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## Joseph Woelfl — Life and Artistic Activity

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# Ewa Bogula

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UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

## Joseph Woelfl<sup>1</sup>—Life and Artistic Activity

### Abstract

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The present article constitutes an introduction to the artistic profile of Austrian composer and piano virtuoso Joseph Woelfl. This forgotten creative personality left an artistic legacy of instrumental music, stage works, numerous orchestral compositions, piano concertos, a concerto for piano and violin, and a chamber concerto. Beyond this, he wrote numerous other chamber works scored for various ensembles; but above all, he created an array of works for solo piano or two pianos, as well as piano pieces of pedagogical character.

The artist was born on 24 December 1773 in Salzburg, where he began his musical education. In 1790, he left his hometown of Salzburg and, probably following in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's footsteps, set out

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<sup>1</sup> In the following work I have decided to use the spelling of the surname that since 1793 was used by the artist himself. The earliest known document with his signature with the spelling “Joseph Woelfl” can be found in the further mentioned request for the permission to give a public concert on the 9th November 1793 in the Grodno Theatre. However, I use the surname of the family members with the original spelling, i.e. Wölfl. In literature it can be also found in the wrong variants of spelling: Wölffl and Woelffl.

for Vienna. He did not remain there long, however, because in 1791, he was accepted for service to Prince Michał Kleofas Ogiński in Warsaw. The pianist-composer returned to Vienna probably ca 1795. He set out on his next conquest of European cities in 1799. This period of tours lasted until 1801. At this time he visited, among other cities, Prague, Leipzig, Berlin, Hamburg and Dresden. In 1801, he arrived in Paris, where he spent the next four years of his life. In 1805, he left the French capital and set out for London, where he remained until his death. He passed away on 21 May 1812.

In his intensive artistic career, Joseph Woelfl devoted himself mainly to piano performance and composition; beyond this, he also engaged in pedagogical activity. His abundant artistic output is nearly forgotten today, so it is worthwhile to remind a broader audience of this distinguished figure.

## Keywords

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Joseph Woelfl, piano, virtuosity, brilliant style, Salzburg, Vienna, Warsaw, Paris, London

## Early years in Salzburg (1773–1791)

Johann Paul Wölfl—Joseph Woelfl’s father—came from a poor noble family. He graduated from law, and in 1769 was appointed to a position of cavalry of Prince of Salzburg Archbishop Sigismund III von Schrattenbach as a director and was recognised as the most skilled, although the youngest court’s official holding this position. A year after that, in 1770, he got promoted and received a function of “superrevisions supernumerarius”<sup>2</sup> (accountant), and when the new archbishop, prince Hieronymus Joseph Colloredo took office, he was also appointed to the more important position of a tax collector—“Hofumgelter”.<sup>3</sup> In consequence of getting promoted, Johann Paul Wölfl was given a service flat in St Peter’s convent, where Michael Haydn also lived, being the court organist and Kapellmeister of Arch-

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<sup>2</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *Joseph Woelfl. Verzeichnis seiner Werke*, Wien 2011, p. XLV.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

bishop Colloredo at that time.<sup>4</sup> On the 3rd November 1770 Johann Paul Wölfl married Theresia von Sechzern *née* Preusin, a widow of Johann Bernhard von Sechzern. Richard Baum in the biography of Joseph Woelfl, published in 1928, writes that the flat belonging to the Wölfl family was located probably over the Michael Haydn's flat, and in this place, on the 24th December 1773 at 10:30 a.m., Joseph Johann Baptist Woelfl was born.<sup>5</sup>



Illus. 1: Johann Gottfried Scheffner, *Joseph Woelfl*, the plate based on the painting of Friedrich von Amerling.

It is not exactly known how old Joseph Woelfl was when he started his musical education. Researchers discussing the composer's biography, including Margit Haider-Dechant, say that at the age of seven he appeared as a violinist in a public concert.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is inter-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> R. Baum, *Joseph Wölfl (1773–1812). Leben, Klavierwerke, Klavierkammermusik und Klavierkonzerte*, Kassel 1928, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. XLVI.

esting that the future composer began his career playing the violin, but this instrument—as the artist’s further career path indicates—has never been in the centre of his musical interests. In any case, he had to start learning to play the instrument much earlier. We also have information that ten-year-old Joseph was a student at the Kapellhaus music school, which was funded by the Archbishop of Salzburg. The school employed the most prominent musicians who were active in the city at that time. In Kapellhaus young musicians were trained in plainchant and figural singing; the violin, harpsichord and organ playing were taught as well. The school also emphasized the general education of the students and attached importance to their religious attitude. Moreover, the future of the students was taken care of—they were additionally rewarded for the service in the churches, and the money they earned was put as a deposit, given later to the student when he left the school. In the years 1783–1786, when young Woelfl attended music lessons at Kapellhaus, among the teachers there were Thaddäus Hofmann, who was a choral vicar in the years 1780–1806; tenor Karl Schulz, a teacher of singing in the years 1783–1787; soprano Franz Cecerelli, a teacher of figural singing in the years 1783–1788; Leopold Mozart, a piano and violin teacher in the years 1744–1786; additionally, concertmasters Ferdinand Seydl and Michael Haydn, as well as Andrea Pinzger, holding the function of a first courtviolinist of the court chapel.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the letters of Leopold Mozart and his daughter Maria Anna, it is known that in addition to the regular education at Kapellhaus, Woelfl also attended private lessons in the Mozart family’s house. His violin teacher was Leopold Mozart, and Maria Anna, known as Nannerl, probably taught him to play the piano. A few years later in Vienna, Woelfl dedicated her his *Troi Sonates pour le Forte-piano seul* Op. 3.<sup>8</sup>

The frequent presence of the young Woelfl in the Mozarts’ house is confirmed by Leopold’s preserved letters and notes from the diary of Maria Anna, in which Woelfl was mentioned for the first time on the 29th July 1783.<sup>9</sup> Nannerl writes in the diary that young Woelfl and

<sup>7</sup> R. Baum, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> The dedication is as follows: “Gewidmet Mme. Anne de Sonnenburg, née Mozart”; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> The diary of Maria Anna Mozart, the note from 29–30.07.1783; after: *Mozart. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, Gesamtausgabe*, W.A. Bauer, O.E. Deutsch (eds.), revised ed., Kassel 2005, Vol. 3, 1780–1786, p. 282 (No. 761).

his father, Johann Paul, went to Michalbeuren.<sup>10</sup> In Mozart's letters, Woelfl is referred to as "Seperl" or "Seperl Wölfl". The term "Seperl" is a diminutive form of the name Joseph. In the letters the form "der Verwalter Seperl" also appears, which is a result of the combination of Woelfl's name with the position of his father.<sup>11</sup> It is also known that from December 1783 to September 1785 the young pianist had 236 music lessons in this family's house. This is evidenced by the letter of Leopold Mozart, who in October 1785 wrote to his daughter:

In the new year two years passed since his father [Johann Paul Wölfl] has not paid anything, he visited me eight days ago and according to his notes the bill for all lesson was for 47 f 12 Xr. [...] It's a nonsense. [...] You clearly see that many lessons were not recorded, besides I always taught the boy for a 1.5 or 2 hours.<sup>12</sup>

The Leopold Mozart's bitter tone not only indicates that there were more lessons that Woelfl's father noted, but also that there were long and intense.

Without doubt, when living in Salzburg Joseph Woelfl very often visited Mozart family, not only to take piano lessons, but also he participated in the family musical life. What is more, in 1785 he took part in the performance of the opera *Die Dorfdeputierten* written by Johann Lukas Schubauer<sup>13</sup> with the text of Gottlob Ephraim Hermann,

<sup>10</sup> Today Michaelbeuern. It is a small town located approx. 30 km north of Salzburg, known mainly for the 8th-century Benedictine convent. *Vide*: [http://www.salzburg.com/wiki/index.php/Benediktinerabtei\\_Michaelbeuern](http://www.salzburg.com/wiki/index.php/Benediktinerabtei_Michaelbeuern) [accessed: 25.02.2016].

<sup>11</sup> Since 1784 the composer's father served as the administrator at St John's hospital (*Verwalter des St. Johannes-Spitals*) in Mülln, suburbs of Salzburg at that time, *vide*: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 6, *Kommentar*, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> Orig. "Aufs neue jahr sinds 2 Jahre, dass sein Vater nichts bezahlt hatte, und er war vor 8 Tag bey mir und nach sejner [sic] notierten Lecktionen Rechnung betrug die ganze Zeit nur 47 f 12 Xr. [...] Das ist also Quark. [...] viele Lecktionen nicht aufgeschrieben worden, siehst du augenscheinlich, wo überdas den Buben alzeit anderhalb stunden, und 2 Stund [sic] meistens unter handen hatte". The letter from Leopold Mozart to Nannerl from 27.10.1785; as cited in: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 436 (No. 892).

<sup>13</sup> Johann Lukas Schubauer (1749–1815) a German composer and a doctor. He was famous mainly as a composer of Singspiels. The opera *Die Dorfdeputierten* is his most famous work, which had the premiere on 3rd May 1783 in Monachium. *Vide*: H. Ulrich, *Schubauer, Johann Lukas*, [in:] *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Personenteil*, L. Finscher (ed.), Vol. 15, Kassel 2006, p. 70–71.

based on the comedy *Il Feudatorio* created by Carl Goldoni.<sup>14</sup> In the letter from Leopold Mozart to Nannerl from December 1786 we read: “Der Verwalter Sepperl [Joseph Woelfl] would like to [...] get his copy of *Dorfdeputierten* back, because when he plays, he cannot play it well from memory”.<sup>15</sup> Mozarts also mention Johann Paul Wöflf many times. As Leopold wrote, he was frequently ill and he was not supposed to live long.<sup>16</sup>

The notes written by Leopold and Nannerl witness that the relations between Wöflf family and Mozarts were friendly. Joseph began learning to play at their house at the age of nine. The latest part from Mozart’s correspondence regarding young musician comes from February 1787.<sup>17</sup>

On the 28th May 1787 Leopold Mozart died, what probably meant the that the new stage in the life of Joseph Woelfl started. It can be assumed that due to the voice mutation he also had to leave Kapellhaus. For three years—from 1786 to 1788—he was also a student of the Benedictine university in Salzburg.<sup>18</sup> There is no information about him until 1790, when the seventeen-year-old musician left Salzburg for the first time, to set off through Vienna on almost an endless journey through Europe.

### Polish episode (1791–1795)

Johann Paul Wöflf decided to send his son after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Vienna<sup>19</sup>. It also appears that Joseph Woelfl in 1791 went with Mozart to Prague, where he gave a concert. He was mentioned there as the young pianist “W”. Mozart was supposed to have said

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<sup>14</sup> *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 6, *Kommentar*, p. 233.

<sup>15</sup> Orig. “Der Verwalter Sepperl möchte [...], das *Dorfdeputierten* Büchl zurück haben, weil er, wenn er spielt, nicht mehr recht auswendig kann”. *Vide*: the letter from Leopold Mozart to Nannerl from 1.12.1786; as cited in: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 616 (No. 1007).

<sup>16</sup> The letter from Leopold Mozart to Nannerl from 10.1784; as cited in: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 350 (No. 826).

<sup>17</sup> The letter from Nannerl to Leopold Mozart from 02.1787; as cited in: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, 1787–1857, p. 32 (No. 1007).

<sup>18</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. XLIX–L.

<sup>19</sup> R. Baum, *op. cit.*, p. 12.



then: “The young man plays very well indeed, but he does not owe me anything— maybe rather to my sister”.<sup>20</sup> This information not only indicates that eighteen-year-old Woelfl already had high playing skills; it also debunks the myth that often appears in the literature that—together with Leopold—Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was also Joseph’s teacher.

Unfortunately, we do not know exactly how the relationship between the young musician and the master of the Classicism looked like. It is probable, however, that it was Wolfgang Amadeus who recommended Woelfl to the Polish prince Michał Kleofas Ogiński.<sup>21</sup> In Ogiński’s service Woelfl spent about fifteen months in the years 1791–1792.<sup>22</sup> The information that Mozart recommended the young musician to Ogiński, although unconfirmed, is repeated many times in the subject literature.<sup>23</sup> Prince Ogiński, born in 1765, was eight years older than his teacher. He proved to be a talented composer, as well as extremely sensitive and open for music man, what is evidenced by his *Listy o muzyce* (Eng. *Letters about music*), in which he describes not only his musical tastes, but also numerous experiences connected with frequent journeys. He knew many musicians-instrumentalists personally, as well as the greatest masters of composition, including Joseph Haydn, while in Vienna he took part in an unknown visit together with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, what happened “about three years before his death” (i.e. probably in 1788).<sup>24</sup> Ogiński added that he did not have the opportunity to talk to the famous musician,

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<sup>20</sup> Orig. “Der junge Mann spielt recht brav, aber ich habe keinen Antheil daran; vielleicht hat er etwa von meiner Schwester profitiert”. Vide: G.N. Nissen, *Biographie W.A. Mozarts*, Leipzig 1828; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. L; Edward Holmes, *The Life of Mozart*, New York 2005, p. 273.

<sup>21</sup> Olga Baird supposes that the similar recommendation could have be handed in to the uncle of Michał Kleofas—the prince Michał Kazimierz Ogiński. Vide: O. Baird, *Joseph Woelfl in Warsaw: His Polish Patrons, Pupils, Addressees and Friends*, [in:] “The Musical Times” 159 (2018), No. 1942, pp. 68–70.

<sup>22</sup> Compare: M.K. Ogiński, *Listy o muzyce*, T. Strumiłło (ed.), Kraków 1956, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> *Woelfl Joseph*, [in:] *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Quellen-Lexikon der Musiker und musikgelehrten*, R. Eitner (ed.), Vol. 10, Leipzig 1904, reels 286–288; vide also: A. Chybiński, *Woelffl Joseph*, [in:] *Słownik muzyków dawnej Polski do roku 1800*, Kraków 1949, p. 138; H. Feicht, *Musikalische Beziehungen zwischen Wien und Warschau zur Zeit der Wiener Klassiker*, “Studien zur Musikwissenschaft” 25 (1962), p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> M.K. Ogiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–125.



because he left the salon earlier. On the basis of the prince's memoirs, showing his extensive contacts with the elite of the world of music of that time, a hypothesis could be drawn that he could get to know someone from Mozart's environment, who would mediate in the often mentioned recommendation. Nor can it be excluded that the prince met Joseph Woelfl himself and offered him this job directly during his many journeys, in one of the salons of Vienna.

The history remembers Michał Kleofas Ogiński mainly as a polonaise master. Alina Żórawska-Witkowska draws attention to the fact that it was during the cooperation with Woelfl that Ogiński's first compositions belonging to this genre were created.<sup>25</sup> Also during his stay in Poland Woelfl wrote a polonaise, which is a part of his sonata (in a catalogue prepared by Margit Haider-Dechant marked as Frühwerk 7 [Fw 7]),<sup>26</sup> played during a public concert in Warsaw in 1792.<sup>27</sup> Many years later Ogiński mentioned his pedagogue very flatteringly:

Woelfl was in my service for around 15 months in Warsaw, in 1791 and 1792. Later he became very popular in Paris, London and many other capitals as a composer and performer of his works, which presented many difficulties for pianists who did not have as long fingers as he had; he was able to perform the scales with rulands and tenth chords with the greatest ease.<sup>28</sup>

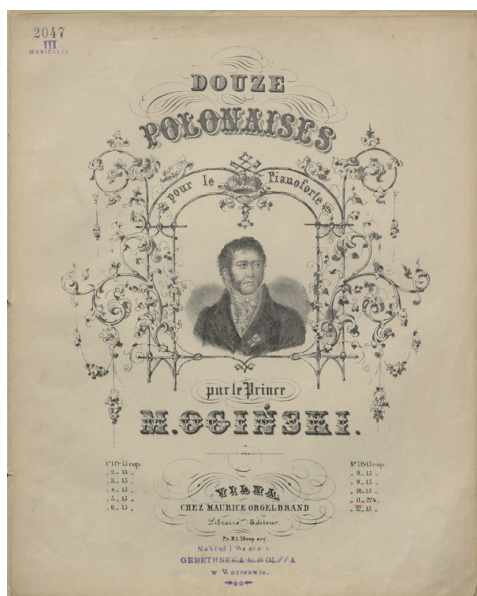
Ogiński, writing these words many years after finishing the cooperation with Woelfl, did not only mention the musician with great sentiment, but also knew his later successes as a composer and piano virtuoso in Europe.

<sup>25</sup> A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *The Musical Life in Warsaw at Wöfl's Time (1791–1795)*, "Joseph Woelfl-Almanach" 2012/13, M. Haider-Dechant, H. Dechant (eds.), p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> Margit Haider-Dechant in the catalogues of the composer's works *Joseph Woelfl. Verzeichnis seiner Werke* uses the following marks for the compositions: works with opus number—op., early works—Fw, works without opus number—WoO.

<sup>27</sup> L. Bernacki, *Teatr, dramat i muzyka za Stanisława Augusta*, Vol. 1, *Źródła i materiały*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 367–368.

<sup>28</sup> Orig. "Woelfl był w mojej służbie w ciągu jakiś 15 miesięcy w Warszawie, w latach 1791 i 1792. Później dał się poznać bardzo korzystnie w Paryżu, Londynie i wielu innych stolicach jako kompozytor i wykonawca swych utworów, które przedstawiały wiele trudności dla pianistów nie posiadających tak długich jak on palców; był on w stanie wykonywać z największą łatwością gamy z rulantami oraz akordy decymowe". As cited in: M.K. Ogiński, *op. cit.*, p. 97.



Illus. 2: Michał Kleofas Ogiński, *Douze polonaises pour le pianoforte*, Vilnius, the Bookshop and Store of Scores of Maurice Orgelbrand, ca 1864. Copy: National Library of Poland, cat. No. Muz. 2047 III.

In 1792 Woelfl left the Ogiński court and settled in Warsaw, where he acted as a piano teacher, probably independent on the prince. It is unknown when Woelfl left Warsaw. It is likely that he stayed there for the next three years, until the Third Partition of Poland in 1795. He gained fame very quickly in the city as he became a known and well-paid pedagogue, teaching magnate youth and children of noble families.<sup>29</sup> Heinz Wolfgang Haman reports that he was a music teacher of the son of a banker from Warsaw, Peter Tepper von Ferguson.<sup>30</sup> However, it is not exactly known which one of the many Ferguson children was taught by Woelfl, Olga Baird supposes that it could be Ludwig-Wilhelm Tepper von Ferguson. She doubts that Tepper von Ferguson received systematic music lessons from Woelfl but they could

<sup>29</sup> A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *Muzyka na dworze i w teatrze Stanisława Augusta*, Warszawa 1995, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> H.W. Hamann, *Wölfl Joseph*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 20, London 1980, p. 508.

participated in salon concerts together.<sup>31</sup> She named also Catarina-Antonina Schroeder, daughter of Jerzy-Anthony Schroeder, as one of the possible Woelfl's pupil in Warsaw.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the pedagogical activity, Woelfl also gave concerts in the capital of Poland. The poster from the 11th September 1792 reports that Joseph Woelfl, "a teacher of clavichord, who is still planning to give lessons in this capital", performed during the concert of an outstanding Viennese clarinetist, Anton Stadler, a friend of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. During the concert Woelfl played an unspecified piano concerto.<sup>33</sup> Just over a month after the first public appearance, Woelfl again presented himself to the Warsaw audience. This time, however, he became the main performer of the concert. The poster announcing the event stated:

26. [October] Friday. Concert by Mr. Woelfl, composer and a teacher of clavichord. 1. Symphony, composer Hayden 2. Mr. Woelfl will play the piano concerto, his own composition. 3. Mr. Endler<sup>34</sup> will play the harmonica sonata. 4. Mr. Woelfl will play a sonata with a new polonaise, his own composition. 5. Symphony. 6. Mr. Endler will play a rondo. 7. Mr. Woelfl will play a very famous piano Cos-sack, with 10 variations, his own composition. 8. Symphony, composed by Pleyel.<sup>35</sup> A brand-new piano made by Schweinfleisch.<sup>36</sup> Entrance 6 złote. Mr. Woelfl (Marywil 8, 2nd floor) has the tickets. Beginning at 6 o'clock.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> O. Baird, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–74.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Orig. "metr klawikorda, który zmyśla jeszcze dawać lekcyę w tej stolicy". As cited in: L. Bernacki, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelm Gottfried Endler, he played the glass harmonica in the sunny theatre; A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> Ignaz Joseph Pleyel (1757–1831) – the Austrian composer and the piano builder. Vide: M. Cranmer, *Pleyel, Ignace Joseph*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 19, London 2001, pp. 918–922.

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Schweinfleisch—the court organ builder of Stanisław August, responsible for the piano tuning and repair at the court, as well as a piano builder.

<sup>37</sup> Orig. "26. [października] Piątek. Koncert p. Woelfla, kompozytora i metra klawikordu. 1. Symfonia, kompozycyi Hayden 2. P. Woelfl odegra koncert na fortepianie swojej kompozycyi. 3. P. Endler odegra sonatę na harmonice. 4. P. Woelfl odegra sonatę z nową polonezą, własnej kompozycyi. 5. Symfonia. 6. P. Endler odegra rondo. 7. P. Woelfl odegra na fortepianie kozaka bardzo sławnego, z 10 waryacjami, swojej kompozycyi. 8. Symfonia, kompozycyi Pleyela. Fortepian zrobiony

Margit Haider-Dechant states that in both cases he is probably talking about the same lost piano concerto and gives it number Fw 9 in the catalogue of Woelfl's works. Also other Woelfl's compositions from the poster have not been preserved, i.e. sonata with a polonaise, probably composed in time of service at the Ogiński court (Fw 7) and a Cossack with ten variations, after which also no traces have been preserved (Fw 8).

Another trace of Joseph Woelfl's musical activity dates from 1793. At that time the musician stayed in Grodno, where he performed in the public theatre in autumn. The departure of Woelfl from Warsaw probably was connected with the debates of the last parliament session of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which took place in Grodno from 17th June to the 23th November 1793. A new ambassador of Russia, Jakob Johann Sievers, induced King Stanisław August to call the parliament by the Neman river. Aware of the consequences, the king agreed to the Russia's conditions and on the 22th July 1793, the Sejm delegation in Grodno signed another partition treaty.<sup>38</sup>

At Grodno Theatre, which activity was controlled by the Grand Marshal of the Crown Michał Jerzy Wandalin Mniszech (Mniszek),<sup>39</sup> instrumental and vocal concerts were organized alongside the stage plays. On the 9th November 1793 Joseph Woelfl asked for permission for giving a public concert.<sup>40</sup> The request was written in Polish, so the composer probably did not prepare it. However, he signed it himself. There we read:

**Benevolent Lord. When I was voyaging in various countries, I entertained the audience playing instrumental concerts. From these**

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wcale nowo przez Schweinfleischa. Wstęp 6 zł. Biletu u P. Woelfl (Marywil 8, II.p). Początek o godz. 6-tej". The poster in Polish and French. As cited in: L. Bernacki, *op. cit.*, pp. 367–368.

<sup>38</sup> Z. Jędrzychowski, *Teatra grodzieńskie 1784–1864*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 46–47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Orig. "Jaśnie Wielmożny Panie Dobrodzieju. Wojażując po różnych kraich zabawiałem publiczność wydawaniem koncertów instrumentalnych. Z tych tedy okoliczności do Grodna zbliżyłem się abym podobnież przez czas jaki mógł Publiczność zabawić. Przeto [słowo nieczytelne] względów Jego Pana Dobrodzieja aby mi dane było pozwolenie od Jurysdykcji Jego Pana wydawania koncertów na Teatrze Grodzieńskim. Jego Pana Dobrodzieja Najniższy Sługa. Joseph Woelfl". *Kniga raznych zajawlenij i raportow w Marszałkowskom sudie*, 1793, Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius, cat. No. D.A. 4204, card 424.

circumstances, I approached Grodno so that I would be able to entertain the audience. Therefore [the word illegible] for the reasons of His Lordship let me be given permission from the Jurisdiction of His Lord to give concerts at the Grodno Theatre. His Lordship's Servant. Joseph Woelfl.

Woelfl received a positive answer, the document was signed and a concert permitted on the 9th November 1793 by J. Sobolewski—a marshal's judge.

The request kept in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius is at the same time the first document signed by the composer, where he uses the changed spelling of his name “Woelfl” instead of the earlier “Wöflf”.

It is not known when the musician finally left the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Another trace of Woelfl's activity appears in 1795 and confirms his return to Vienna. The composer brought a lot of wealth accumulated over the years of his stay in Poland. Everything seems to indicate that Woelfl was living quite well here, and the reason for his decision to leave the country must have been the Partitions of Poland and the related problems.

### **Vienna (1795–1799)**

After returning from Poland, Joseph Woelfl quickly entered the life of the European capital of music—Vienna. On the 21th October 1795, the premiere of his first opera, singspiel *Der Höllenberg* (in the catalogue by Margit Haider-Dechant WoO 2), composed to the libretto written by Emanuel Schikaneder, took place at the Theater auf der Wieden. *Der Höllenberg, oder Prüfung und Lohn* is a grand heroic-comic opera in two acts, consisting of an overture and twenty five numbers.<sup>41</sup> According to Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried,

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<sup>41</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 184–185; Hermann Dechant, *Joseph Woelfl as Operista*, “Joseph Woelfl-Almanach” 2012/13, M. Haider-Dechant, H. Dechant (eds.), p. 11.

the work was staged in Vienna nineteen times in addition to the premiere, the last time on the 8th March 1799.<sup>42</sup>

Soon after the premiere of Woelfl's first stage work, this time at the Viennese Hoftheater, another opera was performed—*Das Schöne Milchmädchen, oder Der Guckkasten* (WoO 3), composed to the libretto written by Joseph Richter. This one-act comic operetta consists of an overture and fourteen musical numbers.<sup>43</sup> A year later, on the 3th of December 1797, the third singspiel by the composer, *Der Kopf ohne Mann* (WoO 6), was staged at the Theater auf der Wieden. The libretto of this two-act heroic-comic opera was created by Joachim Perinet, and its action takes place at the gates of Vienna in 1529.<sup>44</sup> Later that year, on the 26th March, Woelfl's music resounded again at the Theater auf der Wieden. This time there was presented a two-act singspiel-pasticcio *Liebe macht kurzen Prozess, oder Heirath auf gewisse Art* (WoO 12), again to the libretto written by Joachim Perinet. In addition to Joseph Woelfl, who created the greater part of the score, the others that should be mentioned are Johann Henneberg, Matthias Stegmeier, Franz Anton Hoffmeister, Jakob Haibel, Joseph Triebensee, Franz Xaver Süßmayr and Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried.

The Viennese career of the young composer was extremely successful, and he was gaining flattering opinions in the press at the time. As an example, a brief mention from the 24th March 1799 can be cited, which was published in "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung":

Of the new operas that have been here [in Vienna] awarded with special applause and stand out from other works, *Das Sotteraneo* or *Das Burgverlies* by [Ferdinand] Pär, *Falstaff ossia Le tre burle* by [Antonio] Salieri and *Kopf ohne Mann* by Wölfl can be mentioned.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> S. Puderlitschek, *Das Freyhaus-Theater auf der Wieden. Das Tagebuch von Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried 1795 bis 12. 1801*, MA thesis, Universität Wien, Wien 1997; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>43</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>45</sup> Orig. "Von den neuen Opera, welche hier mit Beyfall gegeben worden sind, und worunter sich besonders das *Sotteraneo* oder das *Burgverlies* von Pär, *Falstaff o sia Le tre burle* von Salieri, und der *Kopf ohne Mann* von Wölfl". Vide: "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 24.03.1799, p. 448.

In connection with the presence of Woelfl on the Vienna stages and in the concert halls there, the composer's name was appearing more and more often in the German-language music press. The reviews of his works have been published on a regular basis in "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", which since November 1798 also frequently wrote about the musician's achievements and provided information about his new prints, even a few years after Woelfl's death. The composer was judged there not only as the author of stage works. He more and more often performed in Vienna as a piano virtuoso.

Among many musical and compositional achievements of Joseph Woelfl, none has brought him such great fame and glory as an unforgettable artistic duel with Ludwig van Beethoven.<sup>46</sup> It was this rivalry and attempts to compare the skills of two piano virtuosos that led to the division of the Viennese society. Musicians were confronted with each other before their official meeting, and the citizens of Vienna began to divide into the supporters of the first or the second of them. Among those interested there were famous figures, such as Count Karl von Lichnovsky, who supported Beethoven, or Baron Raimund Wetzlar von Plankenstern, who was favourable to Woelfl. In the Plankenstern's villa, near the imperial palace of Schönbrunn, in the spring of 1798 a duel between two musicians took place.

Ignaz von Seyfried, a witness of the event, noticed that Ludwig van Beethoven, known in Vienna for some time, was considered as a great pianist and for a long time had no decent opponent in the city. The conflict created by constant comparisons between the two musicians caused, according to Seyfried, a specific division of music lovers, reminiscent of the Parisian dispute between the Gluckists and Piccinists. Richard Baum cites the mentioned Seyfried's relation:

Each pianist presented his latest spiritual achievements; he let himself be carried away, the first or the second, the temporary inspirations of his fiery fantasy, unrestrained speed; they both sat down to two pianos and improvised alternately on the subjects they were asked, and they created *Capriccio* for four hands, which if it had been written paper at the moment of creation, it would certainly face im-

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<sup>46</sup> Tia DeNora, *The Beethoven-Wöfl Piano Duel: Aesthetic Debates and Social Boundaries*, [in:] *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius. Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803*, Berkeley 1995, pp. 147–169.



permanence. In technical terms, it was difficult to give priority to one of them. Woelfl was so gifted with huge hands by generous Nature, that he spanned the tenth with such ease that others needed for an octave, which enabled him to run sequences of double-stopping arpeggios at given intervals at lightning speed. [...] Woelfl, raised in a Mozart school, always remained the same; never shallow, but clear and therefore more accessible; art served him as a means to achieve the goal, in no case as a decoration and a dummy of dry erudition.<sup>47</sup>

This description contains numerous praises for Woelfl, as he was recognized as a winner of the duel. It is known, however, that Beethoven also highly valued the young rival. On the other hand, Woelfl regarded Beethoven as a master and dedicated to him his three sonatas for piano Op. 6 (1799). Two years later, when he heard about the alleged death of the Great Master, he wrote to his editor: “Has Beethoven died, you must give me more precise information, I would regret it immensely because we were both *amici* and *rivali*”.<sup>48</sup>

The greater objectivity was presented by the author of the review in “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” from the 15th May 1799, presenting the figures of Viennese piano virtuosos. Among the best

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<sup>47</sup> Orig. “Jeder trug seine jüngste Geistesproducte vor; bald ließ der Eine oder der Andere den momentanen Eingebungen seiner glühenden Phantasie freyen, ungezügelt Lauf; Bald setzten sich Beide an zwei Pianoforte, improvisierten wechselseitig über gegenseitig sich angegebene Themas und schufen also gar manches vierhändige *Capriccio*, welches hätte es im Augenblicke der Geburt zu Papier gebracht werden können. An mechanischer Geschicklichkeit dürfte es schwer, vielleicht unmöglich gewesen sein, einem der Kämpfer vorzugsweise die Siegespalme zu verleihen; ja, Wölfl war von der gütigen Natur noch mütterlicher bedacht indem sie ihn mit einer Riesenhand ausstattete, die ebenso leicht Dezimen, als andere Menschenkinder Oktaven spannten und es ihm möglich machte, fortlaufende, doppelgriffige Passagen in den genannten Intervallen mit Blitzesschnelligkeit auszuführen. [...] Wölfl hingegen, in Mozarts Schule gebildet immerdar sich gleich; nie flach, aber stets klar, und eben deswegen der Mehrzeit zugänglicher; Kunst diente ihm bloß als Mittel zum Zwecke, in keinem Falle als Prunk- und Schaustück trockenem Gelehrttuens”. As cited in: R. Baum, *op. cit.* p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Orig. “Ob Beethoven tot ist, müssen Sie noch nähere Nachrichten geben, ich würde es außerordentlich bedauern, wenn wir gleich *amici rivali* gewesen sind”. Vide: W. Hitzig, *Die Briefe Joseph Wölfls an Bretikopf u. Härtel*, [in:] *Jahrbuch von Breitkopf u. Härtel auf das Jahr 1926*, Leipzig 1926, pp. 58–59; as cited in: *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen in Tagebüchern, Briefen, Gedichten und Erinnerungen*, K.M. Kopitz, R. Ladenbach (eds.), Vol. 1, München 2009, pp. 1104–1105.

known instrumentalists, the author named two pianists and composers—Josepha Barbara Auernhammer and Magdalena von Kurzbeck. Among the male virtuosos of the piano in the report he distinguished Ludwig van Beethoven and Joseph Woelfl, whose skills divided the Viennese environment:

Opinions regarding the primacy of one or the other are divided here: it seems, however, that more supporters were on the side of the last of them [Woelfl]. However, I will try to present something about each of them without giving priority to any of the parties. Beethoven's game is extremely brilliant, not too delicate though, what is sometimes incomprehensible. He shows his best in free improvisation. It is remarkably amazing how easy and decisive the next ideas are for each of the themes he poses, he does not just perform a simple variation [...], but he really gives concerts. [...] Woelfl's priority is that with thorough musical scholarship and true dignity in the composition, a phrase that seems impossible to perform has lightness, precision and intelligibility that amaze; [...] hence all his performances are planned and exceptional, equally appealing and pleasant he is in *Adagio*, distant from emptiness as well as excess, that one should not be amazed, but only take pleasure.<sup>49</sup>

Joseph Woelfl, originating from the Mozart's school, was compared to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and portrayed as the new favorite of

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<sup>49</sup> Orig. "Die Meynungen, über den Vorzug des Einen vor dem Anderen, sind hier getheilt: doch scheidet es, als ob die größere Parthey auf die Seite des letztern neigte. Ich will mich bemühen, Ihnen das Eigene beyder anzugeben, ohne an jenem Vorrangsstreite Theil zu nehmen. Beethovens Spiel ist äußerst brillant, doch weniger delikate, und schlägt zuweilen in das Undeutliche über. Er zeigt sich am allervorthelhaftesten in der freyen Phantasie. Und hier ist es wirklich ganz außerordentlich, mit welcher Leichtigkeit und zugleich Festigkeit in der Ideenfolge B. auf der Stelle jedes ihm gegebene Thema, nicht etwa nur in den Figuren variirt [...] sondern wirklich ausführt. [...] Aber Vorzüge von ihm hat Wölfl darin, daß er, bey gründlicher musikalischer Gelehrsamkeit und wahrer Würde in der Komposition, Sätze, welche geradehin unmöglich zu exekutieren scheinen, mit einer Leichtigkeit, Präcision und Deutlichkeit vorträgt, die in Erstaunen versetzt; [...] und daß sein Vortrag überall so zweckmäßig und besonders auch ihm *Adagio* so gefällig und einschmeichelnd, gleichfern von Kahlheit und Ueberfüllung ist, daß man nicht bloß bewundern, sondern auch genießen kann". Vide: "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 15.05.1799, pp. 524–525.

the Viennese society. Woelfl reminded Mozart, unfortunately, also in his passion for games, he was known as a compulsive billiard player.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, many years later he was evaluated as one of the most outstanding musicians of Vienna. Carl Czerny in 1842 wrote that Woelfl is one of the best pianists, he stressed the magnificence of his brilliant play and compared him to Czech composers and pianists: Joseph Gelinek (Jelinek) and Josep Lipavski.<sup>51</sup>

In the years of Joseph Woelfl's Vienna activity, numerous compositions were created: piano sonatas Op. 1, 3, 6, 7a; sonatas for piano and violin Op. 2, 7b; string quartet Op. 4; piano trio Op. 5 dedicated to Joseph Haydn; dances and variations.

From the letter of recommendation written by the widow of Mozart, it is known that she had the best opinion about Joseph Woelfl, which could have been influenced by her earlier memories of the relationship between the musician and her deceased husband. In February 1799, in a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Constance wrote:

Dear Gentlemen, I am allowing myself to recommend you the supplier of this letter, my friend Mr. Woelffl [sic], a skillful musician and composer. All courtesies which he owes to the gentlemen I will receive as my personal owes, and I will be honored to give the highest respect to the men, Dear Gentlemen, devoted servant, Constance Mozart.<sup>52</sup>

These words prove that Joseph Woelfl and Mozarts had to have close relations in Vienna as well.

The Viennese period, full of experiences, was not limited only to professional successes. In August 1798 the composer married the actress Theresa Klemm, who a year later gave him the first child. On

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<sup>50</sup> R. Baum, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> *Beethoven aus der Sicht...*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>52</sup> Orig. "Höchstgeehrte Herrn, ich nehme mir die freyheit Ihnen den Ueberbringer dieses Herrn Woelffl, einen geschikten Musikus und Componisten, als meinen freund, auf das beßte zu empfehlen. Die Gefälligkeiten, die er Ihnen zu danken haben wird, werde ich als mir erzeugt ansehen, und sie werden die Hochachtung vernehmen, mit welcher ich die Ehre habe zu seyn, höchstgeehrte Herrn, Ihre ergebenste dienerin Constance Mozart". *Vide*: the letter from Constance Mozart to the publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel from 13.02.1799; as cited in: *Mozart. Briefe...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 227 (No. 1235).

28th August 1799 a happy father wrote in a letter from a trip to his publisher that his son was born recently, who yet during the birth moved his right hand rhythmically.<sup>53</sup>

The composer's restless spirit did not let him stay in Vienna for long with his newly founded family. In March 1799 he left for Prague, what initiated the period of European travels.

### **The period of travels (1799–1801)**

Joseph Woelfl began his two-year journey in Prague, where he gave concerts for the first time on the 17th March 1799. The correspondent of "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" reported the great success of the composer, noting that the concert halls during his performances were full of audience.<sup>54</sup> This opinion was also confirmed by the Czech composer and music teacher Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, who in his *Selbstbiographie* remembered: "Woelfl played extremely clearly and precisely concerto of his authorship with such lightness of hands that no one else could achieve".<sup>55</sup> During the Prague concert Woelfl was able to perform his concerto, which was written during Warsaw years—today considered lost, in the catalogue of his works marked as Fw 9—as well as the *Fantasy in F minor* KV 608 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.<sup>56</sup> The witness' memories, although very flattering, also contain elements of criticism. Tomaschek accused Woelfl that his game did not profoundly move the listener, but he tried to amaze them.

Further traces of the activity of the Austrian composer can be found in Leipzig, where—according to the information from "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung"—Woelfl gave two concerts in April 1799.<sup>57</sup> The first of them took place on 11th April in the Gewandhaus concert hall, while the second, complementary performance took place in the same

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<sup>53</sup> W. Hitzig, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>54</sup> "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 10.04.1799, p. 444.

<sup>55</sup> Orig. "Woelfl spielte von seiner Komposition ein Konzert mit beispielloser Reinheit und Präzision, wie es bei so ungeheurer Spannung seiner Hände wohl niemand anderer herausbringen dürfte". *Vide*: W. Tomaschek, *Selbstbiographie*, Prag 1845; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LIII.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 29.05.1799, p. 550.

place on 23rd April. On this occasion, the editors of the magazine published a comprehensive report:

Mr Wölfl from Vienna, whom the authors have repeatedly mentioned in the magazine on the occasion of the St Michael's Fair gave two concerts here in Leipzig, which, out of the performances of other virtuosos, positively distinguished, just as Mr. W. himself stands out from other virtuosos. That is why we consider our duty to publish a special statement and public thank-you for the pleasure we have been given. [...] on the basis of the work presented to us, which came from his latest opera: *Der Kopf ohne Mann*—it can be said that this work certainly belongs to the greatest compositions of the last time and deserves the praise it received in Vienna and Prague. We share two short fragments in Annex XIII.<sup>58</sup> In his concert there is, apart from the beautiful originality, an extremely rare combination of strength and fragility. On the occasion of his visit, he composed a cantata for solo voice with the accompaniment of the piano to the poem *Die Geister des See's* from this year's Schiller's *Musenalmanach*; among his works, we also got to know a new sonata for piano and flute, quartets, etc., which belong to the best compositions in the field of these genres. Through our comments, which do not just express our opinion, but are the voice of the whole audience, we would like to arouse interest in Mr. Wölfl, who travels from here to Dresden, Berlin and Hamburg to give him as much attention as he deserves! Editorial Staff.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The annex to this issue of "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" contained the aria of Kilian for voice and harpsichord from the first part of the opera and the March *Fort, fort zu Pferde fort* for choir and harpsichord. *Vide*: "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", *op. cit.*, Beilage XIII (XXXXI).

<sup>59</sup> Orig. "Herr Wölfl aus Wien, dessen schon mehrmals von ganz verschiedenen Männern in diesen Blättern rühmlich Erwähnung gethan worden ist, gab bey Gelegenheit der Michaelismesse zwey Konzerte hier in Leipzig, die sich vor so manchen andern Konzerten reisender Virtuosen eben so vortheilhaft auszeichneten, als sich Herr W. selbst von vielen andern Virtuosen auszeichnet und die deshalb eine besondere Anzeige ans zur Pflicht, und einen öffentlichen Dank uns zum Vergnügen machen. Bekanntlich ist er Komponist für Theater- und Kammermusik, und zugleich Virtuos auf dem Pianoforte. Alle Kompositionen, die wir hier von ihm zu hören bekamen, zeugen von eben so viel Genie, als Kenntniss; sein bewundernswerthes Spiel ist bekannt. Nach den Stücken, welche er uns aus seiner neuesten

This extended quotation is an extremely valuable source of Woelfl's activities at the time. The editorial staff of "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" not only presented musician as a piano virtuoso, but also paid attention to his compositional activity, which they evaluated very flatteringly. The sonata for the flute and piano mentioned in the review is probably one of the three sonatas Op. 11, which were created at the beginning of 1799, and the quartets could have come from the collection of three quartets Op. 10, which Woelfl dedicated to Marie de Fries.<sup>60</sup> The Leipzig concerts of the Austrian composer were mentioned once again in "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", where again the satisfaction was expressed that his visit resulted in two concerts, because, according to the author, only a few enthusiasts could listen to the first one. Woelfl's second performance was supposedly organized at the general request of the public and gave music lovers satisfaction they deserved.<sup>61</sup> He also used his visit in Leipzig to go to the famous publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel, what became the beginning of Woelfl's many years of cooperation with this publisher.<sup>62</sup>

Woelfl went next to Dresden, where he was invited by the Elector of Saxony, Frederick Augustus III. The ruler knew the piano extract from the opera *Der Kopf ohne Mann* and decided to bring the musician to his summer residence in Pillnitz. Woelfl's performance there was also a big sensation. This time, however, there was a special reason for this. Woelfl played his *Piano Concerto in C major* (i.e. probably

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Oper: *Der Kopf ohne Mann*—gab, zu urtheilen, gehört diese Arbeit gewiss zu den ausgezeichneten musikalischen Kunstprodukten der letzten Jahre, und verdient den Beyfall, welchen sie in Wien und Prag gefunden, vollkommen. Wir theilen zwey kleine Sätze daraus als Beylage No. XIII. mit. In der Komposition seiner Konzerte herrscht, bey schöner Originalität, eine so äußerst seltene Verbindung von Kraft und Zartheit. Bey seinem Hierseyn hat er das Gedicht: *Die Geister des See's*—aus dem diesjährigen Schillerschen *Musen Almanach*, als Kantate für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers, komponiert; auch haben wir neue Sonate für Klavier und Flöte, Quartetten u.s.w. von seiner Komposition kennen gelernt, welche unter das Vorzügliche gehören, was man in diesem Gattungen besitzt. Möchten wir durch diese wohlgemeinten Bemerkungen, die nicht etwa nur unsere, sondern Stimme des ganzen hiesigen Publikums sind, im Stande seyn, auf Herr Wölfl, die von hier nach Dresden, Berlin und Hamburg u.s.w. gehet—so viel Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen, als er verdient! Dd. Redakt". *Vide*: "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 24.04.1799, pp. 479–480.

<sup>60</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–56.

<sup>61</sup> "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 29.05.1799, p. 550.

<sup>62</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LIV.

WoO 12b) in special conditions. The unfavourable weather caused that the instrument was out of tune. During the rehearsal, Woelfl realised that despite the long tuning the piano sounds half step down. Seeing that the whole orchestra is ready to perform, he decided to play the concerto, but he transposed the composition and performed it in the key of C sharp major. “That is how he played one of the toughest concertos I have ever heard in my life, in C sharp major with such lightness, ease, and precision that he amazed the whole orchestra”.<sup>63</sup> This situation, quoted as an anecdote in “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, illustrates the remarkable technical ease of Woelfl, which allowed him to easily perform even the most complicated passages. According to Baum, Woelfl did not win the elector’s favour, and although the reasons for this remain unknown, a quick journey from Dresden and arrival in Berlin in the middle of May that year would indicate the truth of this information.<sup>64</sup>

The stay in Berlin turned out to be much more fruitful for Woelfl. He triumphed there not only as a piano virtuoso and earned thousands of thalers, but he also made a large group of friends, including Count Camillo Marcolini, a director of the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, Academy of Fine Arts and State Art Collections in Dresden, who was in Berlin at the time.<sup>65</sup> The many concerts that Woelfl gave in Berlin enjoyed high attendance, which was probably the reason the composer stayed in the city until at least 2nd June 1799, when he sent his last letter from Berlin.<sup>66</sup>

Woelfl chose Hamburg as the next destination. On the way he also visited Szczecin and Ludwigslust with concerts. He arrived in Hamburg around the 2nd July 1799, when he wrote another letter addressed to his publishers.<sup>67</sup> Hamburg was a city liked by artists. At that time Daniel Steibelt was there, who specially came to Hamburg from London. Others, now unknown artists, were also present: Mrs. Righini, Miss Gunnet, Miss Grund and gentlemen Dussart, Tieler, Marchant

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<sup>63</sup> Orig. “Und so spielte er denn eins der schwersten Konzerte, die mit nur in meinem Leben vorgekommen sind, aus Cis dur, und mit einer Leichtigkeit, Fertigkeit, Genauigkeit und Präcision, welche die ganze Kapelle in Erstaunen setzte”. *Vide*: “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 29.05.1799.

<sup>64</sup> R. Baum, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>65</sup> W. Hitzig, *op. cit.*, p. 51; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LIV.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> R. Baum, *op. cit.*, p. 20.



and Wolrabe. It was with them that Woelfl planned a joint concert in Leipzig, about which he informed his publisher in September 1799.<sup>68</sup> On the 30th November of the same year, the last Woelfl's concert in Hamburg took place, then together with the Righinis<sup>69</sup> he went to Berlin and Leipzig through Lübeck, where he also gave concert.

The composer's long-term, almost six-month stay in Hamburg was certainly influenced by the city's atmosphere and interesting company. According to the information from the composer himself, this period brought him new friendships, and here also his portrait painted by Johann Friedrich Tielker was created. In addition, during this period Joseph Woelfl began work on his latest opera *Das Trojanische Pferd*, what was reported by "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" in December 1799.<sup>70</sup>

In Berlin, Woelfl found himself in December 1799 and stayed there until February 1800, when he returned to Hamburg. In March 1800 "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" recorded two further concerts of the composer in this Hanseatic city.<sup>71</sup> The first of them took place in the now-nonexistent City Hall building, the so-called Eimbeckschen Haus, the second one in the French theatre. Woelfl again showed not only the perfection of his play, but also the ability to compose and improvise. "Every passage, every manners, in short, everything [emphasized in the original], what he played, performed in the last year, each time purely, accurately and distinctly".<sup>72</sup> During one of the performances, Woelfl allegedly played one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's concertos. The author of the article also confirms that Woelfl spent the summer in Hamburg, and then left the city together with the Kapellmeister Righini.

The following months are a long list of cities that the composer managed to visit. On 27th March 1800 he wrote another letter to

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<sup>68</sup> W. Hitzig, *op. cit.*, p. 51; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LIV.

<sup>69</sup> Vincenzo Maria Righini (1756–1812) and his wife. He was an Italian composer and singer, since 1793 the Kapellmeister at the Prussian court. *Vide*: Ch. Henzel, *Righini, Vincenzo*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 21, London 2001, pp. 385–386.

<sup>70</sup> "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 25.12.1799, p. 238.

<sup>71</sup> "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 5.03.1800, p. 408.

<sup>72</sup> Orig. "Jede Passage, jede Manier, kurz alles, was er spielen unternahm, brachte er, selbst noch in seinen letzten Lebensjahren, jedes Mal durchaus rein, bestimmt und deutlich heraus". *Vide: ibid.*

Breitkopf and Härtel, this time reporting that he was in Weimar, which he considered too small to organize a concert. On 16th April he was already in Wrocław, where he did not stay for too long. Then he visited Magdeburg, Halle, again Weimar, Leipzig and Dresden, to go through Wrocław to Vienna for the rest of the summer.

Woelfl continued his travels from the beginning of September 1800. Once again he visited Wrocław, Dresden, Leipzig, from where he headed to Berlin for the fourth time. The composer had to feel good there, he was also extremely well received by the audience. His presence in the city was noted by the Berlin correspondent of “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, who wrote a report on the musical status of the city *Ueber den Zustand der Musik in Berlin, während des Winters im gegenwärtigen Jahre*.<sup>73</sup> He mentioned Woelfl’s Berlin performances, which attracted listeners from all social classes. In addition, the journal also drew attention to its ongoing concert activity, describing it widely in the pages of the January issue. An anonymous author mentioned Woelfl’s performance on the 10th December 1800, when he performed a symphony in G major written by Joseph Haydn and Woelfl’s double concerto for violin and piano (i.e. probably WoO 24). It seems that this work was created by the composer during his summer stay in Vienna. In Berlin, he performed it with a musician named Seidler: “I did not like the ritornellos, [...] they were constantly interrupted by oboe and bassoon tirades, while the ritornellos in the concerto should be a unity and form a coherent whole.”<sup>74</sup>

The solo performance of the improvisational pianist was much more appraised:

Mr Wöfl presented a musical joke. [...] Wöfl presented himself as an extraordinary pianist, as a man superior to others like him. His readiness, freedom and lightness astound, and his accuracy, self-control and roundness, with which he performs everything, and what would be difficult for another hand, give him due respect. All he plays is very difficult, but everything sounds extremely

<sup>73</sup> “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 28.05.1800, pp. 618–623.

<sup>74</sup> Orig. “Die Ritornelle gefielen mir nicht, weil sie [...] durch eine Menge kleiner Tiraden der Oboen und Fagotten beständig unterbrochen werden, anstatt dass die Ritornelle in einem Konzert gerade in zusammenhängenden Massen bestehen müssen, aus welchen das Einzelne ausgeht. *Vide*: “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 1.01.1801, p. 237.

easy. For this exceptional pianist, anything that the imagination gives to the hands is possible, and he wants to devote all his talent to truth and beauty. [...] Variations were very pleasant, and improvisation, as I have already mentioned, was full of new thoughts that are not seen every day.<sup>75</sup>

It is therefore known that Woelfl successfully improvised. The lightness and freedom with which he did this evidence of his enormous musical imagination and often mentioned technical ease.

Berlin's successes were interrupted by a short trip to Leipzig, where Woelfl played in December 1800. Also there he presented himself as an excellent pianist and improviser. He returned to Berlin in January 1801 and on the twenty-third day of the month he played with Friedrich Heinrich Himmel.<sup>76</sup> At that time, the musicians were to perform a double piano sonata, probably the *Grande Sonata in C major* written by Himmel. It is worth noting that it was the artist whom Woelfl dedicated his *Piano Concerto in G major* Op. 20, composed shortly afterwards in Paris.

Woelfl spent a significant part of 1801 in Hamburg, where he traveled through Braunschweig, Kassel, Frankfurt am Main, Mainz, Koblenz, Trier and Metz. In March 1801 he wrote to his Leipzig publishers, informing them of his stay in Braunschweig and plans to travel to Hanover. From Hanover in April 1801 he sent a letter in which he reported on his further plans to go to Paris and London, where he spent the last years of his life.<sup>77</sup> In May Woelfl went on further concert tours. This time he chose Frankfurt am Main, Offenbach and Darmstadt as his destinations.

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<sup>75</sup> Orig. "Nach diesem hatte Herr Wöfl eine musikalische Badinage angekündigt. [...] Wöfl zeigte dabey besonders als Fortepianospieler, als einen Mann von entschiedenem Uebergewicht über die meisten seines Gleichen. Seine Fertigkeit, Freyheit und Leichtigkeit ist bewunderswürdig, und die Deutlichkeit, Haltung und Rundung, mit der alles klar dasteht, was für jede andere Hand schwer ist, müssen ihm bey den Besten Gleichen Ehre bringen. Er spielt beynahe nichts, das nicht sehr schwer wäre und doch klingt alles leicht. Wenn dieser ausserordentliche Klavierspieler jetzt, da ihm fast nichts mehr unmöglich ist, was die Phantasie der Hand übergeben kann, sein ganzes Talent der Wahrheit und Schönheit weihen wollte; [...] Die Variationen waren übrigens allerliebste und Phantasie, wie schon gesagt, voller neuen Gedanken, die nicht alle Tage kommen". *Vide: Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LVII.

<sup>77</sup> W. Hitzig, *op. cit.*, p. 53; as cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LVII.

Woelfl was gaining more and more fame. He was valued as an outstanding piano virtuoso and composer. In the article published in “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” in July 1801, entitled *Briefe über Tonkunst und Tonkünstler*, the profiles of eminent pianists of the era are described. The anonymous correspondent compares there the achievements of the German pianist and composer Friedrich Heinrich Himmel, Czech Jan Ladislav Dussek and Joseph Woelfl, concluding that the primacy should be given to the last one.<sup>78</sup> In autumn 1801 the composer left Germany. The summary of his previous achievements may be a short review published in July of the same year in the pages of “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” after the last Hanover pianist concert: “Mr. Wöflf gave concerts here with unflagging applause and great interest of not only music lovers, but also people dealing with it professionally. Now he is on his way to Paris.”<sup>79</sup>

### Paris (1801–1805)

Woelfl arrived to Paris in autumn 1801, although his fame reached France much earlier. This is confirmed by a press note in “Journal de Paris” from October 1801, in which Woelfl was presented as a famous and long-awaited by French music lovers pianist.<sup>80</sup> He was valued there primarily for the skill of improvisation and described as a German miracle.<sup>81</sup> He quickly entered the concert life of Paris. Between the 6th and 14th February 1802 “Journal de Paris” announced his first performance in this city eight times.<sup>82</sup> On the basis of the programme note published there, we know that among Woelfl’s works there was a piano concerto (i.e. probably the *Concerto in G major* Op. 20), variations for the piano and that the evening ended with improvisation of

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<sup>78</sup> “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 3.06.1801, pp. 608–610.

<sup>79</sup> Orig. “Herr Wöflf hat hier mit vielem Beyfall und anständiger Unterstützung verschiedene Konzerte gegeben, was um desto mehr bemerkt zu werden verdient, da es uns zwar an Personen, die Musikliebhaber seyn wollen, im geringsten nicht fehlt, aber an Personen, die für Musik etwas thäten, desto mehr. Herr W. wird nach Paris gehen”. *Vide*: “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 8.07.1801, p. 690.

<sup>80</sup> Compare: M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. LVIII.

<sup>81</sup> “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 20.02.1802, p. 324.

<sup>82</sup> “Journal de Paris”, 6–14.02.1802, pp. 824, 866.

the pianist. In addition to his works, compositions of Joseph Haydn, Giovanni Paisiello and Domenico Cimarosa were also performed.

The Polish press also reported on Woelfl's Parisian successes. In one of the issues of "Gazeta Warszawska" from August 1802, the Parisian correspondent posted the following press note:

We now have the second place among the most famous opera composers, Jozef Woelfl (he was in the past for a few months in Warsaw and all music lovers know him) and Peter Winter. The first one is staying here and is now making an opera for the "Feydeau" theatre; recently took a trip to Leodium and Spa [Liège and Spa—currently cities in Belgium], but will soon return. His extraordinary lightness and speed when playing the piano causes universal admiration places him within the first of the virtuosos.<sup>83</sup>

The composer himself writes about the contract signed with the theatre Feydeau in his letter to the Leipzig publishers: "I got a contract at the Feydan [sic] theatre. [...] I have played here several times and achieved great successes".<sup>84</sup>

In autumn 1802 Woelfl left Paris for a short time and went to the Netherlands and England. The first known today destination was Amsterdam, where the musician gave a concert. This fact is briefly recalled by "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung": "Mr. Wöflf, who came to Amsterdam from Paris, performed here with great applause from the audience, from here he goes to London".<sup>85</sup> However, the war caused the musician to postpone his trip to England. Nevertheless, the extremely

<sup>83</sup> Orig. "Mamy tu teraz zch z pomiędzy najslawniejszych kompozytorów oper, Jozefa Woelfl (ten był dawniej przez kilka miesięcy w Warszawie i wszystkim amatorom muzyki dobrze iest znaiomy) i P. Winter. Pierwszy bawi się tu ciągle i układa teraz operę dla teatru „Feydeau”; przedsięwziął niedawno podróż do Leodium i Spa [Liège i Spa—miejscowości w dzisiejszej Belgii], lecz wkrótce powróci. Nadzwyczajna jego letkość i szypkość [sic] w graniu na fortepiano, powszechnie podziwienie sprawia i między naypierwszych wirtuozow mieścić go każe". "Gazeta Warszawska (annex), 3.08.1802, p. 152. Original spelling.

<sup>84</sup> Orig. "Ich habe den Auftrag für das Theater Feydan [sic] zu arbeiten. [...] ich habe hier ein paarmal öffentlich gespielt und vielen Beifall bekommen". As cited in: W. Hitzig, *op cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>85</sup> Orig. "Hr. Wöflf, der von Paris nach Amsterdam gereiset war, liess sich daselbst mit vielem Beyfall hören, und gehet nun von da nach London". *Vide*: "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung", 10.11.1802, p. 115.

high sum he earned in the Netherlands must have been a consolation, so he returned to Paris via Lille.<sup>86</sup> The constant concert successes of the Austrian were followed by newly published compositions. The publication of his works was announced by “Cocatrix” newspaper next to the works of Mozart and Beethoven.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to numerous works for piano, Woelfl finished and published his latest opera work at that time. In October 1803 the editor of “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” wrote: “I am already happy that we can expect a new opera by Woelfl at the Feydeau Theater.”<sup>88</sup> It was probably a comic one-act play entitled *Lamour romanesque*, in the catalogue of the composer’s works labeled WoO 35, which was premiered on the 3rd March 1804.<sup>89</sup> The first performance of the work was long awaited and announced by a number of French newspapers, including “Courrier des Spectacles” or “Journal de Paris”, the opera was also commented by foreign press. “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” also reported the premiere of another piano concerto by Woelfl, i.e. the *Concerto No. 2 Op. 26*. The Paris correspondent rated the concerto as the best of his hitherto created works, writing: “The concert was well written, so brilliant and vivid, innovative, but also less peculiar to its earlier works.”<sup>90</sup>

At the end of his Parisian activity Woelfl came back again to opera, creating an enormous heroic work in three acts: *Fernand, ou les Maures*, catalogued as WoO 36.<sup>91</sup> Premiered on the 11th February 1805 at the Opéra Comique, it must have surprised the audience. Not very flattering press reviews criticised not so much the composition as directing and singers.<sup>92</sup> The failure of the work in Paris, however, caused Woelfl’s dislike of the opera genre for a long time.

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<sup>86</sup> W. Hitizg, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>87</sup> “Cocatrix”, 8.10.1803.

<sup>88</sup> Orig. “Ich höre, wir haben von Woelfl eine neue Oper auf dem Theater Feydeau zu erwarten, und ich freue mich darauf”. *Vide*: “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 21.10.1803, p. 865.

<sup>89</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>90</sup> Orig. “Das Konz. war trefflich geschrieben, wenigstens eben so geistreich, lebhaft, neu und gut durchgeführt, aber weniger bizarr, als frühere von ihm”. *Vide*: “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 28.11.1804, p. 713.

<sup>91</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, pp. 287–291.

<sup>92</sup> “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung”, 27.03.1805, p. 421.

Parisian time in Woelfl's life resulted in many contacts with the most important musicians of Europe as well as music lovers and representatives of the highest social class. Woelfl published a number of new works there and gained great fame, which crossed the borders of France and certainly facilitated his further conquest of Europe.

### **London (1805–1812)**

Woelfl appeared in London in the spring of 1805, greeted as a famous pianist and composer. Already on 27th May 1805 the newspaper "The Morning Chronicle" announced his first performance during the annual benefit concert with the Ashe family, stressing that: "Mr. Woelff [sic], who is just arrived in England, will perform a Concerto on the Grand Piano-forte".<sup>93</sup> The concert took place on the 2th of May 1805.

Soon the London citizens were waiting for the next performance of the Austrian pianist. A few days later, the same newspaper announced the performance of music during the Ashley family's concert: "End of Part I a Concerto on the Grand Piano Forte, by the celebrated Mr. Woelfle [sic], being his first public appearance in this country".<sup>94</sup> It is worth noting that the performance took place in the Covent Garden Theatre.

The outstanding play of the Austrian pianist impressed the English audience. The significant example is the letter from the 25th January 1806, written by the London writer Hester Lynch Piozzi, who describes how much impressed she was by the virtuoso playing of Joseph Woelfl.

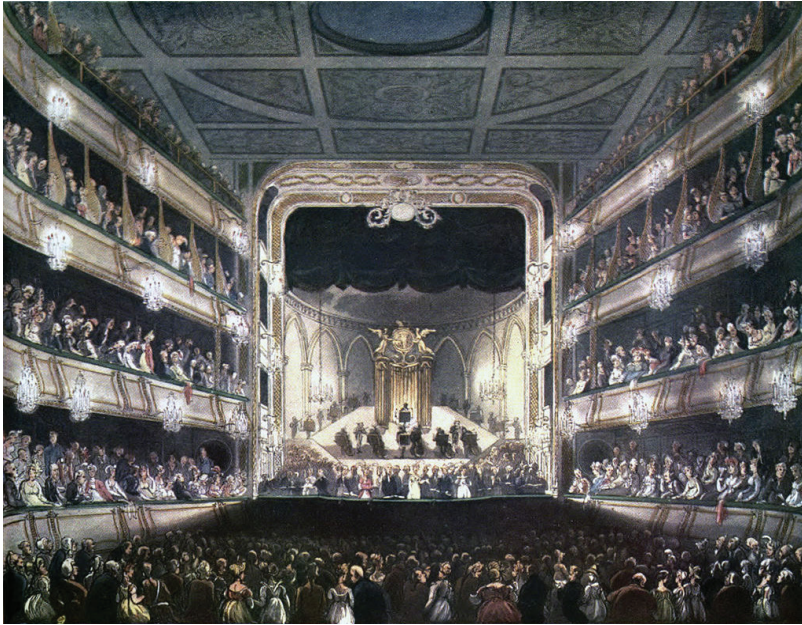
We saw a Man last Night whose Perfections are of the most dazzling kind, he looked like one indeed who had sacrificed all to Study—a Saxon Performer on the Piano e forte who so amazed our little Custer of Knowing-ones—that all agreed on his undoubted Superiority to everything yet exhibited. Rauzzini, Piozzi, Neild; Miss Parkes, Miss Sharp and half a Dozen more competent Auditors expressed their Rapturous Wonder at his Powers, which really put me completely

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<sup>93</sup> "The Morning Chronicle", 27.05.1805.

<sup>94</sup> "The Morning Chronicle", 1.06.1805, p. 244.





Illus. 3: The interior of the Covent Garden Theatre. Source: R. Ackermann et al., *Microcosm of London*, London 1810, illus. 100.

out of Breath, and sent me home fatigued as if I had been playing the Lesson over Myself. Wolfen or Wolveren is his Name [...].<sup>95</sup>

In addition to the extremely fruitful concert activity, the Austrian pianist continued his creative work. In November 1805 he prepared the first premiere of a larger work, the ballet *Terpsichores Return*, which was staged at the Drury Lane Theatre on the 1st November 1805. Soon after, Woelfl's music was played at the King's Theatre, when on the 7th December 1807 the opera of Peter von Winter, *Il Ratto di Proserpina*, and the ballet *Naval Victory and Triumph of Lord Nelson* with Joseph

<sup>95</sup> H.L. Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters: The Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784–1821 (formerly Mrs. Thrale)*, E.A. Bloom, L.D. Bloom (eds.), London, 1989–2002, Vol. 4, p. 95; as cited in: R. Redgewell, *Joseph Woelfl in England*, "Joseph Woelfl-Almanach", *op. cit.*, p. 73.

Woelfl's music were staged there on the occasion of reopening the theatre after the renovation.<sup>96</sup>

At the beginning of 1806 Woelfl achieved another success as a composer, this time with his piano concerto *Le Calm* Op. 36. The London press regularly reported on the actions of the master, making it easy to calculate that the concert was performed five times only in 1806.<sup>97</sup> In May 1806 he appeared on average three times a week. On the 8th of May he presented his new symphony and duet for piano and harp, which together with Woelfl was performed by the famous harpist and composer François Joseph Dizi.<sup>98</sup> Together with Dizi Woelfl also celebrated one of his most important London successes, which was a performance during the famous Salomon's concerts, during which in the past Haydn's London symphonies, among others, were performed. At Salomon's Woelfl performed on the 20th June 1806, when he played with Dizi his next duo dedicated to Salomon, for piano and harp Op. 37.<sup>99</sup>

The collection of works published in 1806 in the Vogel publishing house for the English entrepreneur and the manager of the German theatre in London—Frederick Schirmer<sup>100</sup>—can be a summary of the first two extremely fruitful years of Woelfl's London activity.<sup>101</sup> The collection contains works selected by Schirmer. The entry on the title page of the volume is significant, where at the Schirmer's request only one name is entered, although the volume includes works and arrangements of many musicians: "The work to contain the best favourite songs of the most celebrated German Operas and other musical pieces, arranged and partly originally composed for the Piano-forte, or the Harp, by Mr. WOELFL and the most celebrated masters on the Continent".<sup>102</sup> This collection in the catalogue of the composer's works by Margit Haider-Dechant can be found as the number WoO 42.

The last known letter from the composer to the Leipzig publishers Breitkopf & Härtel confirms his professional success, and hence, financial success, as he wrote:

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<sup>96</sup> "The Times", 6.12.1805.

<sup>97</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–110.

<sup>98</sup> "The Times", 7.05.1806.

<sup>99</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 304–305.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> As cited in: M. Haider-Dechant, *Ibid.*

Soon there will be a significant number of my little things that will be published as a work entitled *le bouquet de Flor...* I still have a lot of work, and my price, both for giving lessons and compositions, is the highest among those in here. I speak English well enough to settle all my businesses in it. It can be easily imagined that there is not much pleasure here, as in Paris or Vienna, but there is money for it, what is always a good thing. You will do me a great favour if you find out from somebody in Frankfurt if my wife is still there. I have not received any letter from her for a long time... Your most-humble friend, J. Woelfl.<sup>103</sup>

The quoted words depict the musician's satisfaction with his position on the London market, they also present a somehow complicated family situation. He regularly contacted the German-speaking world of music, primarily publishing. Breitkopf & Härtel's publishing house still published his works, and the German-language press also mentioned him.

In addition to his concert and composition activities, Woelfl gave piano lessons in London and, as he wrote in the quoted letter to the publishers, he had "the highest" prices. Among his students the Englishman Cipriani Potter gained the greatest fame, from 1832 the director of the Royal Academy of Music.<sup>104</sup>

Rupert Ridgewell says that the top point of the Austrian pianist's career in London was in 1808, when the benefit concert of Woelfl took

<sup>103</sup> Orig. "Bringe in Kurzem eine ziemliche Anzahl kleiner Dinge heraus welche in einem periodischen Werke, *le bouquet de Flor* nummernweise erscheinen sollen... ich habe immer sehr viel zu tun und meine Preise sowohl im Lectiongeben wie in der Komposition sind die höchsten, die man hier macht. Daher bin ich immer sehr vergnügt und unterhalte mich so gut ich kann. Der engl[ischen] Sprache bin ich soweit mächtig, daß ich alle meine Geschäfte damit ordentlich besorgen kann. Daß man hier nicht soviel Vergnügen hat wie in Paris oder Wien, können Sie sich leicht vorstellen, dafür gibt es aber Geld, was immer eine gute Sache ist. Sie würden mir einen großen Gefallen tun, wenn Sie sich bei einem Frankfurter erkundigten, ob meine Frau noch dort ist, ich habe schon seit langer Zeit keine Briefe von ihr bekommen... Ihr ergebenster Freund J. Woelfl". As cited in: W. Hitzig, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>104</sup> Cipriani Potter (1792–1871)—the English pianist, composer and pedagogue. Since 1822 employed in London's Royal Academy of Music, where he led the orchestra. He wrote numerous pieces for piano solo, chamber and symphonic music, including three piano concertos. *Vide*: H. Peter, J. Rushton, *Potter (Philip) Cipriani*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 20, London 1980, pp. 221–223.

place on the 25th April at the King's Theatre. The programme of the concert was announced by "The Times" two days earlier.<sup>105</sup> It contains 4 compositions written by Woelfl—*Grand Overture*, *Piano Sonata*, *Grand Symphony* (i.e. probably *Symphony in D major* Op. 45) and a duo for piano and harp. In addition to Woelfl, two singers performed during the concert—bass Giuseppe Naldi and tenor John Braham. It is interesting that the London press had announced the event, but did not post comments and criticism after the benefit concert. It is not known, therefore, how it was received and whether it took place at all. Rupert Ridgewell also notes that from that moment on, Woelfl appeared less and less as a pianist.<sup>106</sup> A year later, in April 1809, the premiere of the next piano concerto *Le Coucou* Op. 49 took place. This time it was not the composer who sat down to the piano, but a lady named Ferrari, to whom the concerto was dedicated.<sup>107</sup>

The English press gives us relatively little information about the last two years of Joseph Woelfl's life. In 1810 the Austrian pianist prepared an interesting, original collection of his own works, entitled *Harmonic Budget* for publication at Ackermann's Repository of Arts, in the catalogue of the composer's works existing as the number WoO 63.<sup>108</sup> This anthology is an interesting collection of songs, piano compositions for two and four hands as well as chamber compositions for various instruments. It is worth noting that all compositions contained in *Harmonic Budget* were provided by Woelfl with precise tempo marking. For this he used the latest achievement of that time—i.e. *tempo pendulum* (the metronome prototype).

In 1811 Woelfl was again active in the concert life of the city. The London public had the chance to get to know his latest symphonic work. On the 8th February, during the concert of Mrs. Tibb, the *Grand Symphony* was performed, i.e. probably WoO 127, conducted by the composer himself as a pianist.<sup>109</sup> Not much later, in March of that year during the New Musical Fund in the King's Theatre, Woelfl's symphony was played again, this time the performance was conducted by Sir George Smart.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> "The Times", 23.04.1808.

<sup>106</sup> R. Ridgewell, *Joseph Woelfl in England*, *op. cit.*, p. 73–74.

<sup>107</sup> M. Haider-Dechant, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–154.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

<sup>109</sup> "The Times", 8.02.1811.

<sup>110</sup> "The Times", 28.03.1811.

Musical contacts of Joseph Woelfl in London are not insignificant. Very soon, he became an important participant in the most important events in the world of music. He performed for the highest social classes and with distinguished artists. Regularly cooperated, among others with Johann Peter Salomon, London's most important impresario. On the 16th May 1812 the last *Piano Concerto in E major* Op. 64 by Joseph Woelfl was played at his place. The piano part was performed by a woman named Cudmore.

Shortly after this event, the London "The Morning Chronicle" posted information about the composer's death: "DIED. On Thursday morning, after a short illness, at his lodging in Great Mary-le-bone-street, Mr. Woelfl, the celebrated Piano Forte Player".<sup>111</sup> Joseph Woelfl died on the 21st May 1812.

## Conclusion

Born in 1773 in Salzburg, the composer Joseph Woelfl began his musical education in his hometown. Educated at the Kapellhaus school there, he also took private lessons in the Mozart family's house. In 1790 he left Salzburg and went to Vienna. A year later, he probably received a position in Guzów near Żyrardów with the father of a stylized polonaise—the prince Michał Kleofas Ogiński, spending about fifteen months in his service. In 1792 Woelfl left the Ogiński's court and gave piano lessons in Warsaw, and at least twice performed in public. It is also known that in 1793 he gave concerts in Grodno during the Commonwealth's Sejm sessions with the participation of the king. Already in 1795 he was again in Vienna, where he wrote a number of his chamber works—sonatas for solo piano, for piano and violin, and string quartet, as well as numerous operatic works. In the years 1799–1801 the composer devoted himself mainly to traveling around Germany, delighting the audience with his virtuoso piano playing. When in 1801 Woelfl arrived in Paris, he was already well known there and easily found himself in the local musical milieu, and his Parisian concert achievements were repeatedly mentioned by the French and foreign press. In the first years of his stay in Paris, he published a number of opuses of his compositions, including Op. 14–20, which

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<sup>111</sup> As cited in: "The Morning Chronicle", 23.05.1812.

mainly contained sonatas for solo piano and for two pianos, trio sonatas, and the *Piano Concerto No. 1*. However, it is not excluded that some of these works were created before the arrival of the musician to Paris. In 1805 Woelfl reached London, where he spent the rest of his life. There, he was an extremely valued representative of the musical world and a piano teacher. He died on the 21th May 1812.

The Woelfl's musical output contains a whole range of works representing various musical genres, such as songs, vocal-instrumental works, stage works, large instrumental forms, solo and chamber concertos, a number of chamber works—duos, trios, quartets and quintets, and above all numerous piano works—sonatas, variations, dances, arrangements of opera fragments of own or someone else's authorship, pieces for four hands and pedagogical works. It is worth noting that at the end of his life Woelfl also created a kind of piano course book—*Practical School for the Piano Forte* Op. 56, in two volumes containing fifty exercises in total.

Yet in 1815 one of Woelfl's symphonies was performed during Salomon's concerts, and Giovanni Battista Viotti directed the performance of Woelfl's orchestral overture. His symphony in G minor was reminded already in 1869 during the concert given by Philharmonic Society. Woelfl's works were also used by his students, e.g. Cipriani Potter. Unfortunately, shortly after the composer's death, his output was almost completely forgotten.

Today, his enormously interesting and artistically valuable works are restored to concert life, mainly thanks to the indefatigable energy of Margit Haider-Dechant, who not only promotes them as a pianist, but also compiled their thematic catalogue, founded Joseph Woelfl Gesellschaft and Woelfl House in Bonn as well as organizes academic symposia devoted to the composer—Internationale Joseph Woelfl Symposium (the fourth of them took place in Bonn in April 2018).<sup>112</sup> The Apollon Musikoffizin publishing house active at Joseph Woelfl Gesellschaft also publishes post-conference materials edited by Margit Haider-Dechant and Hermann Dechant ("Joseph Woelfl-Almanach" 2012/2013, 2014/2015 and 2016/2017), as well as prints new editions of the composer's works.

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<sup>112</sup> Vide: *Woelfl-Haus Bonn*, <https://sites.google.com/view/joseph-woelfl-gesellschaft-eng/joseph-woelfl> [accessed: 27.02.2018].



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