

The Rev. Prof. Hieronim Feicht, CM (1894–1967)

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Authors writing about the Rev. Prof. Hieronim Feicht unanimously agree that he was an extraordinary personality, unusual not only for specific historical context of Poland after WWII. Two new titles have recently been added to the list of available publications concerning this scholar. These are his *Memoirs* and *Sketches for a Portrait of Hieronim Feicht* edited by Father Wojciech Kałamarz, CM, Ph.D. (see Feicht 2008 and Kałamarz 2012). The *Memoirs* contain Father Feicht's preserved notes and diaries, whereas the *Sketches* are a selection of texts and interviews with people who knew him personally. Both publications confirm the great significance of that outstanding figure, and the *Memoirs* reveal many little known biographical facts.

A priest, a music composer and an organist, he is now remembered primarily as a musicologist. Towards the end of his busy life he introduced himself modestly as a "pupil of two world famous academics: Adolf Chybiński and Peter Wagner of Freiburg" and a specialist "on early Polish music before Chopin" (from a 1963 radio broadcast, see Kałamarz 2012: 15).¹ His academic work reveals the influence both of the founder of the Lvov school of musicology (Chybiński) and of the Swiss medievalist (Wagner), reflected e.g. in his exceptional scholarly diligence and conscientiousness, as well as in the economy and conciseness of his source analyses.

Feicht came from a modest working-class background, from the ancient town of Mogilno in Greater Poland, but he obtained his education in Galicia. As an 11-year-old he was entrusted to the care of the Congregation of the Mission (CM) in Cracow, where he initially learnt in an educational centre in Nowa Wieś, and it was there that his musical training also began (Feicht 2008: 11). He continued it on the secondary level under Bolesław Wallek-Walewski.² During WWI he studied at the CM Institute of Theology, further developing his musical skills and performing various musical functions (such as assistant choirmaster and organist) during church services (Feicht

¹ Feicht continued that former statement by saying: "Under the former I majored in the Polish Renaissance and Baroque, under the latter – in medieval music."

² This composer was, among others, a professor of Cracow Conservatory, and also taught pupils at Cracow's Congregation of the Mission (directing the choir, training voice emission and teaching music theory, etc.)

2008: 3–4). He was ordained priest in 1916 and remained a member of the Congregation of the Mission till the end of his life.

The period between the two world wars was for him the time of further studies and work in different places. These studies and academic work were closely linked to his duties as a missionary. In 1919, the Congregation sent him to Lvov, where he worked as a prefect in the Archiepiscopal Youth Seminary and continued his musical studies (in composition, music theory and organ playing) with Prof. Mieczysław Sołtys at Lvov Conservatory. In 1922, he took up musicological studies with Adolf Chybiński at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov,³ obtaining a doctorate in 1925 on the basis of a dissertation entitled *Bartłomiej Pękiel's Sacred Compositions*.⁴ He remained at the University for one more year as Prof. Chybiński's assistant and a lecturer at the Faculty of Theology. He was then delegated to work in Vilnius at the CM Secondary School. In the academic year 1927–1928, he completed another course of studies, this time — on Gregorian chant with Prof. Peter Wagner in Freiburg (Switzerland). On his return to Poland, he lectured in music theory in Cracow Conservatory and then, in 1930–1932, taught in Warsaw's Higher School of Music, whose rector was Karol Szymanowski. In the following two years he was head of the CM Secondary School in Bydgoszcz. The first half of the year 1935 he spent on a convalescent leave in the CM House on Mount Olcza in the Tatra (Zakopane), and later he stayed for several months at the CM House and parish in Łysków (now Lyskava, Belarus).⁵ Towards the end of 1935 he returned to Cracow and to teaching in the Conservatory. He spent the WWII years in the CM House on Mount Olcza.

He resumed his academic activity in 1946, and in July of that year he obtained his habilitation from Poznań University (on the basis of a treatise on the *Rondos by Fryderyk Chopin* (Feicht 1948), though already earlier, in March, he had taken up teaching musicology classes at Wrocław University. In the beginnings of his 6-year stay in Wrocław, he was also a priest at the parish of

³ Father Feicht's loose handwritten notes from that period have been preserved (Feicht 2008: 15–22).

⁴ This lengthy work was published only after H. Feicht's death (see Feicht 1925).

⁵ A fine account of his stay there is contained in his article 'Łysków near Słonim' (Feicht 1935: 311–333), reprinted with the editor's commentary in *Memoirs* (see Feicht 2008: 23–48).

St Anna in the district of Oporów.⁶ In 1948 the scope of his academic duties was significantly extended, as he was entrusted with the task of establishing a Higher School of Music in Wrocław, of which he subsequently became the rector. Years later, he recalled that period as extremely exhausting:

In Wrocław I had too many duties: lectures, classes and seminars at the university in the mornings, teaching and managerial work at the Higher School of Music in the afternoons, and later — promotion of music in all kinds of schools, radio broadcasts and social work (Kałamorz 2012: 14).⁷

He hoped that the transfer to Warsaw University in 1952 would improve his situation:

I thought that I would at last be able to limit my activity to one place, which would allow me to concentrate exclusively on academic research — on writing (Feicht 2008: 113).

It was in Warsaw that he would live till the end of his life, in the CM House belonging to the Holy Cross Church. He lectured at the Faculty of Musicology, later converted into a Chair, and eventually – into an Institute. In 1954 he was named associate professor, and in 1961 he obtained a full professorship. At the Institute of Musicology, he became head of the Faculty of Polish Music History and of the Centre for the Documentation and Inventorying of Musical Monuments. The hope that he would be allowed to work in only one institution was not fulfilled, however, as from March 1953 and throughout the academic year of 1953–1954 he also lectured at the University in Poznań (after Prof. Chybiński's death), and in 1956, the Polish Episcopate entrusted him with the task of organising the Chair of Church Musicology at the Catholic University of Lublin, which he later headed nearly till the end of his life.

The striking arduousness of Father Feicht's life may have been related to his attitude to work, which he always saw as his duty and service. As he explained: "I have undertaken to organise the Higher School of Music." "I was transferred by the authorities to a post in Warsaw." "At the Minister's

⁶ Formerly Opperau. The *Memoirs* (Feicht 2008: 51–72) contain a reprint of his chronicle of parish work in Oporów, originally published in 1970 (see Schletz 1970).

⁷ We could also mention the so-called "Wrocław Tuesdays" that H. Feicht initiated. These were concert combined with public lectures and meetings with composers (Feicht 2008: 94–96).

request, I commuted to Poznań for 2 years.” (Kałamorz 2012: 13–14) “As far as the Catholic University is concerned — I could not refuse” (Feicht 2008: 132). He also sat on several academic panels and boards of artistic associations,⁸ and was — first and foremost — a member of a religious order whose rule he was obliged to follow. We can see, then, that his concern about the shortage of time for his own research was well justified.⁹

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In his early writings Father Feicht concentrated mainly on church music, which was understandable considering his education and membership of the *Congregatio Missionis*, as well as his own musical practice, including composition. The Professor’s activity as a composer is usually mentioned late in the analyses of his output, though chronologically it came first. He wrote works for the organ, trying his hand at various genres (sonatas, preludes, interludes, fuguetas, variations and organ trios, chorales and others — more than 150 pieces in total), as well as about 80 choral works (independent or in cycles), unaccompanied or with organ, set to Latin and Polish, mostly religious texts.¹⁰ These include: mass cycles, motets, offertories, hymns, cantatas, religious songs, frequently written for a particular occasion and a specific group of performers.¹¹ Some of these were awarded in composer competitions. Most of Feicht’s oeuvre is still known only from manuscripts, though gradually it is beginning to attract the attention of scholars, editors and performers.¹² From the early 1950s, Feicht was a member of the Polish Composers’ Union, in which for many years he held responsi-

⁸ He was, among others, a member of the Committee of Art Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Polish Composers’ Union, the Fryderyk Chopin Society Academic Council, and the Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences.

⁹ “Though people usually try to avoid retirement, I sincerely look forward to it, as I might then still have a few years for my research work.” Feicht’s statement from a radio broadcast of 1963, see Kałamorz 2012: 15. (Unfortunately, his dreamt-of retirement proved very short.)

¹⁰ They also include secular songs to texts by Polish poets: Kazimierz Tetmajer, Jan Kasprówicz, Władysław Syrokomla, as well as Silesian songs (of coalminers, steelworkers, and students).

¹¹ H. Feicht knew very well the performance standards of church choirs, and therefore he composed for various line-ups. One example of his remarkable kindness in this respect are his *4 Eucharistic Hymns for the Corpus Christi Procession for Male Choirs with Weak First Tenors*. Cf. The list of compositions in Lissa and Idaszak 1975: 32–36.

¹² H. Feicht’s output of compositions has been the subject of papers by e.g. Karol Mrowiec, Maria Krawczyk, and Elżbieta Charlińska (who also recently prepared a score publication and recording of his selected organ works, including the *Organ Sonata in D Minor*).

ble functions.¹³ Without Feicht's background as a composer and musician, his academic output would certainly have been different. Mirosław Perz observed that the knowledge of composition techniques

made him concentrate on a specific cognitive subject determined only by the existing source, not by ideas and views, which invariably guaranteed the explicit and disciplined character of his academic productions as well as of his requirements as a teacher (Perz 1998: 44).

Józef M. Chomiński stressed that

for Feicht the discovered historical works were not only a collection of museum exhibits, but, first and foremost, living music, as he combined academic discipline with composition and performance practice (Chomiński 1967: 4).

The search for historical sources was another important area of study which Feicht came in contact with already during his studies in Lvov.¹⁴ In Warsaw he was, as I have already mentioned, head of the Centre for the Documentation and Inventorying of Musical Monuments, initiated by the then director of the Institute of Musicology, Zofia Lissa, in 1957. The Centre was a breeding ground for young academics interested in source studies. The aims and atmosphere of this campaign for the documentation of what remained after the ravages of war is best illustrated by this statement from one of its most active participants, Tadeusz Maciejewski:

We had one aim: to locate and catalogue all the remaining musical monuments still contained in libraries, state and church archives: liturgical books, the repertoires of church ensembles, historical instruments, as well as musical iconography [...] Each new find evoked an enthusiasm bordering on euphoria; today many people may find it hard to understand. Father Feicht was sincerely overjoyed whenever I managed to find something new during my field trips (Kałamorz 2012: 23, 26, 27).¹⁵

The young participants of this campaign felt that initiative rested largely with them, whereas Father Feicht in a sense legitimised and authorised their

¹³ Feicht wrote about it in his *Memoirs* (Feicht 2008: 124–130).

¹⁴ The *Memoirs* (Feicht 2008: 17–18) contain an amusing description of his experiences with source studies in the Lvov period.

¹⁵ Father Feicht had the pleasant ability to exhibit sincere joy at his own and his colleagues' achievements (a quality also emphasised by Mirosław Perz, cf. Kałamorz 2012: 100).

work (Perz 1998: 46).¹⁶ Contact with historical musical sources allowed the young researchers to familiarise themselves with the entire wide field of source studies and to use the acquired knowledge in practice, e.g. while editing the finds. Still, the Professor assessed the results of his Centre's work not only from the point of view of their didactic function, but also — stressing the growing esteem for musicology in academic circles, the interest in Polish musical sources demonstrated by foreign musicological celebrities, and the evident extension of concert repertoires, which now included many valuable new pieces of early Polish music (Feicht 2008: 136, 138, 141, 142).¹⁷

In 1963 Hieronim Feicht admitted in one of his statements: “My academic output is far from imposing as far as numbers are concerned” (Kałamorz 2012: 15). Nevertheless, he has left behind nearly 200 writings, including not only academic musicological papers and source editions, but also journalistic articles on many subjects: reviews, reports, chronicles, etc (Lissa and Idaszak 1975: 22–32, Feicht 2008: 199–215). At this point we could quote Zofia Lissa's opinion about that other type of Feicht's writings:

He was not the kind of academic who locks himself off from the world in the ivory tower of his undoubtedly great knowledge and numerous academic responsibilities. He exhibited a great talent as a promoter of art. This was the aim behind his many popular articles in Polish cultural press as well as theological periodicals. He invariably wrote about Polish music, especially the early sacred music of Poland [...] He also recorded many radio broadcasts, which were always witty, knowledgeable and engaging (Lissa 1975: 19–20).

One could also point out a certain imbalance in the Professor's output from the successive years — for instance, in the year of Poland's millennium, 1966, Prof. Feicht prepared an impressive number of almost 40 different papers and publications, which Wojciech Kałamorz added to his *Memoirs* in order to demonstrate the Professor's unusual activity in that period (Feicht 2008: 193–195).

¹⁶ Father Feicht similarly characterised his own role in the section of his *Memoirs* dedicated to the Centre. He writes with satisfaction that at some point “the youth have become quite independent” and that field trip organisation and planning was entrusted to his assistant — Krzysztof Biegański (Feicht 2008: 139–140).

¹⁷ The author notes that also musicologists from other centres, especially Zygmunt M. Szweykowski from Cracow, contributed to the new finds.

The edition of Hieronim Feicht's major academic writings, prepared in the 1970s in Warsaw's Institute of Musicology — *Opera musicologica Hieronymi Feicht* — contains 25 papers of various lengths divided into three volumes: I. *Studies on Polish Medieval Music*, II. *Renaissance Polyphony*, III. *Studies on the Music of the Polish Renaissance and Baroque*.¹⁸ An appreciation of that output from the perspective of present-day state of research usually leads to the conclusion that, although some details may have become outdated, it still represents "the insightful view of a scholar who can see the essential things through gaps in the mist of history." (Perz 1998: 47) Those of his works that are usually quoted as the most significant were: his late brief syntheses on medieval monody in Poland (Feicht 1965: 9–52, 1968: 52–70); his extremely detailed musicological commentary contained in the large monograph volume dedicated to the Polish *carmen patrium* — *Bogurodzica* (Feicht 1962: 51–92); his early writings about selected 16th–17th-century Polish composers (e.g. Marcin Leopolita, Bartłomiej Pękiel) (See Feicht 1925, Feicht 1930: 106–157); his pioneering contributions on the history of music at the royal Saxon and Vasa courts (Feicht 1928: 20–34 and 125–144, Feicht 1968a: 151–159), as well as his book on *Renaissance Polyphony*, a kind of academic handbook of pre-Classical counterpoint (Feicht 1957). Feicht himself also valued very highly his works on Fryderyk Chopin (Kałamorz 2012: 15).¹⁹ He attached great significance to editing and printing early Polish music. For many years, he was editor-in-chief of the series *Editions of Early Polish Music*, and towards the end of his life — of the monumental source edition of *Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia*.²⁰ It was at his inspiration and under his editorship that the large album entitled *Early Polish Music* with previously unpublished pieces from the 12th–17th centuries was prepared to mark Poland's millennium in 1966. Some of those pieces had been unearthed during the campaign of source documentation already discussed above (Feicht 1966).

¹⁸ Published in by PWM Edition in Cracow, with summaries of Feicht's papers in other languages and editorial notes signalling later developments in research concerning the same subjects. See Lissa and Idaszak 1975, 1976, 1980.

¹⁹ These were: Feicht 1948, Feicht 1960: 56–78.

²⁰ The editor-in-chief of the Editions of Early Polish Music [Wydawnictwa Dawnej Muzyki Polskiej] was A. Chybiński, and after his death in 1953 — H. Feicht, who also became the editor-in-chief of the *Antiquitates* in 1963.

Some musicologists have expressed their regret that Prof. Feicht did not manage to write a synthetic history of Polish, or even – of early Polish music. However, there are also arguments that despite new discoveries it was still too early for such a synthesis, and that Feicht's methodological preferences may have made it difficult for him to undertake such tasks.²¹ Feicht's own statement, quoted in the *Sketches*, may shed some light on this issue:

As soon as I retire, I intend to write a concise, but possibly comprehensive history of Polish musical culture, since there is an urgent need for such a book — it would be very useful for the general public, and quite necessary for our students (Kałamorz 2012: 17).

Again, we can see how he conceived this task in terms of “duty” — work not for academic fame, but “for the general public” and for the benefit of the younger generation — of his beloved “students”.

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The importance of Rev. Prof. Hieronim Feicht's work was rightly summed up by Józef M. Chomiński already in 1967:

he was not only an eminent scientist, educator and organiser, but, first and foremost, a wonderful person, capable of combining his religious vocation with the needs of science, of our country and society, in an extremely harmonious way (Chomiński 1967: 3).

Among his many achievements, one of the greatest was

the training of academic staff characterised by clear scientific views and strict methodological principles. He himself was extremely conscientious and aimed to discover unquestionable scientific truths on the basis of classical methodological principles, which attached much significance to sources and their proper interpretation. These were the rules that he passed on to his students (Chomiński 1967: 5).

²¹ Kałamorz 2012: 133, 66: such opinions were expressed e.g. by Danuta Idaszak and Jerzy Morawski.

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