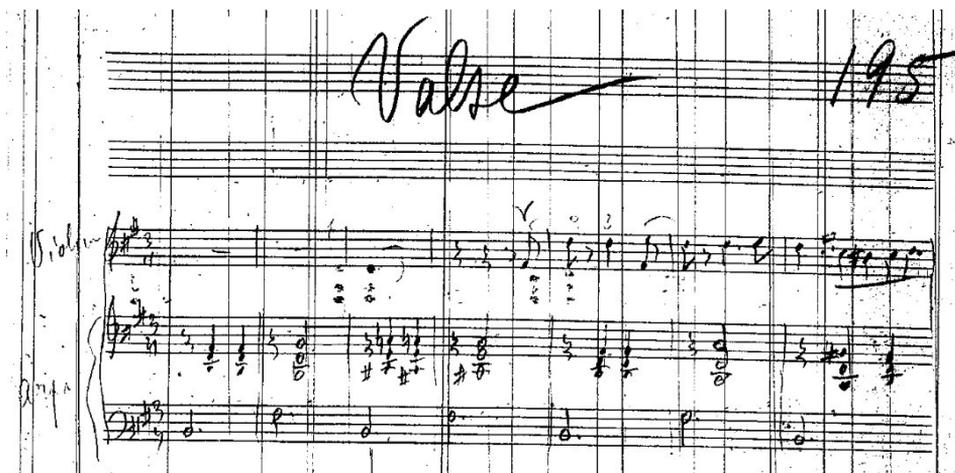
ence which can be felt in the waltz is the one of the Viennese waltz. The variation IV with the subtitle ‘Korol wiesierilsia’ (“The King is pleased”), in a simple rhythm, highlights solely the flageolet technique while the variation V is a figurative *tarantella* with pause motifs characteristic of this dance. The theme returns at the end of the piece. Inspiration from the Romantic virtuoso variation forms is incontestable here.

*Reverie* (1VIII 1913, Mus. 2450) belongs to the category of lyrical pieces. It is characterized by a more harmonically advanced sound language in comparison with the earlier pieces. From the formal point of view, it is a multi-phrase piece, containing many varieties of cantilena, with a wide use of figural ornamentation, also rich in expressive shades. In the reprise macroform, the exposition section has two thematic thoughts, and the middle section is divided into a number of smaller material-related sections. Here, Popławski uses a number of sophisticated ethereal figures against the background of chords and piano *tremolando*.

Example 12. Marceł Popławski, *Reverie*, bars 129–137

World War I found the composer in Russia. The National Library collections contain three miniatures from that period. All of them are danceable and they were composed for the violin accompanied by a harp. The change of the accompaniment instrument may have been due to practical reasons, it is likely that the composer was in contact with the harpist at the time. Of course, this is only an

assumption. The texture of the harp part is not different from the piano part texture, so perhaps the harp was supposed to be a “replacement” for the piano. The first of these, *Valse* in B minor (12 VI 1916, Arzamos – Perovo, Mus. 2441), has an interesting binary scheme of the AB form (A in B minor, B in B major). The A section is shaped by the variation technique with two-note chords using thirds, typical of Popławski’s violin compositions while the B section introduces a new thought made of an asymmetrical arrangement of phrases, and plays the role of a reminiscence or a complementary addition. With its character, it belongs to the melancholic waltz type.



**Example 13.** Marceli Popławski, *Valse* for violin and harp, first bars

*Menuetto* in F sharp minor (18 VII 1916, Mińsk, Mus. 2439) refers to the minuet from Haydn’s time. In the composer’s works, the “Haydn minuet” merges with a strongly chromatic language and polyphonic texture. The harp constantly counterpoints the solo voice, which is developed in concise melodic phrases. The genre features of the classical minuet arranged in the ABA<sub>1</sub> form are blurred by this continuity of narration typical of Popławski’s technique, devoid of rests and clear phrase endings.

The manuscript of the third piece from 1916 (specifically the harp part), *Mazurka* in F minor (29 VIII 1916, Mus. 2440) was probably written by two persons. There is a considerable difference in the handwriting between the violin and the harp voices. Nor does it have the characteristic feature closing the double bar line – mentioned at the beginning of the article – present in all other pieces. The metro-rhythmic structure, abounding with dotted rhythms, emphasises the character of the heroic mazur (the term *serioso* is used). The synthesis of the reprise form with its evolutionary development and multiplication of motifs derived from the theme and the variation technique make this work not so much a mazurka as a mazur paraphrase. The middle section, consisting of three sections in spite of the new

phrases, approaches subsequently in terms of material the first movement. The harp accompaniment is made of simple chords and arpeggios. Again, the violin voice abounds in two-note chords using thirds.

Two years later, Popławski again directs his attention to the old dance. *Rigaudon* (13 IV 1918, Pieńkówka, Mus. 2429) is the only piece of his old dances that has been published (TWMP 1933, PWM 1987, 2004). The 1978 edition in the collection *Polska miniatura skrzypcowa 1870–1939* (en. *Polish Violin miniature 1870–1939*) was accompanied by a short commentary by Adam Walaciński:

*Rigaudon* by Marcei Popławski (1882–1948), composed in 1918, was published only in 1933 by TWMP<sup>17</sup> in Warsaw. Through an intentional stylization, it successfully refers to the favourite form of French harpsichordists, but without special pastiche devices. There are also some echoes of M. Reger's "old style" violin pieces, under whom Popławski studied. The well-balanced form and clarity reveal the hand of presumably not a ground-breaking, but an experienced composer<sup>18</sup>.

The affinity with *galant* style is emphasized by frequent mordents, light motifs and clear texture.

In the autumn of 1918 another dance piece is created: *Polka* in B minor (26 X 1918, Pieńkówka, Mus. 2442), in which the composer follows the same path of the symbiosis of the dance idiom with constant motif work. The material basis is the motif, subjected to repeated structural and tonal transformations. In the narrative, a motoric sixteenth-note motion prevails and polka is transformed into danceable *perpetuum mobile*. The motoric sections function as modulation transitions. Harmony, after all still tonal, is strongly dissonant, no longer treated functionally. There are numerous chromatic shifts. Progress towards overcoming tonality is visible.

At the end of 1918 Popławski composes another *Etude*, this time for solo violin (29 XII 1918, Żytomierz, Mus. 2452). It is based solely on the figuration technique in variable articulation. In musical terms, it is less interesting than the 1907 etudes. Diversified and irregularly changing structures are a common feature that links this etude with its "predecessors".

In 1920 the composer again turns to the minuet. *Menuetto (ancient style)* was written in Warsaw (25 VII 1920, Mus. 2438). As for the form and the texture, it is similar to the previous minuet written four years before. However, it is more in line with the historical model, which is highlighted by the term "old style". It is a stylization which demonstrates the way in which the virtuoso violinist and Neo-Romanticist views the old court dance.

In the 1920s Popławski was in Toruń where he educated young musicians. Probably his further pedagogical experience and contacts with the music world influenced the creation – during this period – of a very ambitious piece entitled

<sup>17</sup> The Society for Contemporary Polish Music.

<sup>18</sup> A. Walaciński, *Noty o kompozytorach*, [in:] *Polska miniatura skrzypcowa 1870–1939*, PWM 1978, p. 72.

*Caprice for violin and piano* (8 II 1922, Toruń, Mus. 2454) dedicated to Irena Dubiska<sup>19</sup>. However experienced he was as an artist at that time, Popławski did not change his concept of the virtuoso piece and again created a composition in the convention of *perpetuum mobile*. *Caprice* has features characteristic of the previous compositions, but it shows a clear tendency to modernise the language in terms of deviation from major-minor tonality. The first manifestation of modernisation occurs already in the initial bars. It is a motoric-syncopying motif – the *motto* of the piano, recurring several times in subsequent sections of the piece, harmonically built on fourth and fifth structures. Although the narrative of the caprice is still dominated by chords built on thirds, they are not treated functionally. The main key in B minor, as well as further key changes announced by key signatures are only indicative, since the constantly applied advanced chromaticism goes beyond tonal thinking. In the motoric narrative, it freely operates on a twelve-note scale, and successive polymetry also appears. Following the example of some earlier pieces, the composer introduces a solo cadenza in the final section. The reprise form remains traditional.

Among the manuscripts examined there is also a short piece called *Melodia (en. Air)* (Mus. 2453), which has no dating. Its technical level suggests that it was written for pedagogical purposes.

## Summary

The manuscripts of Marcelli Popławski's violin works, preserved in the collections of the National Library in Warsaw, make it possible to define the compositional style and the technique profile of the violin pieces of this forgotten composer. Dance pieces feature stylizations of dances of various origins popular in the 19th century and stylisations of dances of the past. Virtuoso pieces deserve more attention. In these pieces, the composer favoured a figure and passage technique as well as a double-note technique. Frequently used two-note chords using thirds serve as a means of evolutionary development technique in all of Popławski's works (including dance and cantilena pieces). They are used in the repetition of thematic thoughts and in bridge sections.

His compositional technique is rooted in the tradition, especially in terms of the form. He makes a symbiosis between the 19th century virtuoso style and the sound language of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, strongly chromatic and using broad structures with a uniform material of the course of narration derived from thematic structures. Chromaticism and chain modulation are the factors which define the form in these structures. The singular continuity in shaping the musical narration, almost completely devoid of caesuras, causes the metro-rhyth-

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<sup>19</sup> *Caprice* was published by PWM in 1946.

mic features of the originals to blur in dance pieces. The rhythmic pattern of a given dance continues at the level of a single structure and is sequentially repeated by Popławski, presented in various registers and keys. By merging the dance idiom with the Neo-Romantic type of narration in structures, he achieves a higher degree of stylization of commonly known dances. The feature which I called “permanent evolution” appears in all the pieces, of course also in the sonatas. However, the excessive repeatability of motif structures, which results from this method of shaping, leads to the lengthiness of the course of musical narration, which in turn has a negative impact on the form proportions. The fourth etude from the *Prelude. Etudes* collection which grows to over 300 bars is the most striking example.

Another feature that characterizes the compositional technique is a constantly wavy line of the melody, also in figurative passages. On the one hand, this is a typical feature of the Art Nouveau music (a winding line with a wavy shape), while on the other hand in Popławski’s compositions it results from the concept of involving all the instrument’s registers into the shaping process. The use of means of violin technique displays the principle of gradation of their difficulty as the piece develops.

The piano part is treated in a very standard way. The composer employs different types of texture, from simple accompaniment, through polyphoning counterpoint to massive vertical chords.

Out of 19 violin compositions available in the manuscript collection only 3 have been published. It can be assumed that the composer himself did not seek to popularise or perform them. Yet they are noteworthy due to their good artistic quality. They are a Neo-Romantic continuation of the virtuoso movement in Polish violin music, rooted in the compositional style of Feliks Janiewicz, Karol Lipiński, Apolinary Kański, Henryk Wieniawski. They can certainly be interesting for performers in search of a new repertoire that has not yet been performed. To sum up, Marceł Popławski’s compositions of various genres should be regarded as the last stage of the late Romantic virtuoso movement in Polish violin literature and also as an important bridge between the widely known Henryk Wieniawski’s compositional output and the visionary violin works by Karol Szymanowski.

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## Rękopisy utworów skrzypcowych Marceliego Popławskiego ze zbiorów Biblioteki Narodowej w Warszawie

### Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia nieznaną kompozycję zapomnianego polskiego twórcy, pedagoga i organizatora życia muzycznego, działającego w I połowie XX wieku, w różnych ośrodkach w Polsce i za granicą. Główną treść poprzedza rys biograficzny, sporządzony na podstawie biogramów encyklopedycznych i leksykalnych. Omówienie w większości niepublikowanych utworów, które zachowały się w rękopisach, przeprowadzone zostało na podstawie źródłowych badań własnych oraz w oparciu o dwa komentarze wydawnicze. W rozwiązaniu głównej problematyki zastosowano deskryptywną metodę analizy dzieła muzycznego, ukierunkowaną na formę muzyczną, w tym na technikę kompozytorską z uwzględnieniem specyfiki gry skrzypcowej oraz strony wyrazowej. Prezentacja dotyczy 22 kompozycji M. Popławskiego: *Berceuse* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1906; *Prelude. Etudes pour violon avec accomp. piano*, 1907; *Preludium i Taniec „W górach”* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1908; *La fleur fanée* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1908, *Fragment* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1908; *Sonata fis-moll* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1908; *Drei Skizzen* na skrzypce i fortepian: *All Ongarese, Chansonete, Eroticon*, 1908; *Sonata e-moll* na skrzypce solo, 1911; *Suita „W słońcu”* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1912; *Wariacje „Za tobą Lizet”* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1913; *Reverie* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1913; *Valse* na skrzypce i harfę, 1916; *Menuetto* na skrzypce i harfę, 1916; *Mazurka* na skrzypce i harfę, 1916; *Rigaudon* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1918; *Polka* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1918; *Etude* na skrzypce solo, 1918; *Menuetto (styl ancien)* na

skrzypce i fortepian, 1920; *Caprice* na skrzypce i fortepian, 1922; *Melodia* na skrzypce i fortepian, bez datowania.

Przeprowadzone analizy pozwoliły na następujące konstatacje dotyczące twórczości M. Popławskiego:

- dorobek kompozytora obejmuje utwory różnych gatunków (taneczne, liryczne, wirtuozowskie, sonaty) i plasuje się w stylu neoromantycznym;
- technika kompozytorska wyróżnia się zasadą „permanentnej ewolucji” w kształtowaniu narracji muzycznej, z zastosowaniem intensywnej chromatyki;
- w późniejszych utworach występują tendencje do modernizacji języka dźwiękowego;
- zachowana twórczość M. Popławskiego stanowi ostatni etap późnoromantycznego nurtu wirtuozowskiego w polskiej literaturze wiolinistycznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polska muzyka skrzypcowa, neoromantyzm w muzyce polskiej, gatunki muzyki skrzypcowej, Marceli Popławski.